

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. VI.—No. 37.]

SEPTEMBER 12, 1886.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 165.



CLEANSING THE LEPER.

And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.—MATT. VIII., 2, 3.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK.

THE broken promises of the New Testament, which we intend to publish some day, are numerous and striking enough to startle the most orthodox Christian. It may, of course, be asked why it was reserved for us to make the discovery. Our answer is that the fact was well known to sincere students of the Bible long before we were born; nor had it escaped the attention of the more learned clergy, although they took particular care not to breathe a word of the matter in their pulpits. All their talk was and is about the "precious" promises of the New Testament, without a hint that nine out of ten have been shamelessly falsified. We are probably within the truth in saying that if Jesus Christ were compelled to honor all his promises to-morrow he would have to file a petition in bankruptcy. Unfortunately there is little fear of his sustaining such a disaster. He claims, and is granted, unlimited time to fulfil his engagements, and as all his creditors keep dying, and the debt is not transferable, his credit remains good without a single payment. We have to give him our time, our money, our affections, and our service; and in return he gives us magnificent drafts on the Bank of Expectation,

not one of which has ever been honored except by the merest accident.

Looking at the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, you find that they all relate to the sweet by-and-bye. Every blessing promised to the faithful is in the future tense—intensely future. Blessed are ye that mourn now, for ye shall be comforted. When? When you have no tears to shed. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. When? When you have no stomachs. These instances are rich enough, but an infinitely richer one remains. It is one of the greatest jokes in the New Testament, or in the Bible. Not, indeed, that Jesus intended to be jocular. He was a dreadfully serious person, and although he frequently wept, there is no evidence that he ever laughed or even smiled. Had he possessed the slightest sense of humor, it would have saved him from many mistakes, and would have probably averted the tragedy of Calvary. It is perfectly obvious that if Jesus Christ had been able to appreciate the comical side of things he would not have made such a mulish exhibition of himself before Pontius Pilate. What a pity Mark Twain was not a popular author in those days. Of course there was Aristophanes, the king of ancient wit, but his plays were in Greek, which was a sealed language to nearly every Jew in Palestine. Besides the founder of

Christianity was one of the chosen people, whose sense of humor seldom goes beyond a practical joke. Search their scriptures from Genesis to Malachi, and with the single exception of Elijah's *sanglante dérision* of the priests of Baal, you will not find a scintillation of wit in the whole book. Jehovah's sarcasms were fiery serpents, his irony was thunderbolts, his laughter was hailstones, and his smile was lightning.

Blessed are the meek, says Jesus, for they shall inherit the earth. There never was a more monstrous falsehood; it only deserves to be greeted with roars of laughter. We know it may be urged that the meek are to come into their landed property in the millennium, but that doctrine is pretty well exploded except in the minds of a few ignorant fanatics, and no decent minister of the Gospel thinks of saying a word in its defence. Jesus Christ undoubtedly meant, as the early Christians sincerely believed, that the reign of the saints on earth would be speedily inaugurated; indeed, twelve thrones were definitely promised to the chief disciples of the meek and lowly one, who were to imitate their Master's humility by lording it over their countrymen. There cannot be a reasonable doubt in the mind of a candid critic that Jesus meant his promise to the meek in its literal significance.

Eighteen centuries have elapsed since Jesus promised that the meek should inherit the earth, and up to the present moment they have not even made a beginning. More than half the soil of our own country is held by the House of Lords, and they are a remarkably meek body! Their leader, the Marquis of Salisbury, is the very type of the arrogant aristocrat, and his spirit is exhibited in due proportion by nearly all his followers. Look into the origin of their estates, and how many acquired them by meekness? The founders of many aristocratic houses were enriched by the impudent spoliation of the Catholic Church under Henry VIII.; and how many peers subsequently created have displayed an appreciable degree of modesty, let history attest. Without a word of exaggeration, it may be said that our aristocracy in England, Scotland and Ireland, have shown in every age as much selfishness, cruelty, and arrogance, as ever afflicted a miserable people. Meekness was never one of their qualifications; yet they inherit the earth, and stick to it with the tenacity of their tribe. Bismarck's version of the beatitude is probably what Jesus Christ ought to have said—Blessed are the Possessors. The disinherited must look after themselves.

While the people are meek, or as the Gospel elsewhere expresses it, poor in spirit, they will never inherit the earth, although it is the gift of nature to all, and is as necessary to human life as the air we breathe or the water we drink. While the multitude were meek they were slaves. Meekness was a strong characteristic of the American negroes, and is the inevitable mark of the slave mind. It was not the driver's whip that kept them in awe, but their own abjectness. Their meekness was simply a vice, and made them the goods and chattels of the unscrupulous Christians who called it a virtue. Dropping his meekness is the first condition of a slave's becoming a free man. When the people of England cease practising the injunctions of the pulpit; when they laugh at those who tell them to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters, and to remain contented in that condition of life to which it has pleased Providence (that is, the squire and the parson) to call them; when they cast off their poorness of spirit and assume the proper pride of manhood; then they will begin to inherit the earth, to which they have always been in justice entitled.

All Europe has just been startled by the tyranny and treachery of Russia. The kidnapping of Prince Alexander, and his expulsion from the throne, in brutal defiance of his claim to better treatment, and cynical contempt of the rights of Bulgaria, are of a piece with the traditional policy of the Czars. Yet the meaner Alexander who sits on the Russian throne, is head of the Church as well as the State, bears a great reputation for piety, and pretends to be a devout adorer of the carpenter's son of Nazareth. Not, however, by practising the precepts of the Sermon of the Mount does he wield his malignant power. The meekness is all on the side of his victims. When once they trample on the besotting nonsense of Jesus Christ they will make short work of their tyrant and his holy gang of temporal and spiritual sycophants and panderers. When the pot does boil over, the fat in the fire will be worth seeing.

G. W. FOOTE.

A FEMALE CHRIST.

THE religion of the Bible has often been extolled as being differentiated from all Pagan forms of belief by its teaching the doctrine of one only God. This contention is incorrect. Hindus, Persians, Greeks, and Egyptians had attained the conception of one supreme ruler long before the monotheistic prophets who could truthfully say of their countrymen "According to the number of thy cities, are thy gods, O Judah." What really differentiates Judaism from the religion of the surrounding nations is that it admits no goddesses. Its deity is purely masculine.

It is true there is a reminiscence of the androgyny of deity in the account of the creation which says God created man in his own image, male and female created he them, and some Rabbis have contended that the perfection of the divine nature must comprise the elements of both sexes.* But the whole conception of the Jewish legislation is patriarchal, that is to say the father is sovereign while the mother is subordinate, retaining her position only at the pleasure of her lord and master.

The conception of woman's inferiority which demanded a double purification at the birth of a female to that required at the birth of a male, shows itself also in the fundamentals of the faith. God is always He; a father not a mother. Sons of gods are spoken of; never daughters. Jesus the Son of God *par excellence* could not be born of an ordinary woman but only of a virgin. Had women written the Bible no doubt all would have been different. Man would have brought sin into the world and all our woe. A woman would have been the Redeemer, and women would have been chosen as the apostles of the redemption. As it is our fair helpmates have good reason to be dissatisfied. Once let woman understand how much her sex has been kept in bondage by religion and the game of the priest is over.

The Catholic church by its worship of the Virgin Mary has done something to provide expression for the reverence for womanhood which made the Greeks place Hera beside Zeus. It is quite safe to say that Mary and the female saints have had far more genuine worship than Father, Son, and Holy Ghost put together. The exclusive masculinity of Protestantism with its bachelor God, who is nevertheless his own father and his own son, has been mitigated by the emasculating of Jesus Christ and the occasional appearance of a female prophet who either announced herself as an incarnation of the Holy Ghost or as one of the other mysterious persons of the Trinity.

Early in the present century Joanna Southcott obtained a number of followers, including three clergymen, who believed her to be chosen of God to produce the new Messiah. It is true the Shiloh, for whom they provided a golden cradle, was to have been a male, and turned out to be the dropsy, but none the less the leading idea in all her writings is that woman, being the cause of man's misfortunes, must be the chief agent in his redemption. This idea crops up continually. It is not long since Mrs. Girling, of the Shaker community, announced herself as "the second appearing of Jesus, the Christ of God, the bride, the lamb's wife, the God-mother and savior." Now we hear of one, Mrs. John P. Martin, of Walnut Hills, Cincinnati, who has got a number of persons to believe that she is God manifest in the flesh, and that her sister, Mrs. John F. Brook, is the Holy Ghost. No doubt they think there is as much necessity for an incarnation now as ever, and if God is getting up a new incarnation, in common fairness he must give the ladies a turn. Why not? Why should not he, or she, have an only-begotten daughter to match the only-begotten son? To make a match she should be born of a virgin father, without the intervention of any human mother. This would be a great improvement, and a much more uncommon miracle than the absence of a father, which characterised the birth of Jesus. It may be disappointing to find that Christ and the Holy Ghost are, or have been, married women, but I think we may all agree that any one who is in absolute need of an object of worship might do worse than select a woman.

J. M. WHEELER.

A BELIEVER in design, mentions, as a striking evidence of the symmetry of nature's operations, that "mushrooms always spring up in a shower, which is doubtless the reason why they are shaped like umbrellas."

* This has recently been contended by Mr. Lawrence Oliphant in his *Synonymata*.

"IMPROVING" CHRISTIAN TEXTS.

THE brief article from my pen which appeared in these columns under the heading of "Shocking the Natives" I might very well have lengthened by the narration of a few more of my experiences with the Christians at the seaside; and but for the fact that I know your readers like short contributions, as much as church-goers do short sermons, I should have done so. A few facts briefly and clearly stated are more likely to be remembered than a long-winded dissertation. Long experience has written this fact indelibly upon the tables of my memory.

With your permission, however, I will the remaining portion of my tale unfold (let not the reader think that I wish to display the rudimentary organ mentioned by Darwin), or, in other words, the story of my doings at Ramsgate. Regularly on Friday I presented myself at Messrs. Smith and Sons' bookstall at the railway station and gravely asked for a copy of the *Freethinker*, and when I was informed that they did not keep it I expressed my astonishment and disgust, and said that I should have to get a member of Parliament to ask a question about it in the House. I then marched off with the air of one who had been greatly injured. When the news-boys came round on Sunday with the *Referee* and *Dispatch* they also were badgered about the *Freethinker*, and it was truly a funny sight to see the faces of these yokels when they expressed their absolute ignorance of the existence of any such journal.

One fine Saturday morning, while walking over the East Cliff with a freethinking companion, we noticed that somebody had scribbled in large letters on the pavement a number of religious texts. Some of them were meaningless, others absurd. My companion suggested that they should be "improved," and with characteristic boldness he took a piece of chalk and altered them. Thus "God is love" was altered into "God is lovely—beautiful—real jam." "Jesus loves you" was changed into "Jesus loves you—especially the ladies," while "You must be born again" was transformed into "You must be born again; but not of a virgin. Think of the poor mothers!"

It is no exaggeration to say that hundreds of persons saw these alterations; many ladies giggled over the latter one especially, and some gnashed their teeth and frowned as they passed them by. Others, again, could not possibly stand such blatant blasphemy and therefore took their handkerchiefs and endeavored to rub them out, but found they could not. A downfall of rain however two days later completed the work for them.

After reflection, I thought, that if the Christians did not like to see their texts improved or ridiculed, perhaps they would not object to answer a few questions relating to the truth of their religion. Accordingly I and my companion—a smart and audacious youth—commenced the task of engraving a few questions in prominent positions such as "Who was Cain's wife?" "Why does not God kill the Devil?" "Did Christ's brothers believe in him?" etc. These questions remained up for over a week and nobody ventured to add an answer.

When they had been up a few days I observed evidence of the existence in that part of the world of other Freethinkers, for some heretical person had written on a fence "Lot's wife; 4 lbs. a penny," and other startling pieces of Biblical information.

I daresay that many Freethinkers will declare that this scribbling of questions for Christians on fences and pavement was unworthy of an earnest man. Perhaps it was. I do not defend it; to me it was a little harmless amusement, and even philosophers may sometimes stoop to that. I only say that if Christians adopt such methods of making known their doctrines, Freethinkers may, in self-defence, show them that it is a game at which a good many other persons may play if they feel so disposed. During the short time I was at Ramsgate I succeeded in making my presence felt, and if next year a hundred or so of London Freethinkers will make an excursion one Sunday to this delightful watering-place (or any other) I will undertake that thousands of persons who have never heard of Freethought shall be awakened, as by an electric shock, from the dreadful nightmare of superstition.

A. B. Moss.

ACID DROPS.

MR. P. McDONALD, M.P., said, in the course of debate in Parliament, that "there was undeniable proof that the riots which had so disgraced the town of Belfast were due, in great measure, to the incitement of two reverend firebrands—the Rev. Dr. Kane and the Rev. "Roaring" Hanna.

NOT content with killing or wounding some thousand inhabitants of various small Greek towns and villages, and smothering 111 New Zealanders by means of a volcanic eruption, the Lord has sent some big earthquakes to Protestant America. Charleston is described as a "complete wreck." Ten successive shocks laid the greater part of the city in ruins. The damage done is estimated at from ten to fifteen million dollars. The dead are being dug out and laid in rows in the streets. Many other cities suffered more or less. The panic was terrible. But they tell us the Lord doeth all things well, and genuine Christians must regard this devastation as another proof of his perfect benevolence.

FIVE fires broke out among the ruins. "Confusion reigns supreme." Most of the people are camped in the open air, or are flying for their lives. Some, including even some women armed with hatchets, are rescuing people buried in the wreckage. The railway tracks are partially destroyed. One train was overwhelmed by a flood caused by the destruction of a dam.

THE negroes are particularly earnest in their religious professions, but it does not appear that religion preserved their equanimity. It really had the contrary effect. The reports speak specially of the "terror of the negroes," who everywhere fell praying and shrieking instead of helping to rescue the wounded and clear the streets. The correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* says "strenuous efforts are now being made to restore order, but the endeavors of the whites are rendered futile by superstitious feeling among the blacks, who appear to be unamenable to reason. Throughout the whole night the negroes continued their religious services in the most exaggerated form. Their shouts and shrieks had a manifest effect upon the whites, and totally unnerved those striving to be calm in their fearful situation." The superstitious fear inculcated by the Bible made them believe that the day of judgment had arrived, and that it was vain and wicked to contend against the Lord.

TALMAGE says that "God chooses our occupation for us." Then God set us to work to attack religion. Why do Christians blame us for doing what God decides we shall do? Hadn't they better prosecute God for making us "blaspheme"?

THE Portsmouth Y.M.C.A. announces that its object is "to make men Christians and to make Christians men." We are afraid that all the Young Men's Christian Associations in the world will fail as signally in the latter part of this programme as in the first half.

A CHRISTIAN contemporary says that the Holy Synod in Russia has carried a measure which will compel the whole army to observe the fast days of the Russian Church. These amount to nearly 200 in the course of the year. The soldiers may not take meat or fish or eggs or milk or even sugar on these days. The officers are thoroughly opposed to this method of sanctifying the military. They say the physical strength of the soldiers must inevitably suffer.

THE Rev. T. W. Herbert, vicar of St. John's, Southend, is a worthy representative of the accursed creed. The child of one of his dissenting parishioners, Mr. Going, having died, notice of burial was given to this clergyman. Availing himself of a technical flaw in the notice, he demanded a fresh one, which delayed the funeral over twenty-four hours in the intensely hot weather, although all arrangements had been made. The father pleaded, on the ground of a sorrowing wife and a delicate child, for a remission of the clerical resolve, but, in his own words, he was "treated like a dog." The ecclesiastical Shylock had his legal pound of flesh, and the putrefying corpse was obliged to be kept for twenty-four hours longer in the house than was necessary.

A CONTROVERSY is going on in the *Church Times* upon the practice of the clergy of "mumbling." Some write stating their preference for "the still small voice," as they call the inaudible tones of the reader of the Church Service. Others naturally object to the unison of gabble and drawl which usually characterises the performance.

REPORTS from China *via* Rome state that the natives have risen against the Christians "owing to the imprudence of the English and American Protestant missionaries." In Cochin China fifty Christians have been massacred. It is intolerable that the heathen Chinese should take a leaf out of the Bible and imitate, however inadequately, the massacres of the Canaanites by God's chosen people. Such methods of conversion or of repression must only be used by the true saints, and as these hated interlopers are as yet in a small minority in China there is but a poor chance of doing God's work in converting the natives wholesale

by the methods prescribed in Deuteronomy and practised on such occasions as the famous feast of St. Bartholomew.

A HANDSOME young gipsy who belongs to the troop which has for some time pitched its tents at Aston states that an endeavor was lately made to induce her to join the Salvation Army, for the purpose of exhibiting herself in the old gipsy costume, and turning her talents to spiritual account. Her story is that an emissary of "General" Booth himself told her she should be well cared for, and well paid, if she would accept the proposal. This, if true, is another striking commentary upon the way in which the Salvation Army conducts its campaign. The young gipsy in question was too proud to listen to such overtures. "I feel some honor in being a gipsy of the pure blood," she said; "but I should lose it all if I exhibited myself in a show."

AT Kingscourt, Cavan, on Sunday, the parish priest, the Rev. J. Flood, at mass denounced the anti-boycotting of a Primrose club recently established in the town. Thereupon a large portion of the congregation left the chapel, amid a scene of wild excitement.

A PIERRE (DAKOTA) JURY has a new name for suicide. At a recent coroner's inquest the jury brought in the following verdict: "We, the jury, do find that she came to her death by felonious intent to hereafter dwell in the happy hunting grounds."

THE modern rage for abbreviations, especially in the names of societies (says the *Freeman*) was strikingly exemplified the other day at a certain woman's prayer meeting. One of the sisters, who is very much interested in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, the Woman's Home Missionary Society, and the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union, prayed fervently, with a charming certainty that she would be understood: "O Lord, bless the W.C.T.U., the W.F.M.S., the W.H.M.S., and the W.E. and I.U.!"

MR. JACKSON is the rector of Wold Newton. He requires his parishioners to make their obeisance to him. A Sunday or two ago Mr. Jackson passed some boys at the rectory gate. One of them, he insists, did not bow to him. He has, therefore, been excluded from the school until he has apologised. The school is a public elementary one, receiving a Government grant. It would be well that this divine should be told that it is no sin in a parishioner not to take off his cap to him; and that, in any case, this heinous offence cannot be punished by exclusion from a public school receiving a Government grant.

A PAPER in the *Saturday Review* on the Religion of Southern Italy mentions the custom of sick persons placing in the churches plaster images of the foot, hand, or whatever part of the body is diseased, by the side of the shrine. The writer does not see any sign of Paganism in this nor in another custom which he ascribes to the fishermen of Calabria and Sicily, that of placing their patron saint at the prow of the vessel in a storm. This, he says, is not to frighten the saint, but that he may lead them safely to port.

AFTER a meeting the other evening, Bishop Coxe said to a reporter: "I should like to correct the proof-sheet of my prayer. You newspaper men and the printers are so unfamiliar with prayer that you're pretty certain to bungle it up badly."

THE article by Lord Bramwell in the *Nineteenth Century* on Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister is, like all his writings, straightforward and incisive. He points out that the Jews who believe that the Bible permits these marriages, are prohibited from them because the Christians put a different interpretation on their law books. He notices, too, that the clergy who say that the Authorised Version of Lev. xviii., 18, has a wrong reading, which is corrected in the margin, yet continually circulate copies of the scriptures without marginal corrections.

"S. L.," writing in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, complains that at the funeral of a Dissenter which took place at Aston Churchyard, the gates were slammed in the faces of the followers, who were refused admission after having walked two miles on purpose to be present at the burial.

Longman's Magazine for September contains an article on "The Singing of the Magnificat." This should be followed by "The Wauling of the Tom-Cat."

THE Rev. Dr. Newman Smyth has put forward a little book on *The Morality of the Old Testament*, as a Help to Belief. Discussing the story of Abraham's offering of Isaac he admits that "As we read the touching story, we feel that in no circumstance could we do such a thing. No conceivable sound or sign from heaven could be to our hearts a command from the God we worship to bind a dear child upon an altar for the flames. We would die rather than make such a sacrifice." The *Record* says, "We think this language dangerous."

SAMUEL MORLEY, the pious philanthropist and hosiery manufacturer, has, despite the prayers in his behalf offered up by the Salvation Army, departed to a place where no hosiery is required. Mr. Morley's cheque-book was often called into requisition by "General" Booth, who, doubtless with an eye to a legacy, issued a general order from headquarters that "all our people shall immediately, on reading this, offer prayer in public and in private for his restoration to health and strength, and that all needed spiritual blessings and consolation may be given to his family." The prayers of the Army were inefficacious, but perhaps their intention may be answered and General Booth find himself down for a round sum in the will. Samuel Morley's cheques will be much missed by the C. E. S., and other propagators of pious claptrap.

MR. CHARLES HERBERT, the well-known bookseller of Goswell Road, having been called as a juryman before the Clerkenwell Coroner's Court, handed in a paper that he had been advised that, being without religious belief, he could neither swear nor affirm as a juror. Dr. Wynn Westcott, deputy coroner, declared that he must do one or the other, and, upon his expressing a doubt as to the legality of either, summarily fined him forty shillings for not committing an illegality. "But is this law? Marry, it is: crowner's quest law."

ANOTHER coroner, Mr. Brackton Hicks, in the case of a person named Nash declining either to swear or to affirm, detained him in court during the hearing of the case. Surely it is time the powers of coroners were more clearly defined.

CHRISTOPHER MADDICKS is another believer who thinks that God manifests himself now as in the days of old. He declares that God had deputed him to carry on a war against Russia, and that he had framed plans for carrying on the campaign. He was able to tell at a glance all who were not Christians, and those who were not would have to be exterminated. Fortunately this prophet is in safe custody. Inspiration and insanity are so curiously alike that it is difficult to tell the other from which.

COMBINING religion with fresh air, Lord Radstock has been preaching at Ramsgate, and, by means of lavish advertising and free admission, a large number of people were induced to listen to this evangelising aristocrat. The chief point of Lord Radstock's discourse is that good works will not lead a man to heaven, the ticket to which place is only stamped Faith. We can quite understand that Lord Radstock and many other Christians may find this a convenient and comforting doctrine.

ACCORDING to report a vigorous effort has been made to render the Trades Union Conference profitable to orthodoxy. A great popular meeting was held by way of "demonstrating the connection between Trades-unionism and Christianity." Mr. Maddison, President of the Hull Trade and Labor Council, occupied the chair, and the chief speaker was Mr. John Wilson, late M.P. for one of the Durham divisions. Mr. Maddison "claimed that Jesus Christ was himself a workman, and that trade unionists who did their duty to their fellows with the fear of God in their hearts were only humbly walking in his footsteps."

PERHAPS Mr. Maddison will kindly inform the world how long Jesus Christ worked at his trade, whether anybody but his father would have employed him, how much a week he got, how much he was worth, and how far his income was swelled when he dropped carpentering and took to living on the substance of rich women. Surely the leader of a strolling salvation troupe, with a cashier like Judas, and a fisher of money like Peter, is a very poor model for the British working man.

MR. WILSON also uttered a good deal of eloquent nonsense. The drift of his speech seemed to be that Jesus Christ was an incipient Trades Unionist. As a matter of fact he approved paying the man who worked one hour the same as the man who worked twelve; and his cousin, John the Baptist, was so much of a Trades Unionist that he told the soldiers to "be content with your wages."

For the rest, Mr. Wilson simply contended that Jesus Christ taught equality and brotherhood. How does he reconcile this with the Savior's promise that his Salvation troupe should sit upon twelve thrones ruling inferior mortals? The fact is Mr. Wilson is a capital fellow himself and takes a few of the best things in the New Testament as Christianity. He ignores all the rest, but the priests do not, and they use it to degrade and defraud the multitude. Mr. Wilson is no more a Christian than we are. He does not understand Christianity, its dogmas and its history, and in preaching such sentimentalism he is only confusing the question and unconsciously ministering to priestcraft and superstition.

The hysterical editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* remarks on the Hull meeting, "What a scandal such a spectacle must afford to the bigoted devotees alike of class ascendancy and of propagandist Atheism." No, not a scandal, but a laughing-stock.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Sept. 12. Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, N.W. (near the Mother Red Cap), at 7.30, "Hebrew Old Clothes."

SEPT. 19, Hall of Science, London; 21, Walworth; 26, Hall of Science, London.

OCT. 3, Ball's Pond; 10, Birmingham; 17, Nottingham; 24, Manchester; 31, Leeds.

NOV. 7, Hall of Science, London; 21, South Shields; 28, Hall of Science, London.

DEC. 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. R. Forder, 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.

A. B. C.—Pamphlet and cuttings received with thanks. Rev. vii. 1, speaks of the corners of the earth. The ends of the earth are mentioned in many places.

ARGUS.—Much obliged for budget of all sorts.

ENQUIRER.—Whether Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, or even Jesus "ever existed" is a question worth no one's while to argue. Whether the four gospels were written by the men whose names they bear is also a question of trivial importance. The real question at issue between Christians and Freethinkers is whether the gospels were written by eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of what is recorded in them. We unhesitatingly answer, no. The evidence may be found in the works of Christian as well as sceptical scholars. There is absolutely no proof that our gospels, as we have them, were in existence until more than a century after the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ.

C. MARSDEN.—You mistake. The argument is not that no Jews could have written our Greek gospels but that they could not have been written by the unlearned Jews of Palestine. Josephus says he learnt Greek with difficulty.

ATHEIST (Bradford) writes: "A friend and I have been giving 500 *Freethinkers* away at Bradford and the vicinity. I hope it will be the means of getting new customers for your splendid little paper. I have the whole set from the beginning bound in the very best style for the use of my children when they are old enough to read them." Our correspondent draws our attention to a depreciatory article on Heine in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, quite inconsistent with James Thomson's articles on Heine which appeared in *Progress*. The writer of the article in question is a perfect Philistine, and understands Heine as much as an African war-chief might understand Shelley.

B. MILES in sending subscription, says he should like to see the *Freethinker* enlarged. We entertained the idea at one time, but we cannot see our way to realising it without raising the price. From every other point of view we could publish sixteen pages as easily as eight. As it is, however, the smallness of the *Freethinker* entails one advantage. There is no shooting cartloads of dullness into it; it has to be readable from title to imprint. We fancy our correspondent would find the extra matter he wishes for in *Progress*.

W. R. JOSSLYN.—Kindly thank the subscribers on our behalf.

J. COLE says there will be "a draw" at the Monarch Coffee Palace, Bethnal Green Road, on Thursday, Sept. 16, for a valuable walking-stick, presented by Mr. W. Cole, who once placed it in an exhibition and was awarded a purse of money and a certificate of merit. Tickets are 6d. each, and the proceeds are intended for our Burnt Out Fund.

E. J. R. (Germany).—Many thanks. Kindly convey our compliments to the young ladies.

GEORGE BYRON.—Your acrostics on Messrs. Foote, Wheeler and Ball are fairly good, but they are far too laudatory for our columns.

W. C. SAVILLE.—Shall appear.

A. HOWDEN.—Your verse is well conceived, but inadequately executed.

X. Y. Z.—You should communicate with Mr. R. Forder.

J. K. SYKES.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

T. G. C.—Scraps and cuttings are always welcome.

B. F. G.—Many thanks. It will be useful. We shall be glad to hear from you again. If in the course of your existence you were only for two days a sincere Christian, that is at least two days more than a good many Christians could boast.

A. SCOTT.—We quite understand your state of mind, and can even sympathise with you. But we sympathise with you only as a doctor might with a patient on whom he is obliged to operate. What you call *shocking* people is only *shaking* them, and that process is absolutely necessary. The mass of religionists need such treatment before they will take the trouble to think. Their creed was not received through the channel of reason, but through the channel of faith, and their minds are as dense on that subject as frozen water or a well-rolled soil. "Is there not," you ask "something higher than cynicism, something loftier than sarcasm?" Yes, things that cynicism and sarcasm cannot touch; for instance, the laws of science, and a good man's heart.

R. G.—We have received your list of subscriptions "from a few friends at Lynn, who sympathise with Mr. Foote in his present difficulty, and greatly value his services to the cause." You request us to acknowledge by initials. Do you mean the initials of all on the list, or only your own? We hold over acknowledgment in the proper place till next week.

W. B. writes that Spencer Street Chapel, Goswell Road, is £9,000 in debt; and asks how this can be squared with the Master's order to "owe no man anything."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Sheffield Evening Star—Kent Argus—Liberator—Pen and Ink—Women's Suffrage Journal—Democrat—Southend Standard—Liberty—Boston Investigator—Ironclad Age—Liberal—Beacon Light—Truthseeker—Christian Globe—Birmingham Daily Post—North Eastern Daily Gazette—Radical—Anti-Sweater.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THIS evening (Sept. 12) Mr. Foote delivers his new lecture on "Hebrew Old Clothes," at Milton Hall.

NOTWITHSTANDING the holiday season, Mr. Foote had first-rate audiences at Liverpool last Sunday, the hall being densely packed in the evening and the temperature a lively foretaste of what most of the auditors may expect in the sweet by-and-bye. Some new members were enrolled, and we are happy to learn that the Liverpool Branch is progressing very favorably in this respect.

DURING the afternoon lecture, Mr. Foote offered to sell all his golden flooring in the New Jerusalem for £5 down. One of his auditors has since taken the offer, and forwarded a £5 note with the following letter: "I did not at the time like to step up and close the bargain, it being the Lord's Day; but I take the earliest opportunity of transacting business to say that if your offer is still good I will accept it. In case you repent having made the offer, and do not wish to dispose of the said desirable property, kindly transfer the £5 to your Burnt-Out Fund."

WE have done both. There may be some flaw in the title deeds of our Mansion in the Sky, and as we do not want to take the slightest advantage of our correspondent we credit him with a five-pound subscription to the Burnt Out Fund, and also assign him all our golden flooring in perpetuity, on condition that he (as he will be well able to) pay us another five pounds upon coming into possession. He may have to send it a frightfully long way, but there are plenty of messengers in heaven, and many of them would like a change from loafing around the throne.

THIS afternoon (Sept. 12) the Birmingham Town Hall will be used by the Freethinkers for a free lecture, sandwiched between good music. Mr. Touzeau Parris will discourse on "Man, Whence and How." Every Birmingham Freethinker should attend and bring a dozen Christians. If the crowd is too big Mr. Parris will no doubt be glad to address an overflow meeting.

Infidel Death-Beds is out and selling rapidly. The best edition, however, is delayed at the binder's and will not be ready till next week. *Progress* is also continuing its success. The September number is going off well and apparently giving general satisfaction.

THE Foote-McCann debate is being reprinted and will be ready shortly. Meanwhile there is not a copy in stock, and as it is being constantly ordered we must beg intending purchasers to refrain until we announce the new edition.

ONE of our readers was recently discussing with a churchwarden the pretty little story about the Magi following the Star of the Nativity. Finding that he was astronomically nowhere, the churchwarden turned upon his opponent and said: "Oh, you are altogether mistaken; the Star of Bethlehem was the name of the pub. where the Virgin Mary was confined." That churchwarden should occupy a pulpit; he would be able to explain all Bible difficulties, and his explanations would have the merit of being at least interesting.

THE distribution of back numbers of the *Freethinker* at Hastings has led to such a demand for the paper that one of the leading newsvendors of High Street has undertaken to supply it.

LAST Tuesday evening Mr. Foote lectured on "Wanted, a Radical Party," at the Tower Hamlets Radical Club, to a large and enthusiastic audience, including many ladies.

A NEW Anti-clerical League has been formed at Milan with the object of "combatting the superstitions and abuses of the clergy." The clerical party have had a long innings in Italy, and although they have long since come to the end of their tether, there is no doubt much to be done in the way of destroying their influence. We wish the Milan Anti-clerical League all prosperity.

WE are pleased to see an acknowledgment in the *Christian Commonwealth* that "the Churches of Boston have lost their hold on the young men, the majority of whom never think of entering any place of worship." It is only reasonable to suppose that the example set by the most intellectual city in the United States will in due time be followed throughout all America.

FOR his *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, the first instalment of which appears in *Progress*, Mr. Wheeler has already compiled a list of the names of over five hundred eminent Freethinkers. Desirous that the work shall be as perfect as possible—

he will be glad to receive information concerning any persons who have rendered distinct services to Freethought, whose names are not to be found in any of the ordinary biographical dictionaries, to all of which he has access, in addition to his own extensive information of the history of the Freethought movement.

In the *Nineteenth Century* for September Mr. Andrew Lang has a learned yet interesting paper on "Egyptian Divine Myths." He contends that animal worship was not a degradation of civilised beliefs, but a continuation of world-wide savage practices. That most of the Egyptian gods and certain of the myths about them were a heritage derived from the savage condition, he illustrates by showing their resemblance to what is told of the gods of modern savages.

MR. WHEELER has received a note from the headquarters of the Salvation Army signed "Railton," expressing regret "that you have been misrepresented in the story of Major Stonehill's life in the *War Cry*," and offering to insert a contradiction, not as written by Mr. Wheeler, but as written by Mr. R., with some pious observations added. Our sub must be content with small mercies. His contradiction in any shape would not reach all those who saw the misstatements and those who see it may prefer to believe the story to the contradiction.

BLACK CHRISTIANITY.

A NEGRO preacher named Celestine Edwards, has been attacking Atheism in Victoria Park, and a local paper, the *Eastern Argus*, of August 28, calls his tirade of abuse and calumny a "powerful impeachment" of Atheism. His methods of argument—that is, of insult—are thoroughly typical, for they breathe forth the virus inherent in the vulgar Christianity which is still so widely prevalent. Such men are beneath notice, but as representatives of a huge mass of Christian sentiment they cannot be entirely ignored. I give specimens of his open-air discourse as reported in the above-mentioned Christian journal, in order to show the depths to which Christianity descends amidst the frantic applause of the crowd of delighted Christians who usually assemble to support their favorite champion. This interesting compound of grinning circus clown and half-educated bigot says that Atheism, though called Secularism, "Freethoughtism" (!) and Materialism by those who are ashamed of the old name, still remains "the same venomous reptile." It is "the most damning imposture of the present day." Under Atheism "the moral law" is "driven into oblivion," and the "conscience" is "crushed" and "prostituted for the most licentious immorality." "The weak has no protection under its government—no regard for the virtue of women, as prostitution is looked upon as physical recreation or sexual enjoyment; marriage is considered as slavery, and science is made the tool of the most abominable immorality. Nothing virtuous is dear to Atheism, because selfishness is its highest motive, and utility its grandest morality. Always and everywhere the moral qualities which ought to be respected for the good of all, in the hands of those haters of Christian morality, degenerated into the grossest sensuality." The black representative of a still blacker Christianity called upon his listeners not to be "led away by the wooden song of this imposture," which spread the most demoralising sentiments and encouraged the most odious vices. The report adds that "the lecture was lively throughout, and the repeated cheers of the immense audience showed that the lecturer carried the people with him." A sum of £7 12s. has been collected for him in testimony of Christian approval of his vile methods of controversy and of his jokes and imbecilities. Few spectacles are calculated to give one a worse idea of the degraded nature and degrading results of popular Christianity. That wholesale lying and the grossest slander should meet with such response is indeed sickening. "Always and everywhere!" All of us, including our Atheistic friends and relations and our best loved heroes and martyrs, are included in these hideous charges. Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, are set down as vile wretches. Vanini had driven the moral law into oblivion, and the Christians rescued it by burning him alive for his Atheistic opinions. Clifford, Humboldt, Maudsley, Rénan, Hume, Harriet Martineau, Strauss, Littré, Gambetta, Robert Owen, Mill, Ingersoll, Robert Stout, Ashton Dilke, Austin Holyoake, and innumerable other dead and living unbelievers of unblemished reputation, are befouled as being necessarily sunk in the mire of the grossest licentiousness. Whoever differs from this black evangelist's opinion concerning the existence of a God must be a most despicable hypocrite who has crushed and prostituted his conscience for the most licentious immorality. Thus Christian yahoos would smother the best and noblest with the filth of their indiscriminate slander.

Respectable and thoughtful Christians are ashamed of this glib and pretentious ignoramus, but then they are in a decided minority, and are themselves on the way to Secularism. They feel that the shameless yet shameful blackguardism of such infamous falsehood must disgust and repel all just, charitable, sober-minded people. Meanwhile the responsibility for such utterances must rest upon Christianity, and will continue to do so while Christian audiences accept it by applauding and rewarding the vilest abuse heaped upon those whose only offence is that they have discovered that theology is baseless and pernicious.

Christians trample on the better teachings of their own Bible. They profess to obey its precepts and to "honor all men" (1 Peter ii, 17) and "in lowliness of mind" to "each esteem others better than themselves" (Phil. ii, 3). But in practice we too often find that they love their neighbors by foully calumniating and insulting them, and they do good to their (theological) enemies by the most sweeping and odious attacks upon character that would, if generally credited, speedily arouse the old spirit of persecution and scourge the land anew with Christian inquisitions, imprisonments and massacres. Pretentiously "meek and mild," armed against common sense and justice by the cant of professions extending far beyond these modest fundamentals, Christians more easily learn the worst lessons from their Bible than the best. Such is inevitably the effect of a system built on delusions and culminating in unpractical follies and noxious moral exaggerations and impossibilities. Mental and moral blindness necessarily results from such stultification of the intellect and perversion of the moral faculties. W. P. BALL.

CHRIST'S FOOLISH SERMON.

MOST of the teachings of Jesus are made known in his sermon on the mount, and a more insane lot of rubbish has never before or since been proclaimed to the world. It is a wonder that Jesus was not, at the end of his discourse, unceremoniously removed to a lunatic asylum—but he providentially escaped that luxury, because, unfortunately for posterity, the "time was not yet come" for such useful institutions.

Although the majority of Christians seldom fail to laud to their utmost the divine teachings of Jesus, and do all they can to induce others to adopt them, they take precious good care themselves never at any time to put these said teachings into practice. And no wonder. What person would be fool enough to obey the silly command of Christ to pluck out his own *right* eye and cast it from him, merely because it offends in some peculiar way. Jesus Christ don't say what is to be done with the left eye if that should happen to offend. It is a pity it was not the custom in his time to allow questions to be put at the end of a discourse, as that important query might possibly have been answered.

Christ also told his hearers to chop off their right hands and throw them away if they should happen to offend. He omits to say whether the left hands are to share the same fate. Artful Christians, taking advantage of Christ's forgetfulness, doubtless commit theft and other crimes with their left hands, and thus avoid having to play their harps with only one hand when they get to heaven. But that is a very paltry way of shirking Christ's sensible injunction.

In his sermon Jesus said "Swear not at all" and yet Christians to this day swear continually in courts of law and in parliament, and not only do they do so themselves, but they compel others to follow their evil example, by persecution and by denying them their lawful rights. And that is how they carry out Christ's command.

Christians are told to "resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." This is a doctrine every follower of Jesus carries out. You can knock a Christian about as much as you like and he'll never give a blow in return—that is if you can find a Christian, but mind you don't find a Tartar.

Jesus said in his mad sermon, "If any man sue thee at the law and take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also." Now if Jesus had said give him thy *boot* also, there would have been some sense in that, because then we should know that he was merely speaking allegorically, and his followers could have carried out that injunction with a much better grace.

"Give to him that asketh thee," says Jesus Christ, "and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away." The Archbishop of Canterbury believes and practises this command. Go and try it on with him. Ask him to give you £10, or lend you a couple of hundred, and he'll hand you over to the nearest policeman as a dangerous lunatic.

Christ also said "Love your enemies." This is all very well in theory, but who follows out this teaching? How many Christians even love their opponents the Atheists? Why they don't love one another. They are actually now in Belfast trying to butcher each other, as Christians have ever done since they have been in existence. It is impossible to love your enemies. Only fancy loving a garroter after he has half-strangled you and robbed you, or loving anyone who has done you all the mischief he could. The idea is too absurd for serious consideration. Christ must have been joking.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," says Jesus. Every person who gets the chance takes good care to disobey this command, and they nevertheless call themselves Christian. In fact Christianity is propagated by part of the money saved by rich followers of Christ, and they who give the money hope to escape the torments of hell by their generosity. But it is no good; they are not going to crawl out of Christ's command so easily as they expect. They must give up all, or perish everlastingly. Yet it is peculiar how the rich bishops and others chance all risks in that respect.

"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink." Who but a madman would give forth such a teaching as this? If people were to obey in this respect the land

would go uncultivated, and we should all be starved to death, unless the Lord provided for us as Christ said he provides for the fowls of the air, "who sow not, neither do they reap." But the fowls of the air get such a scanty allowance from "their heavenly father" that most of them perish; therefore it is hardly safe to trust him to supply our earthly wants. Besides, he might desire to feed us perpetually on manna, like he did the children of Israel. Many people would decline such diet with thanks and chance disobeying this command.

"Take no thought. . . what ye shall put on," said Jesus; but General Booth says you must put on salvation suits, salvation boots, salvation skirts and salvation shirts, so he stands a fair chance of going to hell as well as those who obey him instead of Christ. And one must own that the ladies who attend churches and chapels take no thought what they shall put on—but they take especial notice what their fellow-worshippers put on. There would be no attraction for them if Christ's command was obeyed.

"Every one that asketh receiveth." This is true enough. When the poor people start asking the rich for money they won't be able to pocket it quick enough. The moneyed classes are only too eager to follow out this command, but the poor won't give them the chance. It's really very unchristian to let their rich neighbors go to hell in this fashion. Yet if people can get all they want by asking, only fools would work.

When Jesus had ended his sermon the people were astonished at his doctrines; and so would all sensible people be astonished now to see any person putting them into practice. There have been thousands of foolish sermons preached since Jesus is supposed to have ascended to heaven, but we might venture to assert that there never has been one containing so much nonsense as Christ's sermon on the mount. SCOFFER.

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THE "MOSAIC" NARRATIVE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—No writer could exhaust the list of evidence of the patchwork character of the Old Testament narratives within the limits of one number of the *Freethinker*, and as it does not appear that Mr. Ball is going to continue his instructive account of the Mosaic Narrative, perhaps both he and you will forgive my supplementing the article with the following instances of duplicate narratives in the book of Genesis.

Gen. xix, 29 is a separate account of the destruction of the cities of the plain and Lot's escape, quite distinct from the preceding narrative. There are two contradictory accounts of the origin of the name Beer-sheba (Gen. xxi, 31; xxvi, 32, 33); two accounts of the name Bethel (Gen. xxviii, 10-19, and xxxv, 15), and of the name Israel (Gen. xxvii, 25-33, and xxxv, 10); two accounts of Esau's settlement in Seir, which took place, according to Gen. xxxii, 4, etc., xxxiii, 1, etc., during Jacob's sojourn in Mesopotamia, and according to Gen. xxxvi, 6, 7, after his return thence; and three accounts of the names of Esau's wives (Gen. xxvi, 34; xxviii, 9, and xxxvi, 2, 3).

Two narratives may also be detected in the romance of Joseph, founded, it may be mentioned, on an ancient Egyptian tale. In the one, Joseph is put in a pit at Reuben's advice, but, while the brethren are eating bread, he is stolen by Midianitish merchants, carried to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, a eunuch of Pharaoh's, who has charge of the prisoners as captain of the body-guard (xxxviii, 1-25, 29-36; xl, etc.) According to the other story, Joseph, at the advice of Judah, is sold to Ishmaelites, who take him to Egypt and sell him to an Egyptian, in whose house he enjoys prosperity at first, but is tempted by his master's wife and solely in consequence of his chastity is imprisoned (xxxvii, 25-28; xxxix).

It is vastly more probable that the accounts of Abraham twice passing off his wife as his sister—first to Pharaoh (xii, 10-20) and then to Abimelech (xx, 1-18) are two renderings of the same story, than that the old Jew tried the very same deception after its first failure. The ascription of the same trick to Isaac (xxvi, 7-11) is evidently another version of the one story. A careful reading of any other portion of the historical books will display similar "Mosaic" characters. LUCIANUS.

THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I read in the "Mosaic Narrative," by W. P. Ball, that Eve spoke of God by his name, saying of her first-born: "I have gotten a man from Jehovah." Eve did nothing of the kind. The proposition "from" has been added by orthodox Bible translators in order to hide the real meaning of this remarkable passage. Eve said: קנייה איש את-יהוה—which, translated

literally, means: "I have gotten a man, Yaveh!" Accusative. "Ich habe den Mann, den Herrn!" Luther; accusative. "Possedi hominem per Deum!" (sic). Biblia Sacra, Vulgatæ Edit. "Per" has been fraudulently introduced. It cannot be "I have gotten a man from the Lord," vide English version. The Hebrew shows the accusative "pure and simple." In fact, the objective case appears three times in the same form in this verse, viz.: "Heva, Cain, Yaveh." What meaning is here to be attached to the word "Yaveh"? If Heva (Eve) spoke thus, she certainly did not imply that she had given birth to a god, for Yaveh, or Jehovah, as some scribes erroneously insist upon calling the word, is no divinity at all (vide Professor Sayce and others on the subject). This reduces the tetragrammaton "Yaveh" ad absurdum. It cannot be true that Hevah uttered the words attributed to her. She had neither father nor mother, and would not know what to call the living being in the troubled moments of parturition. This monologue is purely imaginary.

I have frequently contributed to that excellent paper the *Jewish World*. Not one of my arguments has ever been refuted by the many learned correspondents. The foregoing criticism, however, was refused insertion a few years ago, being doubtless considered a knock-down blow for Jehovah.—Your obedient servant, CHARLES KROLL LAPORTE.

Aug. 28, 1886.

[This criticism does not in the slightest degree affect my point which was that Eve, according to the biblical narrative, used the name Yahveh or Jehovah, although Ex. vi, 3, says that God was not known to the patriarchs by this name. Of course it cannot for an instant be supposed that in adopting conflicting biblical statements for the purposes of argument I thereby guaranteed their historical truth, or that in employing the authorised translation I thereby made myself responsible for its literal accuracy.—W. P. BALL.]

THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

REGARDING the medals referring to the massacre of St. Bartholomew mentioned by Mr. Wheeler in the *Freethinker* for August 22, perhaps it may be of interest to some of your Scottish readers to know that there are no less than three of these medals exhibited in the Edinburgh Antiquarian Museum. One was found among the ruins of the old Scottish mint in Edinburgh; and the other two were purchased in Rome a few years ago. The medal found in the old Scottish mint being a little larger than the Roman ones seems to prove that there were more than one set of dies in use. On the obverse is a bust of the Pontiff, Gregory XIII., and the inscription, GREGORIVS XIII., PONT. MAX. AN. I.; reverse, an angel with the cross in the left hand and a drawn sword in the right, flying over a heap of slaughtered Huguenots, and the inscription, VGNOTTORVM STRAGES 1572 (massacre of the Huguenots, 1572). These medals were originally struck in the year of the massacre by order of Gregory XIII., to perpetuate the memory of the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day; and as the original medals are somewhat rare the existence of the medals is often strenuously denied. The dies of the obverse and reverse are now in the Vatican mint, and specimens are occasionally struck from them. The medal is described and figured in a work entitled *Numismata Pontificum Romanorum quæ a tempore Martini V. usque ad annum MDCXCIX vel autoritate publica vel privato genio in lucem prodierunt. Explicata a P. Philippo Bouanni, Societatis Jesu, Romæ MDCXCIX.* B. F. G.

REVISED COMMANDMENTS.

THOU shalt have no other God before me (or behind me) unless those other gods offer superior inducements to the previous one.

THOU shalt not make any graven image unless that graven image appeareth to be more beautiful than thine old one. This is an age of improvement.

THOU shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain unless the other fellow cuss first; in that case retaliation, if naughty, is n'ce.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, unless the boys have a spree—then a little amusement is excusable.

Honor thy father and thy mother, but if thy father objecteth to thy being a dude, kick.

THOU shalt not kill, unless thou art able to prove an alibi, or self-defence.

THOU shalt not steal. It is better to make over thy property to thy wife and compromise at sixpence in the pound.

THOU shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, because thy confidence might go back on thee and give the whole thing away, and thy neighbor might sour on thee.

THOU shalt not covert thy neighbor's goods, or oxen, or other things. For thy neighbor might find it out and make trouble in the premises.

ANOTHER suicide through religious madness has occurred at Ilkeston. The victim was Rebecca Young, who has been heard to declare that she must drown herself, as she knew that the Devil had taken her soul. Yet we hear that the beautiful Christian religion brings nothing but peace and joy to its believers.

REVIEWS.

The Old Poor Law and the New Socialism. By F. C. Montague. Cassell and Co.: 6d.—One of the Cobden Club publications. It is useful and timely. By showing what the Old Poor law led to, it gives a warning against the pauperisation of the people that might ensue from the growing tendency to rely upon the State to provide for popular wants.

Evolution Refuted. By R. R. Stainforth. Morrish: Bristol.—The author, with whom we once debated at Bristol, utterly misapprehends the evolution theory. His refutation, therefore, is of little consequence. Equally futile is the attempt to reconcile Genesis and Science on "the vision" theory. We do not mean that Mr. Stainforth is stupid; his pamphlet is an instance of perverted ingenuity.

Falsvir's Travels. Edited [or rather written] by Thomas Lec. London. Published for the Proprietor at 63 Fleet Street, 1886. One shilling.—Under cover of the remarkable adventures of John Falsvir, seaman, at the North Pole and in the interior of the earth, Mr. Lec satirises much of our English religion and many of our social customs and conventionalities. The title of the attempt unfortunately suggests a comparison with the Travels of Lemuel Gulliver. It is needless to say that the world will not be astonished by the genius of another Swift. The writer has a straightforward matter-of-fact style, but the work taken in hand demands the strong grasp of situation and minute attention to details of a Defoe, and the strong glamor of a scientific romancer like Jules Verne.

The Radical for September appears to be essentially the same paper as the *Republican*. No doubt Mr. Standing expects a much larger circle of readers under the new name. We hope he will not be disappointed.

The Democrat is changed into a monthly, price twopence. The number before us is well written and edited.

PROFANE JOKES.

AN American paper in reporting the suicide of a clergyman remarks, "it is singularly strange inasmuch as he has not been in the habit of doing such things."

AN interesting little boy, timid when left alone in a dark room, was overheard recently by his mother to say in his loneliness, "O Lord, don't let anyone hurt me, and I'll go to church next Sunday and give you some money."

A LITTLE St. Helen's shaver, who wanted to be a good little boy, was told by his mother to pray to God. He said he had prayed, but he did not get good. He was told to keep on praying. "But," said he, "I don't want to be teasing him all the time."

THE pious Earl of Carnarvon, at a banquet, in proposing the health of the clergy, said: "In these days clergymen were expected to have the wisdom and learning of a Jeremy Taylor." His lordship was next day reported to have said: "In these days clergymen are expected to have the wisdom of a journeyman tailor!" Somewhat nearer the truth, this.

TOWN HALL, BIRMINGHAM.

Sunday, Sept. 12, 1886,

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- Historical Sketches of Freethought in England By J. M. Wheeler.
- Creation's God By W. P. Ball.
- Biography By James Leatham.
- The Russian Church By Edward Aveling.
- The Hexateuch By Lucianus.
- Shelley's "Hellas" Brief Freethought Biographies

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