

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

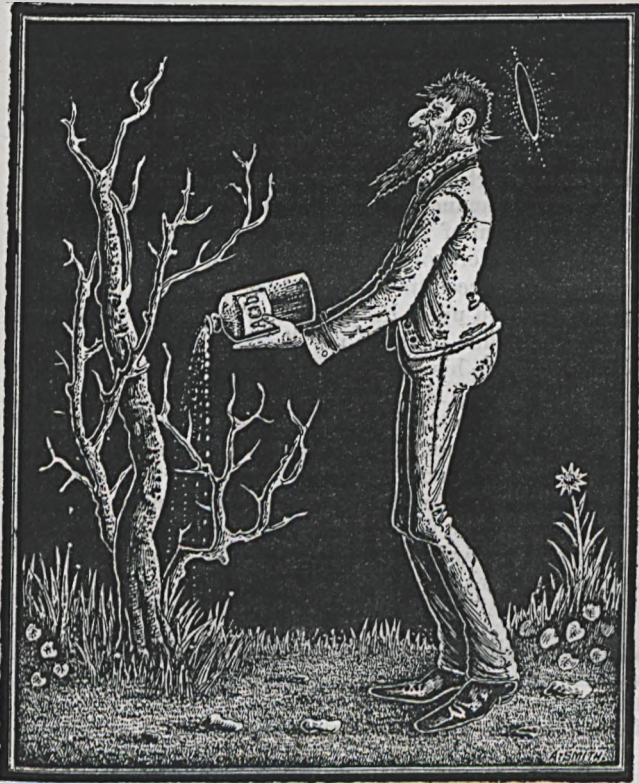
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BLASTING THE FIG TREE.

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. . . . And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.—MARK XI. 12-21.

MY REDEEMER.

"My Redeemer" is a phrase that only occurs once in the Bible. When Job was afflicted in order that God and the Devil might settle a dispute as to what he would do in the circumstances; when his children were murdered, his property stolen, his poor skin covered with scabs, his wife a nagger, and his three "comforters" a batch of pharisees; he cried out (xix., 25) "I know that my Redeemer liveth" like a watch in a pawnshop taunted by the surrounding pledges. Theologians have nearly all maintained that Job's exclamation was a prescient reference to Jesus Christ and the Resurrection of the Body. But Job was a patriarch, not a prophet, and he certainly did not trouble his head about what might happen a few thousand or a few million years after his decease. What he said is wrongly translated in the Authorised Version. It should be "I know that my Avenger or Vindicator liveth." Job practically tells his "comforters," who hint that his own wickedness must be the cause of his misfortunes, that they are more than a trifle mistaken. "I am quite as good as you, my pharasaic friends," he says, "although your skin is sound and mine is like a leper's after a fight with a bramble-bush. Our troubles in this life come God knows how; I have mine, and you may have yours. I am innocent of the wickedness

you impute to me, and my innocence will yet be vindicated. My sores will heal, and I shall see God with a clean skin." Nothing could be more simple and natural, but the spectacled eyes of theologians see a God-Almighty mystery in everything. Of course it may be said that Job would never talk of *seeing* God even with a clean skin. But this objection shows a gross ignorance of Scripture. If Moses saw the Lord's "back parts"—ahem!—there is no reason why a better man should not see his face, and we are plainly told that Abraham habitually enjoyed that distinguished honor.

The word Redeemer is used more than a dozen other times in the Old Testament, but curiously not once in the New Testament. Yet Redemption is mentioned several times, most of the instances being found in Paul's epistles. That metaphysical gentleman had a theory of his own on the subject, and he has impressed it on the Christian world. His Jewish taste for sacrifices had not deserted him. Without shedding of blood, he says, there is no remission of sins. But Christ's blood *was* shed to redeem us from the curse of Adam; and as in the Eden gardener all had sinned so in the Jewish carpenter might all be saved. A pretty little theory indeed! Jesus Christ never heard of it, but what does that matter? It is Paul, and not Jesus, who has decided the dogmas of Christianity. God got into a passion because Adam and Eve put their teeth into an apple, cursed them and all their posterity, and only relented with regard to a small percentage of them when his own son consented to have his infinite veins tapped, for the emission of an infinite stream of blood, in which the "old un" could revel for ever and ever. Such is the filthy and blasphemous doctrine, which men are expected to believe as gospel, on penalty of imprisonment here and hell-fire hereafter! Thomas Paine said he would not believe any doctrine that would shock a child. Paul's doctrine would shock a rhinoceros.

Christianity offers to redeem us all by plunging us in a blood-bath. We object to such redemption. We prefer honest soap and water.

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged within that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

Do they? Yes, as the leopard loses his spots if you paint him red. And fancy the smell when the sanguinary fluid is eighteen hundred years old, and has bathed thousands of millions of the dirtiest sinners that ever lived. Pah! An ounce of civet, good apothecary!

It was largely believed by the early Christians that Christ was our Redeemer in the pawnbroking sense of the word. After that fine stroke of business in the Garden of Eden, all the posterity of Adam belonged of right to the Devil. But after the Crucifixion, as the Apostles' Creed says, Jesus Christ descended into Hell, contracting with the Devil to stay there if all its other denizens were liberated. It appears also to have been part of the bargain that the Devil should forego his interest in fresh comers. On the whole it was an excellent arrangement. The Devil relinquished the small fry of humanity, and received in exchange a third part of the Blessed Trinity safe under lock and key. But for once the Devil was outwitted. Jesus would *not* stay in hell, nor could the proprietor of the establishment keep him there. He broke through Hell and the contract in the most triumphant manner after being in pledge from Friday night till Sunday morning. Ludicrous as this seems, the Christians believed it in all seriousness. In fact, there is no end to the absurdities that superstitionists will accept with a long-faced credulity

G. W. FOOTE.

JESUS AT HIS TRUE VALUE.*

CHRISTIANITY is a bundle of myths clustered around a central idol. Many are content that the myths shall be disengaged, provided the idol is untouched. The Christianity of Christ, they tell us, will take the place of the Christianity of the creeds. Jesus will be revered not as God, but as the divinest man that has ever lived. Unitarians who deny his divinity are usually most anxious to glorify his humanity, and many who have been sceptical as to his miracles have on that very account extolled his morality. The orthodox have not been slow to make the most of these admissions and to cite the testimony of men like Rousseau, Parker, Strauss, Réban, Mill and Arnold, to show that the character of Jesus was something altogether unique and inexplicable. Hence it is necessary to insist both that it is impossible to disengage from the mass of legendary tradition found in the gospels any certain life of Jesus at all, and next that the character of Jesus, as represented in those documents, is not one that can as a whole be offered for the imitation of mankind.

If Jesus was a man we can be quite sure that he partook of the faults and frailties incidental to mankind. There would be no need to point to these, were he not set forth as a divine example. But the truth is, that, despite the evident purpose of the evangelists to extol their hero (a purpose sufficiently to be discerned in the preternatural stupidity ascribed to his followers whenever it will serve as a foil to enhance the superiority of their master), they have left sufficient traces of human error to altogether negative the claims ascribed to him. How few ever think of critically examining the utterances ascribed to Jesus as they would those ascribed to Confucius or Mohammed. Christians for the most part are content to know only so much of their sacred books as they may hear read in church or chapel, and that is usually received without thought or question. If doubts do arise they are met by a system of non-literal interpretation, which would be scouted with contempt if applied to the Koran. What they worship is an ideal Jesus, and they are no more disturbed at the want of correspondence with fact than the orthodox regard the contradictions of the Bible as at all colliding with their dogma of inspiration.

In the work before us M. Morin examines the character of the central idol of Christianity as he finds it depicted in the Gospels. He does not pretend to disengage an historical Jesus out of the mass of often discrepant legends and traditions there collected, but simply takes the documents as they stand and asks, Do they show a character of such sublime perfection that it must serve for ever as the guide to all men? M. Morin's work is characterised by an eminently fair and impartial spirit. He gives due praise to Jesus for all his utterances which breathe a humanitarian spirit. But he also points out how large is the account on the other side. "Gentle Jesus meek and mild" is shown to have an altogether different side to his character. He calls his opponents hypocrites, whited sepulchres, children of hell; and launches out into an invective against the Pharisees, even when a guest at the table of one of them. In clearing the temple he showed himself violent; with his own family he was arrogant rather than amiable; and in his public discourses he exhibits the tone of an imperious and insolent fanatic rather than the sweet reasonableness with which his followers credit him.

Another item dealt with by M. Morin, is the inexcusable manner in which Jesus taught in parables with the express purpose, as he said, "that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." Several of the parables are examined, and their teaching shown to be incompatible with social welfare. The evasive and ambiguous answers of Jesus are noticed at length. We can only briefly refer to his famous retort to those who asked him if it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, and his reply when asked by what right he drove the sellers from the precincts of the temple: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." His refusal to work miracles, and his requiring secrecy from those he is alleged to have cured, M. Morin finds also incompatible with his pretensions.

In examining the doctrines of Jesus, M. Morin points out how, in giving his commission to his apostles, he charged them not to go to Gentiles or Samaritans, for "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come" (Matt. x., 23). To a Canaanitish woman who asked him to cure her child, he replied, with little politeness, that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and not to dogs. His views did not extend beyond the national egoism of his own people. His condemnation of those who rejected him was in the most emphatic terms. "If any one deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father and his angels." "Who-soever believeth not shall be damned."

The chapters dealing with Jesus as a moralist are the most important in the book. M. Morin has no difficult task in showing that all the most characteristic injunctions of Jesus, as the non-resistance of evil, the condemnation of riches and of individual property, the contempt for family ties and disregard of forethought, are inimical to social welfare. These doctrines flowed naturally from his mistaken notion of the speedy approach of the end of the world. Domestic life, labor, property, the administration of justice, in short all worldly advantages and means of ensuring a continuance of social order were out of place since the kingdom of heaven was near at hand.

The last chapters of M. Morin's work are devoted to examining the accounts of the last moments of Jesus, which, as summed up in his pitiable cry of "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" may be said to give the finishing stroke to his divine pretensions.

In summing up, M. Morin decides that, so far from Jesus deserving to be deified, he deserves but a very secondary place among the teachers of humanity. He neither discovered nor invented anything. His moral teachings were not new. His merit was simply that of presenting them in a striking manner; while his own conduct, as narrated by his followers, was far from being up to the standard which he preached to others.

J. M. WHEELER.

A SWEDENBORGIAN tells the following story. A well-known Methodist minister died, and of course went to the infernal regions. There he was shown about the place by Satan himself. He was shown the pits of molten lead for Catholic priests, and the sulphur caves designed for the Salvation Army, and the lakes of fire awaiting his own clan. Then he was taken to a room of great heat, where a number of white-choked gentlemen in black were suspended by the neck. "This," said Satan, "is the drying-room. These are Anglican curates. They are too green to burn at first, so we hang them up to dry."

THE *Christian Herald* tells a story of a pious packman who cheated a servant girl into buying a New Testament by assuring her it was "all about love from beginning to end." By thus obtaining her money under false pretences, the pious liar and cheat brought her to the Lord. How does the *Christian Herald* justify the swindle, and the lie that "there was nothing but love in it"? Is the hell-fire part all about love? and cursing the fig-tree? and drowning the swine? and the insults and curses pronounced by Christ against the clergy of his nation? In the theological sense even the book is far from being full of love, and in the sense which the word ordinarily bears the statement is of course a pure fraud. But lying and cheating for the sake of religion were always popular among Christians.

SOME STRONG REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED INCAPABLE OF ACTING AS JURYMEN.—(1) Their belief that all wrongs and miscarriages of justice will be rectified in a future state of existence is apt to render them callous as to the issue of a case, for they will console themselves by thinking that, even should they give a wrong verdict, it will all be made right in the sweet by-and-bye. (2) Their belief that the present life is only a moment in comparison of time to the life hereafter is also calculated to make them detract weight from the real importance of an issue. (3) Their belief in an imaginary being on whom they rely to guide their judgment may conduce to their forming wrong notions of the case, and to their thinking while doing so that they are being guided aright by an all-wise power. (4) On the same principle by which surgeons and butchers might be excluded from a jury which sits to try a prisoner on a capital charge due to their avocations rendering them familiar with suffering, so, in like manner, might Christians be excluded owing to their belief in an eternal lake of fire and brimstone prepared by a just God as a punishment for the ungodly; for this belief must, to a certain extent, harden their minds and make the most severe penalty which man can inflict, shrink into insignificance when compared to the punishment meted out to sinners by a being whom they consider perfectly righteous.—J. E. ROOSE.

* *Jésus Reçut a sa Juste Valeur*, par A. S. Morin; Paris, Librairie Martinon, 32 Rue des Bons-Enfants.

ACID DROPS.

JOHN WRIGHT sends us an elegant scrawl from the Mission Hall, St. Pancras, about certain converts he and his "little set" have made among "the Freethinkers at the Midland Arches." No doubt John Wright is full of the Holy Spirit, but his spelling is queer and his syntax queerer. What does that matter, however? It is doubtful whether Jesus Christ himself could write, and probably half the apostles couldn't read; at any rate, the magistrates took note of them that they were "unlearned and ignorant men." John Wright is evidently sealed of the tribe of Peter and John.

THIS worthy missionary begins by referring to our "despicable Atheism." The "despicable" is a matter of taste, and *de gustibus non est disputandum*. The "lucrative" is a joke, and a very bad joke too when it comes from the devotee of a creed which pays its Spurgeons twelve hundred a year besides "perquisites," and its Bishops and Archbishops as many or more thousands. Whoever expects to find Freethought "lucrative" had better pass in his checks at once and save himself a bitter disappointment. Serving Freethought means working like a horse, and putting up with just what comes, even if it happens to be twelve months in a Christian gaol.

NOT to give too much importance to missionary Wright's effusion, we may at once say that the two Freethinkers he and his "little set" claim to have bagged are Thomas Spermos and Arthur Bloomfield. We hope our readers will recognise these illustrious obscure. We don't. Had they never been born we should have known as much about them as we do now. But perhaps there is an occult fraternity of Freethinkers somewhere in St. Pancras, and Thomas Spermos and Arthur Bloomfield may have been effulgent glories in its mysterious conclaves.

STAY awhile. Bloomfield? Bloomfield? After all we fancy we have heard that name before. We have a kind of suspicion that it belonged to a young man who called on us several years ago, claiming to be a distressed Freethinker. We gave him a trifle out of our very slender purse (dinner was often precarious then), and we apprised the Freethinker's Benevolent Fund Committee of his case with a view to his relief. They gave him something, and long afterwards he used to thank us whenever he met us in the street. After our release from Holloway, he used to go about singing patter songs at the London Workmen's Clubs, but we never heard of his doing anything particular for Freethought. Can it be that this is missionary Wright's "John Bloomfield"? If so, what a remarkable catch, O ye gods and little fishes!

MISSIONARY WRIGHT forgets to be as artful as the serpent. He lets the cat drop out of the bag in front of the footlights. Thomas Spermos was "long out of employment, owing to the dislike with which all right-minded people regard your atheist riffraff. Seeing therefore his folly, he, thanks to the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale—who procured him a situation—returned to the arms of a loving Savior and is now progressing favorably." Therefore—mark the word! Finding that Freethought didn't pay, and that Christianity did, Thomas Spermos decided his profession like hosts of very respectable hypocrites by saying to himself "Pudding settles it!"

So much for Thomas Spermos and Arthur Bloomfield. "Comment is needless," says missionary Wright. We agree with him, and wonder why he makes such a pother. Still, we may point out a *fact* he has overlooked. He swells like a turkey cock over two (real or alleged) obscure converts, whose transformation has an awful rank smell of bread-and-cheese. But he forgets, poor strutting creature, that nearly every Freethinker is a convert from Christianity. Mr. Bradlaugh was converted to Freethought, and they turned him from home. Mrs. Besant was converted to Freethought, and her mother's heart was wrung till it bled. Mr. Foote was converted to Freethought, and they gave him a year in prison. Mr. Moss was a Christian, Mr. Ball was a Christian, Mr. Wheeler was a Christian, Mr. Robertson was a Christian, Mr. Parris was a Christian, Colonel Ingersoll himself was a Christian. Against these and hundreds more missionary Wright and Z. B. Woffendale fling in the scale Thomas Spermos and Arthur Bloomfield, and actually fancy their own side dips to the ground. But the Holy Ghost was always a poor logician, and when he, she, or it gets inside a man he generally reasons with the power and accuracy of a congenital idiot.

THE *Western Times* reports that Dean Cowie, of Exeter Cathedral, performs the "consecration of the sacramental elements"—whatever that may mean—in a fearfully wondrous style. He claims to be a priest after the manner of Peter the Apostle, and wears variegated vestments with a grand cross all down the hind part of his person—"just like Peter." If Dean Cowie were asked for the evidence of his "apostolic descent" it would be very interesting—especially if the public pay were suspended till he produced the evidence.

ANENT the recent declaration of a clerical agent of the English Church Union that "They were not going to permit secular

courts to have control over the creeds and sacraments," the *Western Times* well observes: "We do not hesitate to say that the rebellious clergy are doing more to sap the authority of law than even Socialism itself. To get clerical berths they make declarations of obedience to the law as a qualification for receiving State property; and then when they get the position which the property is given them to maintain they turn round and say in effect, 'The State was a godless reprobate in expecting them to obey it—their heart is with the dear old Pope of Rome; and down with the Secular Courts of England.'"

THE *Pall Mall Gazette*, which, for a pious paper, is about the most rancorous we know, never loses a chance of venting its spite on Joseph Chamberlain. He is the *bête noir* and almost the Antichrist of Thomas Stead. Whatever Joseph Chamberlain does is wrong, whatever he says is false. Recently the great Radical has been travelling in Turkey, studying all around him with a shrewd pair of eyes. At the finish he had a chat with the Sultan, who, when the interview ended, presented his guest with a handsome cigar-case of gold, ornamented with jewels. Thomas Stead doesn't smoke; he admitted it at the Old Bailey, and said the cigar he tried in the brothel made him sick; so, with a sour-grape-like fury he denounces that cigar-case.

A BETTER joke remains. Joseph Chamberlain sensibly advised the Sultan to open his empire more to railways and utilise its great fertility. Fancy, says the *P. M. G.*, trying to reform a country in this fashion. Then it descants on the superiority of Allah to Mammon, and surmises that the Sultan retired to roost feeling himself immensely superior to the Birmingham Radical! Stead would doubtless advise the Sultan not to trouble about railways, but to try a fresh god and import the Salvation Army on a free tariff.

A BIBLE-READING scoundrel named John Gommersall has just been committed for trial at Berkley Police Court. Prisoner was in the habit of visiting Mrs. Timbrell to read the Bible to her. On some of these occasions he made indecent overtures to the daughter, a girl of thirteen, and finally committed the grave offence with which he is charged.

THE Bishop of Manchester in distributing prizes to successful students of the science and art classes connected with the Bury Co-operative Society, treated his hearers to a lot of trite observations upon the benefits of co-operation. The bishop evidently views the movement from a trade point, for he found one great danger attending it, and that was that when a private firm turned into a company all contributions to religious and other objects were cut off. Co-operative societies will receive episcopal sanction on condition of their contributing to the support of the Church.

A LOCAL Wesleyan preacher named J. G. Booker has absconded from Nottingham, leaving liabilities of over £9,000, much of which was borrowed from friends. The Sunday before he bolted for America he preached a powerful sermon on the appropriate text, "Flee from the wrath to come." Detectives are on the watch for his arrival in America. He will probably be brought back to face the "wrath to come" of those whom he has defrauded, and he will find that judges and juries have not the slightest practical belief in the silly doctrine that the blood of an ancient Jew cleanseth from all sin.

IN the case of the Bloomsbury tragedy, the would-be murderer and actual suicide left a letter in which he states that he has killed his wife, and ends piously with the exclamation, "May God have mercy on her soul." If Arthur Egan had concluded his letter with any exclamation indicating hostility to religion, the pulpits would have rung with denunciations of the Atheism which so naturally led to murder and suicide. As the letter indicates the murderer's belief in God and immortality no notice is taken of it.

MR. F. N. CHARRINGTON, the pious advocate of temperance, has been showing the kind of temperance in action which teetotal saints love to indulge in. At a meeting at the Mansion House concerning the proposed People's Palace for East London, he insisted on being informed whether the building would be opened on the Lord's Day, and whether intoxicating liquors would be sold. The Lord Mayor, as chairman, had already said that these matters would be left to the trustees, and would be considered on a subsequent occasion, when everybody would have an opportunity of expressing an opinion upon them. This was not enough for a saint with the Lord at his back. The temperate teetotaler persisted in putting *his* questions, refused to allow the meeting to proceed, defied the chairman's ruling, declined to sit down or be quiet, and finally had to be turned out by a policeman, amidst general uproar and turbulence.

THE Rev. M. T. Myers (*M. T.* vessels make the most sound), who throughout the above scene had been shouting his loudest in support of the temperate apostle of temperance, then ascended the platform and moved an amendment. He spoke of the trustees opening Argyll Rooms or an Alhambra. After his amendment was defeated and the original motion carried, the Rev. Evans Hurdall again tried to revive the contest. Being ruled out of order, he announced, amidst much disturbance, the

intention of the Sabbatarian party to fight the question inch by inch. The clergy cannot endure competition. A People's Palace open on Sundays would injure their trade too much. Naturally the bigots shriek aloud and resolve to fight tooth and nail.

THE correspondence on "The Priest in the Family," which first appeared in the *Globe*, and which has been copied into many other papers, though of momentous public importance, really contains nothing new. A father of a family finds his wife perverted to the Catholic faith and writes to the priest, the Rev. C. H. Moore, asking if he was aware of her husband's objection to her taking that course, and further asking if she had been twice received at the priest's private residence. The priest, in a sneaking answer, tautologically says, "I cannot but feel for and sympathise with you," and adds "it is a painful part of the work of a priest to be the means of causing disunion in families." The husband submits the correspondence to Cardinal Manning, asking him whether the practices disclosed are in accord with the principles and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Manning replies, fully countenancing all the priest has done: "When our Lord said 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,' He taught us that the bonds of kindred and affection must yield to our duty to him."

THE correspondence establishes, as the husband remarks: "1. That it is right for a priest to surreptitiously receive into his Church either a wife or a daughter, contrary to the known wish of the husband or parents, and without their knowledge. 2. That the priest may keep the matter secret as long as he thinks fit, thus directly teaching the convert to systematically deceive those who have a right to her entire confidence. 3. That the priest is authorised to receive both single and married women alone in his private apartments, and to keep such visits secret for an indefinite period."

THE husband adds that in his own case the operation of this code of priestly morality has completely estranged husband from wife, has brought permanent disunion into a previously united family, has rendered it necessary to restrict free intercourse between mother and children, and has directly led to systematic deception, long continued and most flagrant. All this is nothing new. The Church holds that there is no salvation outside its pale. Everything must be subordinated to the salvation of the soul. Jesus showed no regard for family ties, and the Church cites his authority. To place a priest in the place of a woman's conscience and abet her in deceiving and treating her husband as an enemy, to break up homes and disunite families, is the natural and legitimate effect of substituting religious for secular duty. Once men are convinced that this life is of no importance as compared with a life to come, and there is no moral turpitude they will not sanction and dignify by calling it obedience to conscience.

THE Editor of the *Echo* narrates a case within his own experience where a Protestant gentleman had married a Roman Catholic lady, and it was agreed that if any boys were born they should be brought up in the religion of the father, and that if any girls were born they should be brought up as Roman Catholics. Two boys were born, and the priest tried to induce the mother to have the second one secretly baptised as a Catholic. The mother in this case had sufficient honesty and spirit to resist the persuasions of the priest, and she finally told him that a religion that taught her to deceive her husband could not be altogether true. Shortly after the lady quitted the Romish Church for good. The disgraceful means employed by the Church may succeed in some cases, but the final result is that the moral indignation of the community and of the individual injures the Church far more than the insidious deceit can benefit her.

THE Roman correspondent of the *English Churchman* states that he has it within his personal knowledge that there are secret associations for the conversion of England to Catholicism, consisting of laymen and women who are affiliated to religious orders, and who are pledged to promote the work of conversion in every family to which they have access. The correspondent further says that this work is often enjoined as a penance upon eligible parties.

THE Pope has issued a decree forbidding the cremation of Catholics. His holiness don't believe in running more than one *post mortem* furnace.

THE Rev. W. S. Shipley was charged before the Reading County Magistrates with obtaining goods by false pretences. In a second case he is charged with fraudulently obtaining a quantity of silver and electro-plated goods from a Reading tradesman. Some of the things were pawned, and were not returned till after criminal proceedings had been taken. The accused was remanded.

AN ecclesiastical inquiry has been held at Okehampton, Devon, as to the relations of the Rev. John Sutcliffe, vicar of German-sweek with his congregation. Charges were preferred of general

parochial neglect, spreading slanderous reports, and other offences. The Archdeacon severely reprimanded the clergyman for neglecting to visit the sick, but said he could take no cognisance of the more important charges, which were matters for a civil court.

It is reported that a pious Buckinghamshire farmer has just presented his first-born for christening at his parish church with twenty-six Christian names selected from Scripture, representing every letter of the alphabet. It was with the greatest difficulty that the clergyman got the farmer to be content with the first and last of the names proposed. The full title of the unfortunate infant was to have been: Abel Benjamin Caleb Daniel Ezra Felix Gabriel Haggai Isaac Jacob Kish Levi Manoah Nehemiah Obadiah Peter Quartus Rechab Samuel Tobiah Uzziel Vaniah Word Xystus Yeriah Zechariah Jenkins.

SPURGEON says that "According to thy faith so shall it be unto thee" is as real and certain as the law of gravitation. But his faith don't cure his rheumatic gout, which, he complains, numbs his intellect almost entirely.

A CORRESPONDENT in the *Daily News*, describing the religious boycotting in Wales, mentions how one Welsh clergyman discharged a Nonconformist teacher in a National school because he would not attend church, and in dismissing him added the grossest falsehood and misappropriated part of his salary. The matter being reported to the Education Department, the money was refunded, but no prosecution took place, and the minister was allowed to remain as manager. No wonder the Welsh object to pay tithes to a clergy who teach and practise Christianity of so objectionable a kind.

THE Trinitarian Bible Society have issued a Hebrew Version of the Greek New Testament, for the benefit of the Jews. This is rather rich since the Gospels were originally only intended for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and if written by the apostles ought to have been in Hebrew originally instead of in Greek. But this is not all. Some of the foremost Hebrew scholars in Europe, such as Canoa Driver, Dr. C. H. Wright, Dr. Neubauer, and Professor Kautzsch, have unanimously pronounced this translation utterly unscholarly and misleading. No reply to these grave charges has been attempted, yet the Mildmay Mission to the Jews appeals for subscriptions to a fund to circulate a hundred thousand copies of this version, which has been authoritatively pronounced worthless and misleading.

A NEW religious journal, *The British Weekly*, has started by giving a religious census of the attendance at London churches. The matter was not kept so dark but that there was a special whip-up in many places. The *Church Times* indeed notified its readers of what was about to happen, and there were special harvest services in many places. The *British Weekly* has not as yet published the full census, but it states that the figures, out of a population of 4,000,000, are in round numbers: morning attendance, 460,000; evening attendance, 410,000. We may assume that the morning and evening attendants are for the most part the same individuals. At Liverpool the morning attendance was 63,575, out of a population of 552,425. It is stated that in London there are sittings for over 1,388,000 persons, of which the Established Church has 48.8 per cent., and the other bodies conjoined 51.2 per cent.

ACCORDING to the evidence of Mrs. Chambers in the Wolverhampton wife-murder case, the whole concern of the pious wife-murderer was, How shall I appear before God? On being sentenced, he expressed a hope that he should meet the jury in heaven.

WE published last week an advertisement of the *Secular Review*, which came to us through the usual channels of business. It is not our custom to exercise a rigid censorship over our advertisement columns, and so long as there is no suggestion of indecency or knavery, we let advertisers air their merits as they please. Whether their own opinion of themselves is just or not, is a matter which our readers can decide as easily as we can. For these reasons we did not decline to insert the *Secular Review* advertisement, as well as for another reason, namely, our disinclination to give Mr. Ross an opportunity of saying that he had been treated unfairly, or that the Freethought party with which we have the honor to work was afraid of his attacks. The bad taste of his advertisement will injure no one but himself. "Revolted prurience" is a strange phrase to apply to those who happen to differ from Mr. Ross's social views; and as for popular Freethought being "a hiss and a byword," we can only remark that the expression is probably due to the fact that Mr. Ross's Freethought is *not* popular. It may perhaps sound very unbusinesslike, but we seriously ask Mr. Ross whether it is worth his while to advertise in the *Freethinker*. Its readers belong to "popular Freethought," and therefore are not of those "whose adherence would be of value." Why then does Mr. Ross seek their suffrages? Probably because he wants more readers. The desire is a very laudable one, and we dare say it might be gratified if Mr. Ross would cease making faces at his potential customers.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Nov. 14, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town; at 7.30, "Where is God?"

Tuesday, Nov. 16, Milton Hall, at 8.30—Free Lecture on "New Testament Morality."

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

DEC. 5, Portsmouth; 12, Milton Hall; 19 and 26, Hall of Science, London.

JAN. 9, Manchester; 16, Milton Hall; 23, Liverpool.

CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—F. L.

SEMPER EADEM.—Dupuis's *Origine de tous les Cultes* will give you some information upon sun-worship. A chapter dealing with solar myths and Christianity has been translated, and is published separately. You may also refer to Logan Mitchell's *Christian Mythology Unveiled* and Taylor's *Astronomical Discourses in the Devil's Pulpit*.

PUPIL TEACHER sends us a letter "from an almost converted Presbyterian, brought round by lending him your jolly paper and pamphlets. Two lodgers (strong Churchmen) of his are just hanging by a thread." Presbyterian wants to know, simply for information, how Mr. Slater, "the converted Atheist," got back to Christianity, and thinks a proper account of his mental journey should be interesting and instructive.

J. W. T.—Fair, but not sufficiently striking.

BENSON, newsagent, 26 Snowdrop Walk, Bank, Leeds, will deliver the *Freethinker* every Thursday evening at any customer's house.

YOUNG READER.—Your suggestions are good, and we will bear them in mind. The reprint of *Mistakes of Moses* is nearly ready.

LOUIS COLEMAN, 36 Carter Gate, Newark, wishes to inform the donors that the parcels of literature sent him for distribution did much good, and he will be glad to receive more.

H. RICHARDSON.—It is merely a misprint of a figure, which shall be corrected in another edition. The present edition is nearly exhausted.

H. P. BOWDEN.—Thanks. All copies of the *Three Trials for Blasphemy* were destroyed in the fire.

A. SMITH.—Rabbi Wise is our authority for saying that the Passover never did and never could fall on a Friday. For fuller information see the *Jewish Life of Christ*.

G. G.—Your verse is a little hard. You say you have "loved many girls down below." We hope you mean *seriatim*.

PROTOPLASM.—Papers and cuttings are always welcome. Glad to hear you are delighted with the *Freethought Biographies in Progress*.

B. KNOWLES.—We hope to find you a corner. All orders for literature should be sent direct to Mr. Forder at 28 Stonecutter Street.

G. WEIR, 42 George Street, Edinburgh, supplies the *Freethinker* and all Secular publications.

O. B.—Thanks. It is apparently a contradiction, and we shall take note of it.

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.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Western Times—Thinker—Southampton Guardian—Roynolds's Newspaper—Bath Chronicle—Die Autonomie—Workington Free Press—Truthseeker—Great Thoughts—Freireligiöses Sonntag's-Blatt—Boston Investigator—Menschenhum—Birmingham Post—Radical—Nottingham Express—Sussex Times.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE WAS a fine audience at the London Hall of Science last Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Day of Judgment." Although the lecturer was only half recovered from a prostrating cold, he went through his task to the evident satisfaction of his auditors, who were sometimes so convulsed with laughter that a pause was absolutely necessary, and who gave him quite an ovation at the close. Two broad-chested military men in the front seats seemed to catch every point and enjoy every witticism. Mr. Foote taxed his strength, and has suffered for it since. Fortunately he was relieved in the morning by Mr. A. B. Moss, who generously undertook to fill his place at very short notice. But Mr. Moss has a heart almost half as big as his body. It is wonderful how ever the organ got inside.

This evening (Nov. 14) Mr. Foote lectures at Milton Hall on the novel subject "Where is God?" At present Echo answers "Where?" But wait till the lecturer can say to her "rest, perturbed spirit, rest."

A. B. Moss continues in the New York *Truthseeker* his articles on "Freethought in England." After dealing with the merits of various speakers on our platform, he says the American readers will be surprised at their fewness. He says that the reason is this: "Young Freethinkers have very little encouragement or help from the more wealthy members of the party, and, after years of weary struggle in an unpopular movement, many of them are at length compelled by sheer poverty to retire from the work." Others go to the colonies, where their talent is more appreciated. We are afraid there is too much truth in what Mr. Moss says. We made a desperate effort at the Birmingham Conference to remedy the grievance a little, but without success. We have not given up the idea however, and it will be brought before the party again.

THE Rev. J. P. Hopps, in his "Brief Notices of Books" in the November number of the *Truthseeker*, calls Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds* "A sensible protest against the offensive, but rather damaged evangelical habit of picturing death-bed scenes of dying infidels. Half of these scenes are practically pure invention, and the other half want explaining. Mr. Foote's little work contains brief notices of a great number of men supposed to be 'infidels,' and he does not find it difficult to show that they were too strong to be frightened, and too intelligent to recant."

ANOTHER anti-tithe league has been formed in Anglesea. The agitation has also extended to the Furness district of North Lancashire.

WE have received some copies of the *Freireligiöses Sonntags-Blatt*—Free Religious Sunday Sheet—from Madgeburg. The editor is Dr. Voelkel, and a recent number contains a translation from an article in *Progress*. German Freethinkers or those who read that language can receive a specimen copy by sending a newspaper wrapper to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street.

WHILE our readers are looking out for our Christmas Number we are able to announce that our Summer Number, which has been out of print, is now again on sale. A large parcel has been discovered in an unexpected place. It is a bit of salvage from the fire. The copies are scarcely soiled, but we do not sell them as absolutely uninjured, and therefore the price will be one penny instead of threepence. Postage will be another penny. Mr. Forder will be happy to execute all orders at the shop.

ANOTHER salvage discovery is a packet of *Freethinker Tracts*, containing about twelve thousand in all. These can be had of Mr. Forder. They will soon go, but we are preparing a fresh lot.

THE *Thinker* of Madras continues to flourish. We notice in the issue for October 17, two reprints from our columns, one Mr. Foote's article upon "Jesus and Women," the other Mr. Ball on "Sacrifice."

MR. GERALD MASSEY has published his lecture entitled *Paul, the Gnostic opponent of Peter, not a supporter of Historical Christianity*. The little book will shortly be reviewed in our columns.

PRAISING GOD.

WHY do men praise God? Chiefly from that kind of gratitude which has been defined as a lively sense of benefits to come. Men bow and cringe to overwhelming personal power to escape a despot's malignity or ill will, and to gain all they can from his favor. The obsequious toadyism of time-serving sycophants is the main element of religious worship. God has to be brought into a good humor by suitable means, such as sacrifice, which is bribery and corruption, and praise, which is flattery and corruption similarly employed to conciliate a resistless ruler by cheaper means. Naturally, however, people like to call their strong feelings and propensities by pretty names, and they regard unpleasing descriptions of them as vile libels. They insist that the typical representatives of religion are the few whose religious fervor is of a nobler type, people who like Cowper or St. Thomas à Kempis would praise God even though he doomed them to eternal torture, or who, like St. Catherine of Sienna, would go to hell and stay there in order to save others. But these are the exception. The great appeal of religion is to selfishness. Teach people that they will gain nothing in this world or another by religion and how many would be religious?

Why does God like praise? Is his vanity so insufferable that he must have millions of angels in heaven and saints on earth always dinning words of approval and admiration into his willing ears? Is his ideal of moral goodness so despicable that he thinks his own glorification by crowds of flatterers the highest possible good? Constant adulation is recognised as a serious danger to a man's character. It

inflames a greedy vanity and provokes tyranny and unreason. Great kings in their triumphal processions have had mentors to follow them and continually remind them in the midst of glory and adulation that they must die. God has no such official mentor to correct the constant flattery with wholesome criticism. He is unteachable, and irresponsible. His tyranny is unassailable, and criticism is high treason. The best men care least for praise, especially when indiscriminate as the praises of God are. To delight in pompous ceremonial and continual eulogium is the mark of a weak and ignoble disposition. Those who demand continual praises forfeit our respect. There is far better work than either praising or being praised.

Voltaire tells a story of a Persian satrap who was cured of this liking for perpetual flattery. All day long his praises were sung or recited to him. Every word that fell from his mouth was hailed as the perfection of wisdom and wit. Long formal panegyrics, elaborate eulogistic ceremonies, and high-flown compliments of the most exaggerated character, filled up the whole day. For a time this was delightful, but presently he was bored by it, and before a week was over he was permanently cured. He was as sick of it all as an apprentice boy in a confectioner's shop is of the sweets he has been purposely allowed to surfeit upon during the week as a means of giving him a permanent dislike to them. How long will it take God to get cured of this relish for being praised? According to the Christian theory he will be worshipped and glorified without cessation throughout the whole of eternity. He will never grow tired of it like human kings who often prefer to receive homage by deputy. To his inexhaustible appetite for worship the *Te Deum* will never be suggestive of *Tedium*. Harp'd, hosannah'd, hallelujah'd, bowed to, knelt to, sung to, like an Eastern satrap whose vanity is incurable, this *grand monarque* of the universe will spend every moment of his time in swallowing the most fulsome flattery and adoration from the countless multitudes of courtiers whose chief, or only happiness and employment will be to compliment him in the highest. Saints rejoicing over the tortures of his foes in the flames below will shout his triumph and wave their silver palms in air. Elders will for ever fling down golden crowns at his feet. A choir of a hundred and forty-four thousand trained male performers will salute him with their thundering choruses of praise. And to cap the climax the talking beasts of heaven will occasionally contrive to express their fervent approbation by howling forth such pious exclamations as Amen, or Holy, holy, holy.

God is not content with the praises of reasonable beings like angels and men. All his works are to praise him. Sharks and tigers, cobras and cholera germs, will praise him for the prey he sends. The very floods as they desolate the valleys and the plains are to "clap their hands" (Ps. xviii., 8) and the hills are to be joyful. Dragons are commanded to praise his name (Ps. cxlviii.) Fire and hail, snow and fog, storms and whirlwinds, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, kings and people, all alike are to "praise the name of the Lord." How fond of praise he must be. Could he not find a nobler passion and set a nobler example?

W. P. BALL.

IS GOD DEAD?

If the Bible can be relied upon, God was at one time particularly fond of paying flying visits to this earth of ours; but for the last few thousand years he seems to have given up those enjoyable trips. Perhaps he is getting very old and feeble, and finds it impossible to undertake such long journeys. Even at the time when he sent his only son as substitute he must have been several thousand years old, and doubtless the crucifixion of that promising young man so upset him that he died broken-hearted. His constitution was unable to stand such a severe shock; and as no one has seen anything of him for so long a time, we are naturally led to the conclusion that he is dead. If he is not dead, and he is aware of our disbelief in his existence, why don't he favor this world with a visit at the present day? Of course, Christians will say that he is with us now—that in fact he is everywhere. But that is mere assertion. They have no proof that such is the case. Besides, if God is everywhere, the Devil is everywhere also, otherwise he could not be tempting everybody. Therefore God and the Devil must be inextricably mixed up together, and it will take them all their time to separate themselves before the Day of Judgment arrives. If God is everywhere he must be in cartloads of dung, cartloads of mud, of filth, cartloads of rubbish—he must be in cesspools, dirty ditches, and thousands of

other curious and absurd places too "blasphemous" to mention. We should think that God, if he exists, has too much respect for himself to be everywhere. But perhaps, like other folks, he has to take the rough with the smooth.

If God is everywhere he certainly is not the God we read of in the Old Testament. It there states that he made man in his own image, and no sane individual would pretend that man, shaped as he is, can be everywhere at one time. Then the question is, what has become of this Bible God who can walk, talk, see and smell? Is he dead or only sleeping?

If he is alive and kicking, let him come and speak to us as he did to Adam and Eve; let him make suits of clothes for the naked as he did for that worthy couple; let him take his choice of roast beef or vegetables as when Cain and Abel offered up their sacrifices. Let him come down now when men are building high towers—or has he discovered by this time that men cannot build towers to reach unto heaven? He once even took the trouble to come and tell Abraham's wife that she would have a baby although she was very aged. Surely he might come now on errands of more importance. If he wishes to prove to the world that he is not defunct, why don't he send a supply of manna and quails to the starving unemployed, as he did for his chosen people? Certainly it would not be much of a feed, but it would be better than nothing at all.

In days gone by he showed Moses his back parts. Of course we can hardly expect to indulge in such a glorious sight; we should be quite satisfied if he only showed us a front tooth. He once wrote with his finger the Ten Commandments. Then why (if he is too old to pay us a visit now) can't he drop us a line occasionally so that we might know how he is getting on?

God even told the children of Israel how to make a box, called an ark, to convey him from place to place. That shows he could not be everywhere even when he was supposed to be alive. He also instructed them how to make dishes, spoons, covers, bowls, candlesticks, lamps, tongs, snuff-dishes; how to make and arrange the curtains for their tabernacle; how to build their altar, and what sort of oil to use in their lamps; and what kind of garments they had to wear in this tabernacle. He told them what kind of bullock or ram they should offer on his altar, and how they should carve them up and sprinkle the blood—in fact, he took immense trouble to teach them all these "important" things; yet now he won't even condescend to instruct us in such paltry questions as Home Rule, Land Nationalisation, etc. If he would only let us know his opinions on these matters, it would settle a deal of political strife and at the same time settle all the Atheists.

"Oh," reply the orthodox, "you don't suppose God is going to do just what you ask merely to prove that he exists." But if he has any wish to save us from damnation he might put himself to a little trouble. He has only to appear in public as he did in days gone by, and then we should know that he is not dead. We occasionally hear of people "dying by the visitation of God," but no one has seen him making those visits, and we think it unfair to libel a defunct God in such a fashion.

Some Christians say, "If there is not a living God, who sends the floods and storms, the earthquakes and volcanoes?" But surely it is far better to attribute these calamities to natural laws than to say they are the work of an all-wise, all-good, and benevolent being. Instead of concluding that God is the worker of so much mischief, is it not preferable to believe that he is dead?

SCOFFER.

CHURCH BELLS AND THE SICK.

A RECENT letter in the *Liverpool Courier* signed "Physician," complained that the authorities of a church in Hartington Road, refused to cease ringing their bell, although requested to stop, as a person who lived close by was dangerously ill. The incumbents had previously been written to and when the bell began to ring, a message was at once sent, but they refused to stop even at the request of the wife of the patient. The *Lancet* takes up the subject and says:—"In the old days, when parishioners lived a considerable distance from their church, when there were few clocks in private houses, and when the times of service were uncertain, there were valid reasons why bells should be rung to call together the worshippers, but not one of these reasons at present exists, and the ringing of church bells in cities and towns is a needless and vexatious ceremony. To the sound in health it may be an annoyance; while to the sick it is a very grave infliction, causing in many instances serious injury, and, we cannot hesitate to say, in not a few cases actually aggravating disease and shortening life. The practice should undoubtedly be abandoned, or, if prejudice be too strong for voluntary action, it ought to be interdicted. It is intolerable that, for the sake of a mere sentiment, which has no shadow of solemnity about it, which has nothing whatever to do with religion or belief, and which (outside a utilitarian purpose, which has no place in these days) is simply a superstition of the most stupid kind, annoyance and injury should be perpetrated. A case of flagrant violation of the ordinary rules of courtesy that has just occurred at Liverpool, placing the authorities of one church in a light wholly at variance with the spirit of common humanity, has raised this question in a manner which, we trust, will give it a practical shape. We protest against a practice which is an offence, and

too frequently entails consequences altogether too terribly disastrous to be contemplated without indignation. Medical practitioners will do well to refuse certificates of the cause of death in cases in which they have reason to believe that the fatal issue has been hastened by the disturbance caused by this practice, and leave it to coroners' juries to give expression to the feeling which the grievance very justly creates."

THE NEW JERSEY PROSECUTION FOR BLASPHEMY.

OUR readers may remember that after Mr. C. B. Reynolds had his tent wrecked and himself haled to prison by the bigots of Boonton, New Jersey, he, soon after being released from bail, returned to the place and personally distributed a pamphlet, entitled *Blasphemy and the Bible*. This further enraged the New Jersey Christians, and as the witnesses could not recollect enough of Mr. Reynolds's lecture to make their case sure, they have now indicted him for his pamphlet. Among the passages selected for prosecution are the following:

"This Bible describes God as so loving that he drowned the whole world in his mad fury, because it was so much worse than he (knowing all things?) ever supposed it could be. An all-wise, unchangeable God, who got out of patience with a world which was just what his own stupid blundering had made it, and knew no better way out of the muddle than to destroy it by drowning!"

"Now, reader, take time and calmly think it over. A Jewish girl becomes the mother of God Almighty—the mother of your God. The child of this Jewess was God. Christ is God. God cried and screamed, squealed and kicked; God flung about his little arms; God made aimless dashes into space with his little fists; God stared foolishly at his own little toes; God smiled when he was comfortable and howled when pricked by a nasty pin; God was nursed at Mary's breast; God was wrapped in little diapers; God lay in a cradle and was rocked to sleep; God was quite sick when cutting his little teeth; God caught the measles, mumps, whooping cough and scarlet fever; God learned to walk, and often tumbled down, bumped his forehead, and made his little nose bleed; God was spanked when he was naughty," etc., etc.

If our readers refer to their Christmas Number for 1884, they will see that a good deal of this passage is taken almost word for word from Mr. Foote's article, entitled "God in a Cradle," so that Mr. Reynolds is being prosecuted for Mr. Foote's blasphemy as well as his own. Having undergone three terms for blasphemy, Mr. Foote regrets that the distance will prevent him personally giving Mr. Reynolds the benefit of his experience.

Colonel Ingersoll, who has but just undergone a surgical operation performed upon his throat, so that, under the direction of his physicians, he must not speak above a whisper, attended at the court, Morristown, and, after some difficulty, succeeded in obtaining an adjournment of the case until next term, which begins on the third Tuesday in January.

AN AGNOSTIC'S OATH.

In a trial for libel before Mr. Justice Denman, one of the witnesses, Mr. Wellesley Sale, claimed to affirm upon the ground that he was a Positivist.

Mr. Justice Denman—You don't believe in God or in a future state of rewards and punishments?

Mr. Sale—I am not sure of it. A Positivist says he does not know. I do not know. I leave it.

Mr. Justice Denman—Then you have no affirmative belief in it?

Mr. Sale—I suppose so.

Mr. Justice Denman—And an oath would have no binding force upon your conscience?

Mr. Sale—I wish to affirm.

Mr. Justice Denman—You cannot affirm merely because you wish it. You must show that you come within the Act of Parliament. You do not affirmatively believe in a state of future rewards and punishments?

Mr. Sale—Yes; that is so.

Mr. Justice Denman—An oath would have no more binding force upon your conscience than merely saying so?

Mr. Sale—I wish to swear that everything I say is true.

Mr. Justice Denman—Still, I must get you within the Act.

Mr. Sale—I do not know the nature of the Act.

Mr. Justice Denman—I am not bound to tell you what the Act is. I am not bound to tell you any more. (To counsel) You may try to bring him within the Act if you can.

Mr. Lockwood—Do you mean that taking an oath would not affect your evidence?

Mr. Sale—It would not affect my evidence. I object to kissing a prayer-book.

Mr. Justice Denman—You never kiss a prayer-book on taking an oath at all. It has nothing to do with it.

Mr. Lockwood—What you are called upon to do is to kiss the Gospels. Do I understand you to say that that would have no binding effect upon your conscience?

Mr. Sale—I suppose that is so; I am not sure.

Mr. Justice Denman—If you cannot say that it would not be binding upon your conscience nobody can tell you that.

Mr. Sale—I am an Agnostic.

Mr. Lockwood—You are familiar enough with your own conscience to know whether taking the oath would affect it or not.

Mr. Sale—I am sorry I cannot answer your questions.

Mr. Justice Denman—Then you may go down.

Mr. Sale—Any oath I might take would be binding upon my conscience.

Mr. Justice Denman—Then you must be sworn.

Mr. Sale—But I wish it to be known that I am an Agnostic.

The witness was thereupon sworn, and proceeded to give his evidence.

THE INCARNATION.

YOUR incarnation is nothing unique. We find its parallels in Oriental avatars, and in the heroes of Pagan mythology. The sons of God have always seen the daughters of men that they were fair, and on reading the reports of the Divorce Court we find they still exhibit the same old taste.

Centuries before you were born the Egyptian goddess Isis was depicted holding the divine child Horus in her arms. Christian paintings of the madonna and bambino are merely copies of ancient iconography. The type varies like the artist's genius, but the subject is the same. Nay, the whole story of the Annunciation related by Luke, was chiselled on the walls of the sanctuary in the Temple of Luxor before the Jewish scriptures were written, before Rome arose on her seven hills, before Athens "gleamed on its crest of columns," a beacon of civilisation to a barbarous world. Your holy nativity seems a legend borrowed from "the motherland of superstitions." I can come to no other conclusion, and if I am to be damned for my unbelief I protest against the injustice of my fate. If you were only a man, I have nothing to fear; if you are a god, you should satisfy my scruples before censuring my scepticism. Belief does not depend on will, but on evidence. A word from you would make the dark path of faith luminous. If you leave it in obscurity you cannot wonder if I stray. Surely the being who said Let there be light, and there was light, could easily dispel my darkness; nor can I believe he will, at the end of my journey, flash on me the illumination of hell.—G. W. FOOTE, *Letters to Jesus Christ*.

REVIEWS.

J. Fraser's Penny Comic Pictorial Almanac for Blyth and District; 1887.—A wonderfully cheap pennyworth containing abundance of amusing matter with some rubs at the local sky-pilots.

The Radical. November. Edited and Published by G. STANDING.—Opens with a good portrait and biographical notice of Dr. Henry Travis. The editor writes ably on Education and Endowments.

Thirty-nine Articles of Belief, proposed as the profession and programme of Christian Socialists by One of Them. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith; 1886. Price Twopence.—The thirty-nine articles are well stated, but it is not easy to see why Christian Socialists should be afflicted with forty stripes save one. Article xxiv. is curious as coming from a believer in a Divine Legislator. It reads: "The laws of Nature are the worst possible patterns for Human Legislation."

Appreciation of Gold. By WILLIAM FOWLER, LL.B. London: Cassell and Co.—Of course this publication of the Cobden Club is not devoted to so needless a task as teaching men the appreciation of gold in the ordinary sense, for they have always appreciated it too highly rather than too little. The "appreciation" is purely technical and is not even so much relative to a general fall in prices or rise in value of gold as to the increase in value or appreciation of gold as compared with the lessened value or depreciation of silver. The great losses caused by the depreciation of the silver in which taxes and salaries are paid in our Indian possessions, and the injudicious proposals of bimetallism, or double standards of money value, render the subject of the appreciation of gold a very practical one.

PROFANE JOKES.

IN Berrien county recently, Mr. J. A. Nigh was married to Miss Mollie E. Nigh. This is coming mighty close to the Scriptural injunction, a Nigh for a Nigh!

A CLERGYMAN who married four couples in one hour the other day remarked to a friend that it was "pretty fast work." "Not so very fast," responded his friend; "it's only four knots an hour."

"HAVE you heard that card-playing has almost ceased in Brooklyn?" asked the Snake Editor. "No, I haven't," replied the Horse Editor; "what is the reason?" "One of the churches decided it wasn't wicked."

AMONG the replies to an advertisement of a church committee for "a candidate as organist, music teacher," etc., was the following one: "Gentlemen,—I noticed your advertisement for an organist and music teacher, either lady or gentleman. Having been both for several years, I offer you my services."

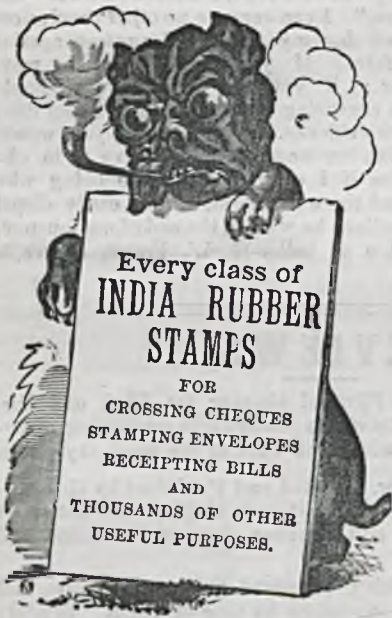
FARMER (to country minister): "I kin bring you in a couple of bushels of apples, dominie, if you'd like 'em. I've got a lot of 'em goin' to rot." Minister: "Thanks, Mr. Hayseed; I would be very glad to get them. Have you ever tried feeding them to hogs? I hear they are very fattening." Farmer: "Yes, I've offered 'em to the hogs, but they won't touch 'em."

LAST spring a little Birmingham boy was saying his prayers at his mother's knee, and just before reaching the end he stopped. "Go on, Freddie," said his mother, "you haven't finished yet." "Bless papa and mamma," he continued, "and now good-bye God, Lent is over, and I guess you won't hear from us again till this time next year. Amen!"

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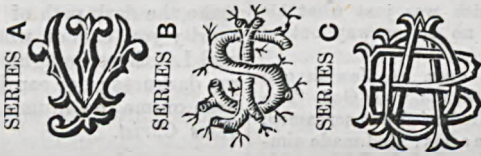
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