

THE FREETHINKER

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

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 185.



PROFESSOR JOSHUA.

Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of man.—JOSHUA x., 12-14.

A CONVERTED ATHEIST.*

MR. WHITMORE will now be able to add another to his "Sixteen Converted Infidel Leaders." Mr. Penny is quite worthy to take his place in the list. "For many years," says Canon Burbidge, in the Preface to Mr. Penny's confessions, "he occupied a somewhat prominent position in the ranks of infidelity." If so, his prominent position must have been among the illustrious obscure. Until we saw the pamphlet now before us we were profoundly ignorant of his existence. It is therefore to be hoped that the Freethought party has suffered no very great calamity by his defection. Still, it is only fair to say that, according to the title-page, Mr. Penny was once Corresponding Secretary of the Barrow and Dalton-in-Furness Branches of the National Secular Society.

How far Mr. Penny is the real author of this pamphlet we have no means of deciding; but we entertain a strong suspicion that his literary sponsor, Canon Burbidge, is responsible for some of its pages. There is a marked unevenness in the style. Some paragraphs exhibit a scholarly use of words, and the touch of a well-practised pen, while

* *Why I am Now a Christian: or a Journey through Atheism to God.* By Eddell C. Penny. (With a Preface by Canon Burbidge). Liverpool: T. Fuller.

others betray very different characteristics. The age of miracles, however, is not past, if we are to believe Mr. Penny; and therefore it is quite possible that the whole of this composite production came from the hand of one man.

Canon Burbidge assures us that his *protégé* has been brought out of darkness into light, and thinks that "sceptics may learn much from his detailed experience." What we should like to learn is this—How came certain arguments which proved one conclusion to prove another? Or how did arguments which seemed unanswerable appear afterwards to be mere sophistries? Had Mr. Penny told us this, his confessions would have been interesting and valuable. They would have given us the *psychology* of a case of conversion. But instead of this, although he fills thirty-eight pages of print, he merely tells us that he has changed sides.

Incidentally, however, Mr. Penny reveals his true motives. Quite unconsciously, perhaps, he discloses the fact that his conversion was due to a very natural fondness for the loaves and fishes. In October, 1884, he was "reduced in circumstances by sin." The intelligence bursts upon us like a thunder-clap, for up to that moment he represents himself as sober and studious. Nor does he inform us what kind of "sin" he had been guilty of. He leaves us to conjecture whether it was lying, theft, arson, adultery, or murder. Let us charitably hope it was none

of these, and conclude that Mr. Penny was suffering from the blues.

Just at that critical moment when "reduced circumstances" made him a possible convert, a Scripture Reader dropped in casually and left a mysterious tract entitled *He Goes Nowhere*, and ending with the text "He will not obey God." Those words sank into Mr. Penny's mind, but as he did not then believe in God it is difficult to understand why he was troubled about disobeying a nonentity. Soon afterwards he began to "do his own thinking," although he had, according to his own account, done so all along. First, he says, "I rejected the atomic theory." But what on earth had that to do with the perturbing tract, or with Atheism either? Subsequently Mr. Penny found that geology and Genesis agreed wonderfully, as they undoubtedly do, and that "the primary or crystalline rocks which contain no vestiges of life answer to the description 'without form and void.'" The Fall of Man was easily swallowed after this brilliant discovery, and then Mr. Penny "longed for God." But the longing for God was accompanied by a yearning for cash. "Business matters," says Mr. Penny, "and trade everywhere had been going bad for months, and my business suffered. I tried to get orders and failed, tried to obtain employment and failed." On Christmas Eve he had ninepence left for a family of five. As he determined to "let no one know" of his poverty, his Atheistic friends could not come to his relief, but some "Church visitors" got to hear of it, and they sent him some "beef and potatoes." The beef and potatoes were the best of missionaries. They converted Mr. Penny. They filled his belly and showed him the error of his ways. Who could doubt that the road leading from beef and potatoes is wrong, and that the road leading to beef and potatoes is right? Mr. Penny regarded the viands as a "god-send," and after dinner he resolved to cultivate the Lord's acquaintance. "The next day," to use his words, "I obtained sufficient orders to enable me to get along comfortably." These evidences of religion were most convincing. Mr. Penny went to a prayer-meeting, got thoroughly converted, and experienced fresh blessings of the beef and potato order. "It will be sufficient for me to state here," he says, "that during the hours I was absent from home God blessed me with a multitude of orders." Quite sufficient! Everybody must admit that Mr. Penny had the most *solid* reasons for becoming a Christian. May his "orders" never grow less, and may "beef and potatoes" ever smoke upon the table to confirm his faith.

In the early part of his pamphlet Mr. Penny writes: "I had many friends among the Atheists, and they were good people, honest and straightforward, leading pure and virtuous lives, and although I have left them I will not belie them; I respected them and they respected me." But as the plot of his conversion thickens, and the beef and potatoes do their work, his tone changes, and true, unadulterated Christian charity appears in all its beauty. He speaks of "the reprobate minds of those who do not like to retain God in their knowledge." He tells the world, or the few who will invest sixpence in his pamphlet, that Free thought means "selfishness," that Freethinkers "deride all that is good and holy," and that no Freethinker "has any incentive for doing good to anyone but himself." Indeed! Then how did those Atheists of his freethinking days become *good, honest, pure, and virtuous*? Mr. Penny has a poor philosophy or a bad memory. His last words are "Come home, dear friends, come home to God." But how about the beef and potatoes? Mr. Penny should assure his readers that those succulent viands will not fail the convert. If he can give that assurance he will probably find some poor devils who will "come," but whether they will be particularly creditable on any cause they honor with their support is a question that Mr. Penny and Canon Burbidge may decide in one way and all honest men in another.

G. W. FOOTE.

A GOOD brother had a call to preach. Being unable to read, he employed a friend to read the Scripture lesson. On one occasion the chapter selected was Genesis xxii., which contains the words—"These eight did Milcah bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother." The preacher discoursed therefrom as follows: "Brethren and sisters, let us consider our blessings. Morning and evening our wives and daughters milk the cows and our wants are supplied. In the days of good old Abraham, as you have heard, it took eight to milk a bear, and they did not get much at that."

M. RENAN'S "STUDIES IN RELIGIOUS HISTORY."*

THE translator has been somewhat tardy in producing his English version of M. Renan's *Studies*, which appeared in France fully two years ago. He has, however, done his work fairly well, and we will not grumble, especially as the book appears very opportunely to enlighten the English reading public as to the views of one of the ablest living Frenchmen on an important political problem with which both his countrymen and our own will have to deal.

The defeat of M. Pichou's recent proposal in the Chamber of Deputies that the *Budget des Cultes* should be suppressed, as a preliminary to the complete separation of Church and State, has been taken by several English papers to imply a reaction in favor of the maintenance of religion, and no doubt the mass of Frenchmen are not prepared to repudiate the payment of some of the costs of religion, which they consider a debt of honor contracted when the ecclesiastical possessions were declared to be the property of the nation. That ultimately Church and State must be entirely separated was the opinion of M. Goblet, who, with the Ministerialists, defeated the proposal. It is also the opinion of M. Renan. In his valuable Preface to the present volume he says:

"Religion must eventually become entirely free; that is, it must be placed beyond the interference of the State, and be as individual a thing as literature, art, or taste."

While it is true that in France a man may enjoy all civic and political rights without even professing any religious belief, "there yet remains the step of abolishing the Concordat and striking out from the general budget all grants in aid of particular forms of worship." The pretence of Catholics that in France they are persecuted, M. Renan declares is false. The truth is they are privileged; and privileges must entail correspondent duties.

"The Catholic party claims all the privileges of the Napoleonic Concordat, without accepting any of its duties. It wants to be free, as in America, and official, as it always used to be in France."

This is instructive, for year by year we are witnessing the same phenomenon in England—the High Church party, in particular, denying the authority of the Privy Council in all matters of worship, while strenuously opposing the idea of disestablishment.

The following passage on prayer will also not be relished by the orthodox:

"Men nowadays pray less and less, for they know that no prayer was ever effective. Evidence proves nothing in a question of this sort. If ever there were a deity whose power was established by documents apparently irrefutable, it was the goddess *Rabbat Tanit* of Carthage. Nearly three thousand stela [tablets] bearing witness to vows made to the goddess have been excavated—they are now for the most part preserved in the National Library of Paris; each and all state that *Rabbat Tanit* heard the prayers addressed to her. These three thousand witnesses to a prayer having secured its object certainly deceived themselves. For indeed, *Rabbat Tanit* being a false deity, never could grant anyone's prayer. The efficacy of quinine is proved because in numberless cases, quinine or its substitutes have modified the course of a fever. Did ever prayer secure such proofs? Certainly not. Yet the fact is easy to test, for millions of prayers are daily offered to Heaven."

In the opening essay on "Experimental Method Applied to Religion," M. Renan touches with light hand the problem of the origin of a religion, a problem which has occupied much of his attention. He suggests that:

"A man sufficiently conversant with Arabic to write in a fine style a book purporting to define Adam's religion, might expect to see it adopted by the tribes bordering on Syria. These tribes, whose ways and customs are still what they were twelve hundred years ago, might easily be persuaded that Mahomet was a great man for having re-discovered the religion of Abraham, but that the religion of Adam is superior, since it applies to the whole of Adam's posterity—that is to mankind without exception. Fireworks let off on the mountains of Safet, and backed up by a few millions of francs, might easily be passed off as the apparition of the Messiah; confirmatory evidence might be procured by a sufficiently generous treatment of the Jews of Tiberias and Safet. By a rapid *coup de main*, Mecca might be taken, and the Caaba dismantled and turned into a receptacle for refuse."

This was written before the appearance of the Mahdi. To such a Messiah Renan advised that he should make his religion very difficult, that it might be all the more attrac-

* *Studies in Religious History*. By Ernest Renan. Authorised English Version, London: Richard Bentley and Son.

tive, and very absurd, that it might the more readily be proclaimed of divine origin. He gives the following explanation of the fecundity of Asia in the matter of religious creations, an explanation which we think applies with some force to the birth of Christianity:

"Asia possesses enthusiasm, faith, an easily-inflamed imagination, a boundless hope, audacious deceit; and in extreme cases, when the holy cause is driven to bay, the imperturbable assurance which maintains an idea in spite of reality. Our races are infinitely more solid, serious, straightforward than those of Asia, and for these very reasons they draw back horrified at what appears to them an imposture; they are not light enough to be so lifted up; they are deficient in that sort of double-dealing [duplicité de conscience] which enables one to be, at the same time, faustical and shrewd, cunning and credulous, impostor and dupe."

Evidently M. Renan has not with age lost his dexterity of touch. The essay on "New Works on Buddhism" will compare favorably with that on "First Works on Buddhism," written some twenty years before. M. Renan has not lost interest in Gautama, "the Atheist Christ of India," but follows up the most recent theories, though unconvinced that the Buddha was mythical, as doubtless are many of the legends concerning him.

In two essays, "Joachim di Flor and the Eternal Gospel" and "Francis of Assisi," he deals with rare sympathy with the Catholic saint who owed nothing to the Bible, and the movement which in the thirteenth century threatened to substitute Franciscanism for Christianity. In "A Monastic Idyl of the Thirteenth Century" we are treated to a glimpse at the heart of Christine of Stommeln, an uncanonised saint who had a very human love affair and was much beset by demons. We have also an historical review of the controversy on free will and grace, between the Thomists and Molinists, under the title of "The Congregation 'De Auxiliis,'" a word upon Galileo's Trial, a review of Saint Beuve's work on Port Royal, and the eloquent discourse on Spinoza which M. Renan delivered at the Hague on the second centenary of the death of the great Pantheistic philosopher. All the studies exhibit fine scholarship united with a sympathetic spirit, which easily assimilates ideas from all sources and presents them with the vivacity and verve which so distinguishes the works of the French from their Teuton compeers. In the fine phrase used by Johnson in the epitaph on Goldsmith, M. Renan "touches nothing which he does not adorn."

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

THE Scotch Presbytery has had to consider a complaint that two of its members actually sanctioned Sunday harvesting in inclement weather rather than the crops should spoil. Wiser than it used to be, the Presbytery resolves to let the subject drop. The official who made the complaint is still at large.

BYRON in his *Don Juan* tells how that immaculate hero was taught from expurgated editions of the classics where the bad passages were all put in an appendix. Something similar has come under our notice. In an American edition of Roget's useful *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*, published by Gould and Lincoln of Boston, the scrupulous editor omitted all such words as "hell," "devil," "damnation," etc. We suppose some complaint was made, for in a second edition, the moral American rectified the matter by adding all the omissions in an appendix, "which saves in fact the trouble of an index."

THE trouble of an index is also saved by the moral Child's Bible, published by Cassells. A juvenile has only to take the ordinary Bible and compare it with the Child's Bible wherever omissions occur and he is at once directed to more smut than most parents would allow to meet their children's eyes in any other book than the word of God.

THE Salvationists in Paris went a little too far when, availing themselves of the apprehensions of war, they sallied forth in uniform, carrying big placards on which was written, "War is declared." An indignant crowd gathered around them, tore up the placards, and would have ill-treated the officers but for the timely arrival of policemen, who dispersed the mob, and marched these Salvationists off to the station.

BELIEF in heaven and hell does not seem to be a sufficient deterrent from suicide, for a lad at Manchester after telling a companion that he should be either in heaven or hell that night, was found lying dead in the street, having shot himself in the stomach with a pistol.

THE sympathetic alliance of Beer and the Bible is seen in the magnificent offer of Sir Andrew Barclay Walker, the Warrington

brewer, to subscribe £10,000 to start a fund for celebrating the Queen's jubilee by erecting a Cathedral at Liverpool. A teetotal friend thinks it very appropriate that profits drawn from intoxicants should go to support religion.

WARNINGS against the custom of praying and otherwise worrying the Almighty are growing more terrible every day. Miss Kate Nicholson, of Mayville, Kentucky, while preparing to retire at night, knelt in front of the grate to say her prayers. Her clothes caught fire and she was burnt to death.

GEORGE MACDONALD, the English novelist, is a reverend, and consequently an authority upon what constitutes a Christian. Here is his latest definition: "A Christian is just one who does what the Lord Jesus tells him. Neither more nor less than that makes one a Christian." It is well that the world should know this. Jesus said, among other things, that if any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. By doing just as Jesus tells him a man may become a good Christian, but he would scarcely be deemed fit to associate with decent folks—*Truth-seeker*.

DR. WALSHAM HOW, the Bishop of Bedford, has put forward a little book entitled, *Half an Hour with God*. Half an hour only with the being who is everywhere present during all eternity! Surely the bishop had his mind on the title of Mr. Foote's lecture "An Hour with the Devil."

AT a revival meeting, a venerable sister began the hymn:—

"My soul, be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise."

She began in shrill quavers, but it was pitched too high. "Ten thousand—Ten thousand," she screeched, and stopped. "Start her off at five thousand!" cried a converted stockbroker present

THE Rev. E. Leaton Blenkinsopp, of Springthorpe, Gainsborough, says that the old cathedral of Moscow, was built by Ivan the Terrible, "who chopped off the head of the architect, that no other church of like grandeur should be built." A good illustration of piety in the ages of faith.

A REPUBLICAN deputy has just called the attention of the Spanish Government to the ill-treatment received by Spanish Protestants at the hands of the Catholics. The Home Secretary promises that liberty of conscience shall be protected. Christians so love and respect each other's Christianity that the State has to interfere to prevent them crushing each other's faith by violence.

THE Rev. J. Jones, Baptist minister, of Llanelly, has died suddenly. The *Christian Herald* ought to deduce the lesson that Baptist ministers are horribly depraved people, and that the death of one of them is God's signal method of proving and punishing the fact. Such at least would be the kind of lesson it would solemnly impress on its readers if the sudden death of a leading "Infidel" were announced.

A WRITER in the *Medium* points out that in an alleged spirit communication from Professor Zollner he writes in a way in which no German would express himself, but this is no reason against believing the message to be genuine, since it came through an English medium! This is almost as good as the case of the boy medium, Henry B. Allen, under the charge of Dr. J. H. Randall, of Boston. The spirits in the dark séances were in the habit of pulling the hair of the sitters. On the lights being turned up one evening, the boy's hands and cuffs were found to be black, and a gentleman explained that he had dressed his hair with lampblack. Dr. Randall and the spiritists at first were staggered, but they soon found an explanation. The spirits, it was said, were composed of the magnetic elements drawn from the medium; when they dissolved, the magnetic force returned, and of course carried back with it whatever material it had touched.

THIS ingenious explanation was soon adopted in the materializing séances. Whenever a medium—often a woman—is caught in a semi-nude state, personating a spirit, it is declared that the spirit rushes away because the circle is broken and leaves the medium thus disordered.

WE heard of a learned professor who was given an envelope whereon was a scrawl, said to be a spirit communication in a foreign language. He said he thought he detected a resemblance to a kind of Arabic, and upon being further questioned as to what kind of Arabic, said gum-arabic.

GENERAL BOOTH, boss of the Salvation Army, and patentee of the holy trade-mark of "Blood and Fire," has married off another daughter, the legal ceremony being performed in the proper place, and a pious travesty of it afterwards at the Clapton Congress Hall. So much a head was charged to see the fun, for Booth is not a squeamish man, or above making cash out of public curiosity in his domestic affairs. How far he would go in this line, for the sake of that filthy lucre which every Christian

abhors, we are unable to say. Happily there are laws of public decency that prevent the exhibition from being carried *too far*.

THE Abbé Roussel is at present the byword of Paris. This priest of the most high God, after the order of Melchizedek or somebody else, prosecuted a young woman named Annette Harchoux, for robbing him. During the trial it turned out that he had seduced the girl, and that he had a private room in the Rue de Grenelle, in which women's clothes had been found, and in which more than one of his mistresses had slept. The *abbé galant* was a "philanthropist," and esteemed by the godly as a second St. Vincent de Paul. According to the Paris correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* this *cause célèbre* "casts a lurid light on the manners and customs of clerical life"—which seems to imply that the whole priestly order is pretty well tarred with the same brush.

FRANCE is to be saved from all her evils. The Catholics are organising a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the steamship *Le Poitou* is engaged to carry the lot. Query—Will her holy cargo make any difference in the rate of insurance? We guess not.

THESE pilgrims will probably pray hard at Jerusalem, and the world will see the result of their prayers. Meanwhile, it is worth noticing that the pious children of one heavenly father are to be divided on board into three classes. *Le Poitou* sails from Marseilles on April 28, and is timed to return to the same port on June 9. Let us hope the pilgrims will observe cleanliness as well as godliness, otherwise all the praying in the world will not prevent some of them from falling victims to fever or cholera.

THE Rev. Septimus Buss, vicar of Shoreditch, was struck in the eye by a rough named Thomas Robson. The reverend gentleman had the good sense to throw his New Testament to the winds and follow up the man till he met a policeman, who took the fellow into custody. Mr. Buss did not turn the other cheek also, as his Lord and Master commands and as he himself teaches his parishioners. One black eye was quite sufficient for the long-suffering non-resistor of evil. The man was sentenced to a month's hard labor, thanks to the sensible but thoroughly un-Christian conduct of this vicar, who preaches one doctrine in the pulpit and acts on its opposite in his daily life.

THE Blackburn Ghost that frightened a man into a fit the other day is still up to her pranks in the churchyard and elsewhere. But another ghost, who has been terrifying women and children in the country lanes near Rossett, in Chester, has been caught. He escaped the bullet fired at him one night by a bicyclist, but the next night, as he approached a pedestrian, a large dog which accompanied him flew forward and seized the apparition, who yelled lustily at this unexpected result. The ghost turned out to be a villager dressed up in white. Educated clergymen teach people that the biblical accounts of ghosts at Jerusalem and elsewhere are true, and then wonder at the credulity and superstition still lingering in rural districts.

"SALADIN" complains of our "puling spite and jealousy." Poor man, we sincerely pity him; and as we shrink from inflicting pain, we shall "studiously refrain" from any further mention of him or his works. "The rest is silence."

THE Rev. David Macrae, of Dundee, has been lecturing on "Devil's Work for a Christian Nation." He dilated on the grog shops and brothels that are being established in Cairo under the civilising influence of Christianity. Similar iniquities were recorded in every country where Christian England set her foot, and according to the Dundee prophet our prayer for the heathen should be "From the accursed influence of this so-called Christian nation, good Lord deliver them!"

BUT why so-called? Is not England a Christian nation? Is not Christianity taught by State priests, and supported by the law of the land? Is it not a crime to oppose Christianity, and were not three Freethinkers imprisoned a short time ago for "bringing it into disbelief and contempt"? If after all this time, and all this money, and all this preaching, and all this Bible printing, and all this Sunday-schooling, England is still only a so-called Christian nation, what is the use of Christianity at all? It must be an impossible religion if people cannot be got to practise it. No doubt the clergy will say, "Ah, it is too good for this world." Very well then, let it be exported to some other planet, and let us get something less showy and more useful in its place.

A CHRISTIAN called Lea has left £4,000 to General Booth for "the spread of the Gospel." But as there is no settled scheme and no specified conditions, the sum will probably be to some extent "for the spread of Booth's butter."

THAT the clergymen of the last century were as arbitrary and inconsiderate in minor matters as their brethren of to-day is shown in the following account of a case in the Ecclesiastical Court which the *Illustrated London News* extracts from the *Morning Chronicle* of a hundred years ago:—"A Saturday or two

ago, a young couple sent notice to this reverend divine of their intention to be married on the following Sunday. About half-past nine, they attended accordingly; and, after waiting about an hour, they took the liberty of sending to remind the parson of his duty. He returned for answer that he knew his duty, and what was a proper time for performing the ceremony. He never attended, however, till the congregation was assembled, and it was time to begin the church service. The disappointed couple then solicited to be married in the face of the congregation, which he obstinately refused, and told them they must come on Monday. In consequence of this disappointment, some words arising between the parties, the man refused to fulfil his engagement; and the unhappy fair one, disappointed in so tender a point, is now confined in a private mad-house, in a most pitiable and miserable condition."

INDIGNANT protests are being made by Roman Catholic bishops and priests and jurors against the systematic exclusion of Roman Catholics in Sligo from the juries empanelled in Crown cases. They say: "We indignantly repudiate the shamelessly false assumption on which the exclusion of Catholics from the jury-box is sought to be justified. We declare it to be the deepest insult that can be offered to ourselves and to the Catholic people of our country." Fifty-two non-Catholic jurors also sign a similar protest against this treatment of their Catholic neighbors. But Protestants whose ricks may be burned by their good neighbors any night, easily sign a paper of this kind. The Protestants who live further off like to keep the Catholics under, much as the Catholics keep them under when they have the chance. Christians love and respect each other so thoroughly that they cannot trust each other to give true verdicts according to their oaths; so they save their Christian rivals from committing perjury by excluding them from the jury.

RELIGIOUS rioting continues to break out at Belfast in spite of all the efforts of the police and military to make the Christians keep the peace which they profess to be so anxious to maintain. On Saturday stones were thrown at the police who endeavored to separate the hostile mobs. Shots were fired, and thirty-five persons were arrested. These were removed to the barracks in spite of all the efforts of the mobs to rescue them. Several policemen were severely beaten, and one of them was so seriously injured that he had to be taken to the hospital. On Sunday evening the sanctity of the day aroused the pious mobs again. Roman Catholics and Protestants alike assailed the police, who had to use their revolvers. Four people were wounded with the bullets. And this is how Christians keep the Sabbath when their religious hostility intensifies the political animosity which it has created and has fostered to the fighting pitch!

IN the Devonshire burial case where the vicar of Stoke Gabriel allowed his housekeeper to die without medical attention, and buried her after the Registrar had refused to issue his certificate, the coroner's jury have returned a verdict of death from natural causes, but they censured the vicar for his inhumanity in not calling in a doctor to see Mrs. Lever during her illness. Christian ministers talk loudly enough of ministering to the sick as a matter of charity, yet when it is a matter of imperative duty we see how heartlessly they can neglect it. Besides this the vicar teaches his congregation to defy the law and create a public scandal.

THE *Christian Witness*, of Glasgow, is a witness of what Christianity tends to make of its votaries. It begins with an article on "The Approaching Fall of the Czar, according to Daniel, the Hebrew Prophet," in which it explains that the king of the north spoken of in Dan. xi, 11, was Count Alexis Orloff, paramour of Catherine of Russia, and that Mr. Gladstone, "a bloody man," has the number of the beast.

THE *Christian Witness* testifies to "The Truth in Jesus and the Great Lies of the World's Great Men." It begins: "Charles Darwin says on his own authority, 'Man is descended from a hairy quadruped, furnished with a tail and pointed ears.' Moses says, on the authority of God, who confirmed his mission by signs and wonders done in Egypt and the wilderness, 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul' (Gen. ii, 7). Of Moses Christ said, 'If ye believe not his writing how can ye believe my words?' Herschell, the astronomer, affirms that the earth contains the sea. David says, 'God has founded the earth upon the seas, and established it upon the floods' (Ps. 24). Herschell says that the earth moves; but David says, 'God laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be moved for ever' (Ps. 103)."

"PLATO," continues the *Witness*, "in his Republic teaches the soul's immortality. But Ezekiel says, 'The soul that sins shall die.' 'That which befalls the sons of men,' says Solomon, 'befalls beasts,'" etc. This article winds up with the following specimen of Christian testimony: "Charles Darwin, the avowed descendant of an ape, Robert Owen the Socialist, Swedenborg the Spiritualist, Smith the Mormon, and others, have appeared in these last days, claiming to be saviors of the world; but there is no name given among men whereby we can be saved except the blessed name—*Jesus*."

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 13, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town; at 7.30, on "Christianity Opposed to Morality."

FEB. 20, Plymouth; 27, Huddersfield.

MARCH 6, Cardiff; 13, Milton Hall; 20, Hall of Science, London; 22, Walworth; 27, Hall of Science, London.

APRIL 10, Birmingham; 17 and 24, Hall of Science, London.

MAY 1, Camberwell.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—J. H., H. Rines.

R. N.—The *Freethinker* is printed on Wednesday evening, having to be on sale early on Thursday morning. We could not possibly, therefore, give any account of the first night's debate between Mrs. Besant and Mr. Foote in our last issue. Nor do we intend to describe the debate in any issue. Obviously neither we nor our staff could do so without bias, and it is therefore best to be silent. The verbatim report will give the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It will be ready the first week in March.

D. G. U.—Not good enough for reproduction. The conception is right, but the execution is hardly satisfactory.

H. D. NASH.—Apply to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, for whatever literature you require.

DELPHIS.—(1) Mr. John Morley, judging from his writings, is an Agnostic or a Positivist. (2) We don't know.

CAPTAIN F. J. WILSON, Comprehensionist, has sent us a number of the *Comprehensionist*, together with a circular, in which he complains of current "slipshodity" of teaching. We fear we lack the comprehension to comprehend Mr. Wilson's philosophy, but he seems to wish education to be based on color, form and number, and to substitute "aspiration" for religion.

J. CARWARDINE.—Thanks for the paper.

W. SCHWEIZER.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

A. FREETHINKER.—Dr. Lardner, Bishop Warburton, Archdeacon Farrar, Rev. S. Baring Gould, De Quincey, and most other critics allow that the passage in Josephus, xviii., 3. § 3, is a forgery. See article on the passage in *Freethinker*, July 11, 1886.

R. BROWN.—As you say, it is amusing. We had already noticed his learned references, and saw they were all second-hand, the author's name being in some cases misspelt. The *Prophet of Nazareth* is evidently a capital book to crib from.

J. P. CHACE.—Thanks for your interesting letter, but we will not return to the subject or the man.

W. C. SAVILLE.—Shall appear.

W. MILE.—The story of the Hindu kings who lived to such marvellous ages is to be found in Buckle's *History of Civilisation*. That author's name is mentioned, though not the book, in *Mr. Adam*.

J. W.—We can only repeat that we do not accept your interpretation of the passage in Timothy. If Paul meant that every man should have only one wife, why did he not plainly say so? and if he did not consider polygamy the proper thing for most people, why should he make an exception in the case of a bishop? As to Jesus Christ, we frankly say that we do not know whether he was executed by Pontius Pilate or not, nor do we see how the matter is of any importance except to a Christian. You appear quite ignorant of that state of mind which is a suspense of judgment in the absence of proof. There are many questions to which a wise man cannot answer "Yes" or "No." Of course the fool's answer is always ready.

F. MILLAR, Freethought lecturer, has changed his address to 115 Teviot Street, Bromley, E.

W. D. B., who sends us a very sensible and interesting letter, says: "I have been recently converted to Freethought by reading the *Freethinker* and other of your publications." We may add that the gentleman who presided at Mr. Foote's afternoon lecture in Sunderland last Sunday was also converted to Freethought by this journal. Some who sniff at the *Freethinker* will please take note.

R. MAYER asks "Who was the designer of man?" As we don't believe he had a designer we must refer our correspondent to somebody who does.

J. E. ROOSE.—Received with thanks.

CASABIANCA.—Next week.

J. WAINWRIGHT.—We do not know enough of the circumstances to comment on the matter with any effect.

B. MILES.—Thomas Paine was a citizen of the United States when England was at war with France, and if he in any way assisted the latter country he was assisting a nation unjustly attacked, and helping to defend a Republic against an aggressive monarchy. Years before that, Thomas Paine wrote the *Rights of Man* to free the English people from political slavery, and his reward was the threat of a halter, which he only escaped by flight. What gratitude did he owe such a country?

J. CASPAR.—The subject shall be noticed next week.

H. CARR.—Very pleased to hear from you. Miss Weston's twaddle is hardly worth troubling about. We agree with her, however, when she advises Christians to read the Bible. If Christians would only study the blessed book they would soon cease to believe in its divinity.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Sunderland Echo—Lucifer—Stroud Journal—Eastern Evening News—Manchester Evening News—Bristol Evening News—Free Sunday Advocate—Jus—Western Figaro—Truthseeker—Comprehensionist—Liberator—Women's Suffrage Journal—Boston Investigator—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.

SUNDERLAND gave Mr. Foote a fine reception last Sunday. The new Secular Society had done its utmost to give the lectures publicity, and their efforts were rewarded with large audiences. As Freethought lectures are a novelty in Sunderland there was naturally a good deal of opposition. It is always so. At first the fools rush in, and afterwards the angels fear to tread. Three or four rank idiots opposed in the morning, and five or six ranker idiots in the afternoon, and on both occasions the champions of Jesus were vigorously supported by a strong contingent of rowdy Christians. But there was a larger and more orderly gathering in the evening, and some decent if not acute opposition was offered by Mr. Wilson (ex-mayor), and Mr. Birch, a leading schoolmaster. It was a frightfully heavy day for the lecturer, but he managed to survive it, and the Secular Society is mightily pleased with the result. Other lecturers are invited to visit Sunderland, Mr. Parris being booked already for March, and the town will be kept awake. Sunderland wanted a good shaking, and it seems likely to get it.

MR. SALT, Mr. Carter, Mr. Lovel, and other veterans, are working energetically with the younger Freethinkers, and the Society has a capital secretary in Mr. Rutherford. We wish them the success they richly deserve. The Sunderland Society is not yet affiliated to the N. S. S., but we hope it soon will be. Union is strength, and there is only one National Society in existence.

MR. SALT, who was prevented by the bigots from selling Freethought literature in the Sunderland Arcade, has taken a news-agent's shop in a main thoroughfare, and is prepared to supply the town with any quantity of "blasphemy." We hear that more Freethought pamphlets have been circulated in Sunderland during the few days that Mr. Salt's shop has been opened than for many previous years.

THE Tithe Agitation is spreading in Essex as well as in Wales and Kent. Several farmers near Great Bardfield refused to pay the full tithe to the Governors of Guy's Hospital. A distraint followed. The subsequent sale of the cattle seized was attended by a large number of farmers and other sympathisers. The auctioneer was hustled about and the disturbance would have become serious but for the action of the police. The meeting decided to form an Anti-Tithe League and passed a resolution in favor of a readjustment of tithe and its gradual redemption. It is evident, however, that tithes which have been bought with the money of public hospitals stand on a different footing from tithes which are State property used in supporting a State clergy.

MR. DILLWYN has secured the first place on Tuesday, February 22, for his motion of Disestablishment in Wales. The precise words of his motion are: "That the Established Church in Wales is an anomaly and an injustice, and ought no longer to exist."

DURING the year 1886, the total number of visitors to Kew Gardens was 1,335,000, and of these 625,000 went on Sunday. This gives an average of about 12,000 visitors per Sunday. The greatest Sunday attendance was 54,000 on June 20. The week-day visitors numbered 710,000, which gives an average of about 2,200.

MATTHEW ARNOLD has reprinted his essays on St. Paul and Protestantism, Puritanism and the Church of England, Modern Dissent, and a Comment on Christmas. Mr. Arnold is much more satisfactory as a destructive critic, than as a constructive one. As in his *Literature and Dogma*, he makes many telling strokes against orthodoxy, but his adherence to Broad Church of Englandism is as puerile as and even more illogical than orthodoxy.

ALTHOUGH the proposition to abolish the revenues paid by France for the support of religion was rejected by 340 to 180, its introduction was significant and M. Goblet admitted that the time must come when religion would have to provide for itself. The debate brought to the front, its proposer, M. Pichou, a Parisian deputy, who edits M. Clemenceau's journal *La Justice*. M. Pichou, who is very young, proved to be an orator of great promise and was well received, and his declaration that the Republic ought not to furnish money to its worst enemies was received with great applause. On the other side M. Freppel, Bishop of Amiens, appealed to patriotic prejudice by declaring that whenever such a motion was passed they would illuminate at Berlin.

Mr. A. B. Moss, who has an extensive practical acquaintance with London poverty, and is a member of a relief committee, has just prepared a new lecture on "Socialistic Dreams," which he is ready to deliver in any part of the country.

THE Camberwell Branch has its annual Children's Party on Wednesday, Feb. 23. Further subscriptions are needed. We hope the Freethinkers in the district will make the gathering a great success. Mr. E. J. Ruse will be glad to hear from any who wish to assist.

Mr. W. ROSSITER, who has had some experience among Secular clubs, writes in the *Nineteenth Century* on "Artisan Atheism." He gives his experience of the great body of artisans, that they are as much governed by conscience as any body of professing Christians, but that "towards all professions, and especially all teachers, of religion, they have a very strong and very bitter antipathy; that they look on theology as having the same value as astrology, and esteem the clergy as on about a level of fortune-tellers, as encouraging ignorance that they may live by teaching that which they know to be false."

THE *Truthseeker*, of New York, for Jan. 29, the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Paine's birthday, gives its readers a capital portrait of the Freethought hero.

THE first N. S. S. quarterly Social Meeting will be held at the London Hall of Science on March 3. The tickets are now on sale, price fourpence each, from the secretaries of the London Branches, or from Mr. R. O. Smith, 142 Old Street, E.C.

RELIGION AND THE PRESS.

ORDINARY newspapers and journals are of course not nearly as religious as the Christians would have them. The prominent position given to politics and matters of social importance and general interest contrasts dreadfully, in the eyes of the pious, with the small attention paid to religion. The *Christian Commonwealth* piteously asks:

"Why then are our English daily journals so barren as regards all religious matters? Is it because English journalists are indifferent to the popular demand, or careless about money-making? The fact that they are willing to publish the details of the most disreputable scandals is proof sufficient that there is no lack of enterprise in providing for the popular demand. Nor can we doubt that the love of gain has a dominant influence over our English journalism, while so many of our leading dailies are devoted to the interests of theatres, the turf, and such like. What then is the real ground for the practical exclusion of religious matters from the daily Press? Why is so small a proportion of space devoted to the most important subject with which the nation is concerned?"

The *Christian Commonwealth* sorrowfully answers its own questions with a frank admission of the growth of the Secular spirit among those who control the newspapers. Its frankness carries it even beyond the actual truth, for exaggeration seems so necessary and habitual to Christian assailants of Freethought that they are unable to give a moderate and impartial estimate of the enemy's forces. As the humor takes them, they either represent Secularists as a few insignificant outcasts whom nobody notices except to despise and condemn, or as a powerful body with wide-spread influence and social control before whom Christians are an almost helpless minority of persecuted saints. The *Christian Commonwealth* is not nearly so extreme as some of the Christian journals, but in depicting the growing power of Freethought it cannot refrain from using far stronger colors than the case actually warrants. Its answer is encouraging, however, as embodying much truth and as showing that Christians will have to treat the Secular spirit with more consideration and less insult. The *Christian Commonwealth* replies to its own inquiry into the irreligiosity of the Press thus:

"There is only one answer which fairly meets the case, and that is, the daily Press is largely, if not almost entirely, in the hands of men who have no sympathy whatever with Christianity, and many of these men are its open and avowed enemies. If this fact were not notorious there are many indications that would go far to establish it. For instance, let some one deliver a rationalistic or atheistic address in an obscure hall to only a score of persons, and next morning our daily journals are sure to have a full report, while a meeting in the interests of Christianity, where thousands are in attendance, and where addresses are made by some of the most eminent men of the nation, will be dismissed with a short paragraph, or else not noticed at all. Can any one suppose that this is purely accidental? Such a notion is simply absurd. In all such cases there is an evident purpose to use the influence of the Press in propagating that which is evil."

This is how it strikes a Christian. As we Freethinkers,

under the influence of a similar bias, are apt to encourage ourselves in rather too strong a belief that we are unfairly and designedly neglected by the daily Press, it is well to observe that our opponents make exactly similar complaints, although of course they have far less reason for doing so. The allegation of the *Christian Commonwealth* that every Atheistic address to a score of persons in some obscure hall is sure to be fully reported in the next day's morning papers is thoroughly absurd, for instance. It is the idea of an excited alarmist who lets his fears run away with his judgment or his veracity. The newspapers frequently give accounts of sermons and seldom or never admit accounts of Freethought lectures, except in provincial or local journals. Still anyone who reads the papers intelligently can see and feel for himself that Christianity is ignored as a reality and only occasionally deferred to as a poetical myth or a sentimental or moral ideal which is carefully disconnected from the huge mass of dogma and supernaturalism that form its basis. Christians naturally notice this lack of the Christian belief and spirit much more readily than we do. The absence of religion is dismally obvious to them: the absence of militant Freethought or outspoken Atheism is noticeable by us. Both sides too readily say, Those who are not with us are against us. The absence of direct attack upon religion is easily accounted for. Partly the moral terrorism of the religious malignancy of disposition and action prevents the editors from hazarding the success of their journals by hostility to religion. Partly, like Gallo, they care for none of these things, and in one sense are more truly Secularists than we of the aggressive school. Besides their indifference and the general necessity of avoiding offence, there is the cultivation or assumption of a quasi-judicial spirit of neutrality, which forms a good excuse for not openly adopting the much-hated views of an advanced minority.

As some justification for the charge of propagating Freethought brought against the Press by the *Christian Commonwealth*, it must be remembered that the newspaper accounts of Positivist addresses by men like Mr. Harrison, and of scientific addresses and lectures and works and ideas put forth by men like Huxley and Tyndall and Darwin, all count in the eyes of thorough Christians as the formidable Atheistic assaults upon Christianity that they really are. As such men are comparatively mild and insidious in their great work of sapping the foundations of Faith and building the edifice of Science, we are apt to forget the vast amount of Freethought work they do. Their eminence enables the Press to introduce the thin end of the wedge and initiate the most deadly and enduring attacks upon Christianity in quarters inaccessible to us.

W. P. BALL.

REVIEWS.

Little Lessons for Little Folks. By AUNT ELMINA (Mrs. E. D. Slenker). New York: The *Truthseeker* Company, 28 Lafayette Place.—A capital book for young children, written in attractive style and without any of the pious balderdash so often considered necessary for juvenile minds. We are pleased to notice that in a little lesson on "Grass" Mrs. Slenker finds space for a quotation from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

The Jesus Christ of John Stuart Mill. By ANTICHRIST. London: E. Truelove, 256 High Holborn. Price Sixpence.—Issued at one shilling shortly after the publication of Mill's *Essays on Religion*, this work has been reduced in price. The author's pseudonym is appropriate, for he "confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (2 John 7), but considers him an invention of persons having very different ideas from Mr. Mill. The author is evidently a well-read man, and calls attention to the fact that Origen, in his fourth book against Celsus, lets slip that Numenius the Pythagorean was acquainted with the narrative about Christ, which he treated as an allegory. The pamphlet has some severe points on the doctrine and character ascribed to Jesus, and although too full of ridicule to be palatable to the orthodox, has some valuable matter for those who know how to use it.

A Nirvana Trilogy. Three Essays on the Career and Literary Labors of James Thomson. By WILLIAM MACCALL. London: Watts and Co.—Mr. Maccall is a wayward man of genius, who has frustrated his faculties by morbid self-study. His brochure on James Thomson is well worth reading, though more as a revelation of the author than of his subject, for there is more of William Maccall than of the great Poet of Pessimism in these pages. There is much truth in the remark (p. 18) on Thomson's sense of form, though we think his "richness of substance" is decidedly underrated. We are, however, far from agreeing with Mr. Maccall that Thomson "had not naturally the faculties of a satirist." Still less do we admit that "grievous harm is done to his memory by the republication of his satirical pieces." As a matter of fact, Thomson republished some of them in pamphlet form himself, and if he was neither a Rabelais nor a Juvenal, he certainly had affinities with Swift, whose genius was a frequent theme of his praise.

S A M U E L ' S C A L L .

HAVE you ever seen a man who has "had a call"? Of course I don't mean a "call" in the profane sense of the word, for in that sense thieves generally get "called," but they rarely stop to give heed to their pursuers. But what I mean is "called" in the religious sense of that word—in short, a spiritual call. If you ever have seen a person in this sad condition you are not likely to forget it. There is a wild glare in the eye, a nervous movement about the mouth, and a strange incoherence in the speech; in short, when a man in the height of his enthusiasm proclaims that he has had a "call," as a rule he is personally testifying that he has just lost his mental balance. I once heard a good religious young man relate how he one night had been to a religious meeting and on his way home he felt a "call." Religious calls, it should be observed, are not heard—they are felt internally, somewhere between the diaphragm and the abdomen. When this lively young saint, who already had sown his oats rather wildly, felt the inspiration within; though he was in a public thoroughfare, he, according to his own testimony, took off his hat, threw it up in the air, and behaved for all the world like a man going stark staring mad. People gathered round and prepared to capture him, with a view of putting him under proper restraint.

Religious people experience these "calls" in a variety of ways, but generally speaking they result in the mental derangement of the individual who has the misfortune to fancy that amid the throbbing of his heart he hears a "still small voice."

Samuel the Prophet, who was the son of a lady named Hannah, one of the wives of an old religious polygamist named Elkanah, received a "call" when he was quite a child. Hannah, his mother, for many years had been barren, and as nature had not blessed her with offspring, she prayed at intervals to the Lord and asked him to supply the deficiency. Now it happened that one night when she went up to the House of the Lord she prayed more fervently than before—so fervently indeed that old Eli the priest, who had been watching her, mistook her fervor for drunkenness, and soundly admonished her to "put away the wine;" but she, with true womanly feeling and dignity, replied that she was not inebriated with wine, but was a woman of "sorrowful spirit," and had just poured out her soul before the Lord. In due course the Lord took compassion upon Hannah's "sorrowful spirit," and the child Samuel was born; and Hannah, out of the consideration for the kindness she had received, voluntarily lent her son to the Lord.

Now Samuel's "call" took place in this wise. Eli the priest, from no fault of his own, had lost favor in the sight of the Lord; his two sons, Hophni and Phineas—also priests—having woefully misbehaved themselves with certain women "that assembled at the door of the Tabernacle."

One night, as Eli and Samuel lay dozing languidly in the Temple, the Lord secreted himself in some snug corner of the building and shouted at the top of his voice, "Samuel!" And the lad, not yet able to distinguish a divine from a human voice, ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; I heard you calling me." But Eli, not knowing the Lord was playing a game of bo-peep with the lad, told him he was mistaken, and he had better lie down again. Samuel obeyed. Again the mysterious voice shouted "Samuel! Samuel!" And again the lad assured Eli that he knew it was him; and perhaps on this occasion the Lord employed his ventriloquial skill to make the voice appear to proceed from the mouth of the dull old priest. Eli, however, probably from previous experience, began to realise that the Lord was up to his tricks, and knowing his propensity for "calling" people, put young Samuel upon his guard, gravely telling him that if he heard the voice again he was to reply, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." So when the Lord called the third time—revealing even in this the mystery of the Trinity, one God with three voices—young Samuel, parrot-like, replied as he was told, and at once established an intimate friendship.

Samuel was thus called at a very early age to take upon himself the high but irresponsible office of prophet to his majesty King Jahveh, Lord of heaven and earth. Samuel prophesied the death of Eli's two sons, and perhaps made arrangements for their dispatch. The prophecy was fulfilled, as were other prophecies of a similar character. And for this obvious reason. Samuel wrote an account of the whole affair himself, and he would indeed have been a motley fool if he had not adjusted matters so that the prophecies and their fulfilment should come in their proper order. As well might we expect a novelist to allow his hero or heroine to die before fulfilling their purpose, a dramatist to let his villain escape the hand of dramatic justice, as a prophet to make a prophecy and forget to fulfil it.

Samuel was one of the few prophets who received a "call" without losing his head; in fact, he was so wide awake that even when he was dead he was sufficiently active to write an account of his own burial. Smart fellow undoubtedly; but if he had buried himself and saved the funeral expenses, he would have been smarter still.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

T H E P A R S O N .

On the good ship "Sky Pilot" of Auldham, which was sailing from Beetle-cum-doo
 With a cargo of sulphur and coal tar for the natives of Calaburnoo,
 Was a parson; and saving the heathen, was the aim of his nautical trip;
 So he thought he would just get his hand in by converting the crew of the ship.
 With this view he requested the captain to allow him to offer up prayer;
 For his feelings, he said, had been wounded by hearing those sailor men swear.
 But alas! for the hopes of the parson, the blue sky soon became overcast,
 And the waves were grey-looking and leaden that were blue but a little time past.
 Then the breeze freshen'd up from the South'ard, and increased till it blew half a gale,
 While some mystic internal emotion made the parson look awfully pale;
 And the ship, which 'ere then had been steady, tossed about with a terrible roll,
 Till the parson imagined some demon was inside him in search of his soul.
 The language the sailors were using seemed to mock his endeavors to pray,
 And he thought his complaints to the captain were received in a frivolous way,
 For he merely replied, "All the better, for while they continue to swear
 You may reckon the ship's in no danger—when they pray 'twill be time to despair."
 Such an answer ill suited the parson, so he crept down below to his berth,
 Where he prayed to the Lord for fair weather, to restore him to dear Mother Earth.
 But the gale still increased in its fury, till the wind shrieked and howl'd as it blew,
 And the sleet and the spray lashed the waters, that each moment more turbulent grew,
 While the waves which, like foam-crested mountains, struck the ship 'midst the elements' strife,
 Made it pause in its course for a moment and tremble as though it had life.
 Through the roar of the waves that were dashing and the wind that was driving the spray
 Came the sound of the crushing of timber, and the mainmast was carried away.
 In a terrible fright the poor parson to his prayers could no longer attend,
 But he thought of the words of the captain, and determined once more to ascend,
 So, with many a stagger and stumble, he succeeded in reaching the deck,
 And there was the mast that had fallen, and the seamen were clearing the wreck,
 Hard at work 'midst the drift and the danger, with an oath in the place of a prayer;
 And the parson he thankfully muttered, "Thank God, they continue to swear."
 CARLOS.

P R O F A N E J O K E S .

WHAT was the first thing the frog said to his Creator? Oh, Lord! how you made me jump.

DINNER TIME.—Grace is being said, and little Annie is looking round inattentively, upon which Georgy frowns at her and she puts out her tongue. This her mother notices, and says, seriously: "Annie, it is very wrong to make a face when grace is being said. Don't you know that we were speaking to Jesus?" Annie: "Well, ma, I wasn't putting out my tongue at *him*; I was doing it at Satan."

ABOUT fifty years ago it was a general custom to see old women regularly attending Sunday-school Bible classes. The minister, after finishing the usual lesson, would, to test their ability, ask the class a few questions on the subject about which he had been speaking. It invariably happened that among the answers given him there would be one with an amusing side to it. The following is an example. Minister: "Could anyone tell me who it was that wrote the Book o' Genesis?" Old Woman: "The Book o' Genesis! Wha wud da't but auld Genesis himsel'?"

A MINISTER, hearing that John, one of the oldest, worst attending, and freest living members of his church, is laid up, calls in hopes to influence him in the right direction. Minister (softly): "I hope I see you keeping well, John? I hope—" John (heartily): "I thank yo for speerin', minister. I hae little to compleen o' but the rheumatics in my left leg." Minister (earnestly): "Just that, John. Now look at the matter seriously. You are growing old. See what old age brings. I hope—" John (shortly): "Auld age? Hoot awa! My weel leg's as auld's my game yin, an' it disna compleen."

OBITUARY.—We regret to notice the death of Mr. H. B. Stanton, the husband of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the American advocate of women's rights, now over here preparing her *Woman's Bible*. Mr. Stanton like Parker Pillsbury, was one of the few remaining veterans of the anti-slavery movement. Most of the early abolitionists were Freethinkers.

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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 Clatham Street, C. on-M., or the Treasurer, Mr. E. G. Field, 9 Rye Street, Clarendon Road, C. on-Medlock, Manchester.

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