

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

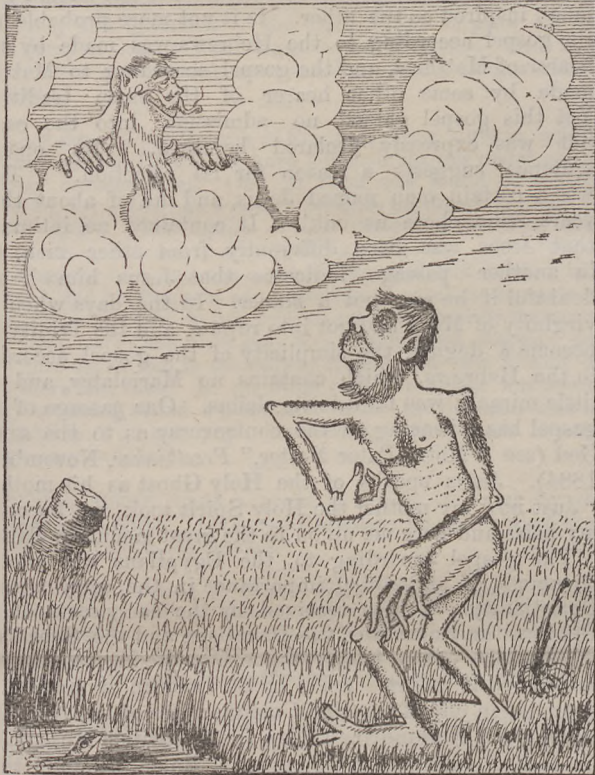
Sub-Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

Vol. V.—No. 3.]

JANUARY 18, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 105.



A CHIP OF THE OLD BLOCK.

(PRIMITIVE MAN).

“So God created man in his own image.”—GENESIS I., 27.

NONSENSE ON ATHEISM.

No greater nonsense is ever talked in this world than when a parson gets on his legs to discourse on Atheism. By some peculiar fatality, the subject is sure to bring out all his insolence, unverity and stupidity; and if he starts, as he generally does, with the first verse of the fourteenth Psalm, you may expect a wonderful display of these qualities. There are many varieties of fools, but there is no fool like a fool in a pulpit. He suggests the reflection that, after all, Balaam's talking ass is one of the smallest miracles in the Bible, and that it belonged to a very numerous and persistent species.

The special object of our criticism is a sermon on Atheism, recently preached in Eccleston Square Church by the Rev. Dr. J. Hiles Hitchens. The key-note of his discourse is struck in his text—“The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.” Notwithstanding this ancient piece of pious impertinence, Dr. Hitchens afterwards sneers at Atheism as a new comer, a sort of *parvenu* among the aristocrats of orthodoxy. This is a fair specimen of his self-contradictions. There is another equally glaring. In his first paragraph he says that “the idea of a Supreme Being had not been obtained by human investigation and deduction, but by direct revelation.” Yet at least a half of his sermon is devoted to showing that God's existence may be seen by “a glance” at the beauty and harmony of nature. And he still further contradicts himself a little later, by allowing that the scientist, in studying nature, does not find God, if he “lay aside all that by instinct and education he has found favorable to the divine.” Such gross discrepancies are amazing at first sight; but they are easily intelligible when you reflect that the speaker is

accustomed to hold forth from the “coward's castle,” where there is no fear of question or reply.

Dr. Hitchens defines Atheism as “the denial of the Divine Existence.” This is absolutely false. Atheism does not deny God; it simply fails to see any satisfactory evidences of his existence. It is not so foolish as to affirm a universal negative. Dr. Hitchens is therefore absurd in contending that “logically, the burden of proof rests with the Atheist.” The burden of proof logically lies on the Theist who affirms, and not on the Atheist who is unconvinced. If this rule is to be reversed, a host of absurdities would soon pass current as respectable truths. Who can disprove witchcraft, or astrology, or necromancy? Yet those who maltreat old women as witches are fined for assault, and those who live by fortune-telling are sent to prison as rogues and vagabonds. Dr. Hitchens' “logic” is in direct opposition to the common sense and common practice of mankind.

Design, says our preacher, must have had a designer. People who talk in this way only expose their simplicity. It is not argument but tautology. “Designer” is involved in “design.” They are only two aspects of the same conception. To say that design must have had a designer, is only saying that design is design. Nobody disputes it. The question is, is there design in nature? Dr. Hitchens tries to prove that there is by giving us a selected catalogue of natural objects, such as the “clustering constellations” (another piece of tautology), Uranus with its mighty orbit, dewdrops, roses, cascades, glaciers, butterflies' eyes, houseflies' wings, and human beings. All this, however, proves nothing. We could readily show the imperfections of many of these; man himself being so full of them, that apart altogether from mental and moral defects, there are hundreds of aberrations from the normal physical structure in the most perfect specimens. But the simplest retort is an opposition catalogue of cancers, tubercles, phylloxera, microbes, and other parasitical pests. Our world-drama might be called “The Biter Bitten,” for as the old rhyme runs,

“Fleas there are that bite men,
And fleas that bite those fleas again;
Those fleas have little fleas that bite 'em;
So fleas bite fleas *ad infinitum*.”

Dr. Hitchens may think there is something vulgar in the introduction of a flea, but on his own theory it is one of God's creatures, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Science, of course, knows nothing vulgar; all things are equal objects of her impartial study. And even theologically, if there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow, there is also a special providence in the hop of a flea. We trust that this great truth is reverently borne in mind by doctors of divinity when they happen to lie in populous beds.

The two great theologians on whom Dr. Hitchens relies are Howe and Paley—antediluvian doctors who reigned before the Darwinian flood. Evolution has put them entirely out of date. It has also explained their error. They looked at nature upside down. They put the cart before the horse. They took the result for the cause. They saw adaptation and called it design. They did not know the biological explanation of it, nor did they see the far more numerous cases of *unadaptation* which perish out of sight in the struggle for existence. They were ignorant of the “survival of the fittest,” which really means the elimination of the unfit, the survivors being the few victors in a multitudinous battle. Dr. Hitchens' science is as antiquated as his logic.

It is difficult to reply to the rest of Dr. Hitchens' sermon, for it is little else than wild assertion of the immorality of

Atheism, in perfect disregard of history and experience. Here is a sample, which is about as significant as the utterance of a howling dog or a scolding shrew:—

“Abandoning the idea of a God, the individual becomes reckless; play is given to the vilest passions; all fear of punishment and all hope of future reward are gone, the nobility of human nature is destroyed; truth, honesty and purity are at a discount.”

The only *idea* in this passage is that the “nobility of human nature” depends on the hope of reward and the fear of punishment. Could there be a more grovelling conception? Why, the street beggar who pats a limping dog or gives him a crust, the gutter child who shares a chance apple with his “chum,” the rough who pilots a blind man over the crossing, or even the convict who does a good turn for a prison “pal,” are in one sense infinitely above it. No wonder that such a base creed has done so little to improve mankind. The world is not to be redeemed by a science of corruption, which sees a devil in every cradle, and a lurking felon in every human heart.

When Dr. Hitchens agrees with Bentley that “No Atheist can be a true friend or an affectionate relation,” he talks the most contemptible nonsense. Has he ever tried an Atheist’s friendship or affection? We have; and we have found many of these maligned Atheists tender and true, women for heart and men for courage, kind and considerate in prosperity and loyal in adversity. Some we have known with a love stronger than death, and one or two who might escaped much misery if they could only have borne other peoples’ troubles “like a Christian.”

We can afford to smile at Dr. Hitchens’ argument against Atheism that it is “inadequate to encounter the hours of trial and the stern solemnities of death,” no less than at his borrowing a foolish fiction from the *Tatler*, in which Atheists are described as “vermin.” We simply refer him to the Freethought papers, where he will find almost every week obituary notices of Atheists who meet death calmly, declining “ghostly aid,” and desiring to be buried without religious rites. We leave Dr. Hitchens for the present. Next week we shall deal with his preposterous diatribes on Atheism in the French Revolution.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS.

(Concluded from page 10).

ONLY those apocryphal gospels have been permitted to survive of which the legends have been in some degree adopted by the Catholic Church. The gospels and other writings of those stigmatised by the Church as heretics have been destroyed.

Probably the most important of these is the gospel according to the Hebrews. Of this gospel we possess numerous fragments which have been brought together, translated and annotated by Mr. E. B. Nicholson, the librarian of the London Institution.* That the genuineness of a book did not secure it a place in the canon, nor did its spuriousness exclude it we have the best evidence. The epistle to the Hebrews, the second of Peter, Jude, and the Apocalypse, were admitted, though the best scholars from the earliest times have held that they were not the production of those whose names they bear. The gospel of the Hebrews put forth a stronger claim to be considered genuine than either of the canonical gospels. It was used by the earliest Christian sects, the Nazarenes and the Ebionites. Paul (1 Cor. xv., 7) refers to a legend found in it and not in our gospel—viz., that Jesus appeared first to James; and Jeremiah Jones thinks it is referred to in Gal. ii., 7. It is quoted by Ignatius in his epistle to the Smyrnæans. It was used by Hegesippus. Papias relates a story found in it, and not in our gospels. Irenæus evidently alluded to it and not to our Greek gospel of Matthew in the passages which are usually cited in proof of the authenticity of the latter. There can be no doubt it was known in the first half of the second century, and was in general use among Palestinian believers. The same cannot be said with equal certainty of either of the gospels in our New Testament. It was referred to in terms inconsistent with any suspicions of its genuineness by Clement of Alexandria, who cites it with the phrase “it is written.” Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius and Theodoret quote it, often

as “Scripture.” Unlike our gospels, it was written in Aramaic, the language used by Jesus, and it was translated into Greek and Latin by St. Jerome, who in his works quotes it thirteen times, and tells us it was generally believed to be the original of Matthew. This opinion was also that of Cardinal Baronius, Father Simon, Dupin and others. Among moderns, Hilgenfeld, the German editor of the fragments, sees everywhere a form of narrative earlier than that of the Greek Matthew, and indeed suggesting the origin of the gospels; the author of “Supernatural Religion” thinks many of the quotations found in the Fathers, and usually referred to our gospels, were more probably taken from that according to the Hebrews; and Mr. E. B. Nicholson thinks that “whoever wrote the gospel of Matthew also wrote the gospel according to the Hebrews,” in which case we suppose the one should be as much inspired as the other. Is it not more probable that the gospel according to the Hebrews was made by some hearer of Matthew, and the gospel according to Matthew made by some other hearer of the same tradition? Yet this gospel gained no admission into the canon, but was expressly declared heretical. Its opening sentence suggests a reason for its rejection. “There was a certain man named Jesus, and he of about thirty years, who chose us out.” It contained no intimation that Jesus was born differently from other men, and in another passage indicates that Jesus himself was doubtful if he was not a sinner. In the days when the virginity of Mary had got into repute, and the Trinity had become a dogma, the simplicity of the gospel according to the Hebrews, which contains no Mariolatry, and but little miracle, was fatal to its claims. One passage of this gospel has a bearing on the controversy as to the sex of God (see “Matro-Pater Noster,” *Freethinker*, November 9, 1884). Jesus speaks of the Holy Ghost as his mother: “Just now my mother the Holy Spirit took me by one of my hairs and bore me up on to the great mountain Tabor.”

The gospel according to the Egyptians was another document of undoubted importance in the early ages of Christianity. It was received by the early sects of the Ophites, the Encratites, the Doketists, and the Sabellians. Erasmus, Dr. Grabe, Father Simon, Grotius, Mills and others, considered it was referred to by St. Luke in his preface. It is quoted in one of the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament, the Alexandrine Codex (in the British Museum) in the second epistle of St. Clement of Rome, which is there included among the New Testament writings. The passage in question is a remarkable one. It says that the Lord being asked when his kingdom would come, replied, “When two shall be one, and that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female.” Other and similarly sublime passages are given from this gospel by Clement of Alexandria. It is also mentioned by Origen, Epiphanius and Jerome. The gospel according to the Egyptians evidently reflected the opinions of the Essenes in regard to meat and marriage. Judge Waite thinks it “may have been in use among the Therapeutæ of Egypt a long time before the introduction of Christianity, the passages relating to Christ being afterwards added” (*History of the Christian Religion to the year 200*, p. 77; Chicago, 1881).

The Gospel of Eve was another edifying scripture, if we may judge by a fragment in which woman is spoken of as the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits annually. The Gospel of Truth, used by the Valentinians, mentioned by Irenæus with the remark that “it does not in any point agree with our gospels,” was also of a mystical character, as were the Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Perfection.

Irenæus, who first mentions the four canonical gospels, also mentions the Gospel of Judas used by an early Christian sect called the Cainites, who are said by their orthodox opponents to have so rejoiced in their emancipation from the bondage of the Jewish law, that they worshipped its first breaker, Cain. In the Gospel of Judas that worthy apostle was looked on as inspired to be the great instrument in the work of redemption. The other apostles, narrowed by their prejudices, had opposed the idea of delivering up Jesus as the sacrifice for the world’s sins, but Judas knew better, and took the heroic resolve of betraying his master and delivering him up in order to effectually over-ride the hesitation of Jesus. Disraeli, De Quincey and Robert Taylor have made similar apologies for Judas, probably unaware that there was early gospel authority for their views.

J. M. WHEELER.

* Published by Kegan Paul and Co., 1879.

ACID DROPS.

A CORRESPONDENT gives the following extract from Surtee's "History of Co. Durham":—"St. Nicholas, Durham; 1568. Men'd'm, that a certain Italian brought into the cittle of Durham, the eleventh day of June, in the year above sayd, a very greate strange and monstrous serpent in length sixteene feate, in quantitie and dimentions greater than a greate horse, which was taken and killed by special policie, (in) Æthiopia within the Turkas dominions. But before it was killed, it had devoured (as it is credibly thought) more than 1,000 persons, and destroyed a whole country."—Our correspondent says: "This must have been the old gentleman himself. I shall give over watching for him now he's dead."

THE *Belfast News Letter* gushes over the great work Christianity is alleged to have done in restoring the world from the fearfully corrupt and superstitious state into which it had fallen. Christianity restored the world into the degradation, superstition, immorality and ignorance of the Dark Ages. It grew on the moral decay of Society like fungus on a rotting tree. And now that the tree is recovering from the fungus, the fungus claims the credit.

Two curates of the Church of England, doing duty in neighboring villages in East Kent, have left their charges under extraordinary circumstances. One of them was found in a state bordering upon *delirium tremens*, owing to his excessive libations of raw spirits. The squire of the village, discovering how matters were, sent for a doctor and a policeman. The former prescribed for him, and the constable watched and tended him all night, and his frequent administering of copious draughts of hot tea was successful in bringing his patient round by the morning. The clergyman then gave way to grief and despair; but the squire drove him to the railway station and saw him off by train there and then. In the other case, the curate was found madly careering round a plantation under the delusion that he was hunting two black pigs. This clergyman has also left the village very suddenly.

GENERAL BOOTH made a profit of 7,000% last year by the trading of the Army. Like most Christians he serves what they would call "God and Mammon."

At a recent meeting in Exeter Hall, to raise money to send Salvation Army officers abroad, the "General" offered to pay 100 per cent. to anyone who would lend the Army money—5 per cent. in this world and 95 per cent. in the next. Query—Which is the strongest inducement to a genuine believer?

THE "Christian Policeman's Association" is jubilant over a membership of 1,300. Do these Christian protectors of the public turn one cheek when smitten on the other? And if a thief takes their helmet do they give him their truncheon also? We somehow guess they do, but not in the sense intended by their divine master.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* is aware "there is something terribly wrong in our religious development," but it fails to point out the humbug and hypocrisy which makes the Christianity of the present day such a sham. On the contrary it attributes the grievous state of the churches to Rationalism, against which it hopes to see a reaction.

In another column, however, it is publishing, without endorsement, a series of papers on "Things not assuredly believed among us," the writer of which certainly inclines towards Rationalism in regard to the inspiration of the Bible. He says there are those to whom the inspiration of the whole book is an absurdity. "They have long felt that to believe that the words of Judas, Caiaphas, the Pharisees, the imprecations in the Book of Psalms, the scepticism of some parts of Ecclesiastes, and the strange things in the Book of Job, were all inspired, is morally and intellectually impossible. When they hear their minister take 'texts' from these parts of the Bible, and insist that their life and conduct are to be regulated by these passages out of the book, they are silent, and know that their minister is ignorant if not stupid. But in most cases the minister is neither; he is only dishonest, and afraid to say what he thinks."

C. J. WARD, M.A., writing on Unbelief, declares that it arises less from the head than from the heart. Those who differ from C. J. W. are advised to look into the state of their internal organs, which he is convinced will be found in a terribly diseased condition. Can it be, however, that C. J. W.'s disbelief in other people's beliefs proceeds from the wicked desires of his own sinful heart?

SPEAKING of George Muller's plan of trusting "in God alone for his temporal supplies," a Christian contemporary says that he "never once departed" from this principle "for any purpose whatever." God has so "richly blessed his faith," we are told, that "about one million pounds sterling had come to hand for the various objects of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, simply in answer to prayer and by patiently waiting upon God."

When boasting of this kind of thing, do our Christian brethren reflect that the money is largely obtained by means of false pretences—Christian dupes being taught that they will receive a thousand-fold hereafter? In the case of Muller's Orphanages, however, the motive is partly humanitarian, and the money, which is really advertised for by publishing accounts of the institution, is not all wasted on the propagation of superstition.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* says that "It is a standing marvel that so religious a people as the Scotch should be so drunken and immoral." For our part we see nothing marvellous in religion producing its natural result.

THE Free Church of Scotland is prosecuting Dr. Muir for heresy. If the church is free, its ministers are not.

MRS. BURKE, a rich and charitable Roman Catholic lady, died last month, "fortified by all the rites of the church and a special blessing from His Holiness Leo XIII." Her five sons, all priests, offered up for her the "Adorable Sacrifice of Mass." The Bishop of Salford pronounced the "Absolutions" over her remains, and said that he had little doubt her stay in Purgatory would be so short that she would "spend Christmas Day with her God in Paradise." Solemn mummeries and tremendous falsehoods are still dear to the hearts of millions.

THE *Christian Herald* narrates how a Hottentot "slave woman" found "freedom" at the hands of the Christians who had enslaved her. Her pious master never dreamed of giving her her freedom in the ordinary sense, of course, nor does such a ridiculous idea occur to the minister who talks to her, or to the editor of the *Christian Herald*: they have a much better kind of freedom to think about. The minister, invited to dine at the slave-owner's house, "fixed his eye" upon the poor "slave woman" standing behind her mistress's chair and said: "Do you know you have a soul, and when you die you must be happy for ever or sent to everlasting fire?" After much anxiety and sorrow the slave receives Christ, and this is the only freedom she obtains. And Christians are so proud of all this as to put it in print for the edification of a world which views slave-owning with righteous abhorrence.

AT Exeter Quarter Sessions a Salvationist named James Webber was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for stabbing another Salvationist. Prisoner's wife misconducted herself at an Army meeting and was "chucked out." This led to a nice row, and an adjournment for a fight between Webber and the Salvation drummer. Webber wanted to fight with a chain wrapped round his hand, but this being taken from him he suddenly resorted to the use of his knife, perhaps remembering that in the shedding of blood there is remission of sins (Heb. ix., 22). For the next six months he will be able to reflect on this pleasing doctrine at his leisure.

COROLLARY from the above:—In the Christian scale of morality it is twice as criminal to make fun of a book as to stab a man. Mr. Foote had twelve months.

BISHOP MOORHOUSE has refused to order prayer for rain in his diocese. He says people should store up the superfluity in wet seasons. But he is inconsistent, as the *Christian Globe* points out, for he prays to God to prevent the increase of the rabbits which have proved such a nuisance to the Australian settlers. Perhaps the *Sydney Bulletin*, with its comic cartoon of a rain-map accompanied with illustrations of the dreadful effects of mistakes in praying for the wrong districts, has ridiculed the Bishop into a little common sense so far as the weather is concerned.

THE Rev. J. W. Horsley, Chaplain of Clerkenwell Prison writes to the *Church Times* on Teetotalism and the Holy Eucharist. He says he meets more dipsomaniacs in a month than most people in a lifetime, and has no hesitation in saying they should only be allowed to communicate in unfermented wine or only in one kind. As he also states that "I have never used unfermented wine in the Eucharist, nor have I any intention of doing so," we suppose he gives communicants only the bread, the body of their Savior. No doubt the prisoners would love their Jesus better if they also imbibed a little of his blood.

THE Rev. A. H. Brown gives some instances of how religion is learnt. Not long ago a choirman, reciting the Apostles' Creed, believed in the *collusion* of saints. One Sunday Mr. Brown asked the scholars their idea of the passage, "O generation of vipers," and inquiring what a viper was, was told "Please, sir, it's what you stick letters with." No doubt the boy meant a *waffer*. He vouches for other examples. "The five horizontal (Oriental) kings." "I feared thee because thou art an *oyster man*" (Luke ix., 21). "Our fathers did eat *mamma* in the desert" (John vi., 31). "His hand was *roasted whole* as the other" (Luke vi., 10).

THE *Church Times* says: "The uniform teaching of the Church has been that St. Joseph was guardian, and no more, to the Blessed Virgin Mary." Who, then, was the father of the

brothers and sisters of Jesus mentioned Matt. xiii., 55, and Mark vi., 3? Were they also begotten of the Holy Ghost?

THE same paper points out that the modern interchange of pulpits amongst the sects is not a token of closer fellowship (for it does nothing towards bringing about union), but of a laxer grasp of doctrine and first principles than the grandfathers of to-day's Dissenters held.

THE people of Grimstone, in Leicestershire, have burned their vicar in effigy on the village green. He had demanded unreasonable fees for the burial of a child. As the clerk would not give him the keys to allow him to lock the place up and prevent the funeral until the money was paid, this meek and mild expounder of Christian doctrine and practice procured a blacksmith and broke into the church by force. The female portion of the community assembled and "tin-panned" their extortionate parson, that is, they caused a great uproar around his house by beating old trays, kettles and pots and pans. This and the lively proceedings on the green frightened the parson out of the way, so that the funeral took place without the expected disturbance.

AT Odessa, Rachel Ostrovskata, a member of a religious sect of murderers, has been found guilty of killing three children, one of them her own and only infant. This secretly organised sect of fanatics, or Christian Thugs as we might call them, only admits women as members. These act as nurses and caretakers of children, their great object being to murder as many little ones as possible by strangulation, poison, or other quiet means. They do this to ensure the salvation of the souls of their innocent victims, and at the same time to earn for themselves eternal glory. Several members have been prosecuted from time to time. The known existence of this unregistered denomination of Christian Stranglers is creating quite a panic among the matrons of Southern Russia.

SISTERS of Mercy sometimes have strange ways of showing their merciful dispositions. Sister Catherine Jones, of St. Michael's Home, Frampton Cotterell, has just been fined 10s. and costs, for cruelly flogging two girls. It is a Church of England sisterhood to which she belongs, and not a Roman Catholic one, as might be supposed.

ACCORDING to an American paper, a Frenchman named Paquet was paralysed down one side while denying the doctrine of eternal punishment. This is alleged to have occurred at Toronto, in Canada, last month. But if there were any connection between disbelief in eternal punishment and hemiplegia, half the people in England would be helpless cripples. So long as superstition is rampant, gossips and penny-a-liners between them will continue to invent and circulate such stories as this of Paquet.

Sunday Words (which, if we may judge from the character of the items marked, has been sent to convert us from the error of our ways), has an isolated paragraph at the bottom of a page which runs thus:—"Hitch your waggon to a star."

BUT we don't happen to possess a waggon; and if we did, we can't see how we could hitch it to a star, or what use this kind of harnessing would be. If the earth and the star happened to be travelling in opposite directions, what would happen to the waggon? If the traces didn't break, we suppose it would be snatched up into the sky like Elijah's chariot of fire. Is this what our Christian editor means? Perhaps he refers to the figurative Star of Bethlehem. Anyhow, he seems a promising candidate for Earlswood. Emerson certainly won't bear clipping in this ridiculous fashion.

MR. HOADLEY, of Goudhurst, Kent, refuses to pay the clergy their "extraordinary tithe." He has just had the whole of his hop-poles seized by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in payment. He says that in many parishes, particularly in Sussex, this extraordinary tithe amounts to more than the actual rent of the land itself, and is an extra tithe over and above the ordinary tithe. Nevertheless the clergy do not want our money; they only care for the salvation of our immortal souls. So they tell us; and people who are very good at believing may possibly credit what they say.

THE *Tory National Review* has a paper on "Christianity and Buddhism" by the Countess of Jersey, who deplors that the Buddhist has "none of the helps offered to the Christian." He believes in no Divine Spirit, seeks no answer to prayer from on high, etc., and, she might have added, gets on tolerably well without these consolations. Lady Jersey refers to the similarity of Northern Buddhism with the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, but does not offer any explanation of the many coincidences of Christianity with the older religion.

THE Lord sent a merry Christmas to the Japanese in the shape of a typhoon which cost 2,000 lives. Also, he sent earthquakes to Spain, where 2,000 people and 10,000 cattle perished, and to Armenia, where several villages were destroyed. Such were a loving Father's Christmas greetings to his children.

THE Feast of Asses was an old Christian celebration, principally at Beauvais in the fourteenth century. A donkey was taught to bray in response to the priests, and the people joined in the chorus! If the Feast of Asses were celebrated now it should be highly popular with Christians, and the braying could easily be done without the aid of a four-legged brother.

THE *Standard* interviewer has been down to Chatham to see the new colony of Israel, which is to consist of the 144,000 elect persons spoken of in the Apocalypse, who will be gathered from all parts of the earth under the direction of the "Messenger of God," James J. "Jezeel," who claims to have a commission in a "Flying Roll" dictated to him from heaven direct. A temple is to be built 120 feet high and 120 feet square, according to inspired directions, to receive the elect, who will be translated bodily to heaven, "at the very latest, by the end of the eighth month of the year 1916." James J. Jezeel, who, like most other lunatics, quotes Scripture largely in favor of his views, does not say what is to become of the non-elect.

ANY good hand at the concoction of a ghost story is invited to communicate with Ed. Gurney, of the Society for Psychical Research, 14 Dean's Yard, Westminster.

A RELIGIOUS paper, entitled, the *Overshadowing of God*, has been started in America. Its promoters declare that this power of God is as much displayed now as in the days of old. Query.—How far does it affect the return of illegitimate births?

THE Act 21, George III., c. 49, under which Mr. Symes is being prosecuted at Melbourne, is entitled, "An Act for preventing certain Abuses and Profanities on the Lord's Day, called Sunday." It provides that "any house, room, or other place which shall be opened or used for publick entertainment or amusement, or for publicly debating on any subject whatsoever, upon any part of the Lord's Day, called Sunday, and to which persons shall be admitted by the payment of money or by tickets sold for money, shall be deemed a disorderly house or place; and the keeper of such house, room or place, shall forfeit the sum of two hundred pounds for every day that such house, room or place shall be opened or used as aforesaid on the Lord's Day, to such persons as will sue for the same, and be otherwise punishable as the law directs in the case of disorderly houses."

It is pretty clear that the law only applies to England, and it is doubtful if it can be construed to cover lectures. Mr. Symes should see that the informer Benn gives security for damages, as triple costs can be recovered if the action fails.

MOODY was in his senses once. He remembers a time "when the Bible was the driest and darkest book in the universe" to him.

TALMAGE says: "It was their integrity that put . . . Korah after Moses, and Saul after David, and Herod after Christ." Talmage means the reverse of this, but his statement may be correct as it stands. Integrity usually has to give way before religion.

IN religious, political and social affairs evidences have been silently but rapidly accumulating that "the end of all things is at hand." Under the influence of the three frog-like spirits of the Sixth Vial, the nations of the earth are gathering to the war of the great day of Almighty God. So says the man of Zion who does biblical prophecy in the *Christian Herald*. His remarks seem much more insane and charlatanic than the prophecies in Zadkiel and Old Moore, but religion and inspiration are scarcely expected to rise above the level of Old Mother Shipton.

It appears that to those who have "pleasure in searching out the works of the Lord" (Ps. cxi., 2), "the blood-red fiery sunsets and sunrises over London and other parts of England," display "in hieroglyphical handwriting in crimson letters on the firmamental heavens an augury and presage of coming bloodshed, sanguinary conflicts, red republican revolutions, destructive conflagrations, and wide-spread effusion of the crimson tide of life, in accordance with the prediction that, previous to the Day of Judgment, there shall be 'fearful sights and great signs in the heavens,' in connection with earthquakes in divers places and distress of nations with perplexity (Luke xxi., 11-25), and that the sea shall assume the appearance of blood and fire, when there shall be 'wonders in the heavens and signs in the earth, blood and fire and vapor and smoke, before the great and notable day of the Lord comes.'" (Acts ii., 19, 20).

THE "Laws of Christianity for Common Life" is the title of R. W. Dale's latest book. We wonder if he includes such laws as—Resist not evil. Take no thought for the morrow. If thy right hand offend thee cut it off. Make yourselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Give to him that asketh. Sell all that ye have and give to the poor. If these laws of Christianity are for common life why don't Christians put them in practice?

EDITORIAL NOTICE.

Our Correspondents are requested to notice the Change in our Address. Letters should be addressed to us at 14 CLERKENWELL GREEN, E.C. All Business Letters should be addressed (as before) to Mr. Ramsey, at the shop, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Jan. 18, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, London, at 7.30, "Cheap Salvation."
Tuesday, Jan. 20, Freethought Institute, York Street, Walworth, at 8.30, "Christianity in its Cradle."

JANUARY 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.—W. C. Savile, J. S., A. F. Jury.
H. G. SWIFT.—More suitable for these columns than for *Progress*. Shall we insert it?

A. J. WILLBRAHAM.—We are unaware. If you attend the Conference at Wednesbury you will doubtless obtain the information you desire. Thanks for your good wishes.

W. A. SENIOR.—Matt. xiii., 55, 56: "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James, and Josee, and Simon, and Judas. And his sisters, are they not all with us." If Jesus had as many sisters as brothers, it was a pretty good family for a virgin.

M. P.—The incident was commented upon last week.
J. MELLING.—The congregation at Bolton is not the only one left in the dark. Thanks.

A. READER.—The story has not much point, and its being true makes it neither better nor worse.

W. ROSSITER.—Your post-card is dated Saturday. We published on the Thursday.

R. M.—We knew nothing of the letter you refer to. The lines we quoted were from Coleridge's "Devil's Walk," which you will find included in any complete edition of his poems. Southey has a similar poem, and it is quite possible that he and Coleridge may have contributed to both pieces. The Pawson your mother mentions is probably Porson.

PUDDLER.—There are some members of the N. S. S. in Warrington, but they find it very difficult to obtain a hall for lectures. We are not aware whether they hold any regular meetings. Thanks for the cutting.

A. "COMR."—We merely dealt with the matter as a bit of news which appeared in the daily papers. Of course there may be a mistake, and we do not keep a staff of reporters, but as nobody's character is at stake (except perhaps the Lord's, who can look after himself) it is hardly worth while to reopen the subject. It is also possible that your informant may be wrong. Thanks for the paper.

E. CHAPMAN, Warrington, states that the paragraph taken from the *Liverpool Post* in last week's "Acid Drops" is incorrect. The man in question was not superintendent of the Sunday-school, but merely an occasional visitor.

J. BRIGHT.—Prof. Newman is right. Neither Peter, Paul, nor any other Apostle in their writings claim to have raised the dead. His words are: "From the apostolic epistles no hint of such a thing can be gathered." Prof. Newman was of course aware of the alleged miracles in that theological romance the Acts of the Apostles.

G. D. F.—More suitable for the *Republican*.

B. A. WILKINSON.—Good for a beginning. Try again.

B. BYNE.—Did you continue the missionary stories of which we received an instalment some time ago?

CORRESPONDENTS who kindly send newspapers will enhance their service by marking the passages to which they desire to call our attention.

W. CALLAWAY.—You are surely not green enough to suppose that we are going to edit the *Freethinker* on your lines. Why don't you start a journal yourself, and save the paper and stamps it costs you to send us your gratuitous and useless advice?

J. T. CONGREVE.—We are surprised at your statements. It ought to be easy enough to join the Hall of Science Club, and if you could neither get enrolled nor obtain a prospectus after applying to three officials, there must have been gross mismanagement. We advise you to ask for Mr. Anderson or Mr. R. O. Smith.

W. KINGSGATE.—No doubt the pictures will be useful to us in some future sketches. The Skeleton Army is older than A.D. 1060. It dates from Ezekiel's resurrection of dry bones in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

A. FRIEND.—We agree with all you say about James Thomson's "Satires and Profanities," but we cannot see our way to publish a cheaper edition at present. Considering the matter and the get-up of the volume, it is by no means dear. The next number of *Progress* will contain a previously unpublished poem of Thomson's, entitled "Supplements to the Inferno." It is a terrible satire on the late

Lord Lytton, written in the *terza rima* like Dante's verse, and extending to several pages.

L. PHILLIPS.—The new volume of *Progress*, from June to December, 1884, will be ready in a few days—price 2s. 6d. The Index can be had separately for one penny. We are happy to say that, notwithstanding the increased price, the January number shows an improvement instead of a falling-off in the sale.

H. SMITHSON.—If you were not a Christian we should take you to be mad. Piety justifies impertinence and sanctifies imbecility. If our future prospects, in this world or the next, were as bad as your grammar and spelling, we should indeed dread the outlook, but at present we are under no alarm. You advise us to fall on our knees and pray to God for mercy; we recommend you to spend a few hours at an evening school.

J. DE FRAINE.—Shall appear. We reciprocate your good wishes.

T. P.—You can have a title-page for Vol. IV. of *Progress*, but that for Vol. III. is out of print. Mr. Foote's "Bible Romances" will be completed shortly. Recent business changes have occupied much of his time, but he will have more leisure for writing now.

TOM TAYLOR.—We remember you of old in Shipley, and shall always be glad to hear from you. We have never visited Lancaster.

G. CHALOVER sends 5s. for the Hall of Science Children's Party, and some cuttings for which we thank him.

J. DAVIDSON.—Shall appear.

F. WILCOCKSON.—Christians pay the "Great Debt" only on a judgment summons. They cling to this world as long as they can, and go to glory when they must.

W. JENNINGS.—The *Progress* Index will in future be published in the last number of each volume. A few copies of the Index of the last volume are printed for subscribers, and can be obtained for one penny each.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Christian World Pulpit—Northampton Daily Chronicle—Lucifer—Liberal—Christian Herald—Lancaster Guardian—Town Crier—L'Europe—Boston Investigator—Sunday Words—Sydney Bulletin—Liberator—Portsmouth Evening News—Scotsman—Manchester Examiner—Newcastle Herald (N. S. W.)—Truth-seeker—Standard—Boston Guardian—Cambria Leader.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE Huddersfield Secularists have managed, after years of difficulty, to rent a public hall for special lectures. The Gymnasium Hall was filled with good audiences last Sunday to hear Mr. Foote. Freethinkers attended from the neighboring towns and villages, one elderly couple walking in and walking back six miles as there was no train service. "Ould David" (Woffenden), the newsagent, was as quaint and conspicuous a figure as ever, and the portrait his friends lately presented to him was on view.

WE hear that "Lara," of the *Secular Review*, had a good audience at Milton Hall last Sunday, and that he acquitted himself well. "Saladin" took the chair, and announced that "next Sunday the most prominent Freethought advocate, Mr. Foote, would lecture." Mr. Foote's subject will be "Cheap Salvation."

MR. W. W. COLLINS is delivering a capital course of lectures at the London Hall of Science on Thursday evenings. The last will be delivered on January 22, when the chair will be taken by Mr. Foote. Subject—"The Evolution Theory."

LAST Sunday afternoon the Rev. J. Fleming Williams duly delivered his lecture on "The *Freethinker* Cartoons." St. Peter's School Room was crowded with Freethinkers, eight or ten being a liberal estimate of the number of Christians present. Mr. Williams regretted our imprisonment, but he thought the *Freethinker* should be suppressed—a statement which he afterwards withdrew. He of course complained of our "tone" and our "taste," our "bitter" attacks on Christianity, and our "ridicule" of what Christians "reverence." All this is very natural, but not very sensible. Mr. Williams's "feelings" are his own concern, and we decline to consider them unless we have our legs under his mahogany, or write in a paper which he is obliged to buy. Mr. Ramsey created much diversion by his smart reply. He justified our cartoons, vindicated the use of ridicule against absurdities, and gave a few startling samples of the Christian charity which Mr. Williams boasted. The audience were well supplied with copies of the *Freethinker*; in fact, it appeared to be the Bible of nine-tenths of them. Mr. Williams has had his say, and he has convinced nobody. The logic of events is the strongest after all; and if the *Freethinker* flourishes while so many Christian Evidence journals die, it is only in accordance with the "survival of the fittest."

WE might answer Mr. Williams and his friends with a *mot* of Swift's. "Surely," said the great satirist, "I have as great right to laugh as another man has to be ridiculous."

IN an article entitled, "Wanted—Men, Money and Prayers," the *Rock* advocates earnest missionary work in all parts of the globe, and points to Japan as a country where, "above all, whatever is done must be done quickly." The sensible and practical Japanese, in adopting European civilisation, are becoming indifferent to religion. "With them," says the *Rock*, "the question no longer lies between Buddhism, or Shintoism, and Christianity. That stage is rapidly passing away. It already becomes

apparent that, wherever European education has made its way amongst them, the question now lies between Christianity and utter Atheism. We do, indeed, send Japan some few missionaries and many Bibles; but we also send . . . tons of infidel literature. Unless, therefore, the next few years are marked by a much increased display of missionary effort, we may expect to see the land settle down to Atheism."

THE Camberwell Branch of the N. S. S. made a start with their new hall on Saturday, Jan. 10. Mrs. Besant laid the foundation stone in the afternoon at half-past three, and after her address Mr. Bradlaugh delivered a brief speech. Mr. Foote, who was invited to attend, was necessarily absent, in consequence of his having to travel down to Huddersfield by the 5 o'clock train. Mr. Ramsey, who spoke a few words in response to repeated calls, conveyed Mr. Foote's regrets at not being present and his hopes for the Society's success.

THE Pope is highly indignant over the proposal to erect a statue to Bruno in Rome. Fortunately his anger now counts for nothing.

EARLY in February Mr. Hopwood will bring forward his Affirmation Bill, in favor of which all Freethinkers should petition without delay. Forms may be obtained of Mr. Forder, 6 Cambridge Terrace, Islington, N.

THE Paris correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* announces that a new sect has been formed in Paris, to be known as Anti-Deists. The first sermon was preached in Paris on Sunday by M. Gaston. The Anti-Deists intend publishing a hymn-book and to parody all the religious ordinances.

A ROMAN CATHOLIC REPLY TO INGERSOLL.

It is interesting and encouraging to observe that the influence of Ingersoll in America has been so great that the Infallible Church condescends, by one of its priests, to publish a reply to him in the shape of a book of over two hundred pages. These "Notes on Ingersoll," by the Rev. L. A. Lambert, have already reached a seventh edition. They form a lengthy answer, written in a popular and quasi-conversational style, to two articles of Ingersoll's in the *North American Review*. Usually only a line or two of the Colonel's is given, followed by a long paragraph, or a page or two, of priestly comment. Considering the weakness of his cause Father Lambert has done better than could have been expected. His answers, such as they are, are clearly and strongly expressed, and a lively, abusive, personal tone helps to make them appear smart to the superficial reader. In the body of the work, however, the abuse is not quite so constant and prominent an ingredient as in the preface, by the Rev. Patrick Cronin, who appears to delight in the free use of such expressions as—"that notorious little fraud, Ingersoll"—"untruthful"—"dishonest"—"vile"—"malevolent"—"fraudulent pedlar of old infidel junk"—"blatant revilers"—"reptile brood"—"hiss forth their venom against Christ and his Church"—and similar courteous and elegant indications of the Christian ideal of controversy.

As it is impossible to deal *seriatim* with two hundred pages of priestly argument and priestly scolding in the limited space at our command, we must perforce content ourselves with a few comparatively brief remarks on some of the more prominent points in this Roman Catholic defence of Christianity—for such, of course, is its real purpose, though the writer takes care to inform us that it is only an attack on Ingersoll, and that Christianity does not stand in the slightest need of any defence.

Of the personalities which form a large part of the Christian argument as here given we need say but little. The kind of wit displayed in likening Ingersoll to Judas, or the Devil, or a lying spirit, amuses Christians and does not hurt Ingersoll. We are even pleased to find Christian hatred so far modifying and humanising its awful malice as merely to hint that Ingersoll "ought to have his ears boxed—if boxes large enough could be found."* The im-

* Ingersoll is accused of "buffoonery," and we are told that Christianity "must not use sophistry, or cunning, or wit, or jokes, or lies." Yet this priest tells us that man was "a victim, not of evolution but of devolution" and satirizes, as he supposes, Ingersoll's references to the slaughtered babes of Canaan thus: "Infants stand you to good purpose, and are made to do considerable duty in all your writings and lectures. You trot them out on all occasions, and in all conditions of *deshabille*. Those infants waddle and crawl—and so forth, through your article so promiscuously as to remind one of a foundling asylum, with yourself as peripatetic dry-nurse in ordinary. By the way, were you not once a colonel of infantry?" To Ingersoll's question on the

putations of dishonesty, bestiality (pp. 72, 107), and so forth, would indeed be gross insults from the lips of a rational being, but from the mouth of a Roman Catholic priest, who has to mingle argument with them, they are compliments. When Father Lambert describes Ingersoll's article as a "new infusion of filth," he only means that it is a powerful, and therefore detestable, attack on priestcraft. From the fierce faggots and dire anathemas of Mother Church, to the mere blackguardism of commonplace insult, is, however, so great an advance in the direction of genuine morality and human brotherhood, that we heartily congratulate Father Lambert, and Roman Catholics in general, on these hopeful signs of progress towards a time when difference of opinion on religious matters shall no longer bring down wholesale slander and abuse upon men who speak out their honest thoughts.

As Father Lambert, however, still believes that no Atheists are honest (p. 171), and that infidel philosophy makes man a beast, Freethinkers can hardly expect very charitable treatment at his hands.

The logic of the priestly portion of the dialogue is, like the general tone and language throughout, of a low order. Sentences of Ingersoll's, always quoted as briefly as possible, snapped off, as it were, are frequently met with the lie direct or with a brazen parade of bold assertion based on the very slightest foundation. Take the following, in which the priest has a somewhat better case than usual:—

INGERSOLL.—"He (God) sent abroad lying spirits to deceive his own prophets."

COMMENT.—I will give one hundred dollars to the poor of this village if you or any of your disciples will make good your statement. I am familiar with the texts in Kings and Ezechiel, which you probably imagine will bear you out, but if you carefully compare those texts with your statement you will find that your zeal has run away with your discretion, and that your hatred of your Maker is more intense than your love for the truth. God abhors lying spirits, false prophets. . . . They were popular lecturers in their day, and they did not die without issue.

The priest artfully evades the main charge of sending forth lying spirits, which is incontestably proved by 1 Kings xxii., 22, and 2 Chron. xviii., 21, and confirmed by such passages as Ezechiel xiv., 9, and Jeremiah xx., 7 and 2 Thess. ii., 11. With the usual priestly skill—if we closely copied his own Christian courtesy towards Ingersoll, we should say with his usual low trickery, intellectual imbecility and consummate hypocrisy—he avoids discovering this damaging fact to his ignorant readers, and leads them to suppose that the whole charge is annihilated, whereas he (secretly) relies only on the concluding words "his own prophets" (or possibly on the word "spirits" being in the plural whereas 1 Kings xxii., 22, speaks of only one lying spirit; for any quibble is good enough for a priest). But according to 1 Kings xxii., Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, who was a faithful servant of the Lord, requested his ally, Ahab, King of Israel, to inquire "of the Lord" (verse 5). Ahab thereupon "gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men," and asked them whether he should go forth against Ramoth-Gilead to battle or not. They repeatedly assured him that "the Lord" should deliver it into his hands (verses 6, 11, 12). Surely these men were prophets of the Lord. They are not described as idolatrous prophets, and the prophets of Baal had been slain by Elijah (1 Kings xviii., 40, in the presence of the Israelites, who had deliberately reinstated Jehovah in his position as their national God. If it be said that these men were "false prophets," we ask how they could be otherwise when the God whom they served put a lying spirit in their mouths. Micaiah, their foe, makes no other charge against them than this. He treats them as genuine prophets of the Lord in all other respects, though probably in his heart he thought less favorably of them, for prophets and priests almost invariably regard rival prophets and priests as "false" ones. Jeremiah, whom Christians accept as a genuine prophet, cries (xx., 7): "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I,

attempted reciprocity argument—"If they kill the babes in our cradles must we brain theirs?" our anathematizer of flippancy and buffoonery in others, replies: "Here they are again—yes, by all means, brain them, tear them limb from limb, salt them, ship them to the Cannibal Islands, make them read your article on the Christian Religion, or your lecture on 'Skulls'—do anything with them to keep them from muddling your brains when you are reasoning with men on subjects that require all your attention."

and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me." Christians must acknowledge that in this case God deceived his own prophet. Whether, however, he sent a lying spirit or did his own work in person, is not made clear. But the moral gravamen of charges of lying or deception is not greatly affected, it appears to us, by the employment or non-employment of an agent and of the dupe in the service of the deceiver. Instead of sending "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," why does not an omnipotent God send enlightenment, that they should believe the truth? Surely the one should be as easy to him as the other, and he should prefer the diffusion of truth to the promulgation of falsehood.

W. P. BALL.

(To be continued).

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DEVIL.

LONG I'd longed to see the Devil
And the glory of the same,
So I read the Lord's Prayer backward,*
And forward the Devil came.

He seemed a noble fellow,
Not quite so good as gay;
But better than most of the devils
One meets with every day.

But this was very surprising
That the Prince of Eternal Arson
Was dressed in a clerical manner
And passed for a modern parson.

He'd a coat of pious blackness,
A collar as white as the Lamb,
And a look on his happy features
That said "the Devil—I AM!"

He stood in silent waiting,
In an easy attitude;
For the Devil is far from vulgar,
And his acts are seldom rude.

He gracefully bowed when I spoke
Of the patent plan of perdition
That Jehovah invented once,
According to superstition.

Then he threw off his priestly robes
To show his true position,
And there before me stood
The Devil of tradition.

And as he is so well known
Describe him I will not,
For if the account weren't dry
It probably might be hot.

But he didn't look a fellow
Whose desire was but to damn,
And when I asked who God was,
He laughed and said, "I AM!"

"O tell me who was Jesus?
And did he die for the world?"
On his face came the sorrow of pity
While a sneer his top lip curled.

"And who is the Holy Ghost?"
Said the Devil, with a wink:
"The Holy Ghost is a spirit
Which you wouldn't like off' to drink."

"And what is a Christian, pray?"
This was the answer given:
"There isn't one in earth
And about the same in heaven."

I didn't ask aught more,
But the Devil talked on—well,
On far too much to mention;
But this thing he did tell:

"There are more devils in earth than hell;
A lot of them dwell in swine,
But far many more in asses
Of the Balaam-donkey line."

Then he donned his churchly vestments,
And said, with a gospel grin:
"This is the best investment
That a devil could e'er be in."

He went away quite politely,
His manners most kind and civil;
But now, when I see a parson,
I always think of the Devil! WITTIVON.

REVIEWS.

Our Corner sustains its interest and variety. The place of honor is given to Mr. Bradlaugh's impeachment of the "Prodigal City Fathers." Mrs. Besant continues her "Autobiographical Sketches" down to the time of the publication of the Knowlton pamphlet, and reviews in a disparaging fashion Mr. Swinburne's "Midsummer Holiday." Mr. Robertson is even more fault-finding in noticing Browning's "Ferishtah's Fancies." Indeed, those who derive their ideas from Mr. Robertson will think the poet a fit candidate for a lunatic asylum. An article on Jeanne Darc will interest the historical student, and lovers of science will be interested in papers on "A Southern Shell," "The Nebular Theory," and "The Spider."—J. M. W.

State Measures for the direct Prevention of Poverty, War and Pestilence. By a DOCTOR OF MEDICINE (author of the "Elements of Social Science.") London: E. Truelove, 256 High Holborn; 1885. Price threepence.—Of the importance of the subjects discussed in this extremely cheap little volume, and of the earnestness and ability of the author, there can be no question. The pamphlet consists of three articles, the first on the State Remedy for Poverty, advocating legislative enactment to regulate population. The second entitled, Can War be suppressed? advocates the reduction of armaments, a confederation of States and international armies. The third paper, which occupies the major portion of the book, is upon the Extinction of Infectious Diseases. The Doctor of Medicine urges the preference of hospital to home treatment, and would make the communication of syphilis a punishable offence. The mere mention of such schemes will raise a cloud of difficulties in most minds, but our purpose is rather to draw attention to an important pamphlet than to urge objections which could not be adequately discussed within the limits of a brief review.

The Agnostic. January. Cattell and Co., Bouverie Street.—We fail to see what useful purpose this new magazine will serve. What can be drearier reading than a dozen articles all on the same subject by writers who view it in the same light? The devotees of the new Gospel of Agnosticism will, perhaps, be gratified, but ordinary people like a little more variety in their mental diet. We see in one of the "Notes" that Mr. Charles Watts has been lecturing on Agnosticism in Canada, and that "thus far his tour has been a brilliant and uninterrupted series of successes," which is a great deal more than his lecturing tours ever were in England. This hyperbolic strain is fairly sustained in other parts of the magazine. "Ignotus," for instance, whose article is one of the most vigorous, calls Darwin a dwarf beside Spencer. Among the few articles of general interest is a serio-comic forecast of Australian Agnosticism, written with considerable *verve*, in which Mr. Joseph Symes figures under the thin and uncomplimentary disguise of Josiah Crimes. Dr. Hardwicke begins an interesting paper on "Man: Whence and Whither." Gregory Greymore jerks out a few spasmodic sentences on Shelley, and makes the queer mistake of quoting as a part of "Epipsychidion" the introductory sonnet which is translated from Dante. Altogether the *Agnostic* is little to our taste. Perhaps this is our own fault. The editor says that "a spade is a spade only in the estimate of the vulgar." We have the misfortune to belong to the vulgar.

The Crusades. By SALADIN. Stewart and Co.—A reprint from the *Secular Review* in pamphlet form of a vigorous review of Christian expeditions against the Saracens, exposing the barbarity, cruelty and lust of the crusading hosts. It ends with Richard Cœur de Lion's massacre of the infidels at Acre, but it might have gone farther with profit. There have been few greater satires on Christianity than the last galvanic spasms of the dead movement under the stimulus of priestly greed and ambition.

"Now, little boy, what is the meaning of the word hypocrisy?" asked a Sunday-school teacher of her favorite pupil. "I can't explain what it is, but I know it all the same." "Give me an example of hypocrisy?" "When a fellow says he loves his Sunday-school teacher. That's hypocrisy."

A GERMAN novelist tells the following story. In front of the vicarage of a little village in Styria there was a wooden crucifix. In the orchard there was a pear-tree. Both were old. The Lord on the cross was rotten, and the pear-tree was barren. His reverence, always trying to make the best of things, called in the village carpenter, had the pear-tree felled, and a new Lord carved of its trunk and put in the place of the old figure. As is well known, when a Roman Catholic passes the image of Christ he raises his hat and bends his knees. An old peasant of undoubted piety had to pass by there daily, and the vicar noted with surprise that since the renovation of the cross this man never did homage to it. On being asked to account for this strange behavior he said, pointing contemptuously at the image, "Do homage to this Lord? Why, I knew him when he was a pear-tree."

* Reading the Lord's Prayer backward was one of the means of raising the Devil, says superstition.

PROFANE JOKES.

A WAG lent a clergyman a horse that ran away and threw him, and then claimed credit for spreading the Gospel.

THE first thing that the Puritans did in America was to fall upon their knees; the next was to fall upon the aborigines.

HIS memory deserves execration. His name was Noah, and he once had wasps reduced down to two, and failed to annihilate them.

NOAH was the first man who strictly observed Lent. He lived on water forty days and forty nights, and this though he had Ham with him.

THE young ladies of a boarding-school were taking their usual promenade in double file. Remarked a bright damsel, "This is as bad as the animals walking to the ark." "Worse!" replied another young creature; "half of them were males."

"Yea, verily," says the Rev. Oleaginous Cantwell, "all things belongeth to the Lord. On one occasion he turned his water into wine, on another his (s)wine into water. He doeth as he will with his own."

IT has been supposed hitherto that the greatest piece of prudery ever known was that of the American lady who had the legs of her piano clothed with trousers; but this has been, upon the Turf and elsewhere, a "record-breaking" year, and the American lady is very easily beaten by a reverend gentleman in Kent, chairman of a clerical book club, whom curiosity induced to order a copy of Mr. Wheeler's "Letters from Hell," but who, upon receipt of the book, had a paper cover made for it, and wrote upon the outside, "Letters, etc."

A PIOUS blacksmith, who had taken a boy from one of the public institutions called boys' homes, thought that the lad neglected to say his prayers at bed-time, as he was told to do; so he determined to listen at the boy's bedroom door. Night came, and the boy fancied he heard someone draw a deep breath outside the door, and in a moment came to the conclusion that it was his master, listening to hear if he said his prayers. So down he dropped on his knees and commenced to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven, You worked six days—I work seven; And never come to this blacksmith's shop; For if thou comest here, thou must hammer and smite From five in the morning till nine at night."

We need hardly say the blacksmith never listened again, and the boy was never afterwards asked if he said his prayers.

LESSONS IN SOCIALISM.—A Course of Sixteen Lessons, commencing Feb. 11th, based on "Das Capital" of Carl Marx, will be given by Dr. Edward Aveling, under the auspices of the Socialist League. Admission to non-members of the Socialist League, 6d. each lesson; 10s. for half course of eight lessons, 3s. A preliminary Public Meeting will be held on Feb. 4th.—For syllabus and further particulars apply to Edward Watson, Socialist League, 27 Farringdon Street.

A PUBLIC DEBATE will take place on Tuesday next, Jan. 20, at Ball's Pond Secular Hall, between Mr. C. R. Offen and Mr. R. Forder. Subject: "That the Story of Jesus in the Four Gospels is Historically True." Affirmative, Mr. Offen; negative, Mr. Forder. Chair to be taken at eight o'clock, by the Rev. W. Harvey Smith. Admission 1s., 6d., and 3d. The balance after expenses are defrayed, will be divided between the London Temperance Hospital and the Benevolent Fund of the National Secular Society.

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