

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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AUGUST 16, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

PRIZE CARTOON.



THE LAUGHTER CURE.

"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."—NUM. XXI, 8.

BELIEVE OR BE DAMNED.

This is not very polite language, but it is borrowed from the Bible, and therefore no Christian can find fault with it. The Revised Version substitutes *condemned* for *damned*, yet the verbal alteration makes no substantial difference. Damnation by any other name would be just as hot. It is merely playing with us to make these superficial changes. When a man has to swing from the gallows, what difference does it make in the feel of the rope round his neck if you say he is being *executed* instead of being *hung*?

According to Christianity, belief is the way to heaven, and unbelief the way to hell. "What must I do to be saved?" asks the terrified jailor of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is the prompt answer of the apostle. How easy the process is, may be seen from the fact that the jailor and all his family were "baptised straightway." Five minutes sufficed for their conversion. Who would hold back when the con-

ditions are so simple? It may be objected that the jailor's mind was ploughed up to receive the gospel seed by an earthquake, and that such phenomena do not occur daily, or even yearly, in our part of the world. True; but there are many revival preachers, whose stentorian eloquence is warranted to produce a similar effect on any ordinary mind. When these gentry bawl, "You're all going to Hell," their auditors feel a trepidation which could scarcely be excelled during the friskiest earthquake.

Belief is the safe side, say the Christians. It leads to heaven if Christianity be true, and only to the grave if Christianity be false; while unbelief does no good if Christianity be false, and leads to hell if Christianity be true. We have heard this specious argument lustily applauded at orthodox meetings. Yet we venture to affirm that it insults human nature and betrays a gross ignorance of the laws of thought; for it is degrading to accept any proposition except on the ground of its truth, and men cannot believe any doctrine through fear of punishment or hope of reward. If you were offered a million pounds, or threatened

with instant death, for believing that twice two are five, you could neither earn the bribe nor escape the penalty. You might say you believed, but you could not alter your conviction; and you would certainly laugh at any man who should afterwards expect you to give him a five-pound note to settle two bills of two pounds each. This truth is very well known to the priests, who are always anxious to control the education of children, in order that they may be *trained* to believe. That is a perfectly natural process. But if children were allowed to grow up unprejudiced until they were old enough to judge for themselves, threats and promises would fall as harmlessly upon their minds as water upon a duck's back. No sceptic ever turned Christian through dread of Hell or expectation of Heaven. Death-bed repentances, which are so fraudulently trumpeted, only show, as far as they are true, that early associations will sometimes triumph over more recent convictions in an enfeebled brain. Old age yearns back to the cradle. Dear old Colonel Newcome cries "Adsum!" as the evening bell reverberates through his dying brain and wakens memories of far-off school days; and honest Jack Falstaff sits up in bed, when the end comes, and babbles o' green fields.

It is obvious, therefore, that the gospel of "Believe or be Damned" is in itself, and apart from the influence of education and example, as futile as it is foolish. Yet it is clearly taught in the Bible, and it is embodied in the Church creeds. "Whoever will be saved," says the Athanasian creed (which, by the way, was not written by St. Athanasius at all), "before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." Hallelujah. Amen.

"Before all things" the Christian must *believe*; before honoring his parents, before cherishing his sisters, before loving his wife, before providing for his children, before helping his friends, before being kind to his neighbors, before fulfilling his duties as a citizen. Believe first of all, is the rule of faith. Surely this insane and debasing dogma was never invented by honest men. It sprang from the brain of designing priests, who knew that their wealth and authority were founded on the slavery and pollution of the human mind.

Scarcely a week passes without our receiving an anonymous letter from some inspired idiot who warns us to flee from the wrath to come. These crazy enthusiasts are quite as sensible as Judge North, although fortune has not placed them in an eminent position, where their silly bigotry might be a public disgrace. They follow Hamlet's advice perforce, and play the fool in their own house. When they pluck up courage to admonish the editor of "that wicked *Freethinker*," they send us by post a stupid unsigned scrawl, such as Jeremiah might have written in an exceptionally severe attack of bile. They inform us, as Judge North did, that we are doing the Devil's work. They bid us pause ere it is too late. They beseech God to turn our hearts, when all the time they mean our heads; and they tell us that if we will persist in our miserable unbelief, if we will continue to laugh at God's holy word, if we will not only refuse but deride the proffered salvation, then is our fate certain, and hell will be our portion for evermore.

We beg to tell these pious busybodies, once for all, that they waste their own time as well as ours, to say nothing of paper and postage stamps. We beg also to remind them that it is rather impudent on their part to speak for God without a commission, and promise what he may not condescend to fulfil. Heaven has no charm for us, and Hell no terror. Both are fantastic dreams of ignorant imagination. God, if he exist, could not trouble to make such a foolish paradise as the Bible describes; nor can we imagine him wicked enough to establish a hell to punish his own creatures for being what he made them. If there be a God, he must have lived a long time; and if he is not omniscient, he must have learnt some wisdom from experience. He must be as well aware as ourselves that "Believe or be Damned" is an alternative that never could be presented except by a rogue or a fool. If there be a future life, and we ever reach Heaven, we have no doubt that the Lord will come out when he hears our knock at the front door, and address us in something like the following manner:—"Good day, Foote. How d'ye do? I'm very glad to see you. You didn't know much about me down below: how could you, when I never introduced myself? My pretended friends down

there (hang them!) called you a blasphemer. I don't think you so, though I certainly do them. You merely declare that I could not be half as black as they painted me, and I heartily thank you for it. I'll deal with *them* when I get hold of them. Meanwhile, come in Foote, and take a front seat."

G. W. FOOTE.

DIVES AND LAZARUS.

In the sixteenth chapter of Luke occurs a pretty little story which the Bible compilers have, without the slightest warrant, called the *parable* of the rich man and Lazarus. It relates in the most matter-of-fact way how a certain man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, died and went to hell, while a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, and had his sores licked by dogs, was "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Nothing is said as to what became of the dogs. Nor are we told what was the offence of the rich man. There is no evidence that he refused to pay tithes. He is not alleged to have been a wicked infidel. Nor does he appear to have given Lazarus into the charge of the police, as a modern clergyman would do. The very head and front of his offending was that he was a rich man, and lived like one. The worst we can infer about him is that he had not done anything to raise the beggar to his own condition. Nor had Lazarus apparently achieved much to merit eternal glory. He is not said to have put to death any heretics, or even to have washed his sins and sores in the blood of the Lamb. He seems simply to have been one of those idle, and possibly pious, beggars whose cries for unearned *backsheesh* are still so common in the East. The narrative, indeed, implies that the beggar was rewarded simply because in this life he had been badly off, while the rich man was punished merely because he had a hot dinner, good clothes and a clean shirt, while Lazarus had only crumbs and rags. The blessed volume tells us how Dives "in hell lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil: but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Denied this humble petition, Dives asks that his brethren may be warned of his fate, but even this boon is not vouchsafed him. The voice of humanity was heard in hell, and heaven answered with inhumanity.

Father Abraham's doctrine of compensation is pretty good as coming from a patriarch who in his lifetime had concubines, slaves, camels, oxen, sheep and riches in abundance. It has the merit of simplicity. Those who were up shall be down and those who were down shall be up. Wherefore, as James says, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice." This see-saw process, however, will not continue. There is no indication that those who drink the new wine of the kingdom of heaven shall one day feed on the flames of hell. On the contrary, we are told that between Dives and Lazarus there was a great gulf fixed which none could pass. The arrangement only reverses men's earthly lot. Unending happiness is the reward of earthly poverty. "Blessed be ye poor." Everlasting torment is the portion of those who are well off here below. "Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." Sell all you have and give unto the poor church and clergy. As the Talmud declares, "You may choose between earthly and heavenly possessions, but cannot have both." Wherefore lay not up treasures upon earth. Take no thought for the morrow. Give to him that asketh, and provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purse, for the fashion of this world passeth away.

It is all very well for the political economist to point to the advantages of wealth, not only for material progress, but as affording leisure for intellectual and moral improvement; or to show that indiscriminate almsgiving engenders pauperism, and that pauperism invariably has crime for its attendant. No good Christian will imperil his soul for such considerations as these, but will avoid wealth and happiness as a delusion and a snare, knowing it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a

rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Besides, he knows that whatever he resigns here, whether it be house or lands, he will receive one hundredfold in the next world. If this is so, wealth is to be shunned. Riches are the worst investment, and the inmates of our workhouses are the luckiest persons alive.

One thing gives me pause—the fact that no mention is made of those dogs. The poor creatures did far more for Lazarus than he was asked to do for the rich man in hell. If the doctrine of compensation is the correct one, and Lazarus deserved to be comforted, surely they also merited even better quarters than Abraham's bosom.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

SEVERAL of the religious journals are much concerned over the discovery of the fragment of a gospel in Egypt. All the best authorities appear to agree that the fragment represents an original document of earlier date than our four gospels. It omits the important words, "But after I am risen I will go before you into Galilee." Some of the critics, however, suggest that it may be a mutilated Gnostic recension of the gospels. How much more likely that it was part of the "Gospel of the Egyptians," which, according to Origen, Theophylact and Jerome, was written before the Gospel of Luke, and which is supposed by Erasmus, Dupin, Father Simon, Grotius, Mill and others, to have been referred to by Luke in his preamble: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." This gospel was quoted by Clement, the earliest of the Christian Fathers. We believe we are the first to make this suggestion as to the identity of the fragment with the Gospel of the Egyptians.

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Christian Commonwealth* evidently thinks that the faith-healing miracles are accomplished by means of Satan's help. Relying on 2 Thess. ii., 9, he says that "the working of Satan, who fashioneth himself into an angel of light, is with all power and signs and lying wonders." It was usual for Christians in the old days to attribute each other's miracles to the Devil.

THE Rev. J. Dunn laments "the sluggishness, the meanness, the fickleness, and sin of those who profess and call themselves Christians." He evidently speaks from experience.

WE read in a Christian contemporary that during the 300 years of "conflict" in which Christianity gradually came to the front and established itself, "the crucifixion of Christ was repeated five million times in the death of as many martyrs, who died for the 'one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.'" Monstrous exaggeration seems natural to Christians. Gibbon shows that the 100,000 heretics put to death in the Netherlands alone by pious Charles V., far outnumbered the primitive martyrs throughout the whole Roman Empire during the three centuries in question. During the worst of the "seven persecutions"—that commenced by Diocletian, whose palace was twice set on fire—only 2,000 Christians were executed. The "one faith," too, was split up into innumerable sects whose bitter hatred of each other soon caused far worse Christian persecutions than the Pagan "persecutions" which the earlier Christian fanatics had brought on themselves.

THE New England Sabbatarians are horrified to hear that President Cleveland fished on Sunday. One of their papers says that he ought to be "careful not to outrage the consciences of the best people of the country by his bold defiance of the divine commands." It is the Christians who break the divine commands by working on Saturday. There is no text against working or fishing on the first day of the week.

CANON SULDERDALE SMITH has been rebuking the natives of Hereford for taking walks on Sunday instead of going to Church. We hope the good people of that city will continue to give Canon Smith plenty of cause for such reproof.

AN old rhyme says:

"Sneeze on a Sunday, your safety seek,
The Devil will chase you the whole of the week."

This omen regarding Sunday must have originated in the days when it was a penal offence for a man to kiss his wife on Sunday, and when Melchisedec Jones was put in the stocks for calling on his sweetheart one Sabbath evening.

TOBACCO-SMOKING is a common thing in some of the rural churches in Holland. This suggests an idea. Let the clergymen who have been asking why the people do not go to church, give notice that hereafter gentlemen will be allowed to bring their cigars and morning papers with them, and smoke and read during

the hours of service, and it will not be long ere the pews will renew their old-time popularity.

THE Rev. W. Malam, vicar of St. James's, Buxton, has gone to law against Dr. C. Bennett, in order to show that he was not guilty of indecently assaulting Annie Rose. The reverend gentleman has obtained a verdict in his favor, but he has done himself a good deal of harm in the process. When a married man writes to a pretty girl of seventeen as "My dear little girl," "prudish little thing" and so forth, ordinary people begin to think, as Ben Jonson says, that "All is not sound, all is not sweet."

THE Rev. John Simpson, a Baptist minister of Fredericton, New Brunswick, was arrested for horse stealing. He had two horses with him. He drew a revolver and tried to shoot the officer, but was overpowered. He appears to have been imitating his Master's performance with the donkeys.

AN American Freethinker says that the Christian sign or abbreviation "I. H. S." must stand for Ignorance, Hypocrisy, Superstition.

THE Rev. F. L. Lyne, better known as "Father Ignatius," has started a new paper which he calls the *Church of England Catholic and Monastic Times*. The Father gives some account of his attempt to establish the monastic life at Llanthony Abbey. The discipline was so severe that none of his fellow-monks could stand it, and even the priests soon left. Indeed he says "nobody stays at Llanthony." From the life he lives it would be wonderful if so imaginative a man as Father Ignatius did not see visions.

THE *Church Times*, in an answer to a correspondent, says that the idiom in Matthew i., 25, "And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son," does not imply a change after the date specified. If it does not, the language, which is the same in the revised version, is most unfortunate. We should further like to know, upon the theory of perpetual virginity, if James, Joses, Juda, Simon and the sisters of Jesus, mentioned Mark vi., 3, were also of the Holy Ghost.

A GENTLEMAN at Leominster complains that he was expected to "kiss the book" in the County Court after another gentleman whose nose and mouth were a mass of running sores. Clearly the only remedy for this horrid state of things is to abolish the oath altogether, or let every witness carry his own swearing block.

THE proposed debate between Mr. Foote and the Rev. Mr. Harvey, of Bristol, will not take place after all. Mr. Harvey adheres to the absurd conditions we published a fortnight ago, and the negotiations were therefore terminated. Besides importing a brother minister into the discussion, so as to make it a three-cornered fight, Mr. Harvey stipulated for free admission, and a collection at the doors to defray the cost of rent and advertising *only*. Mr. Harvey was to pay his own personal expenses, amounting to nothing, and Mr. Foote was also to pay his, amounting to several pounds. The Bristol Branch of the N. S. S. offered to pay these expenses, but Mr. Foote would not sanction such an unjust arrangement. With respect to the free admission, Mr. Foote objected that it might lead to the hall being packed with rowdy Christians, of whom there are unfortunately too many in Bristol as in other cities; while a charge for admission would secure that those who did attend would care for the subject to be debated, and guarantee something like decent order. At the same time, however, Mr. Foote was quite willing to let all the profits go to some local unsectarian charity. As Mr. Harvey will not agree to these terms, our readers may judge how far he really wished the debate to take place.

NEGOTIATIONS are proceeding for a debate in Bristol between Mr. Foote and a local Christian, who is not quite so reluctant or exigent as Mr. Harvey, and we hope to announce the result next week.

ANOTHER parson in the Divorce Court, and this time "a scorcher." The Rev. Jermer Gale Hillier is peculiar in his memory as well as in his morals. When counsel asked him whether he was caught in the act of adultery with Mrs. Herbert, and whether Mr. Herbert threatened to inform the Bishop, the worthy Hillier really couldn't recollect. Mr. Justice Butt properly told him it was very odd that he could forget such a thing, unless it was a matter of every-day occurrence with him. Perhaps it was. Anyhow, Mrs. Hillier has obtained a divorce, with the custody of her children; and the man of God, who *was* her husband, must now find some other woman to ill-treat and abuse.

A NICE correspondence has been going on between the Rev. E. Denny and the Bishop of Llandaff. According to the former, after having as curate advanced £300 towards an endowment, some one else was appointed in his place. The bishop, having given a friend the benefice for which Mr. Denny had worked and paid, sends him a cheque for £300 and hints at simony.

DR. CAZENOVE, Sub-Dean of St. Mary's English Cathedral, Edinburgh, writes to the *Church Times* to complain that visitors to Edinburgh are often "directed either by mistake or design" to St. Giles's High Church instead of to his Cathedral. We fancy most visitors who wish to see the Cathedral desire to view what Sub-Dean Cazenove calls St. Giles's High Church, the historic edifice where Jeannie Geddes threw the cutty stool at the preacher's head, and not the modern building known in Edinburgh as the English Cathedral.

THE *Church Times* is positively rabid in view of the possibility of the coming elections returning those to power who will deal with the Church endowments. It says: "The tail of the Liberal party is a very present mischief. It must be remembered that the Radical residuum is devoted to the abolition of the three things upon which civilisation rests, namely, Marriage, Property and Religion; and it is obvious that where this residuum holds in its hands the casting vote there will be great danger, if not a certainty, that members will be returned pledged to favor its views." The *Church Times* urges that none of its readers should support any candidates but those who support the Church. The "Radical residuum" will not need urging how to use their casting vote when they have it.

THE conversion of Leo Taxil has been made the most of by the Catholics. He has been received by the Papal Nuncio, and after making a recantation of his "errors" the sentence of excommunication supposed to be resting on him as an enemy of God and the Church was raised, and he received sacramental absolution. His wife has written to the papers, describing his change as "ridiculous." *L'Evenement* speaks of him as one "whom one does not own, and, therefore, scarcely need disown."

In his recent Allocution, the Pope complains of the state of matters both in France and Germany, and laments that even in the capital of Christendom the host is no longer publicly adored when carried in procession. A new batch of cardinals is made. The Italians still have seven times as many cardinals as France, and more than a majority of the whole conclave. There is very little chance of an able man becoming Pope unless of Italian birth.

WE venture to present our readers with the following curiosity from Part VI. of the "Crimes of Christianity":—"But the most astonishing relic of the Redeemer was his foreskin, which was cut off at the circumcision and miraculously preserved. This precious article, according to Calvin, was shown to the monks of Charroux, who, as a proof of its genuineness, declared that it yielded drops of blood. But the honor of its possession was disputed by many cities; by Akin, Antwerp, Hildesheim, Besançon, Calcata and Rome. Surely the Christians who venerated this obscene relic were far sunk in the slough of superstition, and it may be doubted whether the most ignorant Polytheists ever condescended to worship the prepuce of a god."

It is reported that the Rev. Coker Adams, rector of Saham Tony, Norfolk, has been driven almost wild by the ridicule with which his excommunication of the old farmer named Payne has been received by the public press. He says, and with truth, too, that the world no longer has the fear of God before its eyes. The worst, or best, of it is that the other threats of the Church, Satan and hell-fire, are beginning to be as much ridiculed as the once-dreaded power of excommunication. No doubt the Rev. Coker Adams wishes he was living in "the good old times."

EXCOMMUNICATION was no joke in the days when the Church was powerful. The excommunicated person was virtually an outlaw, deprived of both civil and religious rights; and it was deemed an offence even to speak to him. Providence was supposed to vindicate the anathemas of the Church, and if it did not, the Church took care of that matter itself. The curse of Emulphus, well known to readers of "Tristram Shandy," was no concoction by Sterne, but a genuine and generally-used form of malediction. A number of interesting particulars, illustrating the power acquired by the Church through excommunication, will be found in the forthcoming No. VII. of "The Crimes of Christianity."

THE Church of England Working Men's Society, a body of incipient priests with a sprinkling of shop-keepers of Ritualistic tendencies, have been discussing how best to spread definite church teaching, and "counteract the efforts of Secularist and Freethought propaganda." A scheme of evangelisation is to be drawn up in the ensuing year for submission to the bishops before the C.E.W.M.S. enters upon its arduous task. Possibly the bishops may throw cold water upon this lay undertaking. Why don't the Church of England working men show themselves on our platforms instead of passing resolutions at their own meetings?

THE *English Churchman* contains the following advertisement: "A young man yearns to be employed in some small way for the Master," etc. One of our readers has sent him the Sacred Advertisements from our Summer Number from which he will no doubt be able to select something suitable.

WHY DON'T HE LEND A HAND?

You say there is a God
Above the boundless sky,
A wise and wondrous deity
Whose strength none can defy.
You say that he is seated
Upon a throne most grand,
Millions of angels at his beck—
Why don't he lend a hand?

See how the earth is groaning,
What countless tears are shed,
See how the plague stalks forward
And brave and sweet lie dead.
Homes burn and hearts are breaking,
Grim murder stains the land;
You say he is omnipotent—
Why don't he lend a hand?

Behold, injustice conquers;
Pain curses every hour;
The good and true and beautiful
Are trampled like the flower.
You say he is our father,
That what he wills doth stand;
If he is thus almighty
Why don't he lend a hand?

What is this monarch doing
Upon his golden throne,
To right the wrong stupendous,
Give joy instead of moan?
With his resistless majesty,
Each force at his command,
Each law his own creation—
Why don't he lend a hand?

Alas! I fear he's sleeping,
Or is himself a dream,
A bubble on thought's ocean,
Our fancy's fading gleam.
We look in vain to find him
Upon his throne so grand,
Then turn your vision earthward—
'Tis we must lend a hand.

'Tis we must grasp the lightning
And plough the rugged soil;
'Tis we must beat back suffering
And plague and murder foil;
'Tis we must build the paradise
And bravely right the wrong;
The god above us faileth,
The god *within* is strong.

S. W. PUTMAN.

REVISING THE BIBLE.

SCENE.—Drawing-room. Small Boy looking at Revised Bible. Matilda, his sister, somewhat past her teens, is making love to new curate.

Boy. What does it mean by "revised version"?

Matilda (who wishes to show her knowledge before the young curate). It means that the Bible has been corrected and improved.

Boy. Then that's what I saw pa doing with our Family Bible.

Matilda. What do you mean?

Boy. Why pa scratched out and altered a figure in your age, and said it would be for your benefit if the new curate happened to look at our Family Bible.

(Small boy felt very uncomfortable that night in bed, vowing vengeance on all revised versions).

THE SLATER TESTIMONIAL FUND.—J. Thorpe, £1; Mrs. Barralet, 5s.; Mr. Barralet, 5s.; North London Branch N. S. S., 5s.; W. Davey, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Hoffman, 2s.; J. Clegg, 2s. 6d.; S. Epton, 6d.; Ruben Berry, 1s.; W. H. Spivey, 1s.; Portsmouth Branch N. S. S., 5s.; G. Bailey, 1s.; T. Wooley, 2s.; J. Doige, 6d.; A Friend, 1s.; E. Nobbs, 2s.; Middletonian, 2s. 6d.; Angola, 5s.; W. B. Coppock, 1s.; A Broad Church Clergyman, 2s. 6d.; John Carter, 1s. All subscriptions to this Fund should be sent to the Treasurer, Mr. W. H. Reynolds, Camplin House, New Cross, S.E. As the Fund closes on the 24th inst., all who wish to subscribe should forward their remittances at once.

A PREACHER who had divided his sermon into numerous divisions and sub-divisions quite exhausted the patience of his auditors, who, finding night approaching, quitted the church one after another. The preacher, not perceiving this rapid desertion, continued to dispute with himself in the pulpit until a singing-boy who had remained said: "Sir, here are the keys of the church; when you have finished, will you be careful to shut the door?"

SPECIAL NOTICE.

OUR recent article in the *Freethinker* on "The Bible and Young Girls" is reprinted with some additions as a Tract under the title of "THE MAIDEN TRIBUTE TO JEHOVAH." Copies will be supplied at 6d. a hundred, or 7d. post free. One thousand for 4s. While the *Pall Mall Gazette* revelations are fresh, the wide distribution of this Tract will be a splendid blow at the Old Book.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

AUGUST 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London; 31, Battersea.
SEPTEMBER 6, Birmingham: 13 and 20, Hall of Science, London; 27, Liverpool.
OCTOBER 4, Manchester.
NOVEMBER 1 and 8, Hall of Science, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to the Manager, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C. The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct 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.

SLATER TESTIMONIAL FUND.—Mr. Evans, 1s. All subscriptions to this Fund should be sent to the Treasurer, Mr. W. H. Reynolds, Camplin House, New Cross, S.E. As the Fund closes on the 24th inst., all who wish to subscribe should forward their remittances at once.

J. A. BRADLEY writes that he got a news vendor to exhibit our contentsheet, and ordered three copies of the *Freethinker*, which, if not sold in the shop, he paid for himself. The news vendor now sells a quire every week. We hope Mr. Bradley will find many imitators. Whenever and wherever the *Freethinker* is offered for sale it finds plenty of customers.

FORWARD.—Thanks for the joke and your good wishes. Why say you are "only a working man"? In a society like ours, where there are so much idle luxury and culpable shrinking from the world's burdens, the fact that you are a working man is rather a distinction.

W. TATHAM.—Mr. Foote will be happy to pay Gainsboro' a visit. Could you not apply for a Saturday or Monday evening when he is lecturing not far off on the Sunday? Mr. Foote's invariable terms are that he takes whatever surplus is left after deducting absolute expenses.

B. B.—You ask how old the earth is and how it was formed? The first question cannot be answered within a few million years. The second question cannot be answered in a sentence. Read Herbert Spencer's paper on the Nebular Hypothesis in his "Essays."

ANONYMOUS correspondents are warned that we cannot reply to their communications. People who are ashamed of their names and addresses need not trouble us.

P. K.—Hardly up to the mark.

T. H. D.—Thanks. Cuttings are always welcome.

J. DE FRAINE.—Not up to the level of your other verses.

C. S. SMITH.—We cannot go into such matters. The private characters of sky-pilots are no business of ours. When they get into the police-courts it is a different thing.

LOR HILL.—Thanks for the suggestion. You will see that we have issued a Tract on the "Maiden Tribute."

AGNOSTIC.—We cannot answer anonymous correspondents.

T. H. HUNDLEY.—Thanks for the cuttings. Send more whenever you are disposed to.

W. C. SAVILE writes: "I am glad to observe the interested knots of readers, studying through the window of 28 Stonecutter Street, your latest Tract, 'The Maiden Tribute to Jehovah.' I trust it will set some to reading the Bible and Thinking (with a capital T)."

G. JACOB.—"Wine which cheereth God and man" (Judges ix., 13) may be a poetical expression, but it is evidently derived from a literal belief. Note also that there was a special drink-offering of wine of a sweet savor unto the Lord (Numbers xv., 7, Revised Version. The authorised wrongly reads *for*). If Elohim is to be read as "gods" or "kings" in this passage, why not elsewhere?

AN ATHEIST BLACKSMITH writes in warm approbation of Mr. Wheeler's article on Freethought Organisation and in praise of our work in general.

S. P.—We are glad to hear your warm praise of our Summer Number.

J. FERGUSON.—We don't see how the story can be true, as small children are not, to our knowledge, admitted to the communion in any Christian church or chapel.

J. J. COKER.—We do not insert ordinary reports of meetings.

W. T. L.—Samuel Kinns threatened several papers with a prosecution for libel, including the *Freethinker*, but we were not frightened into apologising for our criticism of a published book. *Knowledge* was more easily terrified, but whether Mr. Proctor was responsible for its apology we are unable to say. He may have been in America at the time. He is often absent from London for long periods.

C. PEARCE.—The weight of the brain even in Europeans is very various; that of man varying from 34 to 64 ounces and that of woman from 31 to 56 ounces. The average weight in European man is about 49 ounces; in woman, 44.

COMPLETE Catalogue of Progressive Publishing Company's works can be obtained at 28 Stonecutter Street.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Detroit Free Press—Republican—Paris Morning News—Owl—Ironclad Age—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker—Liberal—Lucifer—Unitarian Herald.

"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 September 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.

VICTOR HUGO's magnificent oration on Voltaire is just issued from our office at one penny. The translation is by James Parton, who has written the best Biography of the great sceptic; but we have had to make a few alterations where the original was not accurately rendered. Every Freethinker should read this finest tribute to the greatest of all French heretics by the greatest of all French poets. Whoever can read it without a thrill is more or less than human.

THERE seems to be a misunderstanding, as to Colonel Ingersoll's "Mistakes of Moses" just issued from our office. It is not the lecture of that title, but a volume of over a hundred and thirty pages, which was, we believe, published before the author ever lectured on the subject. It contains all the best things in the lecture and a great deal more.

MR. FOOTE'S anti-theological pamphlets now in print are being bound up in a volume under the title of "Theological Essays," for the convenience of those who wish to keep them in a permanent form. The volume comprises also a title-page and a special Preface.

A LARGE quantity of our special new Tract, "The Maiden Tribute to Jehovah," is already in circulation, and we hope our readers will distribute the remainder at once. Two thousand were purchased on Sunday evening at Milton Hall after Mr. Foote's lecture. One enthusiastic lady particularly wanted Judge North's address, in order that his godly lordship might be favored with a few copies through the post.

THE Birmingham Owl quotes the whole of the strictures on Sir William Harcourt from Mr. Foote's "Prisoner of Blasphemy" in the August number of *Progress*, and says that they "throw a lurid light upon Sir William Harcourt's professions as a member of the Government which shirked the great principle involved in the exclusion of Mr. Bradlaugh." According to the Owl, "Birmingham Liberals are not greatly enamored of the ex-Home Secretary, and have never been so. In their eyes, Sir William Harcourt is a mere office-seeker ready now to denounce Mr. Gladstone, and now Lord Beaconsfield, if only his personal ambition can be gratified by intriguing against either."

MRS. SYKES, of Southend, has an old eight-day clock in her shop. She used to wind it up on Monday mornings. In the spring of '84 the police came in one Sunday and told her she would be summoned for Sunday trading. The poor old lady was ready to die with fright, for she was all alone, her son being then in London; and she forgot to wind up her clock the next morning. From that day to this the hands have remained stationary. Customers look at the lazy timepiece and say, "Why, Missis, your clock's stopped." She tells them why, and says, "It will never go again until Mr. Bradlaugh takes his seat."

MR. FOOTE'S pamphlet on Lord Randolph Churchill rapidly ran out of print, and a second edition is now ready. Such a scathing exposure of the Woodstock Bantam, tracking him through all his weathercock changes, must do a great deal of good if widely circulated. The leader of the Tory Democracy has climbed to power by denouncing "Atheism" and "Sedition," and Freethinkers and Republicans are above all interested in seeing his public character exhibited in its true light.

MR. C. B. REYNOLDS, who is an ex-minister, is actively engaged in a summer Freethought campaign, travelling through the American States with a large moveable tent. The reports of the large audiences attending this method of propaganda are very encouraging.

OUR initiation of the attack on Christianity by means of pictures has found imitation in America where the *Truthseeker* has of late taken to occasionally giving its readers a cartoon. Two—"A Short Lesson in History for Christians," and "The Modern Balaam"—have been issued separately. We trust they will have an extensive sale.

SEVERAL writers in the *Unitarian Herald* advocate the reading of other than Biblical literature in the pulpit. The Unitarian practice in this matter has always seemed to us inconsistent with their profession that inspiration may be found in other quarters besides the Jew-books. Ministers frequently have to use the words "Thus saith the Lord," for what they conscientiously believe the Lord never uttered. When Unitarians follow the practice of William James Fox in this matter, we shall give them greater credit for consistency.

MR. WHEELER'S article in our issue for July 5, "Who wrote the Bible," is reprinted in *Monroe's Ironclad Age* for August 1.

THE BANK DIRECTOR'S LAMENTATION.

In convict's garb, O Lord, to thee
I raise my sad complaints.
Oh, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why thus afflict thy saints?

For here in Glasgow Gaol I lie,
And sceptics mock me sore;
Yet like good Daniel in the den
I trust in thee the more.

No help save thine remains; but thou
Will ne'er abandon me;
Because thou knowest well, O Lord,
I ne'er neglected thee.

Yea, I exhorted by the mile,
Said grace till joints were cold,
And into sanctimonious ways
I bullied young and old.

I lov'd thy sawbath, Laird, sae weel,
I kept it like grim death;
My children dared not move a limb,
Or draw a hasty breath.

I never looked at newspapers
On Mondays, Lord; for they,
Thou knowest well, are put in type
Upon thy Sabbath day.

And dost thou not remember, Lord,
I never would employ,
Since I was elder in thy kirk,
A godless man or boy?

I know thou never wilt forget
How oft I sent away
Young lads that whistled in the street
Upon thy Sabbath day.

Employers ask'd their characters;
I gravely shook my head:
I could not help such wicked boys
To earn their daily bread.

Oh, how they meek'd and jeer'd and hiss'd
When in the dock I stood,
Although I was a deacon, Lord,
So pious and so good.

Men called me villain, swindler, thief:
I turned to thee the more.
Hell was too good for me, they cried;
They shook their fists; they swore.

Where were Elisha's bears, O Lord,
That thou should'st suffer this?
Where sleep the lightnings of thy wrath
When scorners hoot and hiss?

For if I beggar'd thousands, Lord,
It was thy will I should.
I bow unto thy will supreme;
It must be for my good.

Their pangs will not be pangs to me
While I adore thy name,
And sing, as we in heaven shall sing,
Thy glory and thy fame.

I hear of bankrupts, whose sad fates
With fortitude I bear;
Of lunatics, and suicides,
The victims of despair:

Of widows wailing ruin'd homes,
Of orphans lacking bread.
It was thy will: 'twas not my crime,
As godless jurors said.

How could it be my fault, when I
In hourly prayer did plead,
And gained thy guidance for each act,
Thy blessing on each deed?

Oh, was I not the sort of saint
That Christ our Savior loves?
As wise as serpents we must be,
Yet seem as harmless doves.

To use thy name as their decoy,
To swindle deep but well,
Brings some directors palace homes,
And some the prison cell.

Those doubly-blest directors know
The better way, O Lord;
In grace and wealth, a double crop,
They reap a rich reward.

But I, Lord, reap a martyr's crop
Of grace and worldly pain.
Thou chast'nest whom thou lovest, Lord,
For their eternal gain.

Yea, Lord, thou art my stronghold still,
Thy promises are sure,
Especially to saints whom men
In dungeons vile immure.

The heavens are opened to my gaze;
By faith I enter in;
By Christ the Lamb and by his blood
Regenerate from sin.

In heaven, Lord, I shall sound thy praise
Upon the golden lyre,
While wretches ruin'd by my frauds
Suffer eternal fire.

W. P. BALL.

INGERSOLL ON HELL AND SHEOL.

COLONEL INGERSOLL has been buttonholed by the reporter of the *Boston Record*, and asked if he had read the Revised Testament. He replied, "Yes, but I don't believe the work has been fairly done. The clergy are not going to scrape the butter off their own bread. The clergy are offensive partisans, and those of each denomination will interpret the Scripture their way. No Baptist minister would countenance a 'revision' that favored sprinkling, and no Catholic priest would admit that any version would be correct that destroyed the dogma of the 'real presence.' So I might go through all the denominations."

"Why was the word 'sheol' introduced in place of 'hell,' and how do you like the substitute?"

"The civilised world has outgrown the vulgar and brutal hell of their fathers and of the founders of the churches. The clergy are ashamed to preach about sulphurous flames and undying worms. The imagination of the world has been developed, the heart has grown tender, and the old dogma of eternal pain shocks all civilised people. It is becoming disgraceful either to preach or believe in such a brutal lie. The clergy are beginning to think that it is hardly manly to frighten children with a detected falsehood. Sheol is a great relief. It is not so hot as the old place. The nights are comfortable and the society is quite refined. The worms are dead, and the air reasonably free from noxious vapors. It is a much worse word to hold a revival with, but much better for every-day use. It will hardly take the place of the old word when people step on tacks, put up stoves, or sit on pins; but for use at church fairs and mite societies it will do about as well. We do not need revision; excision is what we want. The barbarism should be taken out of the Bible. Passages upholding polygamy, wars of extermination, slavery and religious persecution, should not be attributed to a perfect God. The good that is in the Bible will be saved for man, and man will be saved from the evil that is in that book. Why should we worship in God what we detest in man?"

"Do you think the use of the word 'sheol' will make any difference to the preachers?"

"Of course it will make no difference with Talmage. He will make sheol just as hot and smoky and uncomfortable as hell, but his congregation will laugh instead of tremble. The old shudder has gone. Beecher had demolished hell before sheol was adopted. According to his doctrine of 'Evolution,' hell has been slowly growing cool. The cindered souls do not even perspire. Sheol is nothing to Mr. Beecher but a new name for an old mistake. As to the effect it will have on Heber Newton. I cannot tell, neither can he, until he asks his Bishop. There are people who believe in witches and madstones and fiat money, and centuries hence it may be that people will exist who will believe as firmly in hell as Dr. Shedd does now."

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.—Lately I sat through evensong in the chapel of Peterhouse, at Cambridge, a college six centuries old. Ere service began I looked at the great stained windows. There Abraham with knife uplifted over his son seemed to say, "Behold these scholars still believe in a deity demanding human sacrifices, and whose religion rests on sacrifice of his own son." And there was Moses with horns of light on his head, who said, "Behold these learned men still believe in a deity who got tired after six days' work, and rested, and forbade mankind work or pleasure on that day." And John preaching in the wilderness said, "Behold, in this university which produced a Newton and a Darwin, my baptismal exorcism still goes on."—*M. D. Conway.*

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CORRESPONDENCE.

CHRISTIAN RUFFIANISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—The Christian ruffianism displayed at some of the outdoor meetings in connection with the branches of the N. S. S. is a matter in which some prompt and effective action should be taken. Last Sunday our lecturers at Derby and Southsea were attacked and maltreated by Christian roughs. Last Sunday I lectured in Southwark Park, under the auspices of the Bermondsey and Rotherhithe branch of the N. S. S.; and although my subject was a purely scientific one ("The Struggle for Existence"), and not at all calculated to excite the passions of Christians, yet, after I had replied to the opposition, an entirely unprovoked attack was made on the chairman by a mob of many Christians, who, after a great deal of hustling, succeeded in getting the platform and breaking it to pieces. From two to three hundred soldiers of the "meek and lowly Jesus" escorted the chairman and myself out of the park, and favored us with plenty of hooting and yelling. It was only by taking refuge in a passing tram-car that I escaped their clutches. If our outdoor meetings were organised as they should be, and Freethinkers in each locality attended them *en masse*, these disturbances would never take place. It is only when the enemy finds our forces are weak these cowardly attacks are made. It is hardly fair to leave a lecturer and his chairman unprotected to the tender mercies of a Christian mob, and on behalf of those who occupy our outdoor platforms, I would appeal to the Freethinkers in every locality where lectures are delivered to rally in strong force and endeavor to arrest this Christian ruffianism, which is a growing evil in our midst, and will otherwise become detrimental to the interests and progress of our movement.—Yours, fraternally,

FREDERICK MILLAR.

[We agree with Mr. Millar that this ruffianism should be checked. If there is continued disturbance at any of the outdoor meetings, the matter should be laid before the Executive of the N. S. S., and steps might then be taken to secure order. If necessary, although we are already heavily worked, we will undertake in an extreme case to convene a meeting, summon our friends to our side, and see whether Freethinkers shall be heard or not.—EDITOR.]

"DIEU PROTEGE L'INNOCENCE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Allow me a little space to expose the hypocrisy of the *Pall Mall Gazette**, which, *apropos* of the terrible revelations of aristocratic depravity, drags in the name of the Christian God, who, if he is ruler of this world, must be held responsible for all the deeds of horror perpetrated here below, since "without God's will not a sparrow falleth." I was told in my youth that God protects the innocent. Innocence left to the protection of Yahveh, Jesus and Company, would have been exterminated long ago.—Your obedient servant,

CHAS. KROLL LAPORTE.

8 Citizen Road, N., August 8, 1885.

NOTES ON THE NEW OLD TESTAMENT.

THERE is at least one absolute mistake in the Revised Version, and no less a one than the confusion of God and Gog. Ezekiel xxxviii., 16, reads in the old version, "I will bring thee [Gog] against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee O, Gog, before their eyes." The alteration, or misprint, in the revision is slight but important. "I will bring thee against my land, that the nations may know thee when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes." Surely it is God, and not Gog, the nations are to know? But the whole of Ezekiel's rhapsody about Gog is so confused that it is scarcely worth anyone's while to trouble about his meaning.

"Who killed Goliath?" asks the Sunday-school teacher, and every juvenile cries out "David!" If, however, the teacher will read the nineteenth verse of the twenty-second chapter of the second book of Samuel in the Revised Version, he will discover that Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam, was slain by Elhanan, the son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite. The later author of the Chronicles (1k. 1, c. xx., 5), finding that tradition had credited pious King David with the exploit, inserted the words, "the brother of" before the name of Goliath, and King James's translators had the cheek to transfer the same to the Book of Samuel, in order to avoid a contradiction in the Word of God.

It is often the case that the performance of a less known person gets attributed to one more celebrated. The witticisms of many an unknown wag have been attributed to Joe Miller or to Sydney Smith. It is therefore quite possible that David did not kill Goliath. Of the disposition to magnify his exploits we have evidence in 2 Sam. xviii., 3, which is made to say of David

"thou art worth ten thousand," but the marginal note to which is, "So some ancient authors. The Hebrew text has, 'for now there are ten thousand such as we.'"

It is also evident that there has been exaggeration about David's captains. For instance, his chief captain is said, in 1 Chron. xi., 11, to have lifted up his spear and slain three hundred at one time, while in 2 Sam. xxiii., 8, the number is said to have been eight hundred. The Revised Version, however, alters this verse from, "The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time," into the unintelligible—"Jashebbashebeth, a Tache-monite, chief of the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite, against eight hundred, slain at one time." The revisers may congratulate themselves on having made sufficient confusion in this text to almost cover up the fact of its contradicting the Chronicles.

In the Authorised Version, 1 Sam. xiii., begins, "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel," etc. The revision alters this to "Saul was *thirty* years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years over Israel. And Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel," etc. The Hebrew text, which is supposed to be the word of the Lord, says that Saul was one year old when he began to reign. This statement was too much for the faith of both King James' translators and the revisers, yet both agree that "Jehoiakin was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem; and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Chron. xxxvi., 9; but see 2 Kings xxiv., 8).

USUALLY the revisers have kept out italics, but in 2 Sam. iv., 1, 2, they have supplied in italics the word Ishbosheth. It is worth notice that the correct form of this name is given (1 Chron. viii., 33; ix., 39)—*viz.*, Eshbaal, as Mephibosheth was really named Meribaal. The names were altered, as Jerubbaal was changed to Gideon, to conceal the fact of the Jews having once been worshippers of Baal. Bosheth means shame. In Hosea ii., 16, Jahveh says, "thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali." This implies that he had previously been considered the same as the Phœnician god.

REVIEW.

The Republican. August. STANDRING.—Opens with an interesting notice and a not very successful portrait of Colonel Ingersoll. Mr. Standring continues his graphic People's History of the Aristocracy, and there are many other attractive items.

THE GOD-IDEA.—It is fortunate for theologians that the fundamental principle of their "science" either cannot be comprehended, or if comprehended, cannot be reconciled with any known principle of nature. "God is," they pompously declare, but what he is they are unable to tell us, without contradicting themselves and each other. Some say God must be material; some say, Nay, he must be no such thing; some will have him spiritual, others immaterial; others, again, neither spiritual nor material, nor immaterial, nor even conceivable. Some say, if a spirit, he can only be known by his place and figure; some not. Some call him the author of sin, some the permitter of sin, while some are sure he could not consistently, with his own perfections, either authorise sin or grant to sinners a permit. Some say he made the Devil, others that the most low be-devilled himself, others that he created him angelic and upright, and could not keep him so. Some say he hardens men's hearts, others that they harden their own hearts, others, again, that to harden men's hearts is the Devil's peculiar and exclusive privilege. Some affirm his omnipotency, some deny it. Some say he is no respecter of persons, some the reverse. Some say he is immensity, others that he fills immensity, others that he don't fill anything, though "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," others, again, that he neither contains nor is contained, but "dwells on his own thoughts." Some say he created matter out of nothing; some say it is quite a mistake, inasmuch as creation meant bringing order out of chaos. Some say he is not one person, but three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, which together constitute Godhead; others that he is one and indivisible, while others believe him "our father which art in heaven," but will have nothing to do with the Son and the Holy Ghost.—*Charles Southwell*, "Apology for Atheism," pp. 54, 55; 1846.

A PRIEST the other day, examining a confirmation class in the south of Ireland, asked the question: "What is the sacrament of matrimony?" A little girl at the head of the class answered: "Tis a state of torment into which souls enter to prepare them for another and better world." "Good," said the priest, "the answer for purgatory." "Put her down," said the curate, "put her down to the fut of the class." "Lave her alone," said the priest, "for anything you or I know to the contrary, she may be perfectly right."

* *Wide issue of Thursday, No. 6355.*

PROFANE JOKES.

AN American advertisement asks for "young man to look after a horse of the Methodist persuasion."

"I HAVE no faith in the mind cure." "Have you given it a fair trial?" "Yes, I tried it on a ham last winter, and it wouldn't work."

ACTUAL fact at the balloon ascent at the Alexandra Palace, Bank Holiday.—Little Girl: "Are they going up to Jesus, uncle?" Uncle: "They won't get up to him. He got the start of them a long while ago."

"How many Gods are there?" asked the Sunday-school teacher of the juvenile class. "Three!" yelled Jimmy Mullen, a bright little fellow of seven years. "Why, Jimmy!" said the teacher in astonishment. "No; two, two!" chirped Johnny, "I forgot. We don't count the Holy Ghost." This may sound a little sacrilegious, but it is a fact.

A CELEBRATED revivalist, named John Paul, who had been awakening the northern districts of England with his preaching, was returning one evening across some fields. A rude fellow passing him, pushed him off the pathway rather roughly. "You should not be so rough, my man," said the reverend gentleman, "for I would have you know I'm the Rev. Mr. Paul, and have come amongst you folks to awaken within you," etc. Before he had finished his speech the man, who had eyed him with profound astonishment, broke in: "So you're Paul, are you? Well, now, tell us, did you ever get an answer to that long letter you wrote to the Ephesians?"

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