

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE ASCENSION.

"To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise," said Jesus to the penitent thief on the cross. This promise was obviously not fulfilled, for, according to John, Jesus told Mary Magdalene after his resurrection that he was not yet ascended unto his father. He had not been to heaven at all, and the penitent thief was either waiting for him at the gate or hunting about for him inside. The Apostles' Creed tells us that, during the three days which Jesus miraculously spent in the tomb between late on Friday evening and early on Sunday morning, he no less miraculously "descended into hell," where, according to Peter, he "preached to the spirits in prison;" no doubt to the great terror of Old Nick, who must have trembled lest such a persuasive preacher should convert all his infernal crew, and empty every seat in the pit.

Such discrepancies do not disturb the faith of the true believer, who swallows contradictions and absurdities with the same generous hospitality which the whale extended to Jonah. But they stagger the reflecting mind, and they wrinkle the sceptic's face with scornful laughter. The whole story of Christ's resurrection and ascension abounds with similar difficulties. It was never concocted for a sceptical age. The writers knew they could draw to any extent on their readers' credulity, and they were, perhaps, little less furnished with that article themselves. What a roaring farce it would be if witnesses like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (or whoever the evangelists were) went into the witness-box to-day to prove their story. How a clever Q. C., like Sir Hardinge Giffard, would turn them inside out in cross-examination, and make them contradict themselves and each other on every important point of the case! How satirically the judge would sum up, and how quickly the jury would return a verdict for the other side! Paul, who was a clever fellow, tested the story in this way, and came to the conclusion that the Christians were fools

or rogues. He continued in this frame of mind until his wits were disordered by a sunstroke, which is an affliction that generally leaves a craze of some sort behind it.

Let us look at the story as Paul did before that unlucky accident, without sharing his Jewish bigotry.

Ascensions were not quite unfamiliar to the Jewish mind. Enoch was translated, and Elijah went to glory without dying, in a chariot of fire. Rather a curious conveyance, to be sure; especially to heaven, although it might be very

appropriate to the other place. But that is a minor point that need not detain us. The essential point is, that if Enoch and Elijah had ascended to heaven, it was natural that the Christians should believe as much of their Savior. How could he wait, like common clay, for the general resurrection, and play an ordinary part in the scramble? The idea was too derogatory. He therefore had a resurrection all to himself, and went off to heaven by a special conveyance.

All four evangelists relate the Resurrection, but only Mark and Luke relate the Ascension. Matthew and John never heard of it, or if they did they were silent about it, thinking that Jesus Christ's farewell performance was a trifling matter. Matthew says that Jesus met the eleven surviving members of his company by appointment, some time after his resurrection, on a mountain in Galilee. Some of the disciples worshipped him, but some doubted; and the world has been divided ever since, pretty much in the same way, on the subject. Jesus discoursed to them in a very lofty manner, and Matthew leaves him there, without telling

us whether he or the disciples ever came down again. John also leaves Jesus talking to the eleven after dining with them at the Sea of Tiberias. He informs us that Jesus did "many other things," which would take more books than the world could hold to recite, and the Ascension might have been one of them. But it might not have been, and John would hardly have neglected such a capital wind-up of his story.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—124.



CHRIST'S FAREWELL PERFORMANCE.

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."—ACTS i., 9.

Luke says that Jesus appeared unto the eleven, who naturally thought he was a spirit, and were "terrified and affrighted." But, although he came like a ghost, he invited them to feel his muscle and see that he was real flesh and blood. He then ate a piece of broiled fish, and preached a short sermon; after which he led them to Bethany, and went aloft, with the undigested remnants of the fish in his stomach.

Mark's account of the Ascension is perhaps borrowed from Luke. At any rate, it appears in the second half of his last chapter, which the learned *chefs* who cooked the Revised Version are obliged to confess is wanting in the earliest manuscripts. Mark omits the fish in his Savior's stomach, but he adds that, after reaching heaven, the celestial levitator coolly took a seat "on the right hand of God," although it is difficult to understand how the disciples could see the performance at such a distance. They must have been longer-sighted than their maker, for when his curiosity was excited about the Tower of Babel, he was obliged to come down and see what was up.

Mark and Luke both make Jesus ascend on the very day of his resurrection, or the next day at the latest. But according to the Acts of the Apostles, he appeared several times for forty days; and instead of taking them out to Bethany, or making appointments with them in Galilee, he strictly warned them not to leave Jerusalem. After preaching his farewell sermon, positively for the last time, he emigrated above, and was soon in a fog, as they were. While they stared at the point where he vanished, two men "in white apparel" appeared on the scene, and told them that Jesus would come down as he had gone up. The disciples believed their prophecy at once. Perhaps the white clothes settled the point in their minds. Anyhow, they went home to the third-floor back where they all lodged. The accommodation was scanty, but they had lost their Treasurer as well as their President, and the Holy Ghost had not yet taught them how to Jew the faithful into sending their goods to the auction-room and bringing them the nett proceeds.

According to the fifteenth of Corinthians, Jesus descended pretty soon. Paul says that he appeared unto five hundred of the brethren at once. This must have been after the Ascension, for at that time (Acts i, 15) the total number of the brethren was only one hundred and twenty. Evidently there was a good deal of human nature in those days, just as there is now. Jesus Christ perhaps gave a number of farewell performances, like Mrs. Bancroft or Sims Reeves, each positively the last according to the bill, but somehow not so in reality. Altogether the subject is rather obscure, or we are, the Lord knows which. But obscurity is no difficulty to a true believer. Anybody can believe what he understands. Faith consists in believing what you don't understand. Anybody, too, can believe what is credible. Faith consists in believing what is incredible. The true believer holds with Tertullian, that a thing is true because it is impossible; and he wishes with old Sir Thomas Browne, that the marvels of theology were still harder, so as to show the full extent of his faith.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE Rev. J. J. S. Bird, as editor of the *Preachers' Analyst*, commends a Christian contemporary because it "advocates Christianity without the filthy admixture of worldly politics," by means of which other time-serving Christian editors "prostitute their names and bid for the favor of agitating fanatics." If Mr. Bird is so horrified at the mention of the worldly affairs of this life, he had better take unto himself wings and flit away from this intolerable purgatory to a better world more congenial to his lofty spiritual requirements. He will not be missed here, and the angels will probably be glad of such an acquisition to their ranks.

ONE of the Davenport brothers who obtained such celebrity among spiritists by their rope tying performances, has found it to his interest to expose the fraud and is now in Chicago challenging the mediums to produce phenomena in his presence which he cannot explain.

THE heartless rascals of Petersburg, Virginia, have sent good Reverend Brother Thomas Spencer to the penitentiary for five years and for nothing but serving the Lord. He entered a house in quest of souls and they called it burglary. The brother's religion is colored, and of the baptist variety, but to jail him for this is inhuman.—*Ironclad Age*.

THE NEW OLD TESTAMENT.—I.

A GENERATION ago the idea of revising the Bible would have been resented by the orthodox world, as calculated to suggest too forcibly that human errors had somehow got mixed up with God's holy work. There would obviously be no necessity for a revision were there not errors to be corrected and improvements to be made. The thought of uninspired men touching up the handiwork of the Holy Ghost sounded almost blasphemous to those who believed in the literal inspiration of Scripture. Since, however, Free-thought criticism has broken down the doctrine of verbal inspiration, or changed it into the modified imbecility of those who believe that deity inspired the original writers of the Jew-books, but quite forgot to inspire their copyists and translators, the desirability became manifest of revising a translation which, however excellent in its English, scholars were agreed, was frequently far from representing what is supposed to be the original.

The publication of the revised edition of the New Testament, with its omission of the one strong text in favor of the Trinity, its marginal note upon the long interpolation at the end of Mark with its damnation clause, and its entire alteration of many a passage which had previously been expounded as "the word of God," was an eye-opener to many; and it is doubtless greatly on this account that it has been so virulently attacked by Dean Burgon and other orthodox critics.

A cursory glance at the revision of the Old Testament is sufficient to assure us that the revisers were more content to meet the censure of scholars by refusing to sanction necessary alterations in the text and translation than to incur the prejudice which would arise from a wide departure from the authorised version. Indeed, the result is exactly what might have been expected from the composition of the committee and the conditions under which they worked. A body of orthodox Protestants*—mainly ecclesiastics, and all subscribers to doctrinal creeds, with instructions "To introduce as few alterations as possible into the Text of the Authorised Version consistent with faithfulness," and, acting under rules making each proposed alteration subject first to the vote of a majority, and on two subsequent revisions to a majority of two-thirds—could not fail to give a very conservative result. Moreover, the revisers of the Old Testament in one sense had an easier task than the revisers of the New. They escaped the difficulty of choosing between conflicting readings. A watchful Providence has not left any manuscripts of the Old Testament of earlier date than the ninth century after Christ, and the scribes having "vigorously suppressed discordant copies" prior to that period,† the revisers have simply kept to what is called the Massoretic or traditional text, although that text is often contradicted by the earlier versions of the Septuagint and the Samaritan, and even sometimes in the Talmud. Accordingly, we find the changes simply matters of translation, and these, on the whole, too slight to satisfy the demands of scholarly criticism. On the other hand, accommodations have been made to the exigences of modern theology which a true criticism, directed only to ascertain the real meaning of the authors, would never entertain. Thus, in the first chapter of Genesis, while the substitution of "waste and void" for "without form and void" is doubtless a better rendering of the Hebrew, one sees at a glance that the substitution of "And there was evening and there was morning, one day," etc., for "and the evening and the morning were the first day" is an attempt to render the language less open to the objections of modern science. As, however, we are still told to keep the Sabbath, because "in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth," the force of those objections is really not impaired.

For the phrase "There were giants in the earth in those days" (Genesis vi, 1), we are to read "The Nephilim were in the earth in those days," and we are referred in the margin to Numbers xiii, 33, where the sons of Anak, in whose presence the Jews were as "grass-hoppers," are also called Nephilim. This is simply the

* We believe that, by the wish of Dr. Pusey, Cardinal Newman was invited to join, but declined. His mastery of English would have certainly been an acquisition, but beyond that no essential change could have resulted.

† See Professor Robertson Smith's "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," pp. 69—75.

shirking of a difficulty by refusing to translate. Exodus ii, 12, translates that Moses "smote" instead of "slew" the Egyptian, but, as he "hid him in the sand," we presume he is still a murderer. Nor is the honesty of Moses and his band much affected by the unwarrantable substitution of the command from the Lord, "let them ask every man of his neighbor," for "let every man borrow of his neighbor" (Exodus xi., 2). This is a case of unnecessary duplicity on the part of the revisers, for the idea of borrowing, and of borrowing with no intention to return is distinctly in the narrative. Pharaoh and the Egyptians supposed the brief absence from Goschen asked for and granted, was temporary. Moses and the Jews knew that the object was different. Hence the *asking* of vessels and jewels was really *stealing*. Although the verb may be rendered *ask*, it also means to borrow, and is so translated in 2 Kings vi., 5. The command "ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (iii., 22) is still retained.

The supernatural element of the Bible remains unaffected. Joshua still stops the sun, and although the command is given as if it were poetry from the lost "book of Jasher," the alleged fact that "the sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day" is given in solid prose. Baalam's ass has her mouth opened by the Lord, and speaks to her master as of yore. Samson catches three hundred foxes, or jackals, and ties them tail to tail. Elijah is still fed by ravens, and not by blackmoors, as some ingenious critics have sagely suggested, and Jonah prays from the belly of a great fish. We cannot be quite sure as to Samson's jackals, since "dragons" are changed into "jackals" in some places and into "serpents" in others. Dragons, however, still remain among Biblical zoology (Isaiah xxvii., 1; lv., 1), and "satyrs," though these have the marginal reading "he-goats." The unicorn is changed into the wild ox; "be-hemoth" is explained as hippopotamus, and "leviathan" as the crocodile. The "cockatrice," that remarkable serpent that was hatched from the egg of a cock, is changed into the equally fabulous "basilisk," with the alternative of "adder" (Isa. xi., 8; xiv., 29; lix., 5). The cherubim are left in their old state of monstrosity.

In a succeeding number I shall examine some of the more important doctrinal issues affected by the revision. One word of praise must be given at once. The removal of the misleading chapter and verse divisions and the still more mischievous headlines—such as those which declare that the Song of Solomon celebrates the love of Christ for his Church—is a decided improvement. That many of the renderings are better must also cordially be allowed. No doubt the New Old Testament will be used as a buttress against the advancing tide of Freethought criticism, but it will also do something to extinguish that Bibliolatry which is the disgrace of a civilised community.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

The *Daily Telegraph* has brought its omniscience and banter to bear on an individual who has published a book advocating the use of insects as food. It forgets to mention that the word of God declares that "the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind" might be freely eaten, while pork and oysters were held in abomination.

THE Bible Society at its May meeting boasted of having distributed over four million copies of either single gospels or, in the majority of cases, of the complete Bible. China alone has had 200,000 copies. Truly a vast amount of paper and ink has been shed abroad, but with what result? Has any one benefited with the exception of the paid producers and agents of the society?

THE annual meeting of the Christian Evidence Society, although presided over by the head of the English Church, was a very tame affair. It is true there was some mention of a converted Atheist, intended, no doubt, to act as a bait in the appeal for cash; but, as no particulars were given, we presume Mr. Waterman alluded to "Happy George," of the Salvation Army. The Christian Evidence Society, as usual, is very much in want of funds. Its total income is £1,401, and of this the secretaries take £562. Last year they began with a balance of £96, now they only boast of £23. A special appeal for funds to meet infidelity in India only brought out the sum of £8 from Christian England. Who will come to the help of the Lord?

THE speech of the Archbishop of Canterbury was very funny to those who know the character of the out-door advocates of the Christian Evidence Society. He declared he looked on the C. E. S. as "a scientific society" and as "undertaking to produce real and satisfactory evidence," and he felt sure its representatives took care to make themselves acquainted with their opponents' arguments and to represent them fairly. If his Grace could only listen *incognito* to the coarse diatribes of some of them, we venture to assert that he would both change his opinion and see that such persons were dismissed as a disgrace to the Christian cause.

A NEW monthly journal, the *Anti-Infidel*, edited by W. R. Bradlaugh, was sold at the meeting. We wonder if the C. E. S. only authorise or if they intend to subsidise this profound journal, which declares that the term infidel "signifies those who believe nothing." The only approach to an argument in the sheet is the allegation that Jephthah's daughter was not sacrificed, but was devoted to perpetual virginity. To support this allegation, the writer quotes the text Judges xi., 40, as "The daughters of Israel went yearly to *talk with* [instead of *lament*] the daughters of Jephthah four days in the year." Fancy all the daughters of Israel going to talk with her only at this particular time! What would be said of a Freethinker who thus misrepresented the language of Scripture? The Revised Version says they went "to celebrate" the daughters of Jephthah, and in the margin keeps "lament."

THE *Anti-Infidel* writer has a better argument in store. He declares that the law of God commands that those who gave their seed to *Molech* should be put to death, and therefore because Jephthah was not put to death, he could not have sacrificed his daughter to *Jahveh*! He is, moreover, evidently unaware that the historical events in the book of Judges were long anterior in point of time to the composition of the priestly code of Deuteronomy. That the early Jews did indulge in human sacrifice is evident from Gen. xxii., Lev. xxvii., 1 Sam. xv., and Micah vi., besides the instance of Jephthah, who declared that whatsoever came forth from his house to meet him should surely be the Lord's, and he would "offer it for a burnt offering."

AT the May meeting of the London Missionary Society, the report deplored that in India "the destructive effect of Western civilisation was more apparent than the reviving power of the Christian spirit." Calcutta and Bangalore were specified as exhibiting great demands for sceptical literature. In China also the Gospel met with many hindrances. On the other hand, success was chronicled among the natives of Madagascar, New Guinea, etc. Christianity succeeds better among savages than among intelligent races like the Hindus and Chinese.

A CHRISTIAN gentleman named Walter Bicknell, evidently under the influence of the spirit in both senses, has been encouraging the vicar of Datchet Church and enlivening the dulness of the proceedings with his applause during divine service. His hearty "Hear, hear," after the vicar had read the Lord's Prayer, and his generous and enthusiastic "Bravo, well done!" at the end of the first lesson, were not appreciated as they ought to have been, and the too vigorous supporter of the faith was led away in the care of a constable and fined 30s.

A TERRIBLE snowstorm has passed over Austria. Six persons were found frozen to death in Vienna, and the young crops throughout the country are covered with snow. "The old belief in the three ice saints is once more confirmed." What a pity the people don't drop the superstition of the three saints and keep only to the superstition of the one God who shows his unspeakable kindness by freezing people to death and ruining and starving poor peasants by destroying their crops.

MR. SPURGEON says that Christians "need to set their faces like flint against the world." This is extremely rich, coming from a man who spends a couple of thousand a year, rides in his private carriage, enjoys himself two or three months every year at one of the most fashionable and expensive watering-places in Europe, and nurses the rich man's disease of gout.

MR. SPURGEON has been expressing himself with equal sincerity on the Bible. In preaching the annual sermon for the British and Foreign Bible Society, he remarked that "if God was not the author of the book, then it was an imposture; if he was the author, and they doubted it not, then let them bow reverently before it, and accept its every word." Very well, Mr. Spurgeon, let us put you to the test. According to the last chapter of Mark, Jesus said that all who believed in him should be able to heal the sick, play with serpents and drink poison. Can you do these things? If not, you are not a real believer in Jesus, unless Jesus was just as truthful as you appear to be.

MR. SAMUEL SMITH, member for Liverpool, is a conspicuous figure at the May meeting, and his squeaking voice is heard wherever the faithful do congregate. With a Pecksniffian whine he laments the separation of the rich and poor, and declares that if it were not for the saving influence of Christianity a mighty revolution would sweep London away like Babylon or Rome. Mr. Smith's history is queer, for neither Babylon nor Rome was

swept away by a revolution. But Mr. Smith's Christianity is queerer still. Jesus Christ's plan for bridging the separation between the rich and poor was to abolish the rich and make everybody poor. When Mr. Smith and his pious friends follow out this plan by selling all they have and giving the proceeds to their less fortunate brethren, we shall believe in their sincerity. But until then, we regard them as hypocrites, who profess one thing and practise another; and as social mountebanks, who mock the misery they are always maundering over.

THE London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews has spent £38,293 1s. 4d. during the year and has baptised 49 Jews, 10 at least of these being children. How many of these costly creatures are genuine converts, we are not informed, and the social status and personal characters of the proselytes are not dilated upon. At this rate it will take infinite time and infinite money to convert the Jews, and we dare say the Society's officials sincerely hope it will.

SCIENCE and religion are as irreconcilable as fire and water, but many attempts are made to bring about an artificial union between the two. Professor Drummond, lecturing on Natural Selection to a religious audience, makes the doctrine of selection apply to the "spiritual" world equally with the physical. As when a pond gradually dries up and the aquatic creatures in it perish while the tadpole develops air-breathing apparatus and escapes as a frog, so the Christian tadpole who develops suitable spiritual apparatus while on earth will come out as a full-blown spiritual frog in the kingdom of heaven. We won't quarrel with the analogy, but the conceited Christian frogs and toads who so modestly expect all eternity, and infinite felicity, and unity and identity with omniscience and perfection, for their poor pitiful selves, remind us most of the over-ambitious frog in the fable, who burst itself by trying to puff itself to the size of the bull. Fortunately for themselves the Christian amphibia only try the inflation process in their spare time and on Sundays, and not very strenuously then. If it were otherwise our cemeteries and lunatic asylums would speedily be overcrowded.

PROFESSOR DRUMMOND says that the spiritual counterpart of the Darwinian law of natural selection will keep heaven fit. Fit for what? Believing scoundrels are selected, and unbelieving philosophers are excluded. Converted murderers are eligible, while sceptical philanthropists are damned. Darwin and Spencer are shut out by the operation of their own law of evolution by survival of the fittest, which in its religious aspects will place Peace and Lefroy safe in the arms of Jesus. Perhaps, however, the Professor gets over some of these difficulties by means of a private Gospel of his own which it is not expedient to reveal unto Christians until their spiritual apparatus has been sufficiently developed in a harmless direction.

THE English Church Union complained bitterly at the May meeting of "the revival of persecution" in the prosecution of the Rev. C. B. Cox for ritualism. It was this same association that offered £500 to the Archbishop of York for the expenses of prosecuting Mr. Voysey for heresy. Evidently the English Church Union are excellent followers of St. Augustine, who deemed persecution an excellent thing for others, but most damnable when applied to one's own views.

THE Rev. Joseph Davies, rector of St. Ann's Church, Houghton, near Manchester, has been suspended, not from the gallows, but from his duty and emoluments for five years. Communion wine is professionally taken once a month, and a slight elevation at those intervals might be pardonable. But the Rev. Joseph Davies has been injudicious enough to exhibit the operation of the spirit out of season, and with an objectionable frequency. Hence these tears. We beg pardon. Hence this suspension.

THE Roman Catholic Bishop of Portsmouth denounces the heathen custom of purchasing costly flowers to put on the grave at a funeral, instead of providing prayers for the dead. In the one case the money goes to the florist, in the other to the priest.

THE *Freeman*, commenting on the changed attitude of the *Rock*, which should now be called the *Quicksand*, declares that "Evangelicalism in the Church of England is played out." There are other "isms" equally played out in the minds of intelligent men. Baptism, for instance, Mr. *Freeman*.

THE Original Grand Old Man—Methuselah.

CON.—What is the difference between the Revised Version of the Bible and a fashionably-attired lady?—The Bible appears with an improved dress, the lady with a dress-improver. [The perpetrator of this conundrum will appreciate the practical use of a dress-improver if he ventures within range.]

Now that the Revised Version has been issued it will be quite the correct thing to tell a disagreeable acquaintance to "go to Sheol!" Revision is the order of the day. We have revised spirit duties, revised income-tax and revised Bibles. We have it on a totally unreliable authority that the Orange lodges throughout the country are about to "revise" the wooden

"bibles" which form part of the lodge furniture, and are so admirably adapted to their requirements. With paint and gold-leaf galore this may be accomplished in less than fifteen years.

It is amusing to note that in the newspaper comments on the Revised Bible, most of the eulogy is given to the "noble English." The work of the translators is more appreciated than that of the Holy Ghost himself.

THE *Standard* reminds its readers that "the Bible and the Sword were Gordon's constant companions." It might have said with equal truth that the Bible and the Sword throughout history have been constant companions, the first usually forming an introduction to the second. The Bible and the Sword would make an excellent Tory war cry.

SURELY the Holy Ghost does not approve of having his writings tampered with, or how came it that when sixteen servants of the most high were engaged in touching up his holy word their gov'nor did not keep them all alive until it was finished? If sixteen Freethinkers had been engaged on a Free-thought work, and ten died before it was completed, what a shout of rejoicing would have gone up from Christians at so manifest a sign of God's wrath.

BISHOP RYLE is again in hot water. Speaking after a breakfast in connection with the Bible Society, he launched into a tirade against the Government, in which the addition to the income-tax figured prominently. No doubt this will press heavily on a bishop who lives in apostolic poverty on £3,500 a year, but the black army should be the last to complain. Their "forward" policy has involved the country in many petty wars which have added to our already excessive taxation.

THE vacant Archbishopric of Dublin is causing a flutter in certain dovescotes, and *United Ireland* is fearful lest the choice of "bishops, priests and people" may be set aside at the instance of the wicked British Government, and the infallible head of the Church go infallibly wrong! But when did the "people" get the right of selecting a bishop? Besides, as every bishop is filled with the Holy Ghost, what does it matter who is elected?

ACCORDING to the *Sporting Chronicle*, the Irish bishops in Rome had only just decided to change the title of the College of Maynooth from "Royal" to "Pontifical" when there was a shock of earthquake, which the bishops accepted as an omen of St. Patrick's pleasure at the change. As the *Sporting Chronicle* has a couple of prophets on its staff, we are bound to accept its statement. Perhaps the occurrence will throw some light on the recent earthquakes in Spain, not to mention Java.

THE Rev. Ambrose Cave was fined 5s. and costs, at Hove, for being drunk. A brandy bottle was found on him, and he had been stopping ladies in the streets and making remarks to them which they declined to repeat to the constable who took the reverend sky-pilot in charge.

NONCONFORMIST papers are complaining bitterly that a workman's child was "buried like a dog" at Ramsbury, Wilts, in consequence of the unexpected refusal of the minister to read the service over the grave of an unbaptised child. A similar case of bigotry occurred at Ilminster. The pious clerk of the Burial Board refused to grant a certificate for burial because the deceased infant had not been baptised; but in this case the bigot was brought to book and compelled to do his duty. The *Christian Commonwealth* says: "Our Congregational and Methodist friends are continually deploring such cases as these." These outrages on human susceptibilities are by Christians on Christians for the sake of Christian beliefs. What a valuable aid to peace and harmony Christianity is!

WE read of certain books being written in "cursive Hebrew." The Old Testament, we imagine, was written in very cursive Hebrew and the New in cursive Greek. Genesis begins with the story of the cursing of Adam, and Revelation ends with a curse on those who add to its words and take from them. Few books, we imagine, are more cursively written, in this sense, than God's holy Bible.

THE Bishop of Durham, it seems, was beneath the descending hoist or lift in an hotel at Rome, in happy unconsciousness of his danger, when an English lady, failing to rouse him from his episcopal meditations upon the mansions of the blest by her exclamations in French, "rushed forward and dragged his lordship away, just as the hoist grazed his head." It is the ladies who save the bishops. The descending hoist is, perhaps, a prophetic emblem or antetype of disestablishment. The poor bishops will have to clear out as the Bishop of Durham did.

THE Policemen's Choir, of the Christian Policemen's Association, are to give a "service of song" at Exeter Hall, entitled "The Prodigal Son." The opening chorus, we presume, will be "Run him in." If sung in character with flourishing of staves and appropriate action this should bring down the house. Whether Bobby the saint will also sing selections from *Robert le Diable* we cannot say.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Our next number will contain a Descriptive Report of the Whit-Sunday Conference of the National Secular Society at Birmingham.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

MAY 24, N. S. S. Conference; 31, Milton Hall.
JUNE 7, Liverpool; 14, Plymouth; 21, Manchester; 28, Bristol.
JULY 5, Hall of Science, London; 12, Camberwell.

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- ATHEIST writes from Darent Camp: "Books, lectures, tracts, etc., received with thanks. They are being read by all educated men here and highly approved."
- H. SMITH.—We publish the full text of Justice Stephen's draft bill for abolishing the Blasphemy Laws in another column. Freethinkers should bring it before the notice of parliamentary candidates and ask them plainly, "Will you vote for that?" We are glad to hear that Mr. B. Priestley, the selected candidate for your district, heartily approves the bill.
- J. A. BRADLEY, a veteran Freethinker turned 81, wishes "success to the dear *Freethinker*."
- T. BAKER.—Thanks for your excellent advice. We have often complained of the same thing, but hitherto with very little effect.
- J. GUNDY.—We are obliged. See "Sugar Plums."
- H. BROWN.—When you talk of our rule in India being just and honest you show that you have little knowledge of the subject. Fortunately the English democracy is awakening to the claims of India, and in this fact there is hope. When we said, in "The Shadow of the Sword," that if Russia attacked India we, that is England, should defend it, we meant that as England is in India, and owes to that vast country a duty before she quits it, she is bound to aim at fostering native self-government, and to ward off Russian aggression which would interfere with that, *when it comes*. We have no affection for Russia, if you mean the Russian government; and we dare say we have quite as much love for England as those who are always shrieking for the blood of her "enemies."
- W. C. SCRIVENER.—We agree with you that the "Calling of Samuel" was one of the best sketches that ever appeared in the *Freethinker*, and we were very sorry to omit it from Part I. of the Comic Bible Sketches. The fact is, the block was lost during our long imprisonment or in one of our subsequent shiftings. We intend, however, to have another engraved, and we hope to include it in Part II.—"The Flight of the Shadows" by Ingersoll is not one of our publications; we only sell it as we do other Freethought literature.
- W. SLADE.—We have never met "Major" Cadman, and therefore cannot tell whether your portrait of him is a good one. If it is, he deserves a place in Tassaud's—we mean in the Chamber of Horrors.
- EX-WESLEYAN.—There is no Ladies' Society in connection with the N. S. S., but there are a good many lady members.—Mother of God is a very ancient Christian phrase for Mary.
- J. HURST.—The Freethinker Tracts are *not* out of print. Your agent has misinformed you. You can have six dozen penny pamphlets, for distribution, sent you carriage paid for 5s.
- J. O'DUGAN wants to know whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead once or twice: as the Apostle's Creed says "he rose *again*."
- WM. CORNWALL.—There is a French work by H. Rodriguez entitled "Les Origines de la Sermon sur la Montagne," showing that most of the aphorisms of the Sermon on the Mount are to be found in the Talmud. We shall deal with the subject in a future number.
- J. BELL.—The English Church takes from the country about nine millions yearly.
- R. W.—The doctrine that falsehood may be used to heretics has been asserted by many Catholics. The title of the thirty-first chapter of Eusebius, twelfth book of Evangelical Preparation, reads "That falsehood may be employed by way of medicine." We will give you some other references next week. We agree with you that Roman Catholicism is more deserving of attack.
- D. KAY.—Professor Drummond's work has been several times referred to in our columns. Thanks.
- INQUIRER.—We do not know the work mentioned.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Boston Investigator—Philosophic Inquirer—Liberal—Church Reformer—Ironclad Age—Northampton Guardian—Leeds Mercury—Kirkcudbrightshire Advertiser—Truth—Truth-seeker—Liberator—Northampton Reporter.

"FREETHINKER" PRIZES.

We offer another PRIZE OF ONE GUINEA for the best Comic Bible Sketch, and a PRIZE OF ONE GUINEA for the best Religious Topical Sketch suitable for reproduction; the competition to close on June 1.

The drawing must be done on white cardboard or thick white paper in pure black ink. The lines should be bold and well distinct. Washes or colors must not be used. The size should be about one-third broader than our ordinary single or double column size.

SUGAR PLUMS.

A FINE audience welcomed Mr. Foote at the London Hall of Science last Sunday evening. His lecture on "Christ's Resurrection and Ascension" was followed with eager interest, and the audience vociferously applauded his peroration. It speaks well for Freethought when such gatherings are to be found in our halls at this time of the year.

THE first number of "Crimes of Christianity," by Mr. Foote and Mr. Wheeler, is now on sale. It contains sixteen pages of print on good paper. No pains are spared to make the work a standard one for Freethinkers, and the parts are published at the lowest possible price, so as to place them within the reach of the poorest. Those who want to see what Christianity really has done for the world will find it in this work, and in no other. The Christian Evidence Society is challenged to deny its statements and to confute its arguments. If the representatives of that Society were true to their "mission," they would accept the challenge; but we suspect they will decline it, with their usual discretion. The great difficulty they would find in answering the "Crimes of Christianity" is that it is cram-full of damning facts, for every one of which ample authority is given in the foot-notes.

OUR Summer Number will be ready earlier this year. It is on the stocks and will be launched (D.V., or otherwise) about the middle of June. We think our readers will allow it to be as gallant and saucy a craft as we ever floated. Our artist has designed a beautiful new cover, and the inside will be crammed with illustrations, among others being a series of twelve exquisitely comic sketches of the scrimmage between Jehovah and Dagon in the Philistines' joss-house. The letter-press will be quite up to the illustrations, and the whole will form a real Freethinker's treat and a wonderful threepennyworth.

THE June number of *Progress* will contain the first act of a drama entitled "A Gauntlet," by the great Norwegian writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. The translation into English has been made by one of his countrymen, long resident in London. The drama is full of power, and is worthy of the greatest living Norwegian writer after Ibsen. It is a curious thing (from the Christian standpoint) that both these authors are profound Freethinkers.

NEXT Thursday evening the Students' Association will hold their annual *convorsazione* at the London Hall of Science. There has been little time for a proper announcement, but we hope this paragraph will do something towards making the gathering a success. Mrs. Besant and the Misses Bradlaugh have worked hard at their task of teaching. It is not a labor which attracts much public attention; yet for that very reason the members and friends of the N. S. S. should show their appreciation of a work which reflects so much credit on our movement. Tickets can be had of Mrs. Besant or the Misses Bradlaugh, at 63 Fleet Street, or at the Hall of Science.

COLONEL SWABE, one of the candidates for the Middleton division in South Lancashire, has promised to vote for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. The other candidate, a Mr. Plowman, hailing from London, but unknown to fame, could not be more bitter against blasphemers if he were the Almighty himself. He wants to see them all imprisoned together with all parents who object to vaccination. We trust that every Freethinker in the constituency will do his best to keep Mr. Plowman out. Freethinkers owe no loyalty to Liberals who promise to vote for their persecution and imprisonment.

A CORRESPONDENT, who dates from the neighborhood of Oliver Cromwell's birthplace, writing to us concerning the "Jewish Life of Christ," says, "My copy has caused some excitement among the followers of the 'meek and lowly one' in my locality. I, for one, thank you for publishing this remarkable work."

FREETHINKERS could not do better than lend a copy of "this remarkable work" to their Christian friends. It would be an eye-opener to many of them, and would set them thinking about their creed, which is usually the last thing they ever think about.

THE veteran reformer, Isaac Pitman, has reprinted in his *Phonetic Journal* the article by Mr. Foote, entitled "The Ogre," which appeared in a recent number of *Progress* and formed the basis of his "Shadow of the Sword." In writing to the editor of *Progress*, Mr. Pitman says: "I cannot reprint the article without thanking you for so forcible and timely an expression on the important topic of National War."

THE Press is beginning to break its long silence by noticing Freethought publications. In reviewing some of our editor's writings, the *Batley News* says that "Mr. Foote is a fierce, fiery, furious opponent, but all his writings are able, interesting and pointed. Secularists must value them highly."

UNDER the title of "George Eliot's Dog," *Knowledge* transcribes an interesting account of a conversation with George Eliot and George Henry Lewes and animals. The most noteworthy sentence was that of Mr. Lewes: "After all, the dream of a personal immortality is a selfish one. It would come, in the long run, merely to the survival of the fittest, who would build their heavenly mansions on a hecatomb of human failures."

FREETHOUGHT flourishes in New Zealand "like a green bay-tree." Dr. J. L. York, of America, has been lecturing with great acceptance at Auckland. Our colonists bid fair to emancipate themselves from superstition before the mother country.

WE are glad to see the *Ironclad Age*, of Indianapolis, still to the fore. Its editor, Dr. Monroe, has a decided vein of American humor, and he contrives to steam along pretty lively without the assistance of either God, Devil or Ghost, as witness an article in which he suggests that Satan has contrived to interpolate a few passages into the writings of his heavenly antagonist.

THE Rev. Chas. Webster Leadbeater's conversion to Buddhism has been speedily followed by that of an English lady in Ceylon, Miss Mary Flynn. Taking her seat at the Columbo College among a circle of yellow-capped Buddhists, she was examined and questioned as to her reasons for accepting the faith. The novice replied that after a study of the various religions of the world she found Buddhism alone in accordance with reason and common sense. How many of the heathen converts to Christianity ever "made a study of the various religions of the world?"

IN an article on the Methodist Annual Stock-taking the *Methodist Times* frankly confesses that the district returns are exceedingly unsatisfactory, and that, "to use a phrase of Mr. Spurgeon's, at this rate of progress it will take just an eternity and a half to reach the Millenium." As the Methodists are the only body who publish official returns, we may give a good guess that those who conceal them are in no more flourishing condition.

NOT only has the income of the Wesleyan Missionary Society been stationary for some years past, but this year there is a decided falling off in the collections. Does this represent decrease of lucre or increase of sanity among the Wesleyans?

LITTLE Switzerland boasts a scholarly Freethinker in the person of Professor Gustav Volckmar, professor of New Testament exegesis in the university of Zurich. His scholarly works rank with the first European criticism of the day and have been largely drawn upon by the author of "Supernatural Religion."

JUDGE WAITE, author of "The History of the Christian Religion to the year 200," tells us one morning recently Professor Volckmar explained to his class that it was impossible there could have been an eclipse of the sun at the time of the crucifixion, because it was at the time of full moon. On another occasion he asked the class, "What was the resurrection of Jesus?" One of the students answered, "It was a vision." The professor pronounced this answer correct. Judge Waite asked him afterwards how, if the resurrection was only a vision to the disciples, did he account for the tomb being empty. The old professor (he is 75) stopped and said abruptly, "there was no tomb. Jesus was executed as a criminal, and such were not allowed burial." Of course he must look on the whole story as having been invented to support the doctrine of a material resurrection.

CHRISTIAN EXCUSES FOR GOD'S WORD.

THE *Christian Commonwealth*, in preparing its readers for the proper reading of the revised Old Testament, feels it necessary to deal with the question of the immoralities and divinely-sanctioned slaughterings so unblushingly recorded by the inspired writers. Who excuses, accuses; but the accusal inherent in the broad facts themselves is so patent to every thoughtful reader, and so serious in its moral bearings, that a defence, if a valid one can be obtained, is indeed one of the first necessities of Christian warfare. If the defence of God fails the Christian position becomes untenable.

First, it is alleged that many things that are "not quite fit for promiscuous reading" are often "necessary and profitable," and that if "some unveiling" of broad natural facts takes place in our "wonderfully human and therefore miscellaneous Bible" there is "really nothing to stumble at in that." But the many grossnesses of expression and narration in the Bible are almost always totally unnecessary and exceedingly unprofitable. The disgusting fulness of detail in such practically irrelevant and superfluous stories as those of Lot's daughters and the treatment of the Levite's concubine (Judges xix.), is unpardonable in a work designed by an all-wise being for the edification of men, women and children, in all times, and in all nations, how-

ever civilised and refined. The grossness of biblical language, and of biblical ideas and sentiments, is no puzzle to the Secularist. He merely sees therein the perfectly natural reflection of the thoughts and ways of the semi-savages who originated the biblical legends. But the Christian views this "wonderfully human" book as divine revelation, as the word of God which is to stand sure unto all generations, with its filthy passages unexpurgated and its wicked commandments unrevoked.

The second defence put forward is that "the gross sins recorded in the Bible, if rightly viewed, would not only demonstrate the stern fidelity of the record, but in nearly every case, if results were properly traced, would constitute a series of most healthful warnings." Without stopping to inquire how far the record of filthy actions proves the truthfulness of the gross-minded writers who addressed "an evil and adulterous generation," to use Christ's refined description of their improved descendants, it will be better to inquire at once for the "healthful warnings" which might palliate, or even possibly justify, the grossness of a book intended for family reading and general use. The fact is, that the "healthful warnings" are usually conspicuous by their absence, and hence it is that the defender of the chaste and delicate Scriptures given of God finds it necessary to guard himself by inserting such question-begging expressions as "if rightly viewed" and "if results were properly traced"—which amount to a confession that, as it stands, the sacred filth by no means conveys any obvious moral lesson or warning. The story of Lot and his daughters is told at length, but no condemnation or disapproval, direct or indirect, individual or tribal, is ever expressed or hinted at in the beautiful moral text-book by which men and women are to guide their thoughts and conduct. Peter (ii., 7, 8), after an interval long enough to allow of ample moral reflection and religious development, only speaks of Lot as just and righteous, and as "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." If the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone from heaven is an exceptional instance of the judgments that overtake men who do not superadd the right kind of piety to their immorality, the safety and welfare of Lot and his daughters and the absence of punishment and reproof will equally show the great benefits derived from mingling true religion with infamous vice. In the sweet story of old about the Levite's concubine nothing whatever is done to the unmanly priest for thrusting the woman forth to shame and death; and the bestial rioters who may have died in the battle or may have escaped (see Judges xx., 47; xxi., 6—23), but who brought down destruction on all the innocent women and children of their tribe, incurred the vengeance of Israel by their outrage upon a priest and his property, and not, so far as I can see, in vindication of woman's rights not recognised in those days of infamy and oppression. The punishments or rewards with which God visited flagrant immorality were too uncertain and varying to be of any moral value. If the weak and unstable Reuben was deposed from his leadership, the strong and able Judah, who was guilty of a very similar offence, was rewarded with the birthright and leadership which the elder son had forfeited by his immorality or incapacity. The Old Testament standard of morality is a very low one, and the attempt to extract a high modern standard of sexual morality from the scriptures of sensual and uncivilised men can only result in ignominious failure.

The third plea justifies the massacre of the Canaanites. The "divinely-commissioned avengers"—there was no one to avenge, for the Canaanites had injured no one—"were authorised to do deeds for which we have absolutely no warrant." This is no defence: it is sheer condemnation. It only declares that, under God's orders, his chosen people did deeds which without those orders would have been utterly indefensible. It assumes that the theological sanction converts what otherwise would have been infamous crime into loyal and commendable virtue. God's order cancels all merely human obligations just as Christ's blood washes away all guilt. No allegations of "evolution—of development" can ever excuse the intrinsic immorality of these religious pretences. If an omnipotent and philanthropic God had to resort to crime to attain his ends, how can his saints be expected to shun his example, and why should the civilised Christians of to-day blame them for using similar means, as they have so freely done in the past?

W. P. BALL.

PRIESTS IN IRELAND.

In his recently published "Letters from the West of Ireland," Mr. Shand, after describing the prevalent poverty and decay, speaks as follows of the priests, who seem to be the only thriving class in Ireland:—

"I see, as everyone must see, that any number of priests are living, even in the poorest districts, with every comfort about them; and the laborer being, no doubt, worthy of his hire, I feel it invidious to criticise that state of things. And I know that many of those priests are indefatigable in their labors of charity and mercy; and that in the worst and hardest times, when there was no one else within call, they have stood between their flocks and oppression or starvation. But I see, too, that the country is covered with substantial ecclesiastical edifices of all kinds that sometimes are actually magnificent. The parish churches are generally good, and often showy; the convents and schools are commodious, and often architecturally imposing; while not a few of the cathedrals, though one may take exception to the style and the taste, are of grand proportions, and must have been extremely costly. The Church revenues, which apparently are swelling from year to year, must be drawn from a steadily dwindling population, and chiefly out of the pockets of poor farmers, of poorer peasants and petty shopkeepers. It would seem as if, while the rents of the landlords were being reduced, the dues of the priests and bishops were being proportionally augmented."

JUSTICE STEPHEN'S BILL.

THE following is the text of the Bill drafted by Sir Fitzjames Stephen for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws:—

"Whereas certain laws now in force and intended for the promotion of religion are no longer suitable for that purpose, and it is expedient to repeal them,

"Be it enacted as follows:—

"1. After the passing of this Act no criminal proceedings shall be instituted in any Court whatever, against any person whatever, for Atheism, blasphemy at common law, blasphemous libel, heresy, or schism, except only criminal proceedings instituted in Ecclesiastical Courts against clergymen of the Church of England.

"2. An Act passed in the first year of his late Majesty King Edward VI., c. 1, intituled 'An Act against such as shall unreverently speak against the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, commonly called the sacrament of the altar, and for the receiving thereof in both kinds,' and an Act passed in the 9th and 10 year of his late Majesty King William III., c. 35, intituled 'An Act for the more effectual suppressing of blasphemy and profaneness,' are hereby repealed.

"3. Provided that nothing herein contained shall be deemed to affect the provisions of an Act passed in the nineteenth year of his late Majesty King George II., c. 21, intituled 'An Act more effectually to prevent profane cursing and swearing,' or any other provision of any other Act of Parliament not hereby expressly repealed."

ALL FOR JESUS.—It appears from the religious press that several of the great religious societies find it very difficult to make their income keep pace with their current expenditure. The appeals from the platform of Exeter Hall have been so pitiful that we have been induced to look into the matter, and have carefully read the report of one of these societies as a sample. An inspection of the subscription list shows where the trouble is at once. Instead of being a bright record of Christian liberality, it is, to a very large extent, a miserable exposure of un-Christian stinginess. The people who manage this great society talk about their despondency, their troubled spirits, and their anxious hearts, yet a number of their committeemen, who are well-to-do people in the City, think that they have discharged their own duty when they have subscribed a five pound note each, which, after all, is not quite two shillings a week. Their anxiety did not rise as high as half a crown. One reverend gentleman, whose income is nearer two thousand than one thousand a year, figures for a guinea, which amounts to the magnificent sum of fourpence three-farthings a week. A prosperous City solicitor subscribes the same amount. A manufacturer engaged in a very profitable business, employing hundreds of hands, subscribes two shillings a week. A City merchant, who rides in his carriage and lives in a stately mansion, is equally munificent. Another, who is a member of an eminent firm, is content with the regulation guinea, or fourpence three-farthings a week. A wealthy corn merchant gives ninepence a week. Another noble-hearted man of business, who makes over twenty thousand pounds a year, gives the regulation guinea, or fourpence three-farthings a week. We could multiply such examples almost *ad libitum*.—*Echo*.

FROUDE once said, "I can only believe in a God who does something," and Carlyle exclaimed, "Ah, he does nothing."

CORRESPONDENCE.

ARGUMENT FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Dear Sir,—I am a Freethinker. Yesterday afternoon I was riding down Kentish Town Road with a friend. The subject of our discussion was the resurrection of Jesus. There was no difference of opinion. We were both agreed on the subject. Our condition was rather wonder that so many really able men do, or pretend to, believe this myth. My friend is of a slightly irreverent turn of mind, calm and unruffled as the mountain lake on a windless summer's day. You can imagine my surprise when on my ears fell these words of my now excited friend: "By God, Jesus is risen. There's a living proof of the fact. Look Tom." He pointed out to me a baker's hand-cart which, according to the golden legend writ thereon, belonged to one J. Christ, Fancy Baker, etc., I intend to try and make the acquaintance of this interesting bread-vendor. I am anxious to know whether he also possesses the useful power of multiplying loaves, which power his illustrious namesake used in such a beneficent way. You had, perhaps, better join in the search for this phenomenon, or in a solemn embassy to his celestialness to inquire of him whether he is the one that is to come, etc. J. Christ dwells somewhere in the neighborhood of an hostelry yclept "Bull and Gate."—Yours,
T. EVAN-JACOB.

REVIEWS.

Letter to Samuel Smith, M.P. By W. A. NEWCOMB; Standing, London, 1d.—The author, who is not a literary man, puts a good deal of pungent common sense into his defence of Freethought against Mr. Smith's aspersions. Concerning charitable institutions, for instance, he says, "First, if we don't build asylums, we don't fill them; Christians do." A capital retort, worth a long disquisition.

Gordon Judged out of His Own Mouth. By ANNIE BESANT Freethought Publishing Company.—Mrs. Besant has done a useful work in putting together a choice selection of passages from Gordon's own writings, to show that he was far from being the sublime character his admirers pretend. He may have been a "Christian hero," but he was a long way from a perfect man. We only differ from Mrs. Besant on one point. She appears to question Gordon's courage, ascribing it to his fatalism, and we think this is a mistake.

THE Rev. Canon Green, in St. Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide, preached a sort of Peter-the-Hermit sermon on General Gordon. Why was he not rescued? cries the valorous Green. Surely, he shouts (having completely lost his head), England's dead heroes would have, "given up years of Paradise if they might return for a brief space to earth and rally their old comrades round them once again and go forth to fresh wars against the infidel." But why invoke the mighty dead, O valorous Green? Why not go forth to fight the infidel yourself? Because you prefer to do the spouting for a big salary, and sending the poor fools out to die for a shilling a day.

AN archdiaconal conference has been held at Stour, near Stafford, where one hundred clergymen have been discussing the momentous question, "What steps can be taken to restore the Holy Communion in the consciences of our people, to the prominence assigned to it in the New Testament?" It seems that Theophagy is on the decline. While all other feasts are well patronised, the Lord's table is almost deserted. Can the New Testament itself be responsible? It warns all partakers of the Lord's Supper—"not where he eats but where he's being eaten," that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. xi, 29). As the Lord's body isn't easily discerned when fresh from the bakehouse, no wonder believers prefer to be on the safe side of the hedge, and not sup with the Lord lest they eat and drink damnation to themselves.

JOKING apart, such a text as that we have cited must occasion almost as much agony to tender consciences as the fear that they may have committed the mysterious sin against the Holy Ghost which is never forgiven, "neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. xii, 32).

TALMAGE, in his wild way, holds that all things are gregarious and fond of company. He says: "You plant a forget-me-not or a heart's-ease away up alone on the hill-side, and it will soon hunt up some other heart's-ease or forget-me-not. You find the herbs talking to each other in the morning dew. A galaxy of stars is a Mutual Life Insurance Company." We should like to see one of these wandering forget-me-nots hunting up boon companions; and the arrangement of terms by a company of business-like stars—astronomical not theatrical—would probably present points of great interest. If these utterances were not sanctified by the pulpit we should certainly say that Talmage, in rushing into the poetical sublime, had simply taken the step beyond, and landed himself in the region of the ridiculous.

PROFANE JOKES.

FREDDY says Jonah had a nautical education because he was brought up by a whale.

AN English clergyman asked an uneducated woman whether she liked his written or unwritten sermons the best. After thinking a few moments, she said, "Why, I loike yo the best without the book, because yo keep saying the same thing over and over again, and that helps me to remember what I hear a good deal better." He was a wiser man and not quite as well satisfied with himself.

GOING AWAY FOR FUN.—Little Edith Upperton: "Good-bye. I shan't see you again for six weeks." Little Nelly Lowerten: "Why, are you going away?" "Yes. We is all going to Aunt Harriet's in the country. We's going to skate and sleigh-ride, and have quilting bees, and country dances, and tea-parties, and, oh, lots of fun." "But why can't you all stay in the city and have a nice time just the same?" "Why, don't you know? It's Lent, and it's wicked to have fun where people can see you."

THE UNRELIABLE HAT.—"How is your congregation coming on?" said a Detroit man to a colored minister of that town. "We are goin' right ahead, sah. Since we has quit passin' de hat we has taken in lots ob money. De kerleeshuns has increased wonderfully, sah—wonderfully." "I don't understand how you can take up collections if you don't pass the hat." "We passes de plate now." "Well, that's the same thing as passing the hat, isn't it?" "No, sah, hit ain't the same ting. Deacon Webster passed de hat mor dan a year, and de kerleeshuns were mighty small; but now I passes de plate myself, and de money just rools in. De plate am much more reliable dan de hat." "How is that?" "Deacon Webster put tar in de top ob his hat."

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