

# THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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THE TOWER OF BABEL.

"And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded."—GEN. xi., 5.

## OUR FATHER.

THAT oily man of God, Archdeacon Farrar, has recently been telling the world that the cure for all the ills of modern life lies not in ambitious schemes of social improvement, but in a faithful acceptance of Christianity and a firm trust in God. Considering that Christianity has been tried for so many centuries, there is something exceedingly impudent in this recipe. And there is something worse in the Archdeacon's advice of "trust in God." No doubt it has answered remarkably well in his own case. His lines have been cast in pleasant places, he has more than a full share of the world's wealth, he knows absolutely nothing of the hardships and agonies of his less fortunate brethren, whose toil supports the luxury of himself and all the privileged class to which he belongs. Trust in God, combined of course with a sharp eye for the main chance, may lead a parson to a fat living. But we cannot all get fat livings. Somebody must endow them. And those who endow them must either work themselves or rob those who do. Trust in God generally means living at the expense of your neighbors.

Our Father, as Christ taught his disciples to address their deity, is a remarkably convenient personage to priestly and political spongers, and remarkably useless to everybody else. The widow, the orphan, the aged, the infirm, the distressed, find that he is as hard and deaf as a rock to all their prayers. They frequently ask him to "give us this day our daily bread," and go on staring at an empty table, or prowling about, weary and footsore, in search of food and shelter. They find "our Father" as implacable

as a desert sun. When they come to "a great rock" they find every place in its shadow occupied, and when they come to an oasis they are warned off from the well and the palm trees by those already installed there; until at last, with the simple "our Father" upon their feeble lips, they drop exhausted, and see dimly the swoop of vulture wings.

Perhaps Archdeacon Farrar, from the pharasaic altitude of two thousand a year, would urge that these unfortunates only pay the penalty of their own misdeeds, that sin must be punished, and that "the wages of sin is death." But this is hypocritical claptrap. It is nonsense to say that the best people always fare the best in this world, or that the worst always fare the worst. We know better, and the priests know better. There are many sky-pilots who live in luxury although their characters would not stand a comparison with those of many victims of misfortune. Christian apologists have recognised these unjust disparities, and have tried to justify them by alleging an ample rectification in the next world. Yet how do they know this? If God permits injustice here, he may permit still more hereafter.

All such arguments are excluded by natural devastations, such as famines, floods and earthquakes. What is "our Father" doing when a bad rice-crop kills off thousands of his children? What is he doing when an avalanche or a landslip mangles and buries hundreds more? What is he doing when floods sweep all before them, carrying along homesteads, destroying whole villages or towns, and tossing men, women and children like corks upon the surge? What is he doing when earthquake suddenly springs upon a doomed city, dashing down its walls, tumbling in its roofs, reddening its ruins with blood, and paralysing the survivors with such grief and terror that their lot is almost worse than that of the murdered dead? Does "our Father," who guides all the forces of nature, plan and execute these catastrophes? Does he enjoy their horrors in anticipation? Does he watch with a satisfied smile the agony of the dying and the terror of the living? Does he hear their cries unmoved? Does he listen without a pang to the shrill cries of bereaved mothers, and the deep groans of strong men who gaze on the desolation of all things they held dear? Does he see without a shudder the ghastly relics of human bodies in the *débris*? Does he behold without a sigh of regret that white baby face which should only have been smothered with kisses, and that cold hand of its dead mother protruding as in mute appeal?

A hundred and thirty years have elapsed since Voltaire wrote his poem on the Lisbon earthquake, and besought the theologians to reconcile it with their dogmas. The only answer they gave him was insult and persecution, and they can give no other answer to-day. But the recent earthquakes in Spain have found a large part of the population, although unhappily not the majority, free from priestly sophistry, and fully aware that whether God or Devil has wrought the mischief, as far as possible Man must and shall repair it. How pathetic is the spectacle of those poor priest-led Spaniards singing hymns to the Virgin, and chanting prayers to God in the fields, while their loved ones lie buried in their ruined homes and cold and starvation prowl around for fresh victims. "Our Father" is a useless phantom in the hour of need. There is no especial clause in the code of Nature for man's behoof. His welfare depends absolutely on his own knowledge, energy and courage. God helps those who help themselves, and nobody else; and when men say "God help you" they mean that you are past all hope.

G. W. FOOTE.

## THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS.

Nor everyone is aware that the twenty-seven canonical books of the New Testament are only a selection made from a number of documents current in the early days of Christianity, the rest of which have been branded as Apocryphal, and have fallen into disuse.

Luke, in the preface to his gospel, tells us that already in his time many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things most surely believed among Christians. Of the number and extent of the Apocryphal writings which accumulated in the early ages of the Church few have an idea. A bare catalogue of the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Epistles, Apocalypses, etc., then in repute would make a long list. For the sake of brevity, I confine myself to the Apocryphal Gospels. Of these about fifty are known. Some seven have come down to our time entire, the mass only in fragments, found here and there among the Fathers; and of a few we possess nothing but the names. The complete Apocryphal Gospels are:—The Gospel of Thomas, which was known to Irenæus, the first person who mentions the four canonical Gospels, and to Origen and Eusebius. Justin Martyr, who does not mention our Gospels by name, but speaks of certain Memoirs of the Apostles, writes of Jesus doing carpenter's work in almost the same words as the Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of James, or Proto-evangelium, which was quoted by Origen, as a work of authority, for the fact that Jesus had brothers. This book was much used by the Greek Fathers, they making no doubt that it was the work of James. Portions of it were publicly read in the Eastern Church, and it was translated into Arabic and Coptic. It was prohibited for a time in the Latin Churches, but was even used in the West during the middle ages. Tischendorf is disposed to regard it as the production of an Ebonite affected by Gnostic tendencies. Dr. Wright has published a Syrian fragment of the Gospel found among MSS., which he refers to the sixth century. Of less importance are: The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, which no more deserves that title than our own. The Gospel of Mary's Nativity. The History of Joseph. The Gospel of the Infancy. The Gospel of Nicodemus, which really consists of two documents, the Acts of Pilate and the Descent of Jesus into Hell; which last corroborates an important item of the so-called Apostles' Creed, which finds no support in the canonical gospels.

Translations of Tischendorf's editions of these are to be found in B. H. Cowper's "Apocryphal Gospels." That gentleman, like most orthodox divines, is never weary of speaking of them as frauds and forgeries, and of their puerility and inferiority to the Canonical Gospels. I take a milder view. Instead of being deliberate frauds and forgeries, I consider that they were like the canonical gospels, the simple conversion of oral traditions into writing, and, like them, passing from hand to hand, they went through a process of accretion in transcription. It is rather good of those who believe that Jesus was born of a virgin mother, that he walked on the sea, withered a fig-tree by cursing it, cast devils into swine, and was carried by the Devil to the top of a mountain, to speak of puerile miracles. Why should we not also believe that he turned clay sparrows into live ones; and tamed lions and panthers in Egypt, where the idols fell prostrate at his appearance? This last is surely as likely as that the veil of the temple was rent and the dead rose from their graves at his crucifixion. Our gospels are evidently imperfect. They give no account of the youth and early manhood of Jesus, or of the alleged time between his resurrection and ascension. The stories were told to fill up the gaps and to meet difficulties. Curiosity called for them and credulity accepted them. It is true they riot in a somewhat greater extravagance of fiction than the canonical gospels, but their inferiority arises less from this than from their omission of the discourses and moral teachings of Jesus.

In selecting the books of the canon the Church was neither guided by scholarship nor by a distaste for the miraculous, but by a sense of what was edifying as well as what best comported with its own doctrines. This fully accounts for the boasted superiority of the, so-called inspired gospels. The apocryphal ones show us what was the Christianity of the crowd. They afford incontestible proof how deeply the Christian religion was rooted in superstition and how

rapidly it fell into vulgarity, and they illustrate the process by which mythical legends and superstitions got appended to the simple teachings of Jesus of Galilee.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded).

## INGERSOLL ON "WHICH WAY?"

THE *Cleveland Herald* (Ohio) gives a long account of Colonel Ingersoll's lecture, "Which Way?" at Close Hall. Christians, including prominent church deacons, believers in the Hebrew religion, ministers of various denominations, members of the Liberal League, unbelievers of every known nationality, and undecided people who are still "on the fence" of religion, helped to crowd the hall to suffocation. The famous orator stepped upon the platform a few minutes after eight o'clock, and as usual, without the formality of an introduction, stepped as near as possible to the edge of the platform and began the first lines of his lecture. The frequent interruptions by applause showed that he had many friends in the audience who believe with him. In appearance he is as elegant and stately as ever. His round, intelligent face is still beaming with good nature, and, as of old, he accompanies his witty remarks with a taking smile and often with a good burst of laughter. Below we quote a few of Col. Ingersoll's remarks:—

"Have I the right to enquire? Yes. If I have the right to enquire, I have the right to investigate. If I have the right to investigate, I have the right to accept. The right to investigate and to accept carries with it the right to reject. And what shall I reject? That which does not conform with my ideas, with my standard of reason, with my standard of common sense. Of what use is language if a man is not allowed to express his ideas? That is the only use of speech. Without Freethought progress is an impossibility. Shall man be governed by the supernatural, or shall he govern himself? Millions of men have been endeavoring to govern this world by means of the supernatural. The priests of one church have no confidence in the miracles and wonders told by the priests of other churches. Maybe they know each other. A Christian missionary will tell the Hindoo of the miracles of the Bible. The Hindoo smiles. The Hindoo tells the Christian missionary of the miracles of his sacred books, and the missionary looks upon him with pity and contempt. No priest takes the word of another."

"I say to-day that no man of genius in the world is in the Orthodox pulpit, so far as I know. I challenge the Christian Church to produce a man like Alexander Humboldt, a man like Darwin. Where in the ranks of Orthodoxy are historians like Draper and Buckle? Where are the naturalists like Tyndall, philosophers like Mill and Spencer, and women like George Eliot and Harriet Martineau?"

"What is the next argument they will bring forward? The father and mother argument. 'You must not disgrace your parents.'—How did Christ come to leave the religion of his mother? That argument proves too much. There is one way every man can honor his mother—that is by finding out more than she knew. There is one way a man can honor his father—by correcting the old man's errors."

"They don't understand it was a slow growth. They don't understand that theology is a science made up of mistakes, prejudices and falsehoods. You may ask me what I want. Well, in the first place I want to get theology out of the Government. It has no business there; man gets his authority from man, and is responsible only to man. I want to get theology out of politics. I want to get theology out of morality, and out of charity. Don't give for God's sake, but for man's sake."

## ACID DROPS.

THE late Rev. W. Milton, of Sheffield, leaves 50,450L. behind him. He didn't take it with him in gold because it would have melted.

If our remark is objected to as lacking Christian charity, we answer that the doctrine of hell-fire is drawn from Christianity and that according to Christ it is impossible for a rich man to enter heaven without a special miracle. Christianity brought the horror and the terror of hell into men's hearts. We only make fun of it and destroy it.

By a decision of the popular vote the churches of Washington Territory, U.S., have to pay taxes. Why should places of worship go scot-free with us, while places of instruction pay full rates?

UNDER the head "Mechanical Modes of Worship," the *Christian World* regales its readers with Miss Gordon Cumming's account of the prayer-wheels of Thibet and other mechanical forms of invocation. Thus rosaries are used by various sects of Hindus similar to those in use among Catholics who doubtless derived

them from the East. The Vishnuvites repeat the eight-syllabled charm "Great Krishna is the refuge of my soul." In Japan the one prayer is "Save us, O Buddha." Christians do not hesitate to ridicule the repetition of these vain charms, but Sunday after Sunday cry "Lord have mercy on us. Christ have mercy upon us;" repeating the formula, "We beseech thee to hear us" twenty-three times in succession.

TALMAGE has been demolishing Evolution amidst the laughter and applause of a meeting of Baptist ministers. How would it sound, he asked, if instead of the genealogy of man in the Bible, we should read that a mushroom begat a tadpole, a tadpole begat a pollywog, a pollywog begat a fish, a fish begat a reptile, a reptile begat a quadruped, a quadruped begat a baboon, and a baboon begat man? The theory of the survival of the fittest was not true, for Garfield died in September and Guiteau survived him until the next June! There has been no natural progress. Men were once ten feet high and lived to be 900 years old. Evolution is an old heathen corpse set in a morgue, and Spencer and Huxley are trying to galvanize it.—What a spectacle of incompetence and conceit these ignorant sky-pilots present! No wonder they feel keenly the assumption that they have ascended from a grinning baboon.

M. CAMILL, M.D., of New York, complains of the impiety involved in the employment of electricity in the new electric lights and in the telegraph and the telephone. He writes to the board of aldermen: "It is demonstrated that the lightning flash and electric light are the same. Will you, then, suffer the almighty to be hired out by the year at from five dollars to eight dollars per week?"

CANON LEFROY says that the dynamite plots are frustrated by God because of the prayers of believers in Christ. Those who take part in Fenian plots are almost invariably believers in Christ too. Prayer against prayer, which is God to answer?

THE Queen thinks of visiting Mentone or Cannes. Accordingly her yacht has been luxuriously refitted at a cost of 50,000*l.* No Christian journal protests against this wanton extravagance.

DR. JOHN CLIFFORD has been indulging in "A New Year's Vision" of the twentieth century, when the General Baptists (his own sect, of course) are to have it all their own way. But all their present doctrines will then be understood in a different sense. The Bible, for instance, will be read in a different spirit. Christians will only regard the eternal substance and not the "fallible form." All this is perhaps very charming if it could only be understood; but that is a very small difficulty to a Christian.

DR. CLIFFORD talks of "the spirit of love and hope, of self-sacrifice and purity" which the Bible infuses into those who read it. Curiously, a copy of holy writ has been found on one or two burglars lately, and the practice of carrying one seems to be spreading in the profession. By-and-bye when a man is seen loitering and suspected of felonious intentions, the police will run him in and search him to see whether he has a Bible or a New Testament on him. If he has, it will be all U. P.

PROFESSOR DRUMMOND says that "the evidence for Christianity is a *Christian*." Perhaps that accounts for our scepticism. We have never seen a single true specimen yet. Where is there a Christian? We would go miles to see one.

A PIOUS contemporary claims sympathy for missionaries. We do sympathise with them, especially when they get eaten. But we sympathise a good deal more with the unfortunate cannibals.

SOME savages, by the way, believe that they become possessed of the qualities of any man they kill, especially if they eat him. What an inducement it must be, then, to murder and cannibalism, when a benighted heathen sees a missionary stocked with all the cardinal virtues! This should be borne in mind by the Societies, who might see that the missionaries they export are not too utterly virtuous and tempting.

THE Mahdi is no fool. He declined to go in front to charm off hostile bullets, as his chiefs requested when he ordered them to march against the Mudir of Dongola. He changed his mind instead, and countermanded the expedition. Our mystery-men keep clear of such tests altogether. They let the fighting men go abroad to battle, and pray for them over a snug fire and a comfortable glass.

LORD SALISBURY has at last relented. The Wesleyans at Hatfield, who meet in a stable because he has steadily refused them a site for a chapel, have just received an offer from his lordship of roomier premises. Unfortunately, however, these are far away on the borders of the next parish, so the poor Wesleyans will probably go on meeting in a place like that which their Savior was born in. How these Christians love one another!

SPURGEON is at his old tricks. "Compelled," he says, "to go away for awhile, for the doctors say we shall not rally until a change is taken, we commit all our Tabernacle work to the

Lord." Compelled! And who compels you, Mr. Spurgeon? Nobody. You simply go off to France because you want to be free from pain, exactly like other people, and because you want to keep out of heaven as long as you can, exactly like other people. Otherwise you would go on with your Tabernacle work, and commit *yourself* to the Lord. You believe in prayer just as much as we do, but you get a handsome living by hypocritical talk about it. You are always prating of the efficacy of prayer. Try it yourself. You say the Lord sends you unexpected cheques for the precise sums you want. Why then don't you ask him to cure your gout? Your only answer is a wink.

THE religious processions in Spain for thanking the Lord for quieting the earthquakes and only killing 1,000 people were premature. Almost every day the telegrams report fresh shocks. The inhabitants escape being buried alive by living out in the fields exposed to the bitter frosts. The suffering is great, for many fled from the falling houses without clothes or food. A number of towns and villages are completely destroyed and deserted, and a famine is expected. "Horrible details" are spoken of. They tell us that the Lord who sends these earthquakes in his idiotic wrath and cruelty doeth all things well. The pious Spaniards acknowledge his goodness and wish he would show it. They carry images of the Virgin Mary in solemn processions, as at Malaga, in the hope of softening his anger. They might as well import cargoes of earthquake pills from America.

THE Rev. Lewis A. Kirby, curate of Branston, undoubtedly committed a shocking and indecent offence—there was really no defence—and, as Mr. Tweed properly informed the justices, they had no option but to send the case for trial in another Court. The magistrates, however, retired, and after an absence of upwards of half-an-hour, returned into Court, when the Chairman announced that they thought the justice of the case would be met if they reduced the charge to one of aggravated assault. To this reduced charge a plea of guilty was at once put in, and "as the accused was a clergyman who was in a position different to other people," the Bench simply inflicted a fine of 20*l.* The money was, of course, at once paid. We venture to think that if the accused had been an ignorant lout instead of an educated scoundrel, the result of the case would have been very different.—*Lincoln Gazette*.

ON Monday a vicar of a parish near Birmingham charged a woman of ill-fame with robbing him at a disreputable house in Birmingham. He has not shown up to press the charge, as he might be "shown up" himself.

THE Wesleyans of Warrington are, according to the *Liverpool Daily Post*, "much scandalised" at recent events in their particular circle. The superintendent of the Sunday-school paid "attentions" to a young lady connected with the school, and subsequently transferred his "affections" to another lady. The local bench of magistrates awarded the jilted one three-and-sixpence per week for fourteen years. Verily, brethren, this is a vale of tears, and the way of the transgressor is hard.

JAMES PRESTON, member of the Salvation Army at St. Helens, tried to keep the disgraceful affiliation case in which he was concerned out of the press by bribing the reporters, but he has not succeeded. The pious vagabond seduced the girl under promise of marriage, and used to take her to Salvation Army meetings.

WE have just learned from the *Christian Commonwealth* what Christianity is. It is "a Divine Pleroma." It "tells the same truth in more than a thousand different ways." This is exactly what puzzles us. We cannot understand its contradictory ways of narrating the same truth. That seventy elders saw God and that no man hath seen God, are of course only two ways of telling the same Christian truth, but for the life of us we cannot muster sufficient faith to believe both views at once. How happy must those Christians be who can swallow a thousand!

CHRISTIANITY, or Christ, we hardly gather which, is also "that marvellous Polygon which has been the wonder of nearly nineteen centuries." We have heard of the Loves of the Triangles; perhaps the Christian editor will some day give us a history of religious wars under the title of the Conflict of the Polygons. For our part we want Christianity to act on the square, without going into more pretentious figures.

THE same paper says that the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem eighteen hundred and eighty-four years ago has never been seriously disputed and never will be. But every scholar knows that by the best Christian reckonings the ordinary chronology is four years out. That Bethlehem was the birthplace of the Nazarene is also very seriously disputed. Those who are careless in little things cannot be trustworthy guides in great things.

THE *Cambrian News* of Jan. 2 says: "The greatest example of lying and shameful advertisements of all sorts we know of is the *Christian World*, which alternates sermons on the grace of God with advice gratis by 'Christian' gentlemen who have suffered from loathsome diseases!" Many of the distinctively Christian papers are tarred with the same brush.

J. HUDSON writes to *Kemble's Gazette*, urging that a monument should be erected at Margate as a thank-offering to God for having spared the town from cholera. An inscription thanking God for having removed so many Italians during the past year without injuring the people of Margate, will do much honor to that watering-place.

PARKER says that Christians have "turned the trumpet into an Atheist." He means that the churches have banished it from their services. Steam engines and electric telegraphs, we suppose, are also Atheists.

JESUS was a true prophet. He said his followers would be brought before magistrates and punished. This was the case with Herbert Percy Freund, the inspired evangelist, who has been repeatedly convicted for causing an obstruction at the Royal Exchange by preaching "The Doom of London." He again was brought before the Lord Mayor charged with brawling in St. Paul's Cathedral. It was proved he rose from the congregation and said, "Now is the time for the kingdom of God to come! This is a temple of idols." In defence prisoner said, "I am God's creature, for God created man and woman in his own likeness." The Lord Mayor: "I don't want any nonsense of that kind." Prisoner: "No, you won't hear me; neither you nor your predecessors will hearken to God or his voice." The prisoner admitting the charge, the Lord Mayor said he was evidently demented, though not insane, and therefore he would not send him to an asylum, but would commit him to prison for two months. Freund may console himself with the reflection that his master would have fared no better.

THIS case is a striking comment on the Christianity of the age. Freund is evidently deeply imbued with the spirit of his master. Like him he denounced the Pharisees of the time, and proclaims woe to the city, not hesitating to brawl in the temple itself. Like him he cites scripture in his defence, but the Lord Mayor, with secular wisdom, pooch-poochs scripture as nonsense, and confines himself to the charge. If, however, Freethinkers challenge scripture as nonsense they do so at the risk of prosecution from the Court of Aldermen.

THE *Lambeth Post* calls a correspondent in the *Echo* a "maudlin fool" because he pleads for mercy on behalf of Jay, who murdered his sweetheart in a fit of jealousy. The Christian editor would, "if possible, hang him twice over." He would have the community love its enemies in the usual Christian style.

WE are informed that "Kelly's Post-Office Directory" has Scriptural texts in very large type, inserted at certain pages. The taste of this is questionable, and the effect, probably, is to bring religion into ridicule; but while there are maniacs who like to pay heavily for this kind of advertisement, the proprietors, we suppose, will continue to pocket their money and oblige them.

THE Rev. W. Stacey Chapinan, of St. Leonard's Newark, issues a paltry leaflet, which he styles the first of "these simple, straightforward, vigorous, homely and thoroughly evangelical tracts." We never saw a sillier or worse written production. The longest and most important paragraph is a miraculously feeble attempt at wit, concluding with an appeal for the collection box. Somehow the sky-pilots always end up with that.

THE *Protestant Standard* combines religion with business in a truly pious manner. The editor beseeches his readers to serve the Lord by "increasing his circulation to a million copies every week," and by sending him advertisements, remembering always that "our lowest price is four shillings per inch."

DR. LAMBART, of Liverpool, has just finished a course of lectures on "The Flood." No one can deny that there was a flood of talk. His lectures were supposed to be a "reply" to Mrs. Besant's lecture delivered two years ago, and took nearly as long in preparing as Noah's ark did in building, and were equally "at sea." Dr. Lambart's medical addresses are intended "for young men" (don't blush, doctor); he has shown his impartiality by producing theological discourses admirably adapted for old women—of either sex.

THE unconscious blasphemy of some people is comical. The other night a Mr. L. P. Stubbs, of Liverpool, was addressing a meeting of Sunday-school teachers at Stalybridge when he compared the second person of the Trinity to a cart! "We are all yoked to Christ as to a cart," said the orator. The metaphor was certainly a novel one, and the only omission the speaker made was a description of the animals who draw the cart. He might also have told his hearers what sort of a cart J. C. is. There are carts and carts. Some which travel in the Lord Mayor's Show and some which come after it.

THE *Christian Herald*, in its regular weekly column of Faith-healing reports, tells of the restoration to sound health of a factory-girl in a rapid decline who had been "so ill" that "all arrangements for her funeral had more than once been made."

This last statement looks like a falsehood on the face of it, and strongly indicates the general want of accuracy and truthfulness on the part of the simpletons and quacks who are concerned in these Faith-healing cases.

AT the re-opening of St. Colan's Church, Cornwall, great commotion was caused by the conduct of Mr. Hoblyn, a county magistrate, who, in defence of his alleged proprietary rights, made his way into the church and cut down one of the pews. His friends also tried to prevent certain seats from being occupied, but failed, the crowd being too great and too pugnacious for such tactics to be of any use.

GOD sent a storm to Plymouth, which blew down a nunnery wall and killed one of the nuns. What had she done to offend his almighty lordship, we wonder? Perhaps she had eaten meat on a Friday, or miscounted her beads.

DURING service at the Presbyterian Church, Gloucester Road, Chalk Farm, the gallery suddenly gave way, precipitating its occupants to the ground. One lady was killed, and several persons seriously injured. What sermons a similar accident at the Hall of Science would have occasioned!

THE Rev. J. T. Brien, of Longsight, died suddenly on Christmas Day. He had been keeping Christmas not wisely but too well.

THESE accidents may be accounted for by this being the special week of prayer. Probably the Lord plugs his ears with cotton wool, or drops off to sleep to avoid the importunities of his servants.

THE parishioners of St. John's, Cheetham, want their nine-years' curate, the Rev. Charles Gunton, to be appointed to the rectorship. The neighboring clergy inform the bishop that he is a dreadful infidel, and the poor bishop don't know what to do. He feels that whatever the wishes of the congregation may be, he must send a bad saint, rather than a good infidel, to Cheetham.

MR. AND MRS. FULLER, of Sheffield, are very religious, it appears. A policeman found them in their night-dresses in the street, and with their baby still more slightly clad, although the night was bitterly cold. They walked along arm-in-arm, singing hymns. They refused to return home, but consented to go with the policeman on condition that he took them to a place of worship. While on the way to the police-station they noticed that the policeman was not singing, and they refused to move another step unless he would join in the hymn. Such piety deserved reward, and next morning they were sent home. But Mr. Fuller soon climbed out on the leads in his night-dress and addressed the passers-by on their way to church, telling them to fetch Canon Blakeney, as he was the only person who would do them good. Mrs. Fuller also got out of the window and emphasised her husband's remarks by brandishing a broken fire-shovel. Ladders were procured and the religious lunatics were secured with some difficulty and taken to an asylum.

THESE religious monomaniacs, it was found, had been dipping their children into cold water and returning them, wet and shivering, to their beds. The mother said she had been "washing them in the blood of Christ." The father at another time had thrown the baby, naked, from the window into the street, and the mother caught it "like a ball." If these fanatics had lived in the time of St. Simon Stylites, they would have been canonized as eminent Christian saints.

ANOTHER nice couple are Joseph and Ann Rowthan, of West Ham, the latter of whom summoned her husband for assault. In his defence the prisoner said his wife was always preaching at him. She preached Anti-Christ, whilst he only believed in a stern, humble Galilean. Magistrate: "What does she preach?" Prisoner: "She preaches lies. She is all the while at it." Complainant: "Why, he preaches at me. He says Christ told him to do that and to do this. What I preach I learn at the Brickfields Chapel, and they don't tell lies there." Of course not, nor at the husband's chapel either; yet little religious differences have led to strife from the time of Cain and Abel downwards.

THE *Saturday Review* for Jan. 3 has an article on the ancient MS. of the New Testament preserved at Cambridge and known as the Codex Bezae. It characterises an attempt in this version to reconcile the genealogies given in Matthew and Luke as "a wilful and wanton alteration of the text." The manuscript is assigned to the sixth century, and contains numerous variations from other MSS. Among others a long interpolation occurs between the 28th and 29th verses of Matt. xx. The *S. R.* says: "Its readings are very erratic in St. Luke's Gospel, and far more so in the Acts of the Apostles." All of which shows the great care taken by the Holy Ghost of the inspired writings.

THE Coroner at Gosport has a nice notion of the law and its dignity. Upon a juryman requesting to affirm, he would neither allow him to do so nor to leave the court, but detained him as a listener, "to uphold the dignity of the court."

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Jan. 11, Gymnasium Hall, Huddersfield:—at 11, "Buddha before Christ;" at 3, "The Roots of Christianity;" at 6.30, "Will Christ Save Us?"

JANUARY 18, Milton Hall; 20, Walworth; 25, Milton Hall; 27, Walworth.

FEBRUARY 1, Claremont Hall, London; 8, Hall of Science, London; 15, Milton Hall; 22, Liverpool.

MARCH 1, Manchester; 8, Claremont Hall; 15, Northampton; 22, Grimsby; 29, Glasgow.

APRIL 19, Hall of Science; 26, Hall of Science.

## 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, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.

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.—J. Smith, Ole Mo.

W. BOWERMAN.—Booth's Christmas cadging circular has already been dealt with. Glad to hear of your services to the movement.

F. RAYNER.—The best work we know against Spiritism is Truesdell's "Bottom Facts." It shows how all the tricks are done. There is also "Confessions of a Medium," published by Griffith and Farren; and a shilling exposure of Spiritism by F. Maskelyne. Mr. G. H. Reddall had a very good pamphlet exposure, which we expect is out of print.

W. SOWDON.—We have no space for your communication.

J. SUFFOLK.—Read Greg's "Creed of Christendom," Newman's "Phases of Faith," and Amberley's "Analysis of Religious Belief." We shall be surprised if you remain a Christian after the perusal of these works.

J. DAVISON.—Dr. F. C. C. Louis Buchner was born at Darmstadt, March 29, 1824. "Force and Matter" was first published in 1855.

G. KITCHING.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

ARGUS.—We have not received any copy of the *Sydney Bulletin* lately. Thanks for the cuttings.

J. W. GRANTHAW.—We are obliged for the cuttings and your compliments and your good wishes.

H. J. THORPE writes that he left on the table of the Haverhill Reading Room that copy of the *Freethinker* on account of which Mr. Turpin was expelled. He gives an amusing account of the finding of this awful paper, and of the look of mingled terror and disgust that sat on the faces of the officials as they contemplated it. A parson finally put it in his pocket as the *safest place*, probably intending to read it carefully on the quiet.

G. NAYLOR.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

C. W. ROWE.—The argument has often been used before. Thanks for the clippings.

G. COCKMAN, Secretary of the Hackney Branch of the N. S. S., desires us to press on all Freethinkers in the district the necessity of their supporting it by their presence and subscriptions. Meetings are held every Sunday evening at Rutland Hall, Broadway, South Hackney.

J. COLE.—Thanks. Why not join the Hackney Branch?

H. W. KITCHENER informs us that he has got a newsagent at Olney, Bucks, to supply the *Freethinker* and *Progress*. His address is H. H. Hobbs, High Street. Our correspondent adds that every one of our Special Numbers is superior to its predecessor, and that it is the duty of every Freethinker to support *Progress* while it "keeps up to its present high standard of excellence."

W. H. CARTER.—By joining the Hall of Science Club and Institute, 142 Old Street, E.C., the subscription to which is very light, you will have access to a good library containing not only Mill's works but many others you will require.

CONSTANT READER.—Colonel Ingersoll's lectures are easily procurable; and if you read them you will know what his views are better than we can tell you.—The authorities can prosecute you for disobeying the Vaccination Laws as often as they please, and you may be fined just as frequently.—See "Acid Drops."

J. W. FORTESCUE sends 2s. 6d. for Children's Party.

C. HOBSON.—Glad to find soldiers like yourself who are not afraid of avowing their principles. Thanks for your interesting letter.

H. TONGE.—Many thanks for the portrait of the lad who refused to take the oath at Wigan.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Catholic Times—Cambrian News—Newcastle Herald (New South Wales)—Truthseeker—Montreal Weekly Witness—Boston Investigator—Lincoln Gazette—St. Helen's Newspaper—Liberal (Barton Co.)—Women's Suffrage Journal—Sheffield Evening Star—Leicester Chronicle—National Philanthropist—York Herald—Portsmouth Evening News.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE lectured at Rochdale last Sunday. His visit was rendered pleasant by two things. In the afternoon he presented an Illuminated Address, handsomely framed, to Mr. W. Cropper, corresponding secretary, on behalf of the Committee of the Branch. Mr. Cropper, who has labored long and earnestly for Freethought, acknowledged the testimonial in a brief speech, which was rendered too brief by the emotion which over-

powered his voice. In the evening, during a chat with the Committee, Mr. Foote learned that the Secular Hall is doing remarkably well, financially and otherwise. The only drawback to the day's pleasantness was the absence of Mr. Priestley, who was confined to his house by indisposition.

THE Rev. E. Whitehouse, formerly curate of Dawley, writes home from Patea, New Zealand. According to this clerical whiner, religion is dying out in New Zealand because there is no endowed State Church to keep it alive. This supports what we have always said, that religion is a trade. When it turns over plenty of cash it is lively, when it turns over little it languishes, and passes through bankruptcy to dejection. Mr. Whitehouse adds that the prestige of the Government out there is "thrown into the scale against" Christianity, and he describes New Zealand as "the Paradise of so-called Freethought."

THE *Toronto Globe* gives a report of the Convention of Canadian Freethinkers in that city. Mr. J. Ick Evans will be president and Mr. R. B. Butler secretary for the ensuing year. A protest was made against the Customs' collectors confiscating the works of Paine and other Freethought literature. We are glad to note a spirit of activity among the Freethinkers of the dominion.

WE have received a copy of the neat card of membership of the Ingersoll Secular Society, Boston, Massachusetts, whose meetings are held every Sunday afternoon in the Paine Memorial Hall. At the top is an extract from the Colonel's lectures:—"Banish me from Eden when you will, but first let me eat of the fruit of the tree of Knowledge." At the bottom is a sentence from Professor Clifford:—"If men were no better than their religions, the world would be a hell indeed." The subscription is one dollar a year. We wish the new Society all success.

THE principles of the Ingersoll Secular Society are simple and admirable:—"We affirm it to be both the duty and the pride of all Freethinkers to advocate the use of Reason as the Supreme Guide and Standard for mankind in ALL THINGS; to inculcate the doing of Right for the Right's sake ALONE; and to labor actively in teaching people to so appreciate Truth and Virtue that they will search out and follow them because of their WORTH and BEAUTY, and not because of rewards and punishments either in this world or any other."

THE following complaint is not from an "infidel" paper, but from the *Rock*:—"To listen to the 'twaddle' which we hear in some churches is enough to disgust every sensible man who is doomed to be one of the audience. The people will throng the church of some eccentric preacher who tickles their fancy, or they will go to hear fine music, or, in fact, anything that appeals to the senses or to the love of the curious. The public will go to church to be amused rather than to be instructed, and the clergy too often pander to such craving after novelty."

THIS afternoon (Jan. 11) the Rev. Fleming Williams will lecture in St. Peter's Club Room, St. Peter's Street, Hackney Road, on "The *Freethinker* Cartoons." The lecture begins at four o'clock. Only men are admitted, so our lady readers need not take the trouble to go. There will, however, be "free discussion" after Mr. Williams has finished his impeachment, and we think we may predict something lively in the way of debate.

THE *Newcastle Herald*, New South Wales, devotes a column to the account of the opening of a Hall of Science at Newcastle. Miss Ada Campbell, the Freethought lecturer, formally opened the building, and a good report of her address is given.

A CONFERENCE to consider the best means of promoting district Secular organisation will be held on Sunday, Jan. 18, at Mr. Cuxon's, the Rose Tavern, Church Hill, Wednesday. Chair to be taken at 6.30. p.m.

WE are glad to see that Mr. Cookney, 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, has received a good list of subscriptions for the children's party at the Hall of Science next Wednesday, and hope he will receive a good many more. A capital programme of games and amusements has been put forward and a good band is engaged to enliven the proceedings.

THE supply of educated clergymen is falling off in Wales. Of four "priests," recently ordained by the Bishop of Bangor, only one had a university degree. No wonder. Educated men know how false the Church dogmas are, but of course there is one in four who will sign thirty-nine articles, or, as Sydney Smith's young man said, forty if you like.

A WRITER in the *Goleaud*, the organ of the Welsh Methodists, says that "there are many thoughtful young men in our churches who are not at ease about the doctrines of our Connection." Good. But there are many thoughtful young Freethinkers who are entirely at ease about them. The young Methodists will never obtain real ease until they go the same road.

THE French Senate has voted a tax of three per cent. on the property and income of religious bodies, and has abolished the five Catholic Faculties of Theology which have between them only thirty-seven students, although they took about 8,000L a year from the State.

THE population of Berlin is about 1,000,000. Of them less than 20,000 attend public worship. In Hamburg out of 400,000 only 5,000 are found in churches on the Sunday.

#### PARKER IN THE PULPIT.

DR. PARKER, who runs the City Temple and one or two other Christian enterprises, speaks of course with the emphatic omniscience and satisfied assurance which are indispensable for success in the pulpit. He swallows the moral and scientific difficulties of the Bible with the greatest ease, and expects others to imitate the feat without the slightest injury to their moral digestions.

In a recent sermon he does his best to beautify the tale of Jacob's roguery and religion with pulpit eloquence of the usual showy and evasive nature. "Jacob saw Heaven," and so, like that pious thief, "we must bear the reproach [!] of still believing in a heaven rather than wither under the negative of despair." But is nothing to be said about honesty and brotherly feeling? Apparently this is superfluous. Religion is everything. For Dr. Parker says: "All speech is resolved into one word—God! When a man has had his soul filled with God he can never be a bad man. From this sight of God Jacob begins a new life. He may supplant and cheat—that is in the man's queer blood, but he will die upwards, heavenwards." The religious swindler we find can never be a bad man. He only has to fill his soul with God, as Jacob did, and then, however much he may supplant and cheat, he will "die upwards, heavenwards," and his felonies and treacheries will be of little consequence, or of none at all—for we have Dr. Parker's solemn assurance that such a scoundrel as this can never be a bad man. Beautiful moral teaching to thank God and Parker for, is it not?

Dealing with the wholesale destruction of the men, women, children and cattle of Canaan, at the command of his God, he says (according to the account in the *Christian Commonwealth*): "The awful statements made respecting the heathen or non-Jewish people, have occasioned great surprise and not a little resentment. If we take such words in a narrow and literal sense we cannot fail to be shocked. They represent the very spirit of oppression and murder. But if we take them in the right sense we shall find that they set forth the philosophy of progressive civilisation." The very spirit of oppression and murder, taken in the right sense, the religious sense of course, is the divinely-planned source and means of Christian civilisation. Oppression and murder are useful and moral, in short, and are commanded of God. The only thing necessary, we suppose, is that they should be carried out in a proper Christian spirit. The bullets should be wadded with leaves from the Bible, and the bayonets must be blessed by an archbishop and be washed in the blood of Christ as well as of the natives. But Dr. Parker feels that he must hark back or he will lose touch of the present age; for the partially Secularised Christians of to-day are apt to feel occasional scruples when carrying out a policy of this kind. So he justifies the extermination of the Canaanites as "no mere act of butchery and oppression," because some races have to "succumb to others." "They have played their part and have given way to a higher humanity." A "higher humanity" educed by murder under the personal orders and superintendence of an omnipotent being whom Dr. Parker worships as a God of infinite love!

But this advocate of religious murder claims time, slow murder appearing in his eyes to be less objectionable or more defensible than the rapid slaughter which God had insisted upon. "We want time," says the Doctor; "we read the verses in sweltering haste, and imagine that blow followed blow in merciless rapidity; but between the chapters a million years may lie." The last two words, we are afraid, apply more accurately to the reckless preacher who asserts that such an interval is possible than to the million years he speaks of. Biblical chronology only allows about six thousand years since the creation. Where, then, can our pulpit orator possibly place his "million years?" We know of no two consecutive chapters of the biblical record that are separated by as much as a thou-

sandth part of this interval. The suggestion of such a prolonged cessation of slaughter and of suffering during the conquest of Canaan or in the fearful conflict throughout Nature caused by the struggle for existence, is monstrously absurd. This ridiculous excuse for the divine policy of wholesale massacre and annexation is, however, supposed to be a valid defence of the conduct of the Almighty being who ordered it, and it appears, too, that this brutal policy is to be carried out among mankind everywhere as long as the world lasts; for our worse-than-Devil's advocate, our God's advocate, calmly proceeds to tell us that, "We are not dealing with a local incident, but we are in the direct sequence of development. The Bible has never swerved from its own lines. From the first to the last, the new humanity is to advance, and all that is not of its own quality is to be destroyed." Does this mean that the "new humanity" is to shoot down the Indians and exterminate the Zulus and the Soudanese and the New Zealanders? It looks marvellously like the deliberate advocacy of such proceedings. But a nineteenth-century Christian feels that the biblical method of treating aboriginal races is becoming indefensible. Dr. Parker cannot accept the responsibility. He throws it upon God. He leaves "all he cannot explain about the servile or antagonistic races" and their fate at our hands "to him who created them." He consoles Christian destroyers of less warlike races with the comfortable reflection that "Light shall slay the darkness, and a kingdom shall be established which shall explain the mystery of the conflict." Christian rejoicing of this kind shows us that we have hardly done strict justice to the memory of our great forefather Cain. There must, after all, have been a kind of honesty or human conscience in the man which his Christian descendants often fail to inherit. Although it was through a religious quarrel that he slew his brother, yet he never boasted of the act or attempted to justify it. Still less did he glorify it by saying to himself with pious pride: "Light shall slay the darkness, and God in his own good time shall make the mystery clear. He did not dream of sanctifying and ennobling his crime by canting about "the masonry of hearts, the innermost natures of men," and the glory of God. No; if he did not repent, he at least fled from human reproach. It was reserved for Christians to do neither. What a pity Cain was not more deeply religious and that Jehovah did not turn vegetarian and accept his fruits of the ground as graciously as he did the slaughtered lambs offered by Abel; for in that case Cain would have become the greatest hero of the biblical narrative, and a noble representative of the "new humanity" of Moses and Joshua and Parker.

W. P. BALL.

#### "SWEET BEULAH-LAND."

PALESTINE, *alias* Canaan, or Beulah, was a land flowing with milk and honey; hence its sweetness. Alderney cows were indigenous there, and Hivites and Maccabees flourished.

This country is also remarkable as the birth-place of the clever genius who wrote "As Buzzy as a Bee." Another of her native wits was Jerry Myer, who penned that famous pun, "Every one *neighed* after his *neighbor's* wife" (v. 8).

In the "holy land" miracles and prodigies abounded, while the profane believe it not. Hear what the Lord *said!*—"Isaiah hath walked *naked* and barefoot three years for a sign and *wonder*" (xx., 2). Nothing short of divine wisdom could have evolved such a plan—in short, it was a *nude* departure in the wonderful. I will adduce several apologies for, and bring forward proofs of the attainments in science of, that enlightened country.

The author of "Proverbs" was no doubt a medical man, and he writes: "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life." Vegetarianism was anticipated by him—"Better is a dinner of 'yarbs' than a stalled ox." The same philosopher, in a charmingly subtle and insinuating manner, indirectly pats Scepticism on the back. He says, "The *simple* believeth every word." Some say Solomon was a despot, but, holy brethren, that is a mistake! Constitutional governments were undoubtedly meant when he wrote: "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." These were no idle words. Solomon strictly carried them out, for he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred—columbines! The wise man, too, had a thorough

knowledge of the laws of dynamics—"If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength." A forcible remark!

Mr. Bradlaugh, no less than the Archbishop of Canterbury, can seek consolation from the words: "All things come alike to all. . . . As is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath."

The annihilation theory, too, can claim the moral support of the frisky epicurean Solomon—"That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts, as the one dieth, so dieth the other. . . . So that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; all go unto one place" (Eccles. iii., 19, 20).

Another apology for Atheism appears in Jeremiah viii., 9. We learn there that even in that early age "wise men rejected the word of the Lord," but brethren in the faith may object, and point to the context, verse 10, "Therefore will I give their wives unto others." The reader may, however, accept this statement with reserve. It may be human interpolation. I do not believe God inspired it. It matters not, for there may be a lie in the most carefully edited work. Observation teaches us that Freethinkers do not lose their wives in that manner oftener than other men.

Turning for a while to the book of Job, v., 21, we find as a "happy result of God's correction" this promise to the righteous: "Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue," which, being interpreted, means successful concealment in the coal-cellar from a nagging wife. The 25th verse candidly admits one drawback: "Thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth" (green!)

Natural history, too, had a student and exponent in Job. He asks in splendidly sarcastic style: "Doth the untamed donkey bray when he hath grass?" The answer to be inferred is a piece of information original as interesting. We have known the cultivated species of that animal to bray in a luxuriant meadow studded with daisies and buttercups and vocal with the song of birds. The civilised donkey brays when it is happiest.

In continuing my reverent apology for the "Holy Bible," I may here establish the antiquity of hygienic science, such as, for instance, the prophetic words of the Methodist Christ: "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Job teaches: "He that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger."

"The legs of the lame are not equal." For this valuable contribution to the literature of surgical science we are indebted to that patient sufferer and long-suffering patient Job. These words afford a simple means of detecting a cripple, and enable us to avoid the halter! "The legs of the lame are not equal." Remember this, my brethren, and walk only with the upright, which the man with legs cut unequal lengths can never be.

Turn we now to Isaiah, and it strikes us more forcibly than ever that he was a "prophet." Hear ye him: "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart." I humbly hope the divine displeasure will not fall upon me if I undertake to prove the fulfilment of this prophecy from the reputed poet and supposed philosopher Master William Shakspeare, late of Stratford-on-Avon. In the second part of King Henry VI., act II., scene 1, you will find these words:

SIMPCOX: Alas, master, I am not able to stand alone.

You go about to torture me in vain.

*Re-enter Attendant and a Beadle.*

GLOSTER: Well, sir, we must have you find your legs.

Sirrah, Beadle, whip him till he leap over that same stool.

After the beadle hath hit him once he leaps over the stool and runs away, and the people follow and cry, "A miracle!"

Colonel Ingersoll says there may be a million gods. That is a brilliant idea of his, which the ancients stole. I can prove this. The orthodox will admit that the witch at En-dor was a true prophetess, and she told Saul she saw gods (a million) ascending out of the earth. I am glad to discover this doctrine of a plurality of gods in the visions of the Jewish Spiritualists.

Until now we have imputed heinous sin to that untutored barbarian Homer for his polytheism, but Juno bet Venus two I think all that Mars the gracefulness of his theology is the introduction of feminine beauties, a horrid deformity when judged by the canons of true religion.

In concluding this paper I beg to apologise to the whole Christian world, if I have not completely reconciled the book of God with the book of Nature, and made the way of Salvation plain as the nose on the face of the plainest cook in Christendom. Amen. W. C. SAVILLE.

#### SONNET.

"In the eyes of God,  
Pain may have purpose and be justified."  
—Browning's "Ferishtah's Fancies."

PAIN may! Pain *must* be justified with God,  
If God there be, and he be also good;  
But man and pain have ever been at feud,  
And aye shall be, from cradle to the sod:  
Man's highest sense thus contradicts his God—  
That is, man's highest is his lowest mood,  
Which is absurd, and can't be understood.  
If pain, then sin must purpose have with God,  
For pain and sin are one—thus we must say:  
God is its cause, while man's its bitter foe;  
That man seeks good, while God sends sin and woe.  
Why chase the night? We hardly see by day!  
But this we know—disguise it how we may—  
That pain is wrong, and God we do not know!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

#### REVIEW.

*The Story of the Scottish Reformation.* By G. A. WILMOT, F.R.G.S. London: Burns and Oates.

THIS history, which on its very first page spells the name of the authoress of the "Lives of the Queens of England" as Miss "Strikland," cannot receive our commendation. It is written entirely from the Roman Catholic standpoint, defending Mary Stuart and abusing the Reformation which it calls "a curse to Scotland." Knox it describes as "a ruffian" and as accessory in the murder of Beaton and Rizzio. Buckle is cited in proof of the persecuting spirit and narrow tyranny of the Scotch Kirk. This is, doubtless, true enough, but the author carefully conceals the persecution and tyranny of the Romanists. There are too many books occupied with Mary Stuart already for this defence of that unfortunate to deserve any praise.

#### FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

THE BIBLE AND THE APOCRYPHA.—The doctrine of immortality, clearly expressed in the Book of Wisdom, is not in Ecclesiastes; neither is God once named in the Book of Esther as author of the marvellous deliverances which the chosen people are said to have experienced. The history narrated in 1 Maccabees is more credible than that in Esther. It is therefore misleading to mark off all the apocryphal works as *human* and all the canonical ones as *divine*.—Dr. Samuel Davidson, "The Canon of the Bible," p. 263; 1880.

HELL.—The cruelty of a Feejeean god, who, represented as devouring the souls of the dead, may be supposed to inflict torture during the process, is small compared with the cruelty of a god who condemns men to tortures which are eternal; and the ascription of this cruelty, though habitual in ecclesiastical formulas, occasionally occurring in sermons, and still sometimes pictorially illustrated, is becoming so intolerable to the better-natured, that while some theologians distinctly deny it, others quietly drop it out of their teachings.—Herbert Spencer, "Religious Retrospect," *Nineteenth Century*, Jan. 1884.

OATHS.—The oaths and other engagements with which the statute book swarms, are with few, if any exceptions, a great deal worse than useless. Either they have an exclusionary effect, or by their emptiness and looseness they afford to those who have taken them the pretence of acting under a sense of obligation, while no such sense is in their hearts. Hear a judge talk of his oath! What is that oath? A piece of old woman's tattle that is never seen by anybody, means nothing, and has nothing in it which has any tendency to bind anybody. Oh, yes! one thing it has, and that is a promise never to take money fee of anybody. But this he breaks in the face of day, and most days of his life. And thus it is that, in the teeth of Magna Charta, he denies justice to all but the rich and make them pay for it!—Jeremy Bentham, "Notes to Radical Reform Bill."

ARCHDEACON HALE, who was a severe martinet, reprimanding one of the poor aged brethren of the Charterhouse for what he considered insufficient attention to personal neatness and cleanliness, said: "Have you forgotten that vermin were sent as a plague upon the Egyptians?" "Ah, sir," sighed the old man, "a worse plague than vermin was sent to them. *Hail* was sent!"

### PROFANE JOKES.

WHAT animals have the best chance of going to heaven?—Skye-terriers. And the poorest?—Sky-pilots.

OUR jokist thinks that Jesus Christ, whose promised return is eighteen hundred years overdue, may fairly be described as a sky-tarrier.

THE other day we were, for once in our lives, pleased with the proceedings of some Skye-pilots. They refused to take their barks out of harbor when they found that the soldiers and police on board were to be taken to overawe the crofters.

A DAY or two since a lad eight years of age said to his mother: "Which are we, Baptists or Episcopalists?" "We ain't any of them," said a younger brother, chipping in; "we're Percific Coast planeers."

NEW curate to boy: "Then, do I understand that your aunt is on your father's side or on your mother's?" Country scholar: "Sometimes one and sometimes other's, 'ceptin' when feyther whacks e'm both, sir."

FLIPPS, who had been lunching with a friend upon frog's legs: "Everything you see is of some use in the world, even the frog." Friend, who is disputatious: "I don't agree with you. Of what use is the mosquito to us?" Flipps: "Ah! my dear fellow, you take a wrong view of things. Just think how useful we are to the mosquito."

A CLERGYMAN was devoutly reading the Holy Scriptures to his congregation, when he came to certain words in the lower right hand corner to which he desired to give great emphasis, so he read with a loud voice, "I am"—turned over two leaves, and continued "an ass, the foal of an ass"—then, seeing his mistake, found the right place, and added,—"that I am," which, of course, nobody would deny.

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