

# THE FREETHINKER.

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 95.



THE FINGER OF GOD.

"And the Lord said unto Moses. . . . I will write upon these tables"—EXODUS XXXIV., 1.

"Two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."—EXODUS XXXI., 18.

## A MODEST MAN.

THE Devil's "darling sin," according to Coleridge, is "pride that apes humility," and the same high authority tells us that the Devil "grins" on beholding it. If the poet was right in this matter, there are few men who give his Satanic Majesty more occasion for mirth than the Rev. C. L. Engstrom. He is as 'umble as Mr. Uriah Heep himself, and he possesses a no less lofty estimate of his own worth. He bears also, in some respects, a strong resemblance to Mr. Pecksniff; although he is totally devoid of the unction which imparted a peculiar flavor to that pious gentleman's discourses. It must not, however, be supposed that Mr. Engstrom participates in the criminal disposition of those eminent Christians. Far from it. He is a good man—a painfully good man; and if there were no other motive to restrain him from wrong-doing, his inordinate self-esteem would suffice to keep him in the paths of respectability.

My first interview with Mr. Engstrom occurred a few months ago at the *Freethinker's* office. He called to complain of a paragraph in my paper alleging that one of the Christian Evidence Society's outdoor lecturers had, on the previous Sunday, indulged in the most disgusting language about Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant. He wished me to contradict the statement on his authority, which I declined to do, as he was not present, while my informant was. But I offered to say that the Christian Evidence Society, through

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its Secretary, repudiated all complicity with such a gross outrage, and that the lecturer referred to denied having committed it. At the same time, I should feel obliged to add that my informant, Mr. Ramsey, adhered to his statement, and was ready to produce a dozen witnesses to attest its truth. Mr. Ramsey and I both advised Mr. Engstrom to send some independent friend *inco,nito* to hear and report the talk of his underlings at their *al fresco* performances. Although he is such a devoted lover of truth, this simple and effective expedient did not recommend itself to his judgment; and after a protracted discussion, which, as I told him, could not possibly decide a matter of fact, he withdrew, with an air of intense dissatisfaction, and a lugubrious face that would have made the fortune of an undertaker.

During this interview I was struck with Mr. Engstrom's profound conceit. Not even Carlyle's Robespierre had a keener sense of his own goodness, or a more invincible belief in his own infallibility. He stated, and restated, that if ever there was a man in this world free from all prejudice, all untruth, and all uncharitableness, it was himself; and he said it, not out of vanity, for he abhorred that vice, but because it was the simple truth.

Since then I have had a fuller opportunity of studying Mr. Engstrom. Having arranged to give a course of lectures at the London Hall of Science on "The Roots of Christianity," I sent the reverend gentleman some complimentary tickets, and offered special facilities for discussion if the Christian Evidence Society chose to send a representative to oppose me. My offer was accepted. On the first evening I crossed swords with the Rev. J. B. Heard. He was evidently unpractised in platform dialectics; but he was obviously a gentleman, and I judged him to be a scholar and a thinker. The few minutes' conversation I had with him afterwards confirmed that impression. It was clear from his unaffected talk about a book he was writing that he was well-read in the very best literature, and that he moved on defensible, if not impregnable, lines of thought.

What a change when, on the third and fourth evenings, this excellent gentleman was succeeded by Mr. Engstrom! He wearied the audience with long unnecessary explanations of why he was there instead of "a better man;" he protested his kindness towards Freethinkers, and the admirable spirit of charity which animated all his colleagues; and he impertinently trusted that the audience would justify the good opinion he had always expressed of them. This irrelevant verbiage at last wearied his hearers, who manifested a little civil impatience. One of them had the temerity to cry "question;" whereupon the reverend gentleman, as though spying his opportunity, spent several minutes more in scolding the audience for "not giving him a proper reception." Eventually he came to the real subject of discussion. How he treated it and what kind of reply he made to my lecture, it is not for me to say. Being a less modest man than Mr. Engstrom, I decline to gauge my antagonist's prowess. He is quite sure that he "refuted many of the lecturer's arguments," and humbly offers to prove it if necessary. But one's own opinion in such matters is often erroneous, and if there must be a public decision, I prefer to let the spectators award the laurels of victory.

Mr. Engstrom has published his opinion of our encounter in a long letter to the *National Reformer*, in which he blows his own trumpet with the full strength of his lungs, varying the performance with an occasional half-apology for such a strenuous use of the instrument. Mr. Stanring, as an impartial third person, in no sort of communication with me, had in the ordinary course of his journalistic duty written a report of our discussion for the same paper. His

description of the Christian Evidence Society's Secretary was not flattering; whereupon Mr. Engstrom replies in his own defence, and takes occasion to pay himself all the fine compliments which his critic unhandsomely omitted.

Feeling that he did not, like Mr. Heard, succeed in pleasing his audience, Mr. Engstrom sneers at "plaudits as worthless as they are easily gained." So, according to the fable, the disappointed fox declared that the coveted grapes were sour.

Neither Mr. Standring nor the audience were capable of judging Mr. Engstrom. He would be tried by his peers. And as "none but himself could be his parallel," he pronounces judgment on himself, so that the profane world may know what to believe. Not only is he confident that he "refuted many of the lecturer's arguments," but he affirms "without boasting" (of course) that, although he has during thirty years of research given more time to the "scientific and philosophic" than to the "critical and historical portions of this controversy," he has studied even those portions more thoroughly "than Mr. Foote or anyone who heard him speak." For all this modest gentleman knew, Dr. Davidson or the author of "Supernatural Religion," or even the orthodox Dr. Lightfoot, might have been present; but when a man praises himself, because no one else will do it for him, it is not to be expected that he will stick at trifles.

Mr. Engstrom talks of his "career" as though he were a Cæsar or a Napoleon. Very naturally, too, he celebrates his "intense love of truth," which his co-Secretary shares. Perhaps all this is true. Who knows? But Mr. Waterman, at least, has a peculiar way of proving it. He recently spoke after Dr. McCann's lecture at Norwood, and dilated on the great good effected by such discourses, knowing all the time that the chairman treated discussion and disturbance as the same thing, that the lecturer declined even to answer a question, and that a large body of Secularists had left the hall rather than countenance such a farce. What a remarkably "intense love of truth"! I am well aware that the Christian Evidence Society gives a special course of lectures, followed by discussion, every year at the London Hall of Science; but something must be done to raise subscriptions, and "bearding the infidel in his den" looks very taking in the annual circular.

In concluding his letter, Mr. Engstrom prefers certain charges against me, which I can easily repel.

First I "denounced Professor Max Müller in unmeasured terms." This is absurdly untrue. When I denounce anyone I do it in *measured* terms; and, as a matter of fact, I did not "denounce" Professor Max Müller at all. I said that he was not the infallible authority Mr. Engstrom supposed him; that he had more than once been set right in his own special field; that Darwin, Tylor and Whitney, in especial, had given him some hard rubs; that he had a tendency to flatter British Protestantism; and that he was too prone to imagine that philology should remain, in all essentials, just where it was when the Prince Consort first patronised him. All this may or may not be true; but it is not "denunciation," and it is certainly not "unmeasured."

Secondly, I challenged the reading of a newspaper report of something Professor Rhys Davids had said. True, and I did so because loose newspaper summaries are inadmissible in grave discussions, especially when the speakers are well known to be the authors of easily accessible works. What Mr. Engstrom subsequently (on the second evening) quoted from Professor Rhys Davids's Hibbert Lectures, I had already mentioned. I admitted that this admirable oriental scholar did not see any historical point of contact between Buddhism and Christianity. Yet, as he admitted their close parallelism, and the priority of Buddhism, I urged that we were all free to conjecture where the point of contact *might have been*, and I ventured to suggest Egypt in general and Alexandria in particular.

Thirdly, I advised the audience to form their own judgment as to the "dates of the various books of the Bible," disregarding "the opinion of the leading critics of Europe and America." The absurdity of this charge will be manifest when I state that I purposely and avowedly cited only *Christian* doctors on the Canon, so as to obviate that very value of my authorities which Mr. Engstrom raised. It is not my fault if such men ascott are not among "the leading critics of the Bible," why all this pother about critics? We

must judge for ourselves on the facts. Mr. Engstrom is all at sea in this controversy. It is not Max Müller, Rhys Davids, or any other modern who can decide the question for us. That is beginning at the wrong end. We must go to the other end and appeal to Polycarp, Justin, Barnabas, Papias and Irenæus. The one fact that no Christian writer before the year 170 mentions our four Gospels, or gives a single saying of Jesus exactly like their version of it, is of far greater weight than all the speculations of all the critics in the world. Ordinary people may, as they surely will, form their own opinion as to whether an article is a full pound, without waiting to study a dissertation on weights and measures.

Fourthly, I "decried Rénan as a critic," and disputed a quotation Mr. Engstrom made from the *Vie de Jésus*. Mr. Engstrom did *not* quote from the *Vie de Jésus*; he quoted from a fourpenny pamphlet on Rénan published by the Religious Tract Society. The writer of that pamphlet "decries" Rénan far more than I did. Let us hear him:

"Mentally, Rénan's bias is strongly artistic. This makes at once the merit and the demerit of all he produces. In Oriental studies he has not contributed much that is solid in departments demanding profound and absolutely original research. He has never sufficiently mastered the linguistic tools, nor does he possess the necessary technical tastes and aptitudes. But he is an indefatigable collector of facts, and an inimitable systematizer and expounder of the investigations of others, though, it must be added, his generalisations are often superficial. His account of the origins of Christianity deservedly takes a high place in the ranks of *belles lettres*, but it cannot be said to have much weight in the realm of serious history."

Personally, I think the Rev. W. G. Elmslie goes too far in this criticism; but if Mr. Engstrom wishes to reproach people for "decriing" Rénan, he should begin with the writers on his own side. Mr. Engstrom appears to have no first-hand knowledge of Rénan or any other author. If he will read the first edition of the *Vie de Jésus*, then the Preface to the thirteenth edition, and finally *Les Évangiles* and *Les Apôtres*, he will see that Rénan's views on the authorship of the Gospels have been in a state of flux. The one point he is steadfast on is that whoever wrote the Acts wrote the third Gospel; and I allow that his fine literary tact may guide him right in this matter. But his surmise that Luke was the author of both has no such guarantee of its probability. On this point, which must be determined by external evidence, a more sober critic is a better guide; and we might more safely trust Dr. Davidson, who says that "The Gospel and the Acts proceeded from the same hand; but it was not Luke's."

I now leave Mr. Engstrom. His charges have been duly answered, and I trust he is satisfied. If not he can have a further reply. At any rate, I fancy my readers will agree that Mr. Engstrom's accuracy and modesty are about equal. It is not every man who is as wise as Solomon and as meek as Moses; and when such a prodigy arises, he deserves recognition and applause.

G. W. FOOTIE.

#### EFFECTUAL PRAYER.

PREACHER, training his sons in the way they should go: "Yes, boys, the Lord always answers prayer. When he doesn't it is only because you don't pray right. Ask the Lord to teach you to pray for the right thing in the right way and you will get it, never fear! Once I used to pray the Lord that he would send one of my neighbor's geese over into my garden. But the Lord never sent one, though he knew I loved roast goose above all things. Did I turn against the Lord or disbelieve his holy promises? Not at all. My faith was strong, and I knew the Lord would help me if I only prayed aright. At last I saw where my prayer was wrong. I ought to have prayed that I might go over the fence and fetch one of those geese. And then I prayed aright. And before half-an-hour was over *that* prayer was answered."

RELIGIOUS people have strange ideas of God's beneficence. Mr. H. Curtis read an essay at the George Street Debating Society, Plymouth, to prove that cholera and other divinely-sent scourges were "blessings" to mankind. Most of the members, we are told, "agreed that there were blessings in such visitations." Will a new prayer be added to the Litany so that the pious may say: "From all such blessings, Good Lord deliver us"? Or are plagues and famines the kind of blessing which Christians are to ask for their enemies? Being only uninspired Atheists, we find ourselves unable to distinguish these blessings from the worst curses and disasters that afflict mankind.

OBITUARY.—We regret to record the death of Mr. Thomas Southard, of Woolwich, a consistent and earnest Freethinker, whose loss will be felt by many besides his family circle.

## ACID DROPS.

THE *Christian Herald* tells us what it terms a "thrilling story of a farmer's conversion." Mr. Quarrier, an Irish evangelist, was called back for a quarter of mile by a "some thing" which "seemed to tell him" to go by another road. He did so and thus met an old man who had similarly obeyed a heavenly voice which had thrice called out distinctly to him, "John, go out and go up the road." This resembles some of the divinely-arranged meetings of the Bible such as that for instance of Paul and Ananias (Acts ix., 11). But we notice that the amount of revelation increases with the amount of ignorance. Mr. Quarrier only felt a "something" which "seemed" to be an intimation from the Almighty, but the still more ignorant and credulous peasant heard distinct words thrice repeated.

COLONEL COLTHURST asked a very pretty question in the House about the Indian missionaries. He inquired whether some of these black gentry, who had the distribution of public funds during the 1877-8 famine, combined usury with charity, and lent cash to the poor natives at the low rate of eighteen per cent.; and whether, in the Tionevelly and Madura districts, they had actually recovered in the law courts sums equal to twice the original loans. Of course Mr. J. K. Cross, Under Secretary for India, had no information on the subject. It is part of the English system in India that the ruling race must support each other through thick and thin. Missionaries are of course to be screened, however flagitious their offences. What a fine tribe they are to be sure. "Give to every one that asketh," said Christ. "Well," reply the missionaries, "if you say so of course we must, but we shall go to Moses for the practical method of doing right, and give to the black devils as brother Jacob gave to Esau. Large profits and quick returns; cent. per cent. in five years."

THE Rev. A. T. Waugh, vicar of St Mary's Church, Brighton, has been preaching that man is responsible to God for his belief. In that case Mr. Waugh had better look out, for he will fare badly at the day of judgment if the Lord has any self-respect. If there be a God, Mr. Waugh's creed is an atrociously blasphemous libel. It is he, and not the sceptic, who has some reason to fear "the wrath to come." Mr. Waugh knows very well that if he accused any man of roasting his own children in a big fire, he would get knocked down or run in; and he may expect a devilish hard blow from the Almighty's arm, or a long twelve months in the celestial Holloway.

AT Selby, on Monday, John Wilson, a "Major" in the Salvation Army, formerly at Hull, but now at Grimsby, was summoned by the Selby Board of Guardians to show cause why he should not contribute towards the support of his father and mother, who had become chargeable to the common funds of the Union. Defendant did not appear, but Mr. Shipman, the relieving officer, said that the Guardians had received an offer of 1s. per week from him, but the Board asked for an order for 2s. 6d. to be made. From some correspondence recently in the papers it had transpired that defendant had been in receipt of 4l. per week, but defendant in his letter stated that times were not now so good with him. The Bench made the order asked for.

THE *Dalston News* reports that the Rev. J. McNab took the occasion of baptising six women to denounce all other baptism than that by immersion. At the conclusion of the discourse a person in the chapel caused some sensation by asking the pastor to read 1 Cor. i., 17. Three persons who had been announced to attend the Baptist tea-meeting did not turn up. One, the Rev. C. Bridgman, sent a letter saying he must be excused after such "uncharitable and unwarrantable statements."

It transpires that it was a parson, the Rev. John Mirehouse, rector of Colsterworth, who sent the dead body of a child to the Home Secretary, because his churchyard had been closed. The father of the child was extremely shocked and disgusted at the liberty taken by his spiritual pastor, who appears to have thought that as the child had not been baptised no sort of consideration was due to its remains. The reverend sky-pilot did not even send a note of explanation, but left the mystery to solve itself as best it might. Had it been some poor man who did this he would certainly not have got off with a reprimand as did the Rev. J. Mirehouse.

AN earnest Churchman of Littlehampton is intensely disgusted at ritualistic practices carried on in the parish church. There are processions of men and boys in blue and crimson and white, headed by their inspired "man milliner" who shows forth the beauty of holiness in the shape of "motley attire" including "a lace collar and tippet." But if this Protestant parishioner is so sickened and humiliated at the sight of the brass cross on a pole and the "wretched parade" of "meretricious frippery," why don't he help to dis-establish the Church that sanctions and supports such a mockery, as he thinks, of true religion?

A CHRISTIAN contemporary says that last month Dr. Potter, Bishop of Nebraska, gave two cowboys a thrashing and released the bound criminal committed to their charge by the Vigilance Committee of the lawless and unsettled district. We think the

tale of the Bishop's prowess highly improbable and its object decidedly reprehensible.

THE Rev. W. Hillier, a Baptist minister of Exeter, says that it is beyond dispute that the Constitution of England is a Christian Constitution and was therefore violated by the attempt to admit an Atheist into Parliament. This blind leader of the blind must hold that the constitution is already violated by the admission of Jews, for we suppose he knows that Jews are not Christians.

W. R. BRADLAUGH has again been offering up "earnest petitions" for the conversion of his "infidel" brother. He says that a large number of Christian friends are making this a matter of special prayer. Up to the present no result is reported.

BENITO PARADES, a priest in Pueblo, has committed suicide. He fastened round his neck the cord of the Order of Dominicans and hanged himself with it. His fellow priests say he had lost his reason, for he had an idea that Satan was constantly pursuing him. Such results of theological teaching would be more frequent but for secular common sense.

THIS reminds us of an anecdote of a famous revivalist who was asked "What is the matter with you—you act in your pulpit as if you were crazy?" The answer was, "I sincerely believe that nine-tenths of mankind are going headlong to eternal torment, and if you believe it as I do you would just be as crazy as I am."

AN inquest has been held at the Wadaley Asylum, Sheffield, upon the remains of Mrs. Sarah Roberts. Deceased suffered from religious mania, and believed she never could obtain salvation. In a mental frenzy she set fire to her clothes, and died from the injuries she received. A verdict of death by suicide while in an unsound state of mind was returned.

THE Presbyterian Synod of Alabama has condemned the Evolution teachings of the Rev. Dr. Woodrow, professor of natural science at the theological seminary in Columbia. They don't see how to reconcile it with the rib story.

A CORRESPONDENT at Hanley says: "The other evening I heard a Congregational minister relate the following anecdote of the Rev. Peter McKenzie (the lecturer on 'The Devil.') The rev. gentleman (P. Mc.) was giving a lecture to a large audience recently in the course of which he said 'Abraham and Isaac' were the only two Christians at that time, the others were all *Mahommedans*; and they still stuck to their faith,' etc. After the lecture the rev. gentleman dined with a friend who spoke to him thus: 'Mr. McKenzie, you said all the people, except Abraham and Isaac, in the country where the latter resided and at the time they were living, were all *Mahommedans*.' Peter: 'I did say so and they are all *Mahommedans*.' Friend: 'But you said *they were*.' Now, how long is it since Abraham and Isaac were living.' Peter: 'Between 2,000 and 3,000 years ago.' Friend: 'How old is *Mahommedanism*.' Peter: 'Oh! I see; well, if ever! I never thought of that before. Well, I have made that statement at several conferences and preached the same sermon dozens of times, but no one has ever mentioned it to me before. Thanks; I am much obliged to you.' I did not hear the cock crow. It appears 'Peter' makes assertions without first ascertaining if they are correct, or I may say that he is only following in the footsteps of 'Peter' his predecessor."

IN his reply to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, last week, Mr. Wheeler omitted to mention one point of contact and disagreement between the Acts of the Apostles and Josephus—viz., in regard to the death of Herod. This point was also scrupulously omitted to be mentioned by the bishop. It conclusively shows that the author of the Acts of the Apostles was disposed to see ordinary events in a miraculous light, and was given to gross exaggeration. Josephus tells us that at a feast which Herod Agrippa gave, his flatterers saluted him as a god, but severe pains arising in his belly he said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life, while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I who was by you called immortal am to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner." After five days he expired (Antiq. xix., ch. 8, § 2). But Acts says he was smitten by an angel. "And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost."

JOSEPHUS mentions that Agrippa saw an owl as a bird of ill-omen. This owl the author of Acts makes into an angel. Afterwards Eusebius, to whom Christians owe all the early history of their Church, deliberately falsified Josephus by changing the word owl into angel in order to make him agree with the Acts of the Apostles, one feathered fowl being as good as another in the eyes of this worthy Christian father, who thought lying was good as medicine.

THE Bishop of Rochester has prepared some special prayers for the London Mission now going on. One of the phrases is especially rich. "Bless others but *do not forget to bless me.*"

Evidently the bishop thinks the Almighty's memory requires jogging.

Do not forget this mission, Lord,  
Observe the month, November.  
Bless others, Lord, but don't forget  
To bless us Lord, remember.  
Just jot it in thy note-book, Lord,  
We'll give thee full descriptions  
Of what we want; and don't forget  
To send in the subscriptions.

AILED by the prayer of the Bishop of Rochester, and a direct appeal for cash from the Bishops of London and Bedford, the mission for East London is now in full blast. Unfortunately East-enders are more anxious about the election of Professor Stuart than about their eternal souls. When temporal and religious interests come into conflict religious ones always play the part of the earthen vessel. Knowing this, the *Church Times* complains that the returning officer for Hackney did not defer the election for another week.

MOST of the mission work is being done by recruiting officers of the black dragoons from other districts. As all of them have been duly called and consecrated, it is computed that over thirty tons of Holy Ghost have been imported into East London during the past week. Surely we may expect a powerful outpouring of saving grace.

THE publication of the Croker Letters has exposed an amusing instance of how Bishop Philpotts obeyed the injunction to be "all things to all men." Writing to Macaulay on his history in a letter dated Jan. 6, 1849, amid much eulogy, he says, "But your highest merit is your truthfulness." Writing to Mr. Croker, April 13 of the same year, he said, "Mr. Macaulay is a great historical novelist, and can never more be regarded in the severe character of an historian."

A NEW religious sect, styling itself the "New and Latter House of Israel," has started near Coatham. Its founder goes in for a combination of religion and business. The elect are only to deal at his shops. The idea of this 288th English sect is hardly a novel one.

THE *Church Review* notices the proceedings of the Church Association meeting at Birmingham under the title of The Persecution Society (Limited). The persecution society of the Christian Church has usually been limited only by its capacity.

A CONTEMPORARY informs us that Mudie's were horrified when a customer asked for "Letters from Hell." They had scarcely recovered from the shock caused by the publication of a work entitled "The Pedigree of the Devil."

THE City School managers have decided to buy 300 prayer-books and hymnal companions at 1s. each. Mr. Snell objected on the ground that books were not necessary. Did Abraham use a book? Certainly not. We sympathise with Mr. Snell's objection, as we get on very well without them. At the same time we must object to a man who traded on his wife's prostitution being held up as a pattern of conduct to our City youth. We see the results of this kind of moral teaching in the present Corporation.

AN announcement appeared on a hoarding in Blackfriars Road the other day to the following effect: "To Costermongers.—The Rev. B. J. Goulden will preach a special sermon to costermongers on their 'Precious Soul.' Do not go home to wash, but come just as you are." Imagine a parson lecturing costermongers on the sordid! Anyhow, the presence of the unwashed costers in the church pews would probably demonstrate one thing—the immortality of the sordid's smell. After this the rev. gentleman might lecture on the smelt.

#### THE FREETHINKER'S DOXOLOGY.

Tune—"The Old Hundredth."

PRAISE Man, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Science, Superstition's foe.  
Come, let us free these earthly hosts  
From tyrants, devils, gods and ghosts. Selah.

THE Rev. Canon Taylor, D.D., is announced to deliver five lectures at Hope Hall, Liverpool, commencing on November 18, on "Why we should believe the Bible." Of course no discussion is allowed. The "Hope-Hallers" are mostly Orangemen from that part of Scotland known as the North of Ireland. When they argue, their syllogisms consist of three stamps on the floor in rhythmical order. They show great aptitude in arguing with their feet.

A CONSERVATIVE "poet" recently produced an "imitation of Swinburne," which was sent to the *Liverpool Echo*. In publishing this precious production the editor announced that he omitted one verse on account of its profanity, and one on account of its suggestiveness. Of course this "poet" wanted "impious Atheists" to "clear the way."

THE above production took for its motto Isaiah xxxii. 5: "And the vile person shall no more be called Liberal." Few Freethinkers will object to this, the authorised version; but more may prefer the Douay rendering, "The fool shall no more be called prince." "When Christians disagree their unanimity is wonderful"—in persecuting Freethinkers.

"God bless the servant girls," says Spurgeon, "for they are the most generous supporters of the Church of Christ." Naturally; the police reports show that they are the great supporters of fortune-tellers, astrologers, and all kinds of quacks. No doubt Spurgeon is right.

MOODY and Sankey are supposed to take no payment for their services. It is strange, however, that the report of the London Mission does not appear to account for all the fifteen thousand odd pounds recently expended. The sum unaccounted for seems a very large one. We wonder if Moody and Sankey know what was done with it.

THE *Christian World* refers to "the imperfect morality of much that is in the Old Testament." We said the same thing a little more plainly, and got twelve months in Holloway Gaol without the *C. W.* ever saying a word against our sentence. We suppose it is orthodox to say that the Old Testament is often wrong, stupid and vile, but blasphemous to point out the particular instances.

IN the Glossop Road Baptist Chapel, Sheffield, a member named Kent, who did not believe in the immortality of the soul, after the singing of the hymn, "Around the throne of God thousands of children stand," exclaimed, "This is a hateful lie; there are not thousands of children in heaven singing 'Glory, glory, glory.'" The preacher hurriedly left the pulpit, and sizing Kent by the shoulders forced him into a seat. A deacon afterwards expelled him from the building. This was much easier than proving the existence of a heavenly chorus.

THE normal design of the Creator for every country, says the Rev. Edward White, was that the people should own the land; but as his ministers have been eighteen centuries discovering the fact, he must have a marvellous capacity for "keeping it dark." And who has frustrated his normal design? Did the Devil fill him with abnormal designs, and has he only just returned to sanity? It appears to us that the black-coats will say anything or go anywhere to maintain their hold on the loaves and fishes, and they will always find that God originally meant whatever their patrons desire.

THE Rev. J. Pulsford has been deriving Autumn Lessons from Nature. One is that "another glorious summer having regaled our senses and our appetites, and blessed our bodies and souls, has now gone inward to enrich our memories and to cheer us all the winter." All this is very fine for a sky-pilot who has plenty to eat and drink all the year round, and two months' holiday in the summer. But how about the poor devils Mr. Pulsford left behind him in the great city, who toil hard for a pittance and whose holidays are only Bank holidays? What have they to thank the Lord for? And how will Mr. Pulsford's "glorious summer" enable them to "brave the winter"? Such nonsense is a fair sample of the stuff now talked in Christian pulpits, and suggests that Christianity is what Disraeli said Peel's Government was—an organised hypocrisy.

THE Bishop of London, in his recent charge, spoke of "infidelity" as being "the religion of multitudes, with its propaganda, its preachers and its literature, sometimes able and acute, sometimes obscene and blasphemous." Notice the episcopal artfulness. If any one says the "infidel" literature which he has seen is "able and acute" he is led to suppose that other literature, which he sure he has not seen, is "obscene and blasphemous." We retort the charge of obscenity on the book the bishop is paid to defend.

AN unseemly squabble among the South Bank Baptists ended in an appeal to the Langbaugh bench of magistrates. Peter Stewart, an editor, brought a charge of assault against the chapel-keeper. The pastor had endeavored to get rid of the plaintiff and two other members of the congregation. One beloved brother proposed their immediate ejection and threatened to "screw their necks." Great confusion ensued, the pastor's wife was heard loudly crying, the gas was turned out and the defendant forcibly prevented the plaintiff from relighting it. The chapel-keeper had moreover threatened to "double him up" and "pitch him out of the window." The magistrates appeared to sympathise with those who provoked the disturbance. They dismissed the charge of assault, and told the plaintiff that it would be time to apply for protection after he had been doubled up or thrown out of the window.

JUDGE JORDAN, in the Hanley County Court, gave a decision for £2 11s. for a family Bible. Defendant pleaded infancy, but his honor held that a Bible is "a necessary for every young Englishman." Query—Is it necessary to teach the young the stories of Lot, Judah and David, or necessary in order that the young man may learn the worthlessness of God's word?

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

*Sunday*, Nov. 23, Hall of Science, Old Street, London:—At 11.15, Cromwell's House of Lords; at 7, "Christianity in its Cradle."  
*Tuesday*, 25, Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville:—At 8.30, "Lives of Christ. I.—Apocryphal Gospels and Profane Historians."  
*Thursday*, 27, Hall of Science, London:—At 8.30, "The History of Priestcraft."—I.

November 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, Fuddersfield; 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.—R. Young, E. Brown, S. Watts, W. B. J. Barner.

A CONSTANT READER.—Such cuttings are always welcome.

R. C.—As it is a first offence you are forgiven, but don't do it again.

A. F. R. ANDREWS.—We admit there are Unitarians and Unitarians, but are not the bright spirits usually driven out by the "respectable" portion? Thanks for cuttings.

ARGUS.—Your scraps of all kinds, "from grave to gay, and from pica to brevier," are welcome.

T. C.—Up to date the report of Mr. Ramsey's conversion is premature.

EVERTON TOFFEE.—Thanks. We hope the Liverpudlians will follow your good example.

W. J. FORD.—Thanks. Mr. Clodd's articles are valuable. The other matter is put aside for future comment.

G. C. H. CARTER (McDonald's, Market Place, Cathall Road, Harrow Green), wishes us to invite all Freethinkers in the Stratford and Leytonstone district to aid in obtaining suitable premises for Freethought propaganda.

G. MORRISON.—Thanks. Cuttings and jokes are always welcome.

TOM SMITH.—Thanks. Shall be sent.

J. WARBURTON.—We can't credit that Byron ever wrote such wretched doggerel. When people father things on Byron they should take the trouble to imitate his style. As a matter of fact, Byron distinctly repudiated, in private letters since published, all belief in the cardinal dogmas of Christianity.

H. G. SWIFT.—We have a piece of yours in hand for our Christmas Number. It was received during our retirement in North London. Your new piece shall appear at Christmas time in the ordinary number.

J. WIDDICOMBE.—Darwin's "Origin of Species," 7s. 6d.; "Descent of Man," 9s.

F. RAYNER.—We cannot say how many times the "Age of Reason" has been prosecuted—perhaps five or six times. Please remember that we are very busy, and cannot undertake to answer by private letter questions that can be answered in this column.

J. WILSON.—We don't take bets. You ask us to prove that a certain Scotch "medium," who for eighteen years has been your channel of communication with the spirit world, "is a fraud." We reply that we don't know the gentleman, and have no opinion as to his character. If he or any other medium wants to prove the reality of spirit manifestations, he should submit to the test of a competent scientific committee. It is enough for us that three-fourths of the leading mediums have been exposed, and that all their manifestations can be produced, with some a great deal more wonderful, by first-rate conjurers. Maskelyne and Cooke, for instance, can beat them hollow; and as for the slate trick, we are surprised that anybody can be imposed on by it after Dr. Slade's little escapade.

J. B. B.—The hall at Longton could not be obtained.

A CONSTANT READER.—No doubt the parsons find the lines on Money touch them in a sore place.

W. GIBB.—Pamphlet sent. We have read your letter with great interest. Mr. Fawcett may have been a bit of a Freethinker but we have no information on the subject.

J. M. DICK.—You appear to have nonplussed the sky-pilot, but we can hardly deal with the matter without the statement of both sides before us. Glad to hear the Christmas Number is so eagerly expected in Dundee.

W. M. tells us that he once tried the faith lay. It did not work. He prayed the Lord for some coppers for a dinner, but small as the amount was it was not forthcoming.

E. G.—The seal is Arabic and the inscription probably the name of the owner.

A. BLOOMFIELD.—Read the "Age of Reason" and "Bible Romances." If you can afford them Clifford's Essays and "Supernatural Religion."

G. SHORE.—We see no reason for specially announcing a lecture on Mesmerism.

F. S. WILFORD.—What you say is true enough, but it does not materially affect our article. No doubt the lectures in your Board Schools on Sunday evenings are good in their way and we have never said anything to the contrary.

J. GRANGE.—Your congratulations are a little late but we thank you all the same.

THOROUGH (Leicester).—You are mistaken. Thomson's "Religion in the Rocky Mountains" appears in full exactly as he wrote it.

E. KEARSLEY.—The same story appeared in the *Freethinker* more than two years ago.

W. BUNTING, 18 Birk Street, New Radford, Nottingham, sells the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

ELEVE.—Rather long, but shall have careful consideration.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Madras Philosophic Enquirer (two numbers)—Owl—North-Eastern Gazette—Manchester Examiner—Western Daily Mercury—Manchester Weekly Times—Fraser's Almanack—Young Secularist (Melbourne)—Liberator (two numbers)—War Cry—Religious Reformer—Hampshire Independent—Lucifer—Liberal (Barton Co)—Perthshire Courier—Ideographic—Dundee Evening Telegraph—Peer and the Prophet—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Staffordshire Sentinel—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—N. Y. Herald—Leeds Mercury—Herts Observer—Truth—St. Pancras Guardian—Stroud News—Huddersfield Chronicle—Hull Express.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THE December number of *Progress* will be specially interesting. One of its most attractive features will be a Memoir of Richard Carlile by Mr. Wheeler with a portrait which those who knew that great martyr of the liberty of the press have pronounced an excellent likeness. Dr. Drysdale contributes a reply to Hero Jewel and W. P. Ball on the Population Question; Dr. Aveling writes on "Astronomical Problems;" Mr. Foote continues his "Prisoner of Blasphemy;" S. Britton reviews James Thomson's new volume; E. V. Ward appears again with a striking poem; John Robertson writes on "The Music of the Future;" and G. Temp'e contributes a humorous fantasia entitled "Philosophy on a Mountain."

MR. FOOTE will begin two fresh courses of lectures next week: one at Claremont Hall on "Lives of Christ," dealing with all the sources of our information about the Prophet of Nazareth; and one at the Hall of Science on "The History of Priestcraft," dealing with this sinister power in every nation and every age. Opportunity for discussion will be afforded after each lecture.

THE Birmingham *Owl*, a racy illustrated journal, is not afraid to say a good word for Freethought. Referring to Mr. Foote's recent visit to the town, it says: "On Sunday last Mr. G. W. Foote lectured three times at the Alexandra Hall, Hope Street. The witty editor of the *Freethinker* and of *Progress* kept three big audiences in incessant laughter, and hundreds of 'infidel' voices applauded vociferously."

THE North of England Secular Propaganda Association have held their half-yearly conference in the Secular Society rooms, Bradford. They report an increase of membership. The Association have now nine lecturers who are evidently doing good work. Six of these report the delivery of eighty-eight lectures during the spring and summer. We heartily wish the Association success and hope they attend to the spread of Freethought literature as well as to the delivery of lectures.

THE Manchester branch of the N. S. S., being anxious to secure premises of their own, have projected a Secular Hall Company. The shares will be 1l. each, class A payable in full on application, class B payable by monthly subscriptions of 1s. Before registering it is sought to be ascertained how many Freethinkers are willing to co-operate and to what extent. A preliminary circular has therefore been sent out, the answers to which will show how many shares can be counted on in starting. Mr. A. Hemingway, secretary, 25 Higher Chatham Street, Manchester, will be happy to furnish copies of the circular to all applicants. We earnestly trust that the Manchester Freethinkers will rally round the committee and help them to carry their project to a successful issue. There are enough Freethinkers in Cottenopolis to achieve a tremendous success if they only work together with energy and harmony.

MR. SYMES is waging war against the enemy in Melbourne with a vigor and a persistence that are most praiseworthy. Not content with his debates and lectures and the large amount of work he does in his weekly paper the *Liberator*, he has also started a periodical called the *Young Secularist*, for the benefit and instruction of the junior Melbourneites. The Sydney *Liberal* describes him as creating quite a scare among the parsons. The attempt to stop the Sunday meetings and entertainments has resulted in a complete victory for the Secularists. The chief Secretary acknowledges their right to give lectures and concerts in licensed theatres, etc., and to charge for admission. We send Mr. Symes our hearty congratulations.

THE Liberal University of Brussels celebrates its anniversary this year, and the students have resolved to mark the occasion by an International Congress of students under the presidency of Victor Hugo. France will be represented by Paul Bert, G. Clémenceau and Elisée Reclus; Germany by Virchow, Richter and others; Switzerland by Carl Vogt; Spain by E. Castlar. From England they have invited Mr. Bright, Mr. Gladstone, Herbert Spencer and, according to the *Tablet*, Mr. Bradlaugh. It is evident the clerical party in Belgium find little support from the students of Brussels.

THE *Philosophic Inquirer* (Madras) reprints Mr. Wheeler's article on "Christianity in India" from our columns.

CANON LEFROY, in a paper read at the Liverpool Diocesan Conference, gives us the welcome news that "Infidelity," by which he means Secularism and Freethought literature, "at the present moment is domesticated in the homes of England." The *Rock*, commenting on this, regrets the "by far the most dangerous form" which "Infidel" literature has assumed in "the leading monthly reviews." These "able publications," it continues, "find their way into the strictest homes, and yet they contain, month after month, articles attacking the foundations of our faith, differing only from such productions as those of Mr. Bradlaugh and his friends in being written in decent phraseology. It may be desirable that such neutral organs of opinion should exist, though we have our doubts of the necessity. But we are sure that they ought not to lie on the drawing-room table in the house of a Christian family. The boy or girl who takes up one of these reviews, and reads a paper advocating the blindest materialism, sandwiched, so to say, between one by a bishop of the Church of England and another by a Unitarian minister, can come to no conclusion but that the matters treated of in all alike are open questions, on which he or she may form an individual opinion unblamed. It cannot be right for parents to expose their children's faith to such a trial as this, and we believe that a great deal of the scepticism amongst well-educated young people of which we hear may be traced to it." We believe the fears entertained by the *Rock* are well founded. The only way to keep people Christians is to keep them ignorant. Knowledge of both sides of the question can only have one result.

PROFESSOR BAIN has been re-elected Lord Rector of Aberdeen University by a large majority, Randolph Churchill being completely out of the running. Churchill thought the Conservative students' invitation a great honor. We wonder what he thinks of his defeat. The Marlboroughs have no longer a knack of winning battles.

NONCONFORMISTS, according to the Rev. J. Guinness Rogers, have "a fixed resolve to relax no efforts till religious equality is added to the many victories won by Liberalism in this country." We are glad to hear it, and should be still more glad to believe it. We wonder whether Mr. Sharman has received a subscription from Mr. Rogers and his congregation to aid in repealing the Blasphemy Laws. It ought to be true, but we have doubts. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief!

WE have received the following further subscriptions for Mr. F. Goulding:—W. H. Harris, 1s.; J. Widdicombe, 6d.; Mrs. Allen, 2s. Mr. Goulding, in acknowledging receipt of our cheque for last week's subscriptions, states that he has privately received 1s. from R. S. Seago and 1s. from his brother.

THE *Weekly Dispatch* is the only newspaper that has had the courage to notice Thomson's "Satires and Profanities," and even this Radical journal feels obliged to enter a caveat against its publication. It allows that some of the pieces are "well worth preserving," and then paradoxically adds a doubt as to "the prudence of its publication." We wonder how they could be preserved without publication. Perhaps the *Dispatch* will explain. Meanwhile we note its admission that "there are flashes of genius in the contents of the present volume."

#### FATHER IGNATIUS AND MODERN MIRACLES.

THE earnest devotee who has established a monastery at Llanthony Abbey, has recently been giving the people of Birmingham an account of some miracles of which he has been witness. Why not? Christianity is founded on belief in the supernatural. Jesus promised his disciples that they should do even greater works than himself and that signs and wonders should follow them that believed.

Father Ignatius, it appears, has seen the Virgin Mary. Unlike the spirits called from the vasty deep by professional "media," she made no communication, so we are still left in doubt as to her relations with Joseph or Pandera and the number of her children. She had previously been observed by some boys whose names are not given, but who are said to have seen "the figure of a woman in very bright shining garments in a cloud of light." Afterwards they saw it again, and he himself describes it as "the tall majestic figure of a woman with the hands upraised in the act of blessing. He only saw the figure sideways. When he first saw it it was at a distance and of gigantic shape, but as it descended sideways it became of the ordinary size of a woman. The figure was veiled, but the face was visible. The whole appeared and disappeared like a flash of lightning, yet everything was as minutely distinct and clear to him as though the vision had lasted a long time."

This serious narrative instead of receiving the prayerful attention of the Christian world, has only evoked a letter from an individual who signs himself "Irish Hot," and who declares that in a recent fog he saw a cat making a meal of the moon, and that a lamp-post approached him in a drunken manner singing "Wait till the Clouds Roll by, Jenny." This scoffer is very possibly a good orthodox Protestant who altogether disapproves of the *Freethinker* making fun of miraculous occurrences said to have happened among a superstitious people a long way off and a good while ago. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand who hear the tale will believe that in some way delusion and exaggeration have played a part in the concoction of the story. Yet but few of these will ever think of questioning that Paul or Stephen had visions of Jesus, or that Moses and Elias appeared on the mount in shining garments. Miracles are like port-wine, not thought much of until antiquity has given them a flavor. Father Ignatius says that the Protestants who believe his story say the visions were sent by the Devil. Something certainly might be said for this idea on Biblical grounds, for Paul tells us Satan can appear like an angel of light, and Jesus says that false Christians may work signs and wonders to deceive the very elect. Jerome, the Christian Father, says "Miracles by false prophets are no extraordinary thing."

Father Ignatius takes as his text Joel ii., 28, which says, "Your young men shall see visions." He defies any one to show him a single passage in the Bible that justifies the belief that miracles have come to an end. "Never was Rationalism so prevalent, and many a Christian man and woman longed for some testimony from God as to the truth of the revelation believed." But why are miracles not to be vouchsafed to Rationalists as well as to Christian men and women? If the Virgin Mary is on exhibition one would think the best place for her to show up in all her majesty would be at a Freethought hall. Father Ignatius himself declares "he would far sooner have a committee of Rationalists to investigate the affair than a committee of Protestants." But the holy father warns the Rationalist that faith is necessary to bring the phenomena into play. Thus faith must already exist before it can receive supernatural confirmation. I have the honor to agree with the father. If one only has sufficient faith, it is easy to see ghosts, goblins, fairies or mahatmas. In our own time the Countess of Caithness has seen fairies. Their existence, and that of witches, ghosts and goblins, are testified to by innumerable witnesses. Such beliefs, in fact, are the natural product of a diseased condition of the imagination. In Father Ignatius's case, to faith I would add fasting. He tells us himself that the ascetic discipline at Llanthony is very severe. The Devil would have never carried Jesus to the top of an exceeding high mountain, nor to the pinnacle of the temple, if Jesus had not previously disordered his nervous system by fasting. Sainly visions would be few and far between did the saints adopt the advice given by the clergy to George Fox, "to drink beer and dance with the girls." The Virgin Mary never turned up at Llanthony when Walter Savage Landor resided there. Fasting and living in a continual atmosphere of supernatural belief, is sufficient to account for the apparitions. Those only who believe in the Virgin Mary have visions of her. She appears only in out-of-the-way corners in Wales, Ireland, Brittany, the South of France or Spain, but never in Glasgow, London or Paris. As the spiritists say, "the conditions are not favorable." Similarly the Buddhist traveller, Hiouen Tsaing, when at the shrine of Buddha, sees a vision of the great Hindu teacher. Is it not evident that in these cases subjective impressions are confounded with objective reality? Unfortunately, I have myself experienced the possibility of this. When in an unhealthy state of mind and body, I have been able by intense concentration of thought to see before me almost anything I chose to imagine, or at any rate, to consider something I did see as the actual thing thought of. Not only have I seen "miracles," I have wrought them. I have to my own belief passed through deal boards, made inert matter live, and drank deadly poison without injury. I suppose most people have done even more wonderful things in their dreams. Only in my case the faculty of imagination has at these times rendered my reason as dormant when my senses were awake as with others when they are sleeping. Seeing the natural explanation of my own "miracles," I am, perhaps, pardon-

ably dubious about those ascribed to persons I am less acquainted with. At any rate, when I read in certain undateable antique Jewish documents of Baalam's ass reproving her master, Joshua stopping the sun and Elisha causing an iron axe to swim, I feel like the Irish curate who said of "Gulliver's Travels" that "there were some things in that book he really could not believe."

J. M. WHEELER.

### CHRISTIAN INCONSISTENCY.

(Concluded from page 363.)

WHY is a perfect uniformity of opinion expected of those who advocate *Free Thought* when those who teach submission to one infallible book as the very word of God, or to one infallible pope as the direct representative of deity on earth, cannot secure uniformity with all the help of the Divine Spirit to guide them into perfect truth and perfect union? If the difference of view among those who have no heavenly help, but only their own imperfect reason to rely on, should prove the falsity or failure of Freethought, how much more must the quarrels, dissensions, persecutions and wars among the "numberless and yet multiplying sects in the Christian world" prove the falsity and the failure of a creed which professes to be the work of a perfect and almighty being who constantly aids and personally superintends the progress of his own favorite religion?

The fact is that difference of opinion is a healthy sign. Without it progress is simply impossible. If all men continue to think alike what improvement can there be? How can change take place? Whether in Christian circles or among Freethinkers, it is stagnation, the "cycles of Cathay" that is to be dreaded. In the growth of opinion, the evolution of new truth and the correction, improvement and perfection of old teachings, there is hope. In uniformity there would be despair. But while Christians will accept this doctrine as explaining the differences in their own camp, the camp of the Almighty, we are afraid they will not see that it also explains differences of opinion among Freethinkers who have no omniscient and almighty guide to rely upon.

While the *C. C.* in one column classifies infidelity as if it were worse than immorality, in another column it describes the "infidel" John Morley as "one of the ablest men and one of the clearest thinkers of the day," a "man of statesmanlike sagacity and breadth of view," a "representative man of his time" and a "cultured and brilliant exponent of Liberal thought." It seems to us decidedly inconsistent to condemn and abuse "infidels" and "infidelity" wholesale as the *C. C.* has done, and yet to praise them individually and ignore their unbelief while praise is given for their achievements or characteristics.

As Christians frequently complain of us for parodying sacred things we will conclude with quoting some passages from a sort of Decalogue which one of the writers in the *Christian Commonwealth* (p. 51) profanely gives as illustrating the life-creed acted on by "one of the curious types of the kingdom of grace" whose representatives, he says, are to be found among almost all the Christian sects, but especially among those brother saints of his whom he condescends to call the "tag-rag and bob-tail which cannot be classified," "shrivel-souled brethren," "credulous followers" of "blindly ignorant leaders," and so forth.

"Thou shalt never attend a religious meeting at which thou shalt not speak 'a word for the master,' and a dozen for thyself.

"Thou shalt never take the first place at feasts—unless the opportunity presents itself.

"Thou art to tolerate no virtues but ignorance and self-conceit.

"Thou shalt not read Dickens, Kingsley, Huxley, Trollope, Lytton, Thackeray, Emerson, Darwin, Mark Twain, B. Disraeli, Smollett, Shakespeare, Swift, Walter Scott, Oliver Goldsmith, Hood, and all like unto them, for of such is the kingdom of Hell.

"Thou shalt remain ignorant of all other literature, and read thy Bible constantly.

"Thou shalt accept none other commentary upon the Scriptures but mine.

"Thou shalt not think except as I think, on pain of being boycotted—with a solemn prayer-meeting to follow.

"Thou shalt never speak evil of thy brother except when he is absent.

"Thou art not to imitate the wicked world in any one thing but what is mean and despicable.

"Thou shalt not go to theatres, concerts, bazaars, balls penny readings, people's entertainments, skating rinks, cricket matches, races of all kinds, hunting, political meetings, and all such like carnal panderings."

This religious writer moreover fears that his list "does not embrace all the miserable, negative doctrine which is taught, swallowed, nay, too often rammed down the very gullets of fearful people by the curious type to be found in the kingdom of grace in this world." W. P. BALL.

### A SALVATION PRAYER-MEETING.

SOME time ago, while in the provinces, I was induced to attend a Salvation Army prayer-meeting at a hall in which I had once spoken in favor of Freethought. Knowing how ill-conducted many of General Booth's followers are in the open streets, I was not surprised to find them, if possible, several degrees worse in their behavior in barracks.

As soon as I entered the door I was button-holed by a Salvation lassie, who wished to know if I had "found the Lord." "Which Lord?" I inquired, with an air of supreme simplicity. "The Lord, our Savior," answered the maiden, as she released her hold upon me on finding that I gave unmistakable tokens of being unacquainted with "any sich person."

Only a few paces had I taken across the room when I was stopped by a gentleman whose dress betrayed that he was a "Captain," and who informed me that he wished to have a few "quiet words" with me and my companion on the awful subject of our soul's destiny. "Quiet words" it was impossible for him to have with me, or, indeed, anybody at that moment. Prayers were on; the flood-gates of ignorance and superstition were open, and nonsense and blasphemy poured rapidly and noisily out. The captain assured me that he was "saved," and that he had been washed in the "precious blood;" and he seemed a little dismayed when I suggested that so "precious" an article might be applied to a better purpose. "Ah! I see you are one of those infidel fellows that we so often hear about. Well I was an infidel once, but thank God my heart has been changed; I have given it to God." I felt disposed, I must confess, to make a small joke and exclaim "heartless fellow"; but I thought perhaps it would be well to say something serious first, lest I might provoke the "meek and lowly" ones to anger. Amid the howling and imploring of a score or so of nervous, brainless girls, and the grunting, and bawling and yelling of dozens of vigorous-lunged disciples of Booth, I made bold to ask the captain whether the Lord was bothered at all by this discordant yelling of sentences that were perfectly unintelligible to me. "My friend, the Lord hears this and is pleased; he knows our hearts and can read our thoughts." Again I almost committed the unpardonable sin of asserting that God ought to know their hearts if all were like the captain and made a present of them to the Lord; but I restrained myself, and asked whether God answered all the prayers that were made at their barracks, or whether he showed any discrimination. "No; of course God does not answer every prayer; he answers all who seek him in earnestness of spirit and with a contrite heart." "Oh!" said I, "then God does not answer every prayer, but only those that he chooses to answer?" "Yes; he answers only reasonable prayers." "Will all, or at least many, of these prayers-to-night be wasted?" "I am afraid some of them will; but God knows what is best for us." "Does he?" I retorted, "then why don't you have confidence in his judgment and leave it to him?" "Ah, now your infidelity shows itself," said the captain. "I am afraid I can't argue with you. I was like you once; I couldn't understand it and I doubted, and I read the works of Tom Paine and Voltaire and I became an Atheist." "But were Thomas Paine and Voltaire Atheists?" I modestly inquired. "Certainly; and their horrible deaths were a warning to all infidels." "My friend," said I—interrupting him at this juncture, and feeling annoyed with him for maligning the names of the great dead—"My friend, I am sorry your conversion has not made you truthful; and if I thought God answered 'reasonable prayers,' I would pray for you."

By this time my companion was tired of the prayerful clamor of the "saved ones" in close proximity to us; he suggested, therefore, that we should move quietly towards the door. Acting upon this suggestion, we took our departure, leaving the captain—who was not a badly-educated man, in the company of the Salvation damsels, who were all satisfied that they had found a savior who was a blessed lord; which, after all, is what most dear maidens desire, and which all—except old maids—succeed in finding if they behave themselves—for of such is the species called Man. ARTHUR B. MOSS.

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR.—We find St. Stephen, the very first martyr of Christianity, in the very city where its stupendous events are supposed to have happened, and, as our Bible chronologies inform us, within the very year that they happened on the very occasion on which, above all others that can be imagined, he must and would have borne testimony to them, as constituting the evidences of his faith, the justification of his conduct and the grounds of his martyrdom; nevertheless, bearing no such testimony—yea, not so much as glancing at those events, but founding his whole argument on the ancient legends of the Jewish superstition.—Rev Robt Taylor, "The Diagesis, being a Discovery of the Origin, Evidences and Early History of Christianity," chap. vi.

PROFANE JOKES.

WHEN a Brazilian gentleman introduces a clergyman to a friend, he always adds after the formula of introduction, "If he steals anything I am responsible for it."

A WORK OF NECESSITY.—A member of the church, who was fonder of taking the heads of game than those of the sermon, was one Sunday seen by the minister himself shooting rabbits, and thereupon blackcoat administered to him a severe rebuke for his unhallowed conduct.

The following true incident illustrates the saying "God helps those who help themselves." Elsie, aged five, repeating the Lord's Prayer to nurse: "Give us this day our daily bread—it's in the pantry, Jane; shall I go and fetch it?"

AN Arkansas man went to church for the first time in his life. The minister had announced through the local papers that he would discourse on the "Lost Sheep," and the man hoped to gain some information regarding a stray ram of his!

LOOKING A GIFT-HORSE IN THE MOUTH.—The Rector: "Well, Chorbacou, I hope you liked the broth I sent you on Saturday, and the sermon I preached on Sunday." Chorbacou: "Thank you kindly, zur! Boot oi'd loike the braath better if it were moire loike the sarmon, and the sarmon if it were moire loike the braath. You see, zur, the sarmon might a' been a bit clearer, an' oi could a' doon wi' less on it; an' the braath were a bit too clear, an' oi could a' doon wi' more on it."

RHETORICIANS tell us, remarks Scissors, that the slang phrases and idiomatic expressions of one period become the language proper of the next. If this be true we can expect in the next revision of the Testament to find the story of Adam and Eve treated thus: "And the Lord grew hot under the collar at the manner in which they monkeyed around in the Garden of Eden, and he gave them the grand kick-out."

At a church not long ago, on the occasion of the funeral of a prominent and highly-respected citizen named Knight, by a singular contretemps the choir sang as their first selection the usually fitting hymn, "There will be no night there!" The effect, as soprano, alto and tenor successively took up the refrain, was well calculated to excite the risibles of those who had gathered in any but a humorous spirit.

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