

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



THE SUPERSTITION SLAYER: DEDICATED TO JOSEPH SYMES.

JUDGMENT DAY.

THE end of the world has been a fertile and profitable theme with pulpit mountebanks and pious adventurers. Ever since the primitive ages of Christianity it has served to frighten the credulous, and feather the nests of their deceivers.

No. 235.]

In the apostolic days the Second Coming of Christ was generally and constantly expected. According to the twenty-fourth of Matthew, Jesus predicted that the end of all things would soon arrive. The sun and moon were to be darkened; the stars were to fall from heaven; and the Son of Man was to come through the clouds with great power and glory, and gather the elect together from every quarter of the earth. According to the twenty-fifth of

Matthew, this wondrous scene was to be followed by a Great Assize. All the nations were to be judged before the heavenly throne, and divided into two lots, one destined for heaven and the other for hell. And Jesus significantly added, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

St. Paul also, in the fourth chapter of the first of Thessalonians, said that the Lord would "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

Nothing of the sort has happened. There is no sign of the Lord's coming, and he is already eighteen centuries behind date. "Behold I come quickly"—"Surely I come quickly." Such was the announcement. But like many other divine promises it has been falsified. The only orthodox way out of the difficulty is to say that the Lord doesn't reckon time as we do: with him a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day.

The general public, however, eighteen hundred years ago, did not know how long the prophecy was to remain unfulfilled, and it had an extraordinary power over them. Being mostly very ignorant, and therefore very credulous, they were easily terrified by the notion that the world was to be burnt up speedily; and they as readily embraced the doctrine which promised to bring them safely through the catastrophe. From the way in which the game answers still with the Christian mob, after nearly two thousand years of exposure, we can understand what a splendid instrument of proselytising it must have been in the hands of the fanatical preachers of the early Church. Combine with it the Millennium promised to the saints after the Second Coming of Christ, in which they were to enjoy themselves royally, and you will feel the justice of Gibbon's remark that "it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith." It was inculcated by a succession of Fathers, from Justin Martyr to Lactantius. But when it had served its purpose it was allowed to drop. As Gibbon says, it "was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism." The Millennium is actually stigmatised, in what once stood as the forty-first Article of the English Church, as "a fable of Jewish dotage." We wonder whether the plain-spoken divines who drew up that article included Jesus Christ, St. Paul and St. John among the Jewish dotards.

At the end of the tenth century the doctrine of the Second Coming was revived. The people were led to believe that the old serpent's thousand years of bondage was nearly up, that he would be let loose about the year 1,000, that Antichrist would then appear, and that the end of the world would follow. Churches and houses were therefore left to decay, as they would cease to be wanted. Whenever an eclipse of the sun or the moon took place, the people ran into caverns and caves. Multitudes hurried off to Palestine, where they supposed Christ would make his descent. They transferred their property to the priests, who could say with Iago "thus do I even make my fool my purse." Others not only gave their property to the priests, but actually became their slaves; hoping, says Mosheim, that "the supreme Judge would be more favorable to them if they made themselves servants to his servants."

Jortin justly observes that the priests industriously cherished the delusion for the sake of filthy lucre. They accepted the gifts of their poor dupes, although earthly possessions would be as useless to them as to the laity if the last days were at hand. Donations to the Church were given by fools and received by knaves. The reason assigned for the gift is generally thus expressed: *Appropinquante mundi termino—The end of the world being now at hand.*

When the tenth century ended without a sign of the Second Advent, people looked at each other and said "He is not come then." And the priests chuckled "No, he has not come, but your property is gone." There was no chance of bringing an action for obtaining money under false pretences, and Holy Mother Church never gives back a farthing of what she obtains, for what is once devoted to God can never be alienated without sacrilege.

Although the delusion has been milder since then, it has always lurked among the ignorant, and occasionally be-

come acute. Silly Christians still shake their heads when a comet is visible, and regard it as a blazing portent. They even hint that one of these wanderers through space may collide with our globe and cause the final smash; not knowing that comets are quite harmless, and that hundreds of cubic miles of their tails would not outweigh a jar-ful of air.

Dr. Cumming foretold the grand collapse several times. His books were read by thousands of superstitious people. Finally, he was played out, and he went to his grave a discredited prophet. Had he been wiser he would have fixed the event some time after he was likely to be buried. Then the game would have lasted his lifetime, and what does it matter if you are found out when you are dead?

How far Cumming believed his own prophecies is a moot point. It is said that he bought the lease of a house, which expired about twenty-five years after the day of judgment.

Baxter, of the *Christian Herald*, now runs the business. He wrote a book to prove that Louis Napoleon was anti-Christ. Louis Napoleon is dead and nearly forgotten. Then he proved that Gambetta was Antichrist. Gambetta is dead and not forgotten. Then he proved that Prince Jerome was Antichrist. Prince Jerome is nowhere, and Baxter is probably finding a fresh Antichrist. Yet his paper is read by the hundred thousand. As Heine said, the fool-crop is perennial.

Over in America the Second Adventists are a numerous body. They watch and pray for the coming of Christ, and keep white robes ready for their ascension. Some time ago they donned their linen in the expectation that the Lord was coming that very night. But the Lord did not put in an appearance, and the robes were laid up in lavender again. A fat matron trying to fly in that outfit would be a sight worth seeing. It would take several angels to float some of them. Even the archangel Michael might shrink from tackling twenty-stone.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

BIBLE FABLES.

EVERY student of ancient history knows the difficulty of separating fact from fable in its early records. To some extent knowledge of natural law may determine us. When Livy reports that an ox spoke in the market-place at Rome, we may at once dismiss the statement as only evincing the credulity of its reporter. So in the case of the Bible miracles. They only tell us of the narrator's ignorance of the unchangeableness of natural law. A large share of Biblical fables arise from this cause. The supposition that certain men like Samuel and Elijah produced rain by their prayers tells us nothing as to any actual fact, but speaks volumes as to the atmosphere of credulity in which the writers lived.

In all histories we must allow not only for the ignorance of the writers, but for their prejudices. Of these, perhaps the most formidable and certain is the pride of race. It was this which made most early nations ascribe their origin either to gods, or to demigods, or to heroes under the direct protection of gods. It is this which made the Jews consider themselves a chosen race, specially selected above all the rest of the inhabitants of the world. This made them set their tribal god above all the other gods of Egypt, Phœnicia, Assyria, Greece, India, or China, so that when Jahveh crew on his little Palestinian dunghill all the gods of the earth were supposed to keep silence. This made them ascribe all sorts of achievements to their ancestors, and declare that the petty tribes of Judah slew "five hundred thousand chosen men" of the equally insignificant tribes of Israel, in one day (2 Chron. xiii, 16, 17). From Genesis, where Jahveh tells Abraham that his seed shall be as the sands of the sea-shore, to Revelation, where the only ones who are saved are of the twelve tribes of Israel, the Bible is full of evidences of distortion arising from Jewish pride of race.

Ascribing their own origin directly to Abraham, the Jews made the Ishmaelites the offspring only of a discarded concubine. Their enemies, the Moabites and Ammonites, were related to have had a still more discreditable origin in the connection between Lot and his daughters. All who opposed them are made to look very puny. The Egyptians, after working some miracles by their enchant-

ments, are outdone by Aaron, and after suffering grievous plagues are drowned in the Red Sea. The Amalekites were utterly destroyed several times over. (Deut. xxv., 19; 1 Sam. xv., 3, 8; xxvii., 8, 9; xxx., 1; 1 Chron., iv., 43). The walls of Jericho fall when the priests march round them and the people shout. Gideon with three hundred men defeats an army of Midianites like grasshoppers for multitude. Samson slays a thousand Philistines with the simple theological weapon, the jawbone of an ass. Shamgar slaughters six hundred with an ox goad. David with a sling and stone kills a giant about eleven feet and a half high, about as big as they made them in those days, and is declared to have been worth ten thousand men (2 Sam., xviii., 3). Solomon was wiser than all men, and had a thousand wives and concubines, and had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots. Beneath this tall talk there may have been some substratum of historic fact, but when we read that it was Elhanan who slew Goliath (2 Sam., xxi., 19), and that the author of the Song of Solomon speaks of three-score queens and fourscore concubines, while Chronicles only represents Solomon as having four thousand stalls of horses, we see there is a very considerable discount to be taken off somewhere.

Allied to pride of race is pride of caste. Throughout the Bible the handiwork of priest or of prophet is plainly visible. The priests are holy. Aaron's rod blossoms as a sign of the pre-eminence of the priestly tribe. All the kings who disregard their laws come to a bad end. God even sends lying prophets to deceive them. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are swallowed up by an earthquake for disputing the authority of Moses. Forty-two children are torn to pieces by two divinely-inspired she-bears for calling Elisha "baldhead." Lions refuse to eat the prophet Daniel, and fire forbears to burn Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Not only are their persons sacred, but the instruments of their craft also. Uzzah is struck dead for merely touching the ark to prevent it toppling over. No less than fifty thousand and seventy of the little village of Bethshemesh were slain for looking into God Almighty's travelling trunk (1 Sam., vi., 19). We must suppose that all these people persisted in gratifying their curiosity at the certain cost of life.

Other fables arose from more creditable causes. The stories of the creation, of the deluge, and of the confusion of tongues were unscientific attempts to solve natural problems. The story of the tower of Babel possibly arose from a misconception, the word Babel being taken as signifying confusion. So the story of woman being made from man's rib may have arisen from the word "bone" being used as a figure for the innermost part of a thing. Thus a man to express unity with woman would say, "Thou art bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," and the expression would give rise to the legend.

Hero-worship largely contributed to give a fabulous character to the Bible, and the wonders related by the old Jewish writers of their heroes had, of course, to be outdone by the Messiah. Certain things were expected of him, so of course they were said to have been done "that the saying might be fulfilled." Moses had been saved in infancy, so Jesus must be saved likewise. Moses brought water from the rock and fed the Israelites with manna, so Jesus turns water into wine and feeds thousands miraculously. As Elijah restored the widow's son at Zarephath and was taken into heaven, so Jesus raises the widow's son at Nain, and although crucified did not die but rose again and ascended into heaven.

If such tales as these were read in any other book, as in the Koran for instance, we should look on them as no better than semi-savage stories or puerile inventions, but being taught from infancy to consider them as divine, and to regard all doubt of the word of God as deadly sin, we are led astray in our whole conception of the past history of our race, and what is worse, learn to hate and despise our fellows for the sake of fables scarcely fit to form the nursery tales of a civilised people.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE accidental arrangement of paragraphs sometimes occasions a very good joke. One appeared in the *Times* the other day when a letter from Archbishop Thomson, of York, whitewashing the church, was followed by an advertisement of Thomson's Bleaching Process.

ACID DROPS.

THE *Christian World* gushes like a pious flunkey over the Queen's opening of Parliament. It devotes several columns to the affair. One account is written by "Christopher Crayon" who took up his station among the mob to report the incidents of the royal procession. He observes that the crowd was not at all joyful, but eminently sad and dull; and adds, "I did not hear a remark worth quoting from anyone." As though people who ever make a remark worth quoting would cool their feet in the slush for hours in order to see a red-faced corpulent old lady drive down the street. Yet he concludes that "the pageant of Thursday did people good. It helped to circulate money, and that is a blessing. It helped to make people loyal—and loyalty to the Crown, as it represents the country, is a virtue." This passage is full of political and economical blunder, but it is perhaps sound enough for our Christian contemporary.

ALL that was wanted, says Christopher Crayon, was a "little sunshine" to light up the gilded carriages and the flunkeys' calves. The Lord, however, was obstinate and sent sleet instead.

THE other report in the *C. W.* was written by a new county member. This gentleman is a Christian, and would no doubt publicly profess his belief that God is no respecter of persons, as well as in a number of other harmless platitudes. But his faith in these things does not prevent his gushing over the "splendid and magnificent sight—royalty, power, rank, talent, birth, beauty, were all combined, and all presented in fullest display of dress, of jewellery, and of outward glory." Really this new county member, with a little eccentricity in spelling, might rival and even eclipse Thackeray's Jeames.

By the way, the *C. W.*, like a good Protestant paper, is quite rabid against the Irish Roman Catholics, and in its passion it became so imprudent as to prophesy that "Probably before this paper is in the hands of our readers the National League will be proclaimed, and not a moment too soon, by the Government." Alas, the days of Daniel are gone, and even inspired journals should remember the Yankee humorist's advice to "never prophesy unless you know." The Tory Government is gone to pot, and the National League settled it.

THE *C. W.* publishes a long screed, in the shape of an interview from an American merchant, a gentleman whose name is not given, who occupies no public position, and whose only claim to a hearing seems to be his Protestant zeal. He describes the Irish in America in the blackest colors, and represents them as without a single redeeming quality. But, he adds, "I am, of course, speaking of the Roman Catholic Irishmen. The Protestant Irish are as good citizens as we have." This is the sort of bigoted nonsense which the leading Nonconformist journal in England prints as a contribution to the settlement of the Irish Question.

ACCORDING to the *St. James's Gazette* the editor or proprietor of the *Christian Commonwealth* has received sums amounting to £300 of Mr. James Russell, a Scotch farmer, who has since gone bankrupt. In return the reverend writer's "blood boiled," on behalf of his unfortunate client, and he told "almost incredible tales of the cold-blooded ferocity" of Scotch landlords. The moral drawn from this seem to be that the "Rev. Mr. Brook's boiling point is £300."

AT Ipswich Police-court the Rev. A. Francis, curate-in-charge of Burgh, near Woodbridge, was fined 2s. 6d. for being drunk and incapable. The defendant gave the name of Richard Crossby, and described himself as a teacher. He said he had been a teetotaler, and did not know the effects of spirits, two bottles of which were found upon him.

By the way, it was all right to fine the reverend gentleman for being drunk, but why add *incapable*? If every incapable sky-pilot were fined half-a-crown, and had to pay the cash into our office, we should be able to take a big holiday this summer.

MR. STEAD, the pious editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, has been publishing an account of his martyrdom, which appears to have been remarkably easy. He edited his paper while in Holloway Gaol, and had a nice room fitted up with his own furniture. He lived on the fat of the land, and his domicile was always decorated with fresh flowers. Besides walking in the grounds whenever he pleased, he saw his friends every day, and his wife every other day. On Christmas Day Mrs. Stead and the children came and made merry with him, playing blind man's buff and other games. Those who read Mr. Foote's *Prisoner for Blasphemy* will see what a different martyrdom the Freethinker had to undergo.

MR. STEAD bears out what Mr. Foote says as to the prisoners in chapel. "The way in which they joined in the responses," he writes, "was an example to the abbey and the cathedral, especially in the litany, which we had twice a week. The exemplary fashion in which they recited the creeds was most surprising. They went through it with the precision of machines. And

didn't they sing!" Exactly so. Ninety-nine out of every hundred gaol-birds have had some sort of Christian training. The hundredth man is probably a Jew or a heathen. Freethinkers are conspicuous by their absence.

DR. BRISTOL, the Spring Valley, New Jersey, pastor, who is under bail, charged with assaulting a young girl, did not preach last Sunday. His church has failed to take advantage of the immense service his notoriety would enable him to do the cause of religion, and has suspended him.

JOHN HORTON, lately in the employment of the Wesleyan Chapel Committee, was indicted at the Manchester Assizes yesterday for misappropriating the sum of £5,000 from the funds. He pleaded guilty, and Mr. Justice Grantham, who commented in strong terms upon the management under which the prisoner found it possible to carry on such a fraud, passed a sentence of five years' penal servitude.

ANOTHER man of God gone wrong. The Rev. Arthur Denny, of 3 Bonfield Road, Clapham, was on Monday last charged at Bow Street with being drunk and behaving indecently on Saturday night in St James's Park. His solicitor said there was no defence; the poor sky-pilot had been dining, not wisely, but too well. Sir James Ingham fined him five pounds. Perhaps the lady members of the reverend gentleman's congregation will make up the amount.

ALAS, poor men of God! How the days are altered since David danced before the ark! It was dangerous for anyone to reprove him, but now the very police interfere with such things, and magistrates say "a fiver or a month."

THE inquiry into the Royal Liver Society was resumed on Monday at Liverpool. One witness deposed that he was asked by a collector to sign a document, the reason being that "a lot of 'Papes' [Papists] wanted to get hold of the society." The clerk who formerly had charge of the advertisement book of the society deposed that on one occasion 4,000 copies of the *Protestant Standard* were charged for, although only 2,000 were supplied. The Commissioner noted in the advertisement book that the same paper got eight insertions of the balance-sheet instead of four, for which the estimate was given, and £1 was added to the quoted price. "This (he said) was a matter which would need clearing up."

THE Rev. Mr. Jardine, of Kansas City, having been exposed as a man of most corrupt morals, committed suicide last week by taking chloroform.

He would rather be an angel,
And with the angels dwell,
Than be precluded while on earth
From sending girls to L.

So he went up the flume.

A YOUNG man named Charles Napier Sampson, committed suicide by leaping from Clifton Suspension Bridge. The evidence at the inquest showed that the deceased suffered from religious mania. He had been hovering for some time between the Ritualist Church and the Church of Rome, and uncertain wherein lay salvation, his mind became uninged. One more of the many victims of religion of whom a few are bold enough to seek escape in suicide.

Two poor women have been sentenced at the Thames Police Court to three months' imprisonment each with hard labor for fortune-telling. The witnesses against them had been sent by a detective and were only charged sixpence each for having their hearts buoyed up with hopes of money being left them, and sweetheart offers of marriage. Surely this is rather severe when fifty thousand sky-pilots live on the fat of the land by post-mortem fortune-telling. Our school children need as much protection from superstition as the grown-up servant girls and foolish women who patronise the illegal sixpenny fortune-tellers.

THE Salford magistrates are nice persons to administer the law. They acquitted a prisoner charged with stealing a watch on the ground that "there was not much credence to be attached to the prosecutor, especially as he had declined to take the oath." Their declarations that they disbelieve a man because he preferred an affirmation to an oath proves their gross impertinence and ignorance of the law which in permitting affirmation certainly never contemplated that those who prefer that method should be subjected to insult.

DAVID NERO, a negro preacher, calling himself Principal of Sumner College, Kansas, has been remanded at Glasgow, charged with fraud. Although married, he had carried on love correspondence with a number of ladies.

THE Rev. H. H. Smith, vicar of Market Rasen, writes to the *English Churchman* declaring that there is a higher authority than either the Speaker or Mr. Gladstone for the opinion that an infidel is not fit to be a legislator. The authority in question

is verse 3 of 2 Samuel xxiii., where David in his last words before instructing his sons to slay the sons of Saul declares "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." The authority of David is, however, unrecognised by the British constitution.

BOOTH's latest dodge is selling Salvation hearth-rugs with holy mottoes on each side. Fancy warming your toes with the words "Blood and Fire," and "Come to Jesus," staring you in the face. Booth evidently could give points to Jesus Christ. He has found out how to serve God and Mammon at the same time.

WE regret to notice the announcement that illness prevents Col. Ingersoll from lecturing at present. His last lecture is that upon "Myth and Miracle," published at our office. We trust the gallant Colonel will soon take the field again. Not only is he a great power for good in America, but the circulation of his lectures proves that his influence is very extensive in this country also.

THE *Church Review* complains that in each case where there is an agitation against Ritualism the persecution comes from some rival Anglican church. Christ Church is attacking St. Peter's at Folkestone, St. Luke is persecuting his brother evangelist St. Matthew at Sheffield, and St. Bridget is pitching into her sister St. Margaret at Liverpool. How these Christians love one another.

As the Rev. A. H. Paine, the curate-in-charge at St. Margaret's, Liverpool, continues the illegal ceremonies for which the Rev. Bell Cox was suspended, and the Bishop declines to sanction another prosecution, the Ritualists may be considered to have once more triumphed.

WHAT is the difference between a Secular Hall and a Ritualistic Church?—At the former you get sense, at the latter incense and nonsense.

THE *Medium* and *Daybreak* gives over two columns of verbiage, as being spoken by a medium controlled by the spirit of "The Emperor Julian." Long residence in Hades must have emasculated that sturdy Pagan's mind, or he would not drivel so hopelessly over "God's spiritual dispensation." We should have well liked to meet the Emperor if he had preserved some of his ancient manliness, but if he is properly represented by the flabby maunderings in the *Medium*, he has sadly degenerated indeed, and is only fit for the society of imbeciles.

LAST summer several murders were committed in Texas in a very mysterious manner. This winter two other crimes of the same nature have followed. The authorities have been unable to trace the murderers, whose work was performed in a peculiarly cruel way. One woman had a sharp instrument driven into her car, penetrating the brain. A servant girl was brained with a hatchet. Others were put to death in various fiendish ways. Last week, the authorities of Austin were convinced they had found the murderer in the person of a Mexican who is crazed by religion. He is, he says, controlled by the Almighty, who moves him and directs his actions, and one of the directions is to go out at night and draw blood. No doubt the Mexican believes in the Bible declaration that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins."

A MAN in Minneapolis sued a church for 20,000dols. because he fell down a stairway, which he took for a dark closet. He lost his suit. The jury evidently took the ground that if a man insists upon going to church he must put up with the consequences.

WE have much pleasure in giving gratis to the Very Rev. Archpriest Hatherley the following advertisement, which we cut from the *Church Times*:

CLERGYMEN or other friends desirous of obtaining WATER direct from the RIVER JORDAN.

The Very Rev. Archpriest Hatherley, of the Greek Church, who is purposing to make his third pilgrimage to Jerusalem, will have great pleasure in procuring the same for them under his immediate supervision, the genuineness of which will be verified by the authorities on the spot.

Terms, 5s. per bottle, to be remitted in advance with a full and clearly written address to Messrs. Papayanni and Co., Liverpool.

Jordan water is an excellent thing for the scurvy, as testified by General Naaman in the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker*.

"IN six days," said the sky-pilot, addressing the Sunday-school, "God made the earth. Now, dear children, what did he do the seventh day?" No answer. "I will ask you, Johnny Sharpe," continued the sky-pilot, pleasantly; "after working six days what do people do on Sunday?" "Pleathe, thir," replied Johnny Sharpe, "they have a good dinner and go to the pub, sir."

WRITERS in the *Baptist* have for some time past been squabbling over the burning question of hell-fire. We call it squabbling, for the subject of hell is one that doesn't admit of discussion.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 7, St. James's Hall, Grand Parade, Brighton; at 11, "The Church in Danger;" at 3, "Gladstone on Genesis;" at 7, "Bible Blunders."

FEBRUARY 11, Hall of Science, London; 14, Milton Hall; 18, Hall of Science, London; 21, Manchester; 28, South Shields.

MARCH 7, Hall of Science, London; 14, Hall of Science, London; 21, Leeds; 28, Milton Hall.

APRIL 4, Wigan.

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.

J. G. C.—It is by informing us that Abraham did not leave Haran or Charran until "his father was dead" that Acts vii, 4, shows us that the beautiful Sarah must have been over 125. Abraham's father died at the age of 205 (Gen. xi, 32). As Abraham was born when his father Terah was 70 (Gen. xi, 26), he must have been only 70 years younger than his father, that is, he must have been at least 135 years of age when he commenced his wanderings at God's command. As Sarah was ten years younger than Abraham (Gen. xvii, 17), Sarah must have been 125. This, it is true, does not agree with the age mentioned in Genesis, but if God chooses to contradict himself we suppose we must let him.

W. H. COOPER.—Thanks. Cuttings are always welcome. See "Acid Drops."

W. FOXWELL.—Hardly in our way.

H. S.—We don't know any particular book of the kind. There are plenty of works against Christianity, and many published at our office. In explaining to your relatives your "Agnosticism" you must of course follow your own guidance. How can we help you in such a matter?

W. H. RIDER.—The suggestion shall be considered.

W. FRESHFIELD writes: "I have just been reading the February number of *Progress*. It is splendid, and does infinite credit to Freethought. Anyone with a relish for literature must find B.V.'s article worth many times the price. I am longing for the continuation. Mr. Wheeler's paper on Charles Blount is also valuable. I wish he would give us more sketches of historic Freethinkers."

J. TAYLOR (Stockton-on-Tees) asks what we mean by asserting that what he says is not worth a sensible man's attention. We reply that the words are plain to every sensible man. He declares that he did not state that Secularism aims at abolishing marriage, but only said that that is what it must lead to. In support of this wild speculation he quotes a passage from an anonymous book, which has absolutely no connection with the Secular party. If a Secular bookseller sells it, he is not responsible for all its author's positions. A bookseller who sold nothing he could not himself defend in argument would have a very slender trade. Mr. Ramsey has sold copies of the Bible. Does that imply that he agrees with Moses and approves God's order to murder men and debauch women? J. Taylor makes a fresh discovery, namely, that Secularism is opposed to civil and religious liberty. Does not this demonstrate the soundness of our judgment on J. Taylor?

C. DEAKINS.—The passage occurs in an article by Professor Huxley on the Methods and Results of Ethnology, originally published in the *Fortnightly Review*, and reprinted in *Lay Sermons*.

G. COCKMAN.—The reference was to Rev. iii, 16.

MANOMET.—We regret we cannot help you in the matter. Apply to Mr. C. Herbert, bookseller, Goswell Road.

A REDUCED FREETHINKER wishes to dispose of the bound volumes of this journal for '83, '84 and '85. Apply E. Gault, 5 Coutts Road, Burdett Road, Bow.

D. ASKURTH.—Thanks for the batch of cuttings.

H. K.—The subject is certainly grave and important. Shall appear.

F. MULVEY.—Our readers cannot do us a better service than by sending us newspaper cuttings. See "Sugar Plums."

E. L. HALFORD.—Any sketch you send for the competition can be returned if you enclose the necessary postage.

OAKENSHAW.—The work has been out of print for many years. Besides, we cannot attend to orders for literature.

J. F. DAVIS.—Duly received. We regret to hear that you can no longer obtain the Circus for lectures at Hanley, but trust that you will before long succeed elsewhere.

A. E. DOWNS asks whether Mr. Bradlaugh was badly beaten in a debate with some sky-pilot at Bristol about eighteen years ago. We don't know; it was before we knew Mr. Bradlaugh; but from what we do know of him since 1869, we should bet our bottom dollar against the sky-pilot's victory.

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.—Oldham Evening Chronicle—Western Morning News—Woolwich Gazette—Great Thoughts—Church Reformer—Liverpool Halfpenny Weekly—Liberal—Boston Investigator.

"FREETHINKER" PRIZES.

We regret to say again that none of the sketches for the Feb. 1 Competition are good enough to take a prize.

Commended.—E. Anderson, "Shaver."

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 March 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.

THE GLASGOW PROSECUTION.

Just as we were going to press we received the following telegram from Mr. Wallace:

"Case called. Court interposed. Unanimous that such prosecutions and discussion thereof undesirable. Recommended withdrawal, and case continued till to-morrow for consent of prosecution. Lord Adam added as a condition of withdrawal that Ferguson be not sent back to gaol."

So far so good. Our readers will be delighted at this news. We shall write at greater length on the subject next week.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE cheap edition of Mr. Foote's *Prisoner for Blasphemy* is ready and on sale, but we regret that, owing to an accident, there has been a delay at the binder's with the best edition. Those who are disappointed by the non-execution of their orders will not have to wait more than a day or two longer. We may add, for the information of our readers, that the volume is tastefully got up, and contains a considerable addition to the articles that appeared in *Progress*. It comprises 180 pages, and the print and paper, even of the cheap edition, are excellent. Every Freethinker who can afford it should have on his book-shelf a copy of this unique volume.

THE Rev. J. S. Headlam is a strenuous opposer of the Blasphemy Laws, and our East London readers may be interested to learn that he lectures on Blasphemy next Monday evening for the Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S., at the Monarch Coffee-house, Bethnal Green Road. Time 8.30; admission free. Mr. Headlam should have a large audience.

IN the current number of the *Church Reformer* Mr. Headlam writes: "Of all those who have taken part in the 'Bradlaugh Question' Mr. Bradlaugh himself is the only one whose record is perfectly clean."

MR. BRADLAUGH has sent us a copy of his Land Cultivation Bill, which is backed by Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Arch and Mr. Burt. The principle of it is that those who hold more than one hundred acres of land in a waste or uncultivated state shall forfeit it, subject to twenty-five years' compensation on the basis of the average produce during the previous fourteen years. We expect the Bill will give rise to a lively discussion.

AT a meeting held for the purpose of federating the Radical clubs in and around London, a long discussion ensued as to the desirability of admitting the National Secular Society, and the question was eventually settled in the affirmative, on the ground that the society represented *bona fide* Radical views.

SPEAKING of the member for Derby's chance of occupying the woolsack, the *Pall Mall Gazette* says: "Six months of the Lord Chancellorship would be a cheap price for the privilege of extinguishing for the rest of his days a politician who contributes nothing of wisdom, courage or conscience to the Liberal host, and who has so excellent a qualification for acting as the keeper of the Queen's conscience in the fact that his own constitutions so small a tax upon his attention."

IN Mr. Wheeler's paper on Charles Blount in the current number of *Progress* he shows that that Freethinker was the chief means of liberating the English press from the tyranny of a licensing censor. In the paper on Blount in "Half-hours with Freethinkers" no mention is made of this important item in Blount's career.

MR. FROUDE in his new book quotes with much sympathy St. Aldegonde's saying in *Lothair*—"How I hate Sundays!" He remarks that "People, as a fact, think as usual, and talk as usual, but they must not act as usual." He wants to know why he may not play chess on Sundays, and he explodes the bad-example argument as follows: "I must not set a bad example; but is it wrong? And, if not wrong, why is the example bad?" We should very much like to see an article by Mr. Froude on the Sunday question. It would be interesting reading, and it might do the Protestant Philistine a deal of good

ACCORDING to the *Times* report of the sale of the Woodhull Library, the original editions of some of Giordano Bruno's works fetched extraordinary prices. The *Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante* was knocked down at £360. The imprint of the book was "Parigi, 1584," and it was dedicated to Sir Philip Sydney. The work is so rare that Toland imagined his copy (Query—Was this the one mentioned in Addison's *Spectator*?) the only one. Mr. Woodhull's copy had been sold at an auction in Paris, March 28, 1791, for £13 10s. Another of Bruno's works, *Cena de la Ceneri descritta in Cinque Dialoge*, also dated 1584, probably printed in London, and dedicated to Castelnau, the French Ambassador, with whom Bruno resided, was knocked down at £365. At the Paris auction it fetched £6 10s. It is supposed that the Duc D'Aumale has acquired these precious volumes.

R. M., who has recently been contributing a series of papers on Workmen and Museums, to the pages of the *Liverpool Mercury* is continuing his excellent, chatty, scientific articles in the *Halfpenny Weekly*, a paper which should be in demand in these hard times.

THE *Truthseeker* continues its Freethought illustrations. The latest number also contains an excellent paper on the "Revised Bible," by Elizur Wright, being one of the last productions of that lamented Freethinker's pen.

CHAINED TO THE CHURCH.—III.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

WHAT a glorious thing, said a theologian to me, it is to be the fortunate possessor of spiritual vision! To be able to see into futurity; to apprehend the incomprehensible and grasp the infinite? Dost thou deny that there exist men who possess this faculty? Oh, thou wretched and perverse sceptic, who being blind thyself deniest vision to others. Behold how thou art answered. Some men are color blind. Agreed. Well, then, would it not be preposterous for these to affirm that others, who declared that they could see objects of various colors, were fools, who wished to impose upon the credulity of their fellows? Again, some men are destitute of the musical faculty. They think that "Wait till the clouds roll by" is as fine a work of art as "Washed in the blood of the Lamb," and appreciate more thoroughly the musical performances of the Salvation Army than fine organ selections from Handel or Mozart. But if there were some who, being destitute of the musical faculty, denied that either vocal or instrumental harmony could be produced, what, thou perverse sceptic, wouldst thou say to such as these?

Then I opened my mouth, and said that it was true that some men were color blind and others destitute of the musical faculty, and if it were true that some were in like manner destitute of a spiritual faculty—whose fault was it? If it were God's, how could he blame a man because he did not possess the gift? And if God were all-good and all-powerful, and desired man to possess such a power, he could impart it; and if he did not impart it, it must be because he thought that some men at least were better without it.

"But," I continued, "tell me, O thou who art endowed with spiritual vision, what thou seest that I cannot perceive? what thou knowest that I am incapable of knowing? what thou canst do that I am incapable of performing? If I am destitute of the musical sense, I see the musician go through his performances, and I hear sounds which I am informed are both pleasant and harmonious. And if I am color blind, I see those who declare that they distinguish various colors in objects which I see, but which to me are all of the same hue. With your spiritual vision what do you see? With your glorious faith what do you understand?"

But he could only tell me that I was blind to things divine, and that my soul was spiritually starved.

At length I came across another theologian—the only sensible one I ever met. He belonged to the same school as the Rev. Professor John Symes and Canon Shuttleworth, and was gifted with a greater measure of common sense and knowledge of the world than were ever found in a parson before. Grasping me earnestly by the hand, he expressed a fervent hope that he would be the means of bringing me back to the Church—the National Church—to which I and all Englishmen belong, and which we never could leave, though to all appearance I had left it for several years.

He told me that Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote, and other so-called infidels, were really great supporters of the

Church—though for the most part the clergy were not aware of it, nor even these gentlemen themselves—and he impressed upon me most earnestly that if the honorable member for Northampton had not strained at a little theological gnat, the Church would have been bound to have swallowed a great sceptical camel, as it did in the case of Bishop Colenso and other learned divines, who wrote treatises to prove that the Holy Scriptures were not inspired truths, but uninspired errors. Furthermore, that Mr. Bradlaugh would have stood a good chance of being made the Bishop of Timbuctoo after he had written his comments on "Genesis"; and Messrs. Foote and Wheeler would each have been elevated to high position before they had completed their "Crimes of Christianity."

Then this rational divine whispered in my ear that all the learned clergy knew that the Bible was not a god-inspired book, but only an assorted bundle of theological tracts of some antiquity. Nor were the clergy fools enough to believe in miracles, except in so far as every event in nature might in one sense be regarded as both mysterious and miraculous, or, in other words, beyond man's power to thoroughly explain. As for Jesus, he was merely a man; a good man, a Radical, and a blasphemer to boot, and he only died like any other martyr, to show how sincere he was in his principles—principles the general adoption of which he thought would mean the practical salvation of mankind. Neither belief in the devil nor hell-fire were essential parts of the Christian creed.

In point of truth the Church had no fixed creed; its Bible was frequently being revised, its dogmas often undergoing changes, and there was really no strong objection to the Church, one of these fine days, incorporating the fundamental principles of the National Secular Society as part of its creed.

When I heard this I clasped the rational parson to my breast and wept bitterly, saying, "O father, I have sinned against thee in all my lectures, make me one of thy hired servants."

From that hour my conversion was rapid. The wanderer has returned to the Church of his Fathers.

And now I find that all the Churches—according to the most bigotted of the clergy during the election—are to be turned into music-halls, public libraries, museums, picture galleries, halls of science, and that engagements have already been entered into whereby the following ladies and gentlemen will alternately occupy the various pulpits: Professor Huxley, G. H. Macdermott, Rev. Stewart Headlam, Mrs. Weldon, Canon Farrar, Bessie Belwood, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Charles Bradlaugh, Mr. Ruskin, General Booth, and G. W. Foote. Need I add, dear readers, that among the congregation there will always be one repentant sinner, who forever will be remembered as

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

REVIEWS.

The Malthusians. By P. J. PROUDHON. International Publishing Co., 35 Newington Green Road, N. One penny.—Denounces the theory of Malthus as "political murder," and Malthusians as "carnivora."

Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? By SALADIN. W. Stewart and Co., Holborn Viaduct Stops, E.C.—A vigorous attack upon the central myth of Christianity. The improbability of Roman soldiers sleeping at their watch, the silence of contemporary writers, the disbelief of the Jews and early Christian heretics, the incredible and contradictory statements of the gospels, and the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence for those documents, are all dealt with by Saladin. The work may be recommended as most damaging to the Christian cause.

MYTHS, ANCIENT AND MODERN.—The myths of Paganism are as dead as Osiris or Zeus, and the man who should revive them, in opposition to the knowledge of our time, would be justly laughed to scorn; but the coeval imaginations current among the rude inhabitants of Palestine, recorded by writers whose very name and age are admitted by every scholar to be unknown, have, unfortunately not yet shared their fate, but even at this day are regarded by nine-tenths of the civilised world as the authoritative standard of fact and the criterion of the justice of scientific conclusions in all that relates to the origin of things, and among them of species. In this nineteenth century, as at the dawn of modern physical science, the cosmogony of the semi-barbarous Hebrew is the incubus of the philosopher and the opprobrium of the orthodox.—Professor T. Huxley, *Lay Sermons.*

SECULARISM DEFENDED.

A CORRESPONDENT, in sending Mr. Ramsey his half-year's subscription for the *Freethinker*, writes also a carefully-drawn-up letter of complaint, directed against what he considers certain weak or neglected points in the *Freethinker* and in Secularism. As his remonstrance is evidently, and in fact necessarily, intended for notice by others besides Mr. Ramsey, to whom it is addressed, and as it represents accurately and very forcibly a view of Free-thought which is held in all sincerity by some estimable though weak-kneed Freethinkers as well as by many Christians, I will quote and answer the whole of the letter bit by bit, placing the passages from the letter within inverted commas, to distinguish them from my own comments.

"Sir,—I wish Mr. Foote would insert something in the *Freethinker* every week to help men to live well." This remark ignores two or three rather important considerations. (1) To attack and destroy evil is to help men to live well. (2) The advantages of the great modern principle, and the inevitability of the almost universal modern practice, of the division of labor, are overlooked. The *Freethinker* does a certain class of work, and this is proclaimed aloud to everyone in its title, which signifies, or at least is almost universally held to signify, hostility to Christianity. All manner of moral work, and a vast variety of instruction and help in innumerable branches of human knowledge, are necessary to enable men to live well. It does not follow that the *Freethinker*, which is especially devoted to one portion of the great work of human progress, should undertake all other portions as well. The Jack-of-all-trades usually does nothing well, and often fails in everything. The ordinary cookery books, magazines, newspapers, and works on almost every conceivable subject, will help people to "live well," both physically and morally, and by avoiding the direct advocacy of Free-thought these works can secure a far larger circulation and the well-paid services of writers eminent in each particular branch of knowledge or thought. The *Freethinker* concentrates its attention on one particular task. It endeavors to amuse, to cheer, to encourage and to instruct Freethinkers in their Free-thought, and its readers buy it for that reason. It would be folly to exclude the expected Free-thought matter from its limited columns in order to fill them with ordinary disquisitions on temperance, household management, politics, science, art, literature, music, sociology, building societies, medicine, ventilation, thrift, clothing, amusements, businesses, and the thousand and one subjects needed for enabling nations and individuals to "live well" and happily. As to didactic sermons on truth, honesty, and the virtues generally, everyone knows what mockeries such school-boy formalisms are apt to become. Mankind do not so much need tiresome lectures in the general on the well-known moral A B C, as guidance to particular applications, such, for instance, as the great war waged by Free-thought against the degrading delusions, frauds, follies and crimes of superstition.

"Secularism at present is almost entirely destructive." It is destructive of mighty lies, and of rock-bound superstitions and prejudices that form the greatest obstacles to thorough social reform and unbiassed judgment.

"It makes very little direct effort to help men to be useful and happy." Education, temperance societies, political and social reforms, Malthusianism, science, art, morality, etc., are in the main manifestations of growing Secularism replacing religious follies, but Atheists who take prominent part in such work find it only wise and just and courteous to drop the theological dispute when engaged in carrying out such movements.

"It leaves man's life in its moral, social, and æsthetic aspects almost untouched." This is a libel. The pronounced Secularism that does its best to demolish a gigantic and widely mischievous delusion, does invaluable moral work. Is the forlorn hope of the war of freedom and truth, the pioneer band of reason and justice, to be condemned because it spends itself in the thick of the fight against one of man's worst enemies, instead of devoting itself to secondary and domestic reforms? Is Secularism to neglect the struggle for its own freedom? Is it to resign itself peacefully to the infamous laws by which insolent bigotry makes honest Free-thought a crime at law? The grand fight for truth and freedom is the very essence, the very life and soul, of real vigorous moral and social reform.

"Hence it is cold and repellent." The *Freethinker* is generally supposed to be rather "warm," and its numerous purchasers evidently find it tolerably attractive. Growing movements necessarily have to pass through their earlier stages of difficulty and trial. All honor to those who do their best to improve the organisation and work of a movement that entails serious sacrifices on the part of its promoters. It is help that is needed, not complaint; warm-hearted work, not cold unsympathetic criticism of others.

W. P. BALL.

(To be concluded).

THE LAY OF THE REVIVALIST.

I'm the great revival preacher, everyone has heard of me,
I'm the world-renowned exhorter from the wilds of Tennessee;
And whenever I am mentioned, give my name the proper twist,
This is Reverend Giascutis, styled the Boy Revivalist.
True, I am a boy no longer, for my hair is turning gray,
But there's money in the notion, so don't give the snap away.
I have always been a Christian, and when I was but a lad,
Though I lied and stole and cheated, and did other things as bad,
I believed in God and Satan, serving both of them on shares,
Going regular to meeting, where I often rose for prayers;
And there's nothing so disgusting as an infidel to me,
For, the fear of hell denied us, where would all the sinners be?
I'd a wife when I was younger, but I left her in the lurch,
For she was an unbeliever, and would never go to church.
"Be not yoked with unbelievers," is amongst the scripture's charms,
So I turned her from my doorway with a baby in her arms.
Now, they say, she sells her virtue—sins to buy my youngster bread;
And but for the love she bears him she were numbered with the dead.
Maybe it had better be so, but I pray she may be spared
To accept the blessed Gospel and not perish unprepared.
Yes, it goes against the doctrine that we ministers profess,
Though 'twould prove to be quite common if the truth were known, I guess,
But I've dropped the marriage racket, finding this is better sense:
Take a wife where'er you tarry and you'll thus avoid offence.
Once, before I went to preaching, I had taught a Sunday-school,
Scattering saving grace around according to the Gospel rule;
Soon my piety was noted, which no other's could surpass,
And they made me superintendent of the women's Bible class.
Everybody in the parish had in me such confidence,
That in taking up collection I could gather in the pence;
And the same I did sequester, and I almost blush to tell,
When I left that place the people missed the deacon's wife as well.
But I soon grew weary of her; rather she got tired of me,
So she went back to the deacon, and 'tis said they both agree
That Christianity's a humbug, and they'll never more take part
In the spreading of the Gospel—May God grant them change of heart.
I am wheat and they are tares gone to swell the Devil's grist,
I'm the Reverend Giascutis, styled the Boy Revivalist.
There is nothing hits me closer than a woman who's aggrieved
With the conduct of her husband, and who thinks she is deceived;
She is misery embodied, I am balm personified,
And my style of consolation never fails where it is tried.
But I wander from my subject; I am bound for realms of bliss;
There is but one way to get there, and that single way is this:
Who believes not, he shall perish; who has faith, he shall be saved;
Human hearts are desperate wicked, we are totally depraved.
Who can doubt that blessed doctrine? surely none with common sense,
Pleading at the court of conscience, here's myself in evidence.

ENQUIRING YOUNGSTER: "Papa, when we enter heaven do we not march through the pearly gates?" Papa: "Yes, my son." E. Y.: "And each gate is made of one big, solid pearl?" Papa: "Yes, my son." E. Y.: "Where do the oysters grow that contains such big pearls?" Papa (angrily): "Where's my whip, you young scamp?"

"MIKE, now that you have renounced your former faith, and joined our church," said a Protestant preacher to a newly-admitted Hibernian member, "you must abstain from swearing." "Oi will, sor." "You must not go fishing on Sunday, either." "Oi will not, sor." "I desire to use you as an example, and when one of your former associates asks you why you joined my church, I want you to give him a good answer." "Thrust me for that, sor." "I am glad to hear you speak so. Now suppose me to be one of the men who work at the brickyard," and he stepped off a few paces, and then advancing, said: "Hello, Mike." "Hello, yerself." "I understand that you have joined the Protestant Church." "Oi hev." "What were your reasons for doing so?" "None av yer d—d business."

PROFANE JOKES.

ONE of our Freethought friends at Balham has a pet Italian greyhound, which out of fun he has named "Jesus." One of the children being asked at school, "Do you love Jesus?" replied, "Oh, yes, mum; we keep him tied up in our back yard."

THE Rev. Mr. Slytes, of Bungton (to usher in up-town church): "Will you show me to a pew, please?" Usher: "You can take any of the back pews, sir." The Rev. Mr. Slytes: "But I am the Rev. Mr. Slytes of Bungton." Usher: "That don't make any difference, sir. The back pews can be occupied by anybody who behaves himself."

A RECENT lesson in the Sabbath-school was on the death of Elisha, and when one of the scholars came to the clause, "They buried him," the teacher asked, "Why did they not cremate him? Do you think there is any encouragement in the Bible for cremation?" "No encouragement whatever," was the reply; "they tried it on the three that were cast into the fiery furnace, and it didn't work at all."

CHILDREN are reasoners far beyond their years sometimes. This one must have studied Spinoza in some previous stage of its evolution, for at five years he had the Pantheistic philosophy at his tongue's tip. Listen:—"Mother, isn't Dod everywhere?" "Certainly, my son." "In me, mother?" "Yes, my child." "In every part of me, mother?" "Assuredly. Why do you ask?" "Oh! I was only thinking you musn't spank me any more." "Why not?" "Because, mother, when you spank me you spank Dod, and you ought to stop it!"

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