

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTER.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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THE PROPHET'S FUNERAL.

It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord: therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion. . . . And he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass.—1 KINGS xiii., 26, 28.

G O D - M A K I N G .

"MAN is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a flea, and yet he will be making gods by dozens." So wrote honest Montaigne, the first great sceptic in modern history, who was so far in advance of his age that he surprised the world by venturing to doubt whether it was after all a just and sensible thing to burn a man alive for differing from his neighbors.

The history of that mental aberration which is called religion, and a survey of the present state of the world, from the fetish worshipper of central Africa to the super-subtle Theist of educated Europe, furnish us with countless illustrations of the truth of Montaigne's exclamation. God-making has always been a prevalent pastime, although it has less attraction for the modern than for the ancient mind. It was a recreation in which everyone could indulge, whether learned or illiterate, young or old, rich or poor. All the material needed to fashion gods of was ignorance, and there was always an unlimited stock of that article. The artificer was imagination, a glorious faculty, which is the highest dower of the creative artist and the scientific discoverer, and in their service is fruitful in usefulness and beauty, but which in the service of theology is a frightful curse, filling the mental world with fantastic monsters who waylay and devour.

Common people, however, who did the work of the world, were not able to do much god-making. Their leisure

and ability were both limited. But they had a large capacity for admiring the productions of others, and their deficiencies were supplied by a special class of men, called priests, who were set apart for the manufacture of deities, and who devoted their time and their powers to the holy trade. This pious division of labor, this specialisation of function, still continues. Carpenters and tailors, grocers and butchers, who are immersed all the week in labor or business, have no opportunity for long excursions in the field of divinity; and therefore they take their religion at second hand from the priest on Sunday. It was not the multitude, but the sacred specialists, who built up the gigantic and elaborate edifice of theology, which is a purely arbitrary construction, deriving all its design and coherence from the instinctive logic of the human mind, that operates alike in a fairy tale and in a syllogism.

Primitive man used conveniently-shaped flints before he fashioned flint instruments; discovery always preceding invention. In like manner he found gods before he made them. A charm resides in some natural object, such as a fish's tooth, a queer-shaped pebble, or a jewel, and it is worn as an amulet to favor and protect. This is fetishism. By-and-bye counterfeits are made of animals and men, or amalgams of both, and the fetishistic sentiment is transferred to these. This is the beginning of polytheism. And how far it extends even into civilised periods, let the superstitious of Europe attest. The nun who tells her beads, and the lady who wears an ornamental crucifix, are to some extent fetishists; while the Catholic worship of saints is only polytheism in disguise.

Reading the Bible with clear eyes, we see that the ancient Jews worshipped gods of their own making, which were handed down as family relics. When Jacob made tracks after sucking his uncle dry, Rachel carried off the poor old fellow's teraphim, and left him without even a god to worship. Jahveh himself, who has since developed into God the Father, was originally nothing but an image in an ark, as I have shown in my Bible Romance of *God in a Box*. Micah, in the book of Judges, makes himself a houseful of gods, and hires a Levite as his domestic chaplain. How long the practice persisted we may judge from the royal scorn which Isaiah pours on the image-mongers, who hewed down cedars and cypresses, oaks and ashes, some for fuel and some for idols. Let us hear the great prophet:—"He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god."

Twenty-six centuries have elapsed since Isaiah wrote that biting satire, yet image-worship still prevails over three-fourths of the world; and even in Christian countries, to use Browning's phrase, we "see God made and eaten every day." A wave of the hand and a muttered spell change bread or wafer and port-wine into the body and blood of Christ, which are joyously consumed by his cannibal worshippers.

Not even the higher divinities of the greater faiths are exempt from the universal law. They are not creatures of man's hand, yet they are creatures of his brain. What are they but his own fancies, brooded on till they become facts of memory, and seem to possess an objective existence? The process is natural and easy. A figment of the imagination may become intensely real. Have we not a clearer idea of Hamlet and Othello than of half our closest acquaintances? Feuerbach went straight to the mark when he aimed to prove "that the powers before which man crouches are the creatures of his own limited, ignorant,

uncultured and timorous mind, and that in especial the being whom man sets over against himself as a separate supernatural existence is his own being."

Yes, all theology is anthropomorphism—the making of gods in man's image. What is the God of our own theology, as Matthew Arnold puts it, but a magnified man? We cannot transcend our own natures, even in imagination; we can only interpret the universe in the terms of our own consciousness, nor can we endow our gods with any other attributes than we possess ourselves. When we seek to penetrate the "mystery of the infinite," we see nothing but our own shadow and hear nothing but the echo of our own voice.

As we are so are our gods, and what man worships is what he himself would be. The placid Egyptian nature smiles on the face of the sphinx. The gods of India reflect the terror of its heat and its beasts and serpents, the fertility of its soil, and the exuberance of its people's imaginations. The glorious Pantheon of Greece—

Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love—

embodies the wise and graceful fancies of the noblest race that ever adorned the earth, compared with whose mythology the Christian system is a hideous nightmare. The Roman gods wear a sterner look, befitting their practical and imperial worshippers, and Jove himself is the ideal genius of the eternal city. The deities of the old Scandinavians, whose blood tinges our English veins, were fierce and warlike as themselves, with strong hands, supple wrists, mighty thews, lofty stature, grey-blue eyes and tawny hair. Thus has it ever been. So Man created god in his own image, in the image of Man created he him; male and female created he them.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

SIR WILLIAM MUIR, the author of a pretentious *Life of Mahomet*, in which he suggests that the Prophet of Mecca was tempted by Satan, has furnished up the old argument from Charles Leslie's "Short and Easy"—it should be Long and Difficult—Method with the Deists, that the institution of the Eucharist is "a standing witness to the truth of Christianity." In the last number of the first series of *Present Day Tracts* entitled "The Lord's Supper, an Abiding Witness to the Death of Christ," Sir William Muir marshals from Palmer's and Hammond's works on Liturgies a considerable parade of erudition, with a view of showing that all the ancient liturgies, notwithstanding that (as he admits) they abound with error and superstition, embody in their service the solemnisation of the Eucharist. Therefore, he contends they are derived from a common source which "can be none other than the institution on the paschal eve." That is to say, because all the sects of Christendom, barring the Quakers, are in the habit of solemnly taking bread and wine, or wafers without wine, the narratives must be true which relates how Jesus, sitting at table, broke bread, saying, "Take: eat this is my body," and equally declaring that the wine his disciples drank was his blood.

Now we do not believe Jesus was half so idiotic as his worshippers represent him. The force of fatuity could not further go than to offer friends and disciples a meal of one's own flesh and blood; and there are several reasons for believing Jesus did nothing of the kind. In the first place it is rather strange that John, who was presumably present, gives no intimation of the institution of this solemn and most important memorial, although in other passages, he gives long mystical discourses in which Jesus is reported as declaring himself the true vine and the bread that came down from heaven. Still more notable is the fact that the first record is found in Paul's epistle, written from Phillipi to the Corinthians (xi., 20-27.) Paul's epistle is admittedly earlier than any of the Gospels. It is equally admitted that Paul had never seen Jesus—at any rate, not until after his crucifixion. Writing to Corinth, he declares that he had "received of the Lord"—not from the apostles—how Jesus said, "Take eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." In the Synoptics the transaction is represented as taking place on the evening of the passover, the day before Christ's

crucifixion. But according to Jewish law no executions could take place at that time—a fact in itself indicating that the entire story is mythical, with the evident purpose of substituting Jesus for the Jewish sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb. As Paul says "Christ our passover is slain for us."

But the best of all reasons for believing that Christ did not institute the Eucharist is the evidence that the ceremony was in existence before his time. Sir William Muir, aware that the Liturgies cannot be traced earlier than the time when the Romish see had already become dominant and was engaged in suppressing heresies, takes us also to the early Christian writers who mention the institution. Of these the earliest are Justin Martyr and the author of the recently-discovered Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. As the latter document, while giving directions for the celebration of the Eucharist, does not mention the circumstances of its institution, it is out of court. Justin Martyr (towards the middle of the second century) then is Sir William Muir's first authority, and he, disingenuously—we had almost written dishonestly—suppresses the important evidence which that writer gives, that the Eucharist was also celebrated by Pagans. As usual, with the early Christian fathers, Justin attributes a fact so damaging to the originality of his creed to the influence of devils. After narrating the institution of the Eucharist, as cited by Sir William Muir, he says: "Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done."* Why did Sir William omit this while quoting the passage both immediately before and closely following after? Because the mysteries of Mithras were long anterior to Christianity and had even been introduced from the East into Rome in the time of Pompey, 70 B.C.†

No wonder Justin had to fall back on the agency of devils. He had controversies with the Jews, and we know from Celsus that the Jews accused the followers of Jesus ben Pandera of borrowing from Paganism. Possibly they pointed out that the Christian substitute for the Passover was a copy of Pagan rites. The offering of bread and wine was the commonest ceremony of Paganism. It was the natural sacrifice in all sun-worship. Bread, or cakes and wine formed part of the ritual of all the ancient sacrifices. Achilles in Homer and Dido in Virgil "pour in sacrifice the purple wine," a substitute for blood of which its color makes it symbolical. When families and tribes enlarged their bounds by adoption, the participation of bread and wine was a common form, probably a substitute for the earlier savage custom of cementing brotherhood by drinking from the same cup of blood.‡ The ancient mysteries were developments of the system of "brotherhood." The title of "twice born" or "born again," was conferred on those admitted to membership.§ In the Eleusinian and Bacchanalian mysteries, the bread of Ceres, who in allegorical language gave her flesh to eat, and the wine of Bacchus, who in a like sense, gave his blood to drink, formed part of the ceremonial of initiation. Even in Mexico, the early Christian marauders found among the Aztecs, a custom called "eating the god." Mendieta, describing this ceremony, says: "They had also a sort of Eucharist; they made a sort of small idol of seeds and ate them as the body or memory of their gods."||

The Passover was itself probably a substitute for human sacrifice,¶ and the same idea is kept in the Eucharist as celebrated by the largest body of Christians, and is preserved in the word *host*. Sir William Muir's view of the Lord's Supper, and that of all Protestants, fails to account for the doctrine of the Real Presence and for the sacrificial character attaching to the sacrament. On their theory, while it is reasonable to suppose Jesus may have said "Do

* "The First Apology of Justin," chap. lxvi., *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. II., p. 65; 1877. Justin also says, in his Dialogue with Trypho (chap. lxix.), that the Devil has counterfeited the Gospel story. "For when they tell us that Bacchus, son of Jupiter, was begotten by intercourse with Semelo, and that he was the discoverer of the vine; and when they relate, that being torn in pieces, and having died, he rose again, and ascended to heaven; and when they introduce wine into his mysteries, do I not perceive that the Devil has imitated the prophecy announced by the patriarch Jacob, and recorded by Moses?" P. 184.

† See Lajard, *Le Culte de Mithra*.

‡ Wake's *Evolution of Morality*, Vol. I., p. 460.

§ Wake, Vol. II., p. 140.

|| See "Savage Faith and its Survivals," in *Footsteps of the Past*, p. 7.

¶ See *Freethinker*, p. 134.

this in remembrance of me," it was utterly unreasonable for him to say, while holding a piece of bread in his hand, "This is my body." The fact that the custom was an ancient Pagan method of celebrating communion and of initiation into the religious mysteries, explains its adoption in the Christian community, its ascription to their Savior, and the fetishistic character which still attaches itself to the ceremony of the Lord's Supper.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

THE *Christian Herald* speaks of an old man with "one foot in heaven." Of a Christian who was run over by an express train it says, "sudden death was sudden glory." Christians seem to be quite as anxious to avoid sudden glory as other people, and they grieve over friends and relations who have gone to sudden glory much as other folks grieve. Their actions belie their phrases.

SPURGEON says "it takes ten thousand times more faith to be an unbeliever than to be a believer in revelation." If so we Secularists are the true men of faith, and if faith is so valuable a commodity as Christians pretend, we ought to be saved by our faith, for we possess ten thousand times as much as they do.

BUT Spurgeon, like other charitable Christians, believes that his opponent must necessarily be a liar and a hypocrite. He declares that "it requires the hardest faith in the world to deny the Scriptures, because the man, in his secret heart, knows they are true." This is the doctrine of wholesale insult. When applied to Christians by some over-zealous Atheist who in his haste declares that all Christians are hypocrites, the saints can readily see the scandalous nature of such charges, but when they themselves are the offenders wholesale imputations of lying and hypocrisy are only splendid speakings forth for the glory of God. If Christians cannot believe in the existence of an honest Atheist they must not be surprised if some Freethinkers decline to believe in the existence of an honest Christian.

SPURGEON speaks of "that holy man, Mr. Muller, of Bristol," and says, "If you were to tell George Muller there was not a God, he would weep over you." Well, we shall not tell the holy weeper the good news unless we are provided with an umbrella in readiness.

THE Rev. J. Y. Halcombe has put forward a book on *Gospel Difficulties*, which he attempts to surmount by showing that Luke wrote all things in order, and the reason they are not in order now is because a section of Luke,—viz., from chap. xi., 14, to xiii., 23, ought to be inserted between verses 21 and 22 of chapter viii. This alteration, Mr. Halcombe imagines, would bring Luke more in accordance with Mark and John in regard to the order of events.

THE Rev. Howard Eber Evans, however, has published the second part of a disquisition to prove that St. Paul wrote both the Book of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. What Mr. Evans does prove is that a number of expressions in Luke and Acts are so like others in the Epistles of Paul that they were either written by some person who greatly copied Paul's terminology, or what is perhaps more probable, viz., that the author of the Acts also touched up the Epistles of Paul, and perhaps wrote some of them *in toto*. Neither the work of Mr. Evans nor that of Mr. Halcombe is calculated to do much good for the cause of Christian evidences.

THE Rev. Sir G. W. Cox pleads in the *Contemporary Review* for a wide scheme of Church Reform by the abolition of subscription to the articles and the repeal of the Acts of Uniformity. The reverend baronet would open the Church to all who profess and call themselves Christians. This, however, is not as comprehensive as Hooker, who long ago declared that membership of the Church extended to every member of the commonwealth. If as reported, Sir G. W. Cox was concerned in writing *The English Life of Jesus*, he should know the commonwealth comprises large numbers who do not and never will profess and call themselves Christians, and that therefore his comprehensive scheme is not wide enough.

THE Palmerstonian Whig Club at Oxford was a fit place for the once Radical Professor Goldwin Smith to lament the decay of religious belief. Although Mr. Smith in many of his writings has made it evident he himself has no belief in the orthodox beliefs, he would nevertheless like to see the doctrine of future rewards and punishments preached to others, since whatever might be the truth of that doctrine, it had at least the merit of making the poorer classes contented with their lot. Who can wonder at Disraeli's expressed contempt for the Professor?

SOME anonymous idiot, hailing from Kentish Town, sends us the following warning—"He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness. Take heed! You are now warned! It may be for the last time!" If we have committed

the sin against the Holy Ghost this warning is too late. If we have not, it would be as well if our monitor would tell us what is the sin against the Holy Ghost, so that we may avoid it, or at least commit it with our eyes open. If we are already guilty we shall go the whole hog. We won't be damned for a trifle.

THE Rev. Fred Bell, the singing preacher of Nottingham, has skeddaddled with all the cash he could raise, leaving his wife and five children destitute. A few years ago he got into trouble with a servant girl, and the revelations in the police-court were enough to damn him in the eyes of decent people. But Christians are a queer set, and when Fred Bell returned from a six-months' voyage he was welcomed with open arms. The man was plainly a humbug from head to foot. But he managed to run a "Church of the People" with considerable profit to himself. His amatory proclivities rather endeared him to the congregation; he was the ladies' pet, and some of the younger ones are said to be wondering who is to pay for their baby linen. The pious scapegrace is supposed to have found shelter in Canada, whence he will probably migrate to the United States, and under a new name find a fresh set of dupes. All we can say is that those who are duped by him deserve to be so. Any person with the least honesty of character would see through the fellow in five minutes.

THE Rev. R. Hillier, who claims the title of Musical Doctor, has put out a little book on *Christianity, Science and Infidelity*. In his arguments for Christian Theism, Hillier betrays gross ignorance of the theory of evolution, which he meets by saying, "I would ask each of my readers the question, Where is your father, in heaven or in monkeyland?" After this we are not surprised to read of "presumptuous infidelity." The chief argument for Christianity adduced is that it conduces to wealth, as evidenced by the most Christian nations. Unfortunately for Dr. Hillier's argument, it is entirely out of unison with the teaching of Jesus, who declared "Blessed be ye poor," "Woe to the rich," "Lay not up treasures on earth," etc. Dr. Hillier had better stick to his music.

BLACK and scarlet fever are raging in the Rhonda Valley, and the local sky-pilots of the Nonconformist persuasion have decided that all prayer-meetings shall be discontinued in the homes of persons dying from these maladies. The decision is very sensible, but very impious. According to the Bible, the prayer of faith will recover the sick; yet just when these poor Welsh people require its aid it is withheld from them. The fact is, the sky-pilots believe in prayer just as much as we do. It is good to preach, but bad to practise.

THE Thursday after Trinity Sunday being in the Roman Catholic Church the festival of Corpus Christi, the Romanising body in the Church of England known as the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament adopt that day for their celebration and Conference in London. This year the day falls on June 24, the day appointed by the Anglican Church for celebrating St. John the Baptist, but the Ducker is to be discarded for the Body of Christ, although Corpus Christi is unrecognised by the English Church.

BISHOP WILLIAMS says: "If the evolutionists will let my ancestors in the Garden of Eden alone, I will let theirs in the Zoological Gardens alone." The Bishop does not tell us from which of the animals in Eden he traces his descent.

NOT content with closing the Folkestone Exhibition on Sunday, and threatening to prosecute the authorities for keeping a "disorderly house," the Lord's Day Rest Society backs up its bigotry with lying, and gives out that the attendance has dropped down to thirty. Even if it had done so, the numbers in the middle of June could hardly be taken as a fair test whether such an institution was well patronised. But as a matter of fact the attendance was not thirty, but nearly two hundred and fifty, on the last Sunday when the Exhibition was open. The sooner that old law of George III. is repealed the better. Surely it is a monstrous absurdity that art exhibitions and brothels should both come under the head of disorderly houses.

SUBSCRIBERS to the London Missionary Society ought to look a little into the way the work is done in India. The editor of the *Indian Missionary*, the organ of the Society, is evidently aware that fair means will not suffice to lead the Hindus to the bloody religion of the Cross. He therefore advises that Europeans in India shall make the attendance of their native servants at public worship compulsory. He says: "We have arrived at the conclusion, after much inquiry and thought, that attendance should be compulsory, though as little as possible should be said about the matter. If the servants are told quietly, but firmly, that they must be present at prayers every morning, the majority will obey without a murmur." A far-reaching missionary work, he contends, may be done in India by these means, although, with Jesuitical astuteness, he wishes as little as possible said about the matter. Since the time of Constantine, and doubtless before, compulsion has been the favorite argument of Christians. The cross has only formed the hilt of the sword.

WHAT funny notions of Freethought some Freethinkers entertain! Two members of the Ball's Pond Branch have intimated

that they will not take this journal any more while Mr. Ball writes in it. The reason they assign is that he has insulted Mrs. Besant, but they admit that they have not read his pamphlet, and what is more they don't mean to read it. This may be Freethought as they understand it, but it isn't the Freethought for which we went to gaol. The loss of two subscribers will be a terrific blow—of course—but we dare say we shall survive it. Mr. Ball writes in this journal as a Freethinker, and he will continue to. He is responsible for his own economic views, and if he likes to oppose Mrs. Besant's Socialism tooth and nail when he leaves our office he is perfectly free to do so. As to his deliberately insulting anybody, we venture to say he is one of the last men in the world who would be guilty of that offence. We also venture to say that to take your view of any criticism from the person who is criticised, without being at the trouble to read the criticism itself, is—well, we leave it to every honest and sensible person. Just another word. We believe that earnestness in all matters is a good deal better than politeness, and public controversies on the most tremendous questions cannot be conducted in the tone you adopt in a drawing-room over a cup of tea. Nor is it a fair thing to judge a controversialist by three or four phrases culled from as many thousand lines. Judge, if you must judge, by the spirit and intention of the whole.

THE Rev. R. Brotherton, of Beeford, has been giving an address on Village Nonconformity. He states that in his part of the East Riding of Yorkshire, in villages with an aggregate population of 2,200, there is sitting accommodation in churches and chapels for 3,050 persons, probably ten times the number of actual attendants. Yet they cry out for more money for churches.

THE *Record* Reporter at the all-night-with-Jesus meeting of the Salvationists, says: "The vast throng more resembled a horde of lunatics than a band of professed Christian people. If the inhabitants of Bedlam were to be let loose I can hardly imagine their conduct would be more extraordinary than was that of those Salvationists." The frenzied prayers and shouting were varied by mounting on the tables and jumping, while presiding over the scene was General Booth, dangling a girl's gold necklace before the wild crowd and asking them what they were going to give up for Jesus. Their senses would have been a truthful response.

ACCORDING to the newspapers, James Edwards, of Barrow, shoemaker, who is said to be a local preacher, has been arrested at St. Helen's on a charge of fraud.

JOHN MILTON has committed suicide by hanging himself in the Presbyterian Church, Kingston, of which he was verger. His religion was apparently so sincere that he was really anxious to escape from this vale of tears to the better land promised by all preachers, but practically believed in by very few.

THE *Christian Herald* heads a paragraph "From the Congo to Glory." How long is the journey, we wonder? Have the missionaries made an iron railway? If so, we hope they will issue a few return tickets, so that some enterprising special correspondent may bring us back an account of the heavenly continent.

THE Rev. John Byron, M.A., vicar of Killinghome-cum-Habrough, has been shamefully libelling William Mumby in order to prevent his marriage. The reverend slanderer wrote a letter to the father of Mumby's intended and charged the young man with being the father of an illegitimate child, with having also victimised another young woman, and with paying his addresses to a third woman. At the trial the man of God failed to appear, but sent a medical certificate instead, together with a letter of apology in which he withdrew the whole of his statements and acknowledged that they were without foundation. The plaintiff being satisfied, the Bench allowed the summons to be withdrawn. But why did they allow so scandalous a matter to drop? Because a man is a vicar is he to receive no punishment for so vile and cowardly an offence?

GENERAL BOOTH has been sporting a converted nigger at Plymouth. One of our readers swears it is the very same darkie who was formerly there with Ginnett's circus, and who got into trouble over an umbrella which he mistook for his own. Well, what if it is? Is there not more joy in heaven over one darkie that repenteth than over ninety and nine just darkies that steal no umbrellas?

THE Religious Tract Society boasts of proclaiming the Gospel of the Grace of God in 177 languages. What an idiotic God to have created all these difficulties. If he had made only one language the task of promulgating the Gospel would have been far easier, and thousands or millions of lost souls who have perished for lack of knowledge might have been saved.

THE Rev. F. Constable Ellis of Canfairfechan Rectory, attributes to the Welsh Dissenters the prevalence of irreverence, lying, cursing, swearing and immorality in that country. No doubt Mr. Ellis's Christian charity will do something to make the Welsh Dissenters in love with the Establishment.

THE subject of our illustration is the curious story of the pety of a lion and an ass, related in the thirteenth chapter of the First Book of Kings. A man of God warned Jeroboam of idolatry and would have been slain by him, but that the king's hand withered. The frightened king then implored the man of God to entreat the Lord to have his hand restored, and this was done. The king then invited him to his house, but he refused and went away. Another prophet, however, induced him to return by a lying message, alleging an angel's command. For this disobedience the man of God was slain by a lion. When, however, the lion saw he had slain a prophet, he was smitten with remorse of conscience, and stood guarding the carcase on the one side while the ass remained on the other. The whole chapter is a good illustration of the mysterious dispensation under which such pious prophets, lions and asses lived.

THE Chicago Bible Society reports ten thousand families in that city without a copy of the Bible. Why doesn't Moody supply this deficiency instead of crossing the Atlantic to evangelise England? By the way, Moody's nose is put out of joint by Sam Jones, the new Revivalist, who is the latest religious sensation in the States.

BY way of saluting the rising sun, Christian publishers in our country are beginning to print Sam Jones's sermons. They suggest what might happen if Toole took to the pulpit.

OUR contemporary, the *Boston Investigator*, thinks the Chicago people's want of Bibles is no calamity, though if "the city wanted newspapers it would be cause for alarm."

PIOUS begging is not always successful. The *Richmond Religious Herald* (America) writes: "The Rev. J. H. Cason, of Graham, Texas, said, 'I am thinking of going North to beg some money to aid in building two Baptist Churches in Texas. What would you advise?' We advised him to take enough money with him to pay his expenses back."

FOUR young scapegraces broke into the Presbyterian Church, Southgate Road, Islington, and stole as much property as they could lay their hands on, although the whole lot was only worth thirty shillings. What was still worse, they made a raid on the sacramental wine, and consumed all the blood of Christ there was in the place. The worshippers will therefore have to obtain another supply of the article, and we hope J. C.'s veins will stand the fresh depletion.

AT Cradley a crowd of over three thousand people have been waiting for a ghost in the church-yard. Report does not say whether the weird visitor put in an appearance. It seems that the police had great difficulty in keeping order. Would it not be better for them to put up a notice "Ghosts will be prosecuted," and run in every one they find?

THE newspapers add: "It is believed a servant girl is responsible for the superstition which prevails." We venture to doubt it. The Bible and the sky-pilots have more to do with the "superstition which prevails" than she has.

SOME people think the religious instruction given in Board Schools, is of the mildest and most inoffensive description. From the syllabus drawn up by the London School Board of the course of religious instruction marked out for the year 1887, it appears that acquaintance with some of the worst features of the Old Testament, is demanded even from the juvenile classes. For Standard I. there is the Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, Lessons from the Life of Joseph, we suppose, including his resistance of Mrs. Potiphar's solicitations, and the Leading Facts from the Life of Christ, which must comprise his birth from the Virgin. The higher Standards include Lessons from the Lives of Samuel and David, Readings from the Pentateuch, with especial reference to the Lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. The Lives of Saul, David and Solomon, also form part of the choice religious instruction from which we trust all Freethinkers will see that their children are exempted.

M. VERESCHAGEN, not content with proving, by copious scripture extracts, that he is fully justified in painting the holy family as one of many members, now turns the tables on his detractors, and, protesting against the epithet "antichristian," which has been applied to his pictures, asks in his turn: "Is it Christian to represent God and the saints sitting on clouds, as though on chairs or armchairs? Is it Christian to make Christ a Roman patrician, and the saints of both sexes slaves of his household? Is it Christian to muffle up the image of Christ with costly dress material, to seat him on a throne of gold or silver, enriched with jewels, and put a crown on his head and a sceptre into his hands? All this in the clouds! Is it Christian to dress the Virgin in Pompadour costumes, and to cover her with trinkets weighing pounds? I had occasion to study the cults of different religions, but among the Buddhists and Brahmanists I have never found stranger idols than the Madonnas in some Christian churches."

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 27, Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, London, N., at 7.30, on "Who Made God?"

Monday, June 28, Monarch Coffee Tavern, Bethnal Green Road, at 8, "An Hour in Hell."

JULY 4, Rochdale; 11, Milton Hall, London.

AUGUST 8, West Hartlepool; 15, Milton Hall; 22 and 29, Hall of Science, London.

SEPT. 5, Liverpool; 19 and 26, Hall of Science, London.

CORRESPONDENTS

- LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. W. J. Ramsey, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.
- The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 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.—A *Freethinker*, "Magyar."
- E. T. G.—We are always pleased to answer inquiries as to the books that should be read in any line of study.
- J. HARVEY.—It is laughable, but the priest's complaint of his flock is a little too broad for our columns.
- R. PEET.—We insert your letter, valuing fair-play as much as you do.
- SIGNALMAN.—Thanks for the cuttings. We know nothing of the converted infidel you refer to. Probably if you write for the name and address you will not get them. Still you might make the experiment. That old query, whether the hen came before the egg, or the egg before the hen, is worthy of a prize for its downright imbecility. If there is anything in it, it means that God laid the first egg. People who write this sort of nonsense, know nothing of evolution, and are probably incapable of learning.
- R. FOX.—The extract from *Bow Bells* must certainly be startling to orthodox readers. We are afraid, however, that its chronology is exaggerated. Science scarcely allows that man has existed for millions, billions, or trillions of years.
- TRUTHSEEKER.—We are not aware that any book has been written in reply to Meredith's *Prophet of Nazareth*. Whether the daughter of Herodias was drowned we do not know, but we believe she is dead. Anyhow the story of her head being cut off by the ice in that part of the world, is extremely silly. Calvinism is more logical than other forms of Christianity with respect to human volition, but for the rest it is easily assailable, being based on the flimsy foundation of the inspiration of the Bible.
- "GREY-HEADED ATHEIST," has caught Mr. Ball tripping. Of course it was the people of the valley and not the mountaineers who had the iron chariots which enabled them to defeat the combined efforts of the Almighty and Judah. Mr. Ball thanks our correspondent for his kindly correction.
- G. LUCAS.—Thanks for the cuttings.
- W. HOOK.—The doors would simply have to be opened simultaneously as the trap-floor slid aside.
- ARGUS.—Many thanks. We have not seen anything of "Botany" or "Mysteries," but will certainly notice them if they arrive.
- C. AMBROSE.—See "Sugar Plums."
- H. HISCOCK writes on behalf of the Finsbury Branch of the N. S. S.: "I am instructed by the members of this Branch to tender you our best thanks for your kindness in lecturing for us on Clerkenwell Green last Sunday. It was a grand success."
- MARY ROSS.—Thanks for the cuttings. Always pleased to hear from you. We note the statement of your relative who has lived in India for many years, that "Europeans there never like to engage native servants who have become Christians, and even missionaries prefer Hindus or Mohammedans."
- T. A. WILLIAMS.—Thanks. See paragraph.
- R. GREEN.—You don't say what the 2s. is for. We have put it to the Ferguson Fund.
- ZEALOUS FREETHINKER.—Pleased to receive your interesting letter.
- J. PLIMSOLL.—Jokes received with thanks.
- W. DODD.—The offices of the Christian Evidence Society are at 13 Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.
- OLIVER HOWARD.—Kennicott's Bible has over 200,000 various readings of the Old Testament, and Dr. Scrivener estimates there are above 120,000 various readings of the New Testament. Of course many of these are but differences of a letter. Some, however, affect doctrine, and everything is of importance in the inspired Word of God.
- R. FOX.—Always glad to receive cuttings.
- H. M. READ (Salford) thanks the Glasgow friend who sent him a parcel of old *Freethinkers* and pamphlets for distribution. He is making good use of them.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Liberal—Boston Investigator—Beacon Light—Owl—Boston Knight—Ironclad Age—Southport Guardian—Shield Cape Times—Chat—North Cheshire Herald—Dublin Evening Mail—Manchester Evening News—Detroit Free Press.
- 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.

OUR Summer Number is now ready. There are no less than twenty-two illustrations, including a series of twelve on Noah's

Adventures with his Menagerie, showing how he collected the animals, together with the little event out of which the whole story might have grown. The artist who did the remarkable sketch of God in a Cloud for our last Christmas Number gratifies our readers once more with a picture of the Trinity, in which the mysterious problem of the Three in One is satisfactorily solved, leaving the Athanasian Creed and all the commentaries on it thousands of miles behind. Mr. Foote contributes a comic Sermon on Sin, abbreviated from the Rev. Joshua Grampus. Mr. Wheeler gives an account of the Socialist Riots in Jerusalem some eighteen centuries ago. Mr. Ball gives a few pages of Mrs. Eve's Diary, narrating how she got Mr. Adam the sack as head gardener in Eden. Mr. Moss contributes a little farce on the Calling of Samuel. Besides these pieces there is a great variety of humorous matter. We may add that the cover is exceptionally brilliant this time. Altogether our latest special number is launched with a perfect assurance of a prosperous voyage.

MR. FOOTE has consented to give a lecture in aid of the Bethnal Green Branch of the N. S. S. It will be delivered at the Monarch Coffee Tavern, Bethnal Green Road, on Monday evening, and the admission will be free. The Branch does not seek to gain financially, but only to give a fresh impetus to its work.

THIS morning (June 27) Mr. Foote will give another open-air lecture on Kingsland Green on behalf of the Ball's Pond Branch. As the Christians of that neighborhood are sometimes inclined to be rowdy, we hope our friends will muster to keep order.

THERE was an immense crowd on Clerkenwell Green last Sunday morning to hear Mr. Foote's *al fresco* lecture. For over an hour the audience listened to his views on God's Book, and their silence was only broken by roars of laughter and bursts of applause. There were several ladies in the crowd, and the outskirts were patrolled by a solitary policeman, who every now and then tried to suppress an obstinate grin on his own face. Some feeble opposition was offered by one of the Christian Evidence Society's men, and when he was replied to the proceedings terminated with a vote of thanks to Mr. Foote for "his gratuitous lecture, which would be sure to stimulate the out-door work on the Green." There was a good sale of literature outside our "blasphemy factory."

MR. BARNARD, of the Christian Evidence Society, who addressed a microscopic gathering, bitterly complained of Mr. Foote's coming down and taking away his audience. Poor Barnard! He was as spiteful as he could be, but perhaps he had reason to feel sore.

ONE of our West of England readers sends us the following extract from a letter received by one of his friends:—"Dear F.,—Allow me to ask you if you have decided the question of theology, If so, I have not, nor do I seem likely to for some time to come. Half the fellows in this college are Atheists, and the other half don't care a straw. God is shut up in the cupboard with the Bible after it is read in the morning."

WE are informed that there are a good many Freethinkers in the new Working Men's Liberal Club at King's Lynn. A copy of *Progress* monthly has been accepted from one of our friends. It lies on the library table, and is well read.

THE *Thinker* of Madras continues its good policy of reprinting from other journals. The number before us contains Mr. Foote's Open Letter to Jesus Christ and a letter from Mr. Symes to Bishop Goold.

FREETHOUGHT seems to be spreading rapidly in the Navy, and several of her Majesty's chaplains are greatly exercised in mind over this startling phenomenon. One of our subscribers writes as follows from an ironclad: "You will be glad to know that Freethought is steadily increasing on board. When I came to this ship, ——— ago, I believe I was the only 'blasphemer' here, and I was looked down upon as something loathsome. But I am thankful that, with the aid of your ably-written pamphlets and your most valuable paper, I have been able to bring many to see the absurdities of their blessed Bible, and to cast off the yoke of superstition."

THE *Boston Investigator* reprints Mr. Foote's tract on Bible Blunders with the following note: "Mr. George W. Foote, the editor of the London *Freethinker*, who was not long since imprisoned for a year for alleged 'blasphemy,' is a gentleman of much ability and well-read in Biblical doctrines, as the following (in addition to what we gave from him in our last number) conclusively proves, and in which there is no 'blasphemy' that we can discover, but considerable reason and common-sense."

A HOSTILE account of Mr. Symes's propaganda, appearing in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* describes his followers in the following terms:—"The audience was composed chiefly of men, though there were a good number of women present. All ages were represented, from the youth of twenty to the grey hairs of sixty or seventy. The people were most respectable, quiet, orderly, decently dressed, with intelligent and sometimes even thoughtful

faces; no rowdyism of any possible kind was to be seen. It was the most decent audience of artisans and working men that I think I ever remember seeing either inside a church or out of it. Now here I feel I must explain, both with regard to the audience and the speaker, that if I appear to speak of them more kindly than others generally do, it is not because my judgment is less severe, but because the facts are more dangerous than people generally realise. Symes, with a respectable audience, is a much more formidable fact than if he were merely followed by a crowd of boys and larrikins; and so in other things I shall mention hereafter."

SHOULD CHURCHES ESCAPE TAXATION?

PLACES of religious worship are by law exempt from rates and taxes. Religious bodies thus escape from paying their due share of public expenses. Schools, hospitals, alms-houses, mechanics' institutes and lecture-halls, are *not* exempted. Religion is accorded a privilege not granted to philanthropy and education. Why is this? Why should the community at large be burdened with the protection of property which pays no taxes? Why should Dissenters pay for police and paving and lighting and sewerage for Church property? Why should Roman Catholics pay for Jewish synagogues and Jews for Christian churches and chapels? The answer is obvious. The sects and religions unite in securing an immunity from taxation when that immunity is enjoyed by all of them in common. All but Churchmen agree that Church tithes are unjust, but an exemption which bribes religious associations all round, appeals to the religious conscience too strongly to be refused. Secularists are as yet in too small a minority to secure an impartial distribution of taxation. The consequence is that we have to bear a portion of the burden shifted from the shoulders of religious bodies.

This evaded taxation is equivalent to a subsidy from the State. In many parishes the local taxation alone amounts to one-third of the rent-value. If we reckon the rent-value as being six per cent. on the capitalised value of property this remission would be equivalent to a State contribution of two per cent. annually on the total selling-value. Without reckoning compound interest this would buy up all churches and chapels in fifty years. With compound interest the annual payment of two per cent. off the principal would enable anyone to purchase and pay for property in a much shorter period. Making all allowances I think we may fairly estimate that the State thus pays (or allows exemptions equivalent to) the full value of religious edifices twice over in every century. And yet these places of worship, paid for twice a century with public money, are always treated as private property, except—for the present—in the case of churches, which we shall probably find will be handed over to the Churchmen as their property although paid for by the community many times over in remission of taxes and oftener still in tithes, unabolished church rates disguised in various forms, rentals of public land, and other direct or indirect public contributions.

In America this question of untaxed property is becoming a public one. The dangers of Roman Catholicism (which is more widely prevalent in the United States than in England), the peaceful and permanent settlement of many public questions, such as disestablishment and the development of sound democracy or practical republicanism, which demand our more immediate attention in England, combined with the more extensive exemptions and the enormously increasing value of the lands held by the various sects, bring the matter into the arena of practical politics. President Grant, in his "Message" in 1875, said:

"I would also call your attention to the importance of correcting an evil, that, if permitted to continue, will probably lead to great trouble in our land before the close of the nineteenth century. It is the acquisition of vast amounts of untaxed Church property. In 1850, I believe, the Church property of the United States, which paid no tax, municipal or state, amounted to 87,000,000 dollars. In 1860 the amount had doubled. In 1870 it was 354,483,587 dollars. By 1900, without a check, it is safe to say, this property will reach a sum exceeding 3,000,000,000 dollars. So vast a sum, receiving all the protection and benefits of government, without bearing its proportion of the burdens and expenses of the same, will not be looked upon acquiescently by those who have to pay the taxes. In a growing country, where real estate enhances so rapidly with time as in the United States, there is scarcely a limit to the wealth that may be acquired by corporations, religious or otherwise, if allowed to retain real

estate without taxation. The contemplation of so vast a property as here alluded to, without taxation, may lead to sequestration without constitutional authority, and through blood. I would suggest the taxation of all property equally."

President Garfield said in Congress:

"The divorce between Church and State ought to be absolute. It ought to be so absolute that no Church property anywhere, in any state, or in the nation, should be exempt from equal taxation; for if you exempt the property of any church organisation, to that extent you impose a tax upon the whole community."

The New York *Truthseeker*, of April 3, has a long account of the arguments heard on petition before the Committee of the New York Assembly. This account is equal in volume to a whole number of the *Freethinker*. It shows, as one example, that in the City of New York the various sects and institutions escape taxation to the amount of three million dollars every year, which is nearly the same thing as if the State annually shared among the religious sects of that city the sum of £600,000 wrung from the whole body of ratepayers for the support of religion. The petition of the Constitution Club, of Brooklyn, asks that no more acts shall be passed granting exemption from taxation and that only public property shall be free from public imposts. To lessen the difficulties of the proposed change the Club asks that for the first year only one-tenth of the full taxation shall be levied on these religious institutions, and that an additional tenth shall be paid every year till the equalisation of rates and taxes is fully secured.

Colonel Ingersoll has pointed out how untaxed church property will increase in value through the work of others until in time the churches own a large percentage of the property of the civilised world. He says:

"If this property is not taxed, the churches will have so much in their hands that they will again become dangerous to the liberties of mankind. There never will be real liberty in this country until all property is put upon a perfect equality."

The time has not yet come in England for actively taking up this question. But it should be borne in mind, and the seeds of public opinion should be sown. Remission of sins may be left within the prerogative of the Church, but remission of taxes is quite another matter.

W. P. BALL.

LETTERS FROM CHRIST.

A DAY WITH THE RECORDING ANGEL.

THE best holiday I ever spent was with the Recording Angel, who is stationed up above in a very superior suite of offices, fitted in true official style, with a splendid range of desks, and shelves all round for ledgers, journals and subsidiary books, which have to be posted up every night. The daily routine is very laborious, but still there are episodes occurring that relieve the monotony. So to see that the affair was in complete working order, I spent my last holiday and witnessed the heavy work relegated to this official. It was stupendous—the amount of ink, paper and stationery generally being a serious item in "dad's" expenditure—the pens alone "that come as a boon and a blessing to men" costing an enormous sum yearly. The old man had to kill off a large number of penmakers from the earth so as to manufacture his own.

The Recording Angel told me to keep quiet, that proper attention might be paid to the telephonic communication. I had not waited long before the bell rung and then a voice said "Put to the debit of Miggins, junior, of Pleasant Alley, Shoreditch, one black mark; he has been detected pilfering from the family sugar basin." The bells after this kept up quite a concert of tintinnabulums. Voices were heard in every direction, and the bevy of angelic clerks had all their work cut out to make the entries fast enough. "Please erase that debit you made yesterday to the account of the Rev. Wopples, who eloped with the contents of the missionary-box; he's been on his knees for about two hours, so his offence may be wiped out; but make it warm for Miggins, junior." Another voice: "Credit the account of the Archbishop of Gallopbury with one mark; he has gone to the expense of a new alb and has ordered an extra pound of candles for the altar. That dreadful clerical offence of the Rev. Stoggles need not be entered, as he has made full reparation to Jehovah by prosecuting a Secularist who has written an article on ancient Moses and made fun of God having put him into a cleft of the rock. Are you there? Keep at the telephone." "Yes!" "I'm still talking, do you hear—all right. Another case of fearful youthful depravity—these cases must be severely dealt with. Toffins, a boy of eight, kept back his offering to the Lord,—'tuppence' he says—and spent it on cocoa-nut chips. Make it sultry for this youth, as he is the leader of a band of young ruffians, who absent themselves from Sabbath school and wander in the fields instead. Don't switch me off; are you listening? Keep the connection on; I'm investigating a fearful case. Are you there? All right. Now for

particulars. The beadle of the parish church of Saint Jemima, has been found in his spare time lurching on the altar, making a good square meal off the sacramental bread, assisted with cheese, and washing it down with the sacramental wine from the sacramental cup—it's almost too horrible to repeat. The worst is to come. He got slightly obfuscated, reeled against the statue of the Virgin Mary and has flaked off part of her august proboscis. Are you there? Do you hear? Yes, switch me on to Jehovah's number. I want to ask him to settle this beadle at once and send him immediately to Hades. What! Mephisto won't have him. Oh! nonsense. Mephisto says what?—his place is too select for beadles? Well make him big drummer in the Salvation Colney Hatch—a fearful punishment, but he deserves it. Now then! Pay attention. Credit Poet Twentyston's account. He's published a poem against Atheism, written in his best style. Will do a great deal of good; nobody understands what he means, and he doesn't understand it himself—this makes it all the more sublime. Another credit please. Are you there all right? Listen. The Duke of Connoughtn't has subscribed the refuse of his kitchen to Bethshan. Noble example—following in his mother's footsteps. Ah! that reminds me. Did you give her credit for her last contribution of five shillings to the Society for providing cold cream for the chapped hands of the Indian missionaries. Keep someone at the telephone, when you retire for the night—there's lots to report. Willikins, junior, has been detected getting into bed without saying his prayers. Says it's too cold. Have him made stoker when he passes his checks in. Settle the account of the Rev. Snogler, for want of faith. He's had put up against the steeple of his church a lightning-conductor, an apparatus invented by an unbeliever. Are you there still? Sorry to keep you, but just one more case. All right, listen. Is Jehovah asleep? An Atheist has got into Parliament—no cataclysm. Jehovah has not even given the unbeliever toothache; nor corns. He actually speaks in the law chamber; is listened to, nothing occurs. There's an eruption of Etna, but Jehovah's wrong in his geography, this terrible fellow does not reside in Sicily. Oh, for a Newdegate; he'd have jogged Jehovah's memory. Manning's not to be trusted, he once broke his oath. What's this poor world coming to?"

Seeing this department of heaven was in such good working order and that the Recording Angel had such a perfect system of telephonic communication, I left with many thanks to the bevy of angelic clerks, having pinned on their feathers a medal (cost threepence) for their efficiency.

A DREAM OF JUDGMENT.

I SANK peacefully to sleep last night, never anticipating that I should awake in another world; but my soul, spirit, ego or something, seized the opportunity to quit my body (or anyhow my bed) and travel to unknown realms. For I woke with a start in the next life! My death must have been sudden, for I could remember no long illness, no strong battling for life, no cruel parting from the wife who made existence a charm. Rapid, inexorable, the destroyer had descended and brought me here! I stood in a large vestibule, stony, staring and cold; amidst a crowd of others, snatched like myself from bright mortal life. I knew—felt that we were about to be judged—about to enter the awful presence! I looked round, and to my excessive astonishment espied my sister, awaiting her turn. Crossing to her, I fell into conversation, somewhat in this wise:—

I: "What, you here?" She: "Yes; we did not expect this!" I: No, indeed! There is a future life after all we N. S. S. people have said and thought." She: "So it seems. I can smell Hell." (So could I—sulphurous fumes issued from an iron stairway on our left). "But where and what is Heaven?" I: "Oh, I seem to think that it will be a sort of Nirvana-Rest!"

But while I spoke, a form ascended the stair-case which I at once recognized. It was indeed my old schoolfellow and river chum Harry—Poor Harry! Always rather auburn, he was now absolutely fiery! He was, when I saw him last, a lawyer, so I was not surprised to meet him coming from below.

"Why Harry, old man!" "Hullo, Alf! Didn't know you were dead. Glad to see you;" and we shook hands heartily. During a five minutes confab, my friend told me that when he came down he passed his exam. very well, but there was one screw loose and he got plucked. (He was always thinking of his law affairs.) He only got one year in Hell for his sins, and he did not find it so blamed sultry after all. "You don't get burnt," he said, "but you can sweat a little." Knowing he had always been a good sort of fellow, I asked what the venial offence that landed him was? He hesitated, but on my pressing him, he exclaimed, "Well, keep it dark. It was for staying away from church. Good-bye." And he went off humming, "All on account of Eliza."

The next moment I was hurried, by some invisible influence, along a corridor, towards what something told me was the Judgment Room. My short interview with Harry M— had satisfied me that Hell was not very hot, so my native impudence was on tap when the door swung open and I passed into the presence of Almighty God!

And now I can give no definite description of the Face of God! I remember nothing but the impression that flashed through my mind—"Benevolent-looking old humbug!" He or It, sat on the further side of a large fire-place, was attired in a loose robe of

some neutral tint and—that's all I recollect! On his right and on my left, was a table, at which sat a clerk, who wrote down my answers and recorded my sentence. The Recording Angel! In an usher's dress and such a grin on his mug. Si-i-i-lence in Court. He looked just that—and I nearly whispered him presently to meet me outside and I'd stand him a drink. But the Creator was there! I felt a mingled awe and curiosity to find the god-idea true and myself in the presence of the Infinite, so I took off my overcoat (don't know why I had it, but it was there), put it on a chair, folded my arms and—waited developments.

God questioned, I answered, and old "Si-i-i-lence" took notes.

Some dozen queries, which I now forget, were disposed of; then came—"What's your opinion of Jesus?"

"The fat's in the fire," I thought. "He was a brother man," I ventured, blandly.

"Hey!"

I plucked up courage. "Look here," I said, "you know I was an Atheist, and did not believe all that stuff. You gave me a mind and I used it. What's the good of asking me these questions?"

To my surprise, he dropped it, and asked: "Did you ever buy anything besides goods?"

The Devil must have prompted me, for I said, viciously: "Yes, two Bibles, and they are at home now."

The next question was still more idiotic. "Did you take part in a riot in 1884?"

"No!"

"Yes you did, and here's a bill of the damage—£33 odd," said old "Si-i-i-lence."

"You're a liar," I retorted, hotly.

The usher collapsed. God spake (N.B.—This is tragedy):

"You will go to Hell for one year."

"What for?"

No answer, but the old animal at the table booked it with fiendish pleasure. But God was not a woman, so I would have last say. "What then?"

"You will return to earth."

Now I did not care a little bit. Back to earth to my wife! Yet why should I be kept from her even for a year? "Can't that sentence be altered?" I queried.

"It is recorded"—old "Si-i-i-lence" nodded—"and can neither be increased or diminished. I am unchangeable!"

Now for it—"An unchangeable old ass!" I yelled, and rushed to the door, which was rapped loudly, and a voice exclaimed: "Please, Mr. Andrews, it's time to get up."

A. R. ANDREWS.

THE FERGUSON DEFENCE FUND.

MR. ANGUS CAMPBELL'S bill amounted to £100 19s. We have acknowledged in the *Freethinker* £73 3s. 1d. The Glasgow Committee have acknowledged £27 4s. 10d. Their expenditure has been £5 7s. 7d. We have asked them to get their account audited by two outside members of the Glasgow Society. When we receive it we shall publish the voucher, and two gentlemen will certify the total of the sums in our columns. This matter will probably be settled by next week. It is purely formal, for the account is simplicity itself. The deficit of nearly £7 we have paid ourselves, besides a small contribution to the purse presented to Mr. Ferguson on Whit-Sunday. We take this opportunity of heartily thanking our readers for so generously supporting this journal when it was threatened, and especially for helping to save Mr. Ferguson from the horrors of fourteen days' imprisonment at the age of seventy-seven.

Additional Subscriptions.—G. Barker, 2s. 6d.; R. Green, 2s. The following further subscriptions have also been received by the Glasgow Committee: John G. S. Campbell, 5s.; Wm. N. Smith, 5s.; Geo. Smith, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Marshall, 1s.; A. Clacher, 6s. 6d.

PROFANE JOKES.

"I THINK our church will last a good many years yet," said a waggish deacon to his minister; "I see the sleepers are very sound."

A MINISTER at a camp-meeting said: "If the lady with the blue hat, red hair and cross-eyes don't stop talking, she will be pointed out to the congregation."

THE head of John the Baptist, which is at Amiens, was shown to the Abbé de Marolles. In kissing it he exclaimed: "God be praised! This is the fifth or sixth that I have had the honor of kissing."

TWO cardinals found fault with Raphael for having in one of his pictures given too florid a complexion to St. Peter and St. Paul. "Gentlemen," replied the artist, ill-pleased with the criticism, "don't be surprised; I paint them just as they look in heaven. They are blushing with shame to see the Church below so badly governed."

A LAYMAN in Providence, who occasionally exhorted at evening meetings, thus explained his belief in the existence of a deity: "Brethren, I am just as confident that there is a supreme being as I am that there is flour in Alexandria; and that I know for certain, as I yesterday received from there a lot of three hundred barrels of fresh superfine, which I will sell as low as any other person in town."

36pp. Pamphlet, in colored Wrapper. Price 3d.
MRS. BESANT'S SOCIALISM.
Its Follies, Fallacies, and Impossibilities.
 By W. P. BALL.
 Progressive Publishing Co., 28 Stonecutter St., E.C.

The following reply was sent to Mrs. Besant's charges in the *National Reformer*, but was not inserted. In self-defence I publish it as an advertisement:—

"To the Editors of the *National Reformer*.—Mrs. Besant accuses me of making 'perfectly false statements' about her 'manner of life,' but she does not specify a single instance so as to enable me to defend myself if innocent or to withdraw the statement and apologise if I am in error. Have I all of a sudden become so irredeemably base that I cannot even be allowed the opportunity of reform and atonement? Is Mrs. Besant so infallible a judge that an opponent has no need to know the definite particulars of the offence for which she condemns and sentences him? So far as I can call to mind, the little I incidentally said about her manner of life only showed that she lived the life of a blameless Individualist of narrowed experience.

I am also accused of black misrepresentation. The one instance given, which is alleged to be even blacker than usual, is the passage in my pamphlet where I said, 'For a long time after she had owned her Socialism in the Socialist journal *Justice*, she concealed it from the readers of the *National Reformer*, though writing Socialist paragraphs therein.' There is no misrepresentation here, and no attempt at misrepresentation, for the statement is in perfect accordance with the facts. If not, let her point to the paragraph in the 'N. R.' in which she owned she was a Socialist. A general excuse that she 'did not "own" her Socialism in the 'N. R.' because 'the knowledge thereof was public property,' is certainly no proof that she owned her Socialism to the readers of the 'N. R.,' who naturally expect to receive their information from her direct, and not through a casual paragraph in a daily press whose statements concerning the editors of the 'N. R.' are so frequently false and misleading that no sensible being puts any trust in them unless they are confirmed by the said editors' own statements at first hand. I believe that at the time nine out of ten of the readers of the 'N. R.' would have denounced, as Mr. Joshua Widdicombe publicly did, the charge of Socialism as only one of the many libels against Mrs. Besant. They were unsuspectingly reading paragraphs of hers with a Socialist tendency in the belief that the writer was still a staunch advocate of Individualism, like her co-editor. I consider that this method of introducing new views is wrong, but when Mrs. Besant charges me with making 'the odious accusation of duplicity' she overshoots the mark. I gave the case as an illustration of introducing 'the thin end of the wedge,' and I described it as 'reticence,' which is not precisely the equivalent of duplicity. I gave the facts and left Mrs. Besant and the public to explain them as they thought best. There are milder theories than that of odious duplicity. For my part if driven to choose I should certainly prefer the more tenable theory of intellectual deterioration. But without adopting either view there are explanations which a thoughtful and considerate student of human nature might very reasonably offer. It is natural to deny the decisive plunge into troubled waters, and it is at the same time difficult to refrain entirely from expressing views which possess one's mind as of vital importance to the well-being of the whole race, and which in their elementary forms appear to their holder as more general truisms rather than as party doctrines. The policy of introducing the thin end of the wedge does not necessarily involve moral discredit, seeing that none but fools would try to introduce the thick end first. But it does imply an effective and often unsuspected method of action against which one may lawfully put others on their guard.

As the above remarks are but the defence which even the basest of men should be allowed to make in answer to charges against his character, I presume you will do me the justice to insert them. If permitted, I am quite prepared to defend myself on the other points of Mrs. Besant's criticism. For the present I will only ask to be allowed to quote some of the passages from my pamphlet in which I bestow praise, often of the very highest kind, on Mrs. Besant. I describe her as 'so estimable and heroic a lady,' (p. 1), as 'the heroine—and well-nigh the martyr—of Malthusianism' (p. 3), and as 'the brightest star of Socialism' (p. 3). I acknowledge her 'clear unhesitating courage' and 'the beauty of sterling sincerity and moral earnestness' that 'rings through all she says' (p. 26), of her 'sufferings and achievements in the cause of truth' of 'her many virtues and abilities, and her eminent services as a leader of our party' (p. 27), of her 'bravest advocacy of Freethought' (p. 28), and of 'her poetical humanitarianism' (p. 30). I describe her intentions as of 'the very highest order of excellence' (p. 34), I declare that 'she is brave with the glowing faith of the martyr, and the undaunted and portentious resolution of the heroine' (p. 36), and I assure her that if she could only secure the improvement in character and capacity anticipated in her scheme 'I would vote for her to be made absolute Empress of the whole world to-morrow' (p. 29). I submit that this is not the language of a base slanderer whose great object is the vilification of the person whom he both praises and blames so strongly.—Yours truly, W. P. BALL."

[Mrs. Besant, it transpires, was a Socialist in 1884; and she advocated State feeding, in the "N. R." in that year. The earliest avowal of her Socialism in the "N. R."—and that an indirect one—was on Sept. 27, 1885.]

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