

THE FREETHINKER

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

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 184.



SARAH'S BABY.

*Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?—*GEN. XVII., 17.

*And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son....Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age.—*GEN. XVIII., 9-11.

THE BIBLE IN BOARD SCHOOLS.

PARSON DIGGLE, who complained that his enemies called him Little Niggle, is the Chairman of the London School Board. There are so many of the Black Army in that body that it is not surprising to see a sky-pilot preside over their noisy deliberations. Still, a parson in the chair is a considerable fact; it shows that the policy of the Board is reactionary. Education is looked upon as a necessity, but it is made subordinate to other ends; and one great aim of the clericals, the only object indeed for which they fight, is what they call religious teaching. Mr. Diggle boasts that practically all the Board School children in London read the Bible in school hours, and learn as much as possible of the three-headed mystery of the Christian godhead. Further, the children are stimulated to study Holy Writ by the offer of prizes, which are given by Mr. Francis Peek and the Religious Tract Society. The prizes, however, are "good" books, and we understand there is not a fierce competition for them. Had Mr. Francis Peek and the Religious Tract Society been wise in their generation, they would have offered as prizes the things which a boy's soul

loveth, such as clasp-knives, tops, agates, bats and balls and kites.

The last "Examination in Scripture Knowledge" took place on Friday, January 21. We did not compete for a prize ourselves, being a trifle too old, but a copy of the printed Examination Paper has fallen into our hands. *How* we decline to tell. Perhaps an angel brought it, or perhaps an imp. Every Christian reader can take his own choice.

There are different sets of questions for the various Standards, and some of them are obviously open to very comic treatment. For instance, the youngsters in Standard IV. had to "Show from the Old Testament that God is long-suffering." A smart boy, with no fear of Mr. Francis Peek and the Religious Tract Society before his eyes, might have answered in this way: "God is long-suffering, because he let Adam and Eve finish their apple luncheon instead of cursing and kicking them out after the first bite. God is long-suffering, because he did not drown Noah and his posterity, although they were as bad as the antediluvians. God is long-suffering, because he killed only the first-born in Egypt when he might easily have killed every mother's son of them. God is long-suffering, because he let two of the Jews who left Egypt enter

Palestine, although three million others perished of famine, drought, plague, and rattlesnakes, during the forty years it took them to do a fortnight's journey. God is long-suffering, because he let Moses hold him back when he wanted to kill all the Jews at Mount Sinai. God is long-suffering, because he let the Jews stay for centuries in Palestine, though they were worse than the people who were butchered to make room for them. God is long-suffering, because, when David took a census, he slew only seventy thousand people instead of all who were counted. God is long-suffering, because, while we all deserve Hell as Adam's children, and the place is big enough to hold us all with comfort, he allows a few of us to go to Heaven. Lastly, God is long-suffering, because he lets the gentleman who gives us prizes lay up for himself treasures on earth where moth and rust do corrupt and thieves break through and steal, although God ordered everybody to refrain from doing so, under penalty of finding a hot corner in Hades. Yes, our dear patron, Mr. Francis Peek, is a living proof that God is long-suffering."

The children in Standard IV. were also told to write out the commandment against lying, but of course they were not invited to give some Bible illustrations of this part of the decalogue. Here are a couple as samples of what might be given. "Now, therefore, behold the Lord hath put a *lying spirit* in the mouth of all these thy prophets" (1 Kings, xxii., 23). "If the truth of God hath more abounded through *my lie* unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" (Romans iii., 7). God and his great apostle Paul both did a little lying on their own account, and as example is stronger than precept, we may judge how veracious children are likely to be who study the "blessed book."

Children in Standard V. are requested to "Give instances of bravery and generosity in the life of Jonathan." Capital, splendid, or, as the Frenchman said, "magnificent—very good." Surely the youthful mind must have wondered why the examiners did not ask them to give instances of bravery and generosity in the lives of God's favorites. The reason is obvious. God's favorites, the heroes of Bible history, were a scurvy lot, and virtue has to be sought for in the Esaus whom God hated and the Jonathans he condemned.

Another question is "What did our Lord teach about prayer?" Well, Jesus Christ taught that people would receive whatever they asked for in a believing spirit, but there is not a parson in Christendom who would stake sixpence on this theory. Yet boys are taught it at school, and they will be called fools if they rely on it when they grow up.

Another question is "Give an account of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the great day of Pentecost." Here is science for you; here is common sense in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century! Children who will find the problems of this world hard enough when they grow up, and all their knowledge too little for their guidance, are asked to puzzle their brains and waste their time over the silly superstitions of a far-off age. Future generations will marvel at the fact that in the age of railways, telegraphs, and electric lights, grown-up men could deliberately teach children that the third person of the Trinity appeared as fireworks on the heads of twelve ignorant fanatics, and made them jabber so that the bystanders were divided in opinion as to whether they were mad or drunk.

There are many other questions on this Examination Paper, all equally sensible and equally important. This is the sort of stuff which passes as religious education. Nothing in it is calculated to make a child wiser or braver. It is simply grovelling in the mire of ancient superstition. Happily, this perversion of youthful minds will not continue for ever. There is a growing demand for *secular* education. The Bible will soon be expelled from our public schools, and though the Diggles and Peeks and Religious Tract Societies may rave, the change will be a boon to the children and a blessing to posterity.

G. W. FOOTE.

GOD AND FREE AGENCY.

SECULARISTS are often accused of denying human free will, and the most deplorable consequences are stupidly supposed to result from this denial. Without entering into the vexed question of free will *versus* determination, about which so much has been vainly written, it is worth while to point out the damaging retort to which the theologian is exposed, whether he takes his stand upon what is called natural religion or revelation.

The person who postulates an all-knowing and omnipotent deity will find no easy task in explaining how this conception can be reconciled with the free agency of man. If God is the cause of all he must predestinate every thought and action. If the human mind is exempt from the sphere of his control, then his sovereignty is of no effect in the most important department of its supposed dominion. Whatever independent power man freely possesses God must have ceased to possess, and to that extent he is not God. It is usual to say that God has delegated to man the power of free will. But no such word-juggling can affect the issue. To the extent to which man can act in opposition to the will of the deity to that extent is deity circumscribed; and a God limited in power will mostly be considered a God not worth owning. Where there is entire dependence there is no freedom. If God possesses foreknowledge and all power; if he can see into limitless futurity and controls the final evolution as well as created the primal germ, where is there room for free agency? Calvinism is the only logical theology. God is the one responsible author of all, who worketh in all according to his good will and pleasure. If he has made some for honor and some for dishonor, some for eternal bliss and some for everlasting torment, it is all for his own glory. We are his creatures and puppets—

"Impotent Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks and slays;
And one by one back in the Closet lays."

This has been the doctrine of the most devoutly religious men from St. Paul to St. Augustine, from Calvin to Jonathan Edwards. It obtains emphatic recognition in the Bible. "The Lord hath made all for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs xvi., 16). Christ says "without me ye can do nothing" (John xv., 5). Paul declares "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philip. ii. 13), and in a long argument he supports the illustration of Isaiah that we are as clay in the potter's hands. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. . . . Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" (Rom. ix., 15, 16, 21).

In the Church of England Articles it is expressly declared that "The condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength to good works, to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will." They further declare that "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit are not pleasant to God." The Westminster Confession of Faith is even more explicit in its doctrines of election and reprobation fore-ordained of God for his glory, and readers of history are aware that, in the words of Renan, "had Clement VIII. lived a few weeks longer predestination would have been an article of faith" in the Roman Catholic Church. It was mainly the fact that the doctrine was that of Calvin which ensured its rejection at Rome.

It is evident then that opposition of the strongest kind to the doctrine of free agency has been made by theology. We agree that that opposition has been immoral in its tendency. Calvinism makes man an impotent machine in the hands of an irresponsible autocrat, to whom none can say, "What doest thou?" Man's attitude necessarily tends to become that of a fulsome panegyrist to his supposed sovereign and of prostration to his alleged will. The revolt against Calvinism is really a revolt against theology. The practical outcome

OBITUARY.—We regret to observe the death of Professor Edward Livingstone Youmans, the founder of the *Popular Science Monthly*, and one of the first disciples of Mr. Herbert Spencer and the evolution philosophy in America. Professor Youmans was born at Coeymans, New York, in 1821, and although blind early in life attained an eminent place among the scientists of America.

of a belief that all is directed by God is to let things slide. To use effort of any kind may be but a presumptuous attempt to thwart the deity. And no effort is of any avail. The Secularist says, on the contrary, every effort is of avail. He holds that

"Our deeds still travel with us from afar
And what we have been makes us what we are."

The believer in philosophical determinism, the man who recognises the universality of cause and effect, no less in man's mental and moral nature than elsewhere, is justified in using reward and punishment because he finds that these are potent factors in the environment that is slowly modifying the character. But how one who believes that God is the cause of evil as well as of good can take upon himself to punish the evil-doer, has always passed my comprehension. The legitimate consequence of Theism appears to be entire indifference to the things of this world. The legitimate consequence of belief in invariable causation is the acquisition of knowledge in order to act upon and modify it. The fruit of the one was seen in the ages of faith when the pious retired to deserts and monasteries to ensure their salvation, and evils were healed by prayer. The fruit of the other is seen in the study of heredity and social environment and the belief that evils must be grappled with by patient thought and labor.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

A LADY writes to the *Christian Commonwealth* and claims to have heard the voice of God in a direct personal communication to herself. The highly important and interesting words that God uttered to her were: "Be still, and know that I am God." The Christian editor does not believe the lady, though he says he has no doubt of her sincerity. But when an old book tells him that God spoke to an Arab sheik and told him to murder his son as a religious act, the pious editor secures his own personal salvation at once by believing the whole story implicitly. Why is credulity a virtue in the one case and a folly in the other?

In the case of the Church of England nun who sues for her £16,000, it was shown in evidence that while penances and hard work was often the lot of the sisters, the Lady Superior took a substantial breakfast in bed. The Father in Christ, the Rev. H. D. Nihill, who was at the head of the affair, frequently visited her in her bed-room and sometimes took his breakfast there. He would dine in the convent on "fowls, salmon, rich puddings, whiskey and port wine." He was bishop and pope rolled into one, and combined in his own person the offices of treasurer, accountant, auditor, and everything else. He and Miss Skinner frequently took long trips to Scotland and the Continent.

MISS ALLCARD has lost her case, and the Rev. H. D. Nihill can still enjoy his whiskey and salmon out of the interest of her £16,000. As the *Daily News* punningly observes, "Ex *Nihilo nihil fit*"—from nothing nothing comes. Some time ago a Miss Merriman recovered her property from the convent. Miss Allcard is not so fortunate. As she would only become a prey to the Roman Catholics, there is nothing particular to regret so far as this case is concerned. But the whole question of religious influence upon foolish and timid women remains yet to be dealt with.

THE Rev. L. W. Watkinson has been holding forth on the domestic infelicities of great Freethinkers, winding up with the pious advice not to "forsake the vine and fig tree of Christian domesticity." Among the unhappy or reprobate Freethinkers who got on badly with their wives (Christians never do, of course) he mentions Schopenhauer. As a matter of fact Schopenhauer was a bachelor. His "domestic shrine" only exists in Mr. Watkinson's pious imagination.

As a specimen of the domestic infelicities of Christians, we quote the following account of Wesley's married life from the *Christian Commonwealth*: "The good man married a widow with four children and £10,000, and he was miserable. Lord Macaulay said that Wesley possessed as great a genius for Government as Richelieu, but alas! he was unable to govern his malicious and ill-tempered wife. Mr. Telford declares that 'she was one of the worst wives of whom we have ever read; and she darkened Wesley's life by her intolerable jealousy, her malicious and violent temper.'" Could not the Rev. L. W. Watkinson more usefully employ his time in teaching Christian ministers not to marry shrews for the sake of their money?

SOME of the godly are making merry over the Queensberry divorce case. Surely they are thankful for very small mercies,

for the case is quite devoid of the moral turpitude we are so familiar with in Christian divorce suits. Adultery is admitted; yes, but the Marquis and Marchioness had not been living together for years, owing to some incompatibility which appears still to have been consistent with friendship. Adultery in these circumstances is very different from adultery while husband and wife live under the same roof, and pretend love for each other, or at least a care for each other's honor. There was no betrayal of confidence, no duplicity, no violation of domestic peace, no paltering with the interests of children. These are the worst features of adultery, and they were all absent in this case. Separated from his wife, the Marquis did not live a life of strict continence. How many other men of means and leisure would be more heroic?

MR. A. COHEN, M.P., has been presiding at a lecture by Mr. D. Stewart on "The Radicals of the Bible." Eve, it seems, was the first Radical, for she "introduced the first Reform Bill," and thus "caused a split in the Cabinet, and turned out the Government." The Surrey Chapel Radicals to whom the lecture was given enjoyed the joke without seeing that it was against God, who as an obstinate old Tory not only rejected Eve's Reform Bill but cursed the Radical introducer and backer and turned them out of office. Other Biblical Radicals were Moses (to whom the lecturer considered we owe much of the liberty we enjoy), Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and, last but not least, "the Radical Jesus Christ," over whose body men "found their way to happiness and true fraternity." A Conservative lecturer of course would just as readily class these all as Biblical Conservatives. They often say that the Devil was the first Radical.

NOT one of the Biblical Radicals named had anything whatever to do with Radicalism or Radical measures. They all governed as despots—benevolent despots occasionally, but often with severities and barbarities equalling if not surpassing those of the worst tyrants. Moses ordered the extermination of the Midianites and the Canaanites. Deborah praised religious assassination. Gideon was a warrior with many wives. Samson was a dissolute athlete. Was the lecturer a Conservative in disguise who wished to insinuate that Samson's slaying a thousand with the jawbone of an ass only meant that he was a gifted Radical orator? As to Jesus what great Radical measures did he even advocate? Did he inaugurate representative government, or only slavish submission to the powers that be? Did he ever ask for vote by ballot, or free trade, or for universal secular education, or for the abolition of monarchy, church establishment, aristocracy, polygamy, slavery and tyranny?

THE Rev. H. J. Neville, vicar of Stoke Gabriel, Paignton Devonshire, has buried his housekeeper without the registrar's certificate. She had been ill for some weeks, but no doctor had attended her. As there was nothing to determine the cause of death, the Coroner had to procure an order for disinterment. On arrival at Stoke Gabriel, he found an excited crowd assembled at the churchyard. The vicar refused to give up the keys, and defied anyone to break open the gates. The Coroner finally climbed over the wall, opened the gates from the inside, and had the body disinterred by his men. Perhaps the inquest will throw light on the vicar's motives.

RELIGIOUS disturbances have broken out at Stabbio, in Switzerland. Troops have been dispatched to the place to restore order. Further rioting has also been going on at Belfast. Christianity is evidently a great source of harmony.

MR. STANLEY, before starting for Equatorial Africa, stated to a representative of the *Pall Mall Gazette* that the African king by whose orders Bishop Hannington was martyred "was educated by a Roman Catholic priest."

ALDERMAN LIVINGSTON, of Liverpool, declares that Mr. Goschen owed his defeat to intimidation, and that some Roman Catholic priest had denounced from the altar eternal damnation to every man who did not vote for Mr. Neville. The statement is, however, denied, and Alderman Livingston is called on for proof of his statements.

THE village of Hargreave, Cheshire, has been disturbed by some daring anti-ritualist, who, the other Sunday evening, during service, passed a long stick through a window and swept the candlesticks on to the floor. No doubt the perpetrator thought he was doing God a service by removing these signs of idolatry.

AWFUL warnings and visitations of God still abound. The other day a jury at Oxford returned a verdict of sudden death by the visitation of God upon a banker who died suddenly in his bank, and a similar verdict has been given in the case of the parish clerk and sexton of Monkton, Pembroke, who dropped down from heart disease when in church.

A SUDDEN death occurred in Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle last Sunday evening. One of the worshippers named J. C. Michie, a jeweller, fell backwards in his seat and was taken up dead.

A NOTTINGHAM paper, entitled *Glad Tidings*, is sent to us, the most prominent item in which is the following: "Jehovah's Proclamation. *Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles.* 'Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up; beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears. . . . Let the nations be wakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about; . . . Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. . . . the Lord also shall roar out of Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem. . . . but the Lord will be the hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel.'—Joel iii., 9-16." Nice glad tidings, this, of the Lord roaring in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Let him roar!

GAIL HAMILTON, writing in the *North American Review*, mentions that the same vessel in which a Lutheran missionary sailed for the Congo, carried over also 100,000 gallons of New England rum.

The *Saturday Review* has been giving some attention to the English Catholic "Martyrs" who have recently been beatified by the Pope. It says, "Most of them were suspected and many of them even reasonably suspected, of being mixed up with conspiracies against the government, or the life of the Queen." It is at any rate certain that those who upheld the right of the Pope to depose temporal sovereigns could neither then, nor now, be regarded as satisfactory citizens.

MR. BRADLAUGH rebukes the Social Democrats for going to Church and creating a disturbance. No doubt he is right, and it is difficult to see what they can expect to gain by it except a cheap advertisement. Yet their offence is far less in going to one of our State churches than if they went to a Dissenting place of worship, for the parish church is legally the church of all, and everybody has a right there.

MR. C. COLLINGWOOD, in a book entitled *The Bible and the Age*, attempts what he calls a reasonable mystical exegesis of Scripture. The amount of reason brought to bear on the subject may be judged by his belief that there must be exactly four gospels because there are four cardinal quarters in the heavens.

THE Rev. Herbert H. Evans, having proved to his own satisfaction that Paul wrote the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel according to St. Luke, now publishes a book to prove that the same apostle was the author of the last twelve verses of Mark, which are not in the earliest manuscripts. At the same time two Dutch professors, H. A. Pierson and S. Naber contend that Paul did not write the epistles attributed to him, but only edited more ancient documents.

GEORGE MARSH, boiler maker, of Chester, heard a heavenly voice tell him to go to his aunt Singleton, at Middlewick, and get seven £50 shares in the Manchester and County Banking Company. The old lady let him have them, but when she wanted them back he waited in vain for the heavenly voice to give him fresh instructions. But a jury has settled the matter without waiting for the telephonic message from above; and the judge, who expressed himself very suspicious of "heavenly voices in secular matters," orders George Marsh to return the share certificates or pay £350. No doubt the heavenly voice will give him a fresh tip.

"POTIPHAR'S WIFE," a picture by a great Russian artist, is being exhibited in the provinces. It shows a magnificent woman, absolutely naked, reclining on a couch, and in the background *il casto Giuseppe* entering the curtained apartment. This picture was seen by forty thousand people at Manchester, at a shilling a head. Some said it was indecent, others maintained the contrary, and of course everybody who could spare a shilling went to see it in order to form a personal judgment on the question. At Leeds, however, an effort has been made to stop the exhibition. The Vigilance Committee—an offshot of *Pall Mall Stead's* agitation—appealed to the magistrate in the interest of public morality, and after a good deal of palaver the stipendiary, who had seen the picture himself, decided that it was not indecent, and dismissed the summons with costs.

MR. H. A. CHILD, who prosecuted for the Vigilance Committee, said that his clients "held that the story of Potiphar's wife, though found in Holy Writ, was impure, and had an impure moral." Why on earth, then, don't they prosecute the publishers of the Bible instead of attacking the painter? If the story is good to read it is good to depict, and *vice versa*. But Bibliolators were always a hypocritical lot. And as they were in the beginning, they are now, and ever will be, world without end. Amen.

It was at a dinner table. His father was saying something to his mother about dynamite. "Oh," exclaimed Jack, looking across to Eloise with an evident desire to impress her with his acquirements, "I know what dynamite is." "What is it?" inquired Eloise. "It's something that you blaspheme rocks with," Jack explained.

THE *Christian Herald* has a story of "Putting out the Lamps," which runs thus:—"Early one winter morning, as I was going to my work, I saw a man putting out the street lamps. I wondered at first to see him doing so, as it was yet quite dark; but just then the thought struck me, this is so like the Christian! That man is putting out the lamps because he has faith that the sun will rise, and in that great light all the smaller ones would be lost, and perfectly useless." This is exactly what Christianity has been doing. She succeeded in putting out the lamps of science and reason but her promised sun never arose. A horror of great darkness covered Europe during the Middle Ages when Christianity was supreme. That which she has done historically she seeks to do in each individual also. The great business of real Christianity is that of extinguishing the light of human reason and inculcating trust in the darkness of ignorance and the blindness of faith.

CANON WILBERFORCE and his Bishop have a pretty little quarrel. The Canon has a craze for officiating in Nonconformist chapels, and the Bishop interdicts him from doing so. It appears to us that the Bishop is the honestest of the two. A man has no right to take the loaves and fishes of the Church, and then indulge in a freedom which is against the rules and regulations. Let the Canon give up his living, and he can preach where he pleases. But of course that is too big a price for the luxury.

TALMAGE says that "the Bible is a warm letter of affection from a parent to a child." Very warm, and in fact quite hot—hell-fire being his affectionate ultimatum. The passages in which he commands his children to slay each other for religious differences is also peculiarly full of parental love of the divine and Christian kind.

SIR JOHN GOSS testified to having heard the favorite Christmas hymn rendered by a rural choir, as follows:

"The Heavenly Babe you there will find
All wrapped in swaddle—addle—addle—adding clothes."

Sir John Goss was also very great on the topic of the "Easter Hymn," as performed by a barrel organ: "Immediately I heard it I fell flat down in the pew, sir," he used to say, recalling that dreadful Sunday morning.

CHRISTIANITY A CRUTCH.

THE *Christian Herald* has an anecdote of a Christian gentleman in Washington who said to a certain colonel "I wish you had been here a few minutes ago. A poor crippled old man was making the best of his way through the storm across the street, when a big, lusty fellow came along, kicked his crutch from under his arm, and left him lying in the slush and wet."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed the colonel. "I wish I had him here! I would have wrung his neck for him." "Well, colonel, you are the big, lusty fellow I had in mind," said the Christian, "You are big and strong and hearty, and you go about the country kicking the crutch of Christianity from under the arms of poor crippled sinners, who have no other support, and then leave them wallowing in the mud and mire of unbelief and despair. You are all pull down and no build up." The colonel, according to the pious story, which of course gives no names and dates, "was stunned by the parallel, for he was a lecturer against Christianity and the Bible." The only colonel we know of who lectures against Christianity and the Bible is Colonel Ingersoll, but as this particular colonel is represented as making no response, but only as walking away in silence and remaining in a brown study for an hour or two, it is evident he could not have been Colonel Ingersoll. We may be sure that this infidel colonel is a mere myth formed by a comparison of Infidelity with a man who kicks away a cripple's crutch, which idea presently circulated as an anecdote with gradual additions, till at length the impersonal infidel became a Freethought lecturer and a colonel. The first statement of the Christian about the assault on the cripple is confessedly a dramatic falsehood. Why should he hesitate at still further concoction of valuable Christian truth in the shape of incidents that ought to have occurred but didn't?

But the comparison itself is more true than the pious myth-makers will admit. Christians, according to their own similitude, are cripples, and Christianity is the crutch which enables them to hobble along. Christianity would cripple us all mentally and morally in order to have the credit of being an invaluable crutch. How much better is the simple health and strength of Freethought, when no crutch is needed or thought of! Are men's minds for ever to be crushed and mutilated in order that the sorry spectacle of a world of maimed and miserable souls may redound to the glory of a Christianity which cripples them in order to be indispensable to their comfort?

W. P. B.

A CONCEITED parson who had lent a volume of his own sermons on the Deluge to a class of girls, was more surprised than gratified to find on the return of the book that the following had been written on the fly-leaf:

"If there should be another flood,
For refuge hither fly;
Though all the world should be submerged,
This book would still be dry."

That pastor is very anxious to discover the girl who wrote the verse. He is sure there is a dreadful infidel among his pupils, and would like to protect the rest of his lambs from her evil influence.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 6, Assembly Hall, Fawcett Street, Sunderland: at 11, "Will Christ Save Us?" at 2.30, "Where is God?" at 6.30, "Is Christianity True?"

FEB. 13, Milton Hall, London; 20, Plymouth; 27, Huddersfield.
MARCH 6, Cardiff; 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.—W. Schweizer, R. Fox.

A. L. ROY (India).—Pleased to hear from you and to know you are working for progress in your own country.

J. COLLIER.—The story about Col. Ethan Allen has been often contradicted in the American papers. He died in 1789, but the lie survives.

B. B.—*Jacob the Wrestler* is advertised by the author as ready or the cover of *Progress*.

P. L. FORBES.—The subject was treated very similarly in one of our Comic Sketches.

B. KNOWLES.—Pleased to hear that our Christmas Number was so enjoyed in your town. Your verse is fair, but not quite up to the mark. Try again, and if necessary again. Even great poets spoil a lot of paper before they write good verse.

H. J. BARRETT.—It is smart, but of course a good deal *invented*.

J. BOURNE wants to know the present height of Queen Victoria. Sorry we cannot satisfy his curiosity. He should write to the old lady herself. Probably she knows. At any rate we don't and don't care.

W. A. REFIELD.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

R. NICHOLLS.—Your hints are pertinent and amusing.

J. S. W.—Many thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

J. W. MANSON.—Thomas Paine died in Columbia Street, Greenwich, in the State of New York, on June 8, 1809, and was buried on his own farm at New Rochelle. Glad to receive your high opinion of *Infidel Death-Beds*. It did cost a lot of trouble, and so does every pamphlet we write.

M. E. W., in sending us a cutting, says: "Five years ago we were a happy family of five Quakers; now we are a happier family of five Atheists."

F. WENHAM.—Mr. Bradlaugh has exposed that story before, but trumpery journals like the *Evangelist* of course go on repeating it.

CARLOS.—Shall appear.

E. F.—Of course the Church of England "derives benefit from the State." Every penny of its revenues accrues to it by virtue of laws which, like all laws, are alterable. Every living is a distinct trusteeship; the parson has only a life interest, with no right of bequeathal; and that life interest is itself subject to further law.

J. BRUMAGE.—We are much obliged.

J. DAVIDSON.—It is a very good book, and we think you would find it useful.

W. HUNTER supplies all Freethought literature at the bookstall in the Secular Hall, Beck Street, Nottingham.

W. T. LEEKEY.—We don't concern ourselves with the private affairs of sky-pilots. When their doings become public, they are fair game.

W. G. U.—It will serve as a suggestion for a sketch, though not reproducible as it stands.

E. D. SLENKER.—Review next week. Always pleased to hear from you.

A. LEWIS.—We noticed the article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but it is not worth answering. A nameless "Conservative statesman" may be somebody or nobody. It is grossly untrue that the Christians are persecuted in France. They are being placed on a level with other citizens, but as they are accustomed to privileges they feel the change and cry "persecution!"

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker—Menschentum—Jus—Birmingham Daily Post—Church Reformer—Boston Investigator—Ironclad Age—La Luz—Thinker—Glad Tidings—Avant Courier—Canterbury Press—Medium and Daybreak—Pall Mall Gazette—Bath Argus.

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.

CAMBERWELL Secular Hall was crowded last Sunday evening by the biggest audience that ever assembled there to hear a lecture. Mr. Foote was in good form, and spoke for an hour and a quarter. The laughter and applause at "the points" were very hearty. Mr. Angus Thomas was a model chairman, and Mr. A. B. Moss occupied a seat on the platform. The only opponent was Mr. Morden, a well-meaning man, who has singular views of logic, and fancies that every witticism is a bad argument. Perhaps this comes of

reading the Bible too much, or too exclusively. Mr. Morden should restore his equilibrium by a course of say Mark Twain, who is an accessible author, and never blue.

THE *Athenæum* calls Mr. Cotter Morison's new book, *The Service of Man*, "the most powerful attack on Christianity that has been produced in England during this generation." Our readers will find a full account of the contents of this remarkable volume in the current number of *Progress* from the pen of Mr. Foote.

WE hope the *Athenæum* is incorrect in thinking that the illness, which prevented Mr. Morison from completing his work on the original plan, is of a mortal character. Men like Mr. Morison, who combine the progressive spirit with intellectual sanity, and who are enthusiasts without being sentimentalists, are so rare that the loss of a single one of them is a public calamity.

THE Leicester Corporation have appointed a special committee to consider the advisability of establishing a crematory at the corporation cemetery. This is the only burial ground in the town. About 100,000 bodies are interred in it, in stiff, impervious clay. The leading citizens and medical men have signed a memorial in favor of a crematory being established, and it is expected this will be carried out.

A CONFERENCE at Aberystwith resolved that the only satisfactory solution of the title difficulty was in the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in Wales, and the diversion of tithes to purposes which will benefit all classes of the Principality.

La Luz, of Barcelona, the organ of the local Union of Freethinkers, shows that Spain is waking up in religious matters. Let Spain get rid of superstition and priestcraft, and the fine qualities of her people will place her once more in the front rank of nations. Our enterprising contemporary, in its last number to hand, notices our article "Converting a Corpse"—which exposed the silly story of Paul Bert's recantation—and Mr. Wheeler's "Atheism of the Bible." It also reviews Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds*, giving the price of the work in Spanish currency, and adds, "Recomendamos el librito á aquellos de nuestros lectores que sepan el inglés,"—that is, it recommends Mr. Foote's work to all its readers who understand English.

THE present number of the *Westminster Review* is the last that will appear in its present form. On and after April it will be published as a monthly, and we trust it will long continue to uphold the traditions of advanced thought with which its name is inseparably associated.

THE January number opens with an important paper on "State Education in America," which, besides giving much valuable information is an effective plea for "free education" at home. Articles on the Ancient Wild Animals of Britain, Diderot, The Art of Acting, What Woman is Fitted for, Plato's moral mission, Bishop Stubbs's Oxford lectures, The Art of Government, The Rent Question in Ireland, and London Government, make up a sufficiently varied number.

THE *South-Eastern Gazette* prints the following letter from Colonel Ingersoll to Mr. James Loveland, Shoreham, Sevenoaks, Kent: "40 Wall Street, New York, December 31, 1886.—Mr. James Loveland, Shoreham, England. Dear Sir,—I have been informed that Mr. H. Hodson Rugg wrote you a letter, in which he stated that he had received from a Mr. Hine 'the exhilarating intelligence that through his (Hine's) lectures on the "Identity of the British Nation with Lost Israel," I, 'the Arch-Atheist, had been converted to Christianity and had joined the Episcopalian Church,' and that '5,000 of my followers had been won to Christ through Mr. Hine's grand mission work.' I write simply for the purpose of telling you that there is not one word of truth in Mr. Rugg's letter, in so far as it concerns me, or my supposed 'followers.' Never, until two or three days ago, did I know of the existence of any man by the name of 'Mr. Hine.' I never heard him lecture, never read a word of his writing, knew nothing of his theory about 'lost Israel,' and care nothing about the ancestry of the British nation. I wish that you would do me the favor to give any information you may have as to the origin of the ridiculous charge that I have been 'converted to Christianity.'—Yours truly, R. G. INGERSOLL."

ACCORDING to its printed balance-sheet, the Portsmouth Secular and Radical Hall Company has been very successful during its first year. It actually has a *bona fide* balance to the good of £8 2s. 7½d. This is not much, but it is on the right side, and that is the main thing. We congratulate our Portsmouth friends on their success.

THE *Edinburgh Review* has a lengthy study on that old Freethinker Thomas Hobbes. It says: "Above all others he succeeded in marrying words to thought, and lighting up the most abstruse exposition with the brightest gems of wit and fancy."

THE *Boston Investigator*, continuing its publication of Mr. Remsburg's lecture on "The Father's of the American Republic,"

gives evidence that Washington was, as Dr. Abercrombie of the Episcopal Church declared, "a Deist." Jefferson and many others stated that Washington was never known to say a single word which showed a belief in Christianity. Jefferson further said, "I know that Gouverneur Morris, who claimed to be in his secrets, and believed himself to be so, has often told me that Gen. Washington believed no more in that system [Christianity] than he did."—*Jefferson's Works* vol. iv., p. 512. Washington from his position was almost obliged to attend church, but Bishop White testified that he never attended communion.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN is also dealt with. Of Franklin, Joseph Priestley, his intimate friend, wrote: "It is much to be lamented that a man of Franklin's general good character and great influence should have been an unbeliever in Christianity, and also have done as much as he did to make others unbelievers."—*Priestley's Autobiography*, p. 60. Priestley was himself denounced as an infidel. He was a Unitarian of the most advanced type and was mobbed and driven from England on account of his heretical opinions and his sympathy with the French Revolution. Franklin's infidelity must have been of a very radical character to have provoked the censure of Dr. Priestley.

No doubt orthodox parsons will continue to cite the names of Washington and Franklin with those of Milton, Locke, and Newton, among eminent Christians, although each of these rejected the distinctive dogmas of orthodoxy.

MEPHISTOPHELES AT THE LYCEUM.

The other night I went with some friends to see "Faust" at the Lyceum. Not being a play-goer or a dramatic critic, all I need say of Mr. Irving as Mephistopheles is that he seems to me to act the part very sensibly and without the ranting and raving which would so easily vulgarise the character beyond redemption. It is not so much the ability of an actor whom I saw for the first as the presentment of the modernized Devil on the stage that I wish to deal with.

The pervading impression on my mind throughout the performance was that of unreality. I have never seen a play in which the dramatic incidents affected me less. I perceive that to me the Devil is dead. Satan's body is buried with that of Moses for which he contended. Mephistopheles, the foul vapor and miasma of the human mind that created him, is swept away by mental ventilation of latter-day thought and latter-day science. Even his last lingering traces in the mortal puzzlings and hopeless wearings of brain and conscience over the mystery of evil have faded away in the clear light of the all-pervading Darwinian sunrise. The unreality or absolute non-existence of the Devil and his belongings made all his actions unreal—to my consolation, for I dislike being made miserable by tragical plays. Every scene suffered from the inappropriate and preposterous demand upon the unready credulity or the unwilling imagination. The dark study chamber of the learned Doctor Faust with its suspended crocodile and mediæval adjuncts, the colored clouds of lime-lit steam in which his Satanic Majesty appears and disappears, the compact in which Faust sells an immortal soul which he does not possess, the signature, these of the contract in blood, the witch's kitchen with its apish tomfooleries—these only served to reduce the whole thing to an absurdity and to deprive the otherwise thrilling human incidents of force, dignity and verisimilitude. The whole play sunk almost to the level of a child's pantomime or a comic opera. Even the despair of the ruined Margaret when mocked by her girlish companions, her piteous prayer to the Virgin, and her awful meeting with her dying brother just slain by her lover, only partially escaped from the realm of ludicrous unreality by sheer force of eloquent acting—genuine nature for the moment almost obliterating the supernatural nonsense that mingled with it to insult and falsify it. The only part that gave me the least thrill or impression of real devilishness was when, emerging from out of the weird darkness into the corner of the cathedral whither Margaret has fled in her anguish for confession and refuge, the Tempter suggests to the despairing and horror-stricken girl that as she has killed her mother so she shall kill her babe. The impressiveness of the Satanic threats to tear Faust limb from limb and rain down his blood in drops upon the earth seemed puerile talk of childish material horrors quite incongruous with the declaration "I am a spirit." Such ideas seemed only suited to the serious attention of people with the cruder forms of superstition still lingering in their blood. The Walpurgis Night, like

all the rest of the play, was most excellently "staged" for scenery and effects. But the dazzling lightnings, the electric sparks on the rocks, the flashing sky-fires, and earth-flames and thunders of the Brocken, suggested a Crystal Palace firework display rather than anything serious or terribly supernatural; and the screeching witches with their weird antics and noises suggested midnight cats and owls and pantomimic comicalities rather than the horrible glories of demoniacal mirth and Satanic revelry.

It is clear to me that other people are less emancipated from the moral remains of superstition than I am. If it were otherwise the incongruity between the embodied Satan and modern thought would destroy the play except so far as it might be saved by remodelling into *opera bouffe*. The cowering and shrinking of Mephistopheles at the sight of a cross which he disregards when convenient, savored to me of pantomimic farce, and his abject flight before Margaret's uplifted cross, which was powerless when pendent on her neck, caps the absurdity, which doubtless has its traces of sane meaning to those who still suffer from the prejudice in favor of belief, in the supernatural power of the Church confusedly mixed with, and merging into, a belief in the moral efficacy of religion in expelling evil thoughts and influences. The general effect of the supernatural machinery is to make the greatest work of a great poet and philosopher appear almost as frivolous and superficial as a "Fra Diavolo" or a "Falka."

On the other hand, I am bound to say that when I read "Faust" some twenty years ago the philosophy and poetry of the work produced a very different effect upon me from that now produced by the stage representation with its omissions and its too crude materializations of the spirit of evil as a kind of gallery hero and popular magician. In dramatizing the old legend of "Faust," Goethe necessarily had to use the supernatural materials and religious symbols required by such a story; but the imagination, left comparatively free in reading, can far more easily accept such ideas and such necessary obeisances to the religious gallery of readers than it can digest the necessarily unsuccessful attempt to represent them on the stage, where what should be the world-solemnity of the eternal drama of evil and the awful moral enigma of the suffering and destruction of the good, are converted into a pretentious farce mingled with irrelevant and incongruous tragedy. Goethe of course had no real wish to pander to the vulgar ideas. In his continuation of "Faust," far from carrying off his hero to hell, he idealises and almost deifies him in the highest regions of art and philosophy and imagination. Mephistopheles, too, is made to declare—cynically to the religious and apogetically to the cultured—that the world cannot get along without all this *hocus-pocus* business.

I am biassed, I know, by several influences. As a pronounced Atheist I do not so readily imagine the actuality of doctrines and impressions which I am continually exposing and denouncing as both false and as utterly irrelevant to human conduct. Spoiled as a supernatural play, the tragical farce also fails with me in human interest. I have not the slightest sympathy with a hero who ruins the object of his love, or with a modest young maiden who gives her mother a sleeping draught and then admits her lover to her chamber. The cross with which Margaret expelled Mephistopheles from her presence was of no avail against Faust, or her own seductive love of jewellery, or her unfilial and immodest conduct. Perhaps this real powerlessness of the cross was part of the farce, for Goethe, it is well known, had no liking for that emblem of Christianity. It almost seems as if Mephistopheles, with his dry wit and shrewdness and point and decision of character, was intended to entrap our sympathy and respect rather than the foolish puppets with whom he plays. But his jokes, as when he brings wine from the wooden table and turns the spilt liquor into fire, and when he propounds the problem of Martha's future fate and declares that *he* won't have her when she dies, make him a hero of sarcastic comedy rather than the protagonist of a deep tragedy.

The moral sentiment receives no satisfaction from the play and no stimulus. The lime-lit angels betokening the final salvation of Margaret after her death in the dungeon or her execution for murdering her child, are mere theatrical claptrap, satisfactory only to the superstitious believers in heaven and hell. No compensation is possible to the victim, and in this respect the play falls short even of the Book of Job with which Goethe connected his play

by introducing the opening scene of that ancient attempt at a solution of the problem of evil. Faust is left unpunished, and his consignment to hell would only brutalise the play beyond forgiveness. As an evening's entertainment, or as a modernized and beautiful representation of an old and barbarous religious legend, the play is deservedly successful; as anything deeper it is a failure.

W. P. BALL.

THOUGHTS ON CHRIST.

THE cackle and babble from the pulpit during the festive season of Christmas has been in full blast, and—wind! wind!! wind!!! has been the order of the day. What beautiful bathos I have heard about the Son of God, his humility and condescension in clothing himself with about two stone of gristle, bone and hair to pay us a flying visit to start the job of salvation some 1800 years ago; and then the solemnity of this black army when it speaks of that Easter time with its awful sacrifice, "and all for you my brethren" (although you're 1800 years after). One parson in particular got quite familiar with Christ's early life, and depicted the humble home of Joseph with his simple mode of life. "Think," said he, "of that village carpenter's shop and the mother appearing in the doorway, calling Joseph and Christ to the frugal meal of, perhaps, porridge, prepared by the loving hands of the Mother of God." I pictured to myself juvenile Jesus with a mouthful of tropical porridge, and the awful language that must have bubbled up; and then the grave admonition of Mary, saying "Oh, Christ! (seeming almost like profanity) where do you expect to go to?" This parson, who seemed to know the *menu* of the Virgin's table, wound up by telling his audience to think of his second coming and be prepared for it, as no doubt the time was very near, although he kindly allowed a margin of say from ten minutes to ten years.

I took his words in earnest and thought of this second coming, but in no way does my thought come up to Mr. Parson's emotional expectations. Where will he come from, O paid sky-pilot, if he appears as an adult and comes through space as a meteor? Methinks he'll burn out frictionally before he gets to this planet. There is also the attraction of other earths to avoid, and the modern telescope shows little points of light so far away in space that we have scarcely enough figures in our arithmetic to make a sensible computation of the distance. Why if he came beyond those little glints of light—and heaven cannot be discerned in the intervening space—he must have packed up his portmanteau some thousands of years ago, and then must travel at the rate of light to be due on this planet now.

I continued my reverie and thought, firstly, of the shepherds having to "watch their flocks by night all seated on the ground" in oilskins, with their tobacco in full blast, looking out for that erratic "down east" star, and next, of Christ arriving on this planet, not as is always figured by artists in color, or parsons in words, because a toga this weather would look rather bedraggled with splashes of London mud up to the back. And then that umbrella—neither man nor god can look heroic or romantic with an umbrella; you really cannot be emotional with one of these machines; it's in the way when you clasp your hand to heart.

Eighteen hundred years lend a glamor of sentimentalism to the first incarnation; but now!—think of it ye docile lambs (who only say baa to the sky-pilot's poor clack). Christ in tall hat, trousers and cut-away coat, suffering perhaps from tight boots and a cold in the head. It's too sublimely ridiculous to even think of Jesus tallowing his nose and loading himself with gruel previous to getting into bed.

Then those awful parables. Fancy Christ stopping in the street and recounting to a mob of pot-house lurchers the touching history of the Prodigal Son and his weak-kneed return to pa's four-roomed cot, after he had parted with all his slender means by skittles, nap, and riotous living. Then Christ taking a mild excursion on a Sunday to try and find a field where he might pluck ears of corn and rebuke his hypocritical followers. What would be the consequence of Jesus publicly saying "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not"? Why the front of his domicile would be packed the next morning with parcels and hampers containing all the strays in London packed up carefully, with perhaps a change of baby linen and a book of etiquette.

The most terrible episode would be the lecturing tour. Christ on the stump—his next address advertised in the daily papers; the criticisms on his last lecture; and that mendacious rascal, the interviewer, on his track, asking him those painfully private questions, and trying to get an answer to those other irrelevant inquiries, such as: "Does your mother know you're on this planet?"—"Is the old man still friendly?"—"At what rate of speed did you travel?"—"Do the angels suffer from corns?" and "What is the last mixed drink up above?"

The people's caterer would make offers to him to perform his trick act of levitation to a limited height twice daily—offering to advertise him well depicted on posters, ascending twice as high as Blondin. Oh! Mr. Parson, you asked me to think of the second coming of Christ, and this is the result. You said, "Should he come, perhaps some of you here present might become his disciples," although you forgot to mention his *penchant* for fishermen, and a supply of that article could no doubt

be produced from Billingsgate. In future do not tell your audiences to use their own thinking powers; it will kill your trade. Keep your lambs docile and talk them to sweet repose.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"GOD AND HIS BOOK."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“J. M. W.” admits that he “paused before reviewing” *God and his Book*. Who imposed the apparently unpleasant task upon him? I studiously refrained from sending a review copy of the work to the *Freethinker*. Why do you go out of your way to review books not sent to you for review? I do not seek to suggest your reason; let the public do that. I am quite willing also to leave to the judgment of the public the question of the book's merits and demerits; and the public seems prepared to take the judgment into its own hands, and has already read the work more largely than it is likely to read anything from the pen of your plodding little factotum, “J. M. W.,” between this date and the Greek Kalends.—Yours truly

SALADIN.

[We insert “Saladin's” letter as a striking illustration of his modesty and good temper. His ground of complaint is exceedingly minute, in fact microscopic. The *Freethinker* has given him an unsolicited review, for which he is not grateful because he is censured. “Saladin” allows, in a “private” note, that he sent a review copy of his volume to the editor of *Progress*, a fact which he conceals in the letter he asks us to print. We were under the impression that the volume was intended for both publications. It is not true that “Saladin” “studiously refrained” from troubling the editor of the *Freethinker*. Not only did he send us the Parts as they appeared, but we inserted a letter from “Saladin” (*Freethinker*, Aug. 22) on a point in Part III. He did not then object to the publicity our pages afforded. We acknowledged the receipt of the Parts, and distinctly said that “we must defer serious criticism till the work is completed” (Aug. 15), and again (Sept. 19) we spoke of “reserving criticism for the complete work.” We may add that *God and his Book* will probably be noticed in the next number of *Progress*. Meanwhile we may state that the task of reviewing the volume devolved on the sub-editor because we were too busy. We placed the book in his hands, leaving him (as usual) absolutely free to review it in his own way; and he appended his initials in order that (in such a case) he might take the full responsibility of his severe criticism. We are afraid that our own judgment is too much in accord with our sub-editor's to let us share “Saladin's” feelings on the subject. For the rest, Mr. Wheeler's reputation will take care of itself, and in case of extreme necessity it might rely on eulogies from the editorial columns of the *Secular Review*. He is not eternally sounding his own praises, but those who know him best are aware that his modesty covers real abilities and sound erudition. In conclusion we beg “Saladin,” when he favors us with another communication, not to write on both sides of the paper.—EDITOR “FREETHINKER.”]

REVIEWS.

Bacon and Shakespeare. By W. H. BURR. Washington: Brentano Brothers.—Mr. Burr laboriously proves—to his own satisfaction—that Bacon wrote Shakespeare. He has only now to prove that Shakespeare wrote Bacon, and then the farce will be complete. Mr. Burr seems a good man gone wrong.

Vegetarianism and Evolution. By JAMES ANDREW. London: Millington Brothers, Threepence.—The author is an enthusiast in the cause of vegetarianism, and he has written an interesting pamphlet, treating the subject from a common-sense point of view and giving the opinion of many eminent doctors.

Secular versus Christian Morality. By HERBERT COURTNEY. London: Freethought Publishing Company, One Penny.—Mr. Courtney maintains that Christianity, both in theory and practice, is opposed to the free exercise of individual reason and to political reform. He holds that morality is essentially Secular, and has no dependence whatever on revelation. We should like to see the pamphlet widely read.

Our Corner, February. Freethought Publishing Co.—Mrs. Besant continues her able and interesting essay on the Genesis of Conscience, and Mr. John Robertson begins a careful study of Tennyson. Mr. Bradlaugh writes on the New Session of Parliament, and is very severe on Lord Randolph Churchill. Mr. W. H. Utley has a rather flatulent article on the Scientific Aspect of Socialism. The science in this article is an irreducible minimum, and as for its facts, it is enough to say that Mr. Utley, whose youth is his only excuse, gravely tells us that working men all “starve in miserable and disease-haunted slums.”

PROFANE JOKES.

“No cows, no cream,” was the way a compositor set up the words, “No cross, no crown.”

WHERE was Moses when the light went out? In the dark. Certainly not. There was a little Israel-light there.

A “GOSPEL HYMN” sung by the Salvation Army, has for its refrain “Happy as a Whale.” We don't suppose a whale was happy. There is too much “blubber” about it.

BOOK AGENT: “Here's Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.” Aunt Chloe: “No sah! Don't want 'em. Got two bunions now, and dey don't help dis pilgrim's progress one mite.”

“DONALD, man,” said a Highlander to a friend, “is a bumble-bee a beast or a bird?” “Hoot, Sandy,” was the reply, “don't disturb me wi' reeigious questions when I'm taking a dram.”

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PURCHASE OF HALL.

The Directors appeal to the Secularists of Manchester and the vicinity for prompt assistance in carrying out the objects of the company. They have just entered into a contract to purchase a building situate in Bloomsbury, Rusholm Road. It includes a large Hall excellently lighted, free from street noises, and capable of accommodating about 500 persons. There is also a room upstairs which will seat about 80 persons, and can, when required, be made part of the large hall. In addition there are two smaller rooms suitable for classes, and there is convenience for supplying tea parties. It is believed that a building more suitable for the purpose of the Secularists is not to be found in Manchester, whilst the price at which it may be had is considered very reasonable.

The property is freehold, subject to the low chief of £4 9s. 2d. per annum. The price is £1,645, but it will be necessary to raise at least £1,800 to cover incidental expenses and to purchase new seats. Deducting the assured sum of £500, and £300 already promised, or in hand, the further sum of £1,000 is required by June 24. next, when the purchase must be completed or the contract will become null and void and the deposit be forfeited. Part of the amount might be obtained on mortgage, but it is desired to avoid this as the interest in addition to other charges would be a serious hindrance to the work of the body in Manchester.

The shares are £1 each, of two classes, A and B. "A" shares are payable in full on allotment. "B" shares by monthly subscriptions of one shilling per share.

Prospectuses, with forms of application for shares, may be obtained at the Registered Offices from the undersigned, who will give any further information desired. GEORGE PAYNE, Hon. Sec.

N.B.—Friends desirous of aiding in the work without taking shares may do so by donations to the Branch N.S.S., and any such assistance will be gratefully accepted by the Secretary to the Branch, Mr. A. Hemingway, 25 Higher Chatham Street, C. on-M., or the Treasurer, Mr. E. G. Field, 9 Ilye Street, Clarendon Road, C. on-Medlock, Manchester.

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