

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 106.



OLD NICK'S MILLENIUM.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."—REV. XX., 1-2.

A NEW BISHOP.

WANTED a Bishop! Dr. Jackson is dead, and a new occupant must be found for the see of London. The work is not intolerably heavy, and the salary is very large: ten thousand a year, with two palaces rent free. There is only one drawback. Whoever accepts the post is nearly sure to spend eternity in hell.

But what a drawback! One would think it enough to deter all candidates from further pursuit of the prize. What man in his senses would purchase it at such a price? Who would deliberately barter his eternal welfare for temporal success? Who would grasp at a few years of happiness knowing they must lead to everlasting misery?

Yet, as a matter of fact, there are several men longing for the vacant bishopric, a few eagerly expecting it, and thousands who would clutch it with joy. How is this extraordinary fact to be explained? Very simply. The sky-pilots believe in the cash and disbelieve in the danger. They appreciate the salary and the drawback at their proper value. They know that Christ said, "Woe unto you rich." They know he declared it harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. They know he said, "Blessed be ye poor." They know that Dives went to hell because he was rich, and Lazarus to heaven because he was poor. Yes, they know it, and they are ready to preach it for as high a consideration as they can obtain. But they no more believe in Christ's threats and promises than we do. In the very teeth of his clearest admonitions,

they go on "receiving their portion" in this world, and take their chance for the next; while for the liberal income of ten thousand a year the most pious sky-pilot is ready to risk any number of hells and face any number of devils.

Yes, Dr. Jackson will have a successor. The bishopric of London need not go begging. There is a rumor that Dr. Temple, the present bishop of Exeter, will be inducted to the see. He has purged himself of the milk-and-water heresy of "Essays and Reviews" by many years of orthodox preaching and practice, and he is now eligible for promotion to a post in which immaculate orthodoxy is the primary requisite.

Whether Dr. Temple is the lucky man or not, we desire to say a few words about the office. According to Paul, or the author of the epistle to Timothy, a bishop must first of all be *blameless*. Has Dr. Temple or any other parson the audacity to claim such exalted virtue? We are quite willing ourselves to acknowledge any man as a bishop who never committed a fault in his life. But we are convinced that no such person exists; for as Blake sang, "To be good only is to be, a God or else a Pharisee." We therefore call on Mr. Gladstone to refrain from appointing a new bishop of London until he finds a candidate who is perfectly *blameless*. Meanwhile the ten thousand a year might be handed over to the National Secular Society for a change.

Next, a bishop must be "the husband of one wife." The early Church regarded this as binding. Origen, for instance, says that "one who is twice married can neither be made bishop, presbyter, nor deacon." Paul detested marriage himself. He wanted everybody to remain single, as he was—the dry old crust! But he knew it was a doctrine too hard for human nature. He therefore allowed the faithful to marry if they could not live single without sin. But only once. One marriage was a compromise with the flesh, two were a compromise with the Devil. At any rate a bishop was to keep to the minimum. Bishop Ryle, of Liverpool, however, has been married three times, although he is a great stickler for apostolic practice, and is never tired of asserting that the Bible is our one infallible guide. On the other hand, Bishop Fraser, of Manchester, was a bachelor when he took the see. He was not the husband even of one wife. The fact is, these church dignitaries play whatever tricks they please with Scripture. The Russian priests, who are not quite such sharp practitioners as ours, observe the apostolic rule. In Czarland a priest *must* be married. If his wife dies he ceases to be a priest. It is "no wife, no pay." As a natural consequence priest's wives over there have a fine time.

A Bishop must also be "given to hospitality." Perhaps that is why their salaries are fixed so high. We have no doubt that the new bishop of London will fulfil this condition. He will leave the poor east-enders to a suffragan bishop, as Dr. Jackson did, keep to the west-end, and hospitably invite the Prince of Wales and the aristocracy to drop in and dine at his palace.

When a bishop is consecrated he is supplied with a fresh stock of the Holy Ghost, and endowed with the power of remitting and retaining people's sins; or, in other words, of sending them to heaven or hell. This impudent assumption was once credited, but people see through it now. In fact, the whole business is nearly played out. Sensible men laugh at the very way the bishop is chosen. The dean and chapter meet to elect a successor to the late bishop; they are informed who is the Crown nominee; they then seek the Lord in prayer; and they invariably find that the Holy Ghost and the Crown agree in their choice. Yet the men who play this hypocritical farce are handsomely paid to teach honest people their moral duties.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE FAITH FIEND.

BACK thro' the dim and silent ages;
 Back thro' the tombs of buried time;
 Witness the blots on history's pages;
 Follow the track of my guilt and crime!
 Down thro' the dismal, silent turnings—
 Corridors dark of the human mind—
 See there the trace of my cruel burnings
 And the ghastly relics I've left behind!

See ye the ghostly and pale procession
 Gliding along thro' the centuries dim;
 My martyred victims; death's expression
 Sits on their phantom faces grim.
 Hark to their ghostly cries and shrieking,
 'Tis the music of old so sweet to me—
 My priests on the heretic vengeance wreaking—
 And I laugh again in my fiendish glee.

Millions of slaves have I bowed before me;
 States and nations have owned my sway;
 Their monarchs have bade their serfs adore me;
 Yet, what is their glory worth to-day?
 For I've cast my poisoning shadow o'er them,
 And silently killed with my sickly breath;
 And like the empires that shone before them
 Their glory is lost in decay and death.

I delight in the smoke and blood of battle;
 'Tis sport for me and my priestly knaves;
 I goad men to fight like maddened cattle,
 'Tis thus they become my blind, dumb slaves.
 Wide o'er the world have I spread my pinions
 Whilst tyrants ever the weak oppress;
 And wealth I bring to my pious minions
 Who only mock at the poor's distress.

I plunder and kill for the great God's glory;
 My hands are red with his children's blood;
 And the streams that have flowed from my altars gory
 Would bathe the world in a crimson flood.
 To my dungeon and rack has Truth been yielded;
 I have aided the sword of the coward strong;
 With the name of Christ and his cross I've shielded
 The holy and sanctified throne of Wrong.

I check the rippling flow of laughter;
 I chill the sunshine of youthful love;
 I awe mankind with the dread hereafter
 'Twixt the hell below and the heaven above.
 Friendship's golden links I sever;
 I shackle the soul with a weary chain;
 I crush and smother each brave endeavor;
 I load and fetter the human brain.

I enshroud and darken life's brief hist'ry,
 Around the cradle my gloom is spread;
 I clothe the grave in an awful myst'ry,
 And fill the living with gruesome dread.
 I guide the tongue of pious lying;
 I warp the mind with the curse of prayer;
 I haunt the side of the sick and dying
 And mockingly point to my hell's red glare.

I poison the silvern stream of pleasure;
 I wither the flowers of the bright To-day;
 I bribe men's minds with the phantom treasure
 Of the mystic realms of the far away.
 I stifle the voice of inquiring Reason;
 I set my signet on Thought's pale brow;
 I enslave the soul thro' life's glad season
 And a prison make of the golden Now!

H. GORDON SWIFT.

THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE.—If there be a theology which directly or indirectly denies any law of nature, the science which establishes that there is such a law must do more than merely ignore the theology which disowns it—*it must oppose that theology.*—Flint's "Anti-Theistic Theories," p. 223.

CHRISTIAN AND HEATHEN MORALITY.—An impartial comparison between the moral doctrines of Christianity and those of the Brahmans and the Buddhists does not result very favorably to the first—certainly not to such a degree as to entitle Christianity alone to the claims of a sacred or supernatural origin.—Henry Coke, "Creeds of the Day," vol. i., p. 211; 1883.

JESUS AND LAW.—Jesus seems not to have had the slightest idea of the world's orderly laws. He tells Nicodemus that the wind blows where it likes, or is an existence which has no connection with any other existence—the rise of a wind and the coming of the new birth being two operations not subject to Law, and never to be accounted for.—Douglas Campbell, "The Gospel of the World's Divine Order," p. 272; 1873.

PAUL ON MARRIAGE.

"It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor. vii., 1). Add the words "to her hurt," Paul, and you shall have my hearty endorsement. But as it stands, your text is as mischievous as it can be, and it, together with the teachings of your master in Matt. xix., 12, has been the cause of the untold misery and immorality of asceticism and religious celibacy. But proceed. "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Low ground this, Paul. Not a word about love, companionship, mutual assistance, or the rearing and elevation of offspring. Marriage with you seems but one degree better than promiscuity.

"For I would that all men were even as I myself." . . . "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I." If this desire was carried out there would soon be an end to society, and the world would be left to the animals. Paul, however, continues: "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." This is almost as bad, for the continuance of the race is to be left to those who are most animal. It appeals to nothing but the indulgence of appetite.

Further on Paul gives the reason for his preference for the unmarried state. "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (v. 32-33). And a more worthy object of care, too, than all the Lords that were ever hatched. This disparagement is really a capital reason for marriage. The married person has to care for the world, and gives hostages to society. Paul continues, that the difference also between a wife and an unmarried woman is that the latter careth for the things of the Lord "that she may be holy both in body and in spirit." Similarly the writer of the Revelation (xiv., 4) speaks of the redeemed as "they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." The Apostle to the Gentiles evidently looked on marriage as a defilement and "falling from grace." For shame, Paul! Have you no respect for the memory of your own mother? But for your hedging, and saying "I have no commandment of the Lord," your mistaken followers would have soon become extinct in their attempts to please the Lord by celibacy.

Following his principle of being "all things to all men," Paul draws in, a little further on, and says of the virgin "he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better." Not a word of a girl having any choice of her own in the matter. Her one duty is that of obedience. In the eleventh chapter of the same epistle Paul exhorts that woman should be covered or veiled. "For a man," says he, "ought not to cover his head forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not [made] of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. xi., 7-9). The inferiority of the sex could not be put more strongly, and all the slavery and brutality which woman has had to undergo can be defended on Paul's ground. He declares (verse 3) that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man." There is thus all the difference between the position of woman and man that there is between him and God, that is an infinite distance. Paul is so strong on this point that he repeats (Eph. v., 23): "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church." More absolute authority could not be given by a theologian.

Mrs. Booth and the Salvationists should note the doctrine of Paul in regard to woman keeping silence in the churches. "If they will learn anything let them ask their husbands." No independent investigation; and as for preaching, "it is a shame for women to speak in the church." In his first epistle to Timothy (ii., 11, 12) Paul says: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." This was written, remember, to those with whom the position of wives was but little superior to that of slaves. If women would only read their Bible they

would surely repudiate teachings which place them in such an inferior and degrading position. Can it have been true, as alleged by the Ebionites, that Paul became a Christian because jilted by a Jewish lady? At any rate it is evident he had little sympathy with the sex, and no idea of their emancipation. Poor man! he thought he knew much concerning God and Christ Jesus, but he knew nothing of the height and depth of the riches of woman's love, or of her capacity to arrive at and transcend all that is thought of her by her self-styled lord and master.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

MUCH excitement has been caused in Canadian Catholic circles by the announcement that a number of sacred relics brought from Rome by Monsignor Fabre, the Bishop of Montreal, are spurious, he having been victimised by a Jewish relic merchant. The chosen people, it may be mentioned, have a manufactory of relics in full swing at Jerusalem.

THE Bishop went on a special mission to Rome in 1880 to obtain relics. He returned with the alleged bones of St. Claudian and St. Julian, said to have been taken from the sanctuary of St. Peter by the Piedmontese army in 1871. Special altars were erected for the relics, and amid great pomp they were blessed and sanctified. Some bones were cremated, and the dust sold to the faithful for large sums. Recently word was received from Rome that all the relics were spurious, with Papal instructions that they should be exposed and destroyed. There were no Papal instructions about returning their money to those who invested in saint-dust.

THE Sicilian journals report the conclusion of a remarkable trial for murder. A priest named Failla was poisoned in taking the sacrament. A post-mortem examination proved the presence of strychnine in the body, and mixed with the particles "representing the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Suspicion fell on a canon of the church, Gaetano Limoli, who cherished a great hatred against the deceased. The body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ seems to be sometimes a rather dangerous compound. But why, when "changing the elements," did not this disciple of St. Peter also change or neutralise the poison? What had he done with his craft to be thus caught by his "brother in the Lord?" Administering poison in the Eucharist was a common priestly practice in the middle ages.

LAST week in the *English Mechanic* the following question was asked:—"A clergyman prosecuted some boys for playing marbles on Sunday. The magistrate dismissed the case. He took it to a superior court, and, in going through the formalities, a clerk dealt with a certain form and put a 5s. stamp on it. He (the clerk) afterwards, in the absence of the clergyman, found that the stamp should have been a 25s. one, and at the next meeting explained his mistake to the clergyman, but he refused to pay the 20s. extra. Is he legally and morally bound to pay, or if not legally, should he be morally bound? It is to be understood that the clerk would lose if he did not pay.—R. N."

THE Rev. G. Tabberer, vicar of St. Peter's, Coventry, has been at last formally deprived of his benefice by the Bishop of Worcester, on the ground of fornication, drunkenness and indecent behavior. If all the clerical black sheep were sent to Coventry, what a place Coventry would be!

BOYCOTTING a chapel is a new religious sensation. This the Roman Catholics of Templeton have done. They demand that Father Walsh, who was their leader, shall be sent back to them, and, meanwhile, have nailed up the chapel doors and windows. The new priest within the last few days has several times forced open all the doors, but on each occasion they were nailed up again. The congregation are determined to have their own priest or none. Prayers are said every Sunday outside the boycotted chapel. If the people cease to dread the excommunication of the priest, there will be nothing left but for the Holy Ghost to appear in person and settle them like Ananias and Sapphira, or decide between the rival priests as he, she or it did between Joseph and Matthias when a successor was wanted for Judas—by cutting a pack of cards, casting the dice, or flipping a penny.

THE Sacred Harmony Society are treading dangerously near the borders of blasphemy. They produced last Friday at St. James's Hall an English version of Berlioz's cantata "L'Enfance du Christ"—the childhood of Christ—with duets between Joseph and Mary. A considerable portion of the action of the musical play is supposed to take place at Sais in Egypt, where Jesus went in his youth, both according to Catholic tradition and the Jewish Talmud.

THE *Church Review* has an article entitled "Evangelical Insanity." It does not refer to the nonsense of the gospels about a virgin's child, devils cast into pigs, etc., but to the much-declining

body of modern Pharisees calling themselves Evangelicals, and their pretence of constituting the best portion of the Church of England. The *C. R.* intimates that when the Church is properly constituted, i.e., when the Ritualists get in power, the Evangelists will find themselves "chucked out."

RELIGION is not only a burden in Europe. Miss Gordon Cumming, in an article in the *British Quarterly Review* on "The Offerings of the Dead," states that these offerings, prescribed by ancestor-worship in China, cost the population of that country the astounding amount of £32,000,000 annually.

THE Rev. Hugh Gilmore has been preaching against football in some of its aspects. He complains that men pursue it "as a means of living, and as a consequence degraded the pastime and also themselves." The *Sporting Chronicle* retorts the argument upon the reverend gentleman's own fraternity. He is left to consider whether parsons also do not preach "as a means of living," and whether they do not "as a consequence" degrade the pulpit and also themselves.

THE *Christian Herald* narrates on one page the "terrible fate of a blaspheming infidel" who was paralysed, and on the next page describes a poor paralytic in Lambeth Workhouse whose mother brought him up to love Jesus. Why isn't the paralysis a judgment in the one case as much as in the other?

THE Chinese have expelled a Roman Catholic Bishop and thirty missionaries from Canton. Cant-off would now perhaps be a more appropriate name for that town.

THE new religious paper, the *Christian Journal*, is not behind its pious contemporaries in the admission of curious advertisements. One worthy evangeliser advertises as under:—"Mr. — (honored during the past year by bringing over 2,000 souls to Christ) is open for engagements." Christianity must have got to a low ebb when the savior of over 2,000 souls annually has to advertise for engagements.

THE Rev. Benjamin Stewart Darbyshire, of Reigate, has a direct method of enforcing moral lessons on his subordinates. With his nurse he did this by means of a large piece of coal, and in the case of a small boy by the still more effective means of a chopper thrown at his head. For the former method he has been cruelly fined 20s. and costs, and for the latter he is bound over to keep the peace.

THE Rev. F. R. Pepin, of St. Antonie Abbe parish, Montreal, was arrested on December 4, charged with indecently assaulting young girls attending confession in his church. When a warrant was taken out the reverend Lothario decamped across the line to escape justice. Twelve young girls have made similar complaints against their father confessor.

ACCORDING to the *Christian Herald* report on "Faith-Healing," a Mr. Bulkeley has been conducting meetings in Wisconsin during one month, and in this time "814 have been healed." This beats the New Testament accounts of faith-healing. Why isn't all Europe instantly converted by such a supply of miracles? "Many" of them are described as "remarkable." We are told, for instance, that "in one family three or four children, all "deaf and dumb" from their birth, were healed, and now hear and speak." Among credulous people and in times of ignorance such accounts would gradually be incorporated into gospels, and in after ages well-paid scholars would defend them against blaspheming critics.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* attempts to evade the discrepancies in the genealogies of Jesus by saying that "Matthew traces the genealogy through Joseph, and Luke through Mary." Where is the authority for this statement? Not only is Mary not mentioned in either of them, but such language is employed as forbids the idea of either writer having had her in his mind. Matthew says Jacob begat Joseph, and Luke proceeding upwards names first upon his list Joseph the son of Heli. Luke says (ii., 4) that Joseph went with Mary to Bethlehem because he was (not they were) of the house and lineage of David. The Christian quibble does not attempt to solve the difficulty of Matthew giving twenty-seven generations between Jesus and David, while Luke gives forty-two generations.

THE Rev. Henry Tubal Hole, rector of Plimpton, St. Maurice, Devonshire, refuses to admit persons to the holy sacrament of marriage until they have been previously consecrated by baptism in the Church of England! A recent bride and bridegroom had to go to the Congregational minister because the young man did not see why he should take a godmother as well as a mother-in-law. This would be all very well were not the Rev. H. T. Hole, the paid servant of the State, bound, among other things, to marry his parishioners. Such proceedings are little likely to have the effect of bringing more sheep within the fold. Incidents of this kind illustrate the position assumed by the country sky-pilots towards the villagers; but we may be sure not a tithe of the cases of rural clerical arrogance ever find their way into the papers.

THE *Rock* contemplates with anxiety the rapidly increasing proportion of poor men in holy orders. The reluctance of the sons of wealthy families to enter the service of the Church, leaves openings for the ambition of less desirable aspirants from the lower ranks of society. This reluctance will spread, we suspect, until ultimately only the lowest of the low will consent to barter their freedom for the mess of pottage that priestcraft offers.

CLERGYMEN sometimes change the proposed name at baptism. According to a true anecdote in the *Rock*, the curate of Middlewich, Cheshire, once asked the name of a child, and the sponsor said "Lucy, sir." "Lucifer!" said the deaf old man; "that's the Devil. *John*, I baptise thee," etc. The girl accordingly was christened John, and so the name stands in the parish register.

A SKY-PILOT recently refused to christen a baby girl "Bandoline Fixatrice," and induced the parents to have her named "Mary Ann" instead. He probably thought the first name meant something awfully wicked, but on inquiry it turned out to be that of a greasy substance largely sold to parsons for the adornment of their upper lip.

WE don't often agree with the Archbishop of Canterbury, but we cordially endorse his recent remark that "all that science could discover would but throw fresh light on the word of God." Yes, it is quite true. Science *does* throw a fresh light on the Bible! and that fresh light brings out in striking relief all its blunders and absurdities. "More light!" is a good prayer for scientists, but a very bad one for priests. Their Bible, like their craft, is a gross fraud, and they had better "keep it dark."

WE also agree with the Rev. J. Guinness Rogers, who states that "the Bible was not given to teach men science." But what is the use of publishing such an obvious truism. Every schoolboy knows it.

THE *Christian Herald* encourages its juvenile readers with a nice little anecdote of a child who passionately and repeatedly cried out to her Atheist grandfather: "Oh, grandfather, you're a fool; you're a fool; you're a fool! . . . The Bible says you are a fool! 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.'" (Ps. xiv., 1). The result was, we are told, that he became "miserably unhappy and broken down before God; and the Lord graciously used the circumstance to his conversion." Wicked infidels, who think it possible that Christian journals may circulate pious fibs, can inquire of "a Christian lady in Scotland" now deceased. No other references to locality, date or name are given. The veracity of a Christian is as undoubted as his courtesy. We suppose children are to address unbelieving parents and relatives in this biblical style. Suppose the case was reversed, and that unbelieving sons and daughters addressed their Christian parents in this way! What would Christians think of it?

A CHRISTIAN paper describes a certain Methodist preacher's sermons as "strings of pearls with here and there a diamond." We should like to hear that prodigy. Most preachers' sermons are strings of "ha's" with here and there a "hum."

THE Spiritualists have, after all their bluster, declined Mr. Labouchere's challenge. He wants them to submit their "manifestations" to a committee of professional conjurers, but they know a trick worth two of that. They prefer a jury of crazy dupes.

MR. JACOB BRIGHT, in his recent speech at Wilmslow, said that "the new voters would hold that the most irrational thing in the world to have religious creeds settled by Act of Parliament." True, and they will hold it equally absurd to settle religious *discussion* in that way. Mr. Jacob Bright would not lift a finger to help Messrs. Foote, Ramsey and Kemp when they were imprisoned like felons for "blasphemy." Perhaps the "new voters" are teaching him a lesson.

THE *Protestant Standard* gives a garbled report of Mr. Collins' reply to Dr. Lambert, which is simply a disgrace to journalism. The same paper says that Mr. Bradlaugh must not be allowed to sit in Parliament because he does not believe in God, but it expresses a hope that "God will use his very great talents to his own glory." God forbid! Fancy Mr. Bradlaugh reduced to the level of the *Protestant Standard* either in morality or grammar.

THAT waxy old fossil Mr. Newdegate Newdegate M.P., speaking at the annual meeting of the Warwickshire Scripture Readers Society, lamented that in the present day men deemed themselves learned who knew nothing of the Bible. Mr. N. N. has shown that he has not only read it but has taken its lessons of persecution to heart. He and Sir Henry Tyler are pretty well qualified to be first favorites of the Lord of hosts.

ST. GEORGE MIVART, writing in the Roman Catholic organ the *Tablet*, on the Conversion of England, thinks there is hope for the restoration of Catholicism if only "more judicious methods" are employed. He especially advocates the Catholics fitting

themselves for the control of education. Education, however, he will find is the dynamite that will blow up the rock of superstition on which his church is founded. The pedagogue is more than a match for the priest, and the school will supersede the church.

THE right to force clergymen who are distasteful to the people upon the parishioners of St. Jude's, Southsea, has just been sold for £1,000. Other sales of future presentations are advertised. Sell away, kind, good, clerical auctioneers; make the most of your opportunities. It all hastens the day when the "going-going" at present being sounded for the Establishment shall culminate in the absolute and relentless "gone."—*Echo*.

BISHOP RYLE, in consecrating St. Agnes Church, Liverpool, took occasion to warn his hearers against infidelity. "Christ's resurrection," said he, is "a foundation proof that the salvation of sinners by the vicarious atonement is a finished work, and a miracle which the cleverest infidels have never been able to explain away." How the rising of one man's body proves the salvation of another person's soul by vicarious atonement is a mystery. As for explaining away, not the resurrection, but the story of it found in narratives written long after it is alleged to have happened, credulity among Christians is such a common phenomenon, it needs little explanation. It is not our business to explain miracle away, but to explain it. The judge does not remove a prisoner, he only convicts him.

IN several churches last Sunday a vote of thanks was proposed to Almighty God for not injuring more persons by dynamite.

THE *Christian Journal* quotes from "a distinguished Scotch divine," an anecdote about two rivers, one clean, the other muddy, and how when the two coalesced both streams became dirty; with the remark, "So is it too often, alas! with those who wed unbelievers. For a time they run together smoothly, but at last one is changed by the other, and it is generally the unbeliever gains the day." Yes, because the unbeliever's is generally the stronger and deeper current. Only unbelief, by sinking the sediment of superstition, becomes clearer instead of muddier as it flows.

A M E R I C A N I T E M S .

(From the New York *Truthseeker*.)

A YOUNG woman has been expelled from a church in New York for saying that her pastor had kissed her four times when she had only been kissed three times. New Yorkers can't stand wilful exaggeration.

THE popular faith is experiencing a change of base. "Sam," said Chio, "why doan you talk ter old massa 'n tell um ter lay up treasures in hebben?" Sam: "Gwuffum heah, niggah! Sense dem Sundy-school sup'tendents 'n pious folks hez took ter 'bezzlin' I hez moah confidence in airthly banks then heavenly uns ez fuinshul instooshuns."

THE Rev. Mr. Hague, Baptist, says that infidelity is honey-combing the foundations of Episcopalianism, and that it is falling into manifest decay.

THE Rev. Alexander B. Crawford, of an Episcopal Chapel in Philadelphia, has resigned. On a recent Sunday he appeared in the pulpit in an intoxicated condition. He read the prayers and pronounced the benediction, but omitted his sermons. He gave no explanation of how he came so.

CHICAGO is just now pluming itself on the possession of an uncommon kind of tramp. It is claimed for him that he can return thanks for a cold lunch in five modern languages, and also repeat the Lord's Prayer in Greek, Latin and Hebrew. The prayer of course is regarded as good evidence of a devotional state of mind, and is recited as a means of livelihood, forming part of a light occupation.

THERE is an old lady in the eastern part of Mississippi who says the Lord has commanded her to spend the balance of her life in fasting, and for three weeks she has not touched a morsel of anything. "We do not know," says the Grenada (*Miss.*) *Sentinel*, "what the Lord said to that old lady, but we think there are quite a number of people about this time that will be in her condition, without any Almighty fiat, before many moons shall wax and wane, unless they go to work."

THE holiness people of Carthage (Mo.), performed a most miraculous faith-cure upon a Mrs. McKinney. After a day or two of great rejoicing the excitement subsided, and the woman died. The sensible people of the place now charge them with causing her death, alleging that she would have recovered if they had left her alone.

A ROSSVILLE (Kansas) little boy recently received a bright silver dollar as a prize for committing to memory eight hundred verses from the Bible. He took his dollar and went straight to the drug-store and bought himself a pack of elegant satin-finished, linen-back playing cards. He evidently believed that the end justified the means. He did evil that good might come.

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, Feb. 1, Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville, N.; at 11.30, "Christianity and Poverty;" at 7, "Good God."

FEBRUARY 8, Hall of Science, London; 15, Milton Hall; 22, Liverpool; 23, Chatham.

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

APRIL 12, Milton Hall; 19, Hall of Science; 26, Hall of Science.

MAY 10, Milton Hall; 17, 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.—G. D. F.

UT PROSIM.—Of course we shall be glad to see you if you call at our office, but we cannot possibly undertake to edit this paper, or any other, so that *everything* in it will please *everybody*. Someone else may like the very item you dislike, and another dislike the very item you like most. We remember laughing at two objectors to our Christmas Number. We got them both to point out what they disapproved. Each indicated a different passage, and neither could see anything objectionable in the other's rock of offence.

J. N. (Manchester).—It is pleasant to hear you say "I am glad to see the progress Freethought is making among most of my acquaintance, and it is all owing to your agency." The MS. shall have our consideration.

J. SANDERSON.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

G. SHORE, Secretary of the Ball's Pond Branch of the N. S. S. wishes us to announce that a Sunday morning course of lectures will be delivered in the Society's hall during February by the Christian Evidence Society. Opposition is invited.

W. T. L.—Always glad to hear from you.

EVERTON TORFEE.—Send us bits of Liverpool news as often as you find convenient.

F. P. NORCOMBE.—You answer Yes to all our questions. You can do all the things which, according to the last chapter of Mark, Jesus said should be the signs of those who believe. But your word is not enough. Call at our office and swallow a dose of prussic acid; or perhaps you prefer strychnine. Either will suit.

W. LAWRENCE.—Thanks. Cuttings are always welcome.

DISCIPLE IN SECRET.—It is always difficult, and sometimes dangerous, to give advice in such cases, for one cannot know *all* the facts. That is what makes advice so generally useless. You must judge for yourself. All we would ask you to remember is that playing the hypocrite, while of doubtful advantage to your friends, will certainly debase your own character. The address of the Camberwell Branch is 61 New Church Road, Camberwell Road, S.E.

J. ROBSON.—We have no space for further articles; short, lively pieces are more in our way.

C. CLEMETSHOW (Paris).—Yes, the amount will suffice for three months.

F. J. SEATON.—Green's "Short History of the English People" is a good book, but Knight's or Cassell's "History of England" will give you fuller information. Green is published at 8s. 6d.; the others are far more expensive even second-hand.

RUDOLF.—Too long and diffuse. Brevity is the soul of wit. Always be as concise as you can.

S. BOURNE.—There is no absolute rule for the pronunciation of proper names.

JULIUS.—According to Luke i, 36, John was six months older than Jesus.

J. G. FISHER.—The joke has already appeared in a slightly different form.

A. COHEN.—The Society for the Conversion of the Jews announce as the result of last year's work the conversion of four Jews at an average cost of about £6,000 each. It has been suspected that some of these had been converted before. Heathens come much cheaper. Full information about the Sepher Toldoth Jeshu will be found in the introduction, when published.

J. BROWN.—The text of Pappus, who, in his Synodicon to the Council of Nice, asserts that the inspired books jumped on the communion-table and the spurious ones remained underneath, is found in W. Mace's Greek and English New Testament; p. 874; 1719.

ANTI-MARRIAGE.—We don't know. The Socialists are more in your line, judging by their latest manifeste. Try Mr. Morris and the Socialist League.

SEVERAL correspondents remain unanswered till next week. We beg to observe that those who desire answers the same week that they write in should see that their letters reach us not later than Tuesday morning.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Dublin Daily Express—Coventry Times—Stratford Express—Manchester Evening News—Daily Gazette—Hampshire Independent—Hampshire Telegraph—Toronto Globe—Western Daily Mercury—Truthseeker—St. Louis Post Dispatch—Liverpool Post—Kentish Express—Bedfordshire Standard—Erith Times.

"FREETHINKER" PRIZES.

WE have reason to believe that there is a great deal of faculty among our readers which is wasted for want of proper exercise. Sometimes we receive a bit of sparkling verse from a correspondent, and at others a capital suggestion for a picture. It is a pity that these enterprising spirits should not have a better field for their labors; and we are persuaded there are many more who only want a little stimulus to set their brains and hands in motion. In this belief we have resolved to invite our readers to a friendly competition with each other. Verse can be taken by and bye; for the present we will take illustrations only, and see what is the result. We offer a PRIZE OF ONE GUINEA for the best Comic Bible Sketch, and ANOTHER PRIZE OF ONE GUINEA for the best Comic Religious Sketch on a topic of current interest.

The drawings should be done in pen and Indian ink on white cardboard. They should be carefully done with all the lines well distinct, so as to be reproduced by the photo-zinc process. Washes or colors must not be used. The drawings must of course be original, not copies; and they should be about one-third larger than our ordinary single or double column size.

The first competition will close on March 1. The winner of each prize will be announced in the *Freethinker* under his own name or a *nom de plume*, whichever he prefers.

A remittance according to value will be made to the owner of any other drawing which we may publish.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE N. W. London Branch of the N. S. S. is progressing admirably under its new management. The Building Fund grows apace, and the Sunday audiences are increasing in numbers. There was a fine gathering last Sunday to hear Mr. Foote, and we are informed that over a hundred copies of the *Freethinker* were sold at the bookstall, the profits of which (by the way) now go to the Society's funds.

TO-DAY (Feb. 1) Mr. Foote lectures at Claremont Hall. The evening subject is a novel one—"Good God."

THE London correspondent of the New York *Truthseeker*, in a description of Mr. Foote, writes as follows:—"His dry humor is at times perfectly irresistible, and regularly brings down the house! For my part, I like him quite as well as any Freethought lecturer I have heard, and think he will before long take a more prominent place than he has hitherto done!"

WE are glad to find our efforts appreciated in America. The Pittsburg *Truth* says: "The Christmas Number of the London *Freethinker*, G. W. Foote editor, is before us. It is immense. It 'takes the cake.' We shall try to induce the financial secretary of the League to buy a thousand copies for sale. And to our 'Christian' friends who would like to see true likenesses of the renowned Bible characters, we would say subscribe for the *Freethinker*. If the 'Christians' ever put Mr. Foote in prison again, there is no telling what he would do when he got out. They had better let him alone."

PROGRESS for February is, we think, of more than average quality. The advertisement will show a great variety of contents, such as is rarely paralleled in higher-priced magazines. Mr. Foote is getting to the most interesting stage of his "Prisoner for Blasphemy." Mr. Wheeler begins a comprehensive paper on "Primitive Marriage;" Mr. Collins concludes his on "Geology and Evolution," and S. Britton gives us the first instalment of a powerful vindication of Shelley against John Robertson's attacks in *Our Corner*. There is also a scathing satire in verse on Lord Bulwer Lytton by the late James Thomson (B.V.) It is a splendid specimen of Thomson's satirical power, and in itself worth far more than the price of the magazine.

WE are pleased to note that Lord Thurlow will again bring forward his resolution that the national museums, libraries and art galleries be opened on Sundays. It is quite competent for the Government to open these places without a resolution of the House of Commons, and the Trustees of the British Museum have already asked for an additional grant in view of the contingency.

THE Hibbert lecturer for this year will be Prof. Pfeleiderer of Berlin, and his subject "The Preaching of the Apostle Paul and its Influence on the Development of Christianity." If, as is expected, the professor travels on the lines laid down by Baur, we may look for a noteworthy exposition of the differences of faith among the early Christians, and of how the doctrine which originally was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel obtained footing among the Gentiles.

AFTER a joke has gone the rounds we may safely look for its appearance in *Punch*, yet we did not expect the contributors to that melancholy journal would poach on the preserves of our profane columns. It is nevertheless a fact that last week's *Punch* contains a musical profane joke to be found first in the list of "Rib Ticklers" in our Christmas Number, and of which one of our staff acknowledges the demerit of originating.

TALMAGE says that a great religious awakening is much needed. If he kept his eyes on the Freethought movement he might observe it going on.

THE Liberals of America will celebrate the 148th anniversary of Thomas Paine's birthday with great *éclat*. The memory of the rebellious needleman is by no means dying out in the country of his adoption.

THE Freethinkers of Pennsylvania meet for the first time in convention on Jan. 30. Col. Ingersoll has announced his intention of being present. No doubt Freethought is on the move in the Quaker State, as elsewhere.

THE *Rock* notices that "The Church despoilers are growing bold." It especially laments the fact—to us a decidedly encouraging one—that Professor Stuart, the lately-elected member for Hackney, made a speech at Bolton the other day, in which he advocated free education, the funds to be obtained from the property of the Church of Scotland, which would be disestablished in the near future, and that of the Church of England, whose time of grace, he seemed to think, would be extended a little longer.

THE *Times* correspondent in Paris says that Edmund About, the great journalist, "died as he lived, with his back against all beliefs, after having passed the greater part of his life in laughing at them." According to Blowitz this is a "melancholy spectacle." Tastes differ. We think it a glorious spectacle.

THE *Christian World* characteristically supposes that About would not have been a sceptic if he had lived in England. He took a "scunner" at Catholic formalism and ecclesiasticism, and rushed into the arms of Atheism; but in England he would have been attracted by our sweet, reasonable Protestantism, and remained a true son of the Church. All this, however, is very fanciful. What is the use of prophesying backwards? "Might have been" is a very profitless field. Nothing can alter the fact that About *did* live and *did* die a thorough Freethinker.

THE Peckham and Dulwich Branch of the N. S. S. have bought a freehold house and grounds in a prominent position in Rye Lane, Peckham, and have opened the premises as a Radical Club. Members are joining rapidly and there is every prospect of a great success. The Club was opened last Sunday evening with an address by Mr. Ramsey, the large room being crowded, and many unable to obtain admission.

SOMETIME ago we commented strongly on the cowardly policy advocated by Dr. Odgers in a statement respecting the Blasphemy Laws, prepared by him for the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. Dr. Odgers appeared to think that Unitarians are safe from prosecution and that therefore no change in the law is needed. At the meeting of the Council of the Unitarian Association held last week this position was strongly combated by Dr. Aspland, Sir R. K. Wilson and the Revs. J. P. Hopps, B. A. Armstrong and W. Sharman. An attempt made by the editor of the *Christian Life* to shelve the question was defeated, and a resolution recalling the protest made at the annual meeting of the Association in 1883 against the prosecution of the *Freethinker*, and expressing willingness to take further action whenever a bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws comes before Parliament, was carried by fourteen to three.

THE South Shields bigots have just sustained a crushing defeat. After Mr. Foote's last lectures in the Free Library Hall the chairman of that institute gave notice that he should move at the next meeting, on Jan. 19, that the rent of the Hall should be raised, and that no one be allowed to make a charge for admission on Sunday. The local clergy beat the drum ecclesiastic, and urged on the faithful to support this motion and put the infidels down. Two of them, the Rev. J. Bailey and the Rev. J. Coulson, waited upon the Library Committee, and begged them to carry their chairman's pious resolution. These amiable sky-pilots were, however, followed by a deputation of the Secular Society, consisting of Messrs. Lumley, Blythe and Sanderson, who put the matter in a different light. The result was that the bigots were defeated by fifteen votes to nine; the borough member, Mr. J. C. Stephenson, and the mayor voting with the majority. We congratulate the South Shields Freethinkers on their splendid victory, and we especially congratulate Mr. Thomas Lumley on the energy and ability he has displayed throughout the struggle.

THE *Academy* of last week contains a capital reply by "Vernon Lee" (Miss Paget) to a book on "The Wish to Believe," by Wilfrid Ward, son of the late Dr. Ward of the Roman Catholic *Dublin Review*. "Mankind," says she, "in its various stages of

growth has made itself, in the words of Goethe, various divinities in its own image, and these images differ as much as the Easter Island idol who graces the outside of the British Museum differs from the gods of Phidias lodged within that edifice." She shows that, after all, the Catholicism of Mr. Ward is unconsciously influenced by the atmosphere of his time, and is more like the Atheism of Prof. Clifford in its argument than it is like the Catholicism of St. Bernard and the old Catholic theologians.

RELIGIOUS SUICIDES.

TALMAGE, and we might almost say Christians in general, are never tired of associating suicide and all else that is bad with Freethought and Atheism. An American Freethought journal has taken the matter up. The *Pittsburgh Times* having denounced "materialism" as the cause of the alleged prevalence of suicide in the United States, *Truth*, of the same town, replies that although the ministers of the gospel have exhausted themselves upon the subject, they have not been able to give a single instance where materialism was the cause of suicide. "On the contrary," it says, "statistics show that religionists are the ones who commit suicide. Our insane asylums are filled with religious people, but it is as easy to find a materialist in an insane asylum as it is to find a needle in a haystack."

To aid the preachers in forming correct ideas on this subject, *Truth* gives a number of recent instances of suicide and religious insanity taken from the daily press. Among these are the following cases which we give in a more or less abbreviated form:—

The Rev. M. H. Collison, pastor of the Fullerton Avenue Presbyterian Church, Lake View, Chicago, recently shot and instantly killed his wife. He also put a bullet into his own head.

The Rev. Henry Williamson, rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Trenton, N. J., suicided on the 13th of November by shooting himself through the head.

William Pearson, of Chehallis, under an imaginary order from the Higher Power, killed his child with a hammer on December 29, and cut his wife's throat and his own.

Father Rupplin, a Catholic priest of St. Louis, poisoned himself on December 28 with strychnine. He left a letter saying: "I committed suicide on account of poverty and incurable sickness. . . May God help me."

Herman Roggee, a very religious man, suicided a few weeks ago at his residence, 114 East Street, Alleghany City, by hanging. He had an excellent reputation.

Miss Priscilla Brown, of Rochester, Pa., a popular young lady in religious circles, committed suicide on Nov. 15 by hanging herself to a rafter.

On Dec. 7, John Hiltbeitel, of Wernersville, bade his people farewell and followed "voices in heaven" calling him home. He was found shortly after on the Lebanon Valley railroad with both legs cut off and his head smashed in.

On Nov. 29, Max Theodore Voight, of New York City, a lad of 19, took poison. In his pocket-book was found a letter in which he stated that he had always been religious.

At Wausau, Wis., Dec. 22, after an unsuccessful attempt to take the life of his wife, Francis DeLiliz went to the house of his brother, who was confined to his bed by illness, and deliberately chopped the helpless man to pieces, nearly severing his head from his body, and exclaiming the while: "Christ is come. His blood flows freely for all."

Joseph Samson, alderman of the sixth ward, Lancaster, Pa., suicided on Dec. 9, by shooting himself twice in the body with a pistol. He was a prominent member of the Methodist Church.

Bertha Sayelowsky, of New York, a Polish Jewess, and very religious, attempted suicide on Nov. 30 by drowning.

Thomas Marston, of Congers, Ga., burned the Methodist Church and tried to fire the town in several places. After he was arrested he said that God commanded him to do it.

In these cases it was not the "abandonment of all religious belief" that caused the mischief, as the *Pittsburgh Times* would have its readers believe is usually the case. If, indeed, Christians were not possessed of a most excellent capacity for ignoring the "unanswerable logic of facts" to which the *Pittsburgh Times* professes to appeal, they could not help perceiving that their accusations against Atheism are unfounded. As it is, they take no notice of the frequent Christian suicides, and they fail to find genuine cases of Atheistic suicide; and yet they persist in reviling Freethought and Freethinkers for causing despair and self-destruction which might, with far more reason, be attributed to the morbid state of individual minds and the generally unhealthy condition of society produced by religion. From the Poet Laureate down to the lowest Salvationists, Christians and quasi-Christians agree in thus slandering Atheism, and yet in England, as in America, numerous cases of religious suicide, and even of clerical suicide, can be gleaned from the newspapers, while suicides of Atheists seem to take place only in the imaginations of the pious editors and parsons who readily circulate baseless fictions for the glory of God and the condemnation of unbelievers. Christian heads seem impregnable to the assaults of fact and logic, but we must "keep pegging away," as Labouchere says of the Northampton question. By degrees, and in due time, we shall produce some impression, and gradually we may succeed in bringing Christians to such a state of comparative sanity and common sense as will allow them to acknowledge that Atheists are not necessarily inclined to suicide and all that is vile any more than Christians are.

W. P. BALL.

MISSIONARY STORIES.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the sure and certain hope that the following stories may prove an incentive to youthful missionaries and all apostles in embryo, I now consent that ink shall be shed with a large amount of pleasure and a small quill pen. I am also sustained by the intuitive knowledge that these stories will be utilised by future faithfuls when I have been elevated to another sphere and business, and wear a white robe on my God-like form, a crown on my noble and Elisha-like head, and a harp on and in my hands which, at first, I shan't know how to play. The "skeletons" of these stories were given me by a missionary now deceased. As I am blind, my nephew, who is a medical student, a wide reader and a fair scholar, has kindly consented to "edit" these papers, or, as he quaintly puts it in hospital phraseology, "dressing 'em up," "licking 'em into shape," "fleshing the skeletons," etc. My nephew also suggests the *Freethinker* as the fittest journal in which these narratives should appear. With a wisdom, beyond his years, he points out that fleshly experience and an old adage has taught us that "stolen kisses are the sweetest," and that the Holy Bible informs us that forbidden fruit is irresistible. He argues thus: The *Freethinker* is forbidden fruit, and as a natural consequence is read by all religiously inquiring and pious people. He further asserts, "it's bound to fetch 'em," and solemnly promises to distribute any number of these journals, I may be pleased to pay for, among his fellow students and the in-patients of "Guy's." He assures me it will do them a "power of good," and I believe him. I have bribed the blasphemous editor of this print, who, I am informed by my nephew, has sold himself to the Devil; bribed him with the multiplied pence obtained from the school children. Adults refused me a cent; but the babes and sucklings gave their mites freely when I told them "our father which art in heaven" would return them one hundred pennies for each one given now. One boy refused to give his penny until I would tell him when he should see "our father" and "what time the train started." My motive for writing is, I hope, now as plainly apparent as the morality of a Varleyite, or the wisdom of a city jury. Missionaries are assured these stories may be thoroughly relied on and are as true as gospel. They will be short so that they may be conn'd and learnt by heart to cast into the teeth of the unrepentant:—

NO. 1.—THE "DYEING" INFIDEL.

It was a muddy day and the streets were coated with the oleo-margarine-like substance known as London mud. The missionary, well shod and wrapt in an overcoat and deep meditation, thankfully thought of God's goodness to himself as the many ill-clad and shivering wretches hurried by. He was in a pensive mood and the Goswell Road. His attempts to get a hearer among the pedestrians had failed. On the fascia-board of a shop opposite you could read the legend, "Brown, dyer." In the doorway stood a man, whose jovial-looking face and jolly red nose plainly indicated their owner's partiality for the good things of this world. The eagle eye of the missionary lighted up as it lighted on him, and he said: "The Lord hath delivered him into my hand." Crossing, he stood in front of the person, who wore a brown-paper cap, a rainbow-hued apron, and an inquiring expression. As the missionary's boots ceased to spread mud, his tongue took up the running and began to spread the gospel. Lifting up his voice, he cried: "I have a message to you from the master." "Get it off your chest," echoed the man. "Christ died for all," said the missionary. "I too," said the scourer, "am willing to dye for all at the most reasonable prices. Terms cash." "I mean," explained the missionary, "that Christ died on the cross." "Nothing done 'on the cross' here, mister. Like the cove at the moosic 'all, 'Act on the square, boys,' is my motto." And the man of many hues eyed his would-be convert suspiciously. Ignoring interruption, the missionary said: "The blood of the lamb cleanseth from all—." "Tommy rot," interjected the feather-cleaner, "lambs' blood won't clean nothing, a mixer of benzine and ammo —." The undaunted white-chokered one cried, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." "Aye," replied the man of many colors, "that's right enough. 'To dye is gain,' if you only get enuf to keep yer agoin'." The missionary groaned, cast a despairing look upward, murmured a prayer for the obtuse dyeing infidel, and vanished. The multi-hued one skipped to the adjoining pub, muttering, "He's right enough about the gain—it are a profitable business; but what the Devil did he mean by *on the cross*? Damme, he must have been one of the light-fingered crew and took my house for a 'fence.'" BAWDEN BYNE.

(To be continued).

REVIEWS.

Darwin against Moses. By A. B. Moss: Watts and Co.—Interesting, but hardly up to the author's general level.

Our Corner. February, 1885.—Mr. Bradlaugh concludes his impeachment of "The Prodigal City Fathers;" Mrs. Besant continues her "Autobiographical Sketches," dealing especially with her prosecution for publishing the Knowlton pamphlet, and giving many interesting details; Mr. Robertson has a searching

criticism of Lord Tennyson's "Becket." There are other readable articles, notably a notice of Björnson by L. Katscher, and a few pieces of verse which do not rise above the general magazine level.

FROM THE WESLEYAN PULPIT TO THE SECULAR PLATFORM.

THE biography of an earnest man is always interesting. Especially so is the record of the development of a mind as it unshackles itself from the superstitions of childhood. Mr. Symes's account of the life and death of his religion,* just sent us from Melbourne, shows him to have been always a truth-seeker, and, although his progress from the camp of theology was slow, it was all the surer for being slow. Born of Methodist parents, January 29, 1841, he was suckled on the gospel according to John Wesley. The picture of his childhood under this treatment is anything but a lively one. He was brought up to believe in an avenging God to whom the indulgence of the most innocent pleasures were dreadful crimes, and so developed an abnormal religiosity which rendered the task of emancipation a very difficult and painful one. Like other Methodists, he was constantly encouraged to become converted and "find acceptance with God." At the age of seventeen, repenting sincerely of his sins, real and fictitious, the old feeling of fear gave place to confidence and a feeling of peace and joy, which he now sees is sufficiently accounted for on natural principles, although he then ascribed it to supernatural acceptance of his conversion. From this time he regularly attended all the "means of grace," public and private. The way he used to spend his Sundays will give the reader an idea of how thoroughly the religious spirit possessed him:—

Up in the morning soon enough to go to the seven o'clock prayer meeting—this I did every Sunday for a number of years; and in winter often shivered with cold all the time I was there. At half-past eight I took breakfast very rapidly; and then after family prayer visited 20 to 30 houses with tracts, taking the one left the previous Sunday, and leaving another in its stead. At half-past nine I went to the Sunday-school, where we usually spent three hours. The afternoon public service in the chapel began sometimes at two, at other times half an hour later. These I always attended. At 6 o'clock or 6.30 I went to the regular Sunday night preaching, and always stayed to the prayer meeting, which wound up the business of the day. Thus eight or nine hours every Sunday was spent in "religious exercises," and the brief intervals filled up with reading books more or less "sacred," and in meditation and prayer.

At length the idea of giving himself up entirely to the work of the ministry presented itself to his mind, and after some difficulties he was in 1864 accepted by the district meeting, and having passed preliminary examinations was sent for three years to the Wesleyan College at Richmond. He had been warned against reading the Bible without comment, but to this fatal habit he attributes his present unbelief. One of his earliest difficulties was the doctrine of death being a punishment for the sin of Adam and Eve. He says: "The case of the animals caused me much anxiety; and this was increased a hundred-fold when I read that geologists had discovered evidence of death long before man was created." The discovery that the Old Testament taught nothing as to the state of the soul after death he also found impossible to account for on orthodox principles. After entering on active work as a minister, his circuit being in Scotland, Mr. Symes wished to oppose some Unitarians; but when he began to re-study the doctrine of the Trinity, he discovered that the orthodox view could not be found in the New Testament. On another occasion, when reading to a friend a sermon on the struggle between God and Pharaoh, he was struck by the remark of his friend that it was a very unequal contest, where an infinite God and a poor blind heathen king were the combatants. The doctrine of the atonement next occupied Mr. Symes's attention. He began to wonder why Jesus had not preached the doctrine, seeing it was so momentous. That no mention was made of it on the day of Pentecost also gave him trouble. Doubts were confirmed by reading "Ecce Homo," and the doctrine of hell-fire having been given up, Mr. Symes began to see the Wesleyan ministry was no place for him. He resigned in 1872. When he left the pulpit, he tells us, he knew not what to do for a living. In four months he earned less than 5*l.*—this by delivering lectures here and there. In January, 1873, he got employment as agent and lecturer to the Northern Union of Mechanics Institutes. Then he passed to the office of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, of which he was for a year sub-editor. In 1876 Mr. Symes launched out as a Secularist lecturer, since which time his career has been pretty well known to Freethinkers. He says: "After nearly eight years experience, I am as fully resolved as ever to go on with it. . . Secularism in theory embraces all the elements of human welfare; Secularism, in earnest, honest practice, amounts to making the best possible of life and all its capabilities."

Mr. Symes is doing excellent work in his new home and, thanks to the persecution of the bigots, is coming into much prominence. We trust this autobiographic sketch will have the extensive circulation it deserves.

J. M. W.

* "The Life and Death of My Religion," by Joseph Symes. Melbourne: *Liberator* Co.; 1884.

PROFANE JOKES.

"WHAT is the worst thing about riches?" asked the Sunday-school superintendent. And the new boy said, "Not having any!"

THERE was an awful state of affairs in a little Michigan town where a type-setter substituted the word "widows" for "windows." The editor wrote: "The windows of the church need washing badly. They are a disgrace to our village."

A REVEREND professor was engaged in demolishing the Darwinian theory to his class, when he observed they were not paying proper attention. "Gentlemen," said he, "when I am endeavoring to explain to you the peculiarities of the monkey I wish you would look right at me."

A REVEREND gentleman was addressing a school concert recently, and was trying to enforce the doctrine that the hearts of the little ones were sinful and needed regulating. Taking out his watch and holding it up, he said: "Now, here is my watch; suppose it don't keep good time—now goes too fast and now too slow; what shall I do with it?" "Sell it!" shouted a flaxen-haired youngster.

HEREDITARY.—Scene—A Scotch village "pub." Two old cronies having their morning drink and a "crack" together. Jock: "Man, Rubbert, my gudwife an' me wis uncommonly weel pleased wi' your son's meenistrations in the pulpit yesterday. He's verra clever, an' nae mistak. We were baith winnerin' whaur he had gotten all this talent an' abillitee." Rubbert (father of the budding parson): "Weel, Jock, I'm thinkin' my son Wullum tak's a' his talent an' eddication frae me; but a' his oratory he tak's aff his mither, for she's a blatherin' auld tyke."

A MAN accustomed to make long prayers persuaded a guest, greatly against his inclination, to stay to breakfast. He prayed and prayed, till his impatient guest began to think of edging away and walking off; but in attempting it, he waked up the old man's son, who was asleep in his chair. "How soon will your father have done?" whispered the guest. "Has he got to the Jews?" asked the boy in reply, in the same tone. "No," said the other. "Well, then, he ain't half done," replied the boy, and composed himself again to his nap; whereupon the guest bolted at once.

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