

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

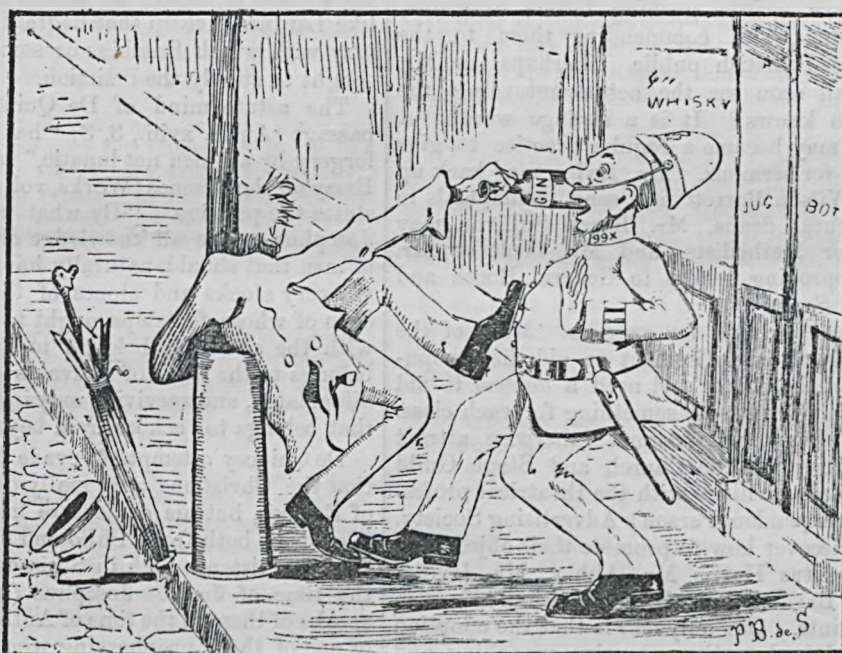
Sub Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 92.



LED OF THE SPIRIT.

"If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."—GALATIANS v., 18.

A WRINKLE FOR PARSONS.

TWELVE HUNDRED clergymen, according to a flaring advertisement in the newspapers, guarantee the virtue of Gordon's Extract. The names and addresses of a hundred of these clerical sponsors are printed in full, and no doubt the other thousand might be published also "if space allowed." Gordon's Extract is a concoction of which we are utterly ignorant; for all we know it may be the best or the worst patent medicine ever invented. We confess, however, that the vast amount of recommendation it receives from the sky-pilots raises in our minds a prejudice against it. There is something very sinister in this long array of ghostly patrons. It suggests a conspiracy of some kind against the public health. Without it, Gordon's Extract might have been worth a trial; but now, whenever we are troubled with "Bilionsness, Sick Headache or Indigestion," which in our case are happily as rare as blue moons, we shall resort to some less suspicious remedy. There is Carlyle's Morison still available; at least there is the universal Holloway, the immortal Cockle, and the venerable Parr.

Yet there is a huge multitude of people who will be otherwise affected by this advertisement. They will regard it as a full assurance of Gordon's merit, a supreme and unquestionable testimony to the efficacy of his Extract. On the whole, it is pretty clear that Gordon has made a hit, and that he understands advertising, whatever may be thought of his cure for dyspepsia. The pill public, if we may speak in this abrupt way of millions of worthy people, is somewhat superstitious. It loves mystery, and has a large fund of faith, which no deception can exhaust. Naturally therefore, it consists mainly of religious persons, as is forcibly shown by the following story.

We were once travelling from London to the North in a third-class compartment, which is one of the best places in the world to study the humors of men. Our companions were two chatty commercial travellers. They talked on a variety of subjects, and in the course of their conversation they exchanged views on the question of advertising. "Well you see," said one—a jocose exuberant man, with a plump body and a rubicund face, further illuminated by

a pair of merry black eyes—"well you see, it all depends on the article. Different classes go in for different things, and you must reach your special class. For instance, some years ago I travelled in the pill line—a funny business, I assure you. Our firm always used to advertise in the religious papers. Their readers go in more for pills than other folk; and then, you see, those journals are read by the families—they get into the hands of the women and young people, the very class we wanted to reach. Yes, the religious papers are the best medium for pills." "Well," said the other, "I've no doubt you're right; it looks reasonable on the face of it." Then they gazed right into each other's eyes, and burst into a roar of laughter.

Inspect the advertisement columns of a few Christian papers, and you will find ample corroboration of this commercial traveller's opinion. Pills, patent medicines, and every variety of short cuts to health, are announced there in great profusion. Beyond doubt, "the religious papers are the best medium for pills."

Mr. Spurgeon is not a parson, but he is a sky-pilot, and it is not surprising to find that he also has a speciality to recommend. For many years he has suffered from gout, a disease which, as George Eliot remarked, "has a good deal of wealth on its side." Poor men are very free from it, and we doubt if Jesus Christ and the twelve Apostles ever had a twinge amongst them. Not finding sufficient efficacy in prayer, Mr. Spurgeon patronises the doctor; and as he is regarded as an oracle by his congregation, he is sometimes consulted as to the best treatment for gout. In the October number of his magazine he compendiously answers many correspondents on the subject. "Nothing," he says, "has ever been of so much service to us as the simple remedies prescribed by"—and then follows the name and address of Mr. Spurgeon's doctor, which we venture to omit. Doubtless this gentleman is a staunch supporter of the Tabernacle, and its grateful pastor gives him a puff on the ground that one good turn deserves another.

A word now for another sky-pilot. Some years ago, when he was not quite so prosperous as he is now, Dr. Parker issued a touting circular for trade advertisements in his journal the *Fountain*. Special advantages were

offered to prompt customers, and it was intimated that any firm could have a special article on its goods in the editorial part of the paper for a certain sum. Of course this sort of thing is quite honest, and all correct; but we are quite sure that there would be a fierce outcry if Secular journals acted in this way.

The truth is, that our sky-pilots emulate the subtlety of the serpent, without burdening themselves with a large supply of the harmlessness of the dove. It is no longer true, if it ever was, that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Pious traders are up to all the tricks of the market, and the sky-pilots themselves could in many cases safely be handicapped in a match with the Heathen Chinese.

Recently the black gentry have taken to patronising the stage. Parsons have written gushing letters to actors, praising their dramas, and commending them to the attention of the good British public. Perhaps, as Mr. Sims says, we shall soon see the actors returning the compliment. Who knows? It is a strange world. A few years hence it may become a regular practice to give theatrical vouchers for sermons. Mr. Irving may back up the bishops, Mr. Wilson Barrett may send testimonials to city canons and rural deans, Mr. Barry Sullivan may recommend superior Methodists, and Mr. Toole or Mr. Terry may send approving letters to General Booth and Messrs. Moody and Sankey.

But to recur to our wrinkle for parsons. Many of the richer sort want a good advertisement to aid their popularity; and many of the poorer sort need a *douceur* to aid their incomes. Now we propose something for each class. Let the superior clergy, who cannot otherwise attract public attention, either join the Church and Stage Guild and exchange constant civilities with the theatrical profession, or get up an independent Parson's Advertising Society. They would soon discover how to promote their object, and no doubt Mr. Augustus Harris, Mr. Abbey, Mr. Irving, or even the great Barnum himself, would kindly furnish them with useful hints. Our only fear is that the adoption of our advice would lead to the extensive preaching and publication of dull sermons, and a consequent increase in lunacy. But, of course, every good has an attendant ill, just as every man has the "defects of his qualities;" and philanthropists must not be deterred by a squeamish tenderness for the few victims of their glorious schemes.

As for the inferior clergy, poor Dissenting ministers, and all the needy sky-pilots who want solid pudding rather than empty praise, they should take the reverse prescription. They must confer praise instead of receiving it. This involves something parasitical, but their profession has accustomed them to that. Let them quietly but plainly intimate that they are ready to give testimonials for articles of general consumption, after a moderate trial of their value. All the pill and patent-medicine men would give them a line at once, and of course the terms could be settled without any unpleasant publicity. There need be no payment. The very thought is revolting to a high-toned sky-pilot. But a judicious present would do very well; a hamper of game, a few dozen of wine, a roll of broadcloth, a parcel of shirts, or perhaps a ton or two of coals. Here is a fine field of operations for the impecunious sky-pilots, and we hope soon to hear the last of the Poor Curates' Aid Society.

G. W. FOOTE.

JOSEPHUS AND JESUS.

WHILE writing my little pamphlet "Gospel Lies," I had occasion to read carefully the Jewish historian who was not only a contemporary of the Apostolic age, but who lived on the spot, and dealt with the period described in the sacred books of the Christians. I was more than ever struck by the fact that the omission by Josephus of all mention of any of the wondrous events accompanying the life of Jesus and the propagation of Christianity, is utterly irreconcilable with the truth of the gospel stories.

That God should in person have visited the earth, performed the most extraordinary miracles, from feeding thousands with a few loaves to raising the dead; that after being publicly crucified he should have risen again and ascended to heaven in the sight of people on the tiptoe of expectation for the advent of their Messiah, without a word of mention from the great Jewish historian, presents a difficulty which has not only never been explained but which has not received the attention it demands.

It must be remembered that Josephus himself had been Governor of Galilee, the very district where most of the miracles of Jesus are said to have been performed. His father, Matthias, was in great reputation in Jerusalem at the very time of the alleged ministry and crucifixion of Jesus, and his own connection with Palestine ran abreast with the generation succeeding to Christ, that dating from the crucifixion to the destruction of Jerusalem.

In the opening of the fourteenth book of his "Antiquities of the Jews," Josephus declares he has taken great pains to omit no facts of consequence, "either through ignorance or laziness." He devotes above forty chapters to the time extending from Herod the Great to Pilate; and, what is more extraordinary, tells us of a false prophet of the Samaritans whom Pilate ordered to be slain. Yet he gives not a word of Jesus; for honest Christian evidence writers like Lardner give up that flagrant forgery of the third century with which Eusebius or some equally pious Christian sought to supply the omission.

The astute mind of De Quincey, who says that this passage (Antiq. xviii., 3, 3) "has long been given up as a forgery by all men not lunatic," saw the difficulty. In his Essay on the Essenes (Works, vol. ix. p. 245) that fine writer states the position. "By what possibility," he asks, "did Josephus escape all knowledge of the Christians as a body of men that should naturally have challenged notice from the very stocks and stones of their birth-place; the very echo of whose footsteps ought to have sunk upon the ear with the awe that belongs to spiritual phenomena, that belongs to the bells of convents in the desert, long since dilapidated, and surviving only in the traditions of Bedouins, that belongs to 'echoes from beyond the grave.'"

De Quincey attempts to evade the difficulty by supposing that the Christians were really described under the name of Essenes, but his conjecture has not found support. It is evident, both from Philo and Josephus, that the Essenes were in existence both in Syria and Egypt long anterior to the time of Jesus. Josephus (Antiq., book xiii., ver. 9) speaks of them in the time of Antiochus, and again (xviii., 5), of one of them prophesying when Herod was a child that he should become king of the Jews. Josephus expressly states (Antiq. xviii., 1, 1) that the Jews "had for a great while three sects—the Essenes, the Sadducees and the Pharisees"—and that the only recent sect was that of which Judas the Galilean was the author. This, according to the Christian story, he must have written in the very teeth of the Christian community rising up everywhere under his eyes.

While allowing that the Essene community had a great share in the formation of early Christianity, we must for many reasons dismiss the conjecture that in describing them Josephus really intended the Christians.

Shall we then suppose with George Solomons (the Jewish author of a very curious book, "The Jesus of History," published by Reeves and Turner), that the patriotic Galileans were Christians, and that the Jesus of history is a compound of the story of Judas of Galilee and the Jesus mentioned by Josephus (Wars vi., 3), as going about crying "Woe, woe to Jerusalem"—a theory for which there is something to be said, as I may take some future occasion to show.

In either case, whether we suppose the early Christians to have been Essenes, or followers of Judas of Galilee, both the originality and veracity of the gospels are impeached. But the more satisfactory and equally damaging account of the matter seems to be that Josephus did not mention the miracles of Jesus and the early Christians simply because he was unacquainted with them; and it follows that the Christian religion had no extensive influence until after the destruction of Jerusalem.

There is another item worth mentioning in connection with Josephus. He tells us at the end of his "Antiquities" that he had taken great pains to understand the elements of the Greek language, though he could not pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness, for, says he, "our nation does not encourage those that learn the languages of other nations."

Hence we learn that the Jews of Palestine spoke Aramaic, and were but rarely acquainted with Greek. Yet the gospels, written by unlearned and ignorant Jews, are not in Aramaic or Hebrew, but in what Swinburne calls "canine Greek," and long discourses by Jesus are given in that language—another striking proof of their authenticity.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

EXETER HALL has been frothing about the evils of moderate drinking. Jesus, however, made from twelve to eighteen firkins of wine for guests who were already "well drunk," and Solomon said to the poor man, "Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his misery no more." We are far, however, from commending either the advice of Solomon or the example of Jesus.

At St. John's Church, Richmond, last Sunday, Professor Miller performed a new fantasia on the trombone, with organ accompaniment written specially for the occasion by the Rev. H. W. Miller. *The Sporting Chronicle* says: "The Salvation Army has already introduced the big drum and the comic songs, the Church has now followed suit with the trombone fantasia, and perhaps the chapels will presently trump the trick with the introduction of a ballet. At any rate, we are certainly getting on, and at the present rate of progression the time cannot be far distant when Mr. Barnum will be considered the most suitable candidate for the position of Archbishop of Canterbury."

A CORRESPONDENT at Liverpool sends us a begging letter with a piteous appeal, "please send me a few stamps," from the Rev. H. Milnes, of Winstead, near Derby, who solicits the stamps to restore his church, which is reported as "in a very defective condition evidently caused by insecure foundation." Mr. Milnes's case is that of all the clergy. They all want funds to bolster up their tottering Church, but they do not all so plainly state its condition.

A WRITER in the *Hull Express*, in mentioning Wombwell's menagerie at Hull Fair, reports the remark of a working man who said, "I always think a monkey is next to a Christian. Their actions are so very like Christians' actions." Rather complimentary to the Christians!

THE Rev. J. Hudson Taylor, who felt he "could have trusted God and eightpence," having at last parted with his only half-crown and thus trusted God and nothing, received next morning, so he says, a pair of kid gloves and half-a-sovereign—"four hundred per cent for twelve hours' investment." He appears to take the Christian teaching, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," as literal fact. If so, there is a splendid field open for Christian investors.

"EIGHT new missionaries" left Europe the other day for China. Ten thousand additional French troops are expected to follow close on their heels.

"THE man that came out of hell with his night-cap on" is one of the interesting items put forward by the Salvation Army at Stirling. We presume the night-cap must have been made of asbestos.

A NEW crime for Voltaire! One of Ashworth's tales, called "Wilkins," accuses him of having lived in open adultery. This is a most extraordinary feat for a man who was never married. Clearly, according to Ashworth, if Voltaire did not believe in miracles, he could at least work them.

HELL GATE is now illuminated with the most powerful electric light in the world, consisting of nine Brush lamps of 6,000 candle-power each. The New Yorkers are proud of the entrance to their harbor being so well lit, and say that hell itself hasn't better burners.

THE Bishop of St. Asaph has inhibited the Rev. J. L. Lyne, better known as Father Ignatius, from conducting an eight days' mission at St. Collin's Church, Llangollen. The Rev. Rhys James, vicar, while reluctantly acknowledging the Bishop's inhibition against the church, has practically defeated his lord and master by granting the use of the schools, where the mission is proceeding. The vicar, in his reply, complains that his parishioners have never seen their bishop.

A WRITER in a religious paper claims that a minister is not now addressed, as he was apt to be fifty years ago, as a "black slug." He is now known as a "black-beetle," a "sky-pilot" or a "parasite."

THE Right Hon. W. H. Smith, M.P., owns an estate near Little Thurlow. It stretches seven miles, and cost him £500,000. This pious Tory M.P. has reduced the wages of the agricultural laborers on this huge estate from 11s. a week to 10s. a week, "because bread is so cheap." Does he give a proportionate increase when bread is so dear, we wonder?

THE *Peterborough Express* warns employers against Salvationist servants. One of these zealous hallelujah lasses received a letter from the Derby Salvation Corps, which said: "God is love; we want chamber-towels, half-a-dozen knives and forks, silk handkerchief, china vases, cup and saucer, and grapes."

This pious incitement to robbery caused the girl to steal a sovereign from her master's drawer, with which she purchased various articles and sent them on to Derby as requested, "all for Jesus." Yet Christians are always boasting that religion makes people honest, although they know that their God commanded his chosen to spoil the Egyptians and to steal the land of Canaan.

A "CONFERENCE on Unfulfilled Prophecy" has just been held in Avenue Road Church. The reverend gentlemen had a rather extensive subject to deal with. If truth had been their object we could have materially assisted them.

THE *Christian Herald* tells us of the "cure of an incurable." In another column it curiously says that "Praise was given on behalf of a dear woman living in Harrow, who is suffering from five cancers." Nice thing to praise the Lord for!

WHEN Christian evidence lecturers stand on Secular platforms they invariably protest their love of fair play and full discussion; but when they stand on their own platforms they frequently belie these fine protestations. Quite recently the Rev. Dr. McCann lectured at Norwood on "Secularism Impossible," the chair being taken by the Rev. Mr. Martin, and the proceedings being under the auspices of the C. E. S. Not only was discussion refused, but not even a question was allowed; and over a hundred Freethinkers rose from their seats and left the hall in disgust. Dr. McCann nevertheless declared his readiness to meet in public debate the best man the Freethinkers could put forward. Well, we are not going to guess, much less decide, who the best man is; but we know that there are several of our lecturers who are quite a match for Dr. McCann or any other sky-pilot, and ready to give him an opportunity of displaying his prowess. At any rate our editor is always at the reverend gentleman's disposal. Is he game? We doubt it.

A RELIGIOUS maniac in Pennsylvania deliberately set fire to her clothes and burnt herself to death. She imagined she was offering herself as a sacrifice to the Lord. Another precious result of Bible training.

ANOTHER crank in America has "sent his child to heaven." The children of parents who are controlled by spirits and commune with ghosts and gods, are never safe from sacrificial butchery.

AT a Catholic mission service in Bundoran, Ireland, thousands of poor people knelt weeping as they listened to "simple and touching evangelistic addresses." They had all, however, to purchase a ticket before they could enter, and they were expected to patronise the stalls where beads and images were exposed for sale. That's the style. Somehow the soul-saving business always ends in cash.

ACCORDING to *Truth*, the ex-empress Eugenie is now a decrepit old woman, with blanched face and hair, and eyes that look as if all the color had been wept out of them. Verily a sad picture! But what of the thousands of women robbed of husbands and sons by that mad war which it is well known she was chiefly responsible for? We do not wish, however, to exult over her miserable fate, although it teaches a stern lesson. Far from it. But we want to stigmatise that horrible religion which animated her, and its horrible priests who prompted her. The good that Christianity has wrought is doubtful; but its evil deeds are recorded in letters of blood and fire on every page of history.

"RAMBLER," in the *Christian World*, speaks in terms of praise of the Rev. F. O. Morris's "clever satire" on Darwinism. So? Why, then, it appears a laudable thing for a Christian to satirise Darwinism, while it is a crime for a Darwinian to satirise Christianity. Why this difference? What is sauce for one party should be sauce for the other too. The only explanation is, that Christians are all more or less trained to be intellectual bullies. They want both side-walks all to themselves, and the Freethinker must take his chance in the road or the gutter. Blessed are the meek!

WAS there ever any humbug like Christian humbug? Has any other religion ever produced a Pecksniff? We doubt it. Yet in the very soil and climate of Christianity there is something naturally propitious to the production of this species. Here, for instance, is Mr. Spurgeon, who, with all his frank talk, is nevertheless a fine sample of the snuffing hypocrite. He professes to believe in the efficacy of prayer, and begs the prayers of his congregation when he is sick. He also tells them that he trusts entirely to prayer for raising the funds for his college and orphanage. Very good. There is no crime in a man being a century behind his time. But there is a great crime in insincerity. Mr. Spurgeon preaches one thing and practises another. Instead of relying on the prayer of faith, he goes periodically to Mentone for the benefit of his health, as though the Lord could not answer petitions as easily in Kennington. But that is not all. He has just postponed his usual trip to Mentone until after Christmas, "to give any danger arising from the cholera epidemic on the Continent time to pass away." These are the very words of a Christian journal in making the announcement

What miserable humbug! Here is a man who pretends that God has often sent him *the very sum* he required in financial straits, and yet he is afraid to trust God to protect him from a danger which Freethinking doctors, municipal officers and deputies, such as Clémenceau, Waldeck-Rousseau and Clovis Hugues, have faced with impunity.

SAMUEL KINNS has been lecturing at the Church Institute, Leeds, to fortify the Christians in their belief that Moses was scientifically inspired. His chief proof appears to have been that Genesis describes man as the last creation, while geology and biology also show that man, as Kinns puts it, made his appearance last on the earth. Just as though it would ever have occurred to anyone but an idiot, even in ancient times, to suppose that man was earlier than the inferior animals. We observe that the chair was taken by the Vicar of Leeds, the Rev. John Gott, and the vote of thanks to the lecturer was proposed by Canon Bullock and seconded by the Rev. E. W. Mackinson. The sky-pilots of Leeds must be greatly in want of encouragement if they are obliged to fall back on Kinns, and when his scientific attainments are perfectly understood they may find that after all he has been "a little more than kin and less than kind."

THE *Rock*, in its answers to correspondence, has the following bit of droll humor:—"F. DEAN.—The present King of Italy does not occupy the position which you have assigned him in the roll of prophecy." The "roll of prophecy" being in the keeping of the *Rock*, it is able, of course, to correct such statements as those of the lunatic F. Dean.

"MAJOR" WILSON of the Hull Mission can't get his month's wages, amounting to 18*l.* As his agreement is not stamped, the

trustees decline to pay him. They are all "at the master's feet," working for souls and not for money.

"THE authorities of the Leek Cottage Hospital, having accepted a donation of 10*l.* from the Race Committee, the Wesleyans of that town have declined to make the annual collections in the chapels from which the charity has largely benefited for some years." Respectable Christians like these cannot condescend to do good unless worldly people's subscriptions are rejected. They withdraw their piety from afflicted sufferers and abandon them to their fate because the sporting world is allowed to help. A sporting contemporary may well describe them as "niggardly, narrow-minded, ignorant, contemptible, grovelling Wesleyan worms."

THE Rev. Canon Jelf, of St. Mary's, Chatham, won't let his curate preach and keeps back his salary in order to compel him to leave the Salvation Army, which he has recently joined. The curate will have to sell his furniture to provide food for his family. How charitable Christians are to each other! How just and forbearing!

"THE Christian Hero," who encourages his soldiers with texts from the Koran, says some curiously Christian things in his last despatches. Thus he tells us that "5,000 men were massacred at Berber. All is for the best." Further, he glories in his destruction of the irrigating machines along the Nile, which he says will prevent all cultivation, so that he anticipates a terrible famine. In all this of course he considers himself eminently "blessed by God," and he likes to sprinkle his despatches with the letters D.V. in pious parentheses.



THE HEAVENLY RACE.

Talmage glories in the thought that races will be run in heaven. No doubt he fancies himself a frequent victor in the celestial games. What sort of a figure he will cut the Lord only knows; but this is a profane artist's conception of the scene.

TALMAGE says that infidelity leads to suicide. There is a striking difference between Talmage and Washington. Washington couldn't tell a lie, but Talmage can and does with great proficiency. Perhaps, however, like Eusebius, he only lies that the glory of God may abound.

BROTHER BROOKS, the so-called "champion baptizer," must look to his laurels, for the *Freeman* (Baptist organ) informs us that the Rev. Mr. Landram baptized no less than seventy-two in thirty-three and a half minutes, "all decently and in order." It will be remembered that Brother Brooks has been accused of plunging them in with only the formula, "Same to you."

BISHOP HELLMUTH, in Part III. of his newly published "Biblical Thesaurus," surmises that "very likely" the serpent was originally one of the mammalia. This is the same bishop who supposes that the monkeys have descended from men.

THE Rev. J. Black says the Jews still suffer for having crucified their blessed savior. Yet Mr. Black believes the crucifixion

gave him his only blessed chance of salvation. If the Jews had only omitted to crucify Jesus, every soul would have gone to perdition for want of the atoning blood. Surely, Christians ought to thank the chosen race for following the law laid down by Jahveh in Deut. xiii, and putting Jesus to death, thereby carrying out the divine plan of salvation.

SAYS the Rev. J. Spedding, "The Gospel is simplicity itself. A wayfaring man, though a fool, can understand it." He might have added that the bigger fool he was the better he would understand and the more he would appreciate it.

Our Corner notices that "Whitaker's Almanack" in giving its list of religious sects, says: "The new denominations are sixteen in number, but one—Rational Christians—has disappeared."

THE people of Chicago have been warned by the Rev. Miles Grant, the "Boston evangelist," to prepare for the destruction of the world, which he claims will happen in a few months or a few years, the aforesaid destruction being some 1800 years overdue.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Nov. 2, St. James's Hall, Burnley:—At 11, "Prison Thoughts on the Bible;" at 3, "Will Christ Save Us?" at 6.30, "Twelve Months in a Christian Gaol."

November 9, Birmingham; 16, Nottingham; 18, Walworth; 23, Hall of Science, London; 25, Claremont Hall, London; 27, Hall of Science, London; 30, Hall of Science.

December 2, Claremont Hall; 4, Hall of Science, London; 6, Cramlington; 7, South Shields; 8, Houghton-le-Spring; 9, Claremont Hall, London; 11, Hall of Science, London; 14, Oldham; 16, Claremont Hall, London; 18, Hall of Science, London; 21, Hall of Science; 28, Milton Hall, London.

January 4, Rochdale; 11, Huddersfield; 18 and 25, Milton Hall.

February 1, Claremont Hall, London; 8, Hall of Science, London; 22, Liverpool.

CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Manager, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C. Literary communications to the Editor, 28 Stonecutter Street, London.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, directly from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3s.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. Displayed Advertisements:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—G. Holborow.

G. L. MAC.—Many thanks. It is quite welcome.

PERPLEXED.—In the words of Bishop Warburton the passage in Josephus (Ant. xviii., iii., 3) is "a rank forgery, and a very stupid one too." Josephus was a Pharisee, and could not say "This was the Christ." The passage is not quoted by any of the apostolic fathers, nor by Origen, Clement, or Tertullian, though they could not have failed to mention it had it been in existence in their time. See Lardner's "Jewish Testimonies" for a dozen other good reasons why the passage is an interpolation. McClintock and Strong's (orthodox) "Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature," art. "Josephus," says: "Whether Eusebius forged it himself or borrowed it from the marginalia of some Christian reader cannot be determined, but that Josephus did not write it may be regarded as settled."

J. L. DOUGLAS, Cigar Divan, 93 Acre Lane, Brixton, supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular literature.

J. RIX.—Thanks. We are quite willing to give Dr. McCann an opportunity of doing a little "infidel slaying" if he is still in the mood.

J. L. MAHON.—Your letter is simply a statement that what you call Scientific Socialism is right. We never said whether it was or was not, and we have no room in our little paper to discuss the subject. We attacked Christian Socialism, which you, being a materialist, do not defend. When one of its champions replies to our article he shall have full consideration.

W. BEATTIE.—We are no authority on legal matters, but we believe you have a perfect right to leave any public place, whether there is a collection going on or not. We know what we should do if anyone tried to stop us.

W. G. K.—Thanks. Your cuttings are always useful.

OLD OXFORD RAD.—Your suggestion is a good one, and we may be able to use it.

D. V.—Thanks. Yes, "sky-pilots" is a "good name for those worthies."

C. (Bucks).—Thanks. No doubt you'll get as good a pair of wings "in that day" as anybody else.

FREETHINKER.—We had several papers sent us with the information that the Rev. P. Pbelim was fined for kicking Mary Moore, which statement you say is incorrect.

T. PRINCE.—Thanks for the suggestion. You want a great deal more practice in writing before your productions are fit to print.

J. WILLIAMS.—We imagine that only the child's father could see the point of the joke. It must have been in the child's look.

J. FRANCE.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

D. CHATTERTON writes that he has been at the Midland Arches selling Freethought literature every Sunday morning except on two or three occasions, when illness kept him at home.

S. FILMER.—Now that Mr. Froude has completed his Life of Carlyle Mr. Foote will set about redeeming his old promise to write on the question "Was Carlyle a Christian?"

F. PUNCHER.—You want far more practice yet in versification. We will try to find space for the prose.

G. T. BROWN (Northampton).—You will see from Mr. Foote's lecture list that he is engaged beyond the date you mention.

W. LOWDON.—There is no Secular hall in Doncaster, nor do we know the address of any newsagent there who sells the *Freethinker*, although we dare say it is procurable somewhere.

F. MILLAR.—Always glad to help those who are helping the cause. Mr. Ramsey will send you an account.

G. PAYNE (Manchester) writes: "The *Freethinker* cartoon this week is splendid, and will no doubt be an eye-opener to many Bible readers who never dreamt that their 'precious treasure' contained such a silly verse as the one you have ridiculed."

F. WILCOCKSON.—We are not offended, but, on the contrary, obliged by your criticism.

HILLHEAD.—The point is not important, and may be allowed to rest.

W. E. B. (Plymouth) writes that when Mr. Foote was lecturing in that town, one of the local sky-pilots, Mr. R. Kiley, prayed "O God bless the blasphemer of the land who standeth in St. James's Hall to-day." The large audiences were, of course, the result of the prayer.

"D.V." and B. (Glasgow) point out that the collection mentioned on p. 339, should have been £12,500 instead of £2,500.

D. AMER writes that the West-Central Branch of the N. S. S. have secured the Athenæum, close to Gower Street Station, for Sunday evening lectures. Mr. Hyndman will open the ball with a lecture on "Socialism and Secularism" this evening (Nov. 2), at 8.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Vox—Hull Express—Ironclad Age (4 numbers)—People—Western Times—Peterborough Express—Boston Investigator—Dundee Evening Telegraph—Aberdeen Evening Express—Aberdeen Journal—Sheerness Guardian—Manchester Guardian—Manchester Examiner—Social Salvation—Huddersfield Examiner—Anti-Christian (Calcutta).

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE had large audiences at Plymouth last Sunday and a very hearty reception. We hear that the Plymouth Freethinkers are going to buy a hall of their own or build one if they cannot, and we wish them success in their project. Meanwhile it is good to know that the local branch of the N. S. S. is in a flourishing condition. When will Bristol wake up and make a similar boast? Before long, perhaps; for we hear a whisper of something being already in embryo in the capital of the West.

By the way, Devonshire has always produced, not only an extraordinary number of poets, but a great number of fighting men, some of whom have wielded the pen instead of the sword. Richard Carlile was a Devonshire man, and so is G. W. Foote. Leafy Devon has thus produced two men in one century who went to prison for Freethought. Can as much be said of any other county in England?

WE understand that Mr. Foote's four lectures at the Hall of Science on "The Roots of Christianity" were the most successful course ever delivered there on Thursday evenings. He will deliver another course in December on "The History of Priestcraft," dealing with the subject broadly, and with illustrations from all religions and ages. During the same month he will deliver a course of four lectures on "The Four Gospels" at Claremont Hall on Tuesday evenings.

THE Progressive Publishing Co. have nearly exhausted their first supply of James Thomson's "Satires and Profanities," and a larger supply is in the binder's hands for immediate delivery. The sale has exceeded expectations.

MR. FROUDE says that Carlyle never went to church "except accidentally," because he generally found there "some vulgar illiterate man declaiming about matters of which he knew nothing." Ah, Thomas, how you knew the species! What a pity you did not write a treatise on the "black dragons" as you once called them, instead of venting your dyspeptic spleen on so many of your unfortunate acquaintances. We should then have had a classic on these pests of society, which would have helped at once to kill and preserve them. They might have lasted—dead, not living—for ages in the amber of your humor and wit.

THE Hackney Branch of the N. S. S. should be supported by Freethinkers in the district. Its meeting-place on Sunday evenings is Rutland Hall, Broadway, South Hackney. This evening (Nov. 2) Miss Jessie Craigen lectures on Anti-vaccination.

THE *Literary World*, noticing Dr. Aveling's little book on "The Origin of Man," says: "Whatever we may think of his theology, the author has certainly produced an excellent *résumé* of the arguments for evolution."

WE are glad to find that in South Australia the oath is practically abolished. The bill has passed its second reading without a division, and no further opposition is expected. In 1882 a similar bill was rejected by three votes. Last year it was only thrown out by the casting vote of the president of the Legislative Council. The desperate resistance of the bigots has completely collapsed, thanks, it is believed, to Lord Coleridge's judgment in the Bradlaugh case and the unseemly scenes which to sincere Christians desecrate rather than honor the oath in the law-courts. Henceforward a simple declaration will in all cases be employed instead of the oath, which, as a legal institution, is by this time completely defunct in South Australia. May the example spread, till the mother country learns reform from her children, and no longer makes an invidious distinction between Christian and Freethinker.

SKY-PILOTS were once anxious to debate with Freethinkers, but they know better now. It is almost as difficult to drag them into a public discussion as to draw blood from a stone, skin a flint, fly over the moon, or do any other impossibility. Imagine our surprise, then, to hear that the Rev. W. W. Howard is going to debate with Mr. W. W. Collins for two nights, Nov. 5 and 6, in the Town Hall, Houghton-le-Spring. We imagine that there will be a rush to see the encounter.

THE Manchester *Examiner* publishes further correspondence on the exclusion of *Progress* and *Our Corner* from the Free Libraries. Mr. George Payne ably answers "Presbyterian's" defence of the committee. A Mr. S. H. Gritton also takes our

side. He has been a Sunday-school teacher and a member of a Christian church, but now finds that while Secular literature may "startle and even shock the feelings of over-sensitive, simple and weak-minded people, it nevertheless has a robustness, honesty, and straightforwardness which cannot fail to commend it to those who admire freedom of thought and who hate cant and hypocrisy."

In a new book on the great Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Mr. P. B. Watson says: "It must be distinctly borne in mind that, in the struggle between Rome and Christianity, Rome was rather the champion of tolerance than of intolerance. There can be no question that the Christians were bad citizens. It was said, and undoubtedly was in many cases true, that they refused to serve in the Imperial armies. When we consider how close was the connection between the Roman worship and the State, and when we remember that every event of importance, such as a victory or an elevation to the throne, was celebrated by a sacrifice in which the Christians could take no part, we shall easily understand how they came to be looked upon as enemies to the Empire itself."

TALMAGE ON SUICIDE.

TALMAGE the Great, with his million of English readers, has been preaching in his usual sensational style on the "Increase of Suicide." Taking Acts xvi., 27, 28, for his text, he shows that Christianity opposed suicide, although it was allowed, and even in certain cases highly honored, by the pagan patriots of old. With the pernicious morality born of Christian teaching—of Christian cowardice and selfishness some will think—he condemns suicide as "the worst of all crimes." Worse than murdering others; worse than a corrupt life spent in leading innocence astray into the paths of ruin and early death; worse than betraying one's fellow-beings to infamy and to massacre; worse than ruining nations and drenching continents with blood! Such appears to be the Christian idea. Suicide cannot be repented of. All other crimes, all sins against our fellow beings, can easily be wiped away by faith in Christ, and therefore are less serious and less blameable than self-destruction, which leaves the self-wronging sinner no opportunity for the repentance and faith without which salvation is impossible.

Talmage says that "assassination of others is a mild crime compared with the assassination of yourself." He declares that the deliberate suicide "who in the use of his reason, by his own act, snaps the bond between his body and his soul goes straight to perdition," in accordance with Rev. xxi., 8, which plunges "murderers" into the lake of fire. The defeated patriot who saves himself from slavery and ignominy by his own weapon, the heretic who escapes the agony of rack and stake by poison, the political offender who saves his estates for his children by preferring death, go straight to hell. Walter Scott glorified the "worst of crimes" when he depicted the brave Jewess baffling the Templar by her threatened leap. Lucretia, the Roman matron, plunged her soul into the eternal torture of the Christian hell when she plunged the dagger into her heroic breast. Bah! Label the most abject poltroonery "Christianity" and millions of cowards are only too delighted to admire it. We despise the moral rot which commands or allows man to massacre his fellows as patriotism, as religion, as self-defence, but cannot allow him under any circumstances whatever to exercise any such power of life and death on himself. Justifiable suicide is at least as rational a verdict as justifiable homicide; and there are rare occasions when suicide becomes a virtue, let Christian admirers and rewarders of wholesale destroyers of others say what they will. And in advocating justice to the memory of suicides against the sweeping condemnation of pitiless Christians we beg to inform pious dunderheads that we are not advocating suicide as they will pretend. We lament the alleged increase of suicide, and would do our best by just teachings and by just social arrangements to prevent men and women being driven to such a pitch of misery and desperation that they welcome death as a friend. We would turn the moral condemnation of the community from the unfortunate whose leap from the "Bridge of Sighs" and from a life of shame excites our pity and rekindles our lost respect and reverence, and we would turn its force upon the well-to-do betrayer whom Christian parents with marriageable daughters are glad to welcome to their homes without any but the most nominal and almost flattering reproof of the dastardly triumphs of the days when he was only sowing the wild oats which others—and often he too, for Nature is not all unjust—will reap as degradation, misery, despair and death.

In answer to the question, "What is the cause" of the increase of suicide, our inspired charlatan confidently says: "I charge upon Infidelity and Agnosticism this whole thing. If there be no hereafter, or if that hereafter be blissful without reference to how we live, and how we die, why not move back the folding doors between this world and the next." Popular preaching evidently has little connection with reason or logic. Because there is no second life it is assumed that a man will hastily get rid of the only life he will ever possess! Because the prospects in an utterly unknown or non-existent land do not please a man, therefore he will throw up all his prospects here.

Surely a religious belief in Elysium would be much more powerful in tempting a man to quit this "vale of tears." Surely a man will not destroy his first and only chance *because* he has no second! No one but a madman will throw up leasehold property because it is not a perpetual freehold. A sane man will rather cherish his brief lease of life the more, and will work while it is day, because the night cometh in which no man can work.

Talmage, however, knows otherwise, and this is how he rants and raves upon the matter, while Christians by the million swallow all he says as the grandest gospel of these latter days:

"Infidelity holds the upper end of the rope for the suicide, and aims the pistol with which a man blows his brains out, and mixes the strychnine for the last swallow. If Infidelity could carry the day and persuade the majority of people in this country that it does not make any difference how you go out of the world you will land safely, the Hudson and the East rivers would be so full of corpses the ferry-boats would be impeded in their progress, and the crack of a suicide's pistol would be no more alarming than the rumble of a street-car.

Ah! Infidelity, stand up and take thy sentence! In the presence of God and angels and men, stand up, thou monster, thy lip blasted with blasphemy, thy cheek scarred with lust, thy breath foul with the corruption of the ages! Stand up, Satyr, filthy goat, buzzard of the nations, leper of the centuries! Stand up thou monster Infidelity! Part man, part panther, part reptile, part dragon, stand up and take thy sentence! Thy hands red with the blood in which thou hast washed, thy feet crimson with the human gore through which thou hast waded, stand up and take thy sentence! Down with thee to the pit and sup on the sobs and groans of families thou hast blasted, and roll on the bed of knives which thou hast sharpened for others, and let thy music be the everlasting *miserere* of those whom thou hast damned! I brand the forehead of Infidelity with all the crimes of self-immolation for the last century on the part of those who had their reason."

This of course is only a specimen of the nice, gentle, moderate, courteous language used by meek and humble Christians whose tender religious susceptibilities require the protection of blasphemy laws. Historically and judicially regarded, the terms of this pulpit indictment apply to Religion and the Church rather than to "Infidelity," which certainly was never the author of Holy Inquisitions, Crusades, religious wars and massacres, and the doctrine of eternal torment. The only point, however, in this elegant diatribe with which we now have space to deal is its utter failure where strength is essential. Like most Christian oratory, it collapses at the foundation. So weak is it in the support and justification of fact that Talmage has not brought forward a single instance of a modern Atheist committing suicide. The alarming increase in self-destruction during "the last two years" has not yielded him an example of "Infidel" suicide whereon he might with some apparent show of justice ground his tremendous abuse of "Infidelity." He has to go back to "a man in London" who shot himself after hearing Mr. Owen lecture on Socialism, and "a friend" of David Hume who committed suicide after reading a passage in that philosopher's writings. These are the only instances he gives. In the mental short-hand in which we conduct our own reasoning we describe these pious statements by a very brief Saxon word, and we feel sure that to all practical intents and purposes vague allegations of the kind are worthless.

But as there have been many cases of undoubted Christians who have committed suicide, Talmage is forced to deal with this unwelcome fact and to account for it. It is not an unknown and probably undiscoverable "man in London" that he now has to speak of as the representative of "Infidel" suicide. It is the well-known Hugh Miller, the Christian geologist, and William Cowper, the Christian poet, who stand before us as indisputable representatives of *Christian* suicide. Cowper, it is true, only made repeated attempts at suicide from religious despair and constitutional melancholia, but Hugh Miller, after writing his "Footprints of the Creator" and "Testimony of the Rocks," found the conflict between geology and scripture too much for his overwrought brain, and shot himself with a revolver. To all appearances this "intellectual giant," as Talmage considers him, fell a victim to the false teaching of Christianity and the difficulty, gradually becoming the impossibility, of reconciling religion with science.

Judging by Talmage's own evidence, that is by the authentic examples he puts forward, his furious denunciation of Infidelity as the cause of suicide ought to be hurled back upon Christianity as the rightful recipient. Talmage has to own that "some of the best Christians that ever lived have committed self-destruction," but he claims that they have always been insane at the time and therefore not responsible. He says "there has never been a case of suicide where the operator was not either demented, and therefore irresponsible, or an infidel," and upon this he challenges "all the ages" and "the whole universe." But if suicide be certain proof of insanity in a Christian, why is it not equally proof of insanity, and of consequent irresponsibility, in an Atheist? Why cannot a charitable judgment be extended to "Infidels" as well as to Christians? Simply because justice to opponents means the suicide of Christianity, and Christianity will never willingly commit this worst of all possible crimes.

W. P. BALL.

THAT man should be redeemed from the sin of eating an apple by the murder of an innocent person called Jesus, is certainly by far the strangest system of religion that ever was palmed upon the world. Never was there so great an outrage on common sense.—L. Mitchell.

A PASSION PLAY AT WANDSWORTH.

ON Monday at the Wandsworth Town Hall a passion play, entitled "*The Road to Death*," was performed by a powerful company under the able management of Messrs. Humbal and Solomons. The piece was put on the stage in an excellent manner; the scenery was first class, and the acting was, with one or two exceptions, very good. A passion play is a very rare occurrence in England and the piece was altogether of a very novel description.

The first scene opens at the Garden of Gethsemane, where a young man named Jesus Christ (a character ably sustained by Mr. Mooney) is to be seen supping with his twelve companions, or, as the programme has it—apostles. They are in high spirits, bandying jokes one with the other, making smart little speeches and proposing toasts. One of the apostles named James (Mr. Wright) actually gave a song entitled "O Jerusalem," which received an encore and a shout of "hornpipe" from a youth in the gods.

Jesus Christ, according to the plot, has been preaching sedition and using blasphemous language. For this he is hated by the priests and bigots, who seek his life. Jesus is aware of their motives, and also knows that he will be betrayed by one of his disciples—Judas (Mr. Tyler). The aforesaid supper party ends unhappily. Jesus tells Judas to his face that he is about to betray him. Hardly are these words uttered when a band of soldiers with lanterns and torches appears on the scene. Simon Peter (Mr. Vane), another apostle, exasperated at the sight, cuts off an ear from one of the unwelcome visitors. This highly amuses the godites, if one may so infer from their approbation. The soldiers then take Jesus prisoner and bind him hand and foot, and the first act ends amidst great excitement.

In Act II. Jesus is brought before Caiaphas, a high priest, and charged with sedition and blasphemy. Witnesses give contradictory evidence against him. He is asked who speaks the truth. But Jesus will not answer. This fine piece of acting nearly brings down the house. Simon Peter is seen warming himself by a fire in the room, and at length he is charged by a damsel (Miss Stubbs) with being one of the prisoner's disciples. This he twice denies, and sneaks out of the room cursing and swearing, followed by a very intelligent male fowl, which cries "Cock-a-doodle-doo." This so amused the audience that the poor bird had to come on and repeat the performance. Christ had previously told Peter this would happen.

The high priest not getting an answer from Jesus, rends his clothes and tears his hair, and gets in a terrible rage, and makes those under him ill-treat the prisoner. This character, performed by Mr. North, was rather over-done—it was much too stagey.

In the next scene Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate (Mr. Vercourt). Here Judas, who had betrayed his master for thirty pieces of silver, brings back the money and throws it on the floor, and rushes off threatening to commit suicide. Pilate would like to release Jesus, but the bigots of the city clamor for his life. At last he is handed over to them to be crucified. Then they all shout and dance with glee, and thus the curtain falls on a very effective scene.

In the opening scene of the next act, Jesus, attired in a new costume of scarlet, is seen pulling a barrow bearing a heavy wooden new cross, on which he is to be crucified. A man named Simon helps him. Weeping women follow singing mournfully "Let me like a soldier fall."

The next and last scene is a splendid one—Jesus is on the cross and a thief on either side (Messrs. Hardgiff and Poloney). Although this scene is magnificent, the acting in it is rather touching and those of the audience who possessed handkerchiefs had them frequently in use. One of the thieves did a sneeze after he was dead, and this again enlivened the audience, as also did the earthquake, the splitting of rocks, the tearing of the drop-scene, and jumping from out their graves of the saints, who dance and hop about the stage. Some of the saints are minus a leg or an arm. This was a curious ending to a very curious play, and the curtain came down amidst the vociferous applause of the audience. Calls were made for Mr. Mooney and the other chief actors. Cries of "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" brought the impersonator of Peter before the footlights. There were also repeated calls for the author, but one of the managers had to apologise for his absence—he being somewhere on the Continent.

SCOFFER.

[As we go to press we hear that this play, which was actually to have been performed at Wandsworth, has been prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain. We see no good reason why the principles of liberty should be thus infringed, nor why we should burke our contributor's account—evidently obtained by the clairvoyant or prophetic or imaginative means usually resorted to by newspaper reporters—of what would have happened if authority had not intervened on behalf of the sacred story.—EDITOR.]

THE MIRACULOUS CURE OF NAAMAN THE LEPER.

(Extract from the Advertisement Column of a Damascus Penny Weekly of the Period).

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"You are at liberty to make any use you think fit of this testimonial.

"I enclose as a thank offering a Post Office Order for five shillings, which you will oblige by sending to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, or the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, as you think fit.—Yours faithfully,

J. W. NAAMAN, Lieut.-Gen.

"P.S.—Did I leave my umbrella at your place when I called? as I missed it as well as one or two other little things. By the way, I wish you would speak to your man Gehazi. I don't mind him eating the oats out of my horses' nose-bags, nor do I particularly care about his pulling their tails out to make himself an apron with, but I must protest against his running away with all my togs whilst I was in your surgery, and compelling me to cover myself with a copy of the *Freethinker*—not that I object to that, but it is not strictly in uniform.

THE CHURCH.

HARK! the church bell,
With horrible yell,
Cries: "Come along, come along, come."
The people haranguing,
The parson is banging
And thumping the orthodox drum
To keep folk awake,
While he speaks of the stake
They all have in the kingdom to come.

Hark! the priest's voice
In language so choice,
Cries: "Come along, come along, all,
And see the connection
'Twixt faith and collection;
'Twixt rises in funds and man's fall.
Sin's root is in cash,
So get rid of the trash,
And it's burden we'll bear for you all."

Hark! the church bell,
With horrible yell,
Cries: "'Money's the root of all ill.'
To free you from sorrow
Your money we borrow—
Its pow'r over our souls is nil.
Get rid of the root
And you're free from the fruit,
While you're filling the heavenly till."

G. L. MAC.

REVIEW.

Conventional Lies of Our Civilisation. By MAX NORDAU. Freethought Publishing Co.—This powerful book, the German original of which, after running through several editions, was suppressed in Austria, is published in America by Schick, of Chicago, and sold in England by the F. P. C. We have no space for a full examination of its contents, and must satisfy ourselves with saying that it is one of the most remarkable and stimulating books we have seen for a long time. Nordau brings a strong penetrating intellect to bear upon the many political, social and religious lies—or as Carlyle would say, shams—of our age; he has, too, a vigorous and compact style, and every page of his work is worth reading and studying. We naturally hope he will find many readers in England.

OBITUARY.—A familiar figure has for many months been absent from the London Hall of Science, and now, alas! will be seen there no more. Mrs. Ann Haslam, wife of Mr. Haslam, the Freethought lecturer, died on Saturday, Oct. 25, after a long illness resulting from a paralytic stroke. She heard Charles Southwell lecture forty years ago at Leamington. Soon afterwards she became a Secularist, and during the rest of her life she was always active in promoting the cause. The funeral takes place at Manor Park Cemetery, Saturday, Nov. 1, at 4 o'clock.

PROFANE JOKES.

SCENE—Old beggar man at street-corner and unctuous-looking Christian. Old Beggar: "Please spare a copper—poor old man." Pious individual passing: "Well, here's a halfpenny, but I don't like giving indiscriminate charity. Still, I will console myself with the blessed text, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." Old Beggar: "Thanks, but there ain't been much lent to the Lord at this corner lately."

JOE: "Say, Jack, s'pose the Devil lost his tail, where would he go for a new 'un?" Jack: "How the Devil do I know? I'm not a Christy Minstrel corner-man, am I? I'll give it up." Joe: "Why, he'd go to the 'Cow and Snuffers' to be sure!" Jack: "Why the Devil would he go there?" Joe: "Because they retail bad spirits there!"

THEY say grace before meals at the house of Mr. Peterson. One day a little girl living in the neighborhood was invited to dinner, and the grace feature of the meal excited her curiosity. "What does 'Amen' mean?" asked the little stranger. "You don't know that?" replied one of the Peterson children. "Why, that means we can pitch into the grub!"

PRAYING FOR COURAGE.—During a big thunder-shower, little Willie, who slept upstairs alone, got scared and called his mother, who came up and asked him what he was frightened about. Willie admitted that the thunder was a little too much for a youngster that slept alone. "Well, if you are afraid," said his mother, "you should pray for courage." "Well, all right," said Willie, an idea coming into his head, "suppose you stay up here and pray while I go down-stairs and sleep with pa?" She didn't stay.

The following conversation was overheard upon a railway platform a few miles from Birmingham, the other day:—Friend (to Captain of Cricket Club): "Well, Tom, how have you got on to-day?" C. C. C.: "Oh, won easily. We played the Trinity—three in one and one in three—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—and licked them; and if Jesus Christ had been there we would have licked him too."

THERE is more theology and logic on tap in the brain of the small boy than in that of the dignified D.D., and it isn't every man who wears a seven and a quarter hat that gets the best of him. "The lions didn't like Daniel, did they?" asked "Shavey Head" of his well-posted papa. "Oh, yes, they did. The Lord made the lions like him, so they wouldn't hurt him." Well, when God makes me like anything I eat it, I do." "Yes, yes;

go away, child. He made the lions hate Daniel." "Then why didn't they bite him?"

IN his Sunday morning prayer a Wisconsin minister prayed the Lord that such of his congregation as were speculating in wheat might be brought to a realising sense of their iniquity by losing heavily. During the next week wheat dropped nine cents per bushel, and twenty-three members of the congregation had such cold feet that they couldn't stand still. The week after that there was a meeting of the congregation to see about the minister's salary, and the result of the meeting was to cut it down from 1500 dols. to 800 dols. As one of the kickers answered in explanation: "We had them Milwaukee chaps right by the short hair, and this feller had to jump in and request the Lord to knock us endways. If he wants more than 800 dols. a year, let him buy lottery tickets and pray for 'em to hit."

A WEDDING IN THE SKIES.—Not far from Gateshead, recently there was a wedding, in celebration of which cannons were fired. A little girl, six years of age, asked her grandmother what all the noise was about, and the old lady told her it was on account of a wedding. The next day there was thunder, and the little one asked her grandmother where it came from. She was told that it came from above, whereupon she exclaimed, "Aa suppose they've got a wedding up thor tee!" As Jesus, in the ascetic spirit of most religious "reformers," says there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage in heaven, the little Northumbrian must have been wrong in her supposition. But are there no bachelors and young maidens in heaven, and are these forbidden to fall in love with each other and marry? Are ardent lovers, separated by death, never allowed to hope for union in heaven?

THE CHAOS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.—We live in a time when the interest in religious thought, or in thought concerning religion, is diffused over an area unusually extensive, but also when the aspect of such thought is singularly multiform and confused. It defies all attempts at reducing to an unity, and recalls the Ovidian account of chaos. At every point there start into action a multitude of aimless or erratic forces crossing and jostling one another, and refusing not only to be governed, but even to be classified. Any attempt to group them, however slightly or however roughly, if not hopeless, is daring; but, as they act upon us all by attraction and repulsion, we are all concerned in knowing what we can of their nature and direction.—W. E. Gladstone, in *Contemporary Review*.

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Prisoner for Blasphemy. V. By G. W. Foote.
'98 in Wexford. By H.
Dwellings for Work-folk. By R. B. Holt.
Exclusion of Place-Men the Essence of Parliamentary Reform. By E. N. Wells.
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