

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



THE EFFECT OF SPURGEON'S PRAYERS.

AT HOME.

AT MENTONE.

All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.—MATT. XXI, 22.

THE RESURRECTION:

A LETTER TO JESUS CHRIST.

DEAR SIR, DEAR GHOST, OR DEAR GOD,—Last week I addressed you on the subject of your Crucifixion. You have not yet replied, but I do not despair of an answer, for your movements are always slow. Eighteen centuries ago you began to redeem the world, and you have made very little progress yet. If you are so long fulfilling your solemn promises, I need not wonder at your tardiness in answering my letter. Besides, I am in no particular hurry. My questions will keep, and I shall quietly await your convenience. Some day you may have a spare hour to attend to my communication. But I beg you will not send a reply by lightning, to make up for lost time, as my life is not heavily insured, and my wife would not like the bother of an inquest. You need not even incur the expense of a long telegram. The penny post will do. Meanwhile I venture to address you again on the subject of your Resurrection. You can answer both letters at once.

According to your biographers you were buried at the expense of your friend, Mr. Joseph of Arimathæa. He appears to have done the thing handsomely, and your obsequies were a little above your station in life. He laid your body in a new tomb, rolled a big stone against the entrance, and went home to supper. No doubt he wished you an eternal farewell. I cannot conceive that he expected to see you again, or he would have left you a free exit when you took it into your head to walk out.

In that sepulchre you performed a marvellous feat. You spent three days there between late on Friday night and early on Sunday morning. Many who are engaged on day work would like to know how you did it. Perhaps you reckoned according to rules of your father's shop—I refer to Joseph, and not the Holy Ghost. Saturday was one day, and the nights counted as two more.

The Apostles' Creed states that you—I suppose it means your soul—descended into hell during your burial; and it was then, I presume, that you “preached unto the spirits in prison.” Indeed, one of the apocryphal gospels, in use by some of your early followers, gives a lively account of how you harried the realm of old Harry, emptying hell wholesale, and robbing the poor Devil of his illustrious subjects, from Adam to John the Baptist. If this story be true, how do you explain your promise to the penitent thief—“To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise”? Did you really say “To day shalt thou be with me in hell”? Or did you forget your intended trip to Gehenna, and had the poor thief to linger outside the gate of heaven until you arrived to pass him in?

With respect to the Jerusalem big-wigs who compassed your death, and proved that a single company of Roman soldiers were more than a match for a legion of angels, one of your biographers tells an astounding story. They informed Pilate that you had promised to rise again after three days, and requested him to take precautions against your disciples' playing the part of body-snatchers. Pilate gave them a watch of soldiers. But there was an earthquake on the Saturday night, and an angel flew down from heaven and rolled away the stone, which he sat on, frightening your keepers into fits. In the confusion you

seem to have walked off and borrowed a suit of clothes. Meanwhile the soldiers went and told the chief priests and elders what had happened. Those gentry gave them "large money," told them to say that your disciples stole the body while they slept, and promised to make it all right with Pilate.

Now this is a wonderful story, and I hope I am not impious in wishing it explained. How did the Jerusalem big-wigs know that you had prophesied your resurrection when your disciples, as John tells us (xx., 9), were ignorant of it themselves? How could their deceiving the people be any protection against you? Why did they continue to treat you as "a deceiver" after you had convinced them to the contrary? Had they really the superhuman courage, or the asinine stupidity, to oppose and vilify one who had proved himself the lord of life and death? Did a company of Roman soldiers actually take a bribe to confess that they had slept at their posts, and had thus committed an offence punishable with death? And how came they to trust for their safety to the Sanhedrim, when that body was notoriously at loggerheads with the Governor?

Until you enlighten me on these points I shall decline to believe the story; and when Matthew says that "this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day," I fancy I see an indication that the narrative was concocted long after your lamented decease.

Will you also kindly inform me which of your friends first visited your tomb on the morning of your Resurrection? Matthew brings two women, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary." Mark brings these two with a third called Salome. Luke ignores Salome, and substitutes Joanna. John brings Mary Magdalene alone. In presence of these contradictions, I know not what to believe. I am, indeed, inclined to think that Mary Magdalene, your hysterical adorer, dreamed the whole thing and imposed it on your disciples.

May I also ask to whom you first appeared? Matthew says you appeared to the ladies, Mark and John to Mary Magdalene, Luke to two gentlemen on the road to Emmaus. Not being endowed with miraculous powers, I cannot believe them all. Will you inform me which speaks the truth? You might also set my mind at rest as to your subsequent interviews with your friends, for my ingenuity is not capable of reconciling the statements of your biographers. Matthew says you appeared once, Luke twice, Mark thrice, and John four times. Were you, let me ask, a spectre or a resuscitated corpse? You gave doubting Thomas palpable proof of your substantial character, but on the other hand you crept through the keyhole of a closed door and vanished like a hedge-row ghost. I am still further puzzled by the statement that you ate a fish supper before you travelled to heaven. These things are too hard for me, and I crave your assistance.

Your friend Paul complicates the matter still more, for he says that you appeared unto five hundred of the brethren at once, some of whom were alive when he wrote. Yet, according to the Acts of the Apostles, the total number of the brethren after your Ascension was only a hundred and twenty. Were Paul's wits, or at least his arithmetic, disordered by that sunstroke; or did you return to earth after your Ascension, when the brethren had multiplied, and give another farewell performance, positively for the last time?

I do not wish to bore you, but I venture to ask another question. Why did you appear only to your disciples? How was it that no outsider ever caught sight of you? Your resurrection, according to Paul, is the central fact of Christianity, the pledge of our immortality, and the promise of our redemption. Why did you not substantiate it beyond dispute? You might have challenged the whole city of Jerusalem to the proof. You might have publicly appeared to your enemies as well as your friends, and Pilate might have forwarded a full account of the miracle to Rome, where it would have been preserved in the imperial archives. The whole world would then have been convinced. But, instead of this, you flitted about mysteriously, concealing a fact, which it was everyone's interest to know, from all but a favored few, who needed very little convincing. The Jews, among whom your resurrection occurred, denied it, and they deny it to this day. Yet you could have easily convinced them, and your neglecting to do so has cost that unhappy people ages of misery and rivers of blood. When the great Czar Nicholas, one Easter morning, was walking round his palace, he passed a sentinel who happened to be

a Jew. The lord of all the Russias gave the morning's salutation "Christ is risen." But the Jewish sentinel grounded his musket and said "Christ is *not* risen." The two men gazed at each other—czar and sentinel. They typified the conflict of centuries. "Christ is risen" say millions of aliens to the land of your birth. "Christ is *not* risen," say your countrymen. They have asserted it through ages of awful persecution. They have affirmed it through incredible sufferings and tortures. They have maintained it amidst the ruin of their homes, the massacre of their families, the violation of their wives and daughters, and the flames of a myriad stakes. Are they or their persecutors in the right? If you have the power to tell us, exercise it. Speak, and set the weary world at rest.

G. W. FOOTE.

A NEW TESTAMENT FORGERY.

If we select the Second Epistle of Peter as an example of a New Testament forgery it is not because we by any means consider the more important portions of that compilation to be genuine. On the contrary, of the twenty-seven documents included in the New Testament only the first four epistles of Paul were certainly written by the person whose name they bear. We instance the Second Epistle of Peter, both because it has been given up as spurious by many pious Christians and because if spurious there is no other alternative than that of forgery. Either it was written by the Apostle Peter or it was fraudulently put forward in his name.

In the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which every competent critic admits was certainly not written by Paul, the only forged portion is the superscription declaring it to be "the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews." But even the orthodox are relinquishing the notion that the titles of their sacred books were dictated by that mysterious individual the Holy Ghost. The Gospels are, professedly *according to*, not *written by* Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. With the Second Epistle of Peter there is no such evasion. The claims of the author to be the Apostle Peter are ostentatiously put forward. It commences by the writer styling himself "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." He declares that he was present with Jesus in the holy mount and heard a voice from heaven (i., 18). He says: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." Evidently he wishes to be taken for the same person as the author of the first epistle.

That, however, the Second Epistle of Peter is by a totally distinct writer is the conclusion of nearly every critic of eminence. Not only is its genuineness rejected by rationalist critics like Baur, Hilgenfeld, Bleek, Reuss and Davidson, but also by conservative theologians like Calvin, Grotius, Neander, Weiss, Huther, Abbott and Farrar. Indeed Rénan says that among true critics it has not a single defender. Both matter and manner of the two epistles are utterly unlike. Ardeacon Farrar says: "Independently of this distinctiveness of verbiage there is a wide difference between the two epistles in the general form of thought. This is a fact too obvious to be denied."* The first epistle is full of Hebraisms,† the second not; the first calls Jesus only Christ, the second continually calls him Lord and Savior; the first dwells on "hope," the second on "knowledge."

Still more decisive are the indications of late date in the second epistle, which Davidson places at about A.D. 170. The similarity with Jude is most striking,‡ and that the latter was the basis is proved by the greater simplicity, naturalness and spontaneity of those expressions in Jude which are also found in Second Peter. If Jude borrowed from Second Peter the description of the mockers in chapter ii., he would surely also have borrowed their refutation in chapter iii. 2 Peter ii., 11: "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusations against them before the Lord," is unintelligible without Jude 9, which give the particular instance of the archangel Michael, who when contending with the devil about the body of Moses durst not bring against him a railing

* *The Early Days of Christianity*, p. 104.

† This by no means proves it the work of Peter. It is extremely unlikely that a Jewish fisherman knew Greek at all.

‡ Compare especially chap. ii.

accusation. Jude used the phrase "clouds without water," which Second Peter alters to "wells without water." Reuss does not scruple to call the book a palpable plagiarism of Jude. But the plagiarist exposes himself. When Jude exhorted the faithful to be mindful of the words of your apostles, it was in keeping with his character, for Jude was no apostle, but when the writer of Second Peter copied the phrase he betrayed himself to be not of the number. The fact is fraudulently concealed in our version, which reads "us the apostles," while the Revised Version gives the true translation, "your apostles." The author, as Dr. Abbott and Archdeacon Farrar show, was acquainted with the works of Josephus, which were not published till after Peter was said to have been crucified at Rome. The allusions to the heresies are further indications of late date, confirmed by the fact that whereas all the early documents of the New Testament speak of the second coming of Christ as close at hand, Second Peter says that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The allusion to Brother Paul's epistles as scripture also betrays a post-apostolic age. The Epistle of Peter to James, in which he speaks of Paul as "the enemy," more clearly shows the spirit of primitive Christianity.

The external testimony leads to the same result. The work was unknown to any of the early Fathers. Neither Clement, Barnabas, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, nor Justin Martyr know anything of it. Irenæus (182—200 A.D.), to whom we mainly owe our canon, and who received the Epistle of Clement and the Pastor of Hermas as inspired, ignored Second Peter, mentioning the first "Peter in his epistle" in a way to imply he knew no second. It is not in the Muratorian canon, although that included the Revelation of Peter. Nor is it in the Syriac or the Vetus Itala versions, nor in the Apostolical Constitutions (210), although that work prescribes what books are to be read. Clement of Alexandria, who cites as inspired the Pastor of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, that of Clement, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Egyptians, the Traditions of the Apostle Matthias and other works, does not allude to it, but seems to exclude it by the expression, "Peter in the Epistle." Tertullian (220 A.D.), who cites Barnabas as the author of Hebrews, does not mention it, neither is it known by the other great African bishop, Cyprian. Canon Westcott admits it does not seem to have been generally known before the end of the third century.*

Origen (250 A.D.), who received the Pastor of Hermas as inspired, says Peter left but one acknowledged epistle. This is tantamount to a denial of the genuineness of the second. In his Greek works Origen speaks of "the epistle and the Catholic epistle" in the singular. It is only in the Latin translation that a reference to the second epistle is found. Eusebius (340 A.D.), in the chapter in which he speaks of the books of the New Testament,† reckons it among the *antilegomena* or disputed books and, as Reuss shows by "disputed" he means "illegitimate." He says that tradition does not reckon, as a part of the New Testament, the second epistle ascribed to Peter; but that, as in the opinion of most men, it is useful, it is much read. Didymus of Alexander (392 A.D.) says that in his time it was accounted spurious and was not in the canon, and that yet it was publicly read.‡ It was rejected by St. Chrysostom (407 A.D.), who doubtless thereby incurred eternal damnation; and by Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus. Even in the sixth century Cosmas says that only three Catholic epistles, instead of seven, were received. Various councils included it in the canon, and in the dark ages it was generally received. At the dawn of the Reformation, however, Erasmus challenged it and a succession of critics have confirmed the objections to it which in Dr. Schaff's orthodox *Encyclopedia of Theology* are acknowledged to be solid. These facts ministers carefully conceal from their congregations lest they should unsettle their faith, for any investigation into the claims of the work not only shows that the Holy Ghost has failed to guide the Church into all truth, but that the Church has received and teaches as the Word of God a deliberate forgery.

J. M. WHEELER.

* *On the Canon*, p. 245.

† *Eccles. Hist.*, book iii., chap. 23; also *Ibid*, chap. 3.

‡ Westcott, p. 416.

ACID DROPS.

ONE of our readers wrote to the Rev. C. J. Whitmore, and asked him for the names of the sixteen "converted infidel leaders" in his much-circulated tract. Mr. Whitmore sent a list of the names, which his correspondent has forwarded to us. These "leaders" were men of such magnificent reputations, that we venture to say our readers will be unacquainted with the names of three-fourths of them. Here they are:—Cooper, Barker, Southwell, Gordon, Bebbington, Sexton, Fulton, Fraser, Earwaker, Bishop, Couch, Ennis, Start, Bendale, Horn, King.

ONLY four of these men had any notoriety worth speaking of. Thomas Cooper was converted in great poverty, and a big Christian subscription was ready for him directly he turned his coat. Joseph Barker, like Joseph's coat, was of many colors. He boxed the compass of opinion, and his change from Atheism to Christianity was only one of many revolutions. Charles Southwell never was converted to Christianity. As for "Dr." Sexton, the less said about him the better. We wish the Christians joy of their catch.

THE rest of Mr. Whitmore's "infidel leaders" are such small fry that it is worth nobody's while to trouble about them. The Christians are welcome to them for any good they were to the Freethought cause. All of them have "an ancient and fish-like smell." How is it that no "infidel leaders" have been converted for very many years? Is the Lord's arm shortened, or what is it? The same old proselytising tricks have been resorted to. Bribes have been offered again and again, not to the real leaders of Freethought, but to third and fourth-rate lecturers, and not a single success has rewarded these pious efforts. In fact the game of converting "infidels," which was never very flourishing, is now utterly played out.

MR. WHITMORE's correspondent asked why the infidel converters were so chary of debating with leading Freethinkers. Mr. Whitmore referred him to a debate between the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale and Mr. Foote, as showing how the latter was "miserably beaten." We may as well relate once more how this debate was published. The joint committee resolved not to have a report taken, in consequence of the heavy expense of a really good one. Thereupon Mr. Woffendale smuggled an incompetent reporter into the meeting, without saying a word of his intention to the joint committee or his opponent. Taking advantage of his closing speech in the debate, he announced that the discussion would appear in print, and his ardent followers, who were apparently in the secret, howled at Mr. Foote for over five minutes when he repudiated a report concocted in such a manner. The reporter himself subsequently called on Mr. Foote and stated that he had not taken, and could not take, a verbatim report. Mr. Woffendale, however, had the impudence to send Mr. Foote, not the reporter's copy, but the proof-slips for revision. Mr. Foote returned them unread, telling Mr. Woffendale to state the truth like an honorable man in his introduction. Of course the reverend gentleman did nothing of the kind, and anyone who looks at the report will see that Mr. Woffendale's speeches occupy a great many more pages than Mr. Foote's, although the former if anything speaks less rapidly than the latter.

LEGALLY, Mr. Woffendale had no right to publish a report of Mr. Foote's speeches in a pamphlet form. But what was the use of a Freethinker's going to law against a Christian on such a matter in a country like this? The proper way to publish a debate is to act as Dr. McCann and Mr. Foote are now doing. A competent reporter is engaged at a liberal price, and as no shorthand writer can take down two hour's debate with absolute accuracy, the reporter's copy is revised by both disputants before it is put in the printer's hands. In this case there has not been the slightest hitch of misunderstanding, probably because Dr. McCann, unlike some Christian advocates, is at least a gentleman.

THIS is an age of change. Old things are passing away and all things are becoming new. Even God Almighty has turned Radical, at least down in Bradford. During the recent election in the central division the pious party got out posters, asking the working men to "Pray to God before going to record their vote so that he might direct them to vote aright." No doubt the working men took the hint, and the result of the Lord's direction was that Mr. Shaw-Lefevre headed the poll with a majority of over seven hundred.

THE Tories should really see to this. Some savages, and even some of the Chinese, thrash their gods when they don't do what is required of them. We advise the Tories to imitate this performance as far as they can. Old Yahveh has a behind, according to the Book of Exodus, but it is too far off to kick. The Tories might, however, inform him that if he does not give them proper assistance they will cut off the supplies and starve his agents. He would then have to feed them himself, as he did Elijah, on sandwiches, or, as he fed the Jews, on manna.

THE Rev. W. M. Kirk, vicar of Brislington, Somerset, has committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. A revolver with one chamber discharged was found by his side.

THE priest who shot his bishop at Madrid the other day seems rather proud of the act. The bishop in dying asked God and man to forgive the assassin. No Christian thinks of paying the slightest attention to this Christian request. Neither is it probable that God will interfere on behalf of the hardened wretch.

HALF a century ago the monks of the Basilian order murdered their prior on account of his objectionable zeal in repressing abuses and disorders. Several of the assassins were tried and convicted, but Ferdinand VII. would not hear of clergy being executed. They were imprisoned for a few years and then released.

How are murderers to be treated on Christian principles? We must judge not that we be not judged. We must forgive them unto seventy-and-seven times in order that we may be forgiven. If we punish we must expect to be punished. We are to love them and be kind to them, and all the rest of it. What would become of society if Christian rot were taken *au sérieux*?

SATAN appears to be tolerably active among the pious in America. At the Methodist Conference at Poughkeepsie three reverend brothers were charged with the prominent sin of the man after God's own heart. The Rev. Dr. Godby, president of a Methodist Episcopal college, has bolted because of a discovered intimacy with two female pupils; and two prominent female revivalists are concerned in the murder of a woman and joint adultery with her husband.

THE Rev. James Mayo has been charged at the Cambridge Police Court with assaulting an invalid who is wheeled about in a bath-chair, because he objects to his right to the footpath. He was treated very indulgently, only being ordered to enter into his recognizances in £25 to keep the peace for six months and to pay 22s. costs.

A CLERGYMAN, who gave the name of Richard Weaver, but who is described as being "better known by his own name," was fined five shillings at the Beverley Borough Police Court for being drunk and incapable. He was rolling about the streets intoxicated and was taken in charge by the police and placed in one of the cells, as he was too drunk to stand.

THE Rev. George Dyson is going to study law. Perhaps he wants to be on the safe side from a legal point of view in his future adventures. We are surprised to hear that he is retiring from the Gospel business. If he stumped the country in the revival line he would get big audiences, plenty of supporters, and plenty of cash. Dabbling in chloroform and intriguing with married women are no barrier to success in that line.

TEN Russian Jews have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from four months to eight years for "converting Christians to their religion." It is now pretended that this conversion included the systematic persecution of a young Jewess who had turned Christian, but who was so terrorised by the Jews (or by the Russian authorities?) that though she was induced to give the required evidence in private she could not be made to repeat it in public.

THE *School Guardian* is indignant over the results of Secular teaching in the French public schools. It says that a little girl of seven in answer to the pious words "We must trust in God," exclaimed "Dieu est un mensonge!" (God is a lie!) The schoolmistress had made her repeat the phrase every morning. We don't believe in the strict accuracy of this account, but if it were true, it would but represent the converse of Christian action in our own country. Christian schoolmistresses here continually teach little children that there is a God, so that, logically speaking, Atheistic schoolmistresses in France are equally justified in teaching the infants that there is no God. Christians never cry out for strict religious neutrality on the part of the State until the State has become hostile to Christianity.

A CONTINENTAL reader informs us that Wolfhagen was much excited on April 6 by an accident which occurred in its vicinity. A number of young girls, candidates for the confirmation about to be held, started at three in the afternoon for the neighboring forest to gather moss with which to decorate the church for the occasion. Four of them were accidentally drowned in a large pond. The Lord might have spared them till they had been confirmed, when their prospect of reaching heaven would have been somewhat brighter.

A CONSERVATIVE comic journal denounces "Freethinkers and Socialists"—whom, of course, it regards as identical—for the "bigotry and tyranny" with which they will treat the world. Haven't the pious Conservatives better hang us at once for the crimes which they are so sure we shall commit? The incident on which the Christian prophecy is founded is that some persons unknown "removed" the monumental crosses from the grass in

a certain cemetery, the locality of which is not mentioned. But Anti-Ritualists and extreme Protestants have far more often demolished crosses and emblems of "popery" than have Freethinkers, who claim liberty for all. The comic journal in question is terribly afraid that we shall "re-ignite fires in Smithfield, and gloat over the sufferings of all those who differed in opinion" from us. Christians are naturally afraid we shall treat them as they have treated us. Thus conscience makes cowards of us all, and Christians are horrified at the prospect of a reciprocity which would apply their own methods to themselves.

THE *Birmingham Daily Times* says that Mr. Bradlaugh's St. James's Hall demonstration on the Irish question was a meeting of Secularists, and refers to them as "the congregation that worships Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Charles Foote at the Hall of Science." Who is Mr. Charles Foote? We should be glad if the editor of the *B. D. T.* would introduce us to our namesake. The Footes are not a numerous body, and perhaps the gentleman is some relative of ours.

ACCORDING to the *B. D. T.*, the *Freethinker* was sold outside St. James's Hall with copies of Mr. Gladstone's speeches. We are delighted to hear it. The paper would do the people quite as much good as the speeches.

THE *B. D. T.* says that "the Secularists have taken up the Prime Minister quite thoroughly." This is a little mistaken. As a matter of fact, the Secularists have not yet debated, much less passed, a resolution on Mr. Gladstone's bills; and nobody is entitled to speak in their name until he is authorised to do so. The St. James's Hall demonstration was not organised by the Secular party, nor was the party even consulted on the matter. It was purely a political demonstration convened by Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Labouchere, and other M.P.'s.

BERNARD, the Catholic Bishop of Liverpool, has issued a letter warning the faithful against a person attired in the garb of a priest who has been soliciting alms in his district. Jesus evidently contemplated no other method of living than that of subsisting on charity, but the Bishop of Liverpool declares that none must solicit alms without a permit from his own bishop, countersigned by the bishop in whose diocese he is collecting. Poachers on episcopal preserves must beware.

WILLIAM DEERING, described as a Salvation Army leader, has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labor for keeping an house of ill-fame in Cardiff. It was stated that the prisoner was very pious, and was extremely particular about the use of bad language in his house, where the police-constable found five prostitutes in bed with men, and one lying upon a sofa, drunk. Perhaps General Booth can explain whether Wm. Deering was, as stated, "a leading member of the Cardiff contingent of the Salvation Army," and whether he recruited the inmates of his establishment from the Salvation barracks.

THE Presbyterian Synods have been held in Aberdeen last week with curious results, if we may believe the Bon-accord Gossip of the *Aberdeen Evening Express*, it seems that at both sittings of the worthy divines a collection was taken. The sum realised amounted to twopence-halfpenny. "Rambler" says: "I do not know whether it is the usual practice, but certainly the plan was adopted in this case, of putting a penny in the plate as a 'bait,' if I may use the term, so that the subscription was really only three bawbees, and these coins, I understand, were dropped in by one old parson." Evidently the white-chokers did not think exhortations to give freely to the Lord applied to themselves. Another amusing illustration of the cloth is given by "Rambler." It seems one of the ministers attended the synodical meeting of his brethren in a new silk hat. Upon leaving his place, however, for a minute, it disappeared, and was replaced by a shocking "come to Jesus" felt.

FERGUSON DEFENCE FUND.

THE following additional subscriptions have been received:—Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose, £2; Liverpool Branch N. S. S., 10s.; A. Anderson, 5s.; Liverpool Friend 1s.; W. Rollo, 2s. 6d. [This fund will close next week. There is still a deficit and we hope to be able to announce that it is fully met.]

A WOMAN astonished a neighbor with the intelligence that the devil was dead. The statement being doubted, the sceptical woman went with her friend to the shop in which she had seen the fact advertised. The two at length reached a dyer's shop, in the window of which was a card with the inscription, "Satin dyed here!"

ELDERLY FEMALE (at the gate of Heaven)—"Can I come in?" St. Peter—"Are you married?" Elderly female—"No, Sir, I never had a chance." St. Peter—"How old are you?" Elderly female—"Forty-seven, Sir; and I've worn false hair for twenty-one years." St. Peter (to assistant)—"Give this lady a pair of golden wings studded with diamonds, and also mark her 100 in truth."

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 2, Assembly Rooms, Grosvenor Street, Manchester; at 11, "Gladstone's Irish Stew;" at 3, "The Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ;" at 6.30, "The Shadow of the Cross."

Monday, May 3, Wellingborough.

Thursday, May 6, Hall of Science, London; Conclusion of the Debate with the Rev. Dr McCann.

MAY 9, Sheffield; 13, West Ham; 16, Milton Hall 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London.

JUNE 6, Oldham; 13, N. S. S. Conference; 20, Milton Hall; 27, Ball's Pond.

CORRESPONDENTS

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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. 3d.; 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.—William Rollo.

No HELL.—The mistake was made by the journal we quoted, but after all it is only the reference that is wrong. Your *jeu d'esprit* is amusing but rather wild.

A. LESLIE.—We do not share your opinion of the few interruptions in Dr. McCann's speeches. It is quite impossible for a crowded audience to sit for two hours hearing a lively subject discussed without occasionally giving vent to their feelings. It would be far better if audiences refrained from marks of dissent, and as Dr. McCann's friends were in the minority, and he had therefore an up-hill fight, it would have been generous to have maintained a perfect decorum in this respect. But it is foolish to expect too much of human nature, and Dr. McCann has told us that he considers he was treated with fairness and good temper. It does not follow that a man is a blackguard because he says "Oh!" or that he wishes to cut your throat because he says "Ah!"

G. L. G. asks who was David's mother. His father was Mr. Jesse, and we suppose his mother was Mrs. Jesse. Holy Scripture affords no further assistance.

W. CLARK.—Many such stories have been current. If the Devil has flown away with all the old women that figure in these narratives, he must have a large stock of them in Hades.

W. STANLEY wishes our picture of the Workman God could be enlarged for framing.

A. SPENCER.—Thanks for cuttings. We cannot answer your question. ARGUS sends us a batch of cuttings, and adds that last week's *Freethinker* was in his opinion the brightest we have issued for months.

A. SEWELL.—Thanks.

A. J. WILBRAHAM.—Much obliged. See "Acid Drops."

L. HALL.—A great deal of Christianity was borrowed from ancient Egypt; for instance the Virgin and Child, purgatory, judgment after death, and perhaps heaven and hell. There are other items, but these will suffice. It is worth noting that most of the dogmas of the early Christian church arose, were elaborated, and fought over, in Egypt. Rome invented nothing but papal infallibility. Read the first four numbers of the *Crimes of Christianity*.

R. E.—The joke appeared two or three years ago.

J. W. CROWTHER (Halifax) thanks the friends who have sent him copies of the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications for free distribution.

C. FITZGERATT.—The story has already been dealt with in these columns.

C. A. SEA.—Sorry we cannot answer your question. The *Protestant Standard* could perhaps inform you.

G. T.—We have rather too much than too little copy on hand at present.

E. J. R.—Always pleased to hear from you or your family. Thanks for the cuttings.

W. MUMBY sends 10s. towards the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, which we have handed to the Rev. W. Sharman. Our correspondent is greatly pleased with "Christ in London" and wishes it could be printed as a tract.

J. SAUNDERS.—You can't expect our pictures to be quite equal to *Punch's*. Wait till we can pay an artist twenty pounds a week. Glad to hear you troubled the millennial Christian by asking him whether Christ's second coming would be as great a failure as his first. It was a neat question. Peg away. Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword* has run out of print.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Birmingham Daily Times—The True Witness—Thinker—Liberal—Lucifer—Ironclad Age—Western Mail—Leith Herald—Good Tidings—Church Army Gazette.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was a bumping audience at Mr. Foote's evening lecture in Liverpool last Sunday, notwithstanding the holiday time. A successful collection was made towards the cost of the new piano, which is an ornament to the platform, and a great enlivener of the proceedings. We understand there is still a deficit to be met, and we hope the Liverpool friends will soon

set the committee's mind at rest [by meeting it. Mr. Sweitzer, the Secretary, is ready to receive anything from a threepenny-bit to a five-pound note.

MR. FOOTE's afternoon lecture at Manchester to-day (May 2) on the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, will be in some measure a reply to a recent discourse on the subject by the new Bishop of Cottonopolis. Dr. Moorhouse, who succeeds the late Bishop Fraser, has only just landed in England, and some of his new flock (according to law) may like to know and hear answered, his arguments in favor of the theory that a young Jewish carpenter rose from the dead and took a trip to heaven.

THE annual conference of the National Secular Society will be held at Glasgow on June 13th. The journey will be a long one for branches in the South of England, but we hope they will make a special effort to send delegates. Those who go will have an opportunity of shaking hands with old Robert Ferguson. We may remind the branches, and individual members, that all notices of motion must be sent to the secretary, Mr. R. Forder, 7, Arlington Street, New North Road, London, N., on or before May 12.

THE *Graphic* is liberal enough to give a fifteen-line review of *Prisoner for Blasphemy*. But it falls into the error of supposing that our famous picture of the Lord giving Moses a back view was not in the Christmas Number for which we were prosecuted, but in one of the numbers on which the Court of Queen's Bench jury did not convict. Neither was the picture taken from an old Dutch Bible. It was an original illustration, and Jehovah himself might have laughed at it. The *Graphic* admits that, with respect to strong language, Mr. Foote was able to show that he stood on the same level as many of our advanced writers.

THIS week's *Freethinker* will be in the hands of many of our London readers before the third night's debate commences between Dr. McCann and Mr. Foote. Dr. McCann was announced to open on that evening, but it has been arranged for Mr. Foote to do so. He will maintain Secularism, as he understands it, in half-an-hour's speech and reply to Dr. McCann's objections in two subsequent speeches of a quarter of an hour each.

Lucifer, a Freethought and Radical paper dating from Valley Falls, Kansas, contains a list, filling several columns, of advanced books and pamphlets supplied by Messrs. Walker and Harman. Among them we find the whole of Mr. Foote's and Mr. Wheeler's works, as well as most of Mr. Bradlaugh's and Mrs. Besant's. It is gratifying to find our Freethought literature circulating so extensively in America.

MESSRS. SONNENSCHNEIN AND Co., of Paternoster Square, are about to publish a one-volume novel, by Mr. T. Evan Jacob, entitled, "The Bliss of Revenge," the tendency and purpose of which will be to champion Freethought.

ON Good Friday our Portsmouth friends celebrated the opening of their new hall with a tea and social entertainment, under the presidency of Mr. J. Brumage. Mrs. Sowden, Miss Smith, Mr. Standring and Mr. Wheeler, from London, attended the proceedings, and, together with Mr. Lush and Mr. Googe, gave short addresses, after which the large audience gave themselves up to dance and song, enjoying themselves in the thoroughly hearty style which is so aggravating in woe-begone sceptics and wretched benighted infidels.

THE Portsmouth new Hall is a handsome, commodious and centrally-situated building in Wellington Street, Southsea. It was formerly a Baptist Chapel and the Freethought platform is built over the ducking font in which the converted found their watery way to Jesus. Another chapel in the vicinity has been changed into a stay-factory, artificial supports for the body being more in demand than manacles for the mind.

CHRIST AT TABLE.

CHRISTIANS who are anxious to know how to behave themselves when invited out to dine should study how their Lord and master behaved on such occasions. Luke records a case in point in his eleventh chapter, verses 37 to 54. Let us see how the model Christian conducts himself at table, and how he treats the hospitable host and the learned and dignified friends or guests who have been invited to put their legs beneath his mahogany.

We find that a certain unsuspecting Pharisee besought Christ to dine with him. Christ accepted the kindly invitation and sat down to meat among guests of distinction including several doctors of the law. It is an Eastern custom to wash the hands before and after dinner. In countries where knives and forks are scarce and everybody dips in the same dish, such a salutary custom is indispensable as a means of cleanliness and comfort. After sharing

a meal with common Turkish soldiers even they always poured water over my hands, and I always conformed to their custom, for I had been informed that if I did not I should be looked upon as a person of low and dirty habits. Christ, however, had not the common sense or the courtesy to conform to so commendable a usage. Godliness in his eyes was more than cleanliness. Water was chiefly useful for baptism and for turning into wine. If the refined and educated company were disgusted at his vulgar breach of etiquette, their disgust was a fitting punishment for their pride.

Naturally the host " marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner ;" but apparently neither he nor the rest of the company said anything, though their looks may perhaps have expressed their astonishment. It is not recorded that any one uttered a single word of reproof or remonstrance, or did anything whatever to offend the susceptibilities of the great religious reformer who objected to water. Jesus, however, reading the thoughts passing through the minds of the hospitable Pharisee, turned to him and said: " Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?" The abusive insolence of such uncalled-for remarks is more obvious than their relevancy. Is there anything wrong in cleansing the outside of cups and plates? Would external dirt guarantee internal cleanliness? Are filthy hands a proof of a pure heart? Christ evidently thinks little of physical cleanliness, for he says to the Pharisee, " Rather give alms of such things as ye have: and behold, all things are clean unto you." Charity thus covers a multitude of sins, personal uncleanness among the number.

Christ, who was a man as well as a God, called his brother men " fools "; yet he said that " whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire " (Matt. v., 22). God the Son, so far at least as he was a man, must then have been in danger of hell fire. In how much danger? And who redeemed him or " saved " him from this threatened perdition? And what are Christians to do? Are they to copy their master's example and put themselves in danger of hell fire thereby? Or are they to abide by his precepts and shun his example?

Jesus continues his pleasant dinner-table remarks thus:

" But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them."

Did Jesus regard this as friendly conversation likely to improve digestion and to aid social intercourse and good understanding? Or did he forget he was the Great Exemplar, and that Christians would have to follow in his steps and copy his methods and language? As it would be blasphemy to suppose that the Son of God forgot himself or lost his temper, it becomes evident that pious but unmannerly insults to benevolent strangers who foolishly befriend the true saints are part of the Christian ideal.

One of the " lawyers " present remonstrated with Christ at this point, for he felt that the outrageous and unprovoked reproaches of the itinerant street-preacher were directed against his own class as well as against the " scribes and Pharisees." Christ thereupon turned upon this doctor of the Mosaic law, this reverend exponent of the national religion, and launched at him the following tirade:

" Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

A nice guest Jesus must have been. The harmony was entirely broken, and a scene of violence and recrimination

naturally ensued, the scribes and Pharisees urging him " vehemently " and provoking him to speak words for which they might legally prosecute and punish him. This is the kind of harmony that Christianity introduces into the world. This is the way it repays tolerance and benevolent assistance. Truly it comes not to bring peace but a sword.

Even if the accusations of Jesus were true, and there is no sign that these scribes and Pharisees were worse than other men and some signs that they were even better, the time and the occasion rendered such violent utterances entirely unjustifiable. The man who has just done him a good turn, which good turn Jesus meekly accepts, is promptly told that he and his class are hypocrites full of hidden wickedness and corruption. The men to whose company he is admitted on terms of equality and friendship are straightway vilified and denounced as being morally guilty of the bloodshed of the past, including even the murder of Abel by Cain, and they are told the pleasant after-dinner news that all this blood shall be required of their generation. What right had a man to accept a friendly invitation except in a friendly spirit? Why should he accept hospitality only to abuse it?

Consistent Christians who dine out among polite strangers will imitate Christ by breaking the regulations of cleanliness and social convenience that may be in vogue. They will promptly introduce religion into the " conversation " in its most offensive form of personal curses and insults. They will repay the unexpected welcome of sympathetic hosts with vile abuse, accompanied by a most arrogant assumption of a moral superiority that places men of culture and of eminence entirely at their mercy. This will be their method of repaying kindness, of displaying gratitude, of promoting good feeling, of being just and considerate and forgiving, while at the same time they display the full beauties of the Christian meekness and humility and self-surrender that are to reform a proud and selfish world. Suppose it were possible for Mr. Bradlaugh or Mr. Foote to act thus while dining with hospitable Christians. Would the saints admire brawling fanaticism when not on their own side? Dr. McCann tells us that Jesus was the stainless mirror of the eternal. Would a Freethinker also become a stainless mirror of the eternal by closely imitating the grossly offensive ways of the " Perfect One "? And if not, why not, O Christian saint? Only because you would then have your eyes opened. You could easily see the impropriety and vulgar insolence if an unmannerly sceptic said grace before meat by calling down ruin on the heads of his beaming host and his fellow guests, whom he then lashes with unsparing tongue as hypocritical scoundrels and blood-guilty criminals whose deeds call aloud for the swiftly-approaching vengeance he invokes and prophesies. All Christians would justly and unhesitatingly condemn the conduct of any Freethinker who thus let himself off as a social bombshell at a friendly dinner party. And the Freethinker on his part, with quite as much justice and as little hesitation, condemns such conduct on the part even of a Great Exemplar, whose acts he thinks should be more closely scrutinised rather than less because all men are to look to them for guidance.

By his acts at table as by innumerable acts and words elsewhere, Christ stands hopelessly condemned and discredited in the eyes of really unbiassed men. As a man he might claim allowance for human infirmities. As a God he cannot.

W. P. BALL.

THE FREETHINKER'S BELIEF.

(A PARODY.)

I BELIEVE in the policy of the *Freethinker*, Almighty Maker of ridicule and sarcasm. And in G. W. Foote, its Editor, our friend; who is a child of Science, born in the Nineteenth Century, suffered under Judge North, was condemned, incarcerated in a Christian prison, and was dead, and buried to the Literary World. A year later he was liberated; he ascended once more into prominence, and sitteth on his same old seat in the *Freethinker* Office; from whence he is hurling thunderbolts of ridicule and sarcasm at the superstition and ignorance of the present day.

I believe in the Holy Spirit of *Progress*, the Holy Bond of Brotherhood with Humanity, the total extinction of Superstition complete resurrection of Truth, and a life of joy and peace on earth.—Amen.

G. E. C. NAEWIGER.

SIXTY YEARS AGO.

[The following extract from a newspaper called *The Age*, for Feb. 11, 1827, will doubtless be interesting to our readers.]

CARLILE.

"We have been hitherto prevented from noticing the following circumstance, which is to us one of the most distinguished examples which the authority of modern days has taken upon itself to set, and one which it would be highly advisable to recommend the furtherance of. This miserable blasphemer, whose name we have affixed at the heading of this article, appeared at the late sessions at the Old Bailey, to give evidence, when the Recorder thus interrogated him :

Have you been sworn to?—I have.

Recorder: Have you been sworn on the Holy Scriptures?—I have been sworn in the usual way.

Recorder: Do you believe in the book on which you have been sworn?—I do, as a history, believe some parts.

Recorder: Do you believe in the Gospels?—In a general way, I do.

Recorder: Do you believe in the Gospels on which you have been sworn? If you do not, your oath cannot be taken, for it is not worth a farthing.—I do not believe in the Gospels further than as a matter of history; as a whole, I do not believe in them. I repeat that, in my opinion, they are only a matter of history.

Recorder: Then you do not believe in the Bible.—I do not.

Recorder: Then I cannot believe you on your oath. Do you believe in a God? It is a simple question.—I do not think it is a simple question.

Recorder: I must insist upon an answer. Do you believe there is a God?—Witness: I do not understand the term.

Recorder: There is not a person in this Court who hears me but yourself that does not.—Witness: I cannot understand what is meant by God; there may be such a Being. He is spoken of in the Bible, which I only believe as a history, and nothing further; I claim as much right to have my testimony received as any other person. I have as much respect for the truth as any other person.

Recorder: Once more, I ask you, do you believe in a God?—I believe in parts of the history in which that name is mentioned.

Recorder: Then, as you do not believe in the Gospel, on which you have been sworn, I will not receive your evidence; I will suffer no man to be accused and tried on the oath of one who dares to revile his Maker. Stand down, sir.

The hardened wretch shrank to nothing at the rebuke of his earthly judge, and left the Court, shrouded in the contempt of every spectator. How will he meet his Eternal Judge, from whose presence there is no retreat and from whose rebuke there is no appeal?"

A SERMON.

A WESLEYAN MINISTER, who does not of course believe in "immersion for baptism," like the Mormons and Baptists, etc., was holding a meeting, and preached on the subject of Baptism. In the course of his remarks he said some believed it necessary to go down into the water and to come out of it to be baptised. Now the scripture meaning of the word "into" was his subject to-night; therefore he claimed this to be a fallacy, for the preposition "into" of the scriptures should be rendered differently, for it does not mean "into" at all times. Moses, he said, we are told, went up *into* a mountain, and the Savior was taken into a high mountain, etc. Now we do not suppose either went *into* a mountain, but *unto* it. So with going down into the water; it only means going down close by, or near the water, and being baptised in the ordinary way by sprinkling or pouring. He carried this idea fully out, and in due season and style closed his discourse.

An invitation was then given to anyone so disposed to arise and express his thoughts. A large number of the brethren arose, and said they were glad they were present on this occasion; they were pleased with the sound discourse they had just heard, and felt their souls greatly blessed. Finally, a corpulent gentleman of Teutonic extraction, a stranger to all, broke the silence that was almost painful as follows:

"Mr. Breacher, I ish so glad I vash here to-night, for I has had explained to my mindt somedings I could never pelieve before. Oh! I ish so glad that "into" does not mean "into" at all, but shust close by or near to; for now I can pelief manish dings vot I could not pelief before. Ve read, Mr. Breacher, dat Taniel vas cast into the ten of lions, and come out alive. Now I never could pelief that, for de wild beast vould shust eat him right off; but now it is ferry clear to my mindt he vas shust close by or near to, and tid not get into de ten at all. Oh! I ish so glad I vash here to-night. Again, ve reat dat de Hebrew children vash cast into de firish furnace, and dat wash always looking a peeg story too, for dey would have been burnt up. But it is all plain to my mindt now, for they were shust cast by or close to de firish furnace. Oh! I vash so glad I was here to-night. And, dear Mr. Breacher, it is said dat Jonah vas cast into de sea, and taken into a whale'sh pelly. Now I never could pelief dat. It always seemed to me to be a peeg fish story, put it is all plain to my mindt now. He vash not casked into de whale'sh pelly, but shust shumpt onto his pack and rode ashore. Oh! I was so glad I vash here to-night. And now, Mr. Breacher, if you will shust explain a bassage of de scripture, I shall be so happy dat I vash here to-night. It seth de wicked shall be cast into a lake dat purns with fire and prinestone always. Oh!

Mr. Breacher, shall I be cast into dat lake if I am wicked, or shust close by or near to—shust near enuff to be comfortable? Oh, I hopes you tell me I shall be cast only close by, a good way off, and I will be so glad I vash here to-night."

REVIEWS.

My Visit to Spurgeon's Tabernacle. By SALADIN. W. Stewart, Holborn Steps, Farringdon Road.—A lively account of a dipping in the Tabernacle tank, written in Saladin's best vein.

War. By PIERRE KRAPOTKINE. London: International Publishing Co., 35 Newington Green Road, N.—Calls attention to the economic factors of modern war.

Bible Proofs for the Existence of Deity as Exemplified in the Life of Samson. By W. CARTER. Huntley: Sunderland.—Mr. Carter has printed the story of Samson from *Judges*, with some discursive notes of a very heterodox character. He has also added some verses on the subject. The verses are poor but the notes are pointed.

Our Corner, May. Freethought Publishing Company.—Mr. Bradlaugh leads off as usual, concluding his paper on Compulsory Land Cultivation. Mrs. Besant concludes her essay on Modern Socialism, which really ought to be called Future Socialism, for it is not yet realised, and perhaps never will be. The last instalment is certainly interesting. It shows that Mrs. Besant is full of enthusiastic hope, and that she is not deterred from sketching another Utopia by the examples of Plato, Plutarch, More, Campanella, Bacon and Owen. Mr. Robertson continues his able essay on Evolution in Drama. Mr. W. Mawer writes on the Ores of Useful Metals.

THE CONSTANT READER.

A COUNTRY curate, visiting his flock,
At old Rebecca's cottage gave a knock.
"Good morrow, dame; I mean no any libel,
But are you sure you always read your Bible?"
"My Bible, sir!" exclaimed she, in a rage;
Do you think I've turned a Pagan in my age?
Here, Judith, run upstairs, my dear;
'Tis in the drawer; be quick and bring it here."
The girl returned with Bible in a minute,
Not dreaming for a moment what was in it;
When lo! on opening it at parlor door,
Down fell the spectacles upon the floor.
Amazed, she started, for the moment dumb,
But quick exclaimed, "Dear sir, I am glad you're come
'Tis six years since these glasses first were lost,
And I have missed them, to my poor eyes' cost."
Then as the glasses to her nose she raised,
She closed the Bible, saying, "God be praised!"

W. TUCKER.

"HELLELUJAH! lay on another three-inch main there, Sergeant-Major, for they *hare* activally a tumblin' into the fountain by 'undreds," said the captain of the 'Adelaide death or glory boys' the other night. You want to know, of course, what wrung from his 4 by 3 volcanic crater this pious ejaculation. Well, shortly told, one of the 'lasses,' a 'married' woman, had been bemoaning that she was (in one respect only) like Sarah of old. 'It had pleased the Lord,' said her husband, before the whole contingent of men and women, 'to alter her condition, and she's fully and joyfully expected in a month or two to — you know.' Thereupon the military Benedict, transfigured with pious emotion and triumph, yelled out 'Stand up, Maria, and let the Harmacy see what the Loard has done for you.' So writes a South Australian paper, which guarantees the item a fact. And *this* is religion and Divine worship. Great Caesar! Give us blasphemy and call it by its name.—*Sydney Bulletin.*

THERE was quite a social gathering at Parsons' one evening, on which occasion, it seems, young Parsons had determined to participate. Engaging the attention of the company for a moment, he asked:

"Who was the most near-sighted man mentioned in the Bible?"

After a moment's reflection the only minister present answered:

"Adam was. He could not see his own nakedness."

"Nixie," replied the disciple of wit; "next!"

"Jacob!" triumphantly screeched a lively young miss. "He couldn't see that Luban had cheated him out of Rebecca by putting Leah in her place, after having worked seven years for the other girl!"

"You're off!" said the inelegant young man; "next!"

As further answers were not forthcoming, young Parsons ventured the answer:

"Balaam was the most near-sighted. He couldn't see as far as his donkey."

PROFANE JOKES.

THE sermon of the best preacher in the world will not make so much impression upon a congregation as the sudden pattering of rain on the window-panes of a church containing 200 new spring bonnets.

A PARSON, preaching on the depravity of the age, said that "little children, who could neither speak nor walk, were to be seen running about the streets cursing and swearing."

A TEXAS clergyman, about to be appointed chaplain of a penitentiary, preached a farewell sermon to his congregation who had treated him rather badly. He selected the following text: "I go to prepare a place for you, so that where I am ye may be also."

A TEACHER was testing her small pupils as to their understanding of what constituted a good Christian, when one of them, with his face aglow with knowledge struggling for expression, ejaculated: "Teacher, I know who is a good Christian." "Well," replied the teacher, "who is a good Christian?" "Caley M——!" he replied with emphasis. "Well, tell us why you think he is a good Christian," said the teacher. "'Cos whenever he has anything he don't want he gives it to me."

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