

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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A SKELETON ARMY

And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.—2 KINGS XIX., 35.

BIBLE FASTING MEN.

THERE can be little doubt that the Bible is responsible for the fasting feats of recent times. Men like Tanner and Succi do not openly say "Moses fasted forty days, and I will do the same," but there is probably some such sentiment at the bottom of their minds, and it is reasonable to suppose that if they had not read of marvellous fasts in ancient times they would never have dreamt of attempting to see how long the human frame can subsist without food. Three fourths of the crazes of modern ages directly or indirectly originate in the reading of Scripture. The Bible has much to answer for, far more than the greatest impostor or criminal that ever existed. It is a fruitful parent of evil, and its malign fecundity persists from generation to generation. When one set of victims have suffered or perished another springs up for immolation on the altar of superstition. To take an extreme case, hardly a decade passes without some addle-pated Bible reader imagining that the Almighty has ordered him to sacrifice his children, as Abraham was told to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering to the Lord. Short of this horrid madness, there are many gradations of lunacy; and anyone who

takes the pains to inquire will find that "religious madness," which is always more or less Biblical, constantly supplies our asylums with unfortunate wretches. It is becoming quite a common question in cases of suicide—"Was there any religious hallucination?" And the frequency with which an affirmative answer is returned should abash the impudence of those who, like Talmage, incessantly assert that there is an awful *nexus* between suicide and Atheism.

The first Bible fasting-man is Moses. Holy Moses was the original Grand Old Man. Mr. Gladstone is retreating from political life at the ripe age of seventy-seven, but Moses was eighty when he began his public career. He figured on the stage for forty years after that, and when he joined the majority, at the age of a hundred and twenty, he was as fresh and vigorous as ever. Indeed, if the Lord had not taken him up a mountain, and mysteriously settled his hash there, the old fellow might have been alive now. It is not surprising, therefore, that this splendid gentleman began the fasting business, just to show what could be done in that line; nor is it surprising that his exploit should never have been excelled, even if it has ever been equalled. Moses, it appears, received an invitation from

the Lord to come up on Mount Sinai and spend a few days with him; and as royal invitations are commands, Moses accepted with great alacrity. They had so much to say to each other about matters that any two sensible men would have settled in half an hour, that the interview lasted forty days and nights. During the whole of that period, we presume, Moses did not get so much as forty winks. At any rate, he "did neither eat bread, nor drink water." This does not mean that he lived on meat and vegetables and Guinness's stout, but that absolutely nothing passed his lips. Unlike our present-day fasting men, he dispensed not only with food, but also with drink. He lived entirely on his own gravy, though how it was done is like the peace of God—it passes all understanding. What is still more curious, Moses was in such magnificent condition after his extraordinary feat of endurance that "his face shone," and he was obliged to hide its dazzling glory with a three-and-sixpenny veil, which he probably borrowed for the occasion from Mrs. Moses. Whether his skin ever toned down again Scripture forgets to inform us. Probably it did. Anyhow, Moses was the original Veiled Prophet as well as the original Grand Old Man.

David appears to have fasted seven days while Bathsheba's bastard, of whom he was the adulterous father, lay dying; but when the poor thing expired, and prayer was thenceforth vain, he refreshed his inner man. Perhaps the fasting clarified his royal brains; at any rate, David was soon the expectant father of another baby, who turned out to be the wise Solomon. It seems also that the fasting stimulated his piety, for he captured Rahab and other Ammonite cities, and disposed of their inhabitants by chopping and sawing them up alive or baking them in brick-kilns.

Elijah fasted forty days like Moses. Forty is a favorite number in the Bible. We constantly meet with forty days and forty years, and when Paul relates his thirty-nine stripes he calls them forty save one. When Elijah's life was threatened by Jezebel, he fled to the wilderness, where he fell asleep under a juniper tree. While he slept the sleep of the just, an angel baked him a nice cake, and then roused him up to eat it. After this sumptuous repast the prophet went to sleep again, until he was wakened by the angel for another turn at the cake, which was washed down with copious draughts of Simpson. Having victualled and watered in this manner, Elijah girded up his loins for a tramp to Horeb, going "in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights." We should like to possess a ton or two of that miraculous cake. It would be a splendid boon to the unemployed, and would obviate the necessity of demonstrations in Trafalgar Square. Given a proper supply of Elijah's cake, and Messrs. Champion, Hyndman and Burns would have to address the lions for want of a more appreciative audience.

Daniel mourned "three full weeks," during which time, he says, "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth." But he probably ate and drank something, as the words seem to imply, and we must therefore exclude him from our list.

True to the Jewish taste for the sacred number, Jesus Christ's biographer (Matthew) describes him as fasting "forty days and forty nights." After that period he was "an hungered," but he appears to have suffered no inconvenience during the ordeal. Perhaps he forgot his stomach altogether, being so deeply interested in the pantomime he played with the Devil. However that may be, it is remarkable that he fasted exactly the same time as Moses and Elijah. The Grand Old Man's record could not be beaten. Yet as Jesus Christ was a young man, in the very prime of life, he might surely have managed to put in a day or two extra. When the fast was over "angels ministered unto him." How did they do it? Did they bring him sherry and sandwiches, or a plateful of manna which is "angel's food"? Be that as it may, we cannot help thinking that the long fast injured his stomach and made him permanently dyspeptic; for he was ever afterwards a melancholy bilious young man, who often wept, but was never known to smile. Judging from his utterances, he had great belief in fasting as a virtue. He distinctly told his disciples that the power to work miracles was only gained by prayer and fasting. Over in the Soudan the Mahdi was of the same opinion, and he fasted frequently till he grew like a rake; but our bishops and clergy think differently. Their philosophy is, Eat and grow fat.

G. W. FOOTE.

JESUS AS A SOCIALIST.

THE interesting, warm-hearted, but weak-headed body of followers of Maurice and Kingsley, known as "Christian Socialists," would have us believe that all efforts for the social amelioration of the masses are to be traced to the efforts of Jesus of Nazareth, and must follow upon lines laid down by him.

To us the idea is as absurd as the customary representations of Jesus as an enlightened nineteenth-century Protestant, instead of a Jew of the age of Tiberias. A glance at the essential nature of the ideas attributed to Jesus and those held by modern Socialists will suffice to show their fundamental difference.

No doubt a main feature in the programme of Jesus was the establishment of a "kingdom of God." But, mark the phrase, it was a kingdom, not a democratic commonwealth, which he contemplated. Of the modern idea of the people being themselves their own rulers there is no trace in the New Testament.* The conception of the prophets was that of a theocracy, in which the chosen people were to be the instruments of God to bring the world to the true worship. That Jesus himself expected to be king seems evident from his appointing twelve apostles, whom he promised in so many words they should sit on thrones ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel. His appointment of seventy, the number of the Sanhedrim; his taking an ass in fulfilment of the prophecy "Behold, thy king cometh, riding on an ass"; his exhortations to follow him; his evident sanction of their exclamations "Hosannah to the Son of David"; and finally his saying "Thou sayest" when asked the question "Art thou the king of the Jews?"—all confirm the same view. The statement "my kingdom is not of this world" is only found in John, a gospel written in the middle of the second century, when the Jews were dispersed and the prospect of an immediate second coming of the Messiah dimmed.

In the "kingdom" of Jesus the subjects were not to be on a footing of equality, but to have degrees of dignity. He himself speaks of the least and the greatest, and we read that his disciples quarrelled among themselves as to who should have precedence. Some were to have sixty-fold and some one hundred-fold. The kingdom, moreover, was to be established supernaturally; not by any action of the State, as one section of modern Socialists desire; nor by mutual co-operation, as taught by the followers of Owen; nor by the abolition of the State and the supremacy of the individual, as the Anarchists contend. It is true there was to be an overthrow, but this was to be brought about by angels and supernatural powers, the Son of Man coming to judge the world in power and great glory. Christ offered no measures for the natural establishment of his kingdom. He speaks of eating bread and drinking wine therein, but gives no directions as to who are to till the soil, grow the vine and grind the corn. His one method of making men better, the promulgation of precepts, is the one which is looked on with especial disfavor by modern Socialists.

Whatever their economic fallacies, Socialists do not inculcate that poverty is a blessing and wealth a curse; and about the last doctrine they would think of preaching is "Labor not for the meat which perisheth." Nor do they bid their followers take no thought for food or raiment, but copy the birds and lilies of the field. Such Communism as would arise from the simple following of the precept, "Sell all that thou hast and give unto the poor," and "Give to every one that asketh," must simply mean universal pauperisation. No social state could exist without industry and forethought and anxious care for the morrow, which Jesus decried. The trust in Providence which he inculcated is the very antithesis of modern Socialist teaching. "Trust in your own right arm," says the modern reformer, "trust in cause and effect, trust in supply and demand, trust in combined action at the ballot-boxes, but do not think of trusting to Providence unless you are prepared for a fast greatly exceeding the traditional forty days."

Both the means and the aims of Jesus, then, are distinct from those of modern social reformers. In place of a misty miraculous millenium they look forward to an amelioration of the present conditions of this actual life. Instead of idealising poverty they seek to extirpate it. They look

* See Rom. xiii., 1—2.

forward, not to another world, in which they shall sing eternal praises to their Creator, but to a time in this when it shall be impossible for men to be depraved or poor. This, their Earthly Paradise, is to be gained by work instead of worship; not by prayers and penances, but by patience and plodding, not by asceticism but by thought and industry.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

GEORGE LAWN, aged eighteen, was charged with abducting a Salvation lass aged fifteen. Sarah Clarkson, the girl in question, said she made the prisoner's acquaintance through belonging to the Salvation Army at Clapton Hall, where they made appointments to meet. The girl refused to return home one evening, and says they walked about all night. Subsequently she induced the prisoner to obtain lodgings for her, where he visited her until she consented to return home. Prisoner was discharged.

THE Salvation Army attended the races at Northampton the other day with their band and colors. As soon as they arrived on the course they were attacked with stones and other missiles, and when they reached their platform they were stormed from all quarters. Mounted and foot police hurried up to their protection, and under their guard the Army beat a hasty retreat. Two or three heads were broken.

THE Rev. H. Caukwell was announced to open a bazaar at Horncastle in aid of the Congregational Church. He was stopped, however, by a letter from his superiors in Christ. Christians cannot do each other even such a little service as this, yet they turn round upon us and cant about Christian brotherhood and unity and harmony. Christian bigotry and Christian hypocrisy go hand-in-hand together.

A PUBLIC meeting was held at Aldgate for considering the tithe question. The Corporation, it appeared, under pretence of relieving the ratepayers of St. Botolph, Aldgate, has made an arrangement whereby they were saddled with the payment of £6,500 per annum instead of £4,000, as heretofore. Mr. Edwin Bell, after strongly insisting on the injustice of the existing arrangement, remarked that the rates and other charges on property in that parish amounted to 10s. 3d. in the pound, and of that amount 3s. went for tithes. It was, he urged, impossible for the parish to meet the present charge. Such was the poverty of the district that the bells of the parish church could not be rung, and one woman had pawned her wedding ring to pay tithes. A resolution for bringing forward a bill in Parliament was passed with only one dissident.

PATRICK JUDGE was executed at Newcastle on the 16th inst., and he is now in glory, singing hallelujah with the best of them. He was prepared for the kingdom of heaven by Father Wood. Patrick Judge died, as we have no doubt he lived, a very good Catholic; and as he was perfectly illiterate, being unable even to sign his name, he will make a capital saint.

THOUGH unable to write, Judge left a letter for his sister, which was probably concocted by Father Wood. In this precious epistle he doesn't say a word about his wife whom he murdered, nor does the sense of his crime appear to have weighed upon his pious soul. "I forgive the whole world" he says, magnanimously. In other words, the saintly scoundrel forgives all the people he has ever injured. And this is Christianity!

HERE is a fine instance of the consolations of religion! A correspondent writes: "I was recently informed that a very old friend of my family is in a state of sad mental distress, believing that *she is lost*; and this after a life spent in a singularly unselfish way, doing nothing but inculcating her religious views and constant works of charity and mercy to the poor, to whom she has sacrificed position, property and everything."

ANOTHER case of death through religious mania has occurred at Retford.

THOMAS MATHISON, who has been sentenced to six years' penal servitude for bigamy, was a religious rogue who, under the pretence of being a widower, courted his second victim at church, gave her religious books, and acted the saint to perfection.

THE *Evening News* says that the Edinburgh Judiciary Appeal Court was occupied for some time the other day in considering the question whether, "if a man went into a chemist's shop on Sunday to buy a pennyworth of peppermint drops to keep him awake during the sermon," the sale would be illegal, or whether it might be condoned on the plea of "necessity and mercy." After considerable discussion it was decided that, while the customer's case might be one of "necessity," the chemist's act in helping him to keep awake during sermon-time would not necessarily be one of "mercy."

LORD BRAMWELL and Lord Herschell were anxious to do gratuitous work by sitting to hear appeals in the House of Lords. Unfortunately they are incapacitated because they have not taken the oath in the present parliament. They cannot be sworn till parliament meets, and meanwhile they have to remain idle or incur a penalty of five hundred pounds for every case they hear. As the *Daily News* says, "Surely it is time the parliamentary oath was abolished."

TALMAGE says that a theological seminary cannot teach a fool to preach. We always thought that that was their principal object and that they were tolerably successful in attaining it.

TALMAGE gives an imaginary conversation with Christ wherein a man says to him: "My father was a merchant prince: he had a castle in Galilee." The introduction of modern commercialism and middle age feudalism into the simple rude Galilee of two thousand years ago is rich. But anachronism is nothing to painters of biblical word-pictures.

TALMAGE speaks of Christ as "an unheralded young man." Does he reject his Bible then? Where there no "herald angels" singing, no magi, no star in the East, no massacre of Bethlehem, no John the Baptist, no miracles, no prophecies, no announcements whatever, heralding the young man J. C.? What a swindle the Bible must be if Talmage's description of Christ as "unheralded" is correct.

THE *Financial News* has a leading article on "Pharisee Finance," in which it exposes the shameless way in which religious papers like the *Christian Union* puff unsound financial schemes for the sake of a ten guinea advertisement. The "favorable notice" is drawn up beforehand and sent to people with a request for an advertisement to accompany it. The editor for his ten guineas then recommends unsuspecting readers to invest in gambling speculations or anything else. His laudatory article is usually a mixture of cant, audacity and ignorance that none but a religious puffmonger could hope to display without exciting general contempt.

CHARRINGTON speaks of the People's Palace as "one more gigantic vestibule of hell, in the form of a huge drinking saloon." Drink is a lesser evil than religion, whose effects are infinitely more insidious and more powerful. One evil condemning another is like devil casting out devil. When the demon of bigotry seeks to prevent moderate drinking by compulsion, the indignation of the would-be tyrant is absurd.

W. S. LILLY, a Roman Catholic, writing in the *Fortnightly Review* on Materialism and Morality, asks with indignation "What in every country are the great majority of the educated classes who give the tone to the rest?" They are, he answers, sceptics in religion, and this includes everything that is bad. Mr. Lilly looks forward to the most deplorable consequences unless the world returns to the true faith, that, of course, of the Catholic Church. But you can't bring back the mastodon or sweep out the Atlantic with a broom.

IN the *Christian Herald* appears an account of "An Infidel Lecturer Silenced." Mr. Symes, it seems, said at the end of one of his lectures at Melbourne: "Perhaps the Messiah will come and stand up for himself; I should like to see him, or anyone who has seen him, and I will give a reward of £5 to any man who has ever found him." A Christian thereupon arose and exclaimed: "I have found him, and I claim that reward." Mr. Symes is then accused of dishonesty and lying, because he did not hand over the money on the faith of a personal assertion backed by no evidence and based only on a cant use of a phrase uttered by Mr. Symes in its plain ordinary meaning. If anybody lied, it was the pious claimant of the filthy lucre, for he had not found Christ except in a highly figurative and imaginary sense — which would only entitle him to a highly figurative and imaginary five-pound note — which he is welcome to. If anyone offered £1,000 for the best washing fluid this ingenious Christian would probably sue him at law for the money on the ground that the blood of Christ was the article required, seeing that it cleansed from all sin. Christian idiots might sympathise with him, but we are afraid the lawyers would only laugh him out of court.

SPURGEON is off to Mentone and intends to stay there for the rest of the year. He finds the Lord answers prayers against rheumatism much more favorably in a warm climate than in cold, foggy England.

SOME missionaries relate that the Chinese called them "Jesus men," but could not tell whether they were Catholics or Protestants. To ascertain this they often made the sign of the cross on the ground. If the missionaries trod on it they were set down as Protestants, but if they reverently avoided it as Catholics. The account in the Protestant journal, from which we derive this information, says that "Roman Catholics are very much hated in China." The Roman Catholic journals, we remember, attributed recent outrages to the popular hatred of the arrogant Protestants. Both accounts are probably correct, both sorts of Christians being hated and despised by the Celestials.

TEETOTALERS are troubled by the anti-teetotal character of the Lord's Supper. One Christian journal suggests, though with diffidence and correction, that "we are not told that there was any 'wine' used in the cup when Jesus instituted the Supper."

BRIGANDS have captured Monsignor Kyrilios, a Greek prelate. Being very pious they make him read a mass every day, and oblige him to pray for the success of their undertakings, after which they all kneel down and reverently receive the episcopal benediction. The Bishop is said to be trying hard to convert these Christian bandits; and they declare that they will all abandon their calling and turn to honest work—as soon as the bishop's ransom is paid.

THE *Rock* is afraid of the secularising influence of travelling on the highly respectable Britons who rush off to sunnier lands during the winter season. The Alpine climber is to furnish himself with the shield of faith and the sword of the spirit so that he may not fall from the ice-cliffs of orthodoxy into the smiling valleys of laxity and common sense. He is to be careful of the Sabbath, for at the *table d'hôte* he is "exposed to special annoyance on Sundays, as the frequenters of the hotel may be, and often are, free-thinkers, or at least free-talkers." The Sunday thus becomes "a day of irritation, and trial and difficulty." Though the sanctified tourist is himself irritated by adverse conversation, he is to inflict "solemn, heart-searching talk" on others. He must "try to get at" his fellow-voyagers and companions by pious observations and presents of books of devotion and Bibles with a text on the fly-leaf. Protestant propaganda among Catholics and Freethinkers is, of course, as unobjectionable as their free expression of their opinions is irritating and perverse.

THE meeting at the City Temple to discuss the question of Christian Unity proved to be a very uproarious affair. They are also discussing "The Re-union of Christendom" in the *Church Review*, but the writers fail to show that Christendom was ever united from the time when the apostles disputed as to who should be greatest, and Paul and Barnabas had a sharp contention with the others upon the delicate matter of circumcision.

THE Nonconformists have been holding a Conference at Hastings. In the preliminary announcement the conveners set forth the following statements: "Artisans are deplorably alienated from divinely-appointed ordinances of religion, and the Sabbath is desecrated by the modern habits of the wealthy. Industrial depression agitates and distresses. Socialistic doctrines are being widely taught, that profess to aim at social regeneration, but which by a pathway of discontent and infidelity must inevitably lead on to a lawlessness of revolutionary despair. Meanwhile, spite of ameliorating remedies, impurity, gambling and drunkenness are filling streets with shame and households with unutterable horrors." Rather a poor confession after eighteen centuries of a divine religion.

THE Rev. J. Brierley, one of the lights of the Conference, considered that the root of the mischief lay in secular education. If children could come under no other influence but that of the minister, all would be well.

THE Rev. Hugh Fitzpatrick of the Free Church, Keith, is reported as lecturing on the Literary History of the Bible. He made special reference "to the careful system that was adopted to ensure accuracy in copying." How then comes it that according to Dr. Scrivener there are over one hundred and twenty thousand "various readings" in the New Testament alone? The testimony given by St. Jerome of the copyists of his day is very different. He says, "They write down not what they find, but what they seem to understand, and expose their own blunders whilst they affect to correct the mistakes of others."

THE Salvationists held a big meeting at Exeter Hall to bid farewell to contingents for India and elsewhere. The new missionaries wore turbans and red jerseys. One had a one-string banjo, and another, a Hindoo, had a tom-tom, which he beat during the singing. Mr. Bramwell Booth gave vent to some high-lalutin' about "laying down their lives and sealing their testimony with their blood." Mrs. Booth said the men were equipped mostly and chiefly by the Holy Ghost, who apparently made them their red jerseys, and turbans, and flannel garments, and banjos—such tom-foolery being, in his opinion, the best means of producing a love of virtue and a conscience dedicated to Christ.

WE are informed that at the new Coliseum, Dalston, last Sunday evening, a couple of monkeys got mixed up with the congregation, probably thinking the sermon was something in their line. They were captured after a hot chase, and expelled from divine service. There does not appear to have been a search for any of their kindred left behind.

THE Rev. T. T. Waterman, one of the Secretaries of the Christian Evidence Society declined an invitation to send one of its representatives to Mr. G. Standing's lecture at Marylebone.

Replying to Mr. J. F. Henley, secretary of the Hyde Park Branch, Mr. Waterman says that the Christian Evidence Society does not exist for the purpose of holding debates. We quite agree with him. There is nothing the C. E. S. more dreads and shuns, except an empty exchequer; and as that calamity is threatened every year, the C. E. S. periodically comes down to the Hall of Science and submits to a *little* discussion in order to raise the wind.

ACCORDING to Mr. Waterman the C. E. S. exists for the purpose of "setting forth what it deems to be truth." That may be Mr. Waterman's own view, but it is hardly consistent with the rubbish about opposing Infidelity which is talked at the annual meeting.

MR. WATERMAN allows that "there are some objections which can never be answered at all." We agree with him again, but the *some* should be *many*. As a matter of fact, we do not know that the C. E. S. has ever answered any serious objection to Christianity. Its agents spend most of their time in blackguarding Freethinkers.

THE *Birmingham Daily Times* publishes some further particulars in regard to the alleged clerical scandal. It appears that a Mr. Joseph Kesterton, one of the congregation of St. Gabriel's, has addressed a letter to the bishop of the diocese, complaining that his pastor, the Rev. Walter H. Cariss, has seduced his sweetheart, told lies about the matter, and kept to himself money intrusted to him for payment to others. Mr. Cariss is vicar of St. Gabriel's, and is the person who was forcibly ejected from the New Street Railway Station. The bishop says: "I do not gather from what you tell me that there is sufficient foundation for a criminal charge against him in a court of law. But I think it my duty to write him a letter of solemn reproof and warning."

ACCORDING to an announcement in the *Christian Herald*, the Rev. T. E. Westerdale, of Bayswater, has won a ten guinea prize for making up the longest list of words out of the letters in the word "Kensingtonian." Pity ministers of the gospel haven't something better to do with their time than childish puzzle-work of this tedious and utterly useless kind.

THE Rev. E. Smythies, of Loughboro, has raised a hubbub by his impertinent bigotry. He was called upon to bury the remains of Mr. Michael Warren, a much respected inhabitant of the town, who died suddenly, and therefore, the reverend gentleman appears to have thought, under the wrath of God. He declined to allow the corpse to be carried into the church, and refused to read the burial service "over that unhappy man." There was naturally a rumpus, and sky-pilot Smythies left the churchyard amidst the groans and hisses of the mourners.

THE Rev. J. J. Halcombe has discovered, as he thinks, a way out of some "Gospel Difficulties" by transposing a large section of the gospel according to St. Luke. The suggested re-arrangement is Sect. I. chap. i. to viii., 21; Sect. II., chap. xi., 14, to xiii., 21; Sect. III., viii., 22, to xi., 13; Sect. IV., xiii., 22, to the end. Mr. Halcombe does not see that if some difficulties are cleared up by his ingenuity he only suggests the new difficulty of how the word of God came to get out of its proper order.

THE Rev. Mr. Shepherd, of Eastbourne, has been denouncing the meanness of the well-to-do. In a congregation of 800 persons, 250 coins were put in the plate, and the whole amount when distributed just came to a penny per head. Many of the ladies who attended the church were wearing bangles and bracelets from the wrist to the elbow, and some of these creatures had the astounding meanness to put into the plate a button or a brightened farthing. Paying for your religion and getting others to pay for it are two very different matters and most Christians prefer the latter course.

SPEAKING of the indiscriminate distribution of the Old Testament by the Bible Society the Rev. Father Searle declared he would tell them what was the statement of the Rev. A. Jefferson at a meeting of the London School Board. The reverend gentleman was reported to have said that it was cheap Bibles that made most of the bad women of London. That was a very startling statement, but it was not in itself altogether new. We knew that in this bad world of ours the holiest things had the vilest uses, and the promiscuous distribution of the Old Testament had been attended with the most lamentable consequences to morality in families and in schools. That portion of the Old Testament called the Pentateuch contained the Jewish law and a minute description of certain sins and punishments to be inflicted, and if indiscriminately read by the young, most serious consequences must happen.

It is said that the Rev. Sam Small owes certain small sums of money, which he is in no haste to pay. When a man becomes so thoroughly imbued and saturated with religion as Sam is supposed to be, he would rather owe money all his life than cheat anybody out of it.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Nov. 28, Hall of Science, Old Street, London, E.C., at 11.15, "Socialist Remedies for Distress;" at 7, "Where is God?"

Tuesday, Nov. 30, Freethought Institute, York Street, Walworth Road, at 8.30, "The Sermon on the Mount."

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

JAN. 2, Milton Hall; 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.—E. T.
- H. P. BOWDEN.—We are obliged for the trouble you have taken.
- J. HUME.—Free Trade we understand, and Protection we understand; but Fair Trade is economical moonshine.
- A. G.—Very good. We use it for our Christmas Number.
- W. MUMBY.—Thanks for cuttings. We are on our feet again, but it will take us a long time to recover our loss.
- W. JARVIS.—The trial of Mr. Reynolds for blasphemy does not take place till January. Colonel Ingersoll will defend him in court. We shall publish a report of the trial.
- D. M. sends us a pious appeal "To the Working Men of England," hoping it will "effect the conversion of our dear brother Mr. Foote." We are sorry to disappoint D. M., but his medicine hasn't operated a cure. He had better pray hard for a week or two.
- CONSTANT READER.—The question is out of our way. To be brief, "dramatic unities" means a due observance of the laws of time and space; in other words, logical consistency in plot, scene and character.
- SOMEBODY.—We are well acquainted with the points, but we thank you all the same.
- C. GRASON writes that the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale's convert, Thomas Spormos, is really called Thomas Bartram. Spormos is a nickname applied to him by his companions. C. Grason adds that Thomas Bartram (alias Spormos) denies that he is a Christian and says his conversion was a sham. Anyhow, we hope Woffendale will keep him, for the fellow will evidently make a very good Christian.
- A. LOVETT.—The letter from Publius Lentulus to the Roman Senate concerning Jesus Christ is a rank forgery. There is not a scholar in Christendom who thinks otherwise, but it appears to be still published by the Catholic Church to impose on the ignorant multitude.
- A. JONES.—Sir Walter Scott was a Christian. We have not Professor Huxley's words by us at the moment, but the passage you refer to should be taken with the context which explains it. Professor Huxley regards the Bible simply as a piece of ancient literature.
- G. B.—Mr. Wheeler returns his best thanks for the medal issued by the holy butcher Gregory XIII, on hearing the good news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew.
- C. K. L.—The hymn half takes up more room than it is worth.
- W. B.—"Ho that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one," is in Luke xxii, 36.
- It is particularly requested that orders for literature be not sent to Mr. Foote, but to Mr. Forder. Correspondents are constantly forgetting this, and the consequence is a good deal of gratuitous trouble to Mr. Foote, and an inevitable delay in the execution of their orders.
- J. W.—A third part of the Bible Hand-book is in preparation, and will be ready shortly. Mr. Forder will supply you with a copy of Paul Bert's Manual. We believe the price of the English edition is half-a-crown.
- J. REVILL.—2 Kings xix. and Isaiah xxxvii. are alike. We suppose these are the chapters you refer to.
- M. PLACKETT.—Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops."
- A. SWINNEY.—Your application shall be borne in mind. Thanks.
- J. F. HENLEY.—Much obliged. See "Acid Drops."
- E. DANIEL.—We haven't the least idea what Cain meant. We never had a chat with him, and we don't suppose we ever shall until we meet him below. But you may see him before we do, and you can ask him the question yourself.—As to the verse in Thessalonians, you mistake its meaning. The dead in Christ who were to rise first were simply the saints who joined the majority before J. C. re-appeared. The writer distinctly says "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in the air." Paul, or whoever was the author, thought, like all the early Christians, that Jesus Christ was coming again in that generation.
- C. DEANE.—Always glad to hear from you. You write too seldom. We use the verses for the Christmas Number.
- W. T. LEEKEY.—Received with thanks. See "Acid Drops"
- R. FOX thanks "Arthur" for the back numbers of the *Freethinker*.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Kont and Sussex Courier—West London Press—Sheffield Evening Star—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker—Financial News—Our Commonwealth (Adelaide)—Birmingham Daily Times—Sunday Chronicle—Banffshire Journal—Hastings and St. Leonards Times—Thinker—Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt.

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.

MR. FOOTE had capital audiences at South Shields last Sunday. There were many fresh faces at the lectures, but it was also pleasant to see veteran Freethinkers like Captain Duncan and Mr. Sanderson, of Jarrow. Mr. Lumley presided in the morning. In the afternoon the chair was taken by Mr. Peacock, of the South Shields School Board; and in the evening by Mr. Richardson, of the North Shields School Board. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed at all three meetings. Some opposition was offered in the afternoon by Mr. Nicholson, the Chairman of the South Shields School Board.

A SOUTH SHIELDS sky-pilot, who seldom attends the School Board except to air his own fads, is moving for an examination of the scholars in religious knowledge. We suppose he wants to be sure that they know the number of Abraham's sheep and cattle, and how old Sarah was when Pharaoh and Abimelech made love to her. Fortunately Mr. Peacock is a determined opponent of Bible instruction in public schools, and he will probably make it hot for his pious colleague before the controversy closes.

THE December number of *Progress*, which will be ready by the time this paragraph meets the reader's eye, is one of exceptional interest. It contains a good portrait of Paul Bert, the famous French Atheist who is just dead, with a critical biography from the pen of Mr. Foote. Mr. Wheeler writes on the Church and Literature, besides continuing his valuable Freethought Biographies. S. Britton continues his study of Marlowe the Atheist, and there is an excellent article by a fresh contributor on the Origin of the New Testament Canon. J. H. Dell contributes a noticeable poem, and Mr. Foote has a second article on "Four Great Essays on Liberty," dealing with Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying*.

MR. WHEELER's instalment of "Freethought Biographies" in *Progress* is specially interesting, giving an account among others of the late Chas. Bray, Brissot and Buzot the Girondins, Giordano Bruno, George Buchanan, Robert Buchanan the Socialist, Henry Thomas Buckle, William Burdon, Thomas and James Burnet, Eugene, Emile Burnouf, and the poets Burns, Butler, and Byron.

OUR Christmas Number will soon be ready, and to Freethinkers it will be the event of the season. There will be the usual abundance of sketches fit to make the very devils laugh in the midst of their brimstone and fire, and satirical articles and racy paragraphs galore, to say nothing of verses and jokes that *Punch* would move heaven and earth to get if it only knew where they were to be found and had the courage to print them. Someday or other a collection of our Special Numbers will be worth its weight in gold.

MR. A. B. MOSS continues his articles in the New York *Truthseeker*, on "Freethought in England." His third article deals with the English Freethought journals and their editors and contributors. Mr. Moss reports that the *Freethinker* has the widest influence.

MR. FOOTE will re-deliver his new lecture, "Where is God?" at the London Hall of Science this evening (Nov. 28).

THE annual Children's Party, at the Hall of Science, London, is arranged to take place on Wednesday, Jan. 12. There will be the usual entertainment, and we dare say the usual crowd of lively youngsters. Subscriptions for the modest but necessary expenses can be sent to the secretary, Mr. W. Cookney, 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury.

THE fourth annual conference of the Australasian Freethinkers will take place at Sydney during Christmas week. We gather from the convening circular that a good attendance is expected, and we shall be happy to report the result when we receive the Australian papers with an account of the proceedings.

THE *Bristol Mercury*, reviewing the Rev. Marcus Dod's papers on "Christianity and Civilisation," in *Good Words*, says: It does not say much for the influence of nineteen centuries of Christianity upon the English race when an eminent modern novelist sadly confesses that "Rome in the worst days of the Empire was no whit worse than London is now—not so bad, in fact, for Rome did not cover its vices with a cloak of hypocrisy, whereas here in London a man may break every commandment in the Decalogue every day in his life if he will go once to church on Sunday." Dr. Dods gives credit to Christianity for the gradual extirpation of slavery, but cynics will point with relentless finger to the condition of millions of "white slaves" in England whose Christian employers only pay them the veriest pittance that will serve to keep body and soul together.

MR. WHEELER'S paper on "Modern Missions" is reprinted from our columns into those of the *Thinker* of Madras. We trust it will be an eye-opener to those who come under the influence of missionaries in that part of India.

THE *Hastings and St. Leonard's Times* says that the antagonism to the payment of tithes generally is spreading throughout Sussex and Kent. Let the movement spread wide enough, and we shall come within measurable distance of Disestablishment in England as well as in Wales.

A NEW English edition of Rénan's *Life of Jesus*, price one shilling, has just been issued as one of the "Temple Series" published at 6 Booksellers Row.

THE latest addition to Blackwood's "Philosophical Classics for English Readers," is a volume on Hume by Professor Knight, editor of the series.

PROFESSOR KNIGHT says of the character of the great Scotch Freethinker: "Those who differ most widely from the philosophy of Hume cannot fail to appreciate much in the character of the man. His life showed a consistent course of self-command. His passions were kept under the steady control of the reason. He was habitually generous, direct, and open as the day, with no twist in his nature, and with nothing servile. He may be truly described as a man 'without dissimulation,'—which is more than can be said of some of his opponents—as a man of high integrity and candor. His intellectual honesty showed itself in his love of all that could be verified, and in his hatred of what seemed to him to be unreality."

A COMMISSION has been appointed by the French Chamber to inquire into the subject of the abrogation of the Concordat and the complete separation of Church and State. The religious orders complain of persecution because they are subject to State regulations. Then let them cease to take State pay and become free from State control.

MRS. ELIZABETH CADY STANTON has come over on a visit to England, where she is bent on bringing out an edition of the expurgated Woman's Bible.

SPEAKING of the unveiling of Bartholdi's statue of Liberty, Mr. Thaddeus B. Wakeman said he hoped the French people who gave this statue of Liberty had not heard that almost in sight of the bronze figure where it now stands a man is indicted and awaiting trial for exercising the liberty of speech on the subject of religion. He hoped rather that they would be assured that there still exist in America a few people who cherish the principles for which Lafayette fought, and which Paine, Jefferson, and Franklin established on American soil.

ENGLISH Freemasonry is mixed up with a deal of Bible mummery and flummery. We are the more pleased to notice that out west the Montana Grand Lodge has decided that a Mr. Whitford, who published two pamphlets entitled *Bible Fabrications Refuted*, and *Christianity a Reward for Crime*, had committed no Masonic offence and remains a member in good standing.

A DYING SAINT.

CHRISTIANS are fond of inventing horrible accounts of "Infidel" death-beds. Let us turn to their own accounts and see how a saint dies. In the Word of God one saint in particular has his dying words and acts recorded at length, evidently for our special edification. Christians cannot say that the account is a malignant slander, for it is the account given by God, who, they say, cannot lie. Neither can they say it is hostile or exaggerated, unless they are prepared to insult their God by such a suicidal supposition. Least of all can they plead that king David was not a representative saint and prophet. Inspired by God to write a part of the Bible delighted in by Christians of all sects, the royal psalmist is singled out by the revealed Word itself as the man after God's own heart (Acts. xiii., 22; 1 Sam. xiii., 14).

First, we may notice the best method of comforting or reviving an aged saint—the said method being evidently felt to be most congenial to a man after God's own heart. David had many wives and concubines, but these were set aside and a fresh young virgin was procured. The inspired account runs thus:

"Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king,

and ministered to him; but the king knew her not."—(1 Kings i., 1-4.)

If any such substitute for hot-water bottles were employed in the case of a dying Freethinker, either ancient or modern, Christian tongues would never tire of their pleasant task of flinging the vilest accusations of the grossest licentiousness upon the hoary old sinner. But that which would be a disgusting insult to public decency and virtue in the case of an unbelieving reprobate is perfectly correct in the case of an eminent saint. Will Spurgeon by-and-bye adopt this holy method of curing his rheumatism, and if so, what will Mrs. Spurgeon or her ghost say when her reverend sons seek out the young virgin and present her to their reverend father?

Besides the fair damsel Abishag, what other subjects occupied the thoughts of the dying saint? Solomon being his son by the adulteress Bathsheba, the royal adulterer and murderer was anxious to secure his accession to the throne. Much of David's death-bed talk was directed to this object. Wishes for revenge also filled his mind, and his final instructions (1 Kings ii., 1) to Solomon were counsels of blood and treachery. The royal saint had a great general named Joab, who had long been his commander-in-chief and had fought his battles for him. David hated him, but dared not kill him. He left this state murder or private assassination to his wise and pious son Solomon as a secret death-bed charge. He recited some of Joab's offences in the distant past, offences which David had overlooked at the time, and said to his son: "Do thou therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." Apart from the Bible and religion, this treacherous but saintly kind of statecraft is now viewed with general execration. Napoleon left money to reward an assassin, and in this he was a humble follower of the policy of the man after God's own heart. But every one condemns him for it. Should not David also be condemned? Should not his example be denounced in order that it may be avoided? What would the world say of William the Third, if on his death-bed he had left secret orders for the execution or assassination of the Duke of Marlborough? Would not all nations be horrified to hear that the aged Emperor of Germany had ordered the Crown Prince to put Bismarck or Moltke to death? What would the Churches say of Victoria if she left similar messages concerning the Duke of Cambridge or Lord Wolseley? What would they say if a Freethinker on his death-bed had given such orders to another Freethinker, who subsequently carried them out? Would not any such orders have been a terrible blot on the character of Frederick the Great or Gambetta, or of any person who had no religious belief to wash his sins away?

Reasons of state will be pleaded perhaps in extenuation of such crimes. But David also left similar orders for compassing the death of a private individual for having cursed him. David had publicly sworn to spare Shimei's life, but the sanctity of an oath did not prevent the Lord's anointed from ordering by deputy the murder which he feared to commit during his own lifetime. Here is the Scriptural account of the very last dying words of an inspired saint to his pious and promising son:

"And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood. So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David" (1 Kings ii., 8-10).

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" cry the saints; and by righteousness they mean such qualities as David pre-eminently displayed; for the Bible assures us that "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings xv., 5). The torture of the Ammonites, the murderous treachery of his dying orders, the many evil deeds of his life, were no offences in God's eyes. But civilised men must judge differently, and the dying words of the man after God's own heart must ever remain a disgrace to religion, and a discredit to the Bible which he partly wrote. It is strange indeed that Christians can talk so loudly about Infidel death-beds, with the example of David so prominently

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before their eyes. But the peculiar blindness of religion is upon them. They see even non-existent notes in our eyes, but the whole mountains of crime and prejudice that obscure their own they cannot perceive. Starting from the Bible as their standard, their moral perceptions are entirely corrupted and distorted. But the spirit of the age is against them. The dim light of morality is increasing, and Christians will have to face the shame and horror of their own vaunted records of a righteousness which is but a whited sepulchre pretentiously concealing the corruption of saintly sin and royal crime. The worst Infidel death-bed that can be found—and unbelievers do not pretend to any special exemption from faults and sins—can compare favorably with the death-bed of this inspired saint, this selected hero, who had God to protect and guide him in so exceptional a manner. By way of contrast and as an eye-opener for Christians, Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds* might well conclude with an appendix giving God's own unblushing account of the final incidents attending the death-bed of the lustful and bloodthirsty saint and prophet and psalmist and murderer and torturer and adulterer and type of Christ, who was so specially renowned and favored and perfected as being after God's own heart.

W. P. BALL.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

JUDGING from the history of the world since Christianity was established, I should say that your crucifixion has been more of a curse than a blessing. Instead of your sufferings moving the heart to pity, they have too often moved it to hatred and cruelty. The Crusaders captured Jerusalem on Good Friday, and entered the doomed city at the very hour of your Passion. They immediately proceeded to offer up a bloody sacrifice to their deity. Seventy thousand "infidels" were slaughtered, the Jews were burnt in their synagogue, and in the Mosque of Omar the blood was knee-deep and dashed up to the horses' bridles. Your holy champions, who were all decorated with a cross, interrupted their orgie of blood to pay their devotions. After piously kneeling on the various spots they supposed to have been hallowed by your presence, they resumed the massacre of your enemies, beginning with three hundred prisoners whose safety had been solemnly assured. The Saracens were flung from the tops of houses and towers; women with children at their breasts, girls and boys, were indiscriminately slaughtered. It was a hell of rapine, murder, and lust. No heart, among the warriors of the cross, melted with compassion. Where your blood was shed to save, they sacrificed myriads of victims; where you are said to have forgiven your enemies, they exhibited the cruelty of fiends. The carnage lasted a week, and when the victors were tired of slaying, they sold the survivors as slaves.

Such were the deeds of the "Soldiers of Christ," who fought under the symbol of your Crucifixion. How different was the conduct of the Saracens when they recaptured Jerusalem a century later! Not a superfluous drop of blood was shed, and the noble Saladin softened the rigors of the capitulation to thousands, whose only claim on his generosity was that they were human. He ransomed a multitude of captives from his private purse, restored the mothers to their children, and the husbands to their wives. A Mohammedan infidel, he regarded your divinity as a superstition, but his humanity compels our admiration and love and stands out in bold relief against the uniform savagery of your devotees.

Your Crucifixion had done no good for the Crusaders. What has it done for mankind? Worshipping "dead limbs of gibbeted gods," the world grew fouler; its mind was debased by associating images of carnage with its loftiest ideal; and history attests that the Cross never gleamed so brightly as when it rose above the fires of the stake, or shone over seas of blood. Every red drop that fell from your hands and feet and brows, turned into deadly poison, with which your priests have infected humanity. Heart and mind have been alike degraded, cruelty and superstition being twin curses; and at this day, the Christians who most closely resemble your first disciples, assume the watch-word and trade-mark of "Blood and Fire," while their religious antics are worthy of the fetishists of Africa. Were you a god, and did you foresee this? I shrink from the terrible conclusion. It is too appalling. It makes the universe an infinite hell. Until you expressly tell me otherwise, and assure me that the only philosophy is despair, I shall prefer to think that the Jesus who perished on a Roman Cross was a Jewish enthusiast, weak like most men, and mortal like all.—G. W. FOOTE, *Letters to Jesus Christ*.

I CANNOT help noticing, Sir, upon what good terms our Spiritual brethren and sisters are with His Excellency, the God of the Universe. For instance, this afternoon at the meeting a prayer was offered by a medium, which commenced in this wise:—"Good afternoon, God! How do you do, to-day?" It was a good enough prayer, but having been brought up in the Presbyterian faith and catechism the familiarity jarred on my nerves, somewhat.—*Boston Investigator*.

Paul, the Gnostic Opponent of Peter, not the Apostle of Historic Christianity. A Lecture by GERALD MASSEY. One shilling. Villa Bordighiera, New Southgate, London, N.—This lecture is a sequel to the one on "The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ," reviewed in our columns Oct. 17. Mr. Massey holds that Paul was not a supporter of the system known as Historical Christianity, which was founded on a belief in the Christ carnalised, "but that he was its unceasing and deadly opponent during his lifetime; and that after his death his writings were tampered with, interpolated, and re-indoctrinated by his old enemies the forgers and falsifiers, who first began to weave the web of the Papacy in Rome."

Those who have most explored the early ages of Christianity will, we venture to affirm, be the least likely to summarily reject this view. The enmity of Paul and the other apostles shines out in many passages, both of the New Testament and of early Christian literature. Paul's own contempt for those "who seemed to be pillars," and Peter, whom he withstood to his face for his insincerity, is undisguised; and it is evident from such expressions as those of the Apocalypse, directed against Paul, evidently hit at by "those who say they are apostles, but are not, but are of the Synagogue of Satan," and the "know, O vain man" of James, that the dislike was mutual. Indeed, in the Epistle of Peter to James, prefixed to the Clementine Homilies, Paul is spoken of as the enemy, while the *Preaching of Peter* declares that that apostle and Paul remained unreconciled till death. Paul is emphatic that his gospel is his own, derived from no man, but from the Christ revealed within. His Christ is not Jesus of Nazareth, whose name he does not mention, and whose sayings and doings he shows no acquaintance with save in a few passages, as at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, which Mr. Massey does not hesitate to pronounce spurious. Mr. Massey even argues that Paul intends Peter by "the man of sin."

One point is of importance. According to the data derived from the Acts and Paul's Epistle to the Galatians his conversion must have taken place as early as the year 27. Paul states that after his conversion he did not go to Jerusalem for three years. Then after fourteen more years he went again to Jerusalem with Barnabas. This visit can be dated by the famine, which is historic and known to have occurred in the year 44. If Paul was converted as early as 27 of our era it could not have been by seeing the risen spiritual Christ, for according to orthodox chronology he had not then entered upon his ministry! His own account of his conversion is not by any possible exegesis to be reconciled with that given in the Acts of the Apostles.

On another matter we differ from Mr. Massey. He thinks that from his standpoint there is no doctrinal difficulty even about Paul being the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But internal no less than external evidence is against this work coming from the same hand as the Epistle to the Romans. The whole conception of the law is different, and Mr. Massey should be the last to refuse weight to the fact that Marcion, the follower of Paul, excluded it from his canon. That in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Christ is not historical, but a mythical Messiah, is equally explicable on the theory that it was written by Apollos, Barnabas, or other of the Non-Petrine schools of early Christians.

Mr. Massey is successful in showing that there was a great gulf between Gnostic Christology and Historic Christianity. The main work of the first centuries was how to bridge over the chasm. He says:

"This could only be done by resting on Paul as a prop and buttress on the one side, and Peter on the other, which had to be done by converting or perverting the Epistles of the Gnostic Paul into a support for Historic Christianity. In that way the Church was founded. It was built as a bridge across the gulf and the Pope of Rome appointed and aptly designated *Pontifex Maximus*. It was roared above the chasm, lying darkly lurking like an open grave below, and to-day, as ever, the Christian world is horribly haunted with the fear that a breath or two of larger intellectual life, a too audible utterance of free-or thought, a dose of mental dynamite, may bring the edifice of error down in wreck and ruin to fill the gulf at last, over which it was so perilously founded from the first."

It is evident that Mr. Massey has carefully explored a most difficult subject, and one which, owing to the total destruction of the works of Marcion and the early Gnostics, may never be efficiently cleared up. We heartily commend the lecture to all who are interested in the obscure and mysterious subject of the Origin of the Christian Church.

THE sacrifice of Jesus, so much boasted by the Christian Church, is nothing compared to the sacrifice of a mother for her family.

AN illustration of our remarks last week on the uncomfortable position of Freethinkers in hospitals and similar institutions occurs in the current number of the *St. Pancras Guardian* which mentions the custom of itinerant preachers forcing their way into the St. Pancras workhouse every Sunday afternoon and evening. They average, it says, from two to four in some wards every Sunday, and the poor inmates are obliged to listen to the exhortations of these interlopers. This is a specimen of the sort of Christian comfort provided for the poor in this godly land.

PROFANE JOKES.

A NONCONFORMIST was once bandying words with a curate about episcopacy. "I should not care to live subject to a bench of bishops," he observed. "But is there no authority over you?" asked the curate, "Only a board," was the answer. "Well, what's a board except a bench with no legs to stand upon."

A NOTED desperado out West, earned for himself the name "God Almighty" owing to his capability for evading the law. After a while, however, he was caught and lynched. A stranger passing that way at the time made inquiries as to the unwonted stir that was prevailing, and was informed that God Almighty was being strung up. On hearing this explanation he exclaimed:—"What an unfortunate family; the son crucified and the father hung!"

A LADY sat at a Primitive Methodist chapel close by a poor man who was remarkably ill-shod, and whose exclamations were in inverse proportion to his shoe-leather. He kept crying out "Glory be to God!" until he quite annoyed her; and on leaving chapel, the lady promised him a new pair of boots if he would restrain himself within due bounds. He did so for several days; but afterwards some particularly exciting cause occurred, and he started up in chapel, shouting, "Boots or no boots, glory be to God!"

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