

THE FREETHINKER

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

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



THE FLIGHT OF THE PRIESTS.

OUR NEW YEAR.

THE *Freethinker*, though the youngest of Secular journals in England, is still far from being an infant. We are entering our seventh year, and we may fairly say that this journal is an established institution, although by no means an endowed one. Probably the name of no Freethought journal in the world is so well known. This much at least is certain, the *Freethinker* is read all over the globe where English-speaking people are found. It is more ubiquitous than the Union Jack. It has subscribers in Canada, in every State of the American Union, in the West Indies, in South America, in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, at Gibraltar and Malta, in Egypt, India, Burmah and China, as well as in the English colonies in South Africa and Australia. Not only in districts that are thickly peopled with the Anglo-Saxon race is the *Freethinker* looked forward to week by week, but in the most outlandish regions, where white men are few and far between, its arrival is anxiously expected to infuse a little wholesome excitement into lives divorced from the resources of civilisation. Certainly we do not enjoy the *numerous* circulation of which our Christian contemporaries are fond of boasting, but our circulation is more *extensive* than any of theirs. Our *clientèle* is world-wide, and if we emulated the modesty of Jesus Christ we should say that our readers are the salt of the earth.

Comparatively young as the *Freethinker* is, it has had many troubles and trials. Very few journals, indeed, could show such a chequered history. The Lord's friends moved heaven and earth to destroy it utterly. They imprisoned its editor, its printer, and its publisher at one fell swoop, but still it lived and laughed at their malice. Printers and publishers were terrified from all connexion with it, yet it got printed and published in spite of them. Finally, the Lord himself rained down fire upon it, as though it were another Sodom or Gomorrah, and burnt it out of house and home. Nevertheless he did not stop it for a single week. It went on "blaspheming" as before, and now it is back in its old quarters, where it serenely awaits the next move of its earthly and heavenly opponents.

Our policy was deliberately adopted, and it will be resolutely continued. We wage an implacable war with the Christian superstition. We believe it to be a lie and a curse, and we shall attack it with such scholarship as we possess, such argument as we can advance, and such satire as we can wield, until it is slain or we are disabled in the fight. Death is lord of all, and the strongest must succumb to his power. But until he lays us low, or until his cold shadow robs us of strength, we shall not stay our hand in the mighty combat between darkness and light. And we have confidence that when our hand fails or falls, our torch will be successfully carried on by others. May they be firmer and defter than ours! But our successors will not forget that we kindled it, and nursed its young flame when it quivered and flickered in howling storms of persecution.

Besides the *Freethinker* itself, which is of primary importance in all our calculations, there is our publishing business to be maintained. Its object is to second the work of this journal, by providing the soldiers of Freethought with weapons against Christianity. Until our party is very much larger, profit is not to be looked for; enough if the author or editor is paid journeyman's wages. For the rest, we are satisfied, like those who work by our side, with the reward of seeing our labors successful in making men Freethinkers and keeping them so. Some such notion, we imagine, must have been entertained by those who so generously placed at our disposal the means of continuing our task when we were stripped bare by a sudden calamity.

Turning from ourselves to the Freethought party, of which we are only one spokesman, we are happy to observe that it is growing in strength and influence. In the United States, the American Secular Union begins the new year full of hope and vigor. Colonel Ingersoll gives it his sympathy and support, and his new lecture on *Social Salvation*, which was delivered at its annual Conference, is attracting great attention in America, where it cannot fail to win over many waverers from the orthodox ranks. Colonel Ingersoll has also undertaken to defend Mr. C. B. Reynolds, who has to stand his trial for Blasphemy early in the new year. It is good to see that the greatest Free-

thinker in America has the courage of his convictions, and is ready to take the full responsibility of his position.

In Australia, Mr. Joseph Symes continues his gallant warfare against bigotry and superstition, and he is ably seconded by his colleague in the editorship of the *Liberator*, Mr. W. W. Collins. The Secular Society, both at Melbourne and at Sydney, is in a very flourishing condition. In India, our contemporary the *Thinker* carries on the good fight with its accustomed energy.

At home in England our cause is steadily gaining ground. Unfortunately there still remains very much to be done in the way of organization, but every Freethinker must do his best to brighten our prospect in this respect during the new year. Mr. Bradlaugh is in Parliament, but the Oath Question still remains to be settled; and there are the Blasphemy Laws to be repealed. Petitions against these odious laws should be sent in wholesale, or Mr. Courtney Kenney may feel discouraged in his generous efforts to abolish them.

The New Year lies before us, like all the future, a blank. What shall we make of it? What shall we write on its pages before the volume shuts? Without any cheap moralising on the duties of private life, which are each man and woman's personal concern, we venture to hope that Freethinkers will so strive for their cause that when the volume is shut it will contain a record of clear and certain progress.

G. W. FOOTE.

INCARNATIONS.

A REVEREND writer on "The Ideal in History" has the assurance to inform us that "The theory of the Holy Incarnation is too sublime to have originated in the mind of fallen humanity." The assertion shows the characteristic ignorance and effrontery of theologians. The simple fact is that celestial descents and the births of sons of god from daughters of men were so currently received among the pre-Christian heathen that it is hardly possible to discover a nation where they are not to be found.

In the early mythology of all nations we find chiefs ascribing their origin to gods, who, indeed, were usually deified ancestors, and every hero of high renown was credited with being of supernatural lineage. What Grote says in his *History of Greece* is applicable to every nation. "The mythical age was peopled with a mingled aggregation of gods, heroes and men, so confounded together that it was often impossible to distinguish to what class any individual belonged."

M. LePage Renouf, in his *Hibbert Lectures on the Religion of Ancient Egypt* (p. 161), observes:

"I must not quit this part of my subject without a reference to the belief that the ruling sovereign of Egypt was the living image and viceregent of the sun god Ra. He was invested with the attributes of divinity, and that in the earliest times of which we possess monumental evidence."

Menes, who is said to have been the first king of Egypt, was believed to be a god. As with the Thracian god and law-giver, Zalmoxis, whom Herodotus could not determine whether God or man, the early kings of Egypt were merged in divinities. An inscription makes the god Ra acknowledge the paternity of Pharaoh Ramases I.

On the walls of Luxor is found depicted the Annunciation, Immaculate Conception, Birth and Adoration of Amenhept III., a Pharaoh of the 17th dynasty, in the sixteenth century, B.C.*

The soul of Osiris was said to have been incarnated in the sacred bull, Apis, which was miraculously born. Horus, who has the epithets of "Savior" and "Mediator" is the son of Osiris and the immaculate mother Isis.

It is curious that the first Christian Apologist, Justin Martyr, compared the incarnation of Christ with those of heathen gods. He says, in his First Apology, chap. xxii.:

"And if we assert that the Word of God was born of God in a peculiar manner, different from ordinary generation, let this be no extraordinary thing to you who say that Mercury is the angelic word of God. . . . And if we even affirm that he was born of a virgin, accept this in common with what you accept of Perseus."†

* See Gerald Massey's *Natural Genesis*, S. Sharpo's *Egyptian Mythology and Egyptian Christianity*, and Bonwick's *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought* for full particulars of this striking parallel.

† *Anti-Nicene Christian Library*, p. 26.

Perseus was said to have been born from the intercourse between Zeus and Danae, whom he visited in a shower of gold. The supreme god of the Greeks was indeed called Zeus Καταβατης, "Jove the descender," from his habit of mingling with the daughters of men. Hercules was the son of Zeus and a mortal mother Alcmena. Bacchus was his son by Semele, daughter of Kadmus; Mercury the offspring of Jove and a mortal mother Maia; Apollo, the son of God and a mortal mother Latona, and so on. Divine parentage was found for Alexander and for Julius and Augustus Cæsar. Plato was according to some of his admirers, the son of the god Apollo and Periktione: as Professor Draper remarks—

"The Egyptian disciples of Plato would have looked with anger on those who rejected the legend that Periktione, the mother of that great philosopher, a pure virgin, had suffered an immaculate conception through the influences of Apollo, and that the god had declared to Ares, to whom she was betrothed the parentage of the child."*

How similar to the legend of the angel appearing to Joseph. Pythagoras and afterwards Apollonius Tyana were also declared to be of miraculous birth.

In Persia it was the same. Zoroaster was said to be the son of Ahura-mazda, the supreme god. Even in the New World similar legends are found. Ages before Columbus discovered that country the inhabitants of ancient Mexico worshipped "a Savior" named Quetzatcoatl, who was born of a virgin.† Huitzilopochtli was also virgin born.‡ Hiawatha among the Iroquois, and other American-Indian heroes, were said to be Incarnations.§

Dean Milman, in his *History of Christianity* (vol. i., p. 97), refers to the tradition found among the Chinese, that Fo-hi, the founder of the empire, was born of a virgin; and remarks that the first Jesuit missionaries who went to China were appalled at finding, in the mythology of that country, a counterpart of the story of the virgin of Judæa. These missionaries had recourse to the theory of Justin Martyr and the early Christian fathers, that the Devil, in order to discredit the Christian story, imitated it in pre-Christian heathen fables! Father Tachard relates the legend of the birth of Odom, the Siamese legislator, as follows:

"Many, many years ago, a virgin, in a state of ecstasy, left the society of men and haunted the solitary places of the forest, expecting the advent of a god long predicted. One day when she knelt down to pray, she became pregnant by the sunbeams, and in due time was delivered of a boy. She was then translated to heaven, but the boy was found by a hermit, and became a great sage and performer of miracles."||

Somewhat similar is the Chinese account of the birth of Buddha, written from Sanskrit sources in the first century of our era, and translated by the Rev. Samuel Beal in *Sacred Books of the East*. The work is called the Fo-Shio-Hing-Tsan-King. Speaking of Maya, the mother of Buddha, it says:

"On her, in likeness as the heavenly queen, descended the spirit and entered her womb. A mother, but free from grief or pain, (she was) without any false or illusory mind. . . . Whilst she (thus) religiously observed the rules of a pure discipline, Bodhisattva was born from her right side, (come) to deliver the world, constrained by great pity, without causing his mother pain or anguish. As King Yu-hu was born from the thigh, as King Pi-t'au was born from the hand, as King Man-to was born from the top of the head, as King Kia-kha was born from the arm-pit, so also was Bodhisattva on the day of his birth produced from the right side; gradually emerging from the womb, he shed in every direction the rays of his glory. As one born from recumbent space, and not through the gates of life, through countless kalpas, practising virtue, self-conscious he came forth to life, without confusion."

M. L'Abbé Huc, in his *Travels in Tartary and Tibet*, says:

"In the eyes of the Buddhists, this personage is sometimes a man and sometimes a god, or rather both one and the other, a divine incarnation, a man-god, who came into the world to enlighten men, to redeem them, and to indicate to them the way of safety."

In the Indian avatars of Vishnu we find a far-reaching theory of incarnations. Christ, according to his devotees, was only incarnated to redeem the elect, or, at the most, mankind. Vishnu was incarnated to redeem *all* creatures.

Hence he appeared in the progressive animal forms of a fish, tortoise, boar, lion and cripple dwarf, as well as in the heroes Rama, Krishna and Buddha; and like Christ he is yet to come in more transcendent glory. In the Bhagvat Gita or Song Celestial, a work there is good reason to think anterior to the Christian era, Krishna is expressly declared to be the Supreme Deity in human form.

The theory of incarnations is, in truth, only a survival of a phrase of savage animism, which found a spirit behind all living phenomena, and which ascribed the extraordinary action of ancestors and heroes to something superhuman. The fascination of the marvellous gave currency to the stories. A god-man on earth is somewhat more tangible than an abstract deity in the heavens, and this is no doubt the reason that in all religions we find the deities condescend to take flesh and appear among their creatures.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

THE *Christian Herald* discourses upon "the beautiful death" of Happy Ned, the "Cabman Bishop," who was "found dead on his knees." If Edward Summers had been an Infidel his death would have been a dreadful judgment and a solemn warning.

ON Sunday last the Rev. Jonathan Dent preached two sermons at Bolton and almost immediately after was taken suddenly ill and died. The Rev. J. F. N. Eyre, vicar of Ilkeston also died somewhat suddenly on the same day. The moral that pious Christians ought to draw from these solemn warnings is that it is dreadfully wicked to preach sermons or to be a parson. We hope Talmage and the *Christian Herald* add these judgments of God on clergymen to the list of sudden deaths with which they edify the many Christians who delight in such rubbish.

If Merlati's fifty days' fast is perfectly genuine, he has beaten Moses and Jesus hollow, for they only did forty days apiece, that being the semi-sacred round number that they preferred. If fasting was meritorious and religious in Christ and Moses and Elijah, why not in Merlati? Hadn't the Church better canonise him?

THE members of Prince's Agapemone, according to the *Christian Herald*, believe that, as the Adamic, Patriarchal, and Legal Dispensations failed, so also the Dispensation of Grace under Christ has failed. And now, God has sent an individual, named Prince, with a new "Dispensation of Glory." The reason for failure lay in the fact that Satan is concealed in the flesh. Accordingly, about four years ago, God judged the Devil in Prince's flesh, cast him out, and seated Prince on the throne with Christ. And, if you do not take and receive that life from him (Prince) you will still remain under the power of Satan, while all who do receive the testimony, enjoy all the blessings of the new "Dispensation of Glory," without complying with the conditions laid down in the Bible. It is alleged that the Second Coming of Christ has been fulfilled in this man, and in others, at the Agapemone, Bridgwater, Somersetshire—and Christians are now called upon to give up preaching the Bible, and are to preach the "Gospel of Glory" by the Spirit of Prince. This man is a helpless invalid, one of his elders has fits, several of their members are miserable victims to rheumatism, and they indulge in intoxicating drinks. "Thus," says the orthodox writer, "does Satan parody the blessed doctrine of Entire Sanctification." Any imitation of Christian folly and presumption is of course a parody in Christian eyes.

THE *Seneca Tribune* (America) reports a terrible case of cannibalism in Havensville, Kansas. Revival meetings were held in Buck's Grove Church by the Rev. Mr. Bailiff, and there was the usual excitement. Among the converts was Rhodes Clements, a young farmer about thirty years of age. He attended night after night until religion had done its evil work and his brain was turned. One night he left the church with a neighbor, Samuel Gordon, another farmer over sixty years of age, who had been a religious crank for a long while. When they were next seen, the young man was sitting by the old man's corpse, eating his heart. Rhodes Clements had turned upon Samuel Gordon full of the spirit of the Lord, had thrown him down, worried him like a dog, bitten out his liver, heart and lungs, torn off his lower jaw, and made a large hole in his neck. Such are the fruits of Revivalism in Kansas! Well does a writer in the *Seneca Tribune* say—"Here, in the name of religion, are two families led to drink of the bitter cup of desolation and death, and to realise a mad frenzy worse than death. These two families lived on adjoining farms, and nothing had before occurred to mar their pleasant, neighborly intercourse. And now the pall of death hangs over one of them, and something worse than death over the other. And those who get up the excitement that leads to such results are still at large, and seem to revel in the whirlpool they have created."

* *Conflict of Religion and Science*, p. 8.

† Kingsborough's *Mexican Antiquities*, Vol. VI., pp. 166, 175-6.

‡ Squier's *American Archaeological Researches*, p. 136.

§ Theo. Waitz, *Anthropology*, p. 374.

|| Waitz, *Anthropology*, p. 373.

ANOTHER evangelist, Mrs. M. B. Woodworth, has received a request, which is signed by many citizens, to discontinue her preaching at Muncie, Indiana. Among their reasons they say: "As the result of your recent meetings we have seen one of our most respected citizens made defendant in a ten-thousand dollar libel suit; we have seen one of our fair daughters carried from our midst by one of our camp-followers, and another brought to the verge of a suicide's grave; we have seen a mother whose young children needed her constant and tender care rendered insane."

AN unholy ghost has been worrying the minds of the superstitious folks of a village in Devonshire called Lurley. Clothes were torn and damage to the amount of £20 was done. This was attributed to supernatural agency, and wise men and tablets were consulted as the appropriate remedy. A police inquiry, however, resulted in the discovery that the mischievous ghost was Ellen Cook, a servant, who has been sentenced to two months' hard labor. It is time that all the ghosts, holy and unholy alike, were laid by the heels. A police inquiry into the actions of the biggest ghost of all, the Holy Ghost, from the time of his striking Ananias and Sapphira dead to the present day, would show that he was the most mischievous of all the spirits that haunt the mind of man. A warrant for his arrest ought to be issued.

HINE, the Anglo-Israelite, still sends over letters from America boasting that he has converted Colonel Ingersoll to the silliest craze that ever entered an addled brain, and the English journals go on printing the nonsense after it has been contradicted. Fortunately, we are able to nail Hine's lie down with the hammer of a date. Hudson-Rugg, writing to the *South Eastern Gazette*, says: "I had seen the good news, before Mr. Hine wrote to me, in the *St. Catherine's Evening Journal*, November 6." Now Colonel Ingersoll addressed the Annual Conference of the American Secular Union on November 14. Those who read *Social Salvation* will see that Colonel Ingersoll is still in the full possession of his brilliant faculties.

A POOR religious maniac at Tewkesbury, named Samuel Adams, committed suicide by burning himself to death. He left a letter in which he stated that he had been commanded by the Lord to offer himself as a burnt sacrifice.

THE Lord has been playing havoc not only with the telegraph wires, but has burnt down a Roman Catholic school at Kelvedon, Essex, and nearly totally destroyed a Primitive Methodist chapel at Old Lenton, near Nottingham.

THE Rev. J. Davies writes in the *Academy* on the true meaning of the Hebrew word *kipod*, which is translated in the Authorised Version as "bittern" and in the Revised Version as "porcupine." Rabbi Joseph says it means a "tortoise," and Rabbi Salomon wavers between "hedgehog" and "owl." The Rev. J. Davies contends that it is a "pigeon." But what if the holy pigeon should turn out to be a porcupine? Verily the Hebrew is a wonderful language, and when the Lord inspired its writers he ought also to have inspired their interpreters.

THE Bishop of Ripon, lecturing last Sunday at the Leeds Parish Church on the "Progress of Religion," trotted out all the old fallacies. Man was not only a religious animal but he was also marvellously persistent in his religion. Read "superstition" for "religion" and what the right reverend father in God says about the upward development of religion, will be seen to mean really its gradual elimination.

A GOODY-goody paper called *Good Tidings* says, "If one wants to enjoy the comforts afforded by the Bible, the indispensable condition of securing the result is, that he should bow his head and his heart to the absolute authority of the Bible in all matters pertaining to religious faith and practice." In other words you must shut your eyes, open your mouth and see what God will send you. The world, however, is out-growing this child's play.

THE *Referee* has a bit of religious gush about Christmas and Christianity. The season, it says, "should give birth to a genuine Christianity among us." This genuine Christianity is not however to trouble itself about creeds and dogmas, but is to consist in an imitation of "the unselfish far-seeing charity of Him whom besides all other claims to our reverence, we must recognise as the truest exemplar of every human virtue." This is utter rot, if not sheer slipshod hypocrisy. Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, was Christ's idea of "far-seeing charity"; and the proprietors of the *Referee* have not the faintest idea of doing what they teach. The indiscriminate sacrifice of the good to the bad and the reduction of the whole world to a state of voluntary destitution, is "far-seeing charity"! The man who was impudent to his mother, who reviled the priests of his nation as vipers, adulterers and hypocrites, who taught belief in hell-fire, who made false promises by the score, who withered a fig-tree and drowned two thousand pigs by sending devils into them, and who never figured as lover, husband and father—is the truest exemplar of every human virtue! The religious license evidently beats the poetic license into fits, and when a sporting paper that

habitually breaks the fourth commandment takes out this license for a change it tries to go ahead at its queer business of converting its readers to the "genuine Christianity" of indiscriminate benevolence and indiscriminate gush.

ARTHUR BULES, the French-Canadian author, who was decorated by the French Academy a few years ago, has been excommunicated by Cardinal Tachereau at Montreal for attacking the Roman Catholic priests and their teachings. Probably the excommunication will hurt him as little as it did the Jackdaw of Rheims. Anyhow we fancy it will make no difference in his life assurance.

At the Southwark Police-court William Osborne, aged 28, described as a city missionary, has been committed for trial on a charge of criminally assaulting a girl of eleven years of age.

SEVERAL poisonous wells in the rural districts have been found to have been polluted by water from churchyards. Thus churchyards poison men's bodies while churches poison their minds.

DR. VAUGHAN, the Roman Catholic bishop of Salford, says that with all our religious sects and revivalism "very little if any improvement is taking place in the moral condition of English society." What a confession after eighteen centuries of grace and redemption!

THE *Christian World* publishes a begging letter from a rural parson, whose income is "only £120 a year." He gives a curious reason for his mendacity. "I am in my sixty-first year," he says, "and I have already seven young children." Already! Evidently the begging parson has only made a beginning in the paternal line of business. We hope he will be taught the lesson that he must keep all the children he gets.

THE *Christian World* is usually too practical to give much attention to the holy mysteries of the faith, but indulging in "A Christmas Meditation" in its last number, it touches lightly on delicate ground and says, "faith in the word of the Annunciation seems to have been the occasion of the Virgin's wonderful conception, opening her womanhood to the Holy One's creative power." No doubt Joseph would have been quite satisfied if he could have had the advantage of reading the *Christian World*.

A MOHAMMEDAN Monarch, Maliki, emir of Misse, has written to Bishop Crowther (colored) telling him that rum has ruined the country and made his people mad, and asking the prelate to implore the English Queen to prevent the bringing of rum into his dominions.

A PRESBYTERIAN deputation has waited upon the governor of Victoria, and presented a petition to be forwarded to the Queen against the French occupation of the New Hebrides. No doubt a Christian nation like ours ought to be ready to go to war to protect missionary interests.

PASTOR STAUNTON, of Brooklyn, was recently found guilty of ministerial conduct with some ladies, but there are so many of his congregation who are willing to forgive him that he has concluded not to deprive them of the moral and religious benefits of his ministrations.

THE Church papers are again suggesting the establishment of a Saturday weekly paper to compete with the cheap Sunday papers. Politics is probably at the bottom of this apparently religious device. Most of the so-called Sunday papers are published on Saturday. It is the Monday morning papers, which are never objected to, which occasion Sunday labor. The politics of the popular Sunday papers cannot meet the approval of Churchmen, but whoever tries to out rival them with a cheap Saturday weekly, will probably burn his fingers like Mr. Ashmead Bartlett with his much-advertised *England*.

At a recent Sunday-school reunion the superintendent proposed that they form a line and march to the song, "Hold the Fort." Accordingly, the line was formed with Parson B. at the head. All went beautifully until they came to the second verse:

"See the mighty host advancing,
Satan leading on!"

when they were all so impressed with the general appropriateness of the whole thing, that singing, marching, decorum, and all solemn feelings were knocked into pye by a general roar of laughter at the expense of the parson.

BISHOP SELWYN once received into the Christian faith Shaka, a noted old cannibal and polygamist. Some years afterwards, when visiting the same locality, he asked after his welfare, and, on being told that he still lived, announced his intention to call upon him. This was a great honor, and the old chief was duly impressed. He summoned his followers, and bade them prepare a feast, and make all proper arrangements for receiving the distinguished guest. "Give him," he said, "a walhene"—a temporary wife. "But," objected his major-domo, "this is a tohunga"—chief priest. "Then," gravely replied the old Christianised heathen, "give him two."

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Jan. 2, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, at 7.30.

JAN. 9, Manchester; 16, Milton Hall; 20, North Lambeth Branch; 23, Liverpool; 30, Camberwell.

FEB. 6, Sunderland; 13, Milton Hall, London; 20, Plymouth; 27, Huddersfield;

MARCH 20, Hall of Science, London; 27, Hall of Science, London.

APRIL 10, Birmingham.

TO 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.—T. C.

F. REDLANDS says "I have just read Ingersoll's *Social Salvation*. It is quite a gem. Hebrew mythology looks poor indeed after such sound practical sense. I wish every person in the country could read it."

ATHEIST.—There is no photograph of Mr. Foote on sale. The libellous one sold during his imprisonment was copied from an inferior photograph taken in 1873.

J. S. W.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

G. L.—Your scraps are always welcome.

W. FREEMAN.—The lines you send on "The Parsons Idol" have not only already appeared in this paper, but they are printed in one of our *Freethinker* Tracts.

W. MARRIOTT.—The item appeared in this paper long ago. It has also appeared in half the journals in the kingdom.

W. C. SAVILLE.—Shall appear. Thanks for your good wishes for the new year. Glad to assure you we have no need of "The Great Physician" after the Christmas festivities.

H. K.—You cannot expect every line in any journal to please every reader. Tastes are various, both in readers and in writers. If you are personally pleased with the major part of the contents you ought to be satisfied. At the same time, we respect your right to differ from us as to the value of the rest; though, as a matter of fact, the very piece you refer to as objectionable to yourself has been relished by other readers, who have asked us to give them more of the same kind of thing.

R. DUNN.—Mr. Foote never said that the New Testament canon was settled by the books jumping up from under the table. You have a pious memory. Your letter begins with a falsehood and ends with impudence.

E. T. GARNER.—Thanks for the cuttings.

R. S.—We are obliged for your cuttings and good wishes.

REUBEN (Nottingham)—The Mr. Smith who is lecturing in your town on "Moses Right and Newton Wrong" must surely have escaped from his keepers. Glad to hear you have so thoroughly enjoyed our Christmas Number.

AGNOSCO.—We will try to make use of it.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Chatham and Rochester News—Liberator—Scarborough Daily Post—Leeds Mercury—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker—Stage—Liberty.

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. JOSEPH SYMES is not likely to be frightened from the editorial chair of the *Liberator* by men like Dr. Jefferis, if we may judge from the following passage in a letter by Frederic Jones to the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*: "It was only yesterday that G. W. Foote, of the London *Freethinker*, suffered imprisonment and came out of gaol to continue exactly the same line of conduct. Does Dr. Jefferis cherish such an absurd idea as that if the editors of what he pleases to term 'that scurrilous publication,' meaning the *Liberator*, were fined or imprisoned the work would cease for a moment? Did Joseph Symes shrink from his responsibility when the whole forces of the Victorian Government, backed by the malignant enmity of the clergy, were arrayed against him?"

Bailey's Sunday News, a plain-spoken Sydney paper, writes as follows of the pious rogues of that city: "All the *Cantwells*, the *Abinadab Slinks* and the *MacSycophants* the world has ever known could not surpass in infamy the deceitful hypocrites and rogues who snivel about all Sundays with big prayer-books under their immaculately broadclothed arms, turn up the whites of their eyes in pious horror at Sabbath-breaking, and prostitute and desecrate the name of everything the truly devout hold sacred,

by mixing up prayer-meetings and the like with their business avocations, while their hearts and heads are full of schemes the inevitable result of which is to bring hard-working and respectable heads of families to suicide, and their widows and children to starvation."

MR. SCHWEIZER, of Liverpool, lectures at Camberwell this evening (Jan. 2), and Mrs. Mary Sowden takes the chair. Mr. Schweizer was for a long time the active honorary secretary of the Liverpool Branch N. S. S. He now aspires to a position on the Freethought platform, and we hope the Freethinkers of South London will go and take "a taste of his quality."

S. B. PUTNAM has generously foregone his claim to nearly a thousand dollars due to him as Secretary, in order that the American Secular Union may work on in the new year untrammelled by debt. Religious journals please copy.

W. F. FREEMAN, writing on Voltaire in the *Boston Investigator*, says he was struck, when he visited Paris last year, with the fact that the Quai Voltaire, named after the great heretic, is a great book-mart, the embankment being occupied for half a mile by new and second-hand book vendors. "Judging from the number of book-stores in Paris," says Mr. Freeman, "the French are the greatest reading people in the world." Quite so, and it is chiefly due to Voltaire and the other leaders of Freethought. "Infidel France" reads more and better books than "Christian England." It is surprising to note the number of editions that first-rate works run through in Paris. London is far behind, although its population is larger.

TAKE another comparison. A generation ago the Bibliothèque Nationale was started for the purpose of providing the French masses with good literature at twopence-halfpenny a volume, and it was a capital success. Now we have a threepenny library in England. But just look at the difference in the matter! Cassell's and Routledge's cheap series are, with few exceptions, trashy compared with the volumes of the Bibliothèque Nationale. We talk about "those frivolous Frenchmen," but the frivolity does not appear in their reading at any rate.

THE New York *Truthseeker* for Dec. 1 has a picture of a priest giving some scholars a lesson on the arithmetic of the Trinity. On the wall is a picture of the Blessed Virgin, with the following inscription: "Holy Mary, Mother of God. Also God's Daughter and Mother of her Brother, the Son of God. Also Wife of Joseph, Stepfather to his Maker and God. As Mother of God she is Grandmother of the Son. God and Christ are one and yet Half Brothers, as she is Mother of both. Mistress of the Holy Ghost, and yet a Virgin." Verily great is the mystery of godliness.

ON the first of four free Sunday openings of an exhibition at the Manchester City Art Gallery, 7,614 visitors, mostly belonging to the working-class, were admitted, and conducted themselves admirably. Only three policemen were in attendance. Bradford is about to open its Free Library and Museum for three hours on Sunday afternoons. This is only an experiment, but no doubt it will end well, and be repeated. The fashion of applauding at oratorios and sacred concerts is also coming into fashion and exciting some comment in the provincial press.

THE article on "Salutations" by Prof. E. B. Tylor in the new number of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is interesting to students of custom and evolution. Dr. Tylor says that the idea of kissing being an instinctive gesture is negated by its being unknown over half the world, where the prevailing salutation is that by smelling or sniffing, often called by travellers "rubbing noses." Darwinians may find in this another proof of our lineage and also in the cowering, crouching, and lying prostrate with face to the ground which form the prevalent gesture language of submissive salutation. Kneeling, whether before a chief or god is only a modification of these gestures.

MR. R. FORDER has published a lively little pamphlet of his own, entitled *There was War in Heaven*. It is written in a free satirical vein, and it should have a good circulation.

IT was at a big meeting, and there were acres of darkies present. "The Crossing of the Red Sea" was the subject of the discourse, and the Rev. Mr. Dukes was treating it in a most frigid manner. He had just closed by saying, "Moses and the child'un of Israel crossed ober the Red Sea on de ice, but when Faro and his lumberin' big chariots come 'long dey broke frue de ice and dey was all drowned," when a young man arose and said, "Brer Dukes, will you 'low me to ax you a question?" "Sartinly. What is it?" "Well, Brer Dukes, I'se bin studdin' geography, an' geography teeches me dat de Red Sea am in de tropics. What I want to ax is dis: Whar dat ice cum from whar Moses crossed ober on?" "Brer" Dukes cleared his throat, mopped his brow, hesitated a moment, and replied: "Well I'se glad you ax dat question. It gives me an opportunity to 'splain. My dear young brer, you mustn't tink 'cause you bin to school dat you know eberyting. Dis thing I'm preachin' 'bout took place long time ago, fore dere was any geographics, an 'fore dere was any tropics!"

RELIGION AND IMMORALITY.

CHRISTIANS always speak of Religion in the very highest terms. The worst of sins, in their eyes, is the want of it. Yet in dealing with actual religions other than their own Christians often depict these creeds and systems in terms utterly inconsistent with their glowing admiration of religion in the abstract. The *Christian Herald*, describing "Shark Worship in Africa" says:

"The inhabitants of many parts of the African coast worship the shark, and consider its stomach the road to heaven. Three or four times a year they row out and offer the shark poultry and goats to satisfy his appetite. This is not all; a child is once a year sacrificed to the monster, which has been specially fattened for this occasion from its birth to the age of ten. On the fête day, the unfortunate little victim is bound to a post on a sandy point at low water; as the tide rises the sharks arrive. The child may shriek, and the mother may weep, but it is of no avail; even its own parent thinks that the horrible sacrifice will ensure her child's entry into heaven."

Nevertheless religion of course is the most admirable thing upon earth. When it is not admirable the Christian calls it by another name, superstition, and then thinks he has got over the difficulty. By religion he does not mean false religions, he will say. Yet when demolishing Atheists he will appeal to the universality of religion and speak as if the worst of religions was infinitely better than none at all. Fortunately each sect tries to prove that all other religions are inferior to its own, and thus they mutually expose each others' faults. Protestants expose the horrors and immoralities of the Romish Church and the Romish Church does its very best, or worst, to reciprocate the compliment.

The *Rock* exposes the religious immorality of the ancients, who of course are unable to retaliate, though their ghosts might well point the finger of scorn at cases like the Colin Campbell divorce suit, greedily devoured in a dozen columns daily by the filth-loving and scandal-loving Christians of to-day. In a leading article on "Man and Morals before the time of Christ," the *Rock* shows the intimate connection which existed between religion and sexual immorality. It says that in Babylon "Every native woman, moreover, was obliged once in her life to take part in the licentious rites at the temple of the goddess Mylitta," and "with this law in force there could be no chaste woman in Babylon." Speaking of a later period when civilisation was crippled by the ancient religions just as subsequently it was absolutely strangled by the still more powerful religion which now has the honor of being supported by the *Rock*, it says:

"Sad indeed it is to think that Aristotle, when advising that indecent statues and paintings be not exposed publicly, should have felt obliged, by the strength of public opinion, to except the temples of such deities as were held specially to encourage sensuality! Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentions that the vile acts which were supposed to have been performed by the gods were habitually practised among the masses of the people, who, he informs us, were totally ignorant of that Greek philosophy which, could it but have been brought home to them, might have led to their reformation. The excellent moral teaching of the Pythagorean, Socratic, and Platonic schools of philosophy was little likely to furnish with an evangel even the Greeks themselves, far less to supply one to mankind in general."

The lesson which the *Rock* is unable to perceive is that religion then, as now, prevented the social reform and moral progress of the time. It sheltered and sanctified the evils of the past, and drowned the voices of the sages with the conceited babble of superstition. Superstition, of course, as Hobbes justly teaches, is but religion out of fashion. It is easy to expose superstition when it is already out of date. Even the *Rock* can try its hand at this harmless and pleasing amusem^{nt}. The difficulty is to find men bold enough and public-spirited enough to expose it when it figures before a subservient public as true religion and as the sole great friend and patron of all the virtues and blessings. Religions that come to us from the distant past are naturally behind the age; they are almost necessarily conservative of wrong customs and ways of thought and action which once prevailed and were esteemed, but now are seen to be out of date, and by-and-by will be acknowledged to have been immoral. To convince the average man that such ways and ideas are immoral while they are still held in repute as virtues, is a most difficult task, and one that is only possible so far as people have adopted the Secular or Freethought standard

of well-being and virtue as a partial substitute for the comfortable but stagnant infallibility of the religious sanction and guidance.

Taking cases where—in Protestant countries like our own—the immorality may already be perceived, we can notice how Christianity has fostered the revolting use of the confessional, the adoration of a figure of a naked man by girls and women, who are taught to regard him as their spouse, the sanction of sin by indulgences, and above all the compulsory celibacy of all priests and nuns, with all that that implies. Christianity has so distorted man's ideas of morality that the absurd vice of asceticism is regarded as a beautiful virtue, and even among Protestants the condemnation of the systematic enforcement of unnatural conditions of life is not as severe as the case merits. Protestants, in giving up the Romish form of Christian asceticism have usually adopted others, such as Sabbatarianism and other pious restrictions calculated to drive the natural man to vice and drink as a relief to the intolerable dulness and perpetual observances of straight-laced piety. Of the immorality of persecutions, Smithfield burnings, crusades, tithe-exactions, witch hangings, and so forth, for which Christianity is responsible, I say no more, although it must not be forgotten that immorality does not merely mean sexual immorality as some are apt to imagine. The Church has condemned the marriage of cousins as incest, and has granted indulgences permitting uncles to marry nieces. In the dark ages of its supremacy it has licensed priests to keep concubines, while it cherished purity by preventing their marriage. It has prevented divorce even for the most reasonable causes. It defies law and insults morality by declaring that legal marriages are only concubines, and the offspring bastards, the marriage by the priest being the only real marriage in the sight of God and his Church. Thus libertines are enabled to betray girls by a marriage before the priest, which is no marriage in the eye of the law. The religious prejudice still condemns marriage with a deceased wife's sister, and still brands men and women and their innocent children with words and acts of burning injustice and infamy for that which is perfectly legal in most of our colonies, and perfectly in accordance with popular feeling at home. Christianity has crushed and degraded woman as an instrument of lust, while pretending to befriend her so as to make her its supple and insidious tool. It lyingly professes to have abolished polygamy and concubinage now that the reform is secure and popular, but can point to no condemnation of either in the sacred book on which it bases its pretensions.

Taking a case in which the question of morality has still to be fought out, we find that the religious prejudice strengthens the prudish prejudice against Neo-Malthusianism. Instead of leaving men at liberty to judge freely, instead of teaching them positively, as it should do, to judge with open mind, it fosters the frightfully immoral idea that men are to increase and multiply without thought for the morrow, because when God sends mouths he will also send meat. The main idea of sexual morality in the mind of the believer seems to be that a magical ceremony is to be pronounced over couples, and they are then, like the animals, to produce as much offspring as possible, without the slightest regard to the future fate of that offspring, or of their own domestic comfort, or of the interests of the race at large. It matters not if the children are born only to starve with their piously prolific parents, or to compete with each other in dragging wages down to the starvation point. It matters not if the boys are likely to be driven to crime and the girls to infamy through pressure of population and the difficulty or impossibility of getting an honest living. If children receive an inheritance of crime, of disease, of vitiated constitution and brutal depravity, of social slavery, and of sordid strife, the responsibility is God's. He it is who sends the mouths, and to regulate the orders sent to him for such goods is a revolting interference with his wishes and his laws. Such is the teaching of religion to the masses, who are taught that God has revealed all that is necessary for them to know. Such teaching is the great obstacle to the growth of true sexual morality. Christians now regard marital incontinency as virtuous, just as the ancients, likewise blinded by the prejudices imbedded in their surviving religions, regarded the pious immorality in their temples as virtuous. When the battle of morality is won, I think it will be seen that the Christian distortion of sexual

morality has been at least as great, as mischievous, as destructive to human happiness, as that of the pagan religions.

W. P. BALL.

THE SONG OF GREASY JOSHIUA*

I'm an infinite physician on a philanthropic mission,
I'm a prestidigitateur nonpareil;
I can vivify a mummy, or inspire a tailor's dummy,
Or a cemetery's drowsiness dispel.
For a small consideration I'll insure the dissipation
Of a troublesome or obstinate disease;
And my never-failing ointment will secure from disappointment
By eradicating maladies with ease;
All incurable deformities with ease.

I can promenade the ocean, though abnormal its commotion,
I'm the champion controller of the sea.
I've a wonderful specific, which will soothe a storm terrific;
Not a fisherman on earth can fish like me.
I can treat a large collection to a plentiful refectation
On my multiplying mackerel and bun;
Over H₂O I mutter, and, instanter, down the gutter,
Sherry wine begins to wander by the tun;
Yes, it rushes down the gutter by the tun.

I can blast all vegetation by a mystic incantation;
In emergencies I pose as chucker-out;
I can lick the force protective, from policeman to detective;
For I glide through all the key-holes round about.
Throng around the true magician—I can send you to perdition
If you don't intend to patronise my show.
Should you not believe my story you must never hope for glory,
But be violently hurried off below;
Yes, precipitated headlong down below.

EX-RITUALIST.

PROFANE JOKES.

MISSIONARY: "Here you see the torments to which your ancestors are for all eternity condemned. Hasten, therefore, to embrace the religion of charity and love." The Heathen: "And were our ancestors damned for not believing the doctrines of Christianity?" Missionary: "Of course." The Heathen: "But they never heard of the doctrines of Christianity!" Missionary: "Pray, what has that to do with the question?"

It was off the Lizard, and a hard gale blowing from south-east, and no chance of making Plymouth, when H.M.S. Myrtle was in sad plight. She was making water fast, and there seemed to be grave doubts about keeping her afloat. All hands were hard at the pumps, when the first lieutenant approached the captain, and suggested to him that in their present state they should try the efficacy of prayer. "Quite right," said the captain. "A very good suggestion. How many men have you in the sick-bay?" "Three, sir," said the lieutenant. "Good," said the captain. "Serve them out prayer-books, you take charge of the praying party, and I will keep a look-out on the pumping party, then we must pull through." And they did.

THE FIRM MOTHER.—"An' must I always say my prayers before goin' to bed?" asked a boy of his mother. "Yes." "But if I sit up all night I needn't say 'em, need I?" "Yes." "Why?" "Because you must ask the Lord to bless you." "How bless me?" "Take care of you and save you." "How save me?" "Take you to Heaven when you die." "An' if I ask him will he do it?" "Yes." "How do you know?" "The Bible says so." "Does it say me?" "It says little children." "Men, too?" "Yes." "An' grown up women?" "Yes." "How do you know?" "Oh, I don't know. For gracious sake hush and let me read." "What are you readin'?" "A story." "What kind of a story?" "About a man and a woman and I don't know what all." "Is it a story?" "Yes." "Why don't you read the truth?" "If you ask another question to-night I'll whip you." "But I can ask another one in the mornin', mayn't I?" "Yes." "But I musn't ask any more to night?" "No, not another one, for if you do I'll whip you." "I won't ask any more to-night, will I?" "No." "But I will in the mornin', won't I?" "Yes." "An' you'll whip me if I ask any more to-night, won't you?" "Yes." "But you won't in the mornin', will you?" "No." "But you will to-night, won't you?" "Look a-here, not another word out of you now. If you ask another single question I'll whip you." "But you said I could ask 'em in the mornin', didn't you?" "Yes." "An' you won't whip me then, will you?" "No." "But you will to-night, won't you?" "There comes your father, and it is a good thing for you, for I was going to whip you." "Jes' for askin' questions to-night?" "Yes." "But you won't in the mornin' will you?"

* Supposed to be the same person mentioned in Holy Scripture as the anointed, Oily Jesus, etc.

SUPERSTITION IN MAN AND THE LOWER ANIMALS.

SUPERSTITION in its elementary form consists of fear caused by the observation of strange or not understood phenomena, and is common to many animals besides man. The more developed forms of superstition, however, known as religions are peculiar to men, for their higher intelligence is the best adapted to perceive and appreciate what is remarkable in nature and yet not perfect enough to understand that the phenomena which surround them are all capable of natural explanation. Phenomena, the cause of which are not understood, seem always calculated to produce alarm or veneration. The incident in *Robinson Crusoe* of Friday mistaking his master's gun for a god and trying to conciliate it by prayer is perfectly true to life, as is also the incident in *Gulliver's Travels* where the Lilliputians form a similarly erroneous notion in regard to Gulliver's watch. All animals whose powers of observation are greater than their powers of reason are liable to superstitious fears. A horse on a windy day is often thrown into a state of terror by seeing a piece of paper flying about, while a dog may be frightened with a child's doll. It is said that the most ferocious dog may be made to retreat in alarm by a man advancing backwards towards it regarding it the while from under his coat tails held for the purpose one over each arm. The dog's intelligence is just sufficient to appreciate this phenomenon as strange and unaccountable, and retreats, it is said, ignominiously. I have heard of a dog being very much alarmed at seeing an open umbrella, which had been placed on a lawn to dry, moved about by the wind. These idle fears of what is considered not natural are nothing else than superstition, and the supposed supernatural origin of things is pushed further and further back as the phenomena of nature are explained according to natural law.

Those who batten on men's superstitious fears well know that the stranger and more unaccountable the belief which they can foist on their dupes the greater the awe and veneration to be extracted from them. No wonder these superstition-mongers are opposed to the phenomena of nature being rationally explained, and fiercely assail the proposers and adherents of any new theory which is calculated to unravel the mysteries of the universe, for they know that just in proportion as these phenomena are cleared up, superstition, on which their comforts, wealth and influence rest, diminishes; and that their calling, with the infirmity on which it thrives, will be defunct as soon as the fact is well understood that everything is capable of a natural explanation and that consequently the supernatural does not exist.

J. E. ROOSE.

A SYLLOGISM.

"Whoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."—Christ, Luke v. 12.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."—Christ, Luke xii. 20.

"Ye fools and blind."—Matt. xxiii. 13.

"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die."—Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 36.

Whoever says to another "Thou fool," is in danger of hell-fire.

Christ, or God—or both—and Paul, did say "Thou fool" to others! Therefore—what? The reader can work out the syllogism to suit himself.

QUILL.

PARSON to his little grandson: "Now, Tommy, can you tell me where Port comes from?" Tommy: "No, sir, but I know where it goes to." The question was not pressed.

DR. CHALMERS once entertained a distinguished guest from Switzerland whom he asked if he would be helped to kippered salmon. The foreign divine inquired the meaning of the uncouth word, "kippered," and was told that it meant preserved. The poor man in a public prayer soon after, offered up a petition that the distinguished divine might long be "kippered" to the Free Church of Scotland.

A CHORISTER of a country church lately made a sad mistake in the choice of a tune, there being a long slur in it, which came directly upon an unfortunate word, which produced a startling effect, namely—

"With reverence let the saints appear
And bow-wow-wow before the Lord."

The clergyman's little poodle pup, happening to catch the note, sung out his treble pipe, started the squire's old Towser's full bass, and in an instant the whole posse of dogs set up such a chorus that Handel's hailstorm would have dwindled into mustard-seed in comparison.

EQUALLY unfortunate was the pause in the hymn when the soprano sang—

"I want a man—
I want a man—
A mansion in the sky."

And the baritone took up the words:

"Oh, send down sal—
Oh, send down sal—
Salvation from on high."

THE Hall of Science Children's Party, Wednesday, Jan. 12, 1887. Further subscriptions: J. Caspar, 2s.; — Woillaume, 5s.; L., box of sweets. The Committee will please meet in the Minor Hall this (Sunday) evening after the lecture. Further subscriptions will be thankfully received.—WM. COOKNEY, hon. sec., 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C.

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