

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.
Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 179.



A BATTLE ROYAL.

Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses.—JUDE, 9.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

THERE are two very solemn occasions in the Christian year; Good Friday, on which God Almighty was executed, and Christmas Day, on which he was born. Every sincere believer regards them with peculiar awe, and from morn to eve ponders the transcendent mysteries connected with them. Eating and drinking, all the pleasures and pastimes of life, are out of place at such times. Who could pamper the flesh while thinking of his bleeding God, agonising on the terrible cross? Who could dawdle over savory dishes and sparkling wines while remembering the Incarnation of God in the form of a child for the purpose of walking through this miserable vale of tears in order to save his ungrateful children from everlasting hell? Who could dance and sing on the day when his Savior began his sorrowful career on earth, where he was born in a stable, lived on the high road, and died on the gallows?

YET, alas, the number of sincere believers is small. They are only a remnant, a little band of saints in the midst of a sinful world, oases of piety in a wide desert of ungodliness. While they macerate themselves the rest of man-

kind revel in all kinds of delight. Yea, on Good Friday, on the very anniversary of their Redeemer's passion, these light-hearted sinners play at cricket and football, go on picnics, and make excursions to the seaside; eating roast mutton instead of worshipping the Lamb, and swilling beer instead of mourning over the precious streams that flowed from their Savior's veins. And on Christmas Day, the anniversary of his entrance into this scene of woe, when he forsook his glorious palace in heaven for a paltry stable on earth, taking upon himself the burden of teething, measles, whooping cough, and all the ills that baby flesh is heir to, they go not to the House of God and bend their knees in humble praise of his ineffable condescension, but stay at home, eating all manner of gross viands, drinking all manner of pleasant liquors, dancing, singing, playing cards, telling stories round the fire, and kissing each other under the mistletoe. Thoughtless wretches! They are treading the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire. How will they face the offended Majesty of Heaven on that great Day of Judgment, when every smile of theirs on such solemn occasions will be treated as an unpardonable affront? Brethren, be not deceived; God is not mocked.

Still worse than these sinners, if that be possible, there are miserable sceptics who would have us believe that God

Almighty was neither crucified on Good Friday nor born on Christmas Day. These presumptuous infidels pretend that both those holy festivals are derived from ancient sun-worship. They dare to ask us why the anniversary of the Crucifixion, instead of falling on the same day in every year, depends on astronomical signs; and they mockingly remind us that the birthday of our Savior is the same as that of Mithra and all the sun-gods of antiquity. True, the heathen celebrated the new birth of the Sun on the twenty-fifth of December, from the fiery east to the frozen north, from Persia to Scandinavia. But what of that? Their celebration was invented by the Devil, who lorded it over this world until our Savior came to bruise the old serpent's head. He prompted the heathen to commemorate the twenty-fifth of December, for the plausible reason that the Sun had then decisively begun to emerge from his winter cave, giving a fresh promise of gentle spring, lusty summer, and fruitful autumn. I call it a plausible reason, because the Sun is never born, any more than it rises and sets. These phenomena are all illusions, caused by the movement of our own earth. But the cunning Devil took advantage of men's ignorance to deceive them; and having appropriated our Savior's birthday for another purpose, he calculated that it would never be restored to its rightful use. But, God be thanked, he was mistaken. Our Holy Church fought him for three centuries, and at last, having enlisted Constantine and his successors on her side, she exterminated the pagan idolatry and established the religion of Christ. Then were all the Devil's subtle inventions destroyed, and among them the sun-worship which disgraced the close of every year. Happily, however, the task was not so hard as it might have been, for the Devil had outwitted himself. He had accustomed the heathen to celebrate the day on which Christ *was* to be born, and so our holy Church had little else to do than to substitute one name for another, and to devote the day to the worship of the true God instead of a false one.

Since then, alas, owing to the native depravity of the human heart, Satan has recovered some of his lost power; for he is a restless, intriguing, malignant creature, whose mischief will never be terminated until he is chained up in the bottomless pit. Defeated by our holy Church in the east, he planned a fresh attack from the north, and carried it out with considerable success. He contrived to mix up our orthodox Christmas celebration with fantastic nonsense from the Norse mythology. Those who decorate Christmas trees and burn Yule-tide logs are heathens without knowing it, and it is to be feared that their ignorance will not excuse them in the sight of God. Away with such things, brethren! They are snares of the Evil One, traps for your perdition, gins for your immortal souls. Even the evergreens with which you deck your houses are a pitfall of the same old enemy. They are relics of nature-worship, diverting your minds from the Creator to the creature; and well doth Satan know, as ye glance at the white and red berries and then at the fair faces and pouting lips of the daughters of Eve, that your thoughts must be earthly, sensual and devilish. I mean not that you will necessarily rush into illicit pleasures, and drink of the cup of sin; but the carnal mind is always at enmity with God, and at such a time as the birthday of our Lord we shall incur his wrath if we do not keep our attention fixed on things above.

There is another lesson, brethren, which you should lay to heart. Christ gave up all for you; what will you give up for him? His gospel is still unpreached in many benighted parts of this globe. Millions of souls in Asia, Africa and America, go annually to Hell for want of the saving words of grace; and even at home, in our very midst, there are millions outside the Church, who live in pagan darkness, and whose doom is frightful to contemplate. Deny yourselves then for your Savior, and if you cannot be as solemn as you should at this season, at least restrict your pleasures, and give the cost of what you forego to the Church, who will spend the money in the salvation of souls. A single bottle of wine or whiskey, a single turkey or plum-pudding less on your tables this Christmas, may mean a soul less in Hell, and another saint around the great white throne in Heaven. Do not waste your wealth on the perishable bodies of the poor, or if you must feed the hungry and clothe the naked, let your charity go through the hands of God's ministers; but rather seek the immortal welfare of dying sinners, and give, yea ever give,

for the purpose of rescuing them from the wrath to come. Oh, brethren, neglect not this all-important duty.—The choir will now sing the twenty-fifth hymn, after which we shall take the collection. G. W. FOOTE.

ACID DROPS.

FIVE members of the Anti-Tithe Defence League have been distrained upon in the parish of Whitford, Flintshire, by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Why don't the parsons go fishing for coin as Peter did, and let poor farmers alone?

SEVERAL churches in want of subscriptions have of late adopted the dodge of sending round a circular signed by the churchwardens and clergyman, saying, Your assessment for such an object will be so much, for which the collector will call in a few days. Unwary parishioners are deluded into the belief that payment is obligatory. We find that this game is practised extensively in Ireland. We have a circular before us addressed to an old man who has to break stones for a living assessing him in the sum of 2s. 6d. for the support of the ministry. It is to be hoped in such cases the collector will be asked to move off as speedily as possible.

A WELSHWOMAN recently, when the parson came to collect tithe, insisted upon his taking one of her children. She had ten, and declared that if he took the tenth pig he must take the tenth child. The parson relinquished his claim.

"A PERSONAL religion should be a *purse an' all religion*," says Canon Wilberforce. Exactly. The Church puts a pistol to your head and demands, "Your money and your life." All is to be devoted to her service. Continuing his pious puns, the Canon goes on to appeal to Christians for their "worldly goods as well as their goodly words."

It is whispered—and in Christian journals too that ought to be above joking on sacred matters—that as Mr. Kennedy, the secretary at Exeter Hall, opened his Bible the other day, his eye happened to catch the words, "Let your light so shine before men," and that he at once ordered a monster lamp to be hung over the massive portico of Exeter Hall. We wonder whether Christ was thinking of the electric light of the future when he uttered the original words—if he ever did utter them.

CANON WESTCOTT writes in the *Contemporary Review* a lot of vague gush about the ideal excellence of the character of Christ. A man who was disobedient as a son, and who never showed himself in the character of a lover, a husband, or a father, is declared to be the pattern of all excellence. "The Person of the Lord," he says, "meets with us in all our strivings. In Him we discover in the most complete harmony all the excellences which are divided not unequally between man and woman." Catholics use similar language about the Virgin Mary, and have just about as much warrant in historical fact.

Apropos of the character of Jesus, the following letter by a distinguished author written at a time when that character was made the subject of laudation, is too outspoken to be lost: "Both David Hume and John S. Mill lived at a time when speaking against the established superstition was dealt with far more seriously than it is now. Be that as it may: I, for one, never could see anything in the character of J. C. to admire, beyond the circumstance that, for a time, he worked at the carpenter business, and that he could enjoy a glass of good wine (John ii., 10). Even assuming the truth of the stories, Matthew xxvi., 64, and Plato's *Apology*, both Jesus and Socrates courted death most ostentatiously. The egotism of both was simply disgusting. But while Socrates was able to reason, to investigate moral qualities, and to perform the duties of a brave soldier in the army of Athens, Jesus was simply a moaning, whining idler, sponging on every one who would give him a dinner. Besides, Jesus was utterly destitute of originality, and even of thinking power. He has not added a single new idea to the records of sense or nonsense. If he were a 'model' of any sort, he was a model of inanity."

It is reported that the other Sunday Father Hayes ended his speech by the following blessing:—"God bless Ireland and God damn England." The vulgar language employed by this priest is as thoroughly scriptural as is the sentiment it conveys.

THE *Temperance World* groans over the fact that, despite the Blasphemy Laws and our imprisonment, we go on disseminating "moral poison," or in other words Freethought. It makes the important, and in one sense remarkable, discovery that we have "recently" issued a "specially blasphemous Summer Number." Considering that our Christmas Number is now circulating, the *Temperance World* is rather behind date. But Jesus Christ himself, who promised to come again in the lifetime of his hearers, is eighteen centuries behind date; and who can be surprised when his followers are laggards.

By the way, hadn't the *Temperance World* better settle the drink question with Jesus Christ, who turned over a hundred gallons of water into wine to keep a spree going, instead of troubling its hydrocephalous head about our "blasphemy"?

THE "Convict in the pulpit," the Rev. Dr. Keatinge, has been sentenced to eighteen months' hard labor for obtaining money under false pretences. The first jury could not agree, but the second found him guilty.

ONE of the most comical censures upon the "anti-Christian Government of France" is given in a letter from a correspondent of the *Church Times* who has been to Algiers, and laments that the Government in that country does not permit Christianity to be taught to the Mohammedan children. These good Christians think themselves persecuted when they are prevented from interfering with the religion of other people.

AT an East-End theatre, one of the characters in distress calls on God for aid. A kind-hearted French girl, who comes to her assistance, exclaims, pointing upwards, "He is far off, and I am here." That line "fetches" the whole house. Godism is getting played out.

THE Rev. W. Minchin Edwards of Darfield, is a member of the Church Militant. Having imbibed too much seductive fluid at a party at Low Valley, he, according to evidence given at the Birmingham Police-court, cursed "like a collier" and lashed about with a stick "like Billyo" and commenced fighting one Lawrence. He was fined forty shillings and costs for being drunk and riotous.

THE *Christian Herald* narrates how a young man converted by Moody had the great "courage" to throw up his situation as ticket collector at a theatre because he felt that a Christian could not possibly have anything to do with a theatre. His salary was eighteen shillings a week, and he had a wife and family to keep. His faithful answer to the remonstrances of worldly-minded sceptics was, "Can I not trust to the Lord to pay eighteen shillings a week?" He felt he could trust the Lord to pay his wages and feed his family, "nor was his faith in vain; the very next day he got a situation at a better salary." If Christianity of this kind gets propagated among the masses, we shall have hundreds of thousands of people throwing themselves out of employment and trusting to God and the workhouse for their children's food. All connected with theatres, and with public-houses, omnibuses, railways and all businesses that include Sunday work, will have to give up their occupations and put themselves in the Lord's hands.

THESE Christian unemployed, however, are to take comfort. "Depend upon it the kind God who feeds his birds will not allow His children to starve." This at least is the teaching and encouragement held out to them by Christian instructors of the poor. But the assertion implied is thoroughly false. God does not feed his birds sufficiently to prevent starvation. Enormous numbers of birds die of starvation and cold every winter; and if the kindness of man did not assist the vaunted benevolence of God, many thousands of men, women and children would die of starvation every year even in civilised Britain. In other countries millions die at a time in occasional famines. And yet Christian simpletons can go on for ever maundering childish falsehoods about God not allowing his children to starve. No amount of fact will convince a true Christian that a cherished doctrine is false, for the more contrary to reason and truth his belief is, the more the conceited thickhead prides himself on it as a virtue and a glory.

A CORRESPONDENT in the *Rock*, writing about "the Personality of the Devil" as set forth in the leading article in that journal, shows the high and dignified position held by his Satanic Majesty. "The Old Testament Scriptures," he says, "plainly depict Satan as one of the 'sons of God,' whom even the mighty Archangel Michael durst not rebuke (Jude), and who stood constantly in the presence of God (Job i. and ii.; Zech. iii.)." This pious correspondent asserts that "Since the coming of our Savior Satan's energy seems to have redoubled, and he has cast loose upon his present kingdom all the evil passions and powers of evil which he possesses." Christ's coming, then, was a very questionable benefit. Pity he didn't stay away and let the Devil have a rest, instead of rousing him to redoubled energy.

SOME excitement has been evinced in South Wales by the refusal of the rector of Merthyr to allow a Miss Berry to be confirmed because she would not first go to confession. The Bishop of Llandaff has supported the rector by refusing to confirm the girl without her pastor's sanction. The incident illustrates how far Catholic customs are creeping into the Church of England.

THE Roman Catholics of Salford complain that their children are being kidnapped by pious Protestant agencies, and have recently summonsed an officer of the Manchester and Salford Boys and Girls' Refuge for stealing one John Davidson. There was a conflict of testimony and a document was produced which

Davidson's mother declared she signed without knowing the contents. The case was dismissed on the understanding that civil proceedings will be taken by a writ of *habeas corpus*.

THE American churches are complaining of the clipped and punched coins put into their collection boxes because no one will take them in the way of business. Some of the treasurers, according to the *Christian Herald*, "have actually found among the coin buttons the size and color, but not the value of quarter dollars." This meets with the decided condemnation of the editor, the Rev. M. Baxter, and he earnestly reminds these wicked jokers of the "solemn warning" which he supposes Christ addresses to their kind in Matthew vi., 6.

SPURGEON, preaching about Peter's miraculous release from prison, says: "See, dear friends, see clearly, see indisputably—the omnipotence of prayer." And yet with the help of all this "omnipotence of prayer" he is still unable to cure himself of rheumatism and gout during the winter time. Prayer will probably prove a little more omnipotent next summer when warmth has returned.

THE New England Sabbatarians having shut up the public-houses in many parts of the states, the publicans have been severely enforcing the obsolete Sunday laws on the rest of the community, by way of retaliation. Barbers and tobacconists had to close their establishments. In Boston even the druggists' stores were not allowed to open, though it is said that thirsty souls occasionally rung the bell and obtained a Sunday drink, purely medicinal of course, in the back room.

DR. BAGSHAW, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham, in his Advent pastoral, recommends Catholics to resist tithes as an unjust Protestant tax levied on the whole country.

THE word "aggressive" when placed before such words as Atheism and Freethought is supposed to indicate an unusually offensive and wicked violence of word and action. The expression however is evidently harmless when applied by Christians to their own movements, for the "Church Army" announces its want of cheap "gentlemen" at nineteen shillings a week for carrying out "aggressive mission work." Our conscience is at rest. "Aggressive" propagandism is quite respectable after all, and not the very depths of criminality, as bigoted Christians and lukewarm Secularists would fain persuade us.

MR. J. ALLANSON PICTON, who succeeded Mr. Peter Taylor in the representation of Leicester, cannot forget his old preaching tub. Writing to the *Daily News* on the Arigna evictions, he repeats the words of an eye-witness of the wretched scene, who exclaimed "It can't be that God will let this go on much longer!" Why not, forsooth? God has let it go on for centuries, and why should he be in a hurry to stop it now? The fact is, men will write any rubbish in the name of religion. Mr. Picton is a pretty good Radical, and he takes common-sense views of most questions; but when he hears the word "God" his wits forsake him, and he talks like an idiot.

BESIDES, if God will remedy evils, as Mr. Picton teaches, why need men interfere? Is it that God's ways are so violent and brutal that man's milder methods of reform are preferable? And if so, why are we to respect such a God? The fact is that Mr. Picton's "God" is but a cant phrase for the laws of nature, including of course the laws of human nature.

IT is somewhat curious that in Spain, the most orthodox Christian country in the world, Sunday is less gloomily observed than in any other country. All the shops are open, and bull fights take place in the afternoon. The churches, which are best attended on feast days, are always closed when there is a bull-fight on.

THE *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle* of Montreal, writing against the indiscriminate circulation of the Bible, declares that the authorised Protestant version "is in part most obscenely filthy." It is simply a fact that many a poor man has been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for selling literature less indecent than the reports of the Campbell divorce case in the pious *Standard* and *Evening News*, and immensely less obscene than the Bible.

If mortal man, in modern times,
Dared to convey in prose or rhymes,
Such lusty filth to English ears
As in the Word of God appears,
The wretch would quickly rot in gaol,
And "sarve him right," the dirty snail.

WHEN Dr. Talmage, the Brooklyn moultedbank, was announced to preach in San Francisco on the "Seven Plagues of New York," a New York journal unkindly observed, "Dr. Talmage forgets that since he left this city there are only six."

THE French Conservative papers are circulating a startling report of Paul Bert's recantation. The *Constitutionnel* says that he received extreme unction, and died as a good Christian professing his sorrowful repentance. Lies are cheap, and piety has always found them useful. In this case the lie has a good start, for the Republican papers refrain from comment until trustworthy information reaches them. It is known, however, that Paul Bert's body was sent away to France without any religious ceremonies having been performed over it. The only foundation for the report seems to be that, according to Mgr. Pinaud's account, Paul Bert complimented the clericals in Tonquin on their patriotic self-sacrifice. Such a recognition of fellow Frenchmen's self-denial amid common dangers in a foreign land would be both polite and politic, but it would be absurd to attach any theological importance to it. Paul Bert describes himself as having dreamt during the delirium of his illness that he was promised the entrance to Paradise without Bishop Puginier's ministrations, and that his mind was free of his body and in a state of blessedness, seeing all manner of things. Possibly a sick man's dream is the basis on which Christians have erected their structure of falsehood.

WRITING on this subject, the *Pall Mall Gazette* remarks that "People who would never take the trouble or run the risk of reading words written when life was flowing so easily as to leave the intellect perfectly free to settle such questions as it could, will give themselves endless anxiety to know what were the words or thoughts of the same man when departed health had taken intellectual strength with it, and the debility of death is not less on the mind than on the body. It would be easy to give many examples of this, and the case of M. Paul Bert is the latest. All his life Bert was a Freethinker, if not a positive Atheist, of the most pronounced type; indeed he was often spoken of as the incarnation of the spirit of aggressive Atheism. Now that he is dead and gone, some Catholic ecclesiastic comes, of course, to claim his conversion just before death. The fact is probably entirely untrue, but that it should be so eagerly received and discussed by so many good people is a sign of the aberration to which we have alluded."

HENRY VARLEY is in hot water out at the Cape. With his usual Christian charity, and native kindness of heart, he held forth in public against an hotel keeper who died suddenly. Notwithstanding his trade, the man was universally esteemed for his benevolence; but this was nothing to the God-intoxicated Varley who, knowing absolutely nothing about him, said he was a very bad man and wondered why the Almighty suffered him to live so long. A subscription is being raised to enable the widow to prosecute Varley for slander.

By the way, the Christian who entertained Varley at Graham's Town also died suddenly, and the people of that part are wondering whether it was a divine judgment.

THE Rev. James Baillie says: "Of course we don't believe in angels in these days—except when they are on Christmas cards. But the Old Book still stands." Yes, and the Old Book teaches belief in angels, and parsons reject and ridicule that belief and many others, while professing all the time to accept the Book as God's Word. But this particular minister goes on to say: "Still God sends his white-winged messengers to cheer us in the fight." Perhaps he will explain this as figurative and the angels of the Bible as also figurative. Jacob wrestling with a figurative angel till his thigh was put out of joint would be a good idea for parsons.

THE *Tribune* is going in for blasphemy. On its posters it introduces "SATAN, M.P." to the notice of the British public in the very largest of letters. The editor must beware of twelve months in Holloway Gaol.

A SHOCKING child murder was committed through religious mania last week at Aspall near Bolton, where Mary France cut the throat of her child Ellen and stated that the Holy Ghost had ordered her to do so. Why not Mary France as well as Father Abraham?

ANDREW WATSON, of West Bothwell Street, Glasgow, committed suicide after reading Spurgeon's sermons. Had he been perusing *Infidel Death-Beds* or the *Freethinker* there would have been a fine opportunity for moralizing.

It seems from the recent "Prophetic Conference" that Christ is especially expected to land at Chicago. We should think rather that he would have a special aversion to a city so famous for its pigs, unless indeed he has a host of devils to cast out and find fresh habitations for.

A CLERGYMAN near Sleaford, whose examination in bankruptcy has just been concluded at Peterborough, whose parishioners only number about 450, but whose income from his living was £798, has just failed with liabilities amounting to £4,621, and with assets worth less than £400. These are the sort of people who urge the poor to "owe no man anything," and "be content with your wages."

"DECENCY" writes to the *Leytonstone Express* protesting

against the "impurity" sermons which the Rev. W. Manning is preaching in St. Andrew's Church. The reverend gentleman's first sermon was on the seventh commandment, and "passage after passage of Scripture was given out, together with 'revelations' which would have done more credit to a certain evening newspaper than to the House of God."

"DECENCY'S" protest is very natural, but it shows that he is very ignorant of the contents of the Bible or he would not be shocked by "passage after passage" from what he considers the Word of the perfect God.

THE Rev. Prebendary Anderson has been discoursing at Bath on "Suicidal Concessions to Infidelity." Looking carefully through the report we see that the "concessions" mean telling the truth. Prebendary Anderson appears to stand firm by the decalogue, in which there is no law against lying except in litigation.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has devised a brilliant scheme for celebrating the Queen's Jubilee. First of all, of course, the scheme involves cash, and plenty of it; in fact, the Archbishop wants a quarter of a million, which is probably about the value of the precious metal which Aaron did or didn't get for his golden calf. And what is to be done with all this money when it is raised? Are the clergy going to fulfil Christ's command, "Feed my sheep?" Are they going to start co-operative societies of working men? Or are they even going to remove the necessity for an association to supply poor curates with cast-off clerical clothes? No; the Archbishop of Canterbury wishes to erect a big building in London, where the clergy of all the kingdom, who are constantly jawing to laymen in their churches, may assemble and jaw to each other.

THE point of it all is the quarter of a million. There will be pretty pickings for some of the promoters of the scheme if John Bull is foolish enough to support it.

BRITISH Christianity being in want of a popular champion, a Yankee has been imported to demolish our Infidelity. His name is H. L. Hastings. He is holding forth at Exeter Hall, and Messrs. Haughton are starting a new Christian paper which he is to edit. One of Mr. Hastings's discourses is published in a little pamphlet. It is entitled *The Inspiration of the Bible*, and unless the author or the publisher is one of those persons who will have their portion in the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire, five hundred thousand copies of it have been circulated. Moody said he would walk ten miles to hear this lecture, though he never did so. Lord Shaftesbury said it was "admirable." Canon Wilberforce says it is "one of the most pungent and useful ever published."

MR. HASTINGS is what they call a smart man, but he has not the smallest comprehension of Freethought objections to the Bible. When he says that "we must accept Jesus of Nazareth and his claims entirely, or else we must reject the whole Gospel as an imposture" he evinces the grossest ignorance. In an age of universal credulity superstitions arise without being designed. Besides, Freethinkers are well aware that the Gospels were not written until long after the death of Jesus, and they cannot be taken as absolute authorities for anything.

MR. HASTINGS is equally ignorant of Freethought when he derides that old story about the selection of documents at the Council of Nice, when the canonical books were said to have jumped up on the table. What reputable Freethinker ever relied on the story, or what reputable Freethinker ever said that the Christian Scriptures were settled at the Council of Nice at all?

THEN again, instead of answering Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, Besant, or Foote, Mr. Hastings replies to a number of things that were said to him by nameless "infidels" he has met in various parts of the world, and whose version of the conversation would probably differ a good deal from his. He very likely is too prudent to debate the matter with a leading Freethinker. He says that "it required fifteen hundred years to write the Bible." Mr. Hastings dare not say this before any real scholar even in the Christian Church. It is absolutely false, and if he doesn't know it he should go back to America and learn a few facts before he visits England again.

ONE argument of this Yankee Christian in favor of the Bible is very peculiar. He asserts that a certain house in which Voltaire once lived is now used as a Bible depot. Well, a certain chapel at Portsmouth is now converted into a Secular hall. According to Mr. Hastings's method of reasoning this proves that Christianity is going down, and for once we agree with him.

OF Thomas Paine Mr. Hastings says that he "crawled despairingly into a drunkard's grave." The only proper answer to this statement is that Mr. Hastings is a liar. And when he appeals to a letter lying before him, written so late as 1876 by a pretended eye-witness of Paine's death in 1809, he is a double-barrelled liar. The Mrs. Benjamin he refers to was never heard of from the day of Paine's death until the Yankee Christians invented her a few years ago on learning that all the written evidence belied their pious stories of Paine's miserable end.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Dec. 26, Hall of Science, Old Street, London; at 7, "What was God Born for?"

JAN. 2, Milton Hall; 6, Manchester; 16, Milton Hall; 20, North Lambeth Branch; 23, Liverpool, 30, Camberwell.
FEB. 6, Sunderland; 13, Milton Hall, London; 27, Huddersfield;
MARCH 20, Hall of Science, London 27, Hall of Science, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

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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.—T. P.

R. COWPER.—There is no evidence that Matthew ever wrote a Greek gospel or that the one ascribed to him was in existence before one hundred years after his death.

J. HOWE.—Jesus cannot be charged with ordering money to be left for masses, though the priests quote Matt. v., 26, as an authority.

E. T. T.—Presbyterians differ from the orthodox chiefly in believing that church government should be carried on by presbyters and elders instead of bishops. They reject "apostolical succession." Presbyterianism in Scotland owes most to John Knox and Andrew Melville, but the doctrine and discipline is similar to that established by Calvin at Geneva.

J. PALMER says he takes two copies of this paper, one of which he preserves for reference and the other he hands about or sends to the local sky-pilot or local journal. If others would follow suit our influence would be much extended.

J. E. ROOSE.—Shall appear. Darwin has some works on the subject. He thinks that when dogs "bay the moon" they are really howling at phantasms of their own imagination, which is excited by the uncertain and shifting lights and shadows on the horizon.

G. G. COOK.—Cuttings received with thanks. You cannot expect Freethought to flourish in a parasite city like Bath. It is indeed surprising to learn that you have met with a few Freethinkers there.

G. WEIR, the Edinburgh newsagent who supplies all Freethought literature, has removed from George Street to 5 Greenside Place, Leith Walk, nearly opposite the Theatre Royal.

G. CARTER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

H. P. BOWDEN.—We are obliged for the extracts. Yes, we do intend to keep up Christmas, not because it is the birthday of the *Son*, but because it is the birthday of the *Sun*. We celebrate the anniversary as a Pagan, not as a Christian.

H. ROBERTS.—You may depend on it that the Catholic story about Paul Bert is a sheer invention. Paul Bert's relatives and friends appear to know nothing of his pretended conversion. It is not for us to *confute* the story; it is for those who tell it to *prove* it. Surely your Christian friends do not believe everything they see in print.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Independent Pulpit—Chat—Sheffield Independent—La Luz—Liberty—Freethinker's Magazine—L'Anti-Clerical Social—La Lanterne—Lucifer—Hunt's County News—Loods Mercury—Evening Citizen—Truthseeker—Anarchist—Ironclad Age—Birmingham Daily Post—Thinker.

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.

OUR Christmas Number is selling rapidly and promises to be soon out of print. Readers who wish to secure a copy should apply at once. The formes are broken up and no more can be printed.

THE January number of *Progress* affords a good opportunity for those who wish to begin taking it with a new volume. Besides two articles by Mr. Foote, there are papers by Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Ball, S. Britton, etc., and a poem by Mr. J. H. Dell in reply to Tennyson's *Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After*.

THE debate on Socialism between Mrs. Besant and Mr. Foote will take place at the London Hall of Science on the four Wednesday evenings in February. A verbatim report will be published in book form.

Bible Heroes, by Mr. Foote, will be commenced on Jan. 15, when the first two numbers will be published, entitled "Mr. Adam" and "Captain Noah." Two fresh numbers will be published on the 15th of each month until the work is concluded. The price will be the same as *Bible Romances*, and the work will be carried out in a similar spirit. In addition to a review of the lives of Bible Heroes as recorded in the blessed book, odds and ends of tradition and legend about them will be given from Rabbinical and oriental sources.

CONSIDERING the cold and dense fog, there was a good audience at the London Hall of Science last Sunday evening to

hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "God's Birthday." Although there were several empty benches, it was a wonder to find so many filled on such an evening. To-night (Dec. 26) Mr. Foote will lecture on the pertinent question, "What was God Born For?"

MR. JOSEPH THOMSON, the traveller (who declared at the last meeting of the British Association that for every African who is influenced for good by Christianity a thousand are driven into deeper degradation) writes, in the December number of the *Contemporary Review*, on Mohammedanism in Central Africa. He declares that whereas the Christianised portions of Africa are disfigured by drunkenness, ignorance, and every vice, the Mohammedan portions are distinguished by industry, sobriety, and education.

M. THOMSON says of Islam—"But not only is it proselytising among the heathen: it has its missionaries in Sierra Leone and Lagos. It has there thrown down its gage to Christianity for the possession of the natives, and reports speak of it spreading rapidly, and recruiting its ranks from the Christian community to no small extent."

THIS article follows one by Canon Liddon on "Christianity as the Absolute Religion." The one perfect and divinely-revealed religion seems, however, hardly able to hold its own against the "imposture" of Mohammed.

A RELIGIOUS journal, the *British Weekly*, has published a new census of religious worshippers in London. On Sunday, Oct. 24, four thousand enumerators report a total of 479,731 worshippers in the morning and 496,561 in the evening. As there are over a million sittings, the churches and chapels were evidently more than half empty. Assuming these figures to be correct, less than 1 in 8 of the population of London was present during the evening services. The *British Weekly* tacitly claims that the morning and evening worshippers are perfectly distinct sets of people, for it adds the two together and reckons that nearly a million of people attended divine worship. This shows the arithmetical looseness of pious reckoners, but we hope that there has been no exaggeration in the census itself. If indeed it is true that Christians now attend only one service on Sundays, there must be a considerable falling off in the devoutness and sincerity of their religion.

THE churches and chapels provide 1,107,500 sittings for over four millions of Londoners. Horace Mann calculated there should be sittings for 58 per cent. of the population. The actual accommodation provides for only a little over 25 per cent. Thus there are not half enough sittings for a proper attendance by a really Christian population, and this half-allowance of seats is not half filled. The attendance is not a quarter of what it should be if London were really Christian. The *British Weekly*, however, by its double reckoning of worshippers and by adding children and absentees, makes out that there are three million Christians and that only one million people never go to church at all! But the figures of its own census only prove that about half-a-million people attend divine service out of a population of four millions.

THE *Daily News*, a somewhat more impartial and trustworthy authority than the *British Weekly*, acknowledges the full meaning of the facts. It says: "In whatever way these figures may be regarded, they show an immense and startling alienation of the London public from the regular organisation of religious worship. It is in this aspect of the census that its true significance comes out. Either these figures are deficient and misleading, or the lesson they convey to all religious bodies is one of the most serious importance. They are losing their hold on the population. They are failing in the primary purpose of gathering the people together to public religious instruction and religious worship. In presence of this striking and significant inference from figures which show no sign of manipulation or incompleteness, the merely controversial aspects of the census fall into insignificance."

THE *Independent Pulpit*, which reaches us from Waco, Texas, is a capital Freethought publication. The December number contains a good paper by S. Dillworth, "Believe or be Damned," a report of the Secular Congress at New York, and a paper on "Rome or Reason," by Miss Helen Gardener.

A MEMBER of the Hebrew persuasion named H. Guedalla has published a pamphlet with the lumbering title of "The Case of the Jews in the matter of the Founder of Christianity as conceived by Viscount Amberley." It is a reprint of a part of the first volume of the *Analysis of Religious Belief* (p. 379 to 421). Mr. Guedalla has the modesty to think that Viscount Amberley states the Jewish case better than he could do it himself.

THE English Jews have never been very bold in their opposition to Christian teaching. They have for the most part been content to circulate among their brethren such works as Rabbi Isaac's *Shield of Faith*, or to give their own account of the Messianic prophecies. In France and America, H. Cohen in

Les Déicides and Rabbi Isaac Wise in his *Origin of Christianity* have carried the war into the Christian camp.

THE *Freethinker's Magazine* for December has an onslaught on Spiritualism, by Harry Hoover, and a paper on "Ethical Religion," by Ella E. Gibson, who contends for "ethics" but discountenances religion. Miss Gibson is one of the most thoroughgoing Freethinkers in the United States.

WE understand that the *Boston Index*, a rather milk and watery journal of "reverent" Freethought, will expire with the end of this year. It will be succeeded by a Chicago weekly, called *The Open Court*, edited by B. F. Underwood, and a New York weekly under the editorship of Moncure D. Conway.

No. 1 of *La Luz*—The Light—has reached us from Barcelona. It is the new organ of the Barcelona Freethinkers, and we trust will be of service in enlightening a country so long sunk in the night of superstition.

THE history of the New Victoria University, which has grown out of the Owens College, Manchester, has lately been written by Alderman Thompson. Years ago Mr. Owens announced to his friend Mr. Faulkner that he had made a will and left him all his money. Faulkner replied: "Then thou may make another; I won't have it. I have quite as much of my own as I can answer for, and won't have anybody else's on my account." Owens went away deeply offended, but after a time on Faulkner's advice he left some £100,000 to found a college free from all religious restrictions as a protest against the bigotry which disgraced the old universities. Hence religious freedom was made "the fundamental and immutable rule and condition" of the place. No test or declaration of religious opinion whatever was to be required or submitted to, and nothing in religion or theology which could be "reasonably offensive" to the conscience of any student was to be taught. By the continued receipt of bequests and donations the college grew until it was converted into a university.

NEXT week's issue of the *Freethinker*, being our New Year's number, will contain a special full-page cartoon, and all the articles and paragraphs will be set in new type, so that the "little blasphemer" may not only read well but look well.

THE Liverpool and Bootle Secular Tontine Society has just brought its fourth year to a successful close. After paying medical officers' fees, sick allowance, and cost of management, £1 1s. 4d. was returned to each member out of 30s. paid. Local Freethinkers of the working class cannot do better than join this society, which is open to all, without distinction of race or creed. At least one Tontine Society in Liverpool exacts from its members a profession of a particular form of religious belief.

NOTWITHSTANDING opposition from the Orange section of the Corporation, the Liverpool Sunday Lecture Society have secured a renewal of the Rotunda Lecture Hall from the Library and Arts Committee, and the very successful course of lectures will be continued. One of the recent lecturers was the Rev. Father Perry, S.J., of Stoneyhurst College, who has attained high distinction as an astronomer. Perhaps the fact of his lecturing may in some measure account for the howl of bigotry from the opposite party.

MR. FOOTE will deliver the first course of Freethought lectures for the new Sunderland Branch on Sunday, Feb. 6. We learn with extreme pleasure that Mr. John Salt, the President of the Branch, intends to open a shop in the Arcade for the sale of Freethought publications, the newsagents who at present supply them keeping them carefully in the background for fear of the bigots.

THE Hall of Science Children's Party will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 12, 1887. All applications for tickets must be from members of the National Secular Society, stating what Branch they belong to, ages of the children (from six to twelve years). Please send stamped directed envelope. Further subscriptions: G. W. Foote, 5s.; H. Roberts, 1s. 6d.; — Fitzgerald, 1s. 6d.; Phipps Wood, 6d.; J. S. Walter, 2s. 6d. Per Mrs. Mears: Mr. Lowry, 2s.; J. R., 6d.; T. W., 1s.; — Campbell, 2s. 6d.; — Miller, 3d.; — G. B., 2s.; — Turner, 6d.; Hiscock, 6d.; — Cheesewright, 2s.; — Hughes, 2s. Per Mrs. Billot: W. W. C., 1s.; R. Mc, 6d.; E. M. D., 6d.; — Fawcett, 2s. Per Mrs. Forder: Friend, 6d.; — Stalder, 1s.; — Berry, 6d.; Friend, 1s.; — Lyons, 6d.; Mrs. Feltham, 3d.; A. C., 2s.; Gardner, 3d.; Mrs. Smith, 1s.; Mr. Smith, 1s.; — Savage, 2s.; — Richardson, 6d.; Friend, 6d. Per Mr. Heale: — Passler, 3d.; — Galler, 3d.; — Hide, 3d.; — Parnell, 3d.; — Schaefer, 3d.; — Hobbs, 3d.; W. P. C., 3d.; — Langley, 2d.; — Turner, 3d.; — Husser, 2d.; — Hawkins, 2d.; — Bastonwiskie, 6d.; Mr. Heale, 2s.; W. H. N., 1s.; R. Sunderland, 6d.; A. Heale, 3d.; K. Heale, 3d.; — Wintworth, 6d.; — Rumble, 1s.; Mr. Bottom, tin of jam. Further subscriptions can be sent to Wm. Cookney, hon. sec., 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C.

W A S G O D B O R N ?

"Reason could scarce sustain to see
The Almighty One, the Eternal Three,
Or bear the *infant Deity*.
Scarce could her pride descend to own
Her Maker stooping from his throne.
A ransomed world, a *bleeding God*,
And heaven appeased by flowing blood,
Were themes too painful to be understood."

Dr. Isaac Watts.

THE child's query, "Who made God?" is one of those puzzling questions which, as the negro preacher said, would "upset any system of theology." An answer, however, is supplied by the Christian creeds which declare that Christ was God and that he was born of the Virgin Mary. It is true there was no such announcement in the papers of the period as—

"BIRTHS.—Mary, the betrothed of Joseph the carpenter, at Bethlehem stables, of a God. Mother and infant doing well."

The doctrine of the divinity of Jesus was a growth. The idea never arose in the minds of monotheistic Jews. It was an amalgam of the notions of a specially-endowed historical Jesus of Nazareth with the Gnostic belief in a mystical Logos.* That it is, however, the doctrine of all the orthodox churches that the being born of Mary was "very God of very God" will not be disputed by any one acquainted with the Christian creeds and their history. It follows then that it may be said of every Christian in the words of Lord Bacon †—

"He believes a Virgin to be Mother of a Son; and that very Son of hers to be her Maker. He believes him to have been shut up in a narrow room, whom heaven and earth could not contain. He believes him to have been born in time, who was and is from everlasting. He believes him to have been a weak child, carried in arms, who is the Almighty; and him once to have died, who only hath life and immortality."

To deny this is to fall into the heresy of the Socinians or of the Nestorians. At the time when the phrase θεοτοκος, or mother of God, was applied to the blessed Virgin to distinguish her from all other daughters of Eve, even as viviparous animals are distinguished from those which are oviparous, Nestorius, then Patriarch of Constantinople, objected and maintained that Mary had given birth to Christ but not to God. St. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, stoutly contested this heresy at the Council of Ephesus (431). Nestorius was anathematised, degraded from his episcopal dignity and called upon to recant. It is true this was not done without much opposition. In the words of Gibbon, "Ephesus, the city of the Virgin, was defiled with rage and clamor, with sedition and blood." But the orthodox triumphed and declared that Mary was God's mother. The emperor Theodosius subscribed an edict which ranked Nestorius with Simon, the magician, banished him, proscribed his opinions and followers, and condemned his writings to the flames. The doctrine that Christ has two distinct natures, one derived from his mother and the other pertaining to him as God, was equally anathematised. "May those who divide Christ be divided with the sword; may they be hewn in pieces, may they be burnt alive," were the charitable wishes of a Christian synod, says Gibbon.‡ The Council of Chalcedon (451) laid it down with delightful simplicity and precision that "the Incarnation was neither a conversion or transmutation of God into man, nor a conversion of man into God, and a consequent absorption of the one, or a confusion of the two; nor, on the other hand, a mere indwelling of the one in the other, but an actual and abiding union of the two in one personal life." It follows from this clear definition from bishops who evidently had the Holy Ghost, and know all about it, that the one person to whom Mary gave birth was complete God, nor is this inference modified by the fact that one orthodox council having decided that Christ had but one person, another council (Constantinople 681) declared that in that one person were two wills, which sage belief is still the doctrine of both Greek and Latin Churches. One untrained in theology might imagine that a multiplicity, not to say duplicity of wills, implied a multiplicity of willers, but any such view

* "It is a remarkable fact that the foundations of the doctrine of the deity of Christ were laid in the virtual rejection of the truth of his being, properly speaking, a man."—Prof. Andrews Norton.

† In his "Character of a Believing Christian."

‡ *Decline and Fall*, chap. xlvi. Any one who wishes to see a resumé of the controversies on the Incarnation should turn to this chapter.

is anathematized by the Church equally with the Monothelite doctrine, which is that Christ had but one will.

That it is perfectly orthodox to say that God was born of the Virgin Mary could be proved from such eminent theologians as Aquinas, Petavius, Bull and Pearson. Instead of citing their dry-as-dust writings, I will give one passage from the glowing periods of Bishop South's famous "Sermon on Christmas Day, 1665":

"But now was there ever any wonder comparable to this! to behold Divinity thus clothed in flesh! the Creator of all things humbled not only to the company, but also to the cognation of his creatures? . . . Men cannot persuade themselves that a *Deity* and *Infinity* should lie within so narrow a compass as the contemptible dimensions of a human body; that Omnipotence, Omniscience and Omnipresence should be ever wrapped in swaddling clothes, and abased to the homely usages of a stable and a manger," etc.

Of course, while it is perfectly right to say that God the Son was born, it is a damnable heresy to speak of God the Father as having been born, although the Father and Son are one and co-eternal. It is also damnable heresy to say that God the Holy Ghost was born, although it is equally correct to say that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and Son, and that the Son was conceived of the Holy Ghost. It is the beauty of theology that it lifts us into a sublime region where words are without meaning and the most portentous absurdities become truths of the highest import. Its strength and glory lies in the fact that, like the sermon so much admired by the old Scotch-woman, "it confounds the understanding and jumbles the judgment."

J. M. WHEELER.

THE ROCK ON THE DEVIL.

THE *Rock* does not favor the opinions of those semi-Christians, Neo-Christians, nominal Christians, or whatever else we may call them, who explain away the real fundamentals of Christianity and then charge Freethinkers with attacking extinct dogmas and caricaturing existing beliefs when they depict these monstrosities as actually described in the Bible or by Christian Churches. The *Rock* continues to denounce the wicked people who would rob a poor world of its Devil. Modern Infidelity, it says, has rushed to the extreme of denying the existence of Satan. The notion that Satan is a myth, or a mere symbol for our evil desires, is "unhappily prevalent," and the number of people who regard him as an "allegorical personification" is daily increasing. Alack and alas-a-day that ever it should be so. But the *Rock* remains faithful to the teachings of its Lord and Master. It clings to its dear Devil, and no temptations that sceptics can offer will ever persuade it to give up the satisfaction and assurance of that beautiful belief. These believers in the Devil evidently feel there is much more at stake. If there is no Devil there is no hell for him to live in, and they would lose the consolation of belief in everlasting punishment. If there is no everlasting hell, there may be no heaven either. If God's Word is false in one direction why not in the other also? No; the true believer will never allow himself to be reasoned out of his cherished belief in a genuine Devil who goes about personally seeking whom he may devour—or, less figuratively, seeking tenants for his many mansions of fire down below. That Lord Westbury "dismissed hell with costs" is a sign of the direction in which the spirit of the age is pointing, but the true Christian will only cling the more fondly to the fundamentals of his faith. He knows, as the *Rock* teaches, that where Satan's presence ceases to be a pain to us, this comfortable state of real practical unbelief is the most dangerous sign of the perfect control which his Satanic Majesty has obtained over us. Satan then has us in his clutches and is only lulling us into a fancied state of security in order to make sure of us.

Although decrying Reason for its uselessness and deceptiveness in matters of Revelation, the *Rock* pays court to the fair but fickle goddess so far as suits its purpose. Its leading article on "The Personality of the Devil," condescends to employ ordinary argument, or its semblance, to justify the orthodox belief in Satan as a personal being. The world is of "the most exquisite beauty, bearing upon it everywhere the stamp of goodness." Unfortunately this "everywhere" is limited. "Side by side with this state of things we observe indubitable evidence of disorder, disorganisation, weakness, decay and death." Hence, the *Rock* concludes, some evil genius has thwarted the all-

benevolent will of the Almighty and is always inspiring evil thoughts in our minds. "The god of this world," or "Prince of this world," as Christ calls him (for Revelation must supplement Reason) is evidently the being "to whom all evil, physical and moral, is traced, as being his work." "For," continues the *Rock*, "the prevalence of evil implies a cause other than that of God, the good." Yet almost immediately after, the *Rock* speaks of "all things," both visible and invisible, being created by God who "was before all things" and by whom "all things consist" (Col. i, 16, 17; Isaiah liv., 16). God is thus the first great cause and the only originating cause both of good and of evil. The Bible indeed openly says that he creates evil (Isaiah xlv., 7) equally with the good, and he must be held responsible for so doing. But the *Rock* is conveniently blind to this aspect of the question.

The *Rock* has a very curious idea of "Reason," which it depicts as "the prey" of light and darkness, of truth and error. Reason, it appears, has "hazarded the conjecture of two gods, one of good the other of evil." These religious "guesses of the Eastern sages and fire-worshippers" are piously put down to the credit or discredit of Reason—for the *Rock* is unable to perceive any material difference between hazard-ing a conjecture and reasoning, even when the "conjecture" is transformed into a perfect certainty of belief. Surely crude imaginings and assumptions of this primitive kind ought to be called what they confessedly are, namely mere guess-work. I can understand why the *Rock* confounds Reason with the reverse of reason and also why it discredits a faculty of which it possesses so little, for it proceeds to give a significant specimen of its own idea of reasoning. Seeking to prove that the Evil One cannot be the supreme power, it says: "If sin could be armed with Almighty power, it would cease to be omnipotent when confronted with the power of holiness, from its own inherent moral defect." That is, if sin were Almighty it would not be Almighty—if a supposition could be true it couldn't be true—if the Devil actually were omnipotent his omnipotence would be much less than omnipotence and therefore would not be omnipotence at all.

Many modern Christians would get rid of the Devil at any price. They forget the "alarming sacrifice" that will be necessary, for the whole scheme of Christian salvation falls to the ground. The *Rock* is perfectly honest and consistent in maintaining the personality of Satan, and its scriptural arguments are irrefutable except by those who reject or explain away the Bible. The example of Christ's temptation is given as showing the absurdity of the Neo-Christian explanations of the Devil. If the temptation came from his thoughts, where, asks the *Rock*, is the sense of a thought that said "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me?" Next, it continues, the supposition is morally impossible [to Christians]; for on this supposition Christ's thoughts would have been evil, whereas he was without sin (1 John iii., 5). If, too, the Satan of the scene is not a living person, then to be consistent, the other person, Christ himself, must also be regarded as only an imaginary being. So reasons the *Rock*; and Christians who pray Christ's prayer to be delivered from the Evil One must either keep their Devil, and experience, as the *Rock* points out, "the awful sufferings of the presence of the Evil One constantly felt," just as Christ did, or they must give up Bible and Devil together. In time it will be seen that the apparently alarming sacrifice of an absurd and impossible fool's paradise hereafter is a very cheap price to pay for the salvation of all mankind from hell-fire by the only thorough policy of extinguishing the conflagration for ever by floods of common sense.

W. P. BALL.

Petite blondes, or, for that matter, *brunettes magnifiques*, who sing in church choirs, are fascinating, and in many cases perfectly irresistible. And the parson is often so susceptible that, even while he is lecturing on the dangers that arise from pleasing the dictates of the flesh, his mind is with the little golden daisy in the organ loft, and his soul is filled with jealousy of the dark-haired tenor who carries her hymn-book. A case occurred in Chicago last week, where a godly man followed the lady into her bed-chamber, whither she had gone to get her album to show him some pictures, and, while there, he attempted to kiss her. This was very wrong. All men, and especially ministers of the Gospel, should entertain a profound respect for the sex, and never, upon any pretext, enter their bed-chambers, unless by accident, and then apologise and speedily retire. The above maxim is found in a popular hand-book of etiquette, and lots of trouble would be avoided were it more generally observed.

THE PRODIGAL SON; OR CHRISTMAS AT HOME.
[A DOMESTIC DRAMA IN THREE ACTS.]

ACT I.—TIME, JUNE.

Scene.—A neatly-furnished room. PRODIGAL SON standing near couch.

PRODIGAL SON: I'm getting tired of this kind of life. My big brother makes me do just what he likes; he pitches on to me all the hardest work. I don't mean to put up with it any longer. And it's really too monotonous—same old thing every day. I want to go about the world and see some life—not be penned up here like a sheep. I'll ask dad to give me in advance my share of the property, and then I'll be off and enjoy my young self. Ha, here comes dad, I'll just see what he says to my proposal.

Enter FATHER.

FATHER: Hallo, my boy, here you are; I've been looking for you everywhere. Why don't you start on some work? Just go and get me the horse and trap ready.

PROD. SON: I say dad, I want to ask a favor of you. You see it's like this, I'm weary of this mode of life. I want a change, and to travel the world a bit. So if you'll give me £100, I'll take my hook.

FATHER: What, do you really wish to leave home?

PROD. SON: Thou hast said it.

FATHER: Well, I shall not frustrate your wishes. When will you start?

PROD. SON: At once. I'll just go and pack up a few things, and be ready in a jiffy. (Exit.)

FATHER: He'll be sorry for this, by-and-bye, as sure as eggs are eggs. However, I'll give him the money and let him go. It's no good him stopping here if he's dissatisfied.

Enter PRODIGAL SON with carpet bag and gingham.

PROD. SON: I'm off now, father. I want to catch the 6.30 train to Jericho. Have you got the tin ready?

FATHER: Here you are my boy, here's £99 19s. 11¼d., that's all I've got in cash, but here's a farthing's worth of pious to make it level money.

PROD. SON: Thanks, dad; you are a brick, and no mistake. Good-bye till we meet again. (They embrace and shake hands. Slow music.)

ACT II.—A LAPSE OF SIX MONTHS.

Scene.—Farmhouse on the outskirts of Jericho. PRODIGAL SON in rags, and very thin, feeding the pigs.

PROD. SON: O what a varmint I have been. What a fool I was to leave home. Oh, why did I spend all that money so quickly? I enjoyed myself too much—theatres every night—and balls every other night, and the girls there could drink lemonades and brandies. And then look at the money I lost at cards and billiards. O golly, I wish I had it all now, or even

threepence of it, I'd get something to eat. And look at the money I wasted on smokes and glasses of whiskey. It almost makes tears come in my eyes when I think of it. If I had my chance over again I'd never be so foolish, that I wouldn't. And to think of the money I spent on fish dinners and tripe-supper; it makes my mouth water. Now I can't hardly get a crust of bread, and I feel so devilish hungry, I could almost eat some of this pig's food. I'll just taste a bit (picks up handful and commences to eat).

Enter FARMER.

FARMER: Put that pig's food down.

PROD. SON: That's just what I was going to do.

FARMER: If I catch you robbing the poor pigs again I'll give you the sack. Just get on with your work, you lazy fellow. (Exit.)

PROD. SON: Oh, this is too bad. I can't stop here to be starved. Why my old dad's servants could spare me more food than I get here. This place won't do for me—I want a rise—so I will arise and go to my dad and say unto him, Dad, I know I'm a sinner and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me one of thy hired servants—even if I'm lowered for the occasion. So here goes. I leave thee, pigs—farewell. (Exit singing "No place like home.")

ACT III.

Scene.—His Father's house. Friends and relations present. Time, Christmas Day. Great festivities.

FATHER: I wonder how my boy is spending his Christmas. I hope he is enjoying himself. Perhaps he has made his fortune and got married, the young scapegrace.

ELDER SON: Oh, he's all right; he knows his way about. Have another glass of wine, dad, and give us a song. We're all waiting, you know.

ONE OF THE COMPANY: Yes. Order! Our host will oblige with a song.

FATHER: You'll excuse me if I break down; it's my first attempt. (Sings "Where can the Wanderer be?" During chorus loud knock at door. Enter PRODIGAL SON, who has borrowed suit from one of his father's servants. FATHER embraces him. Great rejoicing. PRODIGAL SON relates his misfortunes.)

FATHER: Never mind, my boy. I knew how it would be, so I only gave you a fourth of your share of the property. So make yourself at home.

PROD. SON: Thanks very much, dad; but I hope I didn't interrupt the singing.

FATHER: That doesn't matter in the least, my boy. Glad to see you back again, and sorry to hear of your ups and downs. But now we'll have a good veal supper and a lot more songs, and spend a right down jolly good Christmas.

CURTAIN.

SCOFFER.

SELLING RAPIDLY.

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PROGRESS

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The Star of Bethlehem. By G. W. Foote.
Locksley Hall, Revisited. (A Poem.) By J. H. Dell.
Labor Capitalization. By W. P. Ball.
The Atheist Marlowe. By S. Britton.
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