

# THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

## COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 107.



CHRIST IN GLORY.

*And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass. . . . And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.—REV. I., 13—16.*

## ARE ATHEISTS OUTLAWS?

MR. BRADLAUGH may win on appeal to the House of Lords, as he did in his fight with Newdegate and Co. It is barely possible, and a battle is never lost till it is over. Yet we scarcely dare to hope that he will succeed, for the chances seem all against him; although Mr. Bradlaugh himself is still sanguine of victory, and his legal forecasts have been usually correct. If his anticipations are realised he will have achieved a splendid triumph; but if he fails, the result will be (not through his failure, but through the law of England) that all Atheists must regard themselves as outlaws, having no civil or political rights, and only subsisting by the tolerance of their pious neighbors.

Mr. Bradlaugh is sued by the Attorney-General on behalf of our "Liberal" Government for the sum of £1,500 as the penalty for his having sat and voted three times in the House of Commons without having taken the oath. The fine is a very large one, and it was of course fixed with a view to aristocratic and capitalist pockets, before the Democracy had the impudence to send men to Parliament with long heads and short purses. Mr. Bradlaugh, who swore himself in before sitting and voting, maintains that he did take the oath according to law, but up to the present the judges have decided against him. He also maintains, against the pregnant fifth count in his Information, that being an Atheist does not deprive him of his "right to swear," that the words "so help me God" are

no essential part of the oath, and that the oath itself was never intended as a theological test. The first Court, including Lord Coleridge, took an opposite view, and after the jury's verdict it gave judgment for the Crown. Mr. Bradlaugh appealed for a new trial. The Supreme Court consisting of the Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Cotton and Lord Justice Lindley, has dismissed his appeal, and endorsed the judgment against him.

For the present, therefore, Atheists may be considered incompetent to take an oath. They are consequently ineligible for any office into which the holder is sworn. That is, they are debarred from nearly every position of trust and responsibility. They must not aspire to serve their country by taking part in its public business. They are legally outlaws, as the Jews once were; tolerated only while they are meek and quiet, and rudely reminded of their dependence when they assume the air of citizenship. Jew-baiting has died out in England, but Atheist-hounding has taken its place as a pious and fashionable sport.

The Master of the Rolls went still further. He included in this ban, not only those who do not believe in a God, but those who do not believe that he will reward and punish them in this world or in the next. Now this belief is not held by the advanced Unitarians, and it is certainly rejected by such Theists as Professor Newman; and according to the Master of the Rolls (no mean authority) they are all incapable of holding any public office. What do our Unitarian friends say to this? They have just accepted Dr. Blake Odgers' assurance that, although Freethinkers are still in danger, they are perfectly safe. But here is a superior oracle who blows away their fool's-paradise with one breath. And that is not all. Worse remains for our Unitarian friends. Many of them are mayors, justices of the peace, and so forth. They have not taken the oath, and all their official actions are therefore illegal. Mr. Bradlaugh's fate stares them in the face. What a terrible prospect! The Pharisee walks by the wounded man with a scornful look and a lifted nose only to find the thieves waiting round the corner for him.

With respect to members of Parliament, even if they take the oath "solemnly and publicly" and sit and vote in the House unchallenged, they may still be prosecuted by the Attorney-General if it is afterwards found that they "did not believe in the oath." So says the Master of the Rolls. But what a pretty pickle! Mr. Labouchere has openly derided the oath, and laughed at its Mumbo Jumbo. The Attorney-General is bound to go for him. Mr. John Morley systematically spells God with a small "g." Clearly he should be proceeded against. These would do for a beginning, and fresh batches of culprits could be trounced when this pair is disposed of. The Inquisition need not be very scrupulously conducted. Any admission they had made to any person, and at any time within a generation or so, might be cited against them. The Attorney-General will have his hands full if he conscientiously tries to fulfil his duty in this respect. We suggest that the Government should relieve him by appointing a new Grand Inquisitor. In due course the public might enjoy their fireworks at Smithfield again at the national expense. Who knows? We have a Liberal Government, and this is a progressive age. Lord Justice Lindley said that "there are still old Acts of Parliament under which persons not believing in God could be prosecuted." Atheism is therefore a crime. As a crime at once against human and divine law, it must be especially heinous, and it should be punished with exceptional severity. Let the pious Tories take hope. They may smell roast-Bradlaugh yet.

Seriously, this judgment opens up a grave question for Freethinkers. If the Christians are bent on mischief, we



may have to fight them with their own weapons. We might start a hundred prosecutions to-morrow against Theistic officials. We might all decline to serve on juries, or perform any other obligation of citizenship, until we are righted. We might strike a still heavier blow. An Atheist might be sworn on a jury in a great criminal case; the prisoner's counsel might raise the point in error; the whole proceedings might be nullified because one jurymen was not legally sworn; and the prisoner might finally slip through by pleading *autrefois convict*. Perhaps it requires some such public scandal to rouse Christians to a sense of their bigoted folly. Meanwhile let us work hard to carry the Affirmation Bill and repeal the Blasphemy Laws. If we succeed, well and good; if not, Freethinkers may have to form another Solemn League and Covenant against religious tyranny.

G. W. FOOTE.

### THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

HAHNEMANN, the founder of homœopathy, is usually credited with the introduction of the medical maxim, *similia similibus curantur*—like things are cured by like. Those who would dispute his originality need not refer to the ancient saying familiar to all good toppers, of "taking a hair of the dog that bit you"; they may find the origin of the homœopathic doctrine in the great source of all inspiration—the holy Bible.

The Book of Numbers contains several recipes which would be invaluable if divine grace would enable us to re-discover and correctly employ them. There is, for instance, the holy water described in chap. v., the effects of which will enable any jealous husband to discover if his wife has been faithful to him or not, and in the case of her guilt enable him to dispense with the services of Sir James Hannon.

But perhaps the most curious prescription in the book is that recorded in the twenty-first chapter. The Israelites wandering about for forty years, without travelling forty miles, got tired of the heavenly manna with which the "universal provider" supplied them. They looked back on the fried fish, which they "did eat in Egypt freely," the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic, wherein the Jewish stomach delighteth, and they longed for a change of diet. Upon remonstrating with Moses, and stating their preference for Egyptian lentils rather than celestial mushrooms, the Lord of his tender mercy sent "fiery serpents" (the word is properly translated "seraphim"), and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Then the people prayed Moses to intercede for them, saying, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee;" and Jahveh, in direct opposition to his own commandment, directed Moses to "make a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten when he looketh upon it shall live." Moses accordingly made a serpent of brass, we presume from some of that stolen from the Egyptians, which had the desired effect. Instead of being but one monster more, the sight immediately cured the wounds, and these seraphim sent by the Lord, ashamed of being beaten by their brazen brother, skeddaddled. Of course it may be contended that a seraph is neither in the likeness of anything in heaven above, in earth beneath, or in the water, or fire, under the earth, and that consequently Moses in no wise infringed the Decalogue.

Commentators have been puzzled to account for this evident relic of serpent worship in a religion so abhorrent of idolatry as that of the Jews. These gentry usually shut their eyes very close to the many evidences that the god-guided people were always falling into the idolatries of the surrounding nations. Now we know that the Babylonians, in common with all the great nations of antiquity, worshipped the serpent. It has been thought, indeed, that the name Baal is an abbreviation of Ob-el, "the serpent god." In the Apocryphal book of Bel and the Dragon, to be found in every Catholic Bible, it says (v. 23): "And in that same place there was a great dragon, which they of Babylon worshipped. And the king said unto Daniel, Will thou also say that this is of brass? Lo, he liveth, he eateth and drinketh, thou canst not say that he is no living god: therefore worship him." Serpent worship is indeed so widely spread, and of such great antiquity, that it has been conjectured to have sprung from the antipathy

between our monkey ancestors and snakes. In this legend the brazen serpent is benevolent, but more usually that reptile represents the evil principle. Thus a story in the Zendavesta (which is clearly allied to, and may have suggested that in Genesis) says that Ahriman assumed a serpent's form in order to destroy the first of the human race, whom he accordingly poisoned. In the Saddu we read: "When you kill serpents you shall repeat the Zendavesta, whereby you will obtain great merit; for it is the same as if you had killed so many devils." It is curious that the serpent which is the evil genius of Genesis is the good genius in Numbers, and that Jesus himself is represented as comparing himself to it (John iii., 14). An early Christian sect, the Ophites, found serpent worshiping quite consistent with their Christianity.

It seems likely that this story of the brazen serpent having been made by Moses, was a priestly invention to account for its being an object of idolatry among the Jews, as we know from 2 Kings xviii., 4, it was worshipped down to the time of Hezekiah, that is 700 years after the time of Moses. Hezekiah, we are told, broke the brazen serpent in pieces, but it must have been miraculously joined again, for the identical article is still to be seen, for a consideration, in the Church of St. Ambrose at Milan. Some learned rabbis regard the brazen serpent as a talisman which Moses was enabled to prepare from his knowledge of astrology. Others say it was a form of amulet to be copied and worn as a charm against disease. Others again declare it was only set up *in terrorem*, as a man who has chastised his son hangs up the rod against the wall as a warning. Rationalising commentators have pretended that it was but an emblem of healing by the medical art, a sort of sign-post to a camp hospital, like the red cross flag over an ambulance. These altogether pervert the text, and miss the meaning of the passage. The resemblance of the object set up was of the essence of the cure, as may be seen in 1 Sam. vi., 5. In truth, the doctrine of like curing like, instead of being a modern discovery is a very ancient superstition. The old medical books are full of prescriptions, or rather charms, founded on this notion.\* It is, indeed, one of the recognised principles in savage magic and medicine that things like each other, however superficially, affect each other in a mystic way, and possess identical properties. Thus in Melanesia, according to Mr. Codrington,† "a stone in the shape of a pig, of a bread fruit, of a yam, was a most valuable find," because it made pigs prolific, and fertilised bread, fruit trees and yam plots. In Scotland, too, "stones were called by the names of the limbs they resembled, as 'eye-stanes,' 'head-stane.'" A patient washed the affected part of his body and rubbed it well with the stone corresponding. In precisely the same way the mandrake ‡ root, being thought to resemble the human body, was supposed to be of wondrous medical efficacy, and was credited with human and super-human powers.§ The method of cure, when the Philistines were smitten with emerods and mice, was to make images of the same (1 Sam. vi., 5), and the same idea was found in the well-known superstition of sorcerers making "a waxen man" to represent an enemy, injuries to the waxen figure being supposed to affect the person represented. The story of the brazen serpent is one of a large number of proofs that the Jews were once in a low state of culture, now only to be found among savages.

J. M. WHEELER.

Mrs. Cross's long looked for "Life of George Eliot" as related in her "Letters and Journals" has at length appeared, and will be eagerly read by admirers of the great novelist. It appears that her father was a strong Tory and Churchman, yet being put under a pious Baptist in her second school, she was early swayed in the direction of Evangelical Nonconformity. Her faith in the religion of her childhood was first shaken by reading C. Hennell's "Enquiry into the Origin of Christianity." It was to Freethinkers, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bray of Coventry, and to Mr. Hennell and his sister, that Marian Evans owed the impulse that decided her in the direction of her pursuits. In London she was brought into contact with a circle of advanced thinkers, Herbert Spencer introducing her to her first husband George Henry Lewes. There are several items in the volume to which we shall call our readers' attention in a future number.

\* See "Myths in Medicine and Old Time Doctors," by Alfred C. Garratt, M.D.

† "Journal Anthropological Institute," February, 1881.

‡ Gregor, "Folk-lore of North-east Counties," p. 40.

§ See the paper on "Moly and Mandragora," in A. Lang's "Custom and Myth," 1884.



## ACID DROPS.

TALMAGE knows all about the gates of hell. They have "brazen panels" and swing on "shining hinges." They are "burnished until they sparkle and glisten in the gaslight. They are mighty, and set in sockets of deep and dreadful masonry. They are high, so that those who are in may not clamber over and get out. They are heavy, but they swing easily in to let those go in who are to be destroyed." This is the aspect from outside. "But, my friends," continues the inspired preacher to his congregation, "we shall not stand looking at the outside of the gates of hell." We need not rob Talmage and his followers of the deep consolation to be derived from this hope, but if the Christians are to be *inside* the gates of hell it will devolve upon us Freethinkers, we suppose, to organise a kind of a Gordon relief expedition to break the gates open and get them out. Will they do as much for us if conditions are reversed?

AT Bethshan Faith-healing House, one brother gave thanks for deliverance from possession by demons. A sister gave herself into the Lord's hands and left herself there, whereupon he healed her. A brother took Jesus to dwell within him and to do all for him, including the cure of his children's whooping-cough.

THE position of Bishop of London is not only desirable for what he gets, but for what he has to give. The Bishop has 119 livings at his disposal, their aggregate value being estimated at £81,718. The average value, therefore, of each living is £465. And plenty too for the kind of men who go into the business nowadays. Dr. Jackson found nice berths for all his relatives, and Dr. Temple will be an exceptional Christian if he does not go and do likewise.

A GREENGROCER of Leamington, named Cousens, has got incarcerated in a lunatic asylum for going about shouting and damaging other people's property. When arrested he said, "My heavenly Father has sent me to take possession of the estate." What a pity there were no lunatic asylums in the days of the early apostles.

A DAILY paper in Cuba has been suspended for calling the Holy Ghost the "Deacon of the Doves." If the editor had called that mysterious personage the "Goose of the Geese" he would have been nearer the mark.

THE Rev. Abraham Riding, a New Zealand Congregational minister, was arrested as he was leaving Auckland for Sydney, on a charge of indecently assaulting a boy, and has been committed to trial on three charges of indecency. For this peculiarly clerical offence an Irish bishop was once hung, and another (the Bishop of Clogher) escaped by going abroad.

THE *Christian Herald* goes on teaching false hopes of miraculous help in the daily affairs of life as a religious inducement:—"She had yielded herself to Christ with a true and thorough consecration, and almost immediately she got remunerative and suitable employment without seeking for it, though friends had tried in vain to get her work which she could do."

"THREE answers to prayer in one day" are also recorded by our voracious contemporary. These answers came in the form of money for rent, a suit of clothes, and a Christmas dinner. People need not work if they are good at praying, for this particular Christian "has for so many years so dealt with his difficulties, finding that help always comes."

MIRACLES are still abundant—among people who believe in them. Mr. Ballard, a minister of New Jersey, received a telegram informing him that his daughter was dying. He would not start to see her until she had first been prayed for "most mightily" by Brother Inskip, and the "assurance was granted that God had heard and answered the prayer." At that very hour a strange change took place in the daughter's condition, and she recovered. It was a mystery to others, "but to him it was all plain;" for he recognised "this power of faith and prayer" and "the wonder-working might of God." Why do established churches treat such miracles with silent contempt? They are recorded in print as events of the present day, and are far better vouched for than the miracles of the New Testament.

PROPHET BAXTER is lecturing on the "Speedy Advent of Christ." Eighteen centuries after date!

A CHRISTIAN journal gives a blessed case of conversion of a husband in answer to the prayers of a religious wife who asked the Lord to take from them by death their "darling and only daughter," if by that means her husband might be led to Christ. Then as "no assurance of an answer seemed to be vouchsafed" she continued to plead, "O Lord, take from us our firstborn and only son, who, with his sister, has given his heart to Jesus in these meetings, if that is needed to lead my dear husband to thyself." Finally she cried "Thou didst give thy son to die for him; if the sacrifice of my life is also needed, I freely give it." "No sooner had these words fallen from her lips than she felt, like Daniel of old, that while she was yet speaking God had

heard and answered her prayer." How terribly near all this is to the doctrine of human sacrifice as believed in by Abraham and Jephthah! A little further development of the religious spirit and this woman would have sacrificed her children and herself as many religious lunatics have done.

THE services at Sheepbridge Methodist Free Church the other Sunday were "marked by deep devotion." Two powerful sermons were preached by an imported sky-pilot in order to raise the wind for the resident one, who wanted to furnish his house. Report says that "the collections were good for the times." Who will question the "deep devotion" after that?

A STORY is going the round of the papers about Peel and Disraeli. Their enmity is attributed to Peel's leaving the table when young Disraeli indulged in profane talk about Jesus Christ and his relations with Mary Magdalen. Peel would not "sit in an atmosphere polluted by that young man's presence." He never forgot Disraeli, and surely Disraeli never forgot him.

THE Rev. G. B. Vaux, of Wellington, Somerset, is a model Christian. This worthy has withheld prizes from five or six children in the church school, on the ground that they have not been baptised, notwithstanding the fact that the prizes had been rightfully won. The villagers of Wellington have a shining example of Christian morality and justice set before them for imitation in the person of their pastor.

THEY did not know everything down in Judee. Jesus was under the impression that men could not serve both God and Mammon. If he saw a copy of the *Christian Mammonwealth* with its prominent article on "Market and Trade Points," and its advertisements mixed up with its sermons, it might be an eye-opener. Some of these advertisements are a treat. The most prominent one this week, two columns in length, professes in a most enticing way to show "the most successful way of operating on the Stock Exchange." It indicates that the happy investor who sends £5 may receive back £30 next day as the result of successful operation. Pills, of course, are prominent, and a west-end chemist offers to show district visitors how they easily make 15s. a week without giving up their appointments. Another person who has a house and chapel to let offers them for £300 a-year "To gentlemen wishing to promote Christian work." Christian disciples ask for employment, giving texts of scripture as reference, and Varley advertises his "private and invaluable lectures."

THE following is an extract from a Roman Catholic book which, it is alleged in the *Rock*, used to be sold at the Healtheries: "Fires were raised in all parts to burn those false thinkers who dissented from our holy religion. Charles IX. and his mother, the great Catherine de Medici, will ever be endeared to the hearts of all true Christians by their courage and heroic faith. In one single night the country was delivered from 50,000 Huguenots."

CANON TAYLOR in his course of lectures on the Christian Evidences says that the Gospel is the "necessary" source of human happiness. But Freethinkers and Hindoos and Arabs and Chinese and the ancient Greeks and Romans are, or were, happy in their way very much as Christians are. How then can the gospel be "necessary" to the happiness which exists without it?

HE also says that the mere conception of such a character as Christ is "absolutely unique in the whole range of human literature." If Canon Taylor studied the religions of the world he would discover hundreds of supernatural Saviors each one as "absolutely unique" as Christ in not being *precisely* like any other Savior in every particular.

THE Rev. R. H. Cotton has left the Church and returned to Dissent. The *Church Times* compares him to a sow that has been washed returning to its filth. Religious editors are more noted for biblical Billingsgate than for sweetness and light.

THE Rev. George Corbett, a clergyman of Kingsley, has been fined at the Farnham Police Court for partaking too freely of the fluid which "cheereth God and man."

ANOTHER religious suicide—this time a woman who drowned herself at Margate. Her husband, Edward Wright, said that she was a devout Wesleyan, and suffered from religious melancholy. She used to say she had sinned and could not be saved. Is it not evident that her chapel teachings are responsible for the poor creature's suicide?

THE Church Missionary Society appeals for £17,000 to pay off a debt on its new buildings. The book they read says owe no man anything, but the churches and missionary societies find they can best raise money by pleading that they are heavily in debt.

G. B. FAZAKERLEY, O.S.B., which we take to mean of the Old Soldier Brotherhood, advertises in the *Catholic Times* that by sending one shilling to him you can have a special mass at eight,



every Wednesday morning for a year. The value of masses must be declining when fifty-two are offered for a shilling.

At a Protestant meeting at Southsea it was stated that during the past sixteen years no fewer than 37,000 people had gone over to the Church of Rome from the Church of England. The Rev. C. Stirling said "he wanted to see the Roman Catholics turned out of Parliament again. He wanted to see every Roman Catholic chaplain dismissed from the Army and Navy, and from our gaols and workhouses, and to see all Roman Catholics disfranchised." A truly Christian method of dealing with opponents. He asked his hearers to make it a matter of earnest prayer that God would roll back the tide of Popery. They are more likely to succeed if they see that education is made secular and that children are encouraged to think for themselves.

CAPTAIN PHELAN, the dynamitard who was recently shot in O'Donovan Rossa's office, is in a fair way to recover. He is much aggrieved because a Catholic journal reported that he was "an Ingersoll man." Mr. Phelan denies the slander and says he hopes to live and die a good Catholic. From his record as general dynamitard at large it is judged that the first part of his hope is being granted. It was his assassins who, being good Catholics, sent for a priest for him. They had no objection to assassinating him, yet wanted him to die in the faith.

THE Rev. Canon Knox Little, preaching at Sefton Park a sermon which lasted an hour and twenty minutes said: "They were living in an age when the vast mass of the people did not think but only talked." This is rather good, coming from a minister who is always going about gabbling stale platitudes.

A THIEF, the other day, was as particular about the policeman's oath as the House of Commons is about Mr. Bradlaugh's. He insisted that the policeman's oath was no oath because he had kissed his thumb instead of the book—a method by which the vulgar superstitious think they can evade the supernatural consequences of oath-breaking. To satisfy the accused, the oath was taken again and the book was satisfactorily kissed so as to ensure the policeman's eternal perdition if he told a lie. Thomas Hopkins in the Birmingham Police-court is laughed at. Our law courts are solemnly carrying on a similar farce. The thief, however, only insisted on plain actions as prescribed by law; the judges insist on *opinions* as prescribed by law.

"A SCOTCHMAN" writes to the *Rock* that the Freethought Publishing Company is placarding London with posters, which we hope is true. He also says that the F. P. C. issues the *Freethinker*, which we know to be untrue. This romantic North Briton adds that the circulation of our various publications last year amounted to twelve millions. We sincerely trust that our next year's reality will equal his last year's fiction.

THIS anonymous bigot calls on the authorities to put us down. His betters, however, have learned wisdom by experience. They know that another prosecution would only increase still further the circulation of our "blasphemy."

SOME hypercritical fellow has culled the following specimens of plain Saxon English from Archdeacon Farrar's latest work:—Chiliastic, tallith, pelliun, amphisbæna, eschatological, pseudonymous, hypostasis, anthropomorphic and anthropopathic, cryptograph, iggeroth, obsolescence, torpedo-touch of his avarice, sacerdotal nicology, a sharp paronomasia, galatising, prized momocracy, the Pleroma, mystoe, dynasts, a fusile apostle, eternal Noumena, pseudepigraphy, the plectrum, the isopsephia, a latent paronomasia, paronasia, the orgiastic character, compaginated, deracinated, choenix, Trisagion. Having completed his historic companion to the New Testament, Archdeacon Farrar's next work should be on English literature, with a special study of new-fangled and pedantic phraseology.

"GLIMPSES in the Twilight" is the title of a new theological work. "Guesses in the Dark" would be a fitter name.

JESUS CHRIST, when sold, realised thirty shillings. A single pew in Ward Beecher's church has just fetched nine hundred dollars for the year.

THE *Christian World* is great at logic. In a long article on George Eliot's Religion it contends that she did not rise above Christian sanctity, because Christian sanctity means "the highest conceivable virtue." Now suppose we put this a little more plainly. "My top's better than yours," says Dick. "No, it isn't," says Harry; "my top's the best in the world, and yours can't be better than that." Harry and the *C. W.* are equally good logicians.

THE Rev. W. F. Campbell, Secretary of the Mission Board of the Toronto Diocese, is urgently wanted, having swindled a Detroit elder out of a considerable sum. He is supposed to be engaged in the work of evangelisation in New York.

DR. RABIGER'S "Theological Encyclopædia," published by T. and T. Clark is altogether too heterodox for the *Christian*, which

says: "We would that such works were left in their native German, and not translated to do injury to English readers." The clericals would much like to prevent the results of scholarly criticism becoming known, for such knowledge invariably means the weakening of their authority and that of their precious book.

MR. YATES is too comfortable in Holloway to care to attend the ministrations of the Rev. Mr. Playford. "Dear Edmund" excuses himself on the ground that for a long time past he has been constantly giving his attention to the next *World*.

WE always delight in the ingenious perversions of the "comp." The printer of a local paper is trying hard for first prize. He announces that "the prayer-meeting of the Methodist Chapel will be hell to-night." Almost as wicked as the comp. who set up 1 Cor. xv., 51, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be hanged."

THE Archbishop of York thanks God for bringing our "little army through the desert" in the Soudan. Curiously, the war correspondents don't mention that person. They attribute the victory of our troops to British pluck and scientific weapons. If God settles these affairs, the Archbishop of York and the Mahdi might fight the Egyptian question out between them. It would be ten to one on the Mahdi.

A SINGLE day's fog last week cost London over £10,000 in gas. The Good God is neglecting his business at our expense. We wish the gas his ministers preach could be utilised for lighting purposes.

THE Rev. W. T. Vale finds that in the village of Northenden 80 per cent. of the Wesleyans attend divine service, but only 35 per cent. of the Churchmen. With all the religious tyranny so commonly prevailing in rural districts the Church cannot influence the people like those who work on the voluntary system.

THE Moravian Mission has sent a ship across the ocean 120 times without mishap. A Methodist journal claims this as an instance of the power of prayer. But the Cunard Company have made thousands of trips across the Atlantic without the loss of a single vessel. If the Mission vessel were wrecked would the Methodist editor acknowledge that this proved the inefficacy of prayer? Oh, dear no; it would only prove the goodness of God towards those who were not on board the ship.

WHEN the Lord was "roaring in his wrath," on Saturday, January 31, he flung about his lightning so indiscriminately that he struck one of his own houses at Winchester, and very nearly played the devil with it. St. Cross Church narrowly escaped the fate predicted for sinners in the next world. It has been standing since the twelfth century, so the Lord ought to be pretty well acquainted with it. He cannot therefore plead ignorance. It is evident that he requires another Moses to hold him back when he is on the rampage.

THE Rev. J. Hildyard, of Ingoldsby Rectory, author of a stupid book called "The Ingoldsby Letters," which some unwary people have, to their cost, mistaken for the "Ingoldsby Legends," writes to the *English Churchman* declaring his conviction that the dynamite outrages are "a solemn judgment upon the nation for having for ever abolished the thanksgiving service for the fifth of November from our public worship." Perhaps the Bishops will see to it that O'Donovan Rossa gets as much attention in the prayer-book as did "the hellish malice of Popish conspirators" and Guido Fawkes.

#### DEATH: NOUN OR VERB?

We all love life; we all dread death;  
We, fighting, yield our struggling breath.

The Faithless fear, the Faithful dread,  
The unknown pangs of dying bed.

But Christians feel a double dread:  
The "dying," and the "being dead."

Their ghostly creed makes Reason rave;  
And Fortitude a coward slave.

To them there is, beyond their breath,  
The *substantive*, the *thing*, called Death.

The Atheists' creed is: "Do your best!  
And Death, at *worst*, will be but Rest."

They apprehend no "by-and-bye;"  
They merely dread the *verb*, "To die!"

G. L. MACKENZIE.



## 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. 8, Hall of Science, Old Street, E.C.; at 11.15, "Henry George's Christianity;" at 7, "Cheap Salvation."

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

MARCH 1, Manchester; 8, Milton Hall; 15, Northampton; 17, Walworth; 22, Grimsby; 29, Glasgow.

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

MAY 3, Hall of Science; 10, Milton Hall; 17, Hall of Science.

## CORRESPONDENTS.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, directly from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3s.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—J. Bott, J. W., J. H. Bournemouth, E. Carter, John Morgan.

H. MILES.—Your cuttings are welcome.

S. HOODCOCK.—If "God's judgment" will overtake us "sharply and swiftly," why do you desire somebody else to punish us for our "blasphemy"? What presumptuous folly! You Christians are always assuming that God doesn't know his own business, or is unable to do it. Go, little mortal, and attend to your own affairs. Besides, if the Lord is going to "give us hell," you might let us enjoy a little peace before the fatal day. As for your "poem," we have read it through. We thought nothing could be worse than your creed, but reading your verses has altered our opinion.

D. E.—Probably you don't know how much capital it takes to start a daily paper. Wait a bit. Freethought will have *all* the daily papers in good time. Your verse is certainly not bad, but it is scarcely up to our mark.

G. H. MAPLESON.—You can obtain Title-page and Index for *Progress* at our publishing office in Stonecutter Street. In future they will be issued with the last number of each volume.

W. C. SCRIVENER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

C. WARD.—Cuttings are always welcome. The more the better.

TELEGRAPHIST asks whether we pay for *suggestions* for Sketches. No. He suggests that Jahveh might be represented as hardening Pharaoh's heart by beating it on an anvil. Beating a steak only makes it more tender.

J. T. P.—That Needle's-Eye gate in Jerusalem is a later manufacture of Christian imagination to explain away an awkward text. Jesus put everything in an extreme way, and he doubtless meant that it was impossible, except by a miracle, for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, when he used the metaphor of the camel and the needle's eye.

YOUNG ATHEIST.—Ask Mrs. Besant. She has made the subject her own.

P. DAVIS.—We cannot undertake to explain or defend other people's lectures. We have no more belief than you in gods and devils, and we also decline to believe in your "great mechanic of the universe." You misuse language throughout your letters. Trees, for instance, are not *made*, they *grow*.

R. KNOWLE.—We will think over the suggestion. At first sight it seems too vague. Glad to hear that the *Freethinker* affords "endless enjoyment and instruction" to your friends at Stourbridge. You may rely on our continuing what you call our "vigorous style."

J. MATHER.—The matter shall be dealt with next week.

T. BAYLISS.—We may offer a prize for the best bit of verse, the best joke, or the best profane story, by-and-bye; but we must wait until the competition for the sketch prizes is over.

TWO COPIES WEEKLY.—Thanks for the jokes. There are many who act as you do, taking two copies every week, lending one and keeping the other. May their number increase.

W. B.—It had already attracted our attention. See "Sugar Plums."

C. KING.—Perhaps one of our readers will be able to inform you where the *Freethinker* can be procured in Mossley. Your chapel-going newsagent, who refused to continue supplying it because it was "a bad book," would be a curiosity if he were not a Christian. Our pages are as clean as driven snow; but even if they were less so, they ought not to incense those who regard the dirty Bible as the word of God.

H. BRUCE.—We cannot guess the Latin word from the queer jumble of the alphabet you send us. The bishops do not pay £76,000 a year to poorer brethren out of their incomes, and no sects are represented in the House of Lords except the Church of England.

J. MORRIS.—Thanks for cuttings. Always glad to hear from you.

W. STANLEY.—Your wishes will be met by the little volume of Comic Bible Sketches which you will find announced in "Sugar Plums." Why don't you take two copies of the *Freethinker*? If you lent one about as you now do, you would still have one for preservation and binding. We appreciate your compliments, but we dare not tell our artist that you consider our sketches worthy of Hogarth. He is a modest man, and the flattery might lay him up.

J. LAMB.—Father Noyes, the founder of the Oneida Creek community, claims to be a Christian. He says that the doctrines of Free-love are to be found in the Bible.

G. DOWSE says "Joshua Josephson" is a perfect treat, and the illustrations the most effective caricatures he knows.

WANTED, Nos. 12 and 13 of Vol. IV., to complete sets of the *Freethinker*.

Double value given. H. A. Kemp, 28 Stonecutter Street.

ERNEST DARE.—Thanks for scraps.

W. V.—Thanks. Carlyle's "History of the French Revolution" is the best. There is also an English translation of Mignet's History, published by Bohn. We contemplate issuing some handbills; meanwhile you will do a service by circulating the *Freethinker* tracts.

HOLY JOE.—Always glad to hear from you.

E. T. BILLINGTON.—The book is not very scarce. You would do better to read something more modern.

G. L. wonders how many lies it would take to choke a pulpit scientist. Looking at the lengthy career of Brewin Grant makes us pause before trying to estimate the number.

JOHN GREY.—Ernest Heinrich Hæckel was born at Potsdam, Feb. 16th, 1834.

E. J. TURNER.—Our edition of the *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu* will be thoroughly edited. There will be a complete historical introduction and voluminous notes on the text. In fact, the work will be done once for all.

C. M.—We just remember the passage but cannot fix it. Hunting through our file is a long business. Thanks for the other reference.

A. F. STONE.—Mr. Holyoake wrote a refutation of Paley's "Natural Theology," entitled "Paley Refuted in his Own Words." There is no special refutation of Paley's "Evidences of Christianity," which falls to the ground because its main proposition—that certain men who were eye-witnesses of miracles underwent labors, dangers and sufferings in teaching them—cannot possibly be proved. See Hume on Miracles.

OWING to press of matter, several correspondents remain unanswered till next week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Portsmouth Evening News—Staffordshire Sentinel—Eastern Post—St. Louis Post Dispatch—Truthseeker—Church Missionary Gleaner—Boston Investigator—Midland Free Press—Cottager and Artisan—Aldershot Gazette—Glasgow Evening Times—Bradford Telegraph—Peterborough Express—Westminster and Chelsea News—Christchurch Times—Philosophic Inquirer—Liberal—L'Europe—Midland Echo—Toby—Kentish Express.

## "FREETHINKER" PRIZES.

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 pure black ink on white card-board. 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.

CLAREMONT HALL was crowded last Sunday evening when Mr. Foote lectured on the novel subject "Good God," and the audience was no less enthusiastic than numerous. To-day (Feb. 8) Mr. Foote lectures at the Hall of Science. In the morning he will examine "Henry George's Christianity," and expose the religious nonsense which the American land-reformer mixes up with his economics. In the evening Mr. Foote will deliver his new lecture on "Cheap Salvation."

MR. FOOTE has in the press a racy brochure entitled "Jonah's Excursion." It will contain the twenty-four illustrations that appeared in our Summer Number, with a Frontispiece, and about twelve pages of letter-press, which Mr. Foote has specially written for this publication. The brochure will be handsomely printed on toned paper, the size will be convenient for the pocket, and the price will be only twopence.

PART I. of our "Comic Bible Sketches" will also be published shortly. It will include the best of the illustrations (large and small) that appeared in the *Freethinker* before our imprisonment, including those for which we were prosecuted. A special Frontispiece has been designed for it by our artist, and there will be a brief Introduction by Mr. Foote. Part II. will follow in due course.

THE Progressive Publishing Co. issue two new publications this week. The first is "Monkeys, Apes and Men," by Dr. Aveling, which will complete his popular series on Evolution. The whole will be bound up under an appropriate title. The second is a penny pamphlet of sixteen pages by Mr. W. W. Collins on "Geology and the Bible," which is chiefly a vigorous reply to Dr. Lambart of Liverpool. Both these publications, we imagine, will be eagerly sought.

OUR Jewish Life of Christ, the "Sepher Toldoth Jeshu," edited by Mr. Foote and Mr. Wheeler, is in the press, and will be ready in a week or two. It has necessitated a great deal of very careful research and criticism. Hence the delay.

CHRISTOPHER CRAYON, in the *Christian World*, says that "The Sunday in Chicago is not what it is in Puritan New England or



in Scotch Ontario, but you do not see much vice or drunkenness in the streets." Of course.

THE Rev. Dr. F. G. Lee has just issued a new edition of the Lamentations. According to this document, we are all drifting away from religion to Atheism. "In education," says Jeremiah Lee, "politics, law-making and the administration of the laws, the Almighty is either scarcely recognised or contemptuously set aside." Nearly fifty thousand children are turned out every year from "the Atheistic Board Schools," and newspaper editors "appear (as a rule) to be in direct opposition to any belief in the supernatural of any sort or kind."

ARCHDEACON FARRAR, preaching last Sunday at St. Margaret's, Westminster, said that he had received a letter from a young man who stated that he "outwardly conformed to religious ordinances, attended church, and occasionally received the holy communion, but that everything seemed to him hollow and empty, and that, in his opinion, religion never made men happy and God never answered prayer." Archdeacon Farrar is probably ignorant that there are thousands of young men in the same state of mind.

THE venerable Archdeacon cracked a splendid joke in the same sermon. "Religion," he said, "will not bring men rank, position, admiration, or £10,000 a year." As many church dignitaries sit in the House of Lords, and £10,000 a year is the exact salary of the new Bishop of London, Dr. Farrar must have been indulging in a bit of subtle humor.

THE Hong-Kong correspondent of the *Times* gives the following information concerning the religion of Burmah; "Contrary to the notion generally entertained in England, Burmese Buddhists are Atheists of a very pronounced type; they do not worship Buddha, the images are not gods, and the 'priests' are not priests in the western sense of the word." The existence of a community of Atheists is often questioned by Christians, yet the religion of Buddha shows not only that they exist but attain a high state of civilisation.

THE Council of the Guild of St. Matthew have adopted and are circulating a strongly-worded petition in favor of Mr. Hopwood's Affirmation Bill. It augurs well that some Christians find compulsory oath-taking "tends to create and maintain a false standard of truth, and is a fruitful source of scandal and profanity." We would, however, urge on Freethinkers not to remit their efforts to see that the bill becomes law, so that an affirmation may be used in every case where an appeal to Mumbo Jumbo is now necessary.

A NEW American book by T. Lloyd Stanley is entitled "The Future Religion of the World." Mr. Stanley expects the religion of the Future to be a kind of vague Theism in which God and self are identified, coupled with as much of Christianity as Mr. Stanley can swallow, and that means the rejection of its supernatural dogmas and ecclesiastical system, all that which in fact, makes Christianity distinguishable from any other religion.

AT the St. James's Mission Hall, Bermondsey, there meets a Parliamentary Debating Society. A few days ago the Blasphemy Laws were discussed. The Rev. G. W. Grundy, with a spirit above his cloth, moved a resolution that "prosecutions for unbelief or misbelief are to be deprecated." He was well supported by Mr. Watson (Midlothian), but the bigots came up in full force and defeated the motion by eighteen to twelve. The majority lustily cheered their own foolish bigotry, and appeared to think they had achieved a great triumph, whereas they had really sustained a signal defeat. Eighteen to twelve is perfectly useless. If the jury is divided in the same way "blasphemers" are safe enough. Twelve to none is the only danger.

SOME of the St. James's Mission Hall bigots indulged in the wildest defamation of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Tunstall, who rejoices in the proud position of Premier in a self-elected Parliament of forty, described us as "indecent." If this pious slanderer were worth further notice we would prosecute him for libel. One of these days we may proceed against some culprit who is worth powder and shot. A Mr. F. Smith not only called us "disgusting," an epithet which we can bear with equanimity, but accused us of "undermining the social laws of the country." Mr. Foggy Smith is a little mixed. There are no such laws. Ordinary people know statute law and common law; Mr. Foggy Smith fancies he has discovered a new kind.

ON being asked by a reporter what became of a man after death, Colonel Ingersoll replied to the effect that the similarity between himself and the Christians on that point was that neither knew anything about it, and the difference was that he was honest about it and admitted his ignorance, while they were not, and claimed to have the subject at their fingers' ends.

A CORRESPONDENCE between Dr. E. Percy P. Macloghlin, on behalf of the Wigan Secular Society, and the Hon. and Rev. Canon Bridgeman, rector of Wigan, in which the latter gentleman betrays strong reluctance to defend his creed, is published

in the *Wigan Observer*. Much service is done to the cause when capable defenders obtain a footing in the local press, and Freethinkers should constantly avail themselves of opportunities to air their opinions.

PROFESSOR HUNLEY has been much restored by his visit to Italy, and it is expected will recommence his labors this spring.

THE Madras *Philosophic Inquirer*, after noticing several of our articles in ordinary numbers observes: "The Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* is full of burning satire directed against the very good State religion of England, which proved its truth and divinity by the persecution and imprisonment of the 'blasphemer,' G. W. Foote. The choice selection of articles from able pens, and the excellent pictorial illustrations that adorn its pages richly commend themselves to the support of Freethinkers in every part of the civilised globe."

THE *Philosophic Inquirer* asks, "Have the missionaries ever succeeded in making converts among the students of their own colleges and schools? Have they ever convinced one intelligent student of theirs of the so-called truths contained in the Bible, for propagating which alone they are paid? If so, what percentage of their students have changed faith and become converts?" Missionaries would do well to answer these questions before passing round the box for the purpose of giving the heathen a chance of damnation.

WE notice from the Australian papers that Mr. Gerald Massey is lecturing to large audiences on "The Historical Jesus and Mythological Christ."

THE *Freethought Review* of Wanganui, New Zealand, keeps up its high standard of excellence. We are glad to see it gives no countenance to spiritism and esoteric bosh, which when played out here take refuge in the colonies.

THE *Anti-Christian* of Calcutta continues to carry on the war vigorously. The latest number opens with an amusing petition to Jahveh from the editor, by birth a Brahmin priest, afterwards converted to Christianity and since converted to Freethought, praying that he will endue his Christian followers with a little patience and toleration while he blasphemers.

WE learn from the *Illustrated London News* that M. Caro, the eminent "Christian philosopher," was hissed during his last lecture at the Sorbonne by the students, who are of a Voltairian turn of thinking. Their hisses were meant as a public protest against the uncalled-for declaration of Christian faith made by M. Caro the other day at the funeral of Edmond About, who was a Freethinker.

A CATHOLIC paper says that "Of the five thousand students in Belgium, two thousand are Atheists." It points out how these young men will be scattered throughout the country "to spread the poison of Atheism"—that is to liberate their countrymen from the bondage of clericalism.

#### THE WORLD ON FIRE.

IN one of the Christian journals which we read week by week without the faintest indications of being thereby converted, or rather re-converted, to the Christianity of our more youthful years, we find a full report of a sermon by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon on "The World on Fire."

Spurgeon, of course, believes fully in the literal truth of St. Peter's inspired description of "the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire\* shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt† with fervent heat" (2 Peter iii., 5). He tells us that the Bible very plainly teaches that "this present world is to be burnt up with fire" in one vast "general conflagration" on the Day of Judgment. Peter says that "the heavens and the earth, which are now. . . are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. . . the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. . . the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter iii., 7, 10). Spurgeon follows this account and works it up into pictures of fiery devastation and universal chaos for the benefit of credulous and trembling believers. The noblest buildings, we are informed—

"Will disappear like children's castles of sand upon the sea beach. Down will go the vast cathedrals and the towering palaces, in one common crash; whole cities will flame upon earth's funeral pyre, while forests and melting mountains blend their smoke. . . the sea of flame will overwhelm and devour everything without exception. The massive masonry, and rock-like foundations of our vast engineer-

\* If the heavens are to be on fire the redeemed will be no better off than the lost.

† Only one element, earth, remains to be melted. The other three elements, air, fire, and water, are not usually found in a solid condition. Water instead of being "melted" would fly off as steam. Of course, it would be absurd to suppose that Peter's inspiration gave him any hint of the sixty-odd elements of modern chemistry.



ing works shall run like wax in the tremendous heat. So fierce will be the flames that everything capable of being burned will be utterly consumed, and the elements, or the solid portions of the earth, shall be liquefied by the intense heat; rocks, metals, everything shall dissolve, and the atmosphere itself shall burn with fury when its oxygen shall unite\* with the hydrogen and other gases liberated by the intense heat. Chemists tell us that the great noise which Peter speaks of would certainly accompany such a combustion.†

Unfortunately we lack the spirit of reverent and awe-struck belief in religious terrors necessary for the due appreciation of descriptions of this kind, and hence we feel we are scarcely capable of realising the thrilling effect of such emotional beliefs on early and modern Christians. To us these accounts lack reality, sense and moral appropriateness. They are "old women's fables," of which the ridiculous or senseless aspect is the obvious one, and of which the deeper and more solemn and fearful features are to be ascertained only at second hand by observation of the effects of a real belief on others. When, however, we reflect on the demoralising effects of fear and fright, especially on nervous, excitable and emotional natures, we cease to be astonished at the power and the riches attained by the Church which made its ignorant adherents believe that it held the keys of heaven and hell, and we do not wonder at the influence of such modern preachers as can still succeed in terrifying their congregation with Scriptural tales of universal vengeance and destruction. If Spurgeon and his like could only convert the bulk of the community to these alarmist views we should see modern repetitions of the religious panics which at various times, and notably in the year 1000, caused the unnerved peasants to neglect their fields, and brought the Church enormous accessions of land and money from a superstitious population who believed their last hour was at hand and that their only hope of safety lay in propitiating holy Mother Church by gifts of the property which would so soon be worse than useless to them.

That Spurgeon has not succeeded in bringing the world to his feet by religious horrors and threatenings is not his fault. He does his best to encourage these wretched and ignoble feelings of selfish fright and awful consternation. He tells us that God has but to "speak to his ministers of flaming fire and they will at once subdue the globe by burnings. Earth is as a pile of wood, and the torch-bearers stand ready to kindle it at any moment. There has always been a cry of fire among men, and the cry grows louder, for the burning is near!" This destruction of the world by fire, he impresses upon us, "will happen at a time when it will be very little expected. The dread hour will come as a thief in the night," and the world will perish as it did in the deluge in Noah's time, but by a still more sudden and dreadful catastrophe.

Science is dragged in to prove that "there are evidently the means at hand for the accomplishment of the prophecy." Volcanic eruptions, the molten [intensely heated] nature of the interior of the earth, electricity, lightning, the disappearance of thirteen fixed stars and the temporary appearance or blazing up of others, serve as examples of the vast "reserves of destructive force" ready to God's hand. "He has but to speak the word, and the servants of his Omnipotence will rise, terrible in their destructive power," for "God's dreadful armies lie in ambush everywhere."

This description of the Last Day suffers much, however, from being confined to purely physical phenomena. It lacks the power and interest that attach to the actions and sufferings of living beings. We hear nothing of the shrieks and contortions and mad efforts to escape of the millions of wretches whom our Father is burning alive in the huge holocaust of a universe. But the whole sermon is inferior, and is probably only one of Spurgeon's juvenile productions served up in the honest Christian press as if it were a recently delivered utterance of the great prophet of the Tabernacle and Mentone. If lapse of time should be pleaded in extenuation of the sermon (and of Peter's remarks?) we ask, Why does our Christian contemporary disentomb them, and so assist in frightening sensitive women and children either into the arms of Christ, or, as too often happens, into melancholia and a lunatic asylum.

W. P. BALL.

## MISSIONARY STORIES.

### No. 2.—"COMING THROUGH THE RYE"—A TALE OF HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.

It was a lovely summer Sabbath morn as our Missionary set out from the abode in which he lived and moved and had his *beer in*, and wended his way along the road which goeth up to Peckham; for this morning he was to hold forth on the "Rye" to all and sundry who might choose to listen. The church chimes clanged through the clear air and nature seemed to be at peace. The swift swallow swirling through space playfully swallowed the gnat and the gnat was not. Verdict: Gnat-ural death. The sparrow and the finch hymned their song of thanksgiving as they

\* But intense heat prevents elements from uniting. Perhaps Spurgeon considers that the heat both dissociates and reunites the elements, thus producing combustion and heat *ad infinitum*.

† What chemists, we wonder, are silly enough to step out of their way to tell us that a great noise would accompany a huge conflagration?

caught the gaudy butterfly, and winging their flight westward, tenderly tore the gay ephemeron and dropped him piecemeal down the upturned, clamorous, and expectant throats of their downy little fledgelings, when the butterfly again became the grub. Above, a hawk, with a hawker's licence, granted by the ever sitting magistrate, thought it was time to prey, and preyed. A bird sang that eve in vain for its mate, and the before-mentioned nestlings were orphans in a strange land. Beneath, the pretty, sleek-coated, innocent-looking pussy-cat sought the garden shrubbery, and with blinking eyes took her usual position under her favorite bush, purred a prayer, and waited silently for the unwary, juvenile sparrow.

Adown the road in a neatly trimmed and flower-decked garden fronting a two-storied cottage, sat in the shade of the porch an aged man. A painter in search of a model patriarch would here have found his ideal. His hair, snow-white, fell nearly to his shoulders. His long, full beard, of the same hue enringed a countenance that would have graced the form of a Druid priest or one of the Vikings of old. Many a crown had the old gentleman pouched by posing to photographers and artists. On his knees rested a large black bound book, and ever and anon the old man would lift his eyes from the page and glance around and upward with a cheerful and happy expression on his majestic face as if he too were offering up his mead of praise and prayer. As the eye of our celestial courier took in this picture he paused, and catching sight of the large book, he softly murmured, "Ah, an illustrated Bible." Musing aloud, he whispered: "What a holy calm pervadeth this blessed Sabbath; how peaceful, how serene the very presence of the great I AM permeateth the place; and yon old saint, whose days are dwindled to the shortest span, even he is content in the remnant of days left him, as he sitteth and enjoyeth the perusal of the good old book. I will speak to him." Crossing the road he grasped the iron railings that enclosed the little Eden, and opened fire with the highly original remark: "A fine day, sir."

The old gentleman looked up smilingly and remarked, "You must speak a little louder, please, I'm hard o' hearing." The missionary reiterated, and the grand old man assented. "I trust you enjoy your reading, sir," said the missionary. "It's my greatest comfort," responded the aged one. "Yes, indeed," continued the missionary, "it is *the* great comforter; that blessed book tells us how a loving father gave up his only begotten son." "It does, it does," chimed in the patriarch, and his fine eyes expressed surprise. "Of how stripes were put upon him," said the missionary. "Yes, yes; oh, yes!" said the G. O. M. "It tells us," said the peregrinating parson, "of his precious blood that was shed for us." "It does, indeed; indeed it does!" cried the old man excitedly, as he fondly patted the book, and the fires of youth momentarily enkindled his eyes. "Of his agony and bloody sweat," pursued the missionary, now hot. "That's true, that's true," piped the shrill treble of the aged one, and he was visibly affected. "Of how he suffered," added the now white-heated missionary, "between two thieves." "True again, true again," assented the aged patriarch, and tears streamed down his venerable cheeks. "Of how his side was pierced, and yet not a bone in his body broken." "Yes, yes; oh, how well you know the story." "Of his death and resur—" "Eh, eh?" interrupted the antiquated one, "eh? No, no; he didn't die—he was in the hospital nine months, and is now out again, and has been made a sergeant." "Jesus Christ a sergeant?" interrogated the astounded missionary. "No, no, no," explained the ancient, "not Christ. Who's he? I mean my son Robert, of the Metropolitan Police. Here's the whole account of it, and the picture showing how the two thieves pitched into him, how one stabbed him, how he captured 'em both single-handed, and all about it. Come and have a look." "Is not that book the Bible?" gasped the missionary. "Bible be blowed!" shouted the fossilised old sinner, "it's the '*Lustrated P'lice News*. My son Bob takes 'em in weekly, and has 'em bound—just look at this 'ere picture, where he's a wirin' into the two thieves with his staff—come do, man, and look"—and the proud parent rose and held aloft the open volume. But the missionary had vanished.

BAWDEN BYNE.

## REVIEWS.

*The Commonwealth*. No. I. February.—The organ of the new Socialist League contains the Provisional Rules of the League, the Council's Manifesto, characteristic articles by Edward Aveling and Belfort Bax, and a number of news paragraphs relating to the movement. William Morris has a nervous poem, "The Song of the Workers," to be sung to the tune of "John Brown." Eleanor Marx Aveling resumes her Record of the International Movement which used to be the most readable feature of *To-Day*.

*The Agnostic*. February. Cattell and Co.—Full of the faults we noticed in the first number. The writers have scarcely any touch of fact. They have not the art of bringing their subject down to the ground, where it must be brought before the public will give it much attention. There is also no trace of an editor's hand in the magazine. The "Priest's Warning," a striking poem by C. N., is the only contribution that calls for special notice.



## PROFANE JOKES.

A PHILADELPHIA negro refused to get out of the way of a Texas steer, saying that Heaven would protect him, but when he came down on the other side of a five-barred gate, his language didn't refer to Heaven within a million miles.

"Our new minister's sermons are too short," said a young lady. "I don't think so," responded her mother. "He always gets through," rejoined the daughter, "before I've had time to notice all the new styles of bonnets and dresses."

A BISHOP's wife was telling the story of Jonah to her child the other day in the West Country. "Such a big fish swallowed him, my dear: such a big fish—it might even have swallowed your dear papa." The child was eating grapes, and was of an inductive mind—"And would he spit out the skin, mamma?"

A VERY portly Mephistopheles in a "Faust" extravaganza had to "go home." As he sank through a small circular trap he stuck. The demons below tugged at his crimson legs, the mortals above tried to stuff him down. All was useless. And then over the delightful Dublin din that arose from the whole house came a still, small voice: "Well, boys, that's a comfort any way. Hell's full!"

The Cheapest Publication ever issued.

**PAINE'S THEOLOGICAL WORKS** complete for 1s. (in cloth, 1s. 6d.), including "Age of Reason" and all Miscellaneous Works. Never issued before under 2s.—28 Stonecutter Street.

**SHORTHAND CLERK** desires Evening Work, after six; accurate transcript—usual price.—H., 213 Stanhope Street, N.W. Pitman's shorthand taught.

**FREETHINKER**, 1883 and 1884, complete for highest offer; also odd numbers of 1881 to 1884. Mr. Donald McTavish, Glasgow, please communicate; wrong address given—Apply, A. Munro, 6 Wingfield Road, Stratford, E.

**PORTRAIT OF W. W. COLLINS**, with Biography by "Ignotus," appears in "The Republican" for February, now ready, price One Penny. Also: Letter to Prince Albert Victor, by Geo. Standing; History of the Aristocracy, etc.—Progressive Publishing Co., 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C.

**DARWIN AGAINST MOSES**. By ARTHUR B. MOSS. Price 1d. The "Freethinker" says: "Interesting, but not up to the author's general level." Try it, reader. It is worthy of perusal. Selling well everywhere.—Progressive Publishing Co., 28 Stonecutter Street.

**LESSONS IN SOCIALISM**.—A Course of Sixteen Lessons commencing Feb. 12th, based on "Das Capital" of Karl Marx, will be given at South Place Institute, Moorgate Street, by EDWARD AVELING, D.Sc., F.E.L. Univ. Coll., Lond., under the auspices of the Socialist League. Admission to non-members of the Socialist League, 6d. each lesson; fee for half course of eight lessons, 3s. A preliminary Public Meeting will be held at the above Institute on Saturday, Feb. 7th.—For syllabus and further particulars apply to Edward Watson, Socialist League, 27 Farringdon Street, E.C.

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