

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

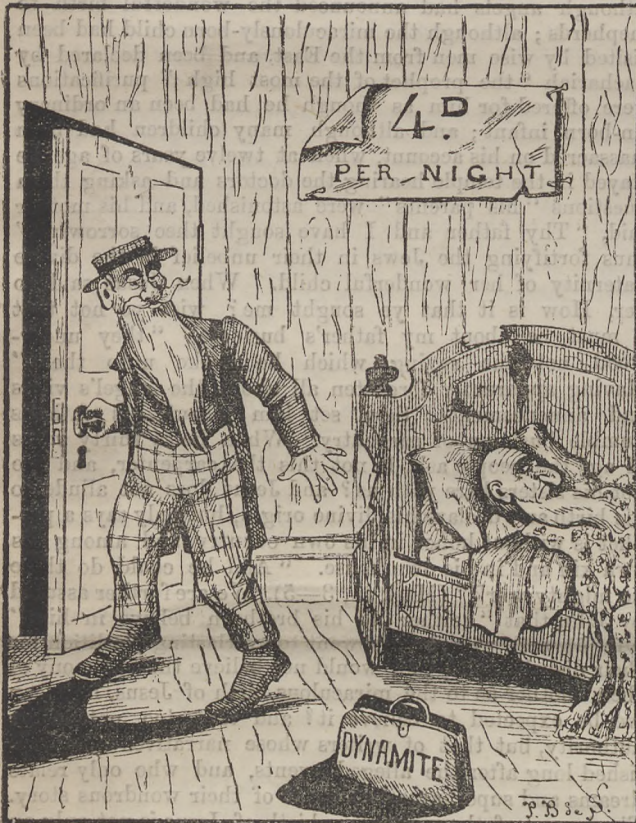
Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. V.—No. 52.]

DECEMBER 27, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCHES.—No. 145.



GOD AND MOSES.

"And it came to pass by the way in the lodging-place that the Lord met him and sought to kill him."—EXODUS IV., 24. (Revised Version.)

"And it came to pass that Moses met him at a public-house, and taxed him therewith." (Unauthorised Version.)

(The Sketch announced for this week stands over unavoidably till next.)

CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTMAS.

CHRISTIANS are now celebrating God's birthday in the most material fashion. Roast beef, plum-pudding, goose, turkey and other rich viands are washed down with copious draughts of beer, wine and spirits. It is a time of general feasting, and the season is held to sanction extravagance. Many orthodox persons are getting drunk for the glory and honor of God. By-and-bye the doctors will appear on the scene, and science will correct the excesses of superstition.

To an outsider this way of celebrating the Incarnation is extremely curious. One would think that Christians ought to show a sense of awe in contemplating such an august mystery. If the almighty spirit became flesh for man's redemption, it seems natural that those who believe the doctrine should realise its spiritual meaning on the day they set apart for its commemoration. But they do next to nothing of the kind. They eat, drink and make merry; they cram themselves with costly and indigestible food; and the only spirit they trouble about is *eau de vie* or mountain dew.

Considering that God Almighty became a squealing infant, got his first nursing in a stable, lived chiefly on the road, and finally died on the gallows, simply in order to save as many as would be saved from perdition, one might also expect them to show a great deal of

regard for each other; for those whom Omnipotence took so much pains for should be very valuable beings. To a superficial degree the expectation is realised. This is the season of sentimental twaddle and hypocritical gush. Rich Christians profess illimitable love for their poor brethren, fling them the bones and bits from their tables, and bid them sing praises unto the Lord for all his mercies. But when Christmas is over, the Christian world resumes its ordinary round of business and pleasure. The old race for wealth is resumed, with the dead certainty that the devil will take the hindmost. Flats and sharps, knaves and dupes, biters and bitten, pursue their respective careers; and many who subscribe to Christmas charities spend the rest of the year in religiously taking in everybody they can in a perfectly legal and respectable manner.

As a matter of fact, Christmas has absolutely nothing to do with Jesus Christ except in name. It is an old Pagan festival, which the Christian Church adopted centuries after the death of the baby-god who was born at Bethlehem. This accounts for its lusty carnalism, so repugnant to the ascetic spirit of Christianity. The twenty-fifth of December was the birthday of Mithra, Horus, and other sun-gods of antiquity. It was celebrated at Rome with great magnificence long before Christ was born and long after he died. It was the resurrection of the sun from the death of winter; and the ancient world had the sense to see that the sun was the all-giver as well as the all-beholder, without whose light and heat there would be no life. Even so late as the

fifth century Pope Leo the Great was compelled to rebuke the "pestiferous persuasion" of the Christians who were found to be celebrating Christmas Day, not for the birth of Christ, but for the resurrection of the sun.

Primitive Christians knew nothing of their Savior's birthday, and it is clear from the fact (or fancy) that shepherds were watching their flocks by night that the advent of Jesus into the world (if he ever *advented*) could not have occurred at midwinter. Mary, who ought to have known, left no record of the date, and the family Bible has never been discovered. Christ's brothers and sisters made no sign, and Joseph's silence is easily intelligible. Not one of the apostles or the early Fathers said a word about Christ's birthday, or hinted that it was the twenty-fifth of December. Not until the second half of the fourth century was it mooted. St. Chrysostom, writing at Antioch, about A.D. 380, says that "it is not yet ten years since this day was made known to us." And this was the very place where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians, and where the fullest information about him would naturally be found. The authority of the Church is the only proof that Jesus of Nazareth was born on Christmas Day, and what that is worth, several centuries after the event, every sensible man can decide for himself.

As for our Christmas trees and Yuletide logs, they come to us from the Scandinavians, and have no more to do with Jesus than they have with the man in the moon.

Probably it will surprise the vast majority of Christians to learn that not only the *day*, but even the *year*, of their Savior's birth is a matter of conjecture. If the second of Luke is right, he must have been born at least six years later than is supposed, for Quirinus was not sent to Syria until the thirty-seventh year after the battle of Actium. Reckoning from the birth of Christ was not begun until the sixth century, nor legalised until the tenth. It is obvious, therefore, that the Christian era is an arbitrary invention, designed by the Church to hide its deficiencies and strengthen its hold on the people.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

No one can wonder at the season of Christmas being assigned as that of the birth-time of Jesus. When Christianity spread through the Roman Empire it found everywhere among the heathen a festival to the sun-god celebrated at the winter solstice. From the twenty-first of December till the end of the year the Romans held the Saturnalia, a season marked by the universal prevalence of licence and merry-making. "Everyone feasted and rejoiced; work and business were for a time entirely suspended; the houses were decked with evergreens; presents were made by parents and friends, and all kinds of amusements and games were indulged in by the people."

Not only are the accessories of Christmas entirely Pagan, but the entire story of the birth of Christ bespeaks its heathen origin. The Jewish God Jahveh, although masculine, did not make up for his lack of the companionship of goddesses by indulging in those intrigues with the daughters of men for which the deities of Greece and Rome were famous. It is true that the legend of the Incarnation derived support from a mistranslation of Isaiah, in which a sign to Abaz of a young woman who should bear a son is treated as the conception of a virgin; and it is even possible that the phrase, "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee," gave rise to the legend: yet certainly so gross a legend could never have been credited had not the Pagan world been accustomed to ascribe divine birth to their heroes. The god Apollo was assigned as the father both of Pythagoras and Plato; Juno produced Vulcan "without the marriage bed;" Buddha was born from the left side of an immaculate mother; Alexander gave out that he was begotten by Jupiter. Livy insinuates that the elder Scipio favored the rise of a similar legend about himself among the Roman people, and divine parentage was equally assigned to Augustus and Apollonius of Tyana.

It is curious, to say the least of it, that so extraordinary a fact as the birth of Jesus without a human father should have been noticed by two only of his biographers, and that

these should differ in their relation of the matter. In Matthew, Mary appears unaware of the honor or shame that was brought upon her. In Luke the announcement is made by Gabriel, one of the highest dignitaries of the celestial court. Mary innocently asks, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? Gabriel is ready with his answer, tells her that the Holy Ghost shall overshadow her, and refers to the fact that her cousin Elisabeth has conceived (which was not a parallel case). Matthew tells us that Joseph was minded to put her away privily, but Luke says not a word of Joseph knowing anything of the condition of his betrothed; nor does it appear from Luke that Mary ever mentioned anything of the suspicious interview with Gabriel. This is by no means all. Although Mary had sung "henceforth all nations shall call me blessed;" although angels had announced the wonderful birth to shepherds; although the miraculously-born child had been visited by wise men from the East, and been declared by Zachariah "the prophet of the most high;" purifications were offered for him as though he had been an ordinary sin-born infant; and although many children had been massacred on his account, when at twelve years of age he stayed in the temple hearing the doctors and asking them questions "his parents" were astonished, and his mother said, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," thus fortifying the Jews in their unbelief in the divine paternity of her wonderful child. When Jesus said to her, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my father's business? "they understood not the saying which he spake unto them." Having apparently forgotten all about the angel's visits and announcements, they set him about his father's humble business of carpentry. When he is thirty years of age the people ask, Is not this the carpenter, and are not his sisters here with us? and Jesus does not allude to his birth and declare his divine origin, but only says a prophet is without honor in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house. "And he could do there no mighty work" (Mark vi., 3-5). We are further assured by John that "neither did his brethren believe in him" (vii., 5), and, we presume, went to everlasting perdition for their disbelief. If they would not believe the testimony of their mother as to the miraculous birth of Jesus, how can we be expected to believe it? and that, too, not on her authority, but that of writers whose narratives were published long after the alleged events, and who only relate dreams and supernatural evidence of their wondrous story. The legend of the miraculous birth of Jesus is not only an outrage upon human credulity—it is refuted by the evidence of the very documents upon which alone it is built.

J. M. WHEELER.

REAL VALUE OF AN OATH.—"Are you sure it is true?" "Yes." "Will you swear it?" "Yes." "Will you bed a bob on it?" "No."

PRETTY TEACHER: "Now, Johnny Wells, can you tell me what is meant by a miracle?" Johnny: "Yes, teacher. Mother says if you don't marry the new parson 'twill be a miracle."

A SLEEPY deacon, who sometimes engaged in popular amusements, hearing the minister quote the words, "Shuffle off this mortal coil," started up, and rubbed his eyes, exclaiming, "Hold on, squire, it's my deal!"

CLEANLINESS OR GODLINESS?—"Thank the Lord!" exclaimed a Baptist convert as he emerged from the water, "I feel perfectly happy." "It is a new experience to you, isn't it?" asked a Freethinker. "Indeed, it is," replied the convert "I never felt so good in all my life." "Well, sir," retorted the Freethinker, "probably it is the first bath you have had. I always feel good immediately after bathing. But, see here, my friend, keep still, and everybody will think that you bathe every day."

PRIESTCRAFT AND WITCHCRAFT.—On the first establishment of the Munich Academy of Sciences, one of the members read a paper to prove the nullity of witchcraft; in consequence a violent outcry arose among the monks, who had been immemorably selling amulets and crosses for its cure. "This discourse," said one of the most vehement of the objectors, "is manifestly injurious to the blood besprinkled particle of the Holy Cross of Scheyrn. Why, the crosses of Scheyrn have been sold all over Europe, more than thirty thousand being frequently distributed in a single year, and found a sure preservative against magic, witchcraft, storms, unclean spirits, etc."—*Westminster Review* January, 1859, p. 223.

ACID DROPS.

TALMAGE believes, or pretends to believe, that the destruction of Jerusalem was prognosticated by the moon being eclipsed for twelve consecutive nights. The notion is perfectly childish. How could the moon while describing almost a half circle round the earth pass through its shadow every night? But anything is good enough for the pulpit. Preachers and hearers who can swallow Jonah and the Trinity can swallow anything.

PREACHING on "The Pleiades and Orion," Talmage finds the first lesson learned from these constellations is that God is the God of order—"order written not in manuscript that may be pigeon-holed, but with the hand of the Almighty on the dome of the sky, so that all nations may read it. Order. Persistent order. Sublime order. Omnipotent order." There is about as much order in the stars of heaven as in a handful of beads upset by a child on the floor. Law will have prevailed equally in both cases, and curious patterns and clusters will have been formed. To Talmage this ought to demonstrate a child of order who upset the beads.

TALMAGE also says: "If God can take care of the seven worlds of the Pleiades and the four chief worlds of Orion, he can probably take care of the world we inhabit." But how does Talmage know the happy condition of these starry worlds? Science shows them to be vast suns shining by their own intensely incandescent heat. If God took care of our world as he does of these, we should be shrivelled up into mere vapor in a moment. The analogy and the assurance are only consoling to ignorant dupes and to pious Christians who coin such oratorical rubbish into influence and money.

THE Rev. J. B. T. Esher says that "The Bible is the visible shadow of the invisible God." "Shadow" is the right word. A shadow is merely the absence, or comparative absence, of light, and it is only visible by contrast with the surrounding brightness. The Bible has indeed been a dark shadow on human life, and the opaque but invisible God who casts that black shadow on the world would do well to stand out of the light, so that the moral and intellectual eclipse he causes may pass away.

BISHOP LIGHTFOOT's edition of the Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp is praised everywhere as a masterpiece of scholarly research. As an instance, however, of how erudition may be united with credulity, we may mention that Bishop Lightfoot refers to the transactions of the Psychical Society in corroboration of the tale that when Polycarp was burnt at Smyrna, Irenæus, then at Rome, heard a voice as of a trumpet informing him of the fact. The story only occurs in a fictitious life of Polycarp, which bears the name of Pinius. It is no doubt, however, just as true as that which relates how Paul heard a voice from heaven. All the early Christian tales arose in the same atmosphere of credulity and deception.

BISHOP LIGHTFOOT defends the genuineness of seven out of the fifteen epistles attributed to St. Ignatius. In order to credit this we must believe that an emperor of Trajan's mild disposition sent an aged Christian from Antioch to Rome by land and sea, in order to be tortured by wild beasts; and, further, that although chained to ten leopards, as he calls his keepers, he had both liberty and leisure to write these epistles to the early churches on his journey. We prefer to class both the life and the writings of Ignatius in the vast catalogue of early Christian myths and fabrications. We can, however, well understand how his Grace of Durham defends the genuineness of writings which say, "Do nothing without the bishops," "Look on the bishops as on the Lord himself."

BAXTER, the reverend editor of the *Christian Herald*, expects if he only lives a few years longer, that he will be translated to heaven without dying or being buried. He should persuade the Life Assurance Companies to insure his life at a greatly reduced rate. The Millennium is to come in 1896 or 1900. People are to try hard to be among the 144,000 who stand around the throne. These were all Israelites (Rev. vii., 4), and it will puzzle English Christians to change their ancestry from Saxon to Hebrew. Faith, however, we must suppose, can work even this miracle. All things are possible to him that believeth.

THIS "clergyman of the Church of England" thus describes his expected ascent in company with his fellow saints, whom he probably anticipates will be largely selected from the two hundred thousand readers of his own religious journal: "The chosen people would leave the earth painlessly, like Enoch and Elijah. As soon as the trumpet sounded the 144,000 would feel a thrill. An immortal vigor would creep through their veins, and despite the laws of gravitation they would ascend slowly and majestically above the houses, mountains, and the clouds, to where Christ was. This would probably occur in a few years." Husbands are to wake and find their wives gone bodily to heaven. Of two ploughmen in the fields, one will rise through the air, and "the other would see nothing left but his clothes."

This kind of thing is thoroughly childish and ridiculous, but it is also thoroughly in accordance with Christ's own teaching. The nude ploughman passing through the intense cold of space will feel rather chilly, we imagine. We hope, for decency's sake, that the "wise virgins" will think twice before ascending publicly in a nude condition.

THE following is from the *Angler's Journal*: "The sickening self-conceit of the deluded and ignorant wretches bamboozled by the salvation tradesman, 'General' Booth, were it not so disgusting, would be quite too amusing. A friend proceeding along the street, rod in hand, last Sunday, was accosted by a 'converted' convict, and told he was making the quickest time on record for a certain warm climate, and that he had better throw away his rod and step into the hall and hear the gospel according to Mr. Tubthumper. The only answer he got was a cut over the back with the rod, whereat, my friend says, his behavior and language were anything but edifying. One would like to be informed which mode of passing the Sabbath is most conducive to religion—sitting quietly beside a murmuring stream, interfering with and disturbing nobody; or spending the day in parading the streets, singing sacred words to the tunes of some of the most ribald songs of the lowest music halls, thereby grieving all truly religious people, and forging an offensive weapon for the use of Atheists and non-believers of all descriptions?"

THE *Christian Herald* gives an account of the death of "a lady who had every appearance of being a devoted Christian." She "taught in a Sunday school, went about distributing tracts," did many "works of charity," and generally speaking "went about doing good." But when this lady died, Christian terrors overcame her mind, and in her anguish or delirium, perhaps after a vivid dream of the biblical lake of fire, she cried out, "I am lost. I have been in hell and to hell I return." With these words she fell back dead. The *Christian Herald* calls this "a terrible unmasking," and accuses her of trusting in good works, and not in Christ. Christians who die an unhappy death are not real Christians, it appears; they are only hypocrites. By this kind of dastardly slander of the noble but helpless dead, Christian skunks endeavor to exculpate the failure of their deathbed consolations. Christ died an unhappy death. He cried out in his horrible despair, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Was he too a hypocrite? Was his collapse a terrible unmasking? Christians at least might learn from his dying agonies and despair a little charity towards each other, and a reverent and kindly tment of the memory of the dead.

THE "Very Rev." C. H. Butcher, D.D., says that "The rule for the acquisition of tact is much the same as the rule for winning the gifts of patience, cheerfulness, and self-control. 'There is nothing for it but the knees.' We must pray for it." We invite this very reverend propagator of Christian delusion to put the matter to a practical test. Take the stupidest members of his congregation and let them employ the utmost resources of prayer. Then observe what improvement, if any, there is in their tact in social and business matters.

THE Rev. R. W. Wodehouse, rector of Distington, Cumberland, is "suspended" for adultery with his servant. This illustrates Christian morality. Mr. Symes, in Australia, is prosecuted for lecturing on Sunday, which they call keeping a "disorderly house," and for publishing a Freethought paper. This illustrates Atheistic depravity. What a pitiful world it would be if Christian morality died out and the Atheistic depravity of honest, innocent enlightenment and enjoyment took its place! Wouldn't it now, O long-eared Christian brethren? If Christian whistles and chaff were no longer found for you, what ever would you do, poor creatures?

TENNYSON is convinced "that the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church would prelude the downfall of much that is greatest and best in England." A very natural sentiment in a peer whose brother is a parson. Tennyson has written some good poetry, but we don't think much of his prose. "Of old sat freedom on the heights," sang the poet in his better days; but the plebeian has climbed higher since then, and he doesn't think so much of that respectable female on a closer inspection. At a distance Tennyson thought she sat; now he is nearer he finds her dancing the *carmagnole*.

POOR Spurgeon has got off to Mentone at last. The Lord has drawn it a little milder with his legs, and he has been able to travel in easy stages. At one of the most fashionable and salubrious watering places in Europe he is now trying the effect of London prayer and Mediterranean air. Ten to one on the air.

THE Rev. Robert Delap has left £106,000 behind him, having been unable to carry it with him on his departure to a better world. £106,000 is a very fair amount for one who honestly teaches people not to lay up treasure on earth.

JAMES FOY, whose head has apparently been turned by Bible-reading, has been putting a crape on a vase at the British Museum, under the plea that it belonged to his father, David, and con-

tained sacred ashes. He returned on a second occasion and stated that the vase was brought from Egypt by Moses, and contained the sacred ashes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and that the mason who had set it up in the museum had stolen the sacred relics. He will be sent to an asylum, although he does not appear to be any more insane than thousands of other dabblers in biblical history and prophecy.

THE Primitive Methodists of Falmouth have been preparing for the season of peace and goodwill to men by a free fight in the chapel last Sunday. The quarrel was over the merits of rival choir-masters, and it was carried to the effusion of "claret." The chapel was cleared and locked up for the whole of the day, even the children's afternoon service being dispensed with.

TUPPER, the proverbial prosy Tupper, is coming it strong. One of his latest poems, which has been widely circulated during the recent elections, is entitled "So help me God." Here are some verses :

"So help me God! I would not move a yard
Without Thy hand in mine to be my guide,
Thy love to bless, Thy bounty to provide,
Thy fostering wing spread over me to guard.

"Yet now our Senate schemes to spurn aside
(On false pretence of Liberal brotherhood)
The Heavenly Father of our earthly good,
Because one Atheist hath his God denied.

"So help me God, it shall not; England's might
Stands in religion, practised and protest,
For so alone by blessing is she blest,
Christian and Protestant in life and light."

To be consistent, Mr. Tupper should add :

"So help me God. Bring back the merry time
When Atheists roasted at the Christian stake,
And heretics were hung for thy sweet mercy's sake,
And Christian England revelled in each pious crime."

THERE has been a dreadful fuss at Towcester. The Bishop of Peterborough refused to consecrate the cemetery, yet the Burial Board allowed a child to be interred there. Query—What will happen to the child? Will it fail to rise on the morning of the resurrection? Or will it rise and be damned straight off for getting buried in the wrong soil? If nothing of the kind happens, and the child is none the worse off for the mishap, what particular use is there in paying a bishop a lot of money to consecrate a few acres of ground?

ACCORDING to Christian contemporaries we see that well-to-do congregations are making handsome and seasonable presents to their spiritual pastors. Albums, writing desks, tea services, and all kinds of elegancies, are flying about like leaves in autumn. It forcibly reminds us of the glorious text, which all sky-pilots have hung up in big letters over their beds and mantel-pieces, "Blessed be ye poor."

THE rectory of Llanddona, Anglesea, is in Chancery. A short time ago an effort was made to sell it at auction. "Going, going," cried the auctioneer. But as nobody bid high enough he declined to say "Gone;" so that cure of souls will have to wait a better market.

THE Young Men's Christian Association at Exeter Hall find the Gospel rather dull without a considerable mixture of something more lively, and they are therefore adding many attractions to the place, the latest being a good gymnasium. Jesus Christ, of course, is their great exemplar; but we don't remember any account of his performances on the trapeze or the horizontal bar. Judging from his portraits (of course they are all authentic), we should say that gymnastics were not much in his line. He seems to have been fonder of loafing on a couch while a handsome young lady washed his understandings. But perhaps they have a special double-revised New Testament at Exeter Hall.

THE Rev. J. Bell Cox has at last been suspended for six months for contempt and disobedience in following illegal ritualistic practices. The *Church Times*, which has done its best to urge on his contumacy, calls this persecution, and bitterly censures Bishop Ryle as the responsible party.

THE *Christian World* appears to think the United States a very dangerous country, at least for clergymen, for it remarks that "Archdeacon Farrar has returned safely from his American tour." The same journal reports that he has "delivered forty-one lectures." No doubt the Archdeacon can discourse with equal ease, unction and infallibility on a number of subjects; yet we venture to think there is some exaggeration in this announcement. Perhaps our half-inspired contemporary means that Archdeacon Farrar has lectured forty-one times.

"A MUSEUM of Lies," says a correspondent of the *C. W.*, might be collected from the recent efforts of the Tory party to uphold the "Christian Religion." A very much bigger Museum

of Lies might be collected if the gentleman would go a little farther back, without troubling politicians for a single "walker."

THE American Congregationalists are greatly troubled and divided over the "heresy" of the Rev. Dr. Munger. Probably our readers will fancy that Dr. Munger has turned Atheist, or something next door to it. Nothing of the sort, however. He simply ventures to "hope" that hell is not quite so hot as most people think, and that those who drop into it are not kept there for ever. Such is the dreadful "heresy" about which the Congregationalists, who pride themselves on their liberality, are now at loggerheads. What a pity it is that the Almighty doesn't clear this matter up, as well as all the other disputed points in theology! Still, there would be one drawback. Sects would have nothing to quarrel about, learned controversialists would have nothing to discuss, and worst of all, religion would be so plain that common folk would dispense with the sky-pilots altogether.

LORD HALSBURY, late Sir Hardinge Giffard, turned up at a mission meeting in Clerkenwell the other evening, in company with Saul Isaacs, the defeated Tory candidate, one of the many Jewish plutocrats who courted constituencies during the recent elections. His lordship evidently aspires to follow in the footsteps of Earl Cairns. He delivered a most pious speech, telling his hearers that religion was the main thing in life, that they had better lose civilisation than lose Christianity, and that unless the children of England received a religious education the unbelief which is already so prevalent would invade and conquer all classes of society. What a capital joke. Old Giffard is probably about as pious as he is good looking. Yet he may well think that religion is the main thing, for he has gained the Lord Chancellorship, and five thousand a year for life, simply by prosecuting Mr. Bradlaugh and ourselves. Having found religion pay so well, he may honestly recommend it to others.

ARTFUL POLL AND ARTLESS JOE; OR, THE GHOST WHO WOULD A WOING GO.

ABOUT two thousand years ago,
There lived a joiner Jew named Joe;
A very silly sort of chap,
At whom Miss Mary "set her cap."
In fact, they were engaged to be
Made man and wife down in Judce;
But, just before the happy day
When Polly would be Mrs. J.,
This joiner chappie heard it said:
"'Tis time, indeed, the girl were wed!"
And so on gossips blabbed away—
They do it just the same to-day.
Well, what d'ye think the hussey said
When she was questioned on this head?—
Upon my word! you're sure to laugh,
To think that Joe was such a calf.
For, mind you, this consummate ass
Believed the artful, gay young lass!
She said that she to him was true,
And swore it, too, till all was blue!
"So help me! may your Polly roast,
If t'other fellow ain't a Ghost!"
Thus Mary swindled poor old Joe,
But, retribution was not slow
To pay her for her "little game;"
For Jesus Ghost, her son, became
An awful worry, night and day
He "checked" her, and off ran away;
In fact, he was a downright scamp!
He shirked his work, went on the tramp,
And marched about with women flighty,
And said he was good god almighty
In human form, as man's redeemer!
The priests cried out: "You damned blasphemer
Our duty's plain as are our noses;
We've got you by the law of Moses
Which he received from God on high,
So, now, young man, you've got to die!"
And die he did, for, on a tree
They nailed him, on mount Calvary!

His poor old mother said: "Dear me!
I'm sadly punished for my sprec;
I wish to goodness, now, I had
Revealed, at first, the youngster's dad!"

MORAL.

Good Christian friends, oh! never lie
About a child's paternity;
But tell the truth, let nothing stop it,
For if you don't you're sure to "cop it!"

G. L. MACKENZIE.

"THE GRAND OLD MAN" Cigars are so named because, like the Grand Old Man himself, they have never been equalled.—Thornes, Maker Bradford, Yorks. All Liberal and Radical Clubs should try them.—ADVT

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Dec. 27, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town; at 7.30, "The First Salvation Army."

JANUARY 3, Milton Hall, London; 10, Hall of Science, London; 17, Huddersfield; 24, Liverpool; 31, Hall of Science, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to 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.

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

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—R. S. Pengelly.

S. SMITH, Bulman's Nursery, North Gates Street, Great Tar, ordered some goods, which have been returned through the post-office marked "insufficiently addressed." Will he please send full address?

NORMAN.—Your Christian friends who laughed heartily at our Xmas Number and then predicted for us a hot corner below, are typical of thousands. Their natural instinct leads them to enjoy our "blasphemy," but they remember their creed and cry "What a wretch?" However, we don't mind so long as they only damn us in the next world and leave us alone in this.—Always glad to hear from converts.

T. BELL.—Nihilism means literally Nothingism. It was applied as a term of reproach to the Russian revolutionists, who accepted it in a spirit of irony. Nihil is the Latin word for nothing.

J. F. HENLEY.—Always pleased to assist any Branch of the N. S. S.

R. CLARKSON.—Scarcely suitable.

L. FROW.—You are mistaken. We are great losers by the prosecution. Several newsagents have been frightened, although we think the scare is about played out now, and their refusal to supply customers means, in some cases, a temporary stoppage of the sale in a whole district. This will rectify itself by-and-by, but in the meantime it is a heavy tax on us. While we were in prison many of our friends took extra copies and distributed them, and we hope some of them will do so again in the present juncture.

W. BLUNDELL, 14 Camden Passage, Islington, supplies all Freethought and Socialistic literature. Catalogue on application by post.

H. J. BARRETT.—The evidence of there being Christians at all in Britain previous to Augustine is of a very dubious character. Despite our insular position, popes often appointed Italians to the richest bishoprics.

J. H. ROGERS.—We did not notice the letter in the *Morning Post*. The explanation in Notes and Queries is probably correct.

JOHN LEE (Manchester) writes that a friend of his spoke of the editor of this journal as an "awfully low brute." The plain-spoken person was induced to attend the lecture on "God's Mother," after which he exclaimed, "A clever chap that Foote!"

A. HARRISON.—Hardly up to the mark. Poetry is a hard mistress; she requires a great deal of wooing before she smiles.

CASTREL.—We don't think much of Josh Billings's "Nuts for Infidels to Crack." Their point seems to depend on their bad spelling.

J. E. ROOSE.—There is much truth in your remarks. We always read your letters with interest. Men like Huxley are no doubt unconsciously influenced by Bumble and Mrs. Grundy. It is so easy to fall into the tone of the people about us, and interest bends a man's mind without his knowing it. You have an extreme instance in the fact that one of the chief stock arguments of religion is that immortality is true because it is pleasant.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current number. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

A CATALOGUE of the Progressive Publishing Company's Works can be obtained at 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker—Rationalist—Liberal—Good Company—Royal Cornwall Gazette—Daily Chronicle—Chat—Wolverhampton Evening Express.

"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 January 1, 1886.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was a large audience at the London Hall of Science last Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "God's Birthday." Everybody seemed pleased when it was announced that there was a prospect of bringing the Glasgow case to a happy termination, and there was a fervid burst of applause when Mr. Foote remarked that the bigots would always find, when they ventured to attack the *Freethinker*, that it is not isolated and defenceless, but has a whole party ready to do battle for it.

AFTER the lecture several Freethinkers introduced themselves, some of them being converts made by Mr. Foote's speeches and writings. One stated that he was first set thinking by an open-air lecture on "Bible Blunders."

GENERAL BOOTH'S annual report has been noticed at some length in most of the London papers, probably for a consideration. The General calls 1885 the Armstrong Year, and boasts that his funds have increased instead of diminished, although he is wisely silent as to the £20,000 he stretched out his hand for and was hauling in until his knuckles were rapped by Mr. Poland. After all, the Salvation Army is the real unadulterated article. Those who wish to hear more on this point should attend Mr. Foote's lecture at Milton Hall this evening (Dec. 27), on "The First Salvation Army."

PART II. of "Comic Bible Sketches" will be issued from our publishing office next week. It will be of the same size and price as Part I., and printed on the same special paper. We anticipate a very large sale, as it contains some of the best illustrations that have appeared in the *Freethinker*. Eventually all the Parts will be bound together as the Comic Bible, and will form a unique volume, which will be treasured as a rarity when we have shuffled off this mortal coil.

THERE has been a livelier sale of James Thomson's "Satires and Profanities" since it was reduced in price. This brilliant book, full of the wittiest "blasphemy" ever penned, should be in the hands of every Freethinker. It is written in such splendid English that a diligent study of it would initiate the reader into the finest subtleties of our noble mother-tongue. The late Professor Clifford, who was an excellent judge, considered some of the pieces in this volume as quite worthy of Swift. Praise cannot go higher than that.

OWING to the rapid demand, the cloth edition of Ingersoll's "Mistakes of Moses" ran out of stock. Admirers of the great Freethought orator who were waiting for copies will be glad to hear that we have now a fresh supply. The volume is handsomely printed with brand-new type on fine paper, well bound, and remarkably cheap.

AN American journal informs a correspondent that the short address, "Colonel Ingersoll, America," will find Pagan Bob, as "there is only one of him on this continent."

THE New Year's number of *Progress* will open with an article by the editor on the Irish Question. Mr. Wheeler writes on "Were the Jews Savages?" Tennyson's new volume is reviewed by Mr. E. V. Ward under the title of "Green Leaves from an Old Tree." Dr. Aveling contributes a careful criticism, from a scientific standpoint, of Mr. Gladstone's recent article on the "Dawn of the Creation." "Old World Stories" is the title of an interesting paper by E. N. Wells. Among the other contents are an article on George Meredith's last novel, a powerful poem by J. M. Harvey, and a very readable paper on American Humorists, by G. Standing. Gossip and Reviews of new books help to make up an attractive number.

ALL members of the Hyde Park Branch of the N. S. S. are earnestly requested to communicate with the present secretary, Mr. J. F. Henley, at the Carpenters' Arms, 12 Seymour Place, Portman Square, W., at once.

THE Rev. Dr. Pressensé complains that Rénan "has never really withdrawn his declaration that throughout the whole universe there has been found no intelligent will but that of man." We are very happy to hear it.

"BIBLE ROMANCES" and "Bible Contradictions" are the titles of two new pamphlets by G. W. Foote, editor of the London *Freethinker*. Either is a more valuable commentary on the Scriptures than anything ever published by the Bible Society.—New York *Truthseeker*.

THE *Rationalist* is doing effective Freethought work in New Zealand. Its leaderettes are pronounced and pithy, and it is printing in its columns some capital papers on "The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ," by Gerald Massey.

SEVERAL instances have occurred of late of Freethinkers having been excluded from such friendly societies as the Oddfellows and the Foresters on account of their views on religious subjects, and even when they are admitted it must be difficult for them to restrain a smile when informed that the guide of their conduct in life should be "the unerring standard of divine truth," or instructed to make a sign supposed to be in imitation of Adam and Eve eating forbidden fruit. Such Freethinkers might do worse than imitate the example of the Liverpool Branch, which has a Tontine Sick Society in connection with its hall, and during the past year its 37 members have not had a single hour's sickness. The subscription is 6d. weekly and 1s. per quarter for management, and after paying medical officers, secretary, treasurer, rent, etc., the society was able to return 25s. 2d. to each member, besides considerably increasing its reserve fund. This

is the third year of its operations, and its earlier years were almost equally successful.

We are happy to state, on the authority of the *Christian World*, that there is a great falling off in missionary funds. This form of the confidence trick is getting played out. The London Missionary Society's income is some thousands a year less than it was ten years ago; and, in spite of the text "Owe no man anything," the Society is now £11,000 in debt. Addressing the Congregational Union, the Rev. Arnold Thomas complained that "people are not caring for the spiritual state of the heathen races as it might be supposed they would care." Mrs. Murray Mitchell, the wife of a South Indian missionary, says "It is everywhere the same story, everywhere the mission is cramped for want of funds. Much might be done if there was only money wherewith to do it. This is the cry everywhere, which is very sad to hear when there is so much money in our Christian country."

Oh, yes, dear madam, we quite understand why you and your dear husband, and all the other dear souls who are engaged in this missionary business, want the whole country to bleed more freely into the salvation bucket, whence the itinerant gossellers manufacture such luscious black-puddings. It is only a new interpretation of the old text, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." But why, dear madam, don't you reflect on the way in which Christianity was first propagated with such striking success. Silver and gold have I none, said Peter. No, but he had a large supply of faith, and he worked miracles wholesale. Your husband ought to have the same power, if we may trust the last chapter of Mark; and if he only went through India working miracles like Peter he would make more converts in a month than all the missionaries have made in a century.

THE Liberal Two Thousand of Birmingham have resolved to keep their Board Schools entirely secular, and the clergy will have to teach religion in their own shops. They will therefore be obliged to do trade by supplying a good article instead of creating an artificial demand.

MANY readers in Manchester and district will be interested to know that Mr. Bilcliff is actively engaged in distributing Free-thought literature in the colony of New Zealand. We notice in the *Rationalist* Mr. Bilcliff's advertisement of Free-thought works, including our own. Mr. Bilcliff's address is Selwyn Street, Christchurch.

OLD Robbie Ferguson, of Glasgow, thanks to his own pluck, and the prompt assistance of our readers, is still at large, smoking his pipe by his own fireside, and enjoying life as well as his age will permit. We hope, not without reason, that he has seen the worst of his trouble. But we beg to remind our readers that more money will be necessary to clear the matter up and free the old man from further annoyance. We shall be glad to acknowledge a good list of subscriptions next week.

CHRISTIANITY A BENEFACTOR TO MANKIND.

I AM about to help the Christians for once. I shall demonstrate—scientifically and irrefragably demonstrate, I believe—that Christianity has aided progress and has favored the permanent interests of mankind.

Progress has been the result of evolution, caused mainly by the survival of the fittest, resulting from the elimination or greater comparative destruction of the unfittest. This elimination is effected by the various evils and hardships of life, which have thus been of great service to the race by removing the relatively unsound stock. The survivors, thus being usually of a slightly superior type to their predecessors, have necessarily propagated a slightly superior race with each fresh generation. Without the destruction of the unfittest—without the elimination of those who are least suited to the environment—no advance could have taken place.

Famine has cut off greater numbers of the foolish and improvident, and has left behind a larger percentage of the provident and practical, and so has often assisted human progress. When God starves millions of his poor dear children to death, he does it all out of sheer kindness to the survivors. It is his fatherly way of chastening whom he loveth, in order to aid their moral progress.

War—especially when it culminated in the *cherem* or indiscriminate massacre ordered by God in the Old Testament—aided progress by eliminating the weaker and less social races.

Pestilence has swept off the dirtier and weaklier and more stupid, and so has favored the cleaner and wiser. Plague, starvation and massacre are the pretty devices of the all-benevolent parent for securing the gradual improvement of

such of his offspring as he permits to survive. We must bless him, and not curse him, for the tender interest he thus takes in our moral and physical welfare.

Prostitution weeds out the unchaste, who leave fewer and less carefully-reared offspring.

Alcohol weeds out the self-indulgent and degraded, who lack principle and self-control, and so improves the average character of the rest of the people. The inferior races all over the world are rapidly dying out under its influence.

Just as we owe much to these agencies, so also we owe a deep debt to Christianity for similar important and probably indispensable services which it has rendered to our ungrateful species. I will mention some of these services.

1. Christianity cuts off the purely other-worldly, who neglect the real work of life because they are blindly covetous of an imaginary heaven as a miser is of gold. By the celibacy and asceticism it enjoined, by burdening itself with the support of priestcraft, and by taking no thought for the morrow, it has prevented or restrained the effective multiplication of the credulous and superstitious. By its action in this direction during many centuries it must have largely extinguished the worst types of fanaticism. It has weeded out the dreamers greedy for a fool's paradise of delusion, and has left the somewhat less credulous—the somewhat more loyal to truth and actual fact—to prosper and multiply in proportion as they mingled real wisdom and common sense with their partial or nominal delusions.

2. Christianity cuts off conflicting sects, who war with each other like Kilkenny cats, till by-and-bye it is to be hoped only the *tales* of the creatures will be left. The more religious people have been, the more deadly have been their internecine struggles, the more they have sacrificed their own welfare and the welfare of others. The persecution, and consequent direct or indirect destruction of the indifferent, who have outwardly conformed, has always necessarily been less in amount than the mutually destructive persecution arising among the deeply religious. The long embittered strife between Catholics and Protestants tended to weed out the most godfearing men on each side, because these continually came to the front, both in battle and in the various forms of martyrdom. The Crusades weeded out millions of the most superstitious who sacrificed lands and lives in vain, and left the race to be continued by the more hard-headed and practical people who purchased the estates of pious fools for a song, and were not to be drawn into a wild-goose chase by all the pleasures and excitements of a mad credulity. Where the persecutions cut off the unorthodox so severely as to render their cause hopeless—as under the Spanish Inquisition, which, as Darwin points out, for three centuries eliminated a yearly average of at least a thousand of the most honest, active and morally useful minds in the nation—the weeding out of the evil took place in a less direct way. The pious nation, deprived of its vigorous and thoughtful minds, suffered as a whole, and less religious and more practical people took from it the crown of dominion it was unworthy to wear. Hence the comparative decadence of superstitious Spain and Italy and the world-wide advance and multiplication of races like the English.

3. Christianity crushed out rival delusions, such as idolatry, or merged them into itself. It thus brought the moral evils of credulity to a head, and simplified and unified the widespread disease of unreality, and of grasping at shadows and subjective images. The diagnosis and extinction of the complaint are thus rendered easier; and the natural process of self-cure by the elimination of those most susceptible to the formidable disease is facilitated. It is by the completion of this slow self-destructive process that Christianity will render its final service to mankind. In thus committing suicide it will confer the greatest boon of all.

I have thus proved, I think, that Christianity has done much for the improvement of the race. Christian advocates are welcome to my testimonial, which I hope will furnish food for thought to Freethinkers as well as Christians, since it is far from being written in an entirely sarcastic spirit, though sarcasm, it must be confessed, is a very marked feature in it. I hope the shallow tricksters of the Anti-Infidel platform will not quote my commendation of Christianity without the context. If they quote me fairly they must represent me as saying that great evils

like death, war, drunkenness, starvation and Christianity, have been potent factors in the evolution of the race, and in this way have undoubtedly benefitted mankind in general. How far gratitude is due for services of this kind even when most important or even absolutely necessary for the progress of the species, is quite another matter. When a grateful "crowning race" of the future erects statues and temples in honor of famine, slavery, and plague as its benefactors and teachers in the past, then Christianity, too, should share the praises and the thanks. Meanwhile, ordinary men, who chiefly value the pleasures of the moment and the benefit of the living generation, may well withhold their admiration and support from a benefactor of this peculiar description.

W. P. BALL.

A MODERN SAINT.—II.

THERE was a dreadful rumpus at the Mission Hall the next evening. Mrs. Butcher graphically described, with many exaggerations, the scene she had witnessed between our hero and Miss Lucy; and as the young lady, who was dependent on her aunt, dared not venture to contradict her, Charley's guilt was fully established. The old lady made it so warm for him that he resolved to decamp. He had fifteen pounds in his possession, collected for a poor widow whose husband died in very distressing circumstances. Like Molière, though in a different fashion, Charley Sweetman took his own wherever he found it. He disappeared with the fifteen pounds, and the places that knew him before knew him no more.

Three months later, a manufacturing town in Yorkshire was stirred with the unctuous eloquence of a young man, named Robert Cathcart, who preached the gospel and teetotalism in a very persuasive manner. Robert Cathcart was our hero in disguise. Teetotalism was a thing he had no belief in, but it "took" in that district. He found also that hell-fire was much in vogue, and he gave them the hottest supply they ever had. In a short time he gathered an admiring circle of devotees, who ministered to his temporal wants as he ministered to their spiritual necessities. An old Nonconformist chapel was bought up cheaply, and our hero had the noble satisfaction of orating from a pulpit. Fortune smiled on him again, and all might have gone well if Robert Cathcart, alias Charley Sweetman, had not accidentally betrayed himself.

It was Christmas time. The shops were gaily trimmed, old and young wore a look of animation, and the festivities of the season were tempting the coldest out of their shells. Our hero spouted teetotalism, but he was not a teetotaler. Still, he was obliged to be one in practice, for he could not purchase the beverage he longed for without running a great risk of detection. But just then the appetite was too strong to be resisted, and our hero's cunning brain concocted a scheme for gratifying it. His landlady, a simple old dame, was easily imposed on. He told her that the doctor had ordered brandy for a sick man he had been visiting, and the statement was true. "He must have it," said Mr. Cathcart, "to save his life, and although it is against my principles I have promised to send him some. Here is a half-sovereign. Pray get a bottle for me. I will keep it by me, and send the poor fellow a little now and then as he requires it."

Mrs. Partridge fetched the bottle of brandy. A drop of it was sent to the sick man by the landlady's daughter, and the rest was deposited in Charley's locked cupboard.

When all the house was a-bed, our hero brought out the precious brandy bottle and tipped away right merrily. Long abstinence had only intensified the craving. "Ah!" he said, smacking his lips, "that's the stuff. Hang this teetotalism. I was a fool to take up with it. But it pays, it pays," he chuckled to himself. The alcohol fired his brain, his eyes gleamed, his heart beat rapidly. Life seemed to gather brighter hues under the inspiration of drink. The past was forgotten, the future undreamt of. Existence was concentrated in the joyous present.

There was very little brandy left in the bottle when that drinking bout was over. Our hero disrobed himself somehow, groped his way between the sheets, and slept the sleep of the drunk.

A few hours later one of his committee called on a matter of pressing importance. Mrs. Partridge had the breakfast ready, and wondered why her lodger did not come down at his usual hour. "I must see him," said the visitor; "I will go up and knock at his door."

Mr. Hezekiah Goodship went up and knocked. There was no answer. He knocked again and again, but the silence was unbroken. "Good heavens," he thought, "I hope there is nothing amiss." He tried the door. Alas! the preacher had forgotten to lock it. Mr. Hezekiah Goodship opened it and stepped in. On the table was an object that made him stand aghast. He took it up and applied his nose to it. "Brandy!" he exclaimed. Then, turning to the bed, he perceived Mr. Robert Cathcart, alias Charley Sweetman, sleeping as men never do except under the influence of mundane spirits. His

breath smelt villainously, and Mr. Hezekiah Goodship started back with an exclamation of "Drunk!"

It is almost needless to say that the Yorkshire manufacturing town was no longer a happy place for our hero. Mr. Robert Cathcart disappeared, and Charley Sweetman was off to fresh woods and pastures new.

(To be concluded.)

THE GLASGOW PROSECUTION.

THE Ferguson appeal was not taken on Thursday, the 17th inst., in the Edinburgh Justiciary Court, as was expected. Preceding cases on the list occupied the judges' time, and the remainder will have to be heard in January. We are given to understand that the judges are rather vexed at the *Freethinker* case being raised at all. The general impression in legal circles at Edinburgh is that religion has more to lose than to gain by such prosecutions. We are also informed that the Glasgow authorities are sorry Mr. Ferguson was ever molested. They did not expect such a stubborn opposition, and they appear willing to compromise the matter, and to let bygones be bygones, each side paying its own costs. We have advised the acceptance of such terms if possible. Freethinkers are in the minority, and at present we must rest satisfied with holding our own. We are anxiously expecting further news.

THE FERGUSON DEFENCE FUND.

SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED:—E. Whitfield, 6d.; S. Hartman, 10s.; Lover of Justice and two Friends, 3s.; G. C., 6d.; Two Vellum Binders, 1s.; J. D. Leggett, 1s. 3d.; A. Gillespie, 6d.; A. Swan, 6d.; W. Walker, 6d.; D. Dawson, 1s. 2d.; Verax 5s. Perth: collected at Mr. C. J. Hunt's lecture, 14s. Per L. Hill: R. D., 1s.; Mrs. Williams, 6d.; J. W. Fortescue, 2s. 6d.; J. Fitzgerald, 1s.; W. L. W., 2s.; N. Harrison, 1s.; J. R. Stamp, 1s. Chatham Branch N. S. S.:—W. B. Thompson, 6d.; W. T. Baker, 1s.; T. Buckingham, 6d.; J. J. Taylor, 3d.; H. Taylor 3d.; F. J. Boorman 3d.

The Glasgow Committee have received the following:—N. B. Billany (Hall, B. N. S. S.), 6s.; William Cunningham (Liverpool), 5s.; James Millar, 5s.

Errata.—In the Glasgow Committee's list last week James Lagan should have been James Logan, and Mrs. Millan should have been Mr. Millar.

REVIEWS.

Sabbath Breaking. By JOHN E. REMSBURG. New York: Published by the *Truthseeker* Company, 23 Clinton Place.—A very complete account of the Sabbatic institution, and an earnest plea for the abrogation of the Sunday Laws. We are pleased to notice that our American friends are tackling the Puritan superstition, and Mr. Remsburg's work is sure to prove helpful.

The Tory Programme. By COSMOPOLITE. One penny: B. Williams, 10 Denman Street, Picadilly Circus, W.—A skit upon what it is supposed the Tories would do if untrammelled by a powerful opposition.

"THERE has been a revival in our town." "Many people converted?" "Oh, yes, and among them twenty pupils of the female college." "How do you know they are converted?" "Because they have declared their intention to flirt with none but divinity students hereafter."

LAMENT of a rector whose parsonage had been entered by burglars:—

They came and prigged my linen, my stockings and my store;
But they couldn't prig my sermons, for they were prigged before.

"Ah," said an old Highland piper, "ah, there was a night I'd ne'er forget! There were eighteen pipers beside me in Mrs. Grass's wee back parlor in the Cowgate, 'an we were a' playin' different tunes, an' I just thoct I was floatin' in Heaven!" It is astonishing what an effect noise has on some natures. A Salvation Army brass band, every member of which has his own peculiar opinions as to time and tune, evidently helps the devotions of the lasses and cadets, but the roar of their volleys and the thumping of their drums had a very different effect on the young men in the Exeter Hall reading-room, who sat with aching heads the other night, trying in vain to think and study while the Army was holding some thanksgiving festival overhead. I could not help thinking of Shakespeare's words, "The empty vessel makes the greatest sound."—*Christian Commonwealth.*

PROFANE JOKES.

A GENTLEMAN invited a friend the other evening to go into the nursery and hear the children say their prayers. They stopped a moment on the stairs, however, and when they reached the room the little prattlers had just sung their evening hymn, and were trying to drown the kitten in the wash-bowl. The visitor appeared to be deeply moved.

ONE man in the west is "selling off," and advertises "at ruinous discounts; no such sacrifices have been made since the days of Abraham and Isaac." Another advertiser, a fruit dealer in Maiden Lane, New York, explains that his cherries "are selling like manna in the desert; nothing has been known like it since the Israelites crossed the Red Sea."

A MONTEZUMA lady said to her young hopeful: "Johnnie, why don't you rock the baby? You'd let it squeal its life out." "I would if I could." "Why, Johnnie! Want your little brother to die?" "Well, wouldn't it be a good deal better for him to be up in heaven, flyin' around, than to be layin' a-squealin' in that 'ere cradle?"

IN Dalkeith was an eccentric character named Philip M'Diamond, who had taken some offence at Norman McLeod, and left off going to the church. Dr. McLeod met him and said, "Well, Philip, why don't you come to church now?" "I dinna ken, sir; I dinna ken." The doctor said, "Remember, Philip, there will be no sermon in hell." To which Philip replied, "Eh, eh, sir; it'll no' be for want of ministers, then!"

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF THE "Freethinker"

ILLUSTRATIONS: Satan's Adventures. (Fourteen sketches). By PAUL BELLEVUE. The Transfiguration. The Deluge! By F. WILCOCKSON. The Baby God. By F. WILCOCKSON. A Corpse Reviver. By F. WILCOCKSON. God in a Cloud. By G. L. MACKENZIE. Our Rector. (A series). By E. CLARE. A Bag of Sins. Happy Eliza! Etc. Etc.

ARTICLES: The Star of Bethlehem. By G. W. FOOTE. God as a Barber. By W. P. BALL. A Bethlehem Scandal. Discovery of Noah's Ark. By J. M. WHEELER. Jehovah's Election Address. By SCOFFER. The Archbishop's Prayer for the General Election. A Modern Judas. By A. B. MOSS. Going to Church. By G. STANDING. Mrs. Brown on the Bible. Rib Ticklers. Etc. Etc.

MIRACLES OF CHEAPNESS. Paine's "Age of Reason" ... 0 6 Paine's "Complete Theological Works," including "Age of Reason" 1 0 Ditto, in cloth ... 1 6 Progressive Publishing Co., 28 Stonecutter St.

TO FREETHINKERS, Etc. A TRIAL SOLICITED. BEST STYLE, FIT AND VALUE. H. HAMPTON, TAILOR, 14 Gt. Castle Street, W. A FEW DOORS FROM REGENT CIRCUS.

RUBBER STAMPS. National Secular Society Monogram ... 1 0 Any two-letter Monogram ... 1 0 Name in full ... 1 4 Postage to any part of England 2d. extra. Agents Wanted. IRETON AND CO., 92 GRAYCHURCH ST., E.C.

IN THE PRESS.

Prisoner for Blasphemy.

By G. W. FOOTE.

Containing a full account of his Prosecutions and Imprisonment.

A volume which every Freethinker will prize, and which will be invaluable to the future historian of our age.

Cheap Edition, in Paper Covers ... 1s. 6d. Superior Edition, in Cloth ... 2s. 6d.

Ready on December 31. PART II. OF

Comic Bible Sketches

48 Pages. In Handsome Wrapper. Price Fourpence.

REDUCED IN PRICE!

The Darwinian Theory ... 3d. The Origin of Man ... 3d. Monkeys, Apes and Men ... 3d. The Three bound in cloth as— Darwin Made Easy ... 1s.

The best popular expositions of Darwin in the market.

By DR. EDWARD AVELING, (Fellow of London University)

CRIMES OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY

G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler.

In parts of 16 pp. Price One Penny each:— I. Christ to Constantine—II. Constantine to Jovian—III. Athanasius to Hypatia—IV. Monksy—V. Pious Frauds—VI. Pious Frauds (concluded)—VII. The Rise of the Papacy—VIII. The Crimes of the Popes—IX. Ignorance, Vices and Quarrels of the Early Clergy—X. The Jew Hunt—XI. The Jew Hunt (concluded)—XII. The Crusades.—XIII. The Crusades (concluded)—XIV. Witchcraft.

Ready December 31. PART XV.—THE INQUISITION.

The succeeding parts will be issued at intervals of a fortnight.

"Shows Christianity to be the greatest criminal the earth has been cumbered with."—Ironclad Age. "The two authors of this work (which is well described by the title) are doing a good work in England in exposing the prevailing religion. In this work new cases of Christian cruelty are unearthed and new authors cited as authorities. We wish every English-reading Christian could have a copy."—New York Truthseeker. "A most useful addition to the Freethought library."—National Reformer. "The evidence against the culprit, Christianity, is led with forensic skill."—Secular Review. "The brochure now before us is a most serviceable and effective compendium of the overwhelming historic testimony against the Christian Church from its origin to the Dark Ages. . . . The bulk of the work is beyond cavil; and if it be complained that the spirit of the writers is too determinedly hostile to Christianity, the answer is that they always speak from cited evidence."—Our Corner.

NOW READY. VOL. I., including Parts I. to IX. Price One Shilling. 144 pp. Bound in handsome wrapper.

Progressive Publishing Co., 28 Stonecutter St.

Bible Contradictions.

Being PART I. of a

BIBLE HANDBOOK FOR FREETHINKERS AND INQUIRING CHRISTIANS.

EDITED BY

G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball,

WITH A

Special Introduction by G. W. Foote.

STITCHED IN WRAPPER.

PRICE FOURPENCE.

"Bible Contradictions" is a convenient and useful arrangement of the gross contradictory passages in the inspired book. The passages of holy writ are arranged in parallel columns. The conclusion of the reader is that God has a very short memory. The pamphlet would be of great use to the ministers."—Ironclad Age.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST.

BEING THE

SEPHER TOLDOTH JESHU,

OR,

Book of the Generations of Jesus.

EDITED

(With Historical Preface & Voluminous Notes)

BY

G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler.

Paper Covers 0 6 Superior Edition (printed on fine paper and bound in limp cloth) 1 0

MR. FOOTE'S WORKS.

Arrows of Freethought ... 0 6 Theological Essays, including all the theological pamphlets now in print. Cloth ... 2 0 Blasphemy No Crime ... 0 1 Mill's Christ. Being an exhaustive examination and exposure of John Stuart Mill's panegyric on Christ in his Essay on Theism ... 0 2 The Folly of Prayer. New edition; with fresh introduction ... 0 1 Atheism and Morality. New edition; fresh introduction ... 0 1 Secularism the True Philosophy of Life. An Exposition and a Defence. (In Wrapper)... 0 4 Atheism and Suicide ... 0 1 The God Christians Swear By ... 0 2 Was Jesus Insane? ... 0 1 Brown's Story; or, The Dying Infidel. 16pp. Law and Gospel. Letters to Lord Coleridge, Judge North, Gaoler Harcourt, and Lawyer Giffard ... 0 1 The Shadow of the Sword. An Essay on War ... 0 2 Jonah's Excursion to Nineveh. With twenty-four illustrations ... 0 2

BIBLE ROMANCES (1d. each).

- 1 The Creation Story 8 The Tower of Babel 2 Noah's Flood 9 Balaam's Ass 3 Eve and the Apple 10 God's Thieves in Canaan 4 The Bible Devil 11 Cain and Abel 5 The Ten Plagues 12 Lot's Wife 6 Jonah and the Whale 7 The Wandering Jews

FIRST SERIES, bound in elegant wrapper, ONE SHILLING.

- 13 Daniel and the Lions 18 Bully Samson 14 The Jew Judges 19 Gospel Ghosts 15 St. John's Nightmare 20 A Rising God 16 A Virgin Mother 21 The Bible Menagerie 17 God in a Box 22 The Crucifixion

SECOND SERIES, bound in elegant wrapper, NINEPENCE.

"For regular go-ahead propagandist work we know of no literature likely to be so effective as Mr. Foote's series of little pamphlets entitled Bible Romances."—Secular Review.

Freethinkers requiring really good

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR CARDS

should send for our Marvel Packet containing Twelve beautifully-assorted Cards: wonderful value. Post free, Eight Stamps.

N. R. PALMER & CO., Oxford Street, Islington, London, N.

Thwaites' Liver Pills.

Are acknowledged to be the best Family Medicine in the World by the many thousands that are using them in preference to all others. It is almost impossible to enumerate in an advertisement what they are good for; it would take up too much of your time to read it, and after you had read it you might say it was only advertising puff; but I ask One Trial of the LIVER PILLS; if not better than any you have tried before, I cannot expect a continuance of your custom. I recommend them for INDIGESTION, LOSS OF APPETITE, DIZZINESS, BILIOUSNESS, COSTIVENESS, NERVOUSNESS, PALPITATION OF THE HEART, PILES, ETC. all of which are, in many cases, caused by the Liver being inactive, or what we call a sluggish Liver. Try some of the LIVER PILLS as soon as you can, as they are PURE HERB PILLS, and may be used at any time by anyone without any change of diet or danger of taking cold. Prepared only by GEORGE THWAITES, 2 Church Row, Stockton-on-Tees. Sold at 1s. 1d. and 2s. 3d. per box, or by post for 15 or 26 Penny Stamps. A Price List of Herbs free.

TEETH, 2s. 6d. each, on vulcanite; upper or lower set, 21. Best quality, on vulcanite, 4s. a tooth, upper or lower set, 22. No extras. Completed in four hours when required. Best teeth on Platinum, 7s. 6d. each; on 18-carat gold, 15s. Painless extraction daily with gas, 6s.; without, 1s.; stopping, 2s. 6d.—MR. STANTON, R.D., 128 Strand, London. Hours nine to eight.

T WORKS. ER, WINK AND SPIRIT MERCHANT, "Duke of Ormand," Princes Street, Westminster, The "National Reformer," "Freethinker," and other Freethought journals at the bar.

Printed and Published by G. W. Foote, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.