

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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DIVINE ASTRONOMY.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven.
And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.—GEN. I., 14, 17.

THE PARSONS' PALAVER.

This is an age of Congresses, and the clergy have taken a leaf out of the laymen's book. Every year they meet in some selected place and discuss the spiritual and temporal ailments of the Church. Their proceedings are chronicled at length in the Christian journals, but the Secular press gives them very little attention. Sensible people see that the Church is expiring, and newspaper editors devote their space to matters of more importance in which the public take a deeper interest.

This year's Church Congress has been held at Wakefield, where it is proposed to establish a new bishopric as soon as the funds are ready. Bishops are costly articles, and as it was stated at the Parsons' Palaver, without a word of dissent, that £3,000 a year is the smallest sum on which a Bishop could live. Millions of honest men support their wives and families, pay rates and taxes, and make some little provision against a rainy day, on less than a thirtieth part of that income. But they are only laymen. It is not to be expected that a priest, although he is sure of a good billet in the next world, could put up with such a straitened lot in this one. Unless he knows something by experience of the luxuries of life, how can he warn men properly against the dangers of wealth and make them feel the blessings of poverty? Above all, a Bishop stands in need of this discipline, for he has to direct the lower clergy. If he were a poor man he would never understand the perils of riches, for mere imagination is powerless to conceive them; but being wealthy, he is able to understand them thoroughly, and imagination is quite sufficient to give him an idea of the fortunes of poverty, such as pigging six in a room, sleeping on the bare floor,

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walking about in rags, and enjoying the privilege of a pinched stomach.

The streets of Wakefield have been spotted with an eruption of black coats and white chokers. Bishops have discoursed to miners on the virtues of thrift. Hotels have been startled by morning prayer-meetings in the coffee-room. Dinners and conversaziones have given the clergy an opportunity of mortifying the flesh, and the grateful pop of champagne corks has set them reflecting on the Savior's first miracle at Cana in Galilee. The one weak point has been the paucity of laymen. A correspondent of *Church Bells* counted only seven of them in one block of seats to fifty ladies and eighty parsons. The male sex held very much aloof, and too much space was occupied by women and clergymen.

Three inaugural sermons, perhaps out of compliment to the Trinity, were preached by the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Edinburgh, and the Bishop of Ripon. The last was in fine form. Like a true gastronome, he took most of his similes from the *menu* of a *table d'hôte*. He concluded by asking his spiritual brethren to deliberate on grave questions in a becoming spirit, and to put away childish thoughts and childish things. Thereupon they all rose and recited the Apostles' Creed.

"Patronage and Endowments" was the first subject of discussion. Canon Lefroy led off, strongly censuring the sale of Church livings, which are as marketable as herrings. Mr. J. T. Dodd (we presume a layman) said there should be "a redistribution of the incomes of the clergy." He wanted to know why the Archbishop of York should receive £33, and the Archbishop of Canterbury £50 a day. These remarks were hissed, probably by the higher clergy in front; but when Mr. Dodd sat down he was cheered, probably by the curates at the back.

The Rev. J. M. Wilson, whose defence of Christianity we reviewed in the August number of *Progress*, opened a discussion on "Christian Evidences." He proposed to "satisfy reason within certain limits," and appeared to think that Reason was a shameless hussy if she demanded more. Archdeacon Games granted that there were difficulties in Christianity, but what of that? Why trouble about them? There might be rotten stones in an impregnable fortress. This profound speaker was followed by the Rev. W. Aitken, who knew many people "earnestly desiring to believe, without sufficient intellectual capacity," but he omitted to say whether they are at large or in a state of confinement. As for the "blatant infidel," whoever he may be, it was of no use to approach him with Christian Evidences; being proud of his infidelity, "nothing but severe distress will show him the hollowness of his unbelief." Mr. Aitken does not appear to have indicated who should administer "the severe distress." If he leaves it to God, he may find that hope deferred maketh the heart sick; and even if he leaves it to the Law he may fare no better. We suffered "severe distress" in Holloway Gaol, but it did not convince us of the hollowness of our unbelief; on the contrary, it made us a ten times greater sceptic, and filled our heart with a tenfold hatred of Christianity. Mr. Aitken had only one proposal to make, and, like all religious projects, his ended in cash. Money should be raised. But, alas, where was it to come from? During last year "only £1,100 had been subscribed for the purpose of dealing with the unbelief so prevalent in this country, which was a striking contrast to the many thousands the infidels spent for the spread of their unbelief." That ended the discussion. The parsons had gone through their yearly talk on Christian Evidences, and could devise nothing except letting Christian Evidences look after themselves. On the whole, if not an honest, it was a sensible resolution. The less they dis-

cuss the better, for debate means ruin. When examined in the light of discussion, their "impregnable fortress" turns out to be full of "rotten stones"; in fact, the whole structure, from battlement to basement, is seen to be nothing but rot, and very dry rot too.

Bishop Ryle dealt with the Church in the Rural Districts, and we are happy to cite his authority for the statement that the country parish, which was once the Church's stronghold, is now its weakest point. It is there, he says, that "the Church has the fewest true friends and supporters, and the most bitter enemies." To remedy this dreadful state of things he proposes simpler sermons and more active ministers. Bless his prelatial heart! he has not sounded the bottom of the mystery. His prescription is useless because his diagnosis is wrong. Let Joseph Arch be invited to address the next Church Congress, and the parsons will then learn the secret of their failure in the rural districts. The parson is hand-in-glove with the squire, he looks down with ill-concealed contempt on the serfs of the soil, and the Church is merely a Conservative Caucus for the election of men who will trample on the rights of labor and defend every species of privilege. Such is the fact, and we are far from deploring it, for the more the clergy make themselves detested, the sooner will the Church be abolished. We agree with Gibbon that to a philosophic eye the virtues of the clergy are more dangerous than their vices.

Perhaps the thorniest subject of discussion was the relation of the Church to polygamous heathen. A few of these gentry get converted, and the question arises, How about their wives? Are they to be baptised without renouncing all their wives except one? Or are the wives to be baptised if they continue to share with other ladies in the affections of one husband? The Bishop of Exeter thought the Church should admit polygamous converts, but if a convert took another wife after baptism he should be excommunicated. But other clergymen dissented from this lenient policy. They demanded that every convert should be called upon to keep one of his wives and turn the others adrift. Could anything show more clearly the anti-human spirit of religion? Polygamy involves a low level of culture, although the Bible does not condemn it, and every one of God's favorites had as many wives as he could keep, and sometimes more. But where it is the law and custom of the country, it loses its moral heinousness; and to break up a home, however constituted, to turn mothers adrift, and make their children bastards, is nothing less than infamy. That Christian priests can contemplate it with equanimity is explained by their profession. Men who read with perfect approval how Abraham turned Hagar and Ishmael out of doors to perish of hunger and thirst, are capable of any enormity in the propagation of their creed.

Another paper on how to instruct the masses as to the advantages of a State Church was to have been read by Lord Halstead, late Sir Hardinge Giffard, who comes of a fine old jobbing family, and whose zeal for religion has been profitable to himself, whatever it has been to others. Lord Halstead is a signal proof that godliness is great gain. It would have delighted the Congress to gaze on his Jovian features and listen to his majestic eloquence, but unfortunately his temporal duties were so pressing that his spiritual duties had to be neglected.

Before the Congress broke up, a workman's meeting was held, and addressed by the Bishops of Ripon and Manchester. The former said "It was not true that the clergy desired to dine with the rich and preach to the poor," forgetting that *qui s'excuse s'accuse*. He denied also that the Bishops were rolling in riches; it was far from true, and they had been "considering the redistribution of their incomes." Whether they will ever get beyond *considering* he did not prophesy. His brother Bishop talked a lot of insincere nonsense about the rights of labor, but warned them that faith in God is better than trusting to political and social regeneration. "Woe unto you hypocrites" said Jesus Christ, and if ever the text was applicable since it should be cast at the Bishop of Manchester.

Only one sensible word, so far as we know, was uttered at the whole Congress. The Bishop of Rochester said "Our great need is a knowledge of human nature and a little common sense." This golden sentence should be written up over the platform at future Congresses. Nay, it might be painted on the front of every pulpit. The second half is especially valuable, and we hope the parsons

will take the Bishop of Rochester's friendly hint, or, as some might call it, his straight tip. Their constant prayer should be "O Lord, give us a little common sense." And as prayer, on their own showing, is often answered, they might in the course of time pray themselves up to the average level of humanity. Even Freethinkers will not deny their assistance, and we also will occasionally pray "O Lord, give them a little common sense."

G. W. FOOTE.

MORAL STATISTICS.

THE person who said "There is nothing more deceptive than facts, except figures" must surely have had in view some similar employment of facts and figures to that found in the article on "Moral Statistics" by the Rev. Dr. H. Hayman in the current number of the *Fortnightly Review*. Statistics, as Carlyle has said, need weighing as well as counting. We see figures produced to show that free trade is a failure, and others that it is a success; to prove that we are becoming more temperate, and that drunkenness is on the increase; to demonstrate that vaccination is a blessing, and that it is a curse. But surely a more curious use of criminal statistics was never made than to argue that they demonstrate man's depravity; that crime increases with the increase of education and Freethought; and that, in particular, an increase of convicted criminals in Germany is owing to the spread of Von Hartmann's pessimistic philosophy!

Dr. Hayman says: "If any proof were needed of the depravity of man's nature, what so cogent as the fact that the intensity of criminality blackens most deeply precisely where there is the greatest number of human beings within arm's length of each other." This is a new argument for the fall of man, and one that would make morality exist in perfection where it could not exist at all, viz, in perfect solitude. It would be as valid to argue for the goodness of human nature from the fact that the intensity of benevolence deepens where the greatest number are brought together. Dr. Johnson asserted that if he drew a circle of a mile in radius around his own house near Fleet Street, it would comprise the major portion of the worth and intelligence of the kingdom, and in his day this was at least as approximately true as most of Dr. Hayman's conclusions.

Dr. Hayman's article, be it said, is founded on Dr. Alexander von Oettingen's work *Moral Statistics in their Significance for a Social Ethic*. Oettingen is a Lutheran professor of theology and his work is intended as a support to the Christian cause. The facts are valuable, but the inferences must be received with caution. Take the increase of crime in great cities. Here, as throughout, figures must be weighed. If crimes are more numerous, are not the temptations thereto overwhelmingly greater? In some cases, too, an increase of criminals means simply greater efficiency of police. In towns, drunkards get "run in" who would go scot free in the country. It is obvious that a certain number of bill forgeries, in a district where bills are constantly used, has not the same significance as the same number in an equally populous district where the use of bills is only half as much. But criminal statistics count only the absolute number of cases and at best compare only the number of the population, not the number of business transactions, the abuse of which leads to crime. Dr. Hayman makes much of the fact, if fact it be, that "In Berlin, prostitution has grown twice as fast as population." He adds that "of 730 brides there in 1880, 358 had forfeited the virgin crown," without enabling us to judge the authority for, or even meaning of this extraordinary statement. It must be borne in mind that Berlin has been made the seat of a vast empire, and that travelling has increased enormously. Possibly it might be found that half the Berlin prostitutes, as certainly a good share of the London ones, are supported by country visitors.

The greater portion of Dr. Hayman's paper is taken up with the statistics of divorce and suicide. Yet nothing could be more absurd than to take either the one or the other as a gauge of a nation's morality; unless Dr. Hayman would have us believe that Spain and Ireland are more moral than England and America. Dr. Hayman calls it a "damning fact" that the maximum rate of divorce follows that of education. Whether the fact

"damns" education, or the Moral Governor, who has arranged matters so, he does not say. Divorce has increased in Europe because people are growing out of the superstition that married people must live together till death, whatever misery may be the result. It is a sign of growing, rather than of dwindling morality. Does Dr. Hayman suppose that in the year following the passing of the French Divorce Law the nation became suddenly so much the more immoral? He says: "To those who believe that woman was created a wife, facilities for divorce are obviously her ready-made bane and natural ruin." This comes immediately giving statistics which show that the large majority of divorces are granted *at the request of the wife*. Evidently some women think divorce means protection rather than ruin.

Suicide, as Beccaria pointed out, if a crime, is one incapable of punishment. It may be considered a bad sign as showing so many find life too grievous to be borne. Yet the fact that while in Saxony there are 338 suicides per million, in Ireland there are only 17 per million, is one which shows what little ethical significance the "crime" has. As Morselli shows, it is affected by many causes apart from the general standard of morality. Sensitive educated natures think of balancing their account of good and ill, while the majority simply live on from instinct till welcome death brings relief. Had Dr. Hayman confined himself to arguing that Pessimism tended to increase suicide he might have had a plausible case. But to point his moral he goes farther than this. After showing that there is an increase in the return of crime in Germany, and overlooking the real cause—the military system which takes so large a population from the restraints of home—he says: "Infidel theories regarding man and nature, rising into barren and naked Materialism, have acted with a solvent and mordant power upon Franco-German society, and we have here the results." What rot! Were this true we should find crime most rife among the scientific and literary classes who are most distinguished for Materialism. These, on the contrary, are found to be the most exempt from crime. Criminals in Germany, as in England, are mainly drawn from the non-thinking classes. They are not the readers of Büchner or Von Hartmann, but profess themselves as of religious belief. The very figures given by Dr. Hayman show that the most religious are the most criminal. Thus the Jews, God's old favorites, have one criminal for every 1,760, the Catholics one for every 2,750, the Protestants, least religious of all, one for every 3,428.* In the face of this to disregard the effect of conscription and connect the increase of detected crime in Germany with the spread of unbelief requires the kind of logic for which theologians are distinguished.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

THE Irishmen who recently visited Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden noticed the great number of works on theology in his library. How many of his best hours has the "grand old man" wasted on religious moonshine! The result is nonsense about Homer, nonsense about Moses, and the Prime Minister of the greatest empire in the world "reconciling" Genesis and Science in a fashion that would make him a laughing-stock to a schoolboy.

THE Baptists, in solemn conclave assembled, have declared that novels and theatres are pernicious. Trade jealousy, sirs, trade jealousy! Novels and theatres are rivals of sermons and gospel-shops, with the immense advantage of being more edifying and entertaining. The Church of the good old times showed a true instinct when it treated actors and actresses as rogues and vagabonds, and nowadays as the stage goes up the pulpit goes down.

ON behalf of the Wakefield Bishopric Committee, the Bishop of Ripon has declined a theatrical benefit on the ground that "a very large section of the subscribers would feel aggrieved, as they are opposed to the theatre." Dancing is also objected to by the same vinegary pietists. Yet we hardly know why, for it is a good old Bible pastime. Did not the man after God's own heart dance before the ark in an airier costume than that of the *première danseuse* in an opera ballet? Did not the wise king say "there is a time to mourn, and a time to dance"? Did not the Psalmist say "Let them praise his name in the dance"? Really these "unco guid" are setting themselves against Scripture. Let

* It is only fair to mention that Dr. Hayman cites from the year most prejudicial against the Jews. Previously to 1878 the proportion brought that race nearer to the Catholics.

them do as the Almighty bids them and get up dancing parties in their gospel shops. Of course it would necessitate moveable pews, but moveable pews are better than empty ones.

THE Rev. J. M. Vaughan, vicar of St. Nicholas, Deptford, is adjudicated a bankrupt, but has not surrendered. His living was worth £700 a year, but with a due appreciation of that part of the Sermon on the Mount which celebrates the blessedness of poverty, he sought to increase his pile by speculating on the Stock Exchange, and he is now several thousand pounds in debt. Of such is the kingdom of heaven.

TWO murderers were executed in Paris last week, and both of them laughed at the priest and his "good God." Thereupon the London *Echo* remarks that "they were not the better in their lives, at all events, for their Atheism." What logic! As a matter of fact, the vast majority of executed criminals are Christians, and it might just as well be said that "they were not the better in their lives, at all events, for their Christianity." Newspapers please copy.

THE Rev. Dr. Clifford says that preachers "should cling to the living core of facts—to Christ and Gethsemane and Calvary—that are the power of Christianity." That's the style. Preach up the story of the Crucifixion, and when people's hearts are moved by the fate of the soft-headed young carpenter, drop into them as unconsidered trifles all the maxims and dogmas of the "bloody faith." Religion and conjuring were always pretty much alike.

WHEN Clovis, King of the Franks, was converted to Christianity, he listened to a sermon on the Crucifixion, and was so indignant that he exclaimed "Ah, if I and my brave Franks had been there, we would have avenged him." The bold soldier did not reflect that God Almighty was stage-manager for the drama of Calvary.

MANY centuries later a poor old lady, who heard of the Crucifixion for the first time, asked when it happened, and on being told she exclaimed "Well, as it was so long ago, let us hope it wasn't true."

ACCORDING to one speaker at the Baptist Congress, "the supernatural holiness of Jesus is the crowning miracle of the Gospels." This kind of gush may go down among the elect, but it will hardly bear the light of criticism. If holiness means lackadaisical piety, the Prophet of Nazareth was undoubtedly pious. He was "a good young man" in the religious sense of the words. But how can he be compared with the great lights of history who fulfilled all the secular duties he so carefully shunned, and bore themselves as true men if not as perfect saints? Put side by side with a Socrates or a Marcus Aurelius, Jesus Christ looks like an effeminate curate, who may be fit for heaven but is out of place on earth.

THE Christians are a happy family. "Let brotherly love continue" is the burden of their song. How naturally, therefore, when a popular Congregationalist minister was asked to preside at the annual meeting of the Bible Society at Trowbridge did the two local Church of England sky-pilots decline to speak if a Nonconformist took the chair. To appease their wounded dignity a layman was invited to preside, but their backs were up and they refused to put in an appearance.

MR. J. W. MORDEN has published a little book to vindicate the divinity of Jesus Christ against infidel objections, and according to the *Christian World* he "successfully shows their essentially flimsy or unfair character." Indeed! Then how is it the *Christian World* is so very careful never to notice any Freethought works that are sent to it for review? Is it not a fair presumption that it thinks discretion the better part of valor, and finds it safest to refute the "flimsy" arguments of Secularism by silence?

THREE females were baptised last week in the river at St. Ives. The Rev. S. Haynes "officiated in his gown." Was it his bed-gown? Perhaps Mrs. Haynes will enlighten us. We should also like to know how the three females performed their toilet after their holy dipping? Did they traipse home like bundles of dripping, or was there a boat-house or a gipsy's van provided for the occasion?

GALEOTE, the Spanish priest who murdered the Bishop of Madrid, has been sentenced to death.

CANON CROW ROOT, at the Church Congress, urged his hearers to "saturate themselves with the Psalms." Perhaps he fancies they usually steep themselves in the Song of Solomon.

IS "S. J. J. C.," who writes in the *Echo* on "The Masses and Christianity," an Agnostic in disguise? Any way, it is curious that to assure Christians "their position is scientifically unassailable" he directs them to Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, where it is contended that the very notion of creation is unthinkable, and that all existence is under uniform law. "S. J. J. C." deeply regrets that a lady should write against

Christianity, but that may be only to draw attention to the very able and pointed letter of Mrs. Ellen Crawford Bromehead, which appeared in the *Echo* last week, and which plainly stated that the world is not indebted to Christianity but to civilisation.

ANOTHER correspondent of the *Echo* says that "the Church requires a free baptism of the Holy Ghost? Then we are afraid it is all up with the Church, for the Holy Ghost has not been heard of since it animated the goat and the goose that led the Crusaders the wrong way to Jerusalem. Both those animals died, and according to every indication the Holy Ghost expired at the same time.

THE problem of getting the masses to Christian services is said to be solved at the Agricultural Hall, where the chief feature is the appearance of a popular soprano. Christianity hopes to hold its own as a cheap form of popular entertainment, and Dr. Thain Davidson is the very man for the role of clown.

THERE is an increase of pauperism in London this autumn and nearly one hundred thousand are said to be in want of the commonest necessities of life. Meantime all the Baptist chapels are having a special whip up for the Baptist mission on the Congo. Had they not better look at home a bit and let the Congo people do their own baptising?

THE Scottish Protestant Alliance have again distinguished themselves by sending a long-winded letter to the Marquis of Salisbury, deploring that a Roman Catholic priest had been allowed to sprinkle the colors of a British regiment with holy water.

GEORGE DAWSON, of Murton Colliery, who used to preach in Hetton Chapel, but eloped some time ago with a married woman who attended the same place of worship, has written a pious letter from Australia addressed to a "Dear brother and sister in Christ," which is published in the *Auckland Times*.

THE Mohammedans and Hindoos are again engaged in religious conflicts. Five or six men have been killed. Twenty natives are in the hospital suffering from dangerous wounds. After all, this is but a weak parody of Christianity as seen in Belfast. Other religions cannot expect to reach the noble level of riot and fratricide reached by the Christian faith of our own beloved islands.

FURTHER disturbances have occurred in Delhi. A Hindoo tied up a small pig in the Jumna Masjid, and this profanation of the Mosque led to a fresh riot, in which several persons were killed. Further bloodshed was only prevented by the interference of the military. The shops remain closed. The followers of the prophet have destroyed a small Hindoo temple, breaking the idols in pieces and smearing the place with blood.

DR. KAVANAGH, a Roman Catholic priest, has been killed while officiating at the altar in the parish chapel of Kildare. A marble angel fell on his head.

THE Convent of the Dames Augustines, at Auxerre, has been attacked by two hundred people, who forced their way in and rescued a novice. The girl went there on a short visit, but did not return, having been induced to write to her father a letter announcing the consecration of her life to God. Being refused access to his daughter, M. Gallet wrote an article calling on the public to help him. Accompanied by his brother, the Mayor of Chassy, and a large number of sympathisers, he demanded to be allowed to speak to his daughter, and threatened to use force if persuasion proved useless. The Superior and the Sisters affirmed that the young lady was no longer there. M. Gallet and the assembled people then rushed in, and in spite of the repeated falsehoods of the nuns, they persisted in searching every corner of the building. After many doors and windows had been broken in this search, M. Gallet's daughter was at last found and released amidst the hearty cheers of the people who were assisting him.

THE churchwardens of St. Mary's, Beverley, having published a notice to the effect that all the seats were free and unappropriated, the Archbishop of York had his attention drawn to the matter, and wrote to the churchwardens, informing them that the notice was illegal, and that the churchwardens are bound to assign the seats to their parishioners according to their degree. The following advertisement accordingly appears in the *Beverley Recorder*: "Wanted, for the Information of the Churchwardens of Saint Mary's, Beverley, to know the Rank, Title, or Occupation, together with the Yearly Income of each Parishioner, to enable them to carry out the Archbishop of York's direction to assign them seats 'according to their degree.' There are about 600 Seats to be assigned amongst about 5,000 Parishioners. An early application is desired."

A PROFANE operetta entitled "Adam and Eve" is now being performed in Paris. Eve crushes the serpent's head with high-heeled boots. The time will come when scriptural comic opera will be produced on the English stage as well as on the French.

Why should ancient Hebrew history or fiction be protected by law?

THE *Nonconformist* says: "It is as a rule a perilous thing for young men to argue with unbelievers." Perilous to their faith that is, since unbelievers are usually well fortified with reason.

THE pious fraud about an Ohio man being turned into a stone pillar because he swore, we have published once or twice. It was called one of the Christian evidences, and is about as true as any of them.—*Boston Investigator*.

THE tithe agitation in Wales has resulted in an arrangement by which the Rev. Evan Evans and other clergymen remit ten per cent. of their tithes, and refund expenses to the farmers who have been distrained upon. One clergyman offers a deduction of 20 per cent. The clergy found themselves morally helpless in face of the general resistance, and they have acted very prudently in accepting a part of their legalised plunder when they could never hope to receive the whole except at the cost of an embittered struggle and universal hatred. The agitation is now mainly confined to Flintshire.

A WRITER to the *Liverpool Evening Express* gives an account of a visit to Talmage's Jabbarnacle, Brooklyn. Talmage prays to his Maker as if he were an old school-fellow. His sermon appeared to be "the ravings of a fanatic who fancied he had a country residence in the seventh heaven." It was "all attitudinising and rant."

ON a recent Sunday, some working men took a trip to a village not far from Bolton, where they entered a public-house for refreshment. One of them began to entertain the company with a comic song which so enraged the landlord that he rushed in and asked whether they thought he had no religion. His own language left no doubt on that point, for "God," "Christ," "damn," and other choice Bible extracts rushed from his lips in the most orthodox manner.

UNDER the appropriate heading of "Raising the Wind," the *Financial News* says it has received the original of a communication addressed from the office of the *Christian Union*, to a firm of stockbrokers. The communication runs as follows: "The *Christian Union* Publishing Office, 8 Salisbury Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C., Sept. 28, 1886. Messrs. — Gentle- men,—We beg to send you for sight proof copy of our editorial on your system of dealings in stocks and shares, which is to appear in the next issue of the *Christian Union*, and shall be glad for you to make any correction to the proof copy. We shall be pleased to insert at same time the accompanying page advertisement at the charge of £10 10s., including one hundred copies of the said issue free for your own private use.—Yours truly, C. KIRKAY. P.S.—Oblige by letting us have the corrected proof editorial in course of post." The *Christian Union* has evidently taken to heart the injunction to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

MISS WESTON, who writes all sorts of goody-goody nonsense in the *Naval Brigade News* and seems to think Jack Tar is fit for nothing better than the merest drivel, has a letter on "Spiritualism" which she calls "The devil's gospel," and a sign of the last times. She is evidently unaware that it is a recrudescence of the superstition which lies at the foundation of her own faith.

THE latest gem in the line of coroner's jury verdict comes from Dakota, where a jury found that "she came to her death from a felonious desire to reach a happy hereafter."

CAPTAIN KENDALL, Lieutenant Elliott, and bandmaster Peck, Salvation Army officers, were sentenced to a month's hard labor by the Torquay magistrates for conducting musical processions through the streets, contrary to the by-laws. After two days' they were released, the alternative fine of £5 having been paid for them by some sympathisers.

CHARLES R. WATERWORTH, "Captain" of the Salvation Army has been fined five shillings for obstruction at Stamford. He went to prison for three days in accordance with instructions from head-quarters not to pay fines.

THERE has been a split among Salvationists at Guildford. In the self-denying week some of the bandsmen imbibed too freely and refused to give up their instruments to those calling themselves "General" Booth's representatives.

MR. HERBERT BOOTH and three other members of the Salvation Army were charged at Halifax on October 5 with cruelly ill-treating a horse which was lame and quite unfit for work. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals prosecuted. Booth was ordered to pay a penalty of £3 8s. and costs, which sum will, no doubt, be quickly subscribed for him by the members of the Army. He evidently feels the same callous indifference to the sufferings of animals that Paul shows in his contemptuous query, "Doth God care for oxen?"

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Oct. 17, Secular Hall, 13 Beck Street, Nottingham; at 11, "Infidel Death-Beds"; at 3, "Is Christianity True?"; at 7, "David, the Man after God's own Heart."

OCT. 24, Manchester; 31, Leeds.

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

DEC. 5, Portsmouth; 12, Milton Hall; 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.
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- RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—E. W.
- W. GRIFFIS.—We quite understand it. Times are more or less hard on all.
- E. J. TIERNEY.—Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant published the *Fruits of Philosophy*, but they were not the authors. It was written by Dr. Knowlton, of America, over fifty years ago.
- H. L.—Sorry to hear the bigots cause you so much loss and inconvenience, but glad to hear you are not afraid of them.
- SIMPLE SIMON.—Thanks for cutting.
- J. BEECROFT, 32 Byford Street, Edgehill, Liverpool, asks his namesake who subscribed to our "Burnt Out" Fund, to communicate with him, as he thinks he has discovered a near relative.
- JACK TAR.—Pleased to hear that our sketches afford so much merriment to your shipmates. *Crimes of Christianity* will be reprinted. The Comic Bible was burnt, and most of the blocks were irretrievably damaged by the fire.
- B. DAWSON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops." Glad to hear you look forward every week with such expectancy to the "little blasphemer."
- S. C. FOX.—(1) In reprinting the *Crimes of Christianity* we shall thoroughly revise and to some extent amplify the portion already issued. The complete work will therefore be a new edition, and it will probably be printed on a larger page. (2) Crowe's History of France. You must read French for the best information. (3) Chambers's if you can buy it. Professor Henry Morley is engaged on a new History of English Literature.
- W. CARTER.—Thanks. We may find a corner.
- C. OAKLEY.—Whether any particular fossilised tree is twelve million years old is very difficult to say. Accurate computation is by no means easy, although the time must have been immense. A million years is a small figure to the geologist.
- E. CLARK.—Whether Christians or Atheists interrupt each other most at open-air meetings is a question on which you and Mr. Ball are not likely to agree. You ask us what good Atheism has ever done? The good it has done is exactly measured by the superstition it has destroyed.
- A. ATKINSON.—Jokes are always welcome.
- W. NELSON.—We are always very busy, and as the filling up of our lecture list involves a floating correspondence, applicants who ask for answers *per return* must expect to be disappointed. The delay in your prospectus might have been obviated by your writing to us sooner. Instead of that you leave it to the last minute and then throw the blame on us.
- W. MACINTOSH.—The conversation between those two Christians was rather coarse and hardly worth reporting.
- SOME IDIOT wastes a penny to say "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." We are not lost yet.
- EX ANIMO.—Many Thanks.
- G. W. DAVEY.—Orders for literature should be sent to Mr. Forder. We have really more copy at present for the *Freethinker* than we can use.
- W. H. MORRISH.—We are glad to see that the Bristol magistrates will not allow the old Act of Charles II. to be used against the Sunday morning barbers. Protection is dying out in religion as well as in political economy.
- A. McINNES.—We have no time to reply by letter to your list of printed questions, and the matter is not of sufficient interest for our readers. Every Christian we decline to allow the free use of our columns considers us cowardly. We are therefore well used to the imputation, and we assure you that yours is not the last straw on the camel's back.
- J. H. WHITHAM.—Your offer is very generous, but we did not understand that J. Harvey, whom we replied to last week, is at present out of a situation.
- G. F. M.—An "Acid Drop" next week.
- ARGUS.—Always glad to receive your batches.
- E. J. TIERNEY.—Mrs. Besant did not ask the Freethinkers at our debate with Dr. McCann "to behave as men and not like beasts." What she did say appears in the published report, and the Christians should refer to it instead of drawing on their imagination. Dr. McCann expressed himself well pleased with his reception, and said that he was treated on the whole with the greatest courtesy.
- W. H. SPIVEY.—We are well aware that the Huddersfield Branch has incurred many expenses, and we are grateful for the subscribers.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Rationalist—West Sussex Gazette—Liverpool Evening Express—Glasgow Herald—Liberal—Ironclad Age—Inverness Courier—Echo—Western Daily Mercury—Chat—Boston Investigator—Islington News—Kent Argus—Church Evangelist—Auckland Times—St. James's Gazette—Wakefield Express—Cambridgeshire Times—Western Daily Press—Truthseeker—Bedford Record—New South Wales Freethinker—Thinker—Beverley Recorder—Sunday Words—Waco Independent Pulpit.

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.

BASKERVILLE HALL, Birmingham, looked unusually lively last Sunday. Downright Freethought lectures are rarer than they should be in that somewhat secluded building, and the custom of free admission to the Sunday lectures does not add to the robustness of Secularism in the capital of the Midlands. When Mr. Foote was announced to deliver three of his "blasphemous" lectures in Baskerville Hall some of the "ancient order of Freethinkers," who are wonderfully like Christians in everything but profession, prophesied an egregious failure. Never, said they, would the people of Birmingham listen to discourses on such "blood-curdling" subjects. But the prophets were wrong. Mr. Foote's morning audience, despite the charges for admission, was about four times as large as that which usually assembles to hear lectures for nothing; and in the evening every inch of room was occupied, including the back of the platform. The "Hour in Hell," which, by the way, was an hour and twenty minutes, was thoroughly relished, if laughter and applause are any indications of satisfaction. There can be no doubt that militant Freethought, if pushed forward vigorously, would find a wide and cordial welcome in Birmingham; and we sincerely hope the N. S. S. Branch will persevere in its intention to provide a Special Lecturer at least once a month. Mr. Card, its energetic Secretary, deserves every praise for his splendid style of advertising, which made Mr. Foote's posters and subjects the talk of the town.

How the rain did pour down in London on Tuesday evening! It was rather unkind of the Clerk of the Weather, who must be in a bad way if his accounts are as muddled as the climate. That very evening was to see the commencement of the six free propagandist lectures at Milton, and who the deuce could be expected to turn out on such a dog of a night? A goodly number, however, plodded through the deluge to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Is the Foundation of Christianity Sound?" They listened with rapt attention, and gave him a tremendous ovation at the close. There was no discussion, although many strange faces were present; but a letter was read from the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale, who, with characteristic modesty, boasted of having "repulsed" Mr. Foote eight or nine years ago. The rest of the letter stated that Christianity is founded on the belief in God, and is therefore secure from all attack. Such a contention is utterly absurd, but Mr. Woffendale knows what he is about. He is far too cute to discuss the authenticity of the Gospels, the credibility of their miracles, the truth of Christian dogmas, the value of Christian ethics, and the divinity of Jesus Christ. These things are definite, and a debater can be pinned down on them, but when he talks about God he floats about in the infinite, where the prejudices of his own party enable him to defy the laws of evidence and the canons of logic. Mr. Woffendale said he was engaged and could not possibly come; otherwise he would have been glad to "cross swords with his old antagonist." Does this mean that he is ready for a public debate, and to see it properly reported?

NEXT Tuesday's lecture at Milton Hall will be given by Mr. Parris. His subject is "Prophecy," and he is well able to treat it. We hope the weather will be propitious, or at least indifferent, and the room crowded. Every Freethinker should come arm in arm with two Christians.

THE Sunday morning lectures at the London Hall of Science are resumed, the subjects being as usual of a political or social turn. Mrs. Besant occupies the platform during October.

OUR comment on the ridiculous story about Shelley's cowardice in a storm, which appeared in *Rare Bits*, has produced good fruit. The editor inserts a mild apology and makes the *amende honorable* by printing a bit of first-hand testimony to Shelley's cool courage in danger from a letter of Byron's. *Rare Bits* adds "it is more than probable that the other story was due to Lord Byron's physician, Polidori, who was no friend of Shelley, and would have been only too glad to circulate anything to his disadvantage."

THE *Illustrated London News* for Oct. 9, gives as supplement a double-page portrait of Herbert Spencer, which admirers of that philosopher would do well to secure.

THE Bristol magistrates have had the good sense to refuse an application for a summons against a barber for Sunday trading.

A SUNDAY band has been established at Leamington, although strongly opposed by the Mayor, who is deacon of the principal Congregational chapel. He only had two supporters against sixteen of the Town Council.

A CAPITAL story of a Chinaman in court is told in the recently-published "Reminiscences" of Sir Francis Doyle. Some Yorkshire footpad robbed a Chinese pedlar near Leeds. By his own account he was a good "Clistian," but pious Judge Park doubted if he should be allowed to kiss the book. "Ask him," he said to the interpreter, "where he was baptised?" "My lord," he explained, "he says he is baptised in every town he comes to." This being overmuch, "Clistian" did not satisfy the judge. "Ask him," said he, "where he expects to go after death." The question elicited the reply that he expected to go back to Pekin. The judge, quite upset, sent his clerk to Judge Holroyd in another court, to ask his opinion. "What," said he, "Park has caught a Tartar, go back and tell him from me the man's evidence is inadmissible." "But my lord," meekly suggested the clerk, "he says he is a Christian." "He a Christian!" roared out Holroyd, "he be damned. He is no more a Christian than I am." This was the answer the clerk had to carry back and the poor Chinaman lost his case.

MRS. REYNOLDS, we presume the wife of Mr. C. B. Reynolds, is reported as speaking very ably at the New York Freethinkers' Convention. A Miss Frances Lord, of London, England, is reported as among the speakers. We understood that Miss Lord was a Theosophist, but shall be glad to find ourselves mistaken.

THE *Truthseeker* of October 2 contains some interesting "Reminiscences of a Reformer" by Lucy N. Colman. Mrs. Colman is now nearly seventy years of age, and has spent the greater portion of her life working for social and religious reform. Speaking of the times of anti-slavery agitation she says, "I have been mobbed several times, and in more than one instance the mob was led by a minister, and the persons composing the mob were eminently Christians." The "Reminiscences" were read at the Convention of the New York State Freethinkers' Association.

WE see from the New South Wales *Freethinker* that Mr. W. W. Collins has been having a six nights' debate at Sydney with George Chainey on the subject of Materialism v. Spiritualism. Both disputants are young men of talent.

THE *Independent Pulpit* of Waco, Texas, keeps up a good standard under the editorship of Mr. J. D. Shaw. The number before us contains a capital paper by Mr. W. S. Bell, an American Freethought lecturer, on the Conflict of Christianity and Civilisation.

RENAN is reported to have recently spoken as follows on Atheism to the author of a work just issued on the *Irreligion of the Future*:—"Yes, it is true, irreligion is the end towards which we are hastening. After all, why should not humanity do without dogmas? Speculation will replace religion. Among the most advanced nations dogmas are already decreasing; by inward toil the incrustations of thought are bruised and destroyed. In France we are already for the most part without religion; the man of the world believes no more than the scholar, he has his small fund of ideas more or less simple or profound, on which he lives without feeling the want of addressing himself to the priest. In Germany the work of decomposition of dogmas is also very advanced. In England it only commences, but it goes fast. Christianity seems everywhere to be followed by Free-thinking. With Buddhism and Hinduism it is the same. In India the majority of intelligent men are Freethinkers; in China there is no national religion. Yes, it will be a long time yet, but religion is passing away, and we can already imagine the time when Europe will be quite without it."

THE Rev. Mr. Diggle, chairman of the London School Board, is a smart man, but he has overreached himself. His "fee" policy, which is the game of the clerical party, is rapidly hastening Free Education. When that is realised, the Diggles of London will have to find out a new way of serving the Lord, for Secular Education will soon follow in its wake.

MATERIALISM REFUTED!

A RELIGIOUS and would-be philosophical journal called *Great Thoughts*, which bears the secondary title of the *Christian Graphic*, gives the listening world the inestimable benefit of a "Refutation of Modern Materialism," for which a prize of £2 has been editorially awarded. This "Refutation" is constructed on the model of "The House that Jack Built," and is about as good a "refutation" of materialism as the more picturesque and vigorous original was of curly-horned cattle or the malt tax. The Refutation begins—"This is the unthinkable, invisible, ponderable, indestructible, material, Atom." Then follows a column and a half of repetitions with gradual additions,

till the last paragraph sums up the complete Refutation as follows:

"This is the 'Inner Consciousness' that they are not all material, possessed by the men who rule over the living creatures that eat the vegetation that covers the earth, that receives light from the sun of one solar system, obedient to the laws presiding over the enormous universe, consequent on evolution, result of the struggle with itself of one UNTHINKABLE, INVISIBLE, PONDERABLE, INDESTRUCTIBLE, MATERIAL, ATOM!"

No one need be surprised to find that this formidable attack on Materialism is written by a pious young lady who dates from a vicarage near Canterbury. Although the editor of the *Great Thoughts* written in vicarage nurseries guarantees that this "original" composition is a "Refutation of Modern Materialism," there is not the slightest need to criticise it seriously. The attributed idea of the "struggle with itself" of the one atom evolving the enormous universe is too good to disturb. Nursery nonsense may as well be met with nursery nonsense. So I will imitate the *Great Thoughts* of Christians and balance their irresistible attack upon Materialism with some equally powerful (and I hope more relevant as well as more amusing) refutations of Christianity drawn up on similar lines to those adopted by our friend the enemy.

REFUTATION No. 1.

This is the world that God built.

This is the God that damned the world that God built.

This is the Son, a son most odd, as old as his dad, the bachelor God, that damned the world that God built.

This is the priest all shaven and shorn, who killed the Son, etc.

This is the Bible all forlorn, that told the priest all shaven and shorn, to kill the Son, etc.

This is the Ghost that fibbed the most, and wrote the Book now all forlorn, etc.

This is the archer that shot the Ghost.

These are the people once chained to the steeple, now freed by the archer that shot the Ghost that fibbed the most, and wrote the Book now all forlorn that taught the priest to kill the Son, the son most odd, as old as his dad, the bachelor God that damned the world that God built.

Perhaps the Christian would deem his faith more effectually refuted by a demonstration commencing "This is the Church that Christ built," which might run on thus: "This is the cash that lay in the Church that Christ built. This is the priest that collared the cash, etc. This is the king that worried the priest"; and so forth. A little reference to "The dove, the dad, and the only Son, one in three and three in one," might assist the refutation, which should also exhibit "the maiden mother all forlorn of whom the eternal Son was born, that wondrous only Son most odd, as old as his father, the bachelor God," etc. Perhaps the best conclusion would be the introduction of science as "the cow with the crumplety horn, that tossed the priest all shaven and shorn."

As the Christian will probably dispute the force and relevancy of these two refutations notwithstanding the unwonted liberality of rhyme and reason to which he has been treated, it will be as well to give him another founded more nearly on his own "original" prize refutation, and reduced a little more nearly to his own level of tedious and pointless dullness.

REFUTATION No. 3.

This is the unthinkable, invisible, imponderable, indestructible, indivisible triune kind of a something or other that we may as well call God in order to prove that it really exists.

This is the four-cornered globe made and fitted up after an eternity of brainless thought and six days' hard labor by the unthinkable, imponderable, indivisible, triune kind of a something or other.

These are the tigers, wolves, cobras, sharks, priests, etc., that bless the four-cornered globe.

This is the all-perfect and ever-adorable Divine Benevolence that planned and created the tigers, etc.

This is the hell that affords further proof of the all-perfect and ever-adorable Divine Benevolence.

These are the saints who believe in the hell.

These are the simpletons fooled by the saints.

These are the massacres, miseries, wrongs endured by the wretches deluded by saints.

This is the Progress that ends the grim massacres, miseries, wrongs, endured by the wretches deluded by saints who believe in the hell that affords such proof of the all-perfect and ever-adorable Divine Benevolence that created the carnivora to bless the four-cornered globe made and fitted up after an eternity of brainless thought and six-days' hard labor by the unthinkable, immovable, imponderable, indivisible, triune kind of something or other which we may as well call God in order to prove that it really exists.

The Great Thinkers who provide Great Thoughts and graphic demonstrations for the Christian public will now observe that by these mutual refutations, Christianity and Materialism have thoroughly demolished each other like a couple of Kilkenny cats. What is to be done in this extremity, O ye great-minded editors of Great Christian Thoughts and Refutations? Let me suggest that we start clear, simply taking the actual facts of life around us and building our system thereon. The House that Man Built on the rock of science will be the theme of the future.

W. P. BALL.

GOD'S IDLE DAY.

In a parliamentary district not far from the Metropolis is a Radical club, some of whose members and committee demonstrated their Radicalism by voting for the Tory candidate at the recent election. They have further taken their policy from the text-book of those particular ranters who call themselves "Constitutionalists," in so far as to decide by a large majority to sell intoxicating drinks, while piously rejecting a motion for opening the club on Sundays. This is undeniably in "sweet accord" with the traditions of Jingo working-men clubs. The public-house is their accredited appendix to the Church, and sometimes the peface. Perhaps ten times oftener the tavern is exclusively the temple! For downright hypocrisy, commend me to those pious politicians who condemn the Sunday closing of public-houses while refusing the Sunday use of an institution to their fellow club-members, justifying their action by methodistical whinnings such as no official "saint" would think of regulating his Sunday occupations by.

A Biblical Dictionary, now circulating among certain who probably cannot afford to purchase rational books, says: "The order of creation was completed by the institution of the Sabbath. In the Sabbath God put his *image* (!) upon the whole of creation, as it were. He crowned it with a moral glory. The Sabbath is the symbol of God's supreme sovereignty." As God probably found world-making a hard week's work, no doubt nothing could be grander than the dignity of repose when he rested on the Sabbath or seventh day. If rest is to be regarded as the climax of "moral glory," how much more glorious if Jehovah had rested eternally. He appears to be in a fair way of entering into his eternal rest ere long, for his "supreme sovereignty" is more and more disregarded. Sunday excursions increase and multiply, while the Sunday newspaper—child of the printing press, whose chief function according to some is to furnish Bibles and tracts for guiding people along a certain narrow path which, allowing for increase of population, is trodden by ever-diminishing numbers—is constantly drawing people away from the garbage of theology.

"For the consecration of one whole day in seven to God is the tribute which the sovereign-deputy owes to the sovereign supreme. During the six days the world and all in it is under the immediate government of man." That should mean that the wild beasts of the jungle tamely submit to the rule of man during six days, but that on the seventh the hunter who had the temerity to break the Sabbath would surely himself fall a prey. There were days when the calling in question of God's "supreme sovereignty" brought condign chastisement on the offender—when the guardians of his honor duly stoned the Sabbath-breaker to death, and no doubt found the performance congenial to their taste.

There are still to be met relics of the more faithful Christian ferocity of past ages who would, if they could, enforce the brutal laws of the Pentateuch—destroy criticism by murdering the critic, and, while allowing themselves considerable latitude, circumscribe the freedom of others to infinitesimal dimensions. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Those dealers in absurd fiddle-faddle about "remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy" should be consistent enough to advocate the enforcement of the whole so-called "Mosaic" code of ignorant and barbarous laws, should memorialise Parliament to resuscitate God's divine test for adultery, and the rest of the dark catalogue of imbecilities and atrocities which so fitly symbolised the character of a God of love and a prince of peace!

The student of Paley will see what a sandy basis the Puritanical Sunday "rests" upon; but he will also find saving clauses in the interest of the clerical army, which will, or should, induce him to make a far more comprehensive and impartial study of that antique superstition and fraud, the Christian Sunday—the day when pious zealots sleep or dream, and when others who are not pious find time to be simply a "holy vacuum."

W. C. SAVILLE.

THE AULD HIELAN'MAN'S PRAYER.—"O Lord! what are we in thy sicht this nicht?—a wheen puir easie-oesies. Gie us a blessin' this ae time; it's no often we bother you. Gie us a we wark an' big wages, an' a breed an' cheese like Ben Nevis, an' whusky like Loch Long. Gie us bull's pork, sheep's beef, an' calf's mutton, an' a new-born egg till better meats be ready. Send a blessin' doon the lum, and bless the kail pat, and the Duke o' Argyle, the Lord God o' the Hielan's. Build a big wa' atween us an' the De'il, an' a far bigger ane atweed us an' the wild Eerishmen, an' put broken bottles on't. Amen!"

REVIEWS.

Peace and Prosperity. By JUSTICE. London: Freethought Publishing Co., 63 Fleet Street.—Like many another reformer, "Justice" fancies that only certain schemes have to be put into effect to ensure peace and prosperity. The book has some useful suggestions, but most of the reforms need the pre-requisite that the people shall become rational.

The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ. A Lecture by GERALD MASSEY. One shilling. Villa Bordighiera, New Southgate, London, N.—Nearly thirty years ago when Gerald Massey's heresy had not ripened or was unsuspected, he was described in a lengthy notice in "Men of the Time" as one of the most striking instances of self-taught genius triumphing over difficulties. Since then Mr. Massey has devoted some fifteen years or more to the study of Egyptology, finding there, as he thinks, the natural genesis of much of modern religion and civilisation, and he is now described in the same publication as a blasphemous lecturer. A blasphemous lecturer no doubt he is if blasphemy consists in disbelieving that God was born of a woman to do penance for his own failure at the beginning of creation. This myth he exposes and explains. He was for a long while a believer in the existence of the Jesus of the Gospels. He now holds that the only historical Jesus was the Jehoshua ben Pandira of the Talmud, who was born above a century before the Christian era; who went to Egypt, learned magic, and was stoned and afterwards hanged on a tree at Lud, on the eve of the Passover. This was the Jesus of "the blasphemous writings of the Jews" referred to by Justin Martyr and of Celsus, who in the second century, says he could relate many things of him different from the Christian gospels. Mr. Massey says "here is the conclusive fact":

"The Jews know nothing of Jesus, the Christ of the gospels, as an historical character; and when the Christians of the fourth century trace his pedigree by the hand of Epiphanius they are forced to derive their Jesus from Pandira."

Mr. Massey also alludes to the tradition vouched for by Irenaeus on the authority of the elders, that Jesus lived to be an oldish man, which would fit in with what is known of Ben Pandira.

So much for the historical Jesus. The mythical Christ is shown to have long antedated Christianity in Egypt; the birth from a virgin mother being depicted on the walls of Luxor, sixteen centuries B.C. The mythical Messiah was, says Mr. Massey, "Horus in the Osirian myths, Har-Khut in the Sutyphonian, Khunsu, in that of Amen-ra, Iu in the cult of Atum-Ra; and the Christ of the Gospels is an amalgam of all these." The parallels with Horus are very striking. Horus is called the Lord, the Lamb of God, the Bread of Life, the Fan-bearer, the Way and Door. He is depicted as a child of twelve and as an adult of thirty, and numerous coincidences with the gospel story are shown to have pre-existed in Egypt. Mr. Massey vigorously contends that from the descent of the Holy Ghost to overshadow Mary to the ascension of the risen Christ at the end of forty days the whole subject-matter of the gospel story bears the impress of the mythical mould, instead of the stamp of human history, and that right through the ideas which shape the narrative were pre-extant and identifiably pre-Christian. In conclusion he says:

"The Christian cult has fanatically fought for its false theory, and waged incessant warfare against Nature and Evolution—Nature's intention made somewhat visible—and against some of the noblest instincts, during eighteen centuries. Seas of human blood have been spilt to keep the barque of Peter afloat. Earth has been honeycombed with the graves of the martyrs of Freethought. Heaven has been filled with a horror of great darkness in the name of God.

Eighteen centuries are a long while in the life-time of a lie, but a brief span in the eternity of Truth. The Fiction is sure to be found out and the Lie will fall at last."

We need scarcely say that in his main contentions we are entirely at one with Mr. Massey, and it is on this account we venture to express our regret that his lecture is not issued at a lower price for the benefit of the masses, and also that he has not throughout given references to his authorities instead of simply directing the reader to his large work on *Natural Genesis*.

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PENNSYLVANIA railroads run "Camp-meeting Specials" on Sunday instead of "Excursion trains," as heretofore. The price of beer, however, remains unchanged.—*Truthseeker*.

PROFANE JOKES.

"I GUESS I'm pretty safe about going to heaven," remarked Bobby to young Mr. Featherly. Mr. Featherly replied that he earnestly hoped so, and then inquired why Bobby felt so confident about the matter. "Because," explained Bobby, "Ma says that it ain't safe to trust me where there's fire."

A CERTAIN minister, residing in a remote district of the Highlands, was sent for to christen the child of a shepherd in one of the loneliest glens of the parish. He set out, but on reaching a burn, which he had to cross about half way on his journey, found it swollen, and the road impassable. However, the father, who was already informed of this event, was waiting on the other side, and brought the baby with him. Preliminaries having been discussed, he waded out as far as he could into the stream, and held out the child at arm's length, while the minister, standing on the other side, splashed water at it with both hands and with all his might, stopping to roar out, above the rushing of the waters. "Has he gotten any yet?"

SYDNEY SMITH once dined with a squire named Kershaw. The evening passed in great hilarity, the squire laughing heartily at Smith's jokes. "I am glad I have amused you," said he, "but you must not laugh at my sermon to-morrow." "I hope I know the difference between here and at church," said the gentleman. "I'm not so sure," replied his visitor: "I'll bet you a guinea you laugh to-morrow." Next day the preacher ascended the steps of the pulpit apparently suffering from a severe cold, with his handkerchief to his face, and at once sneezed out the name Kershaw several times in various intonations. This ingenious assumption of the readiness with which a man would recognise his own name in sounds imperceptible to the ears of others, proved accurate. The poor gentleman burst into a guffaw, to the scandal of the congregation, and the minister, after looking at him with stern reproach, proceeded with his discourse, and won the bet.

DR. WHATELY ON PERSECUTION.

IN one of those moods of philosophical pleasantry and erudite whimsicality in which the Archbishop of Dublin at times relaxed from weighty affairs, he is reported to have made the following quotation and comment:

"Old Father Longlegs wouldn't say his prayers, Take him by the right leg—
Take him by the left leg—
Hold him fast by both legs—
And throw him down stairs."
"There," said the Doctor, "in that nursery verse you may see an epitome of the history of all religious persecution. Father Longlegs, refusing to say the prayers that were dictated and ordered by his little tyrants, is regarded as a heretic, and suffers martyrdom."

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