

# THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



THE THEOLOGICAL SPIDER.

## JESUS ON WOMEN.

"FOR religions," says Michelet, "woman is mother, tender guardian, and faithful nurse. The gods are like men; they are reared, and they die, upon her bosom." Truer words were never uttered. Michelet showed in *La Sorcière*, from which this extract is taken, as well as in many other writings, that he fully understood the fulcrum of priestcraft and the secret of superstition. Women are everywhere the chief, and in some places the only, supporters of religion. Even in Paris, where Freethinkers abound, the women go to church and favor the priest. Naturally, they impress their own views on the children, for while the father's influence is fitful through his absence from home, the mother's is constant and therefore permanent. Again and again the clergy have restored their broken power by the hold upon that sex which men pretend to think the weaker, although they are obviously the sovereigns of every generation. Men may resolve to go where they please, but if they cannot take the women with them they will never make the journey. Women do not resist progress, they simply stand still, and by their real, though disguised, rule over the family, they keep the world with them. Freethinkers should look this fact in the face. Blinking it is futile. Whoever does that imitates the hunted ostrich, who does not escape his doom by hiding his head. The whole question lies in a nutshell. Where one sex is, the other will be; and there is a terrible, yet withal a beautiful, truth in the upshot of Mill's argument, that if men do not lift women up, women will drag men down. In the education and elevation of women, then, lies the great hope of the future. Leading Freethinkers have always seen this. Shelley's great cry, "Can man be

free if woman be a slave?" is one witness, and Mill's great essay on *The Subjection of Women* is another.

Go where you will, you find the priests courting the women. They act thus, not because they despise men, or fear them, but because they (often unconsciously) feel that when they have captured the "weaker" sex, the other becomes a speedy prey. Perhaps a dim perception of this truth hovered in the minds of those who composed the story of the Fall. The serpent does not bother about Adam. He just makes sure of Eve, and she settles her "stronger" half. Milton makes Adam reluct and wrangle, but it is easy to see he will succumb to his wife's persuasions. He swears he won't eat, but Eve draws him all the time with a silken string, mightier than the biggest cable.

When the Christian monks were proselytising at Rome, they were hated, says Jortin, "as beggarly impostors and hungry Greeks who seduced ladies of fortune and quality." Hated, yes; but what did the hatred avail? The women were won, and the game was over. Men growled, but they had to yield. The same holds good to-day. Watch the congregations streaming out of church, count ten bonnets to one hat, and you might fancy Christianity played out because the men stay at home and neglect its ministrations. Nothing of the sort. Men may desert the churches as they like, but while the women go the clergy are safe. Examine the church and chapel organisations closely, and you will see how nine-tenths of everything is designed for women and children. Yes, the bonnet is the priest's talisman. Like Constantine's legendary cross, it bears the sign *By this Conquer*.

On the other hand, the clergy never fail to remind women that religion is their best friend. Without our doctrines



and our holy church, they say, there would be social chaos; the wild passions of men would spurn control, marriage would be despised, wives would become mistresses, homes would disappear, and children would be treated as encumbrances. There is not a grain of truth in this, for religion has fomented, countenanced, or cloaked, more sensuality and selfishness than it has ever repressed. But it is a powerful appeal to woman's healthy domestic sentiment. She feels, if she does not know, that marriage is her sheet anchor, and the home an ark on a weltering flood. When the priest tells her that religion is the surety of both, he plucks at her heart, which vibrates to its depths, and she regards him as her savior.

Historically, the Christian religion, at least, has never been woman's real friend. It claims credit for everything, but what has it achieved? Monogamy was practised by the rude Teutons before Christianity "converted" them by fraud and force, and it was the law in pagan Greece and Rome before the Christian era. Yet in the Bible there is not a word against polygamy. God's favorites had as many wives as they could manage, and Solomon had enough to manage him. In the New Testament, there is only one man who is told to be "the husband of one wife," and that is a bishop. Even in *his* case, a facetious sceptic hints, and the Mormons argue, that the command only means that he must have *one wife at least*.

There are two supreme figures in the New Testament, Paul and Jesus. What Paul says about women I will deal with next week. For the present I confine myself to Jesus. Let the reader remember that Christianity cannot transcend the Bible, any more than a stream can rise above its source.

Like most revivalists and popular preachers, Jesus had a number of women dangling at his heels, but his teaching on the subject in hand is barren, or worse. As a child, he gave his mother the slip at Jerusalem, and caused her much anxiety; and when she found him in the temple, he brutally exclaimed "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" During his ministry, when his mother and his brethren wished to speak with him, he forgot the natural ties of blood, and coolly remarked that his family were those who believed his gospel. These examples are not very edifying. If Christ is our great exemplar, the fashion he set of treating his nearest relatives is "more honored in the breach than in the observance."

Jesus appears to have despised the union of the sexes, therefore marriage, and therefore the home. He taught that in heaven, where all are perfect, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage; the saints being like angels, probably of the neuter gender. In Matthew xix., 12, he appears to recommend emasculation, praising those who make themselves "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." This doctrine is too high for flesh and blood, but Origen, and other early Christians, practised it literally. We may be sure that those who trample on manhood have no real respect for womanhood. Hence the Romish Church has always praised up virginity, which is simply an abnegation of sex. Cruden shrinks from the literal sense of Christ's words, and says that the "eunuchs" he refers to are those who "upon some religious motive do abstain from marriage, and the use of all carnal pleasures; that they may be less encumbered with the cares of the world, and may devote themselves more closely to the service of God." Moonshine! Origen was a better judge than Cruden. If Jesus did not mean what he said, why did he take the trouble to speak? His doctrine is that of the anchorite. It led naturally to the filthy wretches, called monks, who dreaded the sight of a woman, and hoped to please God by stultifying nature. It also led to the Church law forbidding women to touch the sacrament with their naked hands, lest they should pollute it. Only women who relish that infamous law can feel any respect for the teaching of Jesus. G. W. FOOTE.

At Birmingham yesterday, William Nokes, a captain in the Salvation Army was charged with deserting his wife and family, who had in consequence become chargeable to the parish. When arrested he said he had been serving the Lord, and while he was doing that, somebody else must look after his wife and children, as he had no time for such matters. On being sentenced to a month's imprisonment with hard labor, he called out loudly, "Praise the Lord for all things; that is what I wish!" He was removed shouting "Praise the Lord!"—*Daily News*.

## THE VIRTUE OF FAITH.

FAITH is a cardinal theological virtue. God requires the same unquestioning assent to all he says and does that a human sovereign requires from his humblest servitors. His ministers extol Faith as the one thing needful for salvation, without which all a man's best actions are worthless, and by the aid of which a murderer may at the last moment find himself "safe in the arms of Jesus."

It is easy to see that this boasted virtue has no better foundation than that of the savage chiefs or medicine men who resent inquiry into their pretensions. Faith is commended because it means submission. It is the stupor of the mind; the prostration of the intellect before the unknown; the assent to the unproved and unintelligible. There is no merit in believing two and one are three, but much in sacrificing reason at the shrine of the Trinity. No one supposes a man deserves eternal happiness for believing in the uniformity of natural law. The reward is promised to those who disbelieve this and credit the miraculous. Hence we find that in theology dogmas are held with an inflexibility in proportion to their absurdity. Religious strife has never been so bitter over questions of practical conduct as upon what are called the mysteries, that is, the absurdities of religion. The nature of the Trinity, the real presence in the Sacrament, the doctrine of divine grace—these have been the great, the worthy themes of Christian contention. The greater the absurdity the greater the irritation at its being questioned, the greater the triumph over the minds from whom an assent can be procured. The more palpable the nonsense the more prostrate the obedience on the one hand, the more absolute the power on the other.

It is small wonder that sky-pilots preach the virtues of faith. They alone live by it. Let a starving man try to live by faith, and he will find that a perfect mountain of that article will not avail him a single mustard seed.

Faith is the priests' chief support. It is the substance of things unsubstantial, the evidence of things that do not exist. What but Faith could maintain the pretensions of the mystery-men to know more of the universe and of a life hereafter than the rest of their fellows? What but Faith could credit a theory of the universe based upon alleged exceptions to the universal order? Faith delights to throw contempt on reason. It revels in mystery and incomprehensibility. To credit the stability of nature's operations is no merit. Virtue lies in discrediting the uniformity of law. Believe that an ass spoke; that Elijah went up to heaven in a fiery chariot; that Jesus turned water into wine, sent devils into pigs, and rose again after he was dead; have faith, above all, that God came to earth and put himself to death to satisfy himself; and all your sins, though scarlet, shall be as white as snow. Faith, in the eyes of the mythologists, is a creditable, while unbelief is a discreditable, state of mind. They altogether ignore that Faith leads to the most diverse conclusions. The believer at Rome is a sceptic at Benares. The believer in the supernatural is a disbeliever in nature. Faith in Providence is the other side of an unbelief in science. He who relies on revelation is a sceptic to reason. Reliance on Faith is a denial of free inquiry and just scepticism. Priests have never taught the virtue of full, free and impartial investigation; of strictly proportioning belief to evidence; of wise suspension of judgment where evidence is inadequate; of reliance on no salvation save that of truth. Such an attitude of mind would be fatal to their claims. They know that investigation means doubt, and that if doubt be lawful for a moment, it may be lawful for a lifetime. They teach Faith because it means submission, and their teaching is so largely accepted because it suits the natural indolence of men readier to take the conclusions offered by others than to slowly and probably painfully think out matters for themselves. Faith simply comes to mean a man's insincere adherence to dogmas about which he will not consent to reason. It encrusts one in what Mr. Swinburne calls "the spiritual birdlime of a stupefying cant." It means a paralysis of will, a suspension of self-reliance. That rarest of possessions, an intellectual conscience, is never found among the servitors of Faith.

Faith, in the sense in which I have used the term, and as defined by Cardinal Newman, "the acceptance of what our reason cannot reach," is no virtue. It is a vice. It



means credulity. It fosters superstition. It encourages fraud. It means putting out our only sure light, to be guided in the dark by any Jack-o'-lantern that we may fancy or that others may hold before us. Its inculcation leads to an organised hypocrisy, in which people play at pretending to believe the incredible until they believe that they believe. The remedy is to scrutinise most closely where there is most pretension to mystery. What it is presumption to doubt and investigate, it is worse presumption to believe. Faith is the war-cry of fiction—Reason the watch-word of fact.

J. M. WHEELER.

### JEHOVAH AT HOME. (AFTER ADDISON.)

BEING taken for the first time, for my entertainment, into heaven by Jehovah, he lifted up a trap-door that was placed near his foot-stool. At its rising there issued through it such a din as quite astonished me. Upon asking what these noises meant, Jehovah said they were the prayers sent up to him from the earth. Amid the confusion of voices, which was so great that nothing less than the ear of Jah could distinguish them, I heard the words "riches," "honor," and "long life," repeated in several different tones and languages. When the first hubbub of sounds was over, the innumerable voices gradually became more distinguishable. The first prayer was an odd one; it came from Lambeth Palace, and desired Jehovah to increase the stipends of poor curates with large families, and to graciously overlook the fact of the suppliant taking fifteen thousand a year. I knew it at once to be the prayer of my friend Cantaur. This was succeeded by the prayer of one who had insured a rotten ship, and promised to give five pounds to a church if it never returned. Jehovah thanked him for nothing, and, bending down his ear more attentively, heard the next minute the same voice in company with others, reciting the prayer for those at sea. He was then interrupted with a whole volley of vows, which were made for the health of a tyrannical prince by his subjects, who prayed in his presence. I was surprised, after having listened to prayers offered up with so much ardor and devotion, to hear low whispers from the same assembly, expostulating with God for suffering such a tyrant to live, and asking him how his thunder could lie idle. Jehovah was so offended with these prevaricating rasicals that he took down the first vows and puffed away the last. Then a general sent up a request to be allowed to annihilate an army drawn up in array against him; and also a similar petition from the opposing forces; but Jah declined to interfere. "But hark!" said he; "there is a voice I never heard, save in time of danger. 'Tis a rogue that is shipwrecked in the Atlantic; I saved him on a plank but three days ago upon his promise to mend his manners; the scoundrel is not worth a groat, and yet has the impudence to offer me a church if I will keep him from sinking." "But yonder," says he, "is a special youth for you; he desires me to take his father (who keeps a great estate from him) out of the miseries of this human life. The old fellow shall live till he makes his heart ache, I can tell him that for his pains." Another petition was from a very aged man, of near an hundred years old, begging but for one more year of life, and then promising to die contented. "This is the rarest old fellow!" says Jehovah, "he has made this prayer to me for above twenty years together. When he was but fifty years old he desired only that he might live to see his son settle in the world. I granted it. He then begged the same favor for his daughter, and afterwards that he might see the education of a grandson. When all this was brought about, he puts up a petition that he might live to finish a house he was building. In short he is an unreasonable old cur, and never wants an excuse, although he goes about continually saying he is saved, and speaking of the glorious hereafter. I promise to make it warm for him though." Then there ascended a prayer in a well-known Yankee accent, in which I recognised Ward Beecher. He sent up a petition on behalf of a lot of people who had paid half-a-crown each to hear him do it. I was pleased to see that mine host paid no more attention to it than he did to the choir, who, with organ accompaniment, whined out a long litany of intercessions at so much a quarter. Now came up a tremendous shouting of Hallelujah! Amen! Saved! together with the blowing of brass instruments and beating of drums and tambourines in the intervals; and several voices addressed and Jehovah in a very familiar and impudent manner. "That's those confounded Salvationists," he cried; and with this he flung down the trap-door in a passion and was resolved to give no more audiences that day.

E. BUTLER.

### ACID DROPS.

LAST week the Rev. Richard Locke, vicar of Darlington, was walking out with some relations, when a brilliant flash of lightning caused him to recoil and fall senseless to the ground. He never recovered consciousness. Had this taken place in Bible days, no doubt a legend of divine intervention would have arisen; as it is "death is attributed to heart disease."

THE Grimsby correspondent of the *Hull Express* reports an incident in the neighborhood which illustrates the true spirit of the village parson. A laborer's child was charged with omitting to make a bow to the rector. He denied the awful crime, but was forthwith expelled the village school. The Education Board insisted on his re-admission, and the parson took it out by giving the youngster a severe caning. The way these village God-Almighties support their divinity ought to have a little publicity.

CAPTAIN DYAS, writing from Italy, says: "A sad example of the evil wrought by superstition has just been afforded us by the death from hydrophobia of a peasant at Bergamo, who, when bitten by a rabid dog, refused to allow the wound to be cauterised, contenting himself with being 'blessed' by his priest. The poor fellow has just died in great agony, whilst of several others bitten by the same animal, and who had recourse to the 'worldly' means prescribed by science, not one has as yet manifested any symptoms of the disease. Believers should learn a useful lesson from this; but believers, like Bourbons, 'never forget and never learn.'"

A GOOD deal of Socialistic gas was let off at the Trades Union Congress. We call it "gas" because it was mere nebulous sentiment, without the slightest attempt at definition, such as the *bonâ fide* Socialists are ready with, whether they are right or wrong. On the other hand, the Sunday opening of Museums was meanly evaded by the device of passing to the next question. Working men may agitate for better filled bellies as long as they like, but everything they gain in that direction will be precarious, if not illusory, until they learn that culture is the one thing needed for their emancipation. Without it, they simply pass from one set of expropriators to another. By practically voting against Sunday freedom, the Trades Union Congress has voted against culture, and therefore against the only thing that can possibly do the working classes any good.

Is it not obvious that Freethought propaganda is "the one thing needful" at present? Here is a body of representative workmen actually slighting their best friend in deference to the silly prejudice which was instilled into them by the priests.

INGERSOLL once said, and there is unfortunately too much truth in the observation, that Luther and Calvin fitted each other like the upper and lower jaws of a wild beast. Luther, however, was not cruel by nature; but Calvin's morose and bilious temperament would have made him pitiless even without his savage creed. His treatment of Servetus is enough to blacken his character indelibly. It was not only the spirit of persecution that animated him. "The zeal of Calvin," as Gibbon says, was "envenomed by personal malice, and perhaps envy. He accused his adversary before their common enemies, the judges of Vienna, and betrayed, for his destruction, the sacred trust of a private correspondent." Hallam likewise asserts that "Servetus was burned not so much for his heresies as for some personal offence he had several years before given to Calvin."

BUT why, the reader may ask, do we revive the story of Calvin and Servetus? For this reason. The Unitarians have just reopened a church at Gorton, which has been newly decorated, the spandrels of the arches being filled with medallion portraits, among which are Servetus and Calvin, who actually *face each other*. Defending this arrangement, the Rev. D. Agate said at the opening service:—"I am perfectly certain that John Calvin was wholly conscientious in compassing the burning of Servetus, and that he would have gone to the stake himself with unflinching courage had such proof of his manliness and integrity been demanded of him. So it seemed to me that, after all, there was much fitness in the persecutor and the persecuted being face to face in this temple of reconciliation."

LET us examine this apology for a pious murderer. According to the law, Calvin would have had to suffer the fate he desired for Servetus if his charges of heresy were unsubstantiated. To evade the consequences of failure, he did not prosecute in person but instituted the suit in the name of his *cook*. What a fine proof of "manliness" to be sure! As for his "integrity," it is undeniable that Servetus was refused the assistance of counsel at Calvin's instigation.

MR. AGATE is indecently trifling with "manliness and integrity" in the name of a sickly sentimentalism, which, under the guise of toleration, would obliterate the distinction between right and wrong, and falsify every striking fact in the history of persecution. His "temple of reconciliation" is not complete with the effigies of Servetus and Calvin. Let him add Nero and a Christian martyr, Bruno and Mocenigo, Torquemada and a san-benitoed Jew, Jacob Sprenger and a choice old witch, Sir Thomas More and Henry the Eighth, Latimer and Queen Mary, and last, but not least, Jesus Christ and Judas Iscariot. When Mr. Agate's show is completed it would be a fine place of pilgrimage for all the skunks and scoundrels in creation, when they happen to be in a melting mood.

THE Rev. J. A. M'Mullen, vicar of Cobridge, and the Rev. H. B. Carr, are at loggerheads. M'Mullen summoned Carr and his wife in order to bind them over to keep the peace, but the rev-



erend complainant did not venture to put in an appearance when the case came on before the magistrates at Burslem. Vicar M'Mullen, it appears, had been charging his brother in Christ with stealing his letters, and abstracting money and valuables. The Rev. Mr. Carr retorted, meekly and mildly of course, as becomes the British Christian, by calling his pious friend a liar and a coward; and the counsel said that if Mr. Carr had not been a clergyman he thought he would have been perfectly justified in knocking the reverend accuser down. The magistrates dismissed the summons and ordered M'Mullen to pay the costs.

MCMULLEN calls Carr a thief, and Carr calls McMullen a liar. Which are we to believe, or should we believe both? Perhaps, as they are God's ministers, endowed with a full measure of the Holy Ghost, the Lord will clear up the matter.

A SALVATION "Captain" named Thomas Alfred Tutte was summoned for creating an obstruction at Notting Hill. He was leading a band including a drum and cornet, and refused to move away from a house where there was a child dangerously ill. His only answer to the father's request was to shout "Hallelujah" and "Praise God." The magistrate fined the Lord's captain 40s., whereupon he exclaimed: "I shan't pay anything. I was doing my duty to God." He was then sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment, and was removed, calling out "Hallelujah" the while. Inspiration teaches these people that they may override the sense of common humanity and make themselves, in the magistrates words, "an abominable nuisance" to other people.

THE Rev. James Cave was fined five shillings for being drunk and disorderly in the Haymarket. When taken into custody he was shouting at the top of his voice and was surrounded by a large crowd.

MR. EDWARDS, the black evangelist dealt with by Mr. Ball last week, has been lecturing at Morley Hall against the Darwinian theory, which he seems to feel is a personal insult. The Rev. C. S. T. Roberts, who presided, congratulated the lecturer on the "pleasant manner" in which he championed Christianity in East London. Perhaps this reverend chairman did not know that this championship included vile falsehoods and the advocacy of physical violence. Mr. Edwards is not content with slandering Freethinkers for their Freethought; he must also slander all believers in the Darwinian theory as hypocrites "professing to believe what in fact they do not believe." But Mr. Edwards identifies Darwinism with Atheism. He says: "The view of Darwinism was, matter is eternal; the laws and force of matter are eternal, and everything is eternal; there is no room for God. Under these circumstances to accept of Darwinism was not only to contradict Scripture, but also to divest the Almighty of his attributes." The childish twaddle of which the argumentative part of the lecture was composed was well received by the Christian audience. The ignorant charlatan who stigmatises Darwin's *Origin of Species* as "his notorious book" is unworthy of serious reply, and the scandalous way in which he attributes wholesale hypocrisy and depravity to opponents suggests the obvious explanation that he must be measuring other people's corn by his own bushel.

MR. EDWARDS says: "The negro race was in the theory of the evolutionist as the link between men and baboons." The statement is not true, but Mr. Edwards naturally feels very sensitive on the subject, and his lecture was mainly a defence of the negro race against the "ludicrous dreamings" of Darwinism. He resents scientific theory attributing to him a lowly origin or position but does his best to strengthen such a view by his foul libels and presumptuous ignorance.

THE *English Churchman* is scandalised to find that as part of the restoration of Westminster Abbey a statue has been erected representing the Virgin and the child. This it declares is rank idolatry, and is the more objectionable as the Son is depicted in a position of subordination to the mother. We suppose if Jesus had been represented with the Virgin Mary in his arms it would have been all right. The *English Churchman* might console itself by a visit to the British Museum where similar statues of Isis and Horus, and Maya and Buddha may be seen, dating from a period long anterior to the Christian era.

THE text of the Papal brief rescinding the Apostolical letter of Clement XIV. concerning the Jesuits, is published in last week's *Tablet*. We cull the following passage:—"Let this well-deserving Society of Jesus go on in the way it has chosen to the greater glory of God, recalling infidels and heretics to the light of truth." The light of truth has usually been exhibited in the flames of the *auto da fé*.

THE tithe war in Wales is proceeding merrily. The dissenting Christians are leaguely together to resist legalised robbery by the orthodox Christians, who think that the text "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor" means "Sell all that other people have and keep for thyself." A body of eighty or ninety police has to accompany the evangelising forces in order to protect them from the Christian attentions of a large and indignant crowd mostly armed with sticks and stones. At Mr. Lawton's farm the

clergyman's bailiffs put themselves in the wrong by illegally seizing the wrong cow, as no one would help them by pointing out the right one. At Mr. Roberts's farm a bailiff was pelted with sticks, knocked down and otherwise maltreated; but the distraint was, however, effected on one cow, though the other could not be discovered, so that a second distraint will be necessary in this case. When the auctioneer came to Mr. Parry's farm the bailiffs disappeared, and the auctioneer had consequently to postpone the sale and withdraw, the crowd waving their hats frantically at his discomfiture. A resolution condemning the action of the clergy was then carried with acclamation. Evangelisation by bailiffs appears to be somewhat of a failure.

A FEARFUL panic has occurred in a Hungarian church. The altar cloth caught fire and the densely packed crowd of worshippers rushed frantically to the porch. Several hundreds were trampled under foot and seriously injured, and fifteen are already dead. The pilgrims in the gallery, mad with fear, jumped down into the midst of the struggling mass in the body of the church. If religion has any real influence in lifting men above vulgar fears and selfish instincts, why are panic-stricken worshippers in church as brutal in the struggle for existence as the worst riff-raff in a penny gaff could be?

THE *Church Times* betrays a woeful ignorance of how its own sacred books came into existence. Speaking of the contradictory genealogies in Matthew and Luke it says, "It would not have been of any use to tender pedigrees in evidence of a claim of lineage, if those pedigrees contained a flaw visible at first sight to any intelligent Jew." Can the writer be aware of the admission of Dean Alford in the prolegomena to his Greek Testament, chap. i., § 5, p. 15, that "the sacred books of the Christians were not published to the world in general, but were reserved, and precious possessions of the believing societies." The credulous and uncritical state of mind of the writers is evident from the fact that the flaws are visible at first sight to any intelligent Jew.

THE Treasury are prosecuting the Rev. J. H. La Trobe-Bateman, vicar of Haile, in Cumberland, for solemnising matrimony between his servant, Mary Jane Cockbain, and a youth aged eighteen, without licence, certificate, banns, or parent's permission, and secondly for inserting a false entry concerning the marriage in the parish registry. He is committed for trial. He married the pair in defiance of the remonstrances of the youth's parents, and of his promise to them. The reason why he was so anxious to marry off his servant to a foolish lad has not transpired.

A HEAVY gale at St. Vincent, West Indies, where they are used to heavy gales, has blown down seven churches and chapels. No damage of consequence was done to any shipping.

A WARRANT has been issued for the apprehension of Samuel Emspoll, clerk of the Church, Lancashire local board, for embezzling the funds in his possession.

MR. LYNCH, the churchwarden of St. Gregory, Sudbury, has been fined for violently assaulting with a stick a child five years of age.

A "SALVATION ARMY" INTERVIEW.—G—L B—h: "Good gracious, Captain, what have you been doing to your face?" Captain: "Nothing, General; you said as we was to deny ourselves somethink for a fortnight as the funds was getting low, so I am doing without soap."—*Funny Folks*.

PEOPLE are getting wonderfully profane in these days. Passing a dairy at the corner of Lincoln's Inn Fields the other day, we noticed the inscription "The Lord's Creameries."

IT is with much pleasure that I hear of the foundation of a new Christian religion. It was high time we had another one. Unless I am much mistaken, there are at present no more than 176,589,943 religions on earth to help a man up to heaven, and it is quite clear that on these few oddments of creeds, a person may very easily get left—or, worse still, get down the steep declivity that leads to warmth and the big fireside. Therefore I welcome the new religion with much fervor and joy. Its founders are two sisters named Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Brook respectively, the first-named lady being—according to her own admission—Jesus Christ, whilst the other is—on similar evidence—the Holy Ghost! As yet, we are told, only two men have joined the new religion, the rest of its professors being women, but the two male proselytes make up for the scantiness of their numbers by the thoroughgoingness of their fervor. They have given up their business absolutely, have taken lodgings in the same house with the lady founders of the new religion, and they swear that they will never again eat any worldly food. Those two gentlemen ought to flourish. A spiritual diet is a fine institution—though it has the disadvantage of leading occasionally to *delirium tremens*. As for the lady-founders of the new religion, it seems to me that the prison to which *Freethinker* Foote was once sent for blasphemy might very fitly be offered them as the cradle of their young creed—unless, indeed, it be discovered that the lunatic asylum possesses prior and still stronger claims on their patronage.—*Sporting Chronicle*.



## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Sept. 19, Hall of Science, Old Street, E.C., at 7 o'clock—  
"Why Women should be Freethinkers."

Tuesday, Sept. 21, Freethought Institute, York Street, Walworth  
Road, at 8.30—"Who Made God?"

SEPT. 26, Hall of Science, London.

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

NOV. 7, Hall of Science, London; 14, Milton Hall; 21, South  
Shields; 28, Hall of Science, London.

DEC. 19 and 26, Hall of Science, London.

## CORRESPONDENTS.

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- R. H. DYAS (Italy).—Many thanks. See "Acid Drops." Always glad  
to hear from you.
- W. WARREN.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- W. BAXTER points out that he made a mistake in stating the debt of  
the Spencer Street Chapel as £9,000. It should have been £900.
- C. S. T. (Yarmouth).—Cuttings are always welcome.
- J. FERGUSON.—Kindly thank the subscribers on our behalf. We note  
with pleasure that the sum was collected in a workshop.
- D. BAKER.—Received with thanks.
- O. WILDE in sending subscription writes: "I was brought up in the  
Christian faith, but could never make theology and reason fit. Your  
*Freethinker* settled that matter in quick time, and now I feel it my  
duty to assist you as far as my means will allow."
- G. W.—The names of Christ's brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas,  
are given, Matt. xiii. 55, and Mark vi. 3.
- L. SAMPSON.—Spirited, but you want a good deal more practice.
- J. KILBEY.—Thanks. Cuttings are always welcome.
- B. A.—The Christian papers do not tire of reprinting the lying tract  
about "infidel leaders," but we are really tired of refuting it.
- JAMES PARKINS.—We don't see how we can assist you, or why you  
need it. If you send us any pamphlet, it will, if worth a notice, be  
reviewed in the usual way.
- S. MITCHELL.—Kindly thank the Burnley subscribers for us.
- MEUS.—Schopenhauer's chief work, *The World as Will and Imagination*,  
is published by Tribner and Co., in 3 vols. at 31s. 6d.
- J. MORGAN.—We may be dull, but we don't quite see the joke. Thanks  
for the cutting.
- R. FOX.—Thanks for your welcome cuttings.
- A. FREETHINKER.—We have given the numbers of adherents of the  
different religions before, but will look up the latest and best  
authority and print the figures in our next.
- G. BEEFORD.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums." We are not sur-  
prised at your report of the Rev. J. Freeston's address. He is not  
an orthodox stick-in-the-mud, but in many respects an advanced  
thinker.
- G. FRANKS.—We can scarcely help you in such a limited time. The  
very best book on the Origin and Development of the Soul-idea is  
Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, which should be in your public library  
It is in two volumes at 24s. In a smaller way, Robert Cooper's  
*Lectures on the Soul and Immortality* (Truelove), 6d., would help  
you. Mr. Bradlaugh has a pamphlet on the subject—price 2d.  
Mr. T. Marshall's book on Missions may suit you.
- J. F. HENLEY.—We are obliged to your branch, and hope to meet the  
members and friends at an open-air lecture in Hyde Park on the  
26th inst.
- W. CARTER.—Next week.
- B. MILES.—Thanks for your further subscription.
- R. GREEN.—There have been reports, from time to time, of a petrified  
human form, but we do not know that there is any authentic case.
- J. HODGSON.—Not badly written, but a wail over there being no God  
is hardly in our line. On the whole, considering all the evil and  
misery in the world, and all the idiots, liars, rogues, thieves and  
priests, we should decidedly prefer to think there is no one being  
responsible for it. Besides, if there be a God, who whips us with  
rods here, he may lash us with scorpions hereafter. You seem to  
us to be mourning over a very good thing.
- H. L. DARTON.—A man who would believe Joseph Cook on Thomas  
Paine is past praying for. Joseph must have been drunk himself  
when he said Paine was a drunkard, but on what kind of spirit we  
will not decide. Dr. Manley, who attended Paine in his last illness,  
distinctly states that he was fairly abstemious. But in that  
drinking age, if he had consumed two or three bottles of wine a day,  
he would only have done what half the Christian gentlemen of  
England were proud of doing. Pitt and Fox, who are never  
denounced by the Joseph Cooks, because they were considered  
orthodox, were both hard drinkers, and put away more liquor in  
a month than Paine did in a year. What Joseph says about Paine's  
"filthy condition" at the close of his life is utter nonsense. He  
was bed-ridden, and suffered horribly from ulcers, originally brought  
on by his infamous imprisonment; and if he was left in a neglected  
state (of which there is no evidence), so much the worse for the  
Christian attendants whom, as a widower, he was obliged to hire.  
As for the rubbish about the servant-girl, who is alleged to have  
heard him wish the *Age of Reason* were burnt, you will find a refu-  
tation, with all the real facts of the case, in *Infidel Death-Beds*.

INQUIRER.—The Manchester Freethinkers meet every Sunday at  
Grosvenor Street, a few doors on the left off Oxford Road.

W. C. CLARK.—Your letter arrived on Wednesday morning, too late  
for this week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Bath Daily Chronicle—Liberal—Telegram—  
Thinker—Sporting Chronicle—West Sussex Gazette—New York  
Star—Eastern Argus—Freethinker's Magazine—Truthseeker—  
Boston Investigator—Evening News—Devon Evening Express—  
Clerkenwell Chronicle.

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.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

MILTON HALL showed a very improved appearance last Sunday  
evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Hebrew Old Clothes." There  
was a capital audience, and although the place was not  
absolutely crowded, it was well filled and looked quite cheerful.  
Mr. Foote met with his usual reception. This evening (Sept. 19)  
the platform will be occupied by Mrs. Sowden, who is accom-  
plished and has an original turn of mind, being something more  
than an echo of other speakers.

FRESH efforts will be made to render the N. W. London Branch  
a first-rate success. Mr. Foote is discussing fresh projects with  
the Committee, and something will be announced shortly. Mean-  
while we beg to remind all Freethinkers in the district of their  
duty to rally round the Branch and give it effective support.

"WHY Women should be Freethinkers," is the title of Mr.  
Foote's lecture at the London Hall of Science this evening  
(Sept. 19). Secularists should take the opportunity of bringing  
their lady friends or relatives, to many of whom the lecture may  
be an eye-opener and an introduction to Freethought.

*Letters to Jesus Christ* is in the binder's hands, but it is not  
ready for this week's trade. We hope, however, that some copies  
will be on sale by the time the *Freethinker* is in the readers'  
hands. Mr. Foote has taken great pains with the pamphlet,  
and the composition is in his best vein.

WE see from the September number of the *Freethinker's Maga-  
zine* of Salamanca, New York, that Mr. H. L. Green, the editor  
and publisher, has taken Mr. H. Clay Luse as associate editor.  
The magazine promises well under its new management.

THE Annual Convention of the New York State Freethinkers'  
Association has been successfully held at White Sulphur Springs  
Park, Saratoga. Messrs. Wakeman, Reynolds, Washburn, Peck,  
Bell and others were present.

THE Tenth Annual Congress of the American Secular Union  
will be held in New York city at Chickering Hall, Fifth Avenue,  
on November 11, 12, 13, and Sunday the 14th. Colonel Ingersoll  
will conclude the Congress with a lecture.

WILLING to do justice even to an enemy, we gladly note the  
spirited answer of Lord Randolph Churchill to the rabid Orange-  
men who deliberately censured him and his government for  
appointing a Roman Catholic as Home Secretary. His lordship  
expresses his surprise at conduct so "senseless and irrational"  
in this age of "enlightenment and toleration." Good. But  
what a pity he did not cherish the same sentiment a few years  
ago, when he began the exciting sport of baiting Bradlaugh!  
Perhaps, after all, Lord Randolph suits his toleration, like his  
opinions, to circumstances. Toleration may be a good thing  
when it serves his purpose, and a bad one when he stands to win  
on persecution. Or perhaps he really believes that while it is  
persecution for Protestants to badger Catholics, it is fair play  
for both of them to badger Atheists.

THE *Indian Witness* speaks of the recent but rapidly growing  
Arya Somaj, or Aryan Union, a society which, while rejecting  
modern religions, seeks to revive the old Aryan culture. The  
*Witness* says: "Its members highly value the power of the press.  
They are putting out translations of infidel works; the American  
Ingersoll's *Self-contradictions of the Bible* has been translated for  
them into Hindu by a pandit at Jeypur." There is evidently  
some mistake here, as Colonel Ingersoll has no work with the  
title given. Probably two or more works are rolled into one by  
the missionary paper.

SEVERAL of the religious journals of America deplore the  
custom of shutting up the church during the summer vacation,  
as a sign that religion is losing ground. It was not thus half  
a century ago, when every one was expected to be a regular atten-  
dant at church or chapel under the penalty of being set down as  
an infidel.

IN England also it is noticed that visiting parties and other  
forms of Sunday amusement are distinctly on the increase among  
all classes of society.



MR. GERALD MASSEY'S concluding week day evening lectures at St. George's Hall, W., are all anti-theological. On Tuesday, September 21, his subject will be "The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ." Friday, September 24, "The Pre-Christian and Egyptian Origin of the Sayings Attributed to Jesus." Tuesday, 28, "Paul the Gnostic, not a Witness for Historical Christianity."

WE see from the *Truthseeker* that Mr. J. E. Remsburg is delivering eight Freethought lectures a week in Minnesota. If he does this in the summer season we should like to know the amount he manages to deliver in the winter.

THE New York *Truthseeker* for September 4 has a cartoon entitled "Casting Pearls before Swine." It represents Mr. C. B. Reynolds outside his tent scattering his pearls before the Methodist and Catholic pigs of Boonton, New Jersey, who are exhibiting every sign of a disposition to turn and rend him. Not long ago, as our readers may remember, Mr. Reynolds was assaulted by a Christian mob at Boonton. His tent was destroyed, and he was arrested on a charge of blasphemy.

THE clerk who refused the affirmation to Mr. Carl Robitscheck, the Bohemian Atheist who claimed to be naturalised as an American citizen, has received superior instructions, and Mr. Robitscheck has received his papers, his affirmation having been accepted as sufficient.

At a meeting of the British Teacher's Association Mr. D. Salmon read a paper on "The Place of the Parson in the School." He pointed out the unfairness of sectarian schools only nominally voluntary being maintained for the larger part out of Government grants to which all classes contributed, and considered that the only cure for this state of things was for the voluntary schools to be absorbed in the Board schools. Another teacher urged that "what they had to do was to get rid of the parsons out of the schools, and then the work of education would progress, and we should have what was greatly required, a free education."

WE have been favored with a copy of the lecture prospectus for the coming winter at the New Islington Public Hall, Ancoats, Manchester. The lectures will be delivered as usual on Sunday afternoons. There is a sprinkling of clergymen and ministers as well as of religious subjects, to give the programme an air of passable orthodoxy; but the majority of the lecturers are laymen, and will discourse on secular subjects in science, art and literature, with an occasional dash of politics and sociology. It leaves something still to be desired, but it is a step in the right direction.

WE understand that a public debate will take place on the Thames Embankment, near Vauxhall Bridge, on the 26th instant, between Mr. Tarry, of the Christian Evidence Society, and a Freethinker named Mr. Weldon. Time 3 p.m.

## S A C R I F I C E.

SACRIFICE is the basis of Judaism and of the Christianity which sprung from that Judaism. It is the fundamental idea of the religion of the Old Testament and of the New alike. Animals or human beings were sacrificed to the God of the Jews; a human being, his own son in fact, is sacrificed to the God of the Christians. Only by sacrifice can man receive pardon and salvation. Without blood-offering and vicarious atonement his case is a hopeless one. Such at least is the teaching of the Bible.

Christians fail to see the horrible and degrading nature of this doctrine—except in the case of other religions than their own. They cannot face the fact that the essence of sacrifice is the murder of the innocent for the contented brutalisation of the guilty, who rejoice in a factitious happiness secured at the expense of other creatures' sufferings and death, and at the expense of the insidious perversion and stultification of those unselfish instincts of justice and kindness, which would lead a sinner to condemn himself instead of another, and so would bring about both a true atonement by other means than bloodshed and a lasting reform of a genuine and not merely theological character. As it is, religion teaches the wrong-doer to blunt his conscience with a moral fraud. Among the mixed lessons taught by the Bible he finds the congenial doctrine common to most ancient religions, that one crime atones for another, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, that crime on behalf of God is acceptable in the highest degree. The massacre of Jericho and the massacre of St. Bartholomew rest on the same Bible teachings. The heretics are sacrificed to the honor and glory of a well-pleased God. As Abraham offered Isaac, and Jephthah burnt his only daughter, so the more modern inquisitor offered his heretic son, so the African mother devotes her

darling to the sharks, so the Chaldee placed his first-born in the arms of his red-hot idols, so our own forefathers are alleged to have burnt their victims alive in huge images of wicker wood, and so the religions of all ages have prompted ardent men and women to sacrifice their nearest and dearest to propitiate the dreadful deity of their worship. Millions of lives have been sacrificed in honor of God's holy name—millions by brutal fire and sword, and millions by the ascetic self-devotion of deluded nuns and hermits.

When the King of Moab publicly offered his eldest son as a burnt offering to raise a siege (2 Kings iii., 27) he did but imitate such friends of God as Jephthah and Abraham. Christians forget the sanction given to human sacrifice by the divine voice from Mount Sinai (Leviticus xxvii., 28, 29, 34). God refused to allow the redemption of any human being who had been devoted to him as an offering. He insisted on the sacrifice being completed. David, the man after God's own heart, sent seven sons of Saul to be hung before the Lord to stay a famine. It is no wonder that religious lunatics, full of the Bible stories and doctrines, cut their children's throats or dash their brains out in order to propitiate the Lord.

Why was it necessary that the Son of God should be sacrificed that his agony and his blood might appease the Father's wrath? Why was death so necessary a preliminary to forgiveness—the death of a supposed stainless one for the excusal of the vile and guilty? Why does God teach us that it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul? Such ideas are utterly repugnant to civilised feeling. They could only have originated in savage times and in savage instincts—instincts unfortunately not yet eradicated, so deeply seated in human nature are they. The wish to win at another's expense, the willingness to cast one's burdens on others, the superstitious satisfaction afforded by rite and ceremony and incantation and blood and sacrifice, still have more powerful hold on people that they can be brought to confess. Even the higher natures, idealising and misrepresenting the essentially brutal and degrading nature of sacrifice in the beautifying but dangerous ideal of *self-sacrifice*, still cling to a poetical version of a myth whose naked deformity they never allow themselves to behold. If Christ sacrificed himself out of love for mankind, why did the Almighty Father demand the sacrifice? If it is beautiful that a son should sacrifice himself to satisfy his father's vengeance (or so-called sense of justice) is it morally beautiful that a father, and especially an omnipotent father, should insist on that death, or even permit it? If there is heroism on the one side, is it not equally true that there must be infamous cruelty and injustice on the other? Would not a human father be looked upon as guilty of murder, or of sharing in murder or suicide, if he induced or allowed his son to offer himself as a sacrifice to satisfy that father's desire for vengeance? When sacrifices are made to appease Moloch, Christians acknowledge the fiendish nature of the act; and they condemn it, just as the worshippers of Moloch would probably have condemned the barbarities of the worshippers of the rival god Jehovah. But Christians dare not imitate the doings of their God, although they profess to regard him as the essence of perfection. They would be shocked to offer their offspring or to permit their children to offer themselves. All the casuistry in the world will never excuse the immorality of sacrifice divine or human. The once widely-prevalent practice of sacrificing others from superstitious motives is one of the cases in which the misdirected faculties of man have sunk him *lower* than the beasts. For a cruel fancy, for a personal advantage wholly dependent on a fearful falsehood that he has himself invented—man dooms his fellows to an awful death. Only slowly and partially has this criminal tendency that lies at the root of religion been restrained and corrected under the influence of the continuous evolution of knowledge and of the race.

The Bible offerings of bullocks or of men, of heretic nations or of the Lamb of God, are identical in principle with the human sacrifices of the Aztecs or the bloody rites of Dahomey. Modern Christians and African savages find a common delight in the awful sensationalism of blood and death. Alike they revel in the despicable selfishness of a satisfaction bought by the agonies of the slaughtered. Is it not time that Christians should perceive the revolting nature of the iniquitous idea of vicarious sacrifice, and that they should openly and confessedly rely on actual honesty



and goodness rather than on the reflected merit even of a martyr's death? Deeds that make humanity shudder can be no foundation for a true morality. W. P. BALL.

#### RANDOM NOTES FROM CHRIST.

##### THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF JESUS.

I'm afraid the Millenium is still a long way off, for in walking about London streets my mind is alive to the fact that my second coming would be publicly a failure. No! I shall have to skulk from this earth of yours with my mission unfulfilled, a wiser but disappointed peripatetic God. The "unco guid" and religiously respectable members of the numerous sects rant a good deal about the near approach of my second visit, but they don't want me—they would rather I stayed away. They are very comfortable as they are; and when there seems a chance, through illness, for some of my advocates to pass from this world of trouble and woe, where men and women call themselves miserable worthless worms, to the beautiful land over the left, by the bright and shining river, as the modern poetaster gushes about it, don't they evince a desire to go!—oh, don't they!—and call in the best medical advice they can afford, to cure them, so they may be allowed to stay against their will and point out to their neighbors the easiest method of arriving at "those mansions in the skies." With watering mouths they will wait for their three-stringed harps—I suppose for the purpose of taking lessons on that noble instrument, so they can presently be introduced to the "old 'un" and charm him with such dulcet melodies as "Safe in the arms of Jesus" or "Oh, dem golden slippers." The learning to play on those harps is the greatest nuisance of the old man's life. The classes are held a long way from New Jerusalem. It's rare fun watching a class of archbishops tuning up and learning their scales. Tait says his infernal harp's a confounded nuisance. He puts it under the table at meal times, and forgets it. Snap, snap, go the strings.

If I should at last get the patronage of the multitude—for amongst the lower classes I should have to appear—the funds for my actual keep would come in very slowly. It wouldn't be dignified of Jesus Christ to regale himself with whelks from a street stall or with "Fish and bread a penny." There would also be the second-hand suit of clothes from "the Lane," and experience tells me how they would fit. Then my friends would indulge me with refreshment after an "all night with Jesus" meeting. Think of Christ drinking from a pewter pot in front of a beer-house counter (my little miracle at Cana will show you I'm no Lawsonite), and, as funds got low, spouting some of his raiment for actual sustenance. Such no doubt would have been my fate had my mission been recognised. Fancy my peregrinations from town to town by railway, third class; Jesus getting his ticket from the brusque gentleman who is framed so nicely by his pigeon-hole; then having his ticket punched before being allowed on the platform, and the frantic shouts and gesticulations from the man who says: "Now then, you sir, third class behind. Jump in. Right away!" Then the being wedged in between a "Salvation Capting" and a butcher in his official robes of office, or else the fighting of rival 'bus-conductors for the living carcase of Jesus Christ. "Charing Cross to Liverpool Street. Penny all the way. Mind how you get up." This, I can see, would have been my lot, preparatory to being trotted out to eclipse rival sects, who would advertise me on large posters: "No humbug here! We have the only real Jesus Christ. No deception. Will sing a hymn, reel off a sermon, and dance a heavenly hornpipe if you like. Don't forget the box at the door."

The impressionable and gushing votaries always picture me walking about in toga, beautifully draped, after Gustave Doré's picture of Christ leaving the Criterion, or Prætorium, or some place of that description. But how absurd. Think for an instant of Jesus Christ in bedraggled toga on a wet day in London streets, holding an umbrella over his head! My costume would, instead, have to be of the general utility sort—water-tight boots, cheap waterproof coat; and, thoroughly damp and limp, I should hold forth in an East-end hall, with a brass band playing at intervals "For he's a jolly good fellow." There would also be those terrible newspaper correspondents, following me to, say, Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday, reporting next morning how Jesus, seeing the multitude, went up on an eminence and taught them, saying, "Blessed are the meek," "Blessed are the poor in spirit," "Ye are the salt of the earth," "Ye are the light of the world." What would 'Arry and 'Riar say? Think of the mark I should be for their metallic squirts—perhaps a back-scratcher run down my raiment; my voice drowned by such sweet melodies as "Wait till the clouds roll by, Jenny," or "We don't want to fight," and the sweet yells of "Oo-er"; and my discourse spoilt by the mad rush of laden donkeys, or the brazen-voiced men shouting "Chuck up at 'em; all milky ones. Roll, bowl, or pitch."

Imagine me trying to baptise the multitude in one of the Hampstead ponds, and the reply, "Not me, guvnor; no bloomin' fear." If the Spirit of God descended at the time in the form of a dove, 'Arry would either throw half bricks at it or trap it. I suppose, too, my advocates would desire me to do a fifty days' fast in the wilderness, to eclipse Dr. Tanner's forty, and so beat my previous record. Well, imagine me retiring to, say, Epping Forest. The G. E. Railway would run excursion trains at cheap rates for the great unwashed to see me; bookmakers would be on the

ground, laying the odds; and then, when I returned to the busy haunts of men, I should be accosted by 'Arry with his coarse wit, and perhaps likened to a perambulating "plate-rack," in derision at the prominence of my ribs after my long fast.

No! My late experience tells me all these indignities would be heaped on me—my life would become a burden, my mission a failure. Besides, I'm rather tender on that question about the pinnacle of the temple. Think how uncomfortable, on a cold morning, balancing myself at the top of that steeple in Langham Place. Besides, Parker, Spurgeon, and all the bishops would not recognise me, as my coming would no doubt have a tendency to put out their little flaring candles of popularity. And then how about their exchequers? I should be compelled to tell the masses what thorough humbugs all the priests are—the bishops receiving ten or fifteen thousand a year each to explain and translate a plainly-printed book of the Dad's that can be purchased for fourpence. The religious profession and teaching is all lip worship. On this earth there is no belief outside the heterodox (they, I find, certainly have a strong belief in humanity). Not one law in your Parliament is made by reference to the old man's book, nor are my precepts followed—all are quietly ignored; and as soon as the masses are educated enough to think for themselves—good-bye, clergy! good-bye, creeds! The old lady will be disappointed at my failure. I am.

#### "BURNT OUT" FUND.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.—Swansea Friends, 11s.; West Hartlepool Branch, 5s.; O. Wilde, £1; Milton Hall Friend, 5s.; S. Mitchell, 2s.; J. Duckworth, 2s.; R. King, 1s.; A. Heap, 1s.; B. Miles, 5s.; Ball's Pond Friends, per A. Swinney, 7s. 6d.; J. Firth, 1s.; Poor Slave, 2s.; M. H. Dawson, 1s.; Hyde Park Branch, 17s. 6d.; From King's Lynn, per R. Green: F. Y., 1s.; A. E., 2s.; A. P., 1s.; E. G., 3s.; R. G., 3s.; W. M., 1s.; R. G., 5s.; P. J., 1s.; W. S. D., 1s.; R. F., 1s.; B. G., 1s. B., 1s.; R. Ferguson, 5s.; E. Truelove, 2s.; J. Forrester, 2s.; W. Varley, 5s.; A. Pooler, 1s.; J. Gray, 6d.

LOANS.—J. Whiteley, £10; H. M. R., £10.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### "IMPROVING CHRISTIAN TEXTS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As one of your readers and distributors, permit me to say that I think Mr. A. B. Moss has done service to our cause in telling us his doings at Ramsgate, and how he presented himself every Friday at the bookstall of Messrs. Smith and Sons for his *Freethinker*. I wish every Freethinker would follow the same practice whenever opportunity occurs. This would teach these monopolists at least which way the wind blows at the present time. I as a Freethinker never miss the chance, and from time to time rarely receive common civility. I don't travel much, but whenever I have to wait for a train at a bye station I spend my time in taking down the sheets containing texts which hang above the fireplaces, and write in the margin sundry criticisms and reflections which the said texts may produce. This I have found to be useful work, and if memory serves me correctly I think you, Sir, have seen a sample of such work when on your journeys to the north, and have noted the same (at Durham station, to wit). Another trick I am guilty of when in towns other than my own, and it may not be out of place, I trust, to relate it. I make it a point, so far as time will permit, to visit the stalls and booksellers' shops in my way or which I see. I respectfully enter, when the following colloquy as a rule takes place: "The *National Reformer*, please." Shopman or Shopwoman (I find the latter the most uncivil)—"Don't keep it, sir." "Have you the *Secular Review*?" Gruffly I am answered, "No, sir." "Then let me have the *Freethinker*." At the sound of this latter work there comes such a look of angry amazement, and a perfect burst, "I tell you we don't deal in such blasphemy." Calmly I ask, "Don't you? I am surprised, for I always thought that if Christianity be true, 'blasphemy,' as you call it, was the greatest godsend the world ever knew." "Nonsense; what are you talking about?" "I am talking about Christ and him crucified. Was he, the savior of the world, not crucified for blasphemy?" Petulantly the reply comes, "I don't know." "But you said just now it was nonsense, and don't you further know that it is just this nonsense these papers which I inquire for seek and labor to point out?" No answer. "Then have you the *War Cry* and the *Christian Herald*?" "Oh yes, we have those." "Ah, I thought so; then kindly let me say that for me you may keep them. Good morning."

I thus leave the shop or stall, and am often vain enough to think I leave also an impression.—I am, Sir, yours, etc.,

W. C.

LADY WORSHIPPERS will doubtless feel much consoled by Talmage's assurance that "the grave is only the place where we go to dress for the glorious resurrection." Curious dressing-room. But Talmage doesn't believe it in any practical kind of way any more than his congregation does. Christians almost universally regard death as a terrible calamity, and all they say to the contrary is superficial make-believe.



REVIEWS.

All about Mnemonics. By A. E. Middleton. London, Simpkin Marshall and Co.—Explains the various systems of the "art of memory" which have been taught, and gives an improved system seemingly founded on those of Fairchild, Stokes, and Pick.

The Opportunity of Ireland. By G. J. Holyoake. National Liberal Association.—A plea for Mr. Gladstone's scheme of Home Rule, written with Mr. Holyoake's usual point and slipshod grammar.

God and His Book. Part III. By Saladin. Stewart and Co.—We simply acknowledge this, reserving criticism for the complete work.

ASININE REDEMPTION.

"Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb, and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck."—Ex. xiii., 13.

Bray, bray, O modern donkey, bray The song of Moses and the Lamb, Or muse on that pre-Christian day When such as you were worth a damn, When dwelling 'neath the curse of God Long ere the Savior learned to ride Or "walk alone" a single rod, His quadrupedal heralds died— And many a damned ancestral "moke" Was slain. As sure as you're an ass If thus the priest of Jahveh spoke An ass or lamb was brought to grass. All donkeys of a happier time, "Lend me your ears," your debt is paid. Would I could "build the lofty rhyme" To sing your sins on Jesus laid, Exalt his "grace" o'er Moses' Law, Till million-tongued the assembled earth Joined in a glad Hee Haw.

W. C. SAVILLE.

PROFANE JOKES.

A YOUNGSTER, finding that his aged mother's Bible was too fine a print for her failing eyesight, sold the holy book and bought a tipcat and four sticks of candy.

ITALIAN PEDLAR (bearing a tray of plaster of Paris figures on his head): "Ah, your reverence, it is a fine day." Priest: "Indeed it is my son. The saints be with you." Italian Pedlar: "Yes, your reverence, they always are. I haven't sold one this morning."

"WHAT is your age?" asked a magistrate of a pious old lady. "Sixty-two, your honor," she replied. "Why you told me the same age four years ago." "Yes, thank God I'm not one of those persons who say one thing one year and something else the next."

THE time when a pious editor is excused for knocking splinters from the 3rd commandment is when he jabs the wrong end of his pen-holder into the inkstand and hastily shoves it behind his ear without wiping it, or when he licks the nib in mistake after he has stabbed a blackbeetle with it.

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