

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub Editor--J. M. Wheeler.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 93.



THE FATAL APPLE.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”—GEN. III., 6.

UNITARIAN COWARDICE.

HEINE once, with bitter irony, described Alfred de Musset as a young man with “a promising past.” The description applies admirably to Unitarianism. This form of faith promised great things at one time. It censured some popular superstitions, and suffered bravely in the cause of religious freedom. Several of its professors went to gaol, and a few were martyred at the stake. Their courage, it is true, was rather passive than active. They endured rather than dared. They rather asked for toleration than demanded liberty. Yet their spirit was noble if not heroic, and they seemed to nurse the germs of a larger heresy and a grander freedom than they contemplated. They were always, too, more or less learned, for their dissent from orthodoxy was mainly justified by an appeal to scholarship; and this gave them an air of superiority to the swarm of Christian sects. In due course Unitarianism won a recognised position, and produced such distinguished men as Lardner and Priestley. Precisely there, however, its achievements ended. Opportunity only proved its sterility. With plenty of wealth, much learning and ability, and freedom from the grosser superstitions, it has remained stagnant for a whole century, and according to its own confession it is now perceptibly declining.

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Why is this? The answer is not difficult. Unitarianism was never anything more than a compromise. Darwin's grandfather called it “a feather-bed to catch a falling Christian.” It is the refuge of thoughtful timidity. Bold swimmers like a plunge into deep water; timid ones like to wade in from a bathing-machine. The heretic's bathing-machine is Unitarianism. How can such a system succeed with the masses, or with any men of strong character? Energetic minds, with leisure and aptitude for the full study of religious questions, turn in another direction; and the same may be said of unlearned sceptics, who cannot be guided by niceties of scholarship or subtleties of exegesis, but are obliged to view all questions in broad outline, and decide them by the laws of practical reason.

Unitarianism is a religious compromise, and it exhibits the genius of compromise. There is no longer scope for the passive courage it once displayed, and it has no active courage for fresh enterprises. Its watchword is “Rest and be thankful.” Supremely optimistic, it wonders what need there is of any reforms beyond those it offers, or what need of further freedom when every man has the right to be a Unitarian.

These remarks have been provoked by Dr. W. Blake Odgers' “Short Statement of the Existing Law of Blasphemy” drawn up for the Council of the British and

Foreign Unitarian Association. This document is one of the meanest productions we ever read, and the fact that it is the work of an able man makes it all the more contemptible. Dr. Odgers is a typical Unitarian. He plainly says that Unitarianism can be advocated with perfect safety; that the law is therefore in accordance with the "tolerant spirit of our age"; and that there is really no reason for Unitarians to be dissatisfied with it or to trouble about getting it altered. They are safe, and there is an end of the matter. Let Freethinkers look after themselves. The law is "perhaps not quite so clear" in *their* case, and they may stand in considerable danger. But this is a practical world, and what sensible man, especially what Unitarian, will care about other people's safety when his own is secure?

Dr. Odgers may, however, be found an unsafe guide. His statement that "Unitarianism never was illegal at Common Law" is certainly open to question, and he trusts too implicitly in Lord Coleridge's recent judgment. Justice North twice gave a different interpretation of the law; and Sir James Stephen, who is one of our highest authorities, and after Lord Coleridge the most eminent judge on the English bench, says that *any* denial of the truth of Christianity is blasphemy, and that "every bookseller who sells, every one who lends to his friend, a copy of Comte's *Positive Philosophy* or of Rénar's *Vie de Jésus*, commits a crime punishable with fine and imprisonment." No doubt Dr. Odgers is as nearly infallible as human frailty will permit, but his opinion cannot, for practical purposes, outweigh that of judges who have the power to enforce their judgments. If Justice Stephen ever sends a Unitarian to prison, it will be a very faint consolation to know that Dr. Odgers differs from his lordship.

Further, Lord Coleridge's view of the Law is not exactly as Dr. Odgers describes it. The Unitarian lawyer has read his lordship's Summing-up, but he has apparently not read my Defence. Lord Coleridge did indeed state that "if the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without a person being guilty of blasphemous libel." But what are the decencies of controversy? Lord Coleridge did not say; but he passed one remark which was very significant. I quoted in my Defence from the writings of Leslie Stephen, Dr. Maudsley, Lord Amberley, the Duke of Somerset, John and James Mill, Matthew Arnold, Shelley, Swinburne and other high-class heretics, to show that "blasphemy" abounded in expensive books, written by eminent authors, and issued by respectable publishers. With reference to some of these passages, Lord Coleridge said: "I confess, as I heard them, I had and have, a difficulty in distinguishing them from the alleged libels. They do appear to me to be open to the same charge, and on the same grounds, as Mr. Foote's writings." According to Lord Coleridge, then, some of the most eminent sceptics of the day are "blasphemers." What does Dr. Odgers say to this? Unless he *unsays* the language of his circular, he can only answer that as none of these eminent sceptics is a Unitarian he does not care a straw about them, and still holds to his statement that Unitarians are safe.

Well, in one sense they are safe, for they are respectable to the point of dullness, and their Freethought (Dr. Odgers farcically includes them as Freethinkers) is always couched in orthodox phraseology. But if Unitarianism could change its front, if it used the vernacular instead of circumlocutions, if its orators took Emerson's advice and spoke the language of the street, if its writers left their dull decorum and allowed their pens to curvet and prance, it would find danger enough for the stoutest stomach. But it will not do this. It prefers comfort and safety. Ignoble choice! Danger is the penalty of courage, but it is the road to glory. The coward enjoys ease, but he can never know the delights of valor. Not for him the fierce joy of battle or the glad exultance of victory. Unitarians may decline to fight for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, but the work will be done without them in the future as it has in the past. The Freethought which has dared and suffered imprisonment to teach heresy in plain language to plain people, has the courage to face danger, and perhaps the strength to achieve a final triumph.

G. W. FOOTE.

"Ah, Mr. Hobbleton, I hear that you have been called to the ministry."
"Well, I can hardly term it a call. They only offer me two hundred a year. Sort of a whisper you understand."

MATRO-PATER NOSTER.

In due season the disputants in the *Record* will have ended their contest over the "Mother of God," and we would suggest, as an equally edifying and profitable theme, "The Motherhood of God." This subject will open up a charming vista, ending in a maze of dialectic sinuosities. It will bear the charm of novelty to most people, and it will lead many devout minds to the discovery of womanly attributes—perhaps, considering the hoary antiquity of the divinity, we might say old-womanly traits—in the divine character. Lest our dear Christian readers, from proneness to condemn our utterances as frivolous or blasphemous, should turn aside from our suggestion, let us at once introduce to them a volume disclosing much biblical learning and patriotic lore, written by the Rev. A. Gurney, M.A., vicar of St. Barnabas, Pimlico, and entitled "The Vision of the Eucharist" (Kegan Paul and Co). In one of his poems there occur these lines (p. 8):

"Thine all-sustaining Eucharist
Thy Motherhood declares;"

and, anxious to vindicate an expression he thinks may be open to criticism, the reverend poet appends a long note, in which he formulates and enforces an argument in defence of his Muse's daring. From Genesis i. he proves God was mystically bisexual by showing that man was created in God's image, male and female, which "was very good." But some inconvenience having been found to at end this arrangement, God determined that the likeness of the gynecian characteristics of his hermaphroditicity should be preserved in a separate individual; so from Adam was extracted so much of him as was female, and that was amplified into Eve. The Rev. A. Gurney thinks this condition of things far from perfect, but is disposed to concede that it is better than the condition which it superseded, "because it may be necessary, if the distinction between the man and the woman is to be rightly apprehended upon which the maintenance of right relations between them depends, that they should be made to confront one another." It is true the Bishop of Ely dismisses contemptuously as a "Platonic myth" the doctrine that man and woman were originally united in one body; but this divergence of opinion is valuable as showing that there are two sides to the subject we propound for discussion. This teaching was, according to Mr. Gurney, enforced by Christ who, referring particularly to Genesis ii., 23, and generally to marriage (or as our author puts it, "the perfected sacramental embrace") said, "and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matt. xix., 5).

Upon evidence equally conclusive the manhood of Christ is shown to have been created male and female; and from his riven side flowed "his bride, the mother of all living," according to the Fathers, as rendered by Mr. Gurney and adopted by him. This "profound theological conclusion" is supported by various texts, e.g., James i., 18: "Of his own will he brought us forth" [*ἀπεκάλυξεν ἡμᾶς*], an indication of the operation of the divine motherhood; and Revelations i., 13, "girt about at the breasts [*μαστός* not *μαζός*] with a golden girdle," showing that the apocalyptic Christ showed outward and visible signs of his womanhood. Mr. F. Robertson's rendering of Galatians iii., 28, "there can be no male and female" as signifying "neither to the exclusion of the other" (Sermon xviii.) is also prayed in aid.

The bisexual character of Father and Son having been indubitably established, a similar difficulty with regard to the third person remains confronting us. What is the sex of the Holy Ghost, or has it sexes? In its ornithological manifestation was it cock or hen, or both? What say the Church's creeds, which are authoritative and have evidential value? That one commonly called the Nicene Creed, in the time of Pope Hadrian, 787, solemnly declared "the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father by the Son," which is corroborative of the scriptures as indicating a feminine principle existent in the god-head. But what is more to the point is, that the creed of the holy apostles, as first preserved by Eusebius Gallus and handed down to us through Pirminius, with equal solemnity declares that the Son "was *emailed* by the Holy Ghost." There we have evidence that the Early Fathers and high dignitaries of the Church considered the Holy Ghost capable of discharging maternal functions; and forasmuch as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge that the Elohim, in whose likeness bisexual humanity was created, was equally Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so are we forbidden to say that either hypostatic third of this divinity was less sexual than the others. *Ex necessitate*, therefore, the Holy Ghost is gynandrous; and, this believing, we have further reason for accepting the *Quicumque vult* Creed which calls "the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible."

In support of this contention, it were idle to quote relevant passages of Scripture, because we should but deprive the readers of the *Record* of the pleasure of searching for them. Most of our readers are familiar with them, and those who are not, will know from experience that the ingenuity of man has not yet devised a doctrine which eternal wisdom did not foresee, and therefore give inspired authority and refutation. Let us not lay the rude hand of inquiry on the Holy Book, but rather rejoice that as Christ would as a hen have gathered Jerusalem under his wings, so the Comforter divine, once a hen, may assume an even more attractive form when she comes to dispel our doubts, and wipe all tears from our eyes.

ABE.

ACID DROPS.

It is strange how quick some people will change their minds. A man in Vermont imagined he was inspired to kill Mr. Adams, a school-teacher. He called on the lady and acquainted her with his mission, whereupon she seized a club and knocked him down, and then broke nearly every bone in his body. He now entertains doubt as to the genuineness of the inspiration.

WILLIAM TYLER, a lay preacher of Southsea, has been sentenced to two months' imprisonment with hard labor for deserting his wife and then aspersing her character.

THE *Christian Herald* is fond of giving its readers sensational anecdotes with a religious "tag" clumsily appended. A man frightened or "spell-bound" by an immense black snake reminds the editor of the peril of parleying even for an instant with "that old serpent, the Devil." A desperate encounter with a bear "typifies the spiritual conflict," etc. A drowning man tightly gripping a rope teaches men to take a similar tight grip of Christ. A poisonous snake picked up as a whip is "an illustration of the dangers that beset Christians as they journey to heaven." "A bride at ninety years of age" is supposed to remind us of the bridegroom Christ. "A young lady frozen to death" teaches us that Christ will never leave us nor forsake us. A speech of Mr. Gladstone's on our national prospects brings in Daniel's sure and certain prophecies of misfortune; for "within the next ten years" we shall find that "Daniel's ten-horned beast and ten-toed image will be developed," and there will be "a time of trouble such as never was since." Evidently the art of religious tagging is not yet extinct.

THE *Christian Herald* tells us of a child's life being saved by prayer, and of a pious old lady being fed by a fox as Elijah was by ravens. She was snowed up in her hut and "a wild fox" came down the chimney. She "spoke to it kindly," and every day it brought her a hare or a rabbit. Miracles never cease until belief in them has disappeared.

JOHN STERTON of Lochee died suddenly while reading the Bible. Pious sensationals of the *Christian Herald* type will carefully avoid reporting this dreadful warning.

COLONEL SANDEMAN, in an address to the Perth Conservatives, said he believed that the moment the Church was disestablished Atheism would be rampant. He has evidently very little confidence in the power of religion when left to its own resources. Let up hope his opinion is correct. As he objects so much to an "Atheistical crown" perhaps he will help in disestablishing that after the Church has gone to the dogs through having to earn its own living, instead of fattening on legalised plunder.

THE Bethshan people have been building a hall on the faith principle. They set men to work and trusted in the Lord for their wages. "On one occasion a bill for bricks of 50*l.* was due on Friday. On the Thursday Miss Murray told the Lord he had to pay that bill. The same evening came 50*l.* by post." At another time 80*l.* was owing, and the saints "put it into the Lord's hands." Mrs. Boardman prayed, "Lord, don't send now in dribbets, send hundreds." These people talk to the Lord as familiarly as if he were their next-door neighbor. They'll toss him for a pint, next.

"JOHNNIE" ON "SOCIAL PURITY"—ANOTHER MARTYR.

SIR,—Papa was reading Miss Ellice Hopkins's address on "Social Purity" out of the *Glasgow Mail* to mamma, and he came to the bit, "be such men to us women as Jesus Christ was." I went for my Sunday-school ticket and gave pa the verse to read where Jesus says to his mamma, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" I said I thought Jesus was very naughty to speak to his mamma like that, and he smacked my ears and sent me to bed, saying I didn't understand. I wish I had had no father as well as Jesus; he could cheek his mother and get praised for it by nice ladies like Miss Hopkins. Just like you, sir, I've got punished for speaking the truth.—Yours truly, JOHNNIE.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL is willing to stand against Professor Bain as candidate for the Lord Rectorship of Aberdeen University. We venture to assert that such a disgraceful farce would be impossible in any other civilised country. Only a long acquaintance with Tory piety enables one to believe that Conservative students could invite a vulgar young aristocrat like Lord Churchill to contest such an honor against a scholar and thinker like Professor Bain.

THE *Rock* has fallen on the Bishop of Lichfield. But his lordship says that the paragraph is "an entire perversion of all the facts." The *Rock*, on the other hand, maintains that its remarks were "perfectly true." Well, let them squabble to their heart's content. If religious people didn't quarrel with each other, Atheists would now be roasting at Smithfield.

THE Bishop, it seems, refused to confirm several candidates unless they promised to attend a particular church. Very tyrannical, no doubt, to those who trouble about such things,

but why the devil do people stand all this nonsense? Why don't they send the bishops to Jericho, bag and baggage?

THE *Rock* says that "Some of the bishops and clergy never lose an opportunity of condemning in a very peremptory manner the whole of the religious newspaper press without any exception," for the "simplest of all reasons," namely, that the religious press criticises their actions. Hence, "When in Congress assembled they especially thunder forth their anathemas against religious newspapers." Pulpit versus the religious press is an edifying spectacle, but the more wrath Christians spend on each other the less they will have left for us.

THE summonses taken out by the Salvation Army at Truro against disturbers have been dismissed. Salvationists pride themselves on breaking the law whenever it suits their purpose, on the plea that they are obeying a higher law. But they want the law enforced on others. King Jesus is above the law and can use it or break it as he pleases.

Every *Englishman's French Journal* gives among its lessons an anecdote of a curate at Newcastle, who was teaching the catechism to some children and made a vivid picture of hell as an immense burning fiery furnace. One of the children, the daughter of a coal merchant, went up to him after the lesson and asked, "Could you by your recommendation get papa the contract for coals?"

HERR STOCKER, the Prussian Court chaplain who encouraged the persecution of the Jews, now prays for their conversion. The German Jews retaliate by praying in their synagogues that Jahveh will turn the heart of Herr Stocker and the rest of his chosen people's enemies. We shall watch with interest the result of this praying match. The chosen race must "cry aloud and spare not," if they want to wake old Jahveh up; for it has gone badly with them since he made over the business to his son and his son's mother.

A SCHOOLMASTER gives the following version of the Apostles' Creed as the production of a boy twelve years old, who was taken at random from the second class of a National school, where he had been taught for four years:—"I believe in God the all mighty maker of Heaven who was conserved by the holy Gost born of the vuirgen marry soffed under pashed plited was justified and beded he descended into hell the third day he rose again from the ded he descended into Heaven setted at the right hand of God the father all might maker of Heaven and earth the see and all that in them is and rested upon the Seventh day and Howard it."

ACCORDING to an article in the *Theosophist*, the Bible must be read in its esoteric sense—that is, in its inner or secret meaning. It then "contains great truths if you only know where to look for them." The *Theosophist* says: "Many of the Bible stories are purposely made absurd, so that no one should take them in their literal sense. We must try to understand their esoteric meaning, and we shall then find many important truths hidden in them." The *Calcutta Anti-Christian* wants to know the esoteric meaning of the tale of Lot's wife, of Onan, and of other biblical obscenities, where the bestiality is evident, but the beautiful moral lesson is only conspicuous by its absence.

THE Pope refuses to acknowledge the French divorce law. A divorced person marrying a second time will be treated by the Church as an adulterer and the children as bastards. This is how Christianity teaches respect for the law and just consideration for individuals. The Church inculcates and glorifies the immorality of celibacy as a splendid virtue incumbent on all priestly servants of Christ. It prohibits the marriage of cousins as a dreadful sin unless a dispensation has been obtained—and paid for, on which terms rich uncles and nieces also are permitted to marry with the blessings of the Church.

THE Bishop of Peterborough tells the shoemakers of Northampton that it is "just because most people are poor creatures that the Gospel is suited to their needs in contrast to the world's hard doctrine of survival of the fittest, which meant the survival of the strongest." No one can surpass an inspired bishop in the utterance of twaddle and the distortion of fact or theory. *Fittest* is not *strongest*, as his lordship may perceive by turning to any dictionary. Mastodons were much stronger than man, but they have died out, while man remains. Man is much stronger than woman, wherefore man should survive and woman perish, if the bishop's perversion of the Darwinian theory were true. The "world's" hard doctrine of the survival of the fittest, is *God's* hard decision, *God's* cruel will, if the episcopal God exists; and it is absurd to make man responsible for it.

THE Rev. J. Bradney March, of Lloyd House, near Wolverhampton, has been ordered to pay 5*s.* a week for the support of the illegitimate child of his servant.

A SUDDEN death occurred in the Wesleyan Chapel, Ellesmere, on Sunday evening. At the close of the service and during the prayer-meeting Mrs. Ann Ralphs, whilst engaged in prayer, suddenly laid her hand upon a seat before her, and, to the con-

sternation of those present, died almost immediately. At the inquest a verdict of "Died by the Visitation of God" was returned. No proceedings will be taken, as the address of the murderous visitor is unknown.

MR. F. GOULDING, 10 Emma Terrace, Wanstead Flats, Leytonstone, who has often appeared in our correspondence column as the Atheist Blacksmith, is in danger of spending twenty-one days in Holloway Gaol. Having refused to subject his children to vaccination, he was summoned and fined 19s. 6d. The police invaded his house on October 24 and seized several pounds' worth of furniture, which, however, in a forced sale did not apparently realise the full amount of the fine. He was fined again on October 31 on three separate summonses, and he has now to pay £3 12s. to the Queen or else work it out in one of her national workshops, where he will live mostly on bread and water and spend his time in lacerating his fingers with oakum. We sympathise deeply with Mr. Goulding, and we shall be happy to subscribe half a guinea to his expenses if our readers will make up the balance.

THE Bishops of London and Bedford have issued a joint pastoral letter calling for a mission in the eastern part of London during this month. The West-enders are to wait for their special offer of Salvation till next February. The bishops describe the mission as an "effort to help the people of this great city to serve God better." Only when bishops say God they mean the Church, and when they say the Church they mean themselves.

THE bishops profess themselves "very anxious the mission should not be marked by an undue excitement." That is, they desire the success of the Salvationists without the opprobrium of using their methods. But how can the issues of religion, which, according to the bishops, mean either everlasting happiness or eternal torment, be put before men, women and children without occasioning excitement? Only by omitting its dogmas; taking out the brimstone and leaving nothing but a weak decoction of treacle and water.

A TABLE of statistics concerning London churches has been published in the *Church Review*. It fully shows that the more rotten the Church gets within the more paint it puts outside. Ritualism is shown to be largely on the increase, and additional attractions are offered to induce Church attendance. For instance, whereas in 1870 there were only 65 Established Churches in London with free seats, now there are 341. There were in that year 88 with paid choirs, now there are 297. Gregorian chants and other musical attractions are also greatly on the increase.

THE vicar of Grimsby told the Grimsby Artillery volunteers to fight against two enemies—"infidelity and immorality." That's it! Whoever rejects the nonsense of the churches is immoral, or at least is branded so by the Christian charity that "thinketh no evil."

AT a meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the vicar of Huddersfield pointed out "how wars and desolations, in God's providence, had been the means of increasing the circulation of the Bible." Just so; and he might have pointed out how the circulation of the Bible had been the means of increasing wars and desolations.

"My Comforter and other Religious Poems" is just published. We shall see next *My Necktie*, or *My Shirt Collar*, or *My Overcoat*. But perhaps *My Comforter* means an ancient article made out of the thin fleec of a Levantine lamb.

HERE is scholarship and logic for you. Dr. Ellicott's new *Commentary* says that *rib* in the Adam and Eve story may mean *flank or side*; and thus we see that woman was not made out of one of man's ribs, but she is "one side of man." If this disgusting hypocrisy left us in the humor for such things, we might observe that the only side of Adam that Eve got on was his blind side.

DR. PARKER has resolved to begin the work of his life in January—an exposition of the Bible in twenty-five volumes. Good God! must the world suffer this infliction? Locke said that God had not made man and left it to Aristotle to make him think; but it appears that God has given us a Bible to be saved or damned by, and left it to Dr. Parker to tell us what it means. And the obscurity must be very great if so many volumes of explanation are required.

EVAN BRYANT, a Chinese missionary, complains that Buddhism and Confucianism have nothing to offer children and infants. We agree with him that Christianity is not open to the same complaint. It is just exactly fit for juveniles.

THE Rev. C. Leach has the audacity to tell the Birmingham people that Jesus Christ "knocked off the fetters of the slave, and laid the foundations of your noble asylums, hospitals, orphanages and almshouses." Perhaps Mr. Leach will kindly explain when Jesus Christ did these things. He has been dead over eighteen centuries, and the fetters were knocked off the slave within the memory of men now living.

WE regret to notice how some colonial Freethinkers coquette with "spiritism." Are they aware that every noted medium who has come to these shores has been completely exposed? Such "frauds" as Miss Corner or Miss Wood, when their reputation is soiled at home, have only to go abroad to find a fresh harvest of dupes. Truly, as Heine said, the fool crop is perennial.

Light, the spiritist organ, declares: "We want a Nicodemus Society, limited to those who can keep a perilous secret. Probably it was a mistake ever to make the fact of spiritual manifestations public. They should have been kept as secret as Freemasonry, or the Egyptian or Eleusinian mysteries. Séances should have been protected by oaths, pass-words, and grips. Had Spiritualism been kept mysterious, select, exclusive, the probability is that it would have made much greater progress than it really has under this discouraging publicity." Yes, publicity has been found very discouraging indeed to these lovers of the dark.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* gives an account of the Christian persecution of Christians at Very Little Thurlow, as the *South Wales Daily News* calls it. The village is described as a "demoralised place." There are two churches with wealthy vicars, but the villagers do not care to go to church and they do not dare to go to chapel. They are "lapsing into a kind of apathetic infidelity." Mr. Aiken, the dissenting minister, thus narrates one case which is typical of the pressure exercised:—"I happened to call on a poor widow, who lives and keeps her child by her needle. She had been to chapel. Next time I called she told me that the wife of the vicar of Little Thurlow (Rev. C. Crick) had seen me go into the cottage. She called to ask who I was, and, with hot indignation, asked how the woman dared either to let me inside her door or to enter the dissenting chapel, adding that the vicar was so angry that if such things happened again she and her child would be turned into the street, the cottage, like many others in the village, being the vicar's property. *She has never entered the chapel since.*" If Christians act thus towards other Christians, what must Freethinkers expect?

THE *People* says:—"We have come to the conclusion that Eve was rather a bad lot. It will have been remarked how fond women are, when in a rage, of saying waspishly, 'I don't care.' Well, Mrs. A. first originated this phrase—and not very mildly either. When they were being turned out of the Garden, Adam said, 'Confound you, why didn't you leave that pippin alone? I gave you plenty of plums and half a water-melon.' This piteous speech rather touched the angel, and he was about to pass them in again with a caution, when Adam cried, 'Nice thing to be evicted like this!' 'I don't care A-dam,' said Eve; and that profanity settled it.—*Very revised edition of the Pentateuch.*"

THE notions of the next world current among most people are curious in the extreme. You will see upon the tombstone of a man whose noblest thoughts in life have been engrossed by tallow, the confident statement that he is now singing hosannas among the seraph choir, and making melodies of praise upon the slide-trombone. Here is a verse from an elegy on an old lady. The elegy is published in the *Protestant Standard*:—

"There now she praises God on high
With harp and crown so bright,
Her feet no more can never (*sic*) stray,
Her soul is washed so white."

Just think! We have no doubt the old lady was all that fancy could paint, but think of her with a harp and crown! We can imagine the dear old party throwing the crown at the head of the attendant angel because there were not strings to it. With regard to the soul being "washed so white," we have nothing to say, except this: that, judging by what is generally stated about the washing of souls, the angels, instead of being pictured with harps and hautboys, should be represented with washing-boards and bars of yellow soap.—*Sydney Bulletin.*

PRIMATE BARRY speaks unctuously of the *collective* voice of the Church. How well we know that voice, and the sanctified look of the humbug who waltzes around with the plate!—*Ibid.*

THE *Protestant Standard* came out an issue or two ago in a pink wrapper. We suppose this was to remind its readers of Hell. The wrapper was not necessary.—*Ibid.*

HOAXING AN EDITOR.—Some years ago, when the subject of Ritualism was at fever heat, a contemporary opened its columns for the aggrieved parishioners to ventilate their wrongs. Among the letters received by the editor was the following:—"In our parish church last Sunday, being Palm Sunday, the vicar had the audacity to preach with a crown on his head, and palms in his hands. When will these monstrous innovations cease?" The audacity of the hoax was not discovered until the letter appeared in print, and then it was observed that the preacher could not perform his duties without the usual appendages *given him by nature.*

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Nov. 9, Alexandra Hall, Hope Street, Sherlock Street, Birmingham:—At 11, "Prison Thoughts on the Bible;" at 3, "Sky-Pilots;" at 7, "Will Christ Save Us?"

November 16, Nottingham; 17, Leicester; 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.

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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.

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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.—B. Le Gros, H. Wootton, T. Langford.

F. PYALL.—Thanks for "goak." Your reading of the proverb is the correct one.

W. C. S.—Thanks for cutting. Spurgeon's anecdote about Providence appeared in a better form in the *Freethinker*, Nov. 5, 1882; p. 348.

W. WRIGHTON.—Thanks for cuttings. Your suggestion is good, and may be carried out some day.

H. MEESON.—We regret to hear you have been persecuted during illness. But are you not over-sensitive and excitable?

J. ROBSON.—Thanks. It is not worth while advertising the paper.

W. L. H.—Communicate with Mr. Forder, secretary of the N. S. S.

W. LOWDON (Doncaster).—Try W. Woods, newsagent, Cleveland Street, or A. Hinchcliffe, St. Sepulchre's Gate.

I. HARGREAVES.—Rev. vii., 1, speaks of four angels standing on four corners of the earth. "Parallax" has written a book to prove the earth is flat because the Bible says so. Our pamphlets on "The Ten Plagues," "The Wandering Jews" and "God's Thieves in Canaan" will suit your friend.

J. SMITH reports making many converts in the Kingsland Road districts. The sketch is amusing, but hardly suitable.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—Glad to hear that the Bristol Secularists hope soon to be in a good working condition. Mr. Foote is in good health. He never authorised the statement that he would oppose Sir William Harcourt. It would be pleasant to teach that fat knight a lesson, but it would be worse than useless to oppose him if he stood for a borough where the Radical vote is very weak. No doubt the Tories would give him two votes for every Radical vote he lost in the contest. At the same time, if the next general elections are preceded by the Franchise and the Redistribution Bills, more than one Freethinker is likely to contest a seat.—Pleased to hear that you think *Progress* "the best in the market at the price."

EURASEZ L'INFAME.—Thanks for the suggestion. It may be useful.

A LOVER OF FREETHOUGHT.—The passage, "I came not to send peace, but a sword," occurs in Matthew x., 34.

F. J. BOORMAN.—The pious Christian who declared his opinion that Freethinkers should be pole-axed, would be a nice man for a next-door neighbor. We pity his poor wife if she has any independence of mind.

G. PAYNE.—Thanks for all you have done and are doing for us and the cause in Manchester.

M. PLACKITT.—Political matter is best sent to the *National Reformer*.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Sydney Bulletin—Echo—Dundee Evening Telegraph—West Briton—Present Day—Weston-super-Mare Gazette—Truthseeker—Liberty—Western Daily Mercury—Portsmouth Evening News—Swindon Advertiser—Manchester Examiner—Women's Suffrage Journal—Liberator—Gloucester Times—Philosophic Inquirer (Madras)—Kilmarnock Standard—Universe (Berhampur, Bengal)—Hants Observer.

EDITORIAL.

Our new Christmas Number is on the stocks, and will be ready for launching in a fortnight or so. We are trying to make her trim from kelson to topmast, and we hope she will look a gallant craft when she swims on the tide. If the enemy attack her, they will find that her commander and his crew know how to work their guns.

SUGAR PLUMS.

BURNLEY gave Mr. Foote a hearty welcome last Sunday. The incessant rain prevented many Freethinkers from journeying in from the surrounding towns and villages, but a goodly number tramped through the wet, some as far as six or eight miles. Several came long distances by rail, one travelling from Oldham, a distance of over thirty miles. The audiences throughout the day were large and enthusiastic; and there would have been a

great crush in the afternoon and evening if the Lord had gone in for a little less liquidation.

MR. FOOTE has in the press, and will publish next week, a new edition of two of his pamphlets that have run out of print—"Atheism and Morality" and "The Folly of Prayer." Each pamphlet will contain a new Introduction of considerable length, and will be published at the low price of one penny.

WE have just added another penny pamphlet to the Ingersoll literature. It is called "The Great Mistake," and gives the written answers of the Colonel to written questions on the various points in dispute between himself and Christians. It is needless to say the replies are full of racy remarks. Some delightful anecdotes of his clerical opponents are given.

IT has been often asserted by those whose wish is father to the thought that Colonel Ingersoll is about to give up lecturing for Freethought. According to the *Truthseeker*, the gallant and witty Colonel has delivered no less than sixty-four lectures within the last three months. He was warmly received by the people everywhere.

COLONEL INGERSOLL says he has heard that of all the students at Harvard University only nine are preparing for the ministry.

WE are pleased to see that two correspondents in the *West Briton* take up the cause of the "Infidel," and point out that spiteful abuse is no argument.

MR. LEWIS MORRIS, the poet, has for a long time taken an active part in various educational movements in his native land, and his name is at the present time officially connected with each of the three Welsh University Colleges. He is now seeking to improve those institutions by making provision for giving women a share in the government, and for excluding ministers of religion from the post of principal. We wish Mr. Morris all success in his enlightened efforts on behalf of the minister-ridden principality.

WE have received No. 1 of a new Indian monthly journal of Freethought and science, entitled the *Universe*, and dated September, (Anno Scientiæ) 284. It is edited by Kedarnath Basu, and is likely to be of service in opposing the missionaries.

THE latest Religious Encyclopædia, that edited by Dr. Schaff and published at New York, contains a very unfair article on Thomas Paine, in which the disparaging remarks of Leslie Stephen and other writers are given. Nevertheless, it affords no countenance to the Christian lie of Paine having recanted, and corrects the frequent Christian mistake that he was an Atheist. It says: "In his will he speaks of his reposing confidence in his creator—God, and in no other being; for I know no other, nor believe in any other." It acknowledges: "If Paine's writings had been only political he would be entitled to honor as a bold and vigorous friend of human liberty." But is he not entitled to greater honor, in that he attacked both political and religious superstition?

WE are delighted to find that at the recent elections in Manchester the three candidates who spoke most emphatically against our literature being excluded from the Manchester Free Libraries, have all been returned. One of them, Mr. Southern, secured a heavy majority of nearly 700. His opponent was backed by a Ladies Committee, who issued a handbill denouncing his tolerance of the "wicked and demoralising publications of the Secularist Society." The *Examiner* publishes further correspondence on the subject, our own side being supported with great tact and ability.

THE SAFE SIDE.

ONE of the most contemptible of Christian arguments is also one of the commonest. At any rate, say they, to be a Christian is to be on the safe side. We can lose nothing, but have everything to gain by crediting the gospel. This plea is usually put forward, not as an excuse for believing, for the lives of Christians prove they no more really believe the gospel than I do, but as an excuse for not taking the trouble to examine into its evidences.

If Christians really believed the words of Jesus that "every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife, or children or lands for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold," they might think themselves on the safe side. But only fools or worse would forsake one father or mother or wife for the sake of a hundredfold in kingdom-come.

Many eminent Christians advocate this doctrine of expediency; for instance, Paley, who united the craft of a barrister with the conscience of a bishop, defines virtue as "doing good in obedience to the will of God and for the sake of everlasting happiness." According to this, it is impos-

sible to be virtuous unless we take the will of God as our rule and everlasting happiness as our motive. The benevolence, fortitude and humanity of a Buddhist or a Secularist is simply vice in disguise. Who would not rather say with Carlyle ("Past and Present," bk. iii., ch. 15): "Thy future fate, while thou makest it the chief question, seems to me extremely questionable"? If we find a man who needs the fear of being burned in hell fire or the hope of eternal bliss in heaven to keep him in the honest path, we had better look after our pockets. Of any such hope or fear one may say, as Bacon said of the fear of death, that there is no motive which is not able to overcome it. To make virtue consist in obedience to an irresponsible person for the exclusive benefit of one's own personality, is to destroy it. To inculcate, as the motive for virtue, fancies which make this present life seem paltry, and which pamper a morbid appetite for the inscrutable, is to weaken the stimulus to that earthly exertion which alone gives worth to life.

The theological doctrine is that a cosy corner in the celestial mansions can be obtained by an imputed righteousness, if only we believe that God the Son has died to save us from the wrath of God the Father. A very nice arrangement for those who desire, not escape from wrong-doing, but from its supposed post-mortal consequences. What sinner could refuse to make his salvation sure on such free-and-easy terms? No wonder it is found attractive to the idle, the ignorant and the vicious. But if there is a just God, is it so safe to expect salvation from our sins by laying them on an innocent person whose death we declare he required? If God's justice differs from ours, he may after all damn us for disbelieving in Mahomet, and so we shall lose both the pleasant dreams of Mahomet's Paradise in this world and be eternally punished for it in the next.

Looked at from a Secular standpoint, Christianity is certainly not the safe side. Paul declared that if in this life only he had hope, he would be of all men most miserable. It has ever been so to the true believer. To be wise, learned, rich, peaceful or happy, was to him rather a snare and a peril than an advantage. The object of the Christian is not how to live, but how to gain "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The entire theory of the Church is opposed to any scheme for raising the earthly condition of men, and in practice it has consistently and persistently opposed all melioration of human lot. Is it then no loss that the time, talent, wealth and devotion that might have been given to the service of a real suffering humanity, has been wasted on an ideal god, who cannot need our services? Is it no loss that religious strife has made the pages of history red with the records of its progress; that tears and blood, anxieties as to self and dissensions with others, have followed its path? Is it nothing that we support a hundred thousand black-coated parasites who know no more of heaven or hell than the veriest idiot; that so much time is wasted listening to their preaching which might be devoted to the study of nature; that the working man's day of leisure is made one of gloom instead of gladness, in order that other attractions shall not compete with the prosy sermons of the aforesaid parasites?

To those who live by religion it may in a sense be the safe side, but it is assuredly not so for those who pay for it. Carlyle says ("Life of Sterling," chap. vii.): "What can it profit any mortal to adopt locutions and imaginations which do not correspond to fact; which no sane mortal can deliberately adopt in his soul as true; which the most orthodox of mortals can only, and this after infinitely essentially-impious effort to put out the eyes of his mind, persuade himself to 'believe that he believes.'" Doubt is better than intellectual death. Credulity encourages lying. In his noble essay on the "Ethics of Belief," Professor Clifford well says that "The danger to society is not merely that it should believe wrong things, though that is great enough; but that it should become credulous, and lose the habit of testing things and inquiring into them; for then it must sink back into savagery. If a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down or pushes away any doubt which arises about it in his own mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call it in question or discuss it, and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it, the life of that man is one long sin against mankind." The only safe side for

a man is that to which he is directed by his own reason, when his mind is open to look for truth in all directions.

J. M. WHEELER.

ARE WE INFIDELS?

THE *Christian Commonwealth* (which in its determination to be second to none as a religious journal has just enlarged its pages) evidently thinks that we ought to be called Infidels in spite of our protest to the contrary. It says:—

"We notice that a writer in the *Freethinker* objects to our calling a spade a spade. He objects to the term infidel, as applied to his brethren. As we wish to always treat everyone fairly, we at once went to our most approved Lexicon, and we found the following as the definition of *infidel*:—'One who is without faith; hence, a disbeliever; a Freethinker; especially one who disbelieves in Christ, or the divine origin and authority of Christianity.' Now, if this definition does the writers in the *Freethinker* injustice, we shall be glad to know it. Are we to understand that modern *Freethinkers* are not opposed to Christianity and do believe in Christ? It has always been difficult to determine just what infidels do believe, and now, if we are to be kept in doubt as to what they do not believe, we shall have to give up all hope of being able to know anything about them."

Before proceeding to answer this paragraph we desire to acknowledge the comparative courtesy and desire for fair play it exhibits, such qualities being, we regret to say, very rarely displayed in Christian speech and Christian action dealing with so-called "Infidels."

We accept the definition given as fairly typical of the meaning or meanings usually associated rightly or wrongly, with the word *infidel*. Some dictionaries define the word more favorably for our contention, others less. But dictionaries do not decide the matter. Dictionaries represent the temporary verdict of the majority: and majorities are not always right. The majority—and consequently the dictionaries of the majority if they had any—once decided that Christians were the Atheists because they rejected the gods. A large majority of mankind would probably still decide that Christians were infidels. Roman Catholics describe Protestant countries as "infidel parts."

The temporary and local use or abuse of a word does not settle its true meaning and rightful application. Fact, reason, and argument must do this. The Mohammedans, or "true believers," as they, like Christians, consider themselves, call all Christians *gours*,* that is *infidels*, and the same word reappears in the name given to the South African *Kaffirs*. The Christians reciprocate the compliment, and from the time of the Crusades have termed the followers of the Crescent "the Infidels." Are both sides right? Surely it is not wise, or just or courteous to stigmatise each other by a term of abuse which begs the whole question at issue. Similarly the Secularist and the Christian ought not to regard each other as infidels unless by personal disregard of the moral law, of justice, humanity, honesty and truth, either of them has shown himself destitute of honor, conscience, integrity, loyalty to his fellows and the sense of right and duty. Such qualities as these are human attributes common to men of all religions and of none. They are the true faith, the moral faith, the social and brotherly loyalty and faithfulness of mankind at large. We believe in them, and we oppose Christianity because we believe that it misdirects them into channels of actual or potential mischief. They represent the true meaning—the human and universal meaning, which is far more important than the Christianised meaning—of the Latin word *fides*, which primarily and fundamentally signifies *human* faith, loyalty, integrity, honor, and not *theological* faith or belief. *Bona fides* means honesty, genuineness, sincerity—not Christian piety. Such expressions as the *fidei defensor* of our coins only illustrate the artificial and technical meaning which theologians have endeavored to attach to a good old word representing a sound idea and a wide-reaching virtue, the king of virtues in fact, and the one thing needful without which it were indeed better for a man that he had never been born.

It is from the Latin word *fides*, faith, that our word "infidel" is derived, the prefix *in* signifying *not*. Its English counterpart or synonym is the word "unfaithful." Our Latin dictionary defines *infidelis*, the exact Latin original of our "infidel," as meaning "unfaithful, treacherous, deceitful," while *infidelitas* is simply "unfaithfulness"—not heresy, or difference of religious opinion. The human meaning is adhered to. The theological perversion is ignored. This is exactly what we claim. If sectaries—and Christians in their "numerical defeat" over the world are but one section of many—prefer the perversion of the word-symbol of a virtue and attach a particular sense to it for their own purposes, they must not expect others to accept a name which libels them, in direct defiance of their wishes and protestations, as enemies of the real virtue. Many an Atheist lives a noble life of *fidelity* to wife and comrades, of *fidelity* to his own convictions and virtuous impulses, of *fidelity* to truth and duty, of *fidelity* to his party, to his country and to the cause of humanity at large. To a Christian all this *fidelity*, the grand human *fidelity* of a life-time and of the ages, becomes *infidelity* if the good father, the wise patriot, the able reformer, does not believe in Christ. Infidelity in love, honor, patriotism, politics, does not constitute

* The usual dictionary spelling, *giaour*, derived through Italian neighbors of the Turk and giving the idea of a soft *g*, is ridiculous.

a man an "infidel" in Christian eyes. Only theological disbelief, only "infidelity" arising from fidelity to truth and scientific fact, is to count as infidelity. Other forms of fidelity or infidelity are to be quietly shelved so that the whole moral discredit of the word "infidel" may if possible demolish an opponent of the orthodox mythology.

The miner who risks his life for his fellows entombed in the cruel rock—the locomotive driver who shrivels in the fierce flame but will not abandon the guidance of his engine and the lives of the passengers committed to his care—the man or the woman who, with a heroism still more valuable because more widely and permanently useful, faces social martyrdom in order to teach great truths and hated heresies on which depend man's only real demonstrable salvation, his salvation from misery and sin—are these unfaithful, disloyal, *infidel*, to their fellows because they work for love of man whom they have seen instead of love of God whom they have not? Are they faithless traitors because they do good from innate love of virtue instead of fear of hell? Only a Christian who blinds himself to fact and exaggerates a chapel into a universe—only a Christian who believes, as the Church of England article teaches, that all good deeds are sins unless they spring from belief in Christ—can disgrace himself and blaspheme against the human conscience within him by answering such questions as these in the affirmative.

If we do not believe as Christians believe, neither do Christians believe as we do. If we are infidels to Christians, Christians are equally infidels to us. The mutual insult settles nothing.

Perhaps it will be said that we ought not to trouble about a Christian epithet. We are used to it, as the eels are to being skinned. It amuses the Christians and doesn't hurt us, and the word is used only in its Pickwickian sense. But it is not so. The word is the sign and symbol and outward justification of persecution which ruins our lives or distorts our careers, embitters our thought, stigmatises and outlaws our friends for outspoken honesty, imprisons our lecturers, and robs mothers of their children and boroughs of their political rights. We cannot say it is only their fun. We see too clearly and feel too deeply that it is only their malice or their thoughtlessness. We hope that with many Christians it is only the latter, and this hope receives some support from the fact that the *Christian Commonwealth* thinks so well of one grand old "infidel," Thomas Carlyle, that it has given a series of extracts from his writings for the instruction of its Christian readers. It also gives passages from Harriet Martineau's works, and speaks approvingly of the call to "Duty" which another eminent "infidel," Professor Tyndall, "founded so clearly in his Birkbeck oration."

The *Christian Commonwealth* is quite in error in saying that we object to a spade being called a spade. On the contrary our contention is that a spade ought to be called a spade and not a treacherous implement, especially if the spade in question has, as in the case under consideration, human susceptibilities. We are Secularists, Freethinkers, Atheists, Agnostics, Materialists, and some of our friends are Positivists, Deists, Pantheists, Unitarians, Transcendentalists, and so forth. Let Christians describe us by these legitimate and acknowledged terms, and not by a word which asserts that we are destitute of faith, of loyalty, honor, sincerity, truth. We are *not* traitors to humanity. We are *not* faithless to our fellows. We hope and trust that we are the very reverse of infidel to our brethren and to the great principles of truth, justice, duty and love, on which their happiness depends. It is from fidelity to conscience and reason and knowledge—not infidelity—that we attack the Christian myth just as we should attack idolatry, Romanism, Mohomedanism, fetishism, Mormonism, or any other powerful delusion that blinded men to great natural truths, and prevented them from travelling freely and intelligently along the path of progress.

Freethinkers reject revelation. They reject Christianity and Christ. But they do not reject such moral teachings as have been associated, too often in a woefully imperfect or confused or exaggerated form, with the Christian superstition. They believe in practical integrity, and in doing good, especially by opening people's eyes to gigantic blunders and directing the social energies along true paths of reform. A list of the moral virtues and of the social and political principles in which Freethinkers ardently believe with a consensus of opinion more united than is the consensus of doctrinal opinion among Christian sects, would be too long to enter upon now; but we will send the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth* a few copies of *The Atheists' Creed* to accompany this article and to indicate, however slightly and poorly, the spirit and ideal of Atheistic aspiration.

In a paragraph of later date our contemporary says:—

"We fear that we shall not be able to please our infidel contemporaries. If we scold them they are mad, and if we pray for them they declare that is the worst thing we can do for them. We certainly have no wish to harm them, and if they will just tell us what will make them happy, we will give it careful consideration. But may it not be that infidels are like infidelity, wholly illogical, and therefore always hard to please? It is very difficult to satisfy a person who does not know what he wants."

But we know very well what we want of our Christian brethren; for our wants may be summed up in one word—justice. There are laws [which treat the very expression of our opinions as a crime—laws which rob us of our rights as parents, as citizens, as men—laws which compel us to pay for the support of a religion we detest—laws which hamper us, cripple us, ruin us in our careers and businesses. We want the Christian to abolish these

barbarous Christian laws, and also to judge us fairly on our merits and demerits independently of the prejudice and falsehood we so often meet with from Christian believers. We hope the *Christian Commonwealth*, feeling its share of the responsibility for maintaining cruel and unjust laws, will now energetically endeavor to persuade Christians to grant us justice and equality before the law and fair unprejudiced consideration and judgment before the bar of private opinion.

W. P. BALL.

REVIEWS.

Our Old Nobility. By HOWARD EVANS. Second Edition. Henry Vickers, London.—This capital book reappears very opportunely. It has been out of print for some time, and is now republished at a low price (one shilling) which puts it within the reach of the general public. The author and his publisher deserve the best thanks of all true Radicals. They have given the people an opportunity of learning the truth about those great landed families who have for centuries "robbed and bamboozled the people," as Cobden said, and who are still the chief obstacle to political and social progress.

The Dying Faith. By "LARA." Stewart and Co.—This essay has been reprinted from the *Secular Review*, and it certainly deserved to be published in a separate form. It is a powerful impeachment of Christianity, and it abounds with passages of eloquent declamation. Sometimes, however, the style is rather hectic, and we sigh for a judicious mixture of light and shade to vary the monotony of such bold masses of color. "Lara" wields a powerful pen, but he would be a more effective writer if he tamed his natural exuberance by a frequent study of, say Voltaire and Bolingbroke—the one for *finesse* and the other for urbanity.

To-Day (November). The Modern Press.—The Socialist magazine is admirable in almost everything but its economics. G. B. Shaw continues his "Unsocial Socialist," which we fancy will be well worth reading in a complete form. F. L. Lehmann, in writing on "Pessimism, Positivism and Socialism" (a strange concatenation), hazards the original opinion that Atheists are "in reality nothing but a Christian sect." J. Carruthers gives a view of "The Industrial Mechanism of a Socialist Society," which, with the usual confidence of Utopists, he is certain could be perfectly adopted in six months. S. Oliver writes thoughtfully on "Mill and Socialism," with a pleasing lack of the impertinent disrespect his colleagues so frequently show towards that great thinker. The Rev. G. S. Reaney defends Christian Socialism, in which Jesus Christ is to supersede Herbert Spencer as teacher, the writer's political and historical accuracy being well exemplified in the statements that Thomas Cooper is "one of the great leaders of the people" and that Calvinism is "aristocratic." Edward Aveling contributes a minute criticism of Wilson Barrett's Hamlet; and there is a really fine translation by Ernest Jones of a poem of Freiligrath on "Revolution."

THE DYING SCEPTIC.

SLOWLY the shadows deepen round me;
The golden day of my life is past;
Death in his icy chains has bound me;
Rest from labor comes at last!
Yet why have I need to look to heaven
Why should I seek for comfort there?
For what should I cry to be forgiven
And whimper a coward's selfish prayer?
Nay, tell me not that a curse hangs o'er me,
Nor seek by your threats to make me fawn,
For e'en with the glare of your hell before me
I smile with a dying sceptic's scorn!

Where are the terrors you said would haunt me?
Where are your leering demons grim?
The curses with which you mock and taunt me
I hurl them back as my eyes grow dim.
Cease your threats of pain infernal—
Of a God's revenge thro' boundless time;
I defy your demon God eternal,
For my honest doubt is my only crime!
Away with your blood-bought thing, salvation;
Away with your cross and creed of gloom
The heretic laughs at your damnation,
The sceptic fears not hell's red doom.

Point me not to the skies above me;
Can belief by an empty bribe be bought?
My heaven is here with the friends who love me
And the freedom sweet of my fleeting thought
I have tasted of life with its joy and sorrow;
My day of earth's bright heav'n is spent;
Yet I have not a fear for the grim to-morrow,
But pillow my head in death content.
Friends, 'tis finished—the day is closing—
Say that my life has ended well
When 'neath the turf I lie reposing,
Fond friends, good-night—sweet life, farewell!

H. GORDON SWIFT.

OBITUARY.—James Beavis, aged 22, a well-known ardent Freethinker of the North of London, died on Wednesday, 29th ult., after a long illness, and was interred at Finchley on Saturday, Nov. 1. Although great pressure was put on him to recant, he maintained his principles to the last, and died peacefully.

PROFANE JOKES.

"I THINK it's outrageous!" said Mrs. Sparrowgrass. "Here it says in the paper that St. John has been nominated for President! It's bad enough making fun of live people, but when they begin logging in the apostles it certainly is too much!"

"Mr dear brethren," said the minister, leaning forward and speaking very earnestly, "in this excessively warm and oppressive weather I can excuse a little drowsiness during the sermon, but I do wish that you would try and keep awake while the collection is being taken up."

THE telephone girl was dozing when there came a spiteful call. She hastily put her ear to the receiver, after spitefully ringing a reply, and heard: "Hello!" "Hello!" she replied. "Give me Rev. Obadiah Sullysnoot." The Rev. Obadiah was switched on, and the conversation proceeded as follows:—"Hello!" "Hello!" "Is this the Rev. Oba—?" "Yes; what do you want?" shortly. "Why, Sullysnoot, I wanted to tell you that we failed utterly to raise the balance of your salary to-day. We are still 200 dols. short." "That is provoking—very—pro—" Here the girl switched on a man who was dunning a slow customer, and the opinion of Rev. Sullysnoot was expressed by

him as follows:—"You are too cussed shiftless for any use. If you don't get the rest of that money by to-morrow noon I'll send a constable after you. I can't live, and keep up a whole church-full of paupers to boot. I'll pound the stuffing out of you if you don't bring me the rest of that money." Now the godly man is on trial for drunkenness, and the telephone girl is the most innocent witness in the whole case.

ONE of those unnaturally bright children who are always getting people into difficulties was at a prayer-meeting the other evening with his mother, when he asked her aloud: "Ma; say, ma, who was Dinah Moore?" "Hush," whispered his mother, cautiously; "it's a hymn." "No, it ain't, ma," continued the hopeful; "it's a woman's name. Say, whose going home to Dinah Moore?" "Willie," said his mother, in a ghastly voice, "you're disturbing the meeting. It means going to heaven to die no more." "Dine no more. Oh, ma, don't they eat anything there?" His mother explained as well as she could, and Willie sat still for half a minute, his bright eyes roving about the church. Then he asked, in a shrill whisper: "Ma, is God out of town?" "No, no," answered the distracted woman faintly. "Then what's Mr. Kelly running this meeting for, ma?" continued the sweet child. The choir sang him down, but as the meeting closed with a moment of silent prayer his gentle voice could be distinctly heard.

New Pamphlets Just Out.

The Great Mistake. By COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL. Price 1d.

Life and Death. An Examination of the Question—"Does Man Survive Death?" By W. W. COLLINS. Price 2d.

Twenty-four Reasons why the Bible is Not the Word of God. By a CAMBRIDGE GRADUATE. Price 1d.

BY G. W. FOOTE.

The Folly of Prayer. New Edition; with fresh Introduction. Reduced to 1d.

Atheism and Morality. New Edition; fresh Introduction. Reduced to 1d.

Proposed Manchester Secular Hall Company.

THE above Company will have for its object the gradual accumulation of funds for the erection or purchase of premises suitable for the requirements of the Manchester Branch, N. S. S. The Shares will be of £1 each, and of two classes, A and B. The "A" Shares will be payable in full on application; the "B" Share will be payable by monthly subscriptions of One Shilling per Share. Applications may be made to the undersigned, and it is hoped that all friends in the district will assist—A. HEMINGWAY, Cor. Sec., 25 High Street, Bathurst Street, Stretford Road.

Balzac's Droll Stories,

COLLECTED from the Abbays of Touraine, translated into English, complete and unaltered, illustrated with 425 marvellous and fantastic woodcuts by Duré, thick 8vo., cloth, extra gilt 1874; 13s. The most singular designs ever attempted by any artist. So crammed is the book with pictures, that even the contents are adorned with 33 illustrations. Set of "Punch" for Sale.—Charles Lowe, Broad Street, Birmingham. Catalogues gratis. Books purchased.

Now Ready, price 1d., the November

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