

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. VII.—No. 8.]

FEBRUARY 20, 1887.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 186.



A GARDENER GOD.

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden.—GENESIS II., 8.

THE SAFE SIDE.

WHEN I was lecturing at Sunderland recently on "Is Christianity True?" I was opposed by Mr. Wilson, the Ex-Mayor. This gentleman dilated on the consolations of Christianity. He told the audience that Freethought might do very well while they were strong and healthy, but Christianity was the thing for a man to die on. "I have seen Christians die," said Mr. Wilson, "and they have shown me that trust in Jesus conquers the fear of death. You Freethinkers will be afraid of death some day, and then you will be glad of the comfort which is afforded by a belief in the Gospel."

There is an obvious answer to this, and I made it. I told Mr. Wilson that on his showing Christianity was a creed for cowards, and that when I was frightened out of my senses I might become a Christian too. But meanwhile I had no fear of death, and I was certain that Freethinkers died every week who experienced no terror, and who found Freethought as good a support in death as it had been in life.

Mr. Wilson also remarked—the argument is not a new one, but let that pass—that he failed to see in what respect I had the advantage over him. He had the enjoyment of this world, and the promise of another; and if the next life turned out to be a superstitious dream he would have lost nothing by believing in it, while if it proved a reality he would be a gainer. In other words, Mr. Wilson thought he was on the *safe side*, here and hereafter.

This is an argument, if it may be dignified by that name, which strikes many Christians as plausible if not happy.

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But it is thoroughly unsound, and it admits of several obvious and effective answers.

Let us first suppose that the next life *is* a dream, and that the dead Christian is in exactly the same position as the dead Freethinker. So far there is little to choose between them. But let us look at their past lives, and see whether the Freethinker has not enjoyed an advantage. Assuming that the Christian was sincere, he must have missed many enjoyments which to the Freethinker were perfectly legitimate. All religions, from the most savage to the most refined, exact a certain sacrifice. Deity always demands tribute. It may be human lives, or only animals; it may be half your possessions or only a tithe of your income; it may be half the innocent pleasures of life or only a fraction of them. But is it always something. Where religion is rampant it is much; where religion is feeble and apologetic it is comparatively little. If Christianity had not to compete with Freethought for popular sympathy and support, if it had Christendom to itself as it did a few centuries ago, asceticism would be rife, and the exactions of religion would meet us at every turn. Fortunately Christianity is waning, and although it receives lip homage, it does not call for the homage of obedience. Men like the late Mr. Binney, who tell us "how to make the best of both worlds," are half-and-half Christians. Read the sermons of a real Christian, like Cardinal Newman, and you will see how much earthly pleasure is permitted to the believer who aspires to a seat in heaven.

Let us take a very practical test. Our English Sunday is given over to the parsons. We may hear the Gospel or drink gin, but we must not enjoy ourselves rationally, nor are we allowed to improve our minds and tastes in museums,

art galleries, and public libraries. Sunday excursions are regarded as wicked, and it seems to be thought that if the Almighty sees his children enjoying themselves on *his* day, his brows will go down like the top bar of a turnpike gate. Yet Sunday is the day of leisure. To the masses it is the most important day of the week. And why are they debarred from recreations which would be perfectly proper on any other day? The answer is one word—Religion! It is religion that robs Sunday of nearly all its value. But suppose religion is a dark delusion, and death an everlasting sleep, has not the Freethinker, who makes a human use of his Sunday, the advantage over a Christian, who sacrifices it on the altar of superstition?

We will now assume that there *is* an hereafter. In what respect has the Christian an advantage? The Freethinker's unbelief will not abolish his immortality, if it is a fact. The Christian may reply that his faith will affect his future condition. But the adherents of every religion on earth will say the same. How does the Christian *know* that *his* belief is the true one? A hundred different religions prescribe a hundred different roads to glory. The Christian takes one of them, and fancies he is safe. Every other religionist takes another road with the same certitude. The Freethinker walks his own way, and if there be a heaven in the universe he is quite as likely to reach it as a theologian who chooses among a hundred roads, only *one* of which can be *right*, and *all* of which may be *wrong*.

Besides, religion tells us of hell as well as of heaven. The Christian may feel he is on the safe side if he has a through ticket for heaven. But suppose he is mistaken? Suppose he has a through ticket for hell; or suppose his celestial ticket is cancelled by his having committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. How is he on the safe side then? We are also taught that the road to heaven is narrow and uphill, while the road to hell is broad and descending. Many go into the everlasting fire, and few go into everlasting life. According to the law of averages, therefore, no believer in Christianity *can* feel safe. The chances of damnation are great, the chances of salvation are small. It is over a hundred to one that every Christian is going to hell. Those who get to heaven will only be the salvage from the fire.

The whole question may be put in a nutshell. If there be a God, he is either just or unjust. If God be just, he will never punish an honest man for exercising the intelligence with which he gifted him, and living according to the best light he could acquire. If God be unjust, nobody knows *what* he will do, and all men have the same reason for apprehension. For our part we do not believe that God, if he exists, can be as wicked and foolish as he is depicted. We do deity the honor of believing that he is neither a rogue nor a fool; and if ever we meet him, face to face or otherwise, surely our courtesy will place us "on the safe side."

G. W. FOOTE.

BIBLIOMANCY.

A CASE which occupied the attention of the Birmingham Police-court last week calls attention to an old superstition intimately connected with the belief in Bible inspiration, and consequent Bibliolatry, which distinguishes all classes of Christians.

A woman named Mary Ann Ling having missed a sum of money, a number of neighbors were called in, and the question who was the guilty party was put to the test of trial by ordeal. The process consisted in suspending a Bible by means of worsted twisted round a key, which was set spinning while the neighbors sat round. The ordeal concluded by the stopping of the book in front of a Mrs. Williams, and this was regarded as incontestable proof of guilt. She stoutly protested her innocence, but was unanimously adjudged guilty and assaulted. Mrs. Williams summoned Mrs. Ling, who was fined five shillings with the alternative of seven days imprisonment.

Probably few who read the case have any idea how widespread has been the resort to divination by means of the Bible. Trial by ordeal is directly countenanced in the holy book itself. If a man had occasion of suspicion against his wife, she was made to drink the waters of jealousy prepared by the priest* (Num. v.) Diviners are continually

referred to. Joseph had a divining cup. The rod of Moses was credited with like powers. The Urim and Thummin, the breast-plate of the high priest, were used as oracles indicating answers to questions. Divining by lot was employed for the same purpose, and was supposed to be regulated by God. Indeed, Solomon says: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi., 33). The important religious ceremony of selecting the scapegoat was decided by drawing lots (Lev. xvi., 8, 9). The promised land was divided by lot (Num. xxvi., 55, 56). Achan was detected by lot under direct charge of "the Lord" (Joshua vii.) Saul was elected king by lot (1 Sam x., 20, 21). Even Christ's own disciple, St. Matthias, was chosen into the position left vacant by the sudden retirement of Judas Iscariot, by casting lots.

The method of divining by reference to particular parts of the Bible was current through all the ages when Christianity was predominant. On more than one occasion kings have gone to war because they supposed themselves commanded to do so by reference to the Bible. Nicephoras Gregoras recommended the Psalter as the fittest book for the purpose, but Cedrenus informs us that the New Testament was commonly in use. The Gospels were used to decide as to the election of bishops. The custom was found in the palmiest days of the Greek Church, at the time of the consecration of Athanasius, on whose behalf the presiding prelate, Caracalla, Archbishop of Nicomedia, opened the Gospels on the words "For the Devil and his angels." The Bishop of Nicea saw them, and adroitly turned over to another verse, which was instantly read aloud, "The birds of the air came and lodged in the branches thereof." But this text seeming irrelevant, the former became gradually known, and the result appeared in an increase of Christian strife and dissension.

The method was also used for the discovery of heretics. One Peter of Toulouse being accused of heresy, denied it, but was condemned because a person who stood near took up the gospels on which he had sworn, and opening them suddenly, the first words he saw were those said to have been addressed by the demoniac to J. C., "What have I to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth." A somewhat similar method was employed with witches who were taken to the village church and weighed against the big church Bible. If she weighed more she was innocent; but alas for her, if the Bible was so heavily bound that it outweighed her.*

St. Augustine denounced the practice of consulting the Bible in temporal affairs, but declares in one of his letters that he had recourse to it in all cases of spiritual difficulty. Indeed, he largely owed his conversion to lighting upon a particular passage. The same was the case of a much inferior genius, the poet Cowper. John Bunyan and John Wesley devoutly believed in this delusion, finding comfort or despondency as it happened from the message of God's Word. In the early days of Methodism the faithful always resorted to the words of scripture to decide in any difficulty, and the Bible and the key were made to elucidate questions of chapel management.

In former times in England the Bible was consulted on New Year's Day with special formality—each member of the house, before he or she had partaken of food, walking up to it, opening it, and placing a finger at random on a verse, which was supposed to declare their fortune for the ensuing year. The blessed book, with a silver piece inserted into the book of Ruth, was placed under the pillow of young people to give them dreams of matrimonial divination. The virtues of the book went even further, for in some parts the sick were fanned with the leaves of the Bible, and the same precious volume was put under the head of women after child-birth and into the cradle of the new-born babe.

Another form of biblical divination is to go to a place of worship and take as an omen the first passage of scripture read by the minister, or the text from which he preaches. This practice still obtains in every Christian country, and it is sometimes vindicated by persons who ought to know better. The general belief that the Bible is a supernatural book different from all others in being divine while they are human, is part and parcel of the same fetish superstition as that exhibited by Mrs. Ling and her female friends in Birmingham.

J. M. WHEELER.

* See "A Bible Barbarity," *Freethinker*.

* See Brand's "Popular Antiquities," iii., 22.

ACID DROPS.

THE passengers of the ill-fated *Kapunda* had a chance it seems of going to heaven. The Rev. F. Barnes, of Plymouth, who likes of course to make what little capital he can out of the event, visited the vessel before she sailed. He says: "I am glad to say I had a most interesting service. The young men especially seemed very attentive. I had five baptisms, three being adults, and seventy-four communicants." Seventy-four out of more than three hundred is a small proportion. Will the clergy dare to maintain that the bulk of the three hundred went to hell? that not content with drowning them here God must drown them for ever in the fiery ocean of his wrath? If they are gone to heaven, what is the use of Christian salvation which must then be unnecessary?

A NEW publication, translated from the German, entitled *Letters from Heaven*, contains the following passage, which exhibits the characteristic and intense selfishness of Christian teaching: "At the beginning of my heavenly life this question, 'And the lost also,' was still of consequence to me, now it is so no longer. I do not know the lost. I do not feel compassion for them, I cannot love them." After this we turn to Mr. Wheeler's *Letters from Hell* with a sigh of relief.

THE Home Secretary has issued a mandamus to compel the Attleborough Burial Board to apply to the Bishop for the consecration of part of their cemetery. But the members resigned before the rules could be served on them, and only one solitary member, the Rev. T. Turner, remained to answer. As three were a quorum, and he was "only a third of three," without power to act or elect other members, the Home Secretary is completely baffled.

IN Convocation the Rev. W. H. Evans and others presented a gravamen setting forth the difficulties and evils attending the collection of tithes in Wales. He said that the energy which the Church was now putting forth in Wales had stirred up a considerable amount of hostility. In almost every parish there was a combination of farmers who waited on the rector and demanded a reduction of from 10 to 25 per cent., and if the reduction were not made to all, they all refused to pay. If a distraint was made there was a gathering of a large body of people, and the clergyman found that his whole parish was alienated from him, and the result was that many of the Welsh clergy would rather starve than put in a distress. And the point was that only distraints for £20 and upwards carried full costs, and as there were very few farmers in Wales who paid so much, the costs which the tithe-owners had to pay were more than the sums recovered. A resolution was carried asking for laws by which the clergy might sue in the County Court, and the Court be compelled to carry out the distraint, while the whole costs of the distraint should be recoverable. By this means the clergy hope to shift the odium and expense from their own shoulders.

WE have received the *Monthly Intelligencer* of the Birmingham Christian Evidence Association, which contains a confused statement about some alleged misrepresentation in the *Freethinker* as to Mr. T. H. Aston. We are not conscious of having done Mr. Aston an injury, and he admits that the circular we referred to was issued by Messrs. Goddard and Thurston. Mr. Aston and his present Committee say the charges are slanderous, but why have they waited since the early part of November before publishing their denial?

JESUS said "Give to him that asketh." Two workmen in distress were charged at the Castle Eden Petty Sessions, Durham, with begging. The Rev. John Burdon and the Rev. W. Mayor gave them each fourteen days' imprisonment.

ARCHDEACON FARRAR, writing in the *Homiletic Magazine* on "The Reunion of Christendom," thinks that however desirable such a consummation may be, it is not at all feasible. So far from showing any tendency to union, fresh Christian sects are springing up every year.

A CORRESPONDENT writes:—A remarkable instance of clerical bigotry occurred in Glasgow the other day. A well-known and popular D.D. of the U.P. Church, visiting at the house of a member of his congregation, found an intelligent young lad poring over Darwin's work on the *Origin of Species*. Learning what the book was, the minister at once plucked it out of the boy's hands and threw it into the fire. "Never open a book like that again," he said to the boy in a voice of thunder; "the author of that book was a bad man and an infidel."

THE wife of the Rev. J. C. Macredy, clergyman of the church of England, has just obtained a divorce from him on the grounds of his cruelty and adultery. The husband had no means except his curacy of £120 a year, and he was always extorting money from his wife who had £600 a year in her own right. On two occasions he sold off all the furniture for pocket money. He ran her into debt, neglected her, and went to Monte Carlo, spending nearly the whole of his time at the gaming-table. After spending

a great part of his wife's money he threatened to take her children away, and to pinch and starve her till she allowed him £120 a year. He battered at the door where the children were, and in the struggle he struck her a blow on the chest. By the impression of a letter on a blotting-pad it was discovered that while in London he lived with a Mrs. Carter, the pair passing as husband and wife. If he were not a holy minister of the Lord Jesus we should be inclined to think that he was a worthless scoundrel. But as he is good enough for the Church, he perhaps illustrates the religious saying about the worst sinner being the best saint.

ONE of the Socialists charged with brawling in church has been sentenced to twenty-one days' imprisonment. In the cases at Lambeth, as the ringleaders had escaped by giving false names and addresses, the magistrate let the others off on finding surety to the amount of £10 that they would keep the peace.

AMONG its "Gems from New Books" the *Christian Herald* has a story of a ball held at a tavern on the same night with prayer-meetings in chapels on each side of the said tavern, or "synagogue of Satan" as it is termed. But God was about to put an end to this unholy rivalry. While the brothers were "praying with unusual fervor" an "apparition" or "spectre" in the form of a coffin was carried through the house accompanied by the Devil himself. The company broke up in dreadful confusion, flying home as if from the pursuit of wild beasts, so that the ball-room was "left to the phantom." That night one of the daughters of the publican was taken ill and soon after died. "The whole locality was filled with terror and awe." "Thus the ball-room was prayed down, and it has never revived in that place to this day." No names, dates, or localities are mentioned, except that the incident is said to have occurred "in one of the sequestered nooks of Wales." A "tavern" with a chapel on each side of it, and large enough to hold a ball, does not seem particularly appropriate to a "sequestered nook" in wild Wales. Why did God kill the publican's daughter for her father's crime? And if, as the pious story-teller asserts, the brethren caused her fright and death by their fervent prayers ought they not to be tried for manslaughter?

THE next of the "Gems from New Books" is an account of "a remarkable Providence of God concerning the Holy Bible." A room was damaged by fire, it seems, through the upsetting of a benzoline lamp, and the family Bible was found amid the *débris* scarcely singed. Two children in their cradle were burnt to death or suffocated, but the precious book "like the Babylonian lads, came out of the flames with scarcely the smell of the fire upon it." And this combination of events is a remarkable providence of God! What a heartless fiend he must be to neglect the children to save the lumbering old book! And what a hideous depravity or thoughtlessness of disposition is shown in the story-tellers and the readers that can delight in such rubbish and in such divine cruelty and pettiness of character.

CANON WESTCOTT, speaking upon Mohammedans in India, said the time was when Mohammedans bought Bibles and gave them to their children to make fireworks of. Now they buy them but do not understand them; but a third era will come when they will buy and understand them. When they do understand them they will probably once more give them to the children to make fireworks of.

DR. ABBOT, the reputed author of *Philochristus*, in his new book on *The Kernel and the Husk*, in which he regards all miracles as the husk of Christianity, which may be cast aside with benefit, says that "Were it not for St. Paul's vision [*i.e.*, for Christianity] the world might be a chaos of barbarisms." Might be; but again, it might not. It might have been very much better off. This much is certain, that every element of modern civilisation existed in Greece and Rome before Christianity, which, by suppressing Pagan learning and science, led to a long interregnum of barbarism rightly known as the Dark Ages.

If the Lord does not look after his houses better, the fire insurance companies will want heavier premiums. Another church, that of St. Luke's, at Cork, has been burnt down through the overheating of the stove.

THE Rev. C. H. Knowllys, rector of St. Cuthbert's Church, Churchtown, near Southport, seems to be on the most Christian terms with his congregation, some of whom, he complains, not only oppose his scheme for re-seating the church, but take his pews, and carry off the church decorations in the night. One gentleman he alleges "cursed him from the very foot of the altar."

LITTLE Polly, aged five, attends Trinity Church. On reaching home, she describes it to her mother: "It was ever so much larger than our chapel, and it had colored glass in the windows made into pictures. I saw the king, queen, and jack, but there wasn't any ace!"

THE Bridge Street Wesleyan Sunday-school, Bolton, has been much disturbed because some of the scholars recently commenced snow-balling upon leaving Sabbath-school. One lad issued a

summons against another, whereby he lost his employment. On the following Sunday the scholars refused to take lessons while the party who took the matter to court remained in the school.

LORD GIFFORD, who lately died at Edinburgh, has bequeathed £80,000 to found natural theology lectureships at the Scotch universities. No doubt natural theology will be taught as long as the teaching is well endowed, but the world in general will pay no more heed to it than to disquisitions in favor of astrology.

THE Rev. C. L. Engstrom, of the Christian Evidence Society, has got the well-paid berth of Boyle lecturer at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, this year. The Boyle lectures were instituted to defend Christianity against every other form of faith and unfaith; but since those delivered by Maurice there have been none given worthy much consideration. Let us hope Mr. Engstrom will offer us something demanding a reply.

ONE of Mr. Whitmore's "Sixteen Converted Infidels"—who, by the way, never was an "infidel" at all—seems to be leaving the Christians, probably for the same reason that induced him to join them. Mr. Whitmore's entire list consists of similar persons animated by similar motives.

THE Rev. Z. B. Woffendale's two sons, who have been serving the Lord in the grocery line of business, are gone to pot. When the estate is realised they will pay something less than 2s. in the pound. We see in the *Grocer* that the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale appears among the creditors for £150, and Mrs. G. Woffendale for £690.

BOOTH's daughter Catherine has married "Colonel" Clibborn. Husband and wife both declare that they have married for no other reason than to serve the Lord better. We dare say, however, they will manage to increase the population; but then, "it's all for the glory of God."

THE London correspondent of the *Staffordshire Knot* has made a wonderful discovery. Somebody, probably an artful wag, has informed him that there are a number of Freethinkers in England and France who deliberately murder their own children. "In some cases," he says, "the children are slowly starved, in others they are improperly fed, while in others again neglect and desertion are allowed to do their work. In a few instances, the method is even more direct." This writer is so indignant that he commends the matter to the attention of the "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children." There is no such society in existence, so the writer is in a muddle all round.

MR. W. L. SUGDEN has written a wrathful epistle to the editor of the *Staffordshire Knot*, giving his very strong opinion of its London correspondent, and adding that "it is time the vermin's hide was nailed to the gable-end." Mr. Sugden's anger is perhaps natural, but it seems to us that he takes "the vermin" too seriously. The poor scribbler has to turn out his regulation quantity, and when he is gravelled for matter, he must of course invent something, or chronicle the gossip of the Christian and other idiots in whose society he unbends his majestic intellect.

THERE is a curious story of George the Third in the recently published Diary of Mrs. Papendiek. During his first attack of insanity, in 1788, he was told that it was Christmas Day, and he then asked why the Archbishop of Canterbury had not come to administer the sacrament to him. In the middle of his dinner he "got under the sofa, saying that as on that day everything had been denied him, he would there converse with his Savior, and no one could interrupt them." Mad kings, like mad plebeians, generally run a great deal on religion. Supernaturalism is, indeed, a lurking insanity, which soon bursts into vigor when the mind is weakened by illness or perverted by disease.

MR. BUSHNELL, a Christian lecturer, has been holding forth at Hastings on the "Crimes of Christianity." Naturally he fell foul of Messrs. Foote and Wheeler's work, which bears that title, but he appears to have raised the prejudices of his orthodox audience rather by misquotation and misrepresentation than by any attempt at argument. After his lecture he was tackled by Mr. James Britcher, secretary of the Hastings Branch of the N. S. S., who was able to show Mr. Bushnell's dishonesty by accurate quotations from the *Crimes of Christianity*. Mr. J. P. Morris followed in the same vein, and poor Mr. Bushnell had to be rescued by the chairman from his perplexing position. We understand that other Christian lecturers are going to discourse at Hastings, and we are happy to know that they will be replied to by local Freethinkers who are quite capable of defending the cause.

WILLIAM NICHOLSON, a Hull Salvationist, is undergoing what he considers a martyrdom in the local gaol. He was fined 10s. and costs for carrying a large banner, shouting "Glory, Hallelujah," gathering a crowd in the street, dancing before them unto the Lord, and refusing to move on when ordered to do so by the police. This eccentric follower of Jesus Christ said he had no witness in his behalf but God, but as that person did not answer

to the subpoena the poor prisoner was left to exclaim with his Master, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Refusing to pay the fine, he was handed over to the turnkey, exclaiming "I would rather sell my soul to the Devil than pay for what I have done." It is easy enough for William Nicholson to talk about selling his soul to the Devil, but it takes two to make a bargain, and we doubt whether the Devil would buy such articles at a penny a dozen.

AN elderly man, named Popham, deacon of a chapel in the Rhondda Valley, has been sentenced for life for assaulting three girls under thirteen years of age. He decoyed them to his house on Sundays under pretence of instructing them in religion.

SEVERAL churches are reported to have been demolished by a cyclone at Louisville, Ohio.

THE man Currell while being pursued on a warrant for wilful murder is reported as having, on the day following the murder, "made himself very agreeable by conversing upon religious matters, and especially of the exemplary manner in which his parents, particularly his mother, had brought him up. He greatly interested them by telling of the eminent preachers he had heard, and by giving his opinion of the preaching of Dr. Parker, Mr. Goodrich, Mr. Spurgeon and others."

GEORGE YATES, a "sergeant" in the Salvation Army, is charged with deserting his wife and three children, and cohabiting with a young woman connected with the Army. He has been remanded without bail.

THE Romanist fishers of men have caught a big fish in the person of Mrs. Codd, wife of Canon Codd, vicar of Beamerster. It is expected that the whole family will eventually follow to Rome.

ANGELINA MAUD MARSHALL, whose body was found in the river Derwent last week, left letters stating that she intended taking her life owing to the unfortunate position she was in. In one of these letters she expressed the hope that the reason of death would not be made known, as she did not want to bring any disgrace on the Salvation Army, to which she belonged, or upon the man to whom she refers in her letters, who is married, and is a prominent Salvationist.

THE LAW AND HERESY.—The law says: "If you happen to believe the creed a lie, we will make it for your interest to tell that lie. We will deprive you of civil and political rights. We will worry you, we will fine you, until, at last, we shall wring from you the lie, the whole lie, and nothing but the lie—for Jesus' sake." Every trial for heresy puts a premium on hypocrisy. Every punishment for free speech offers a reward for false speech. Such trials will one day be quoted to prove the religious barbarism of an age that thinks itself civilised, and is civilised where its idols are not concerned.—MONCURE D. CONWAY.

A WORD TO THE MANCHESTER FREETHINKERS.

WE would say to the Manchester Freethinkers "Now or never is your chance." Who knows when such a favorable opportunity may occur again? Out of a required sum of £2,000, nearly one half is already assured, and if a serious effort is made to raise the remainder, Manchester will have a Free-thought temple, not so large as the cathedral—that will come in time—but capable of holding five or six hundred persons, with other accommodation for the various purposes of a Free-thought organisation. Mr. Bradlaugh is going to take up some shares, Mrs. Besant we believe will do something, and although Mr. Foote was sorely crippled by his losses through the fire he also will lend a helping hand. Surely, then, the Manchester Freethinkers will do their part. Everything now depends on them. They have the choice of giving Free-thought a great push forward or a heavy kick backward. This is what the alternative implies. We hope they will do their duty; nay, we believe they will. But we warn the indolent, the timid, and the procrastinating, against the danger of holding back. The scheme cannot succeed unless all—that is, everybody—do their best, and do it promptly. We would also say to the circumspect, "Your investment will be safe." Men like Mr. Payne and Mr. Field may be thoroughly relied on; they have proved their fitness to manage other people's business by taking care of their own, and besides being thoroughly capable they are entirely in earnest and profoundly devoted to the cause. This is enough, and more than enough, to convince every Freethinker in Manchester, who has any means at his command, however large or however small, that he is bound in honor to support the Building Scheme with the utmost generosity and despatch. G. W. F.

AN old man who had been dreadfully henpecked all his life was visited on his deathbed by a clergyman. The old man seemed very indifferent, and the clergyman tried to rouse him by talking of the King of Terrors. "Hout, tout, man; I'm no scart at the King of Terrors. I've been living sax-and-thirty years with the Queen of them, and the King cannot be muckle waur."

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 20, St. James's Hall, Plymouth; at 11, "Old Nick;" at 3, "What has Christianity done?" at 7, "Where is God?"

FEB. 27, Huddersfield.
MARCH 6, Cardiff; 13, Milton Hall; 20, Hall of Science, London; 22, Walworth; 27, Hall of Science, London.
APRIL 3, Manchester; 10, Birmingham; 17 and 24, Hall of Science, London.
MAY 1, Camberwell.

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.—X3, W. Schweizer.

E. J. ROSS.—Such clippings are always welcome.

C. CLEMETSHAW.—Always pleased to hear from you.

J. KEAST sends an extract from the *Plymouth Mercury* of 1881, giving an old prophecy of the end of the world in that year. It is rather curious that a little book was published actually asserting that the world did come to an end in that year.

J. P. RATHES.—Too long for the importance of the subject. See "Acid Drops."

W. STEWART.—Many thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

J. TITHERINGTON.—Your queries are pertinent, but we confine ourselves in this journal strictly to Freethought.

P. L. FORBES.—You have ideas, but you have not yet learned to draw.

W. T. LEEKEY.—We are obliged. Write us again.

J. J. STANDING (New Jersey).—Pleased to receive your interesting letter and the American cuttings. We share your view that the American Secular Union has a good fighting secretary in Mr. Putnam. Mr. Foote is in excellent health.

A NEW CREATURE.—You should favor the reverend gentleman with your criticism. He is very fond of *new* things, but if he serves up new wine in the communion we pity his congregation.

C. J. W.—We are not surprised to hear that the writer you refer to "has incorporated whole paragraphs from some of Thomas Scott's publications without having the honesty to put them in inverted commas." Thanks for the South Place Institute prospectus. We are quite aware that the congregation is pretty advanced, but is it not a little too respectable?

A. F. ATKINSON.—If the Rev. J. R. Webster really believes that Melchizedek built the great pyramid he must have a very decided chink in his roof. For the rest, there is nothing wonderful in such things as the ark of the covenant being similar to objects used in the Egyptian ritual; but it was not the Egyptians who copied from the Jews, but the Jews who copied from the Egyptians. The Egyptians were a mighty people when the Jews according to their own account were a lot of leprous and insignificant slaves.

J. W.—We have heard a similar account of the man Penny from other sources during the past week. Still, we shall not use the facts at present, for we have hit the man hard enough; but we shall certainly use them if he makes any further parade of his conversion.

It is particularly requested that all orders for literature be sent to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C., and not to Mr. Foote. The non-observance of this rule causes trouble and delay.

J. K. SYKES.—Always glad to hear from you. Sorry we missed you at Manchester.

A. RENWOOD.—We do not see what there is to answer. Mr. Symes was once a sincere Christian, as he is now a sincere Freethinker. No doubt he talked a good deal of nonsense while he was a Christian. Most Christian preachers do. The other man in the story is in the position which Mr. Symes has left behind. Mr. Symes's answer, supposing the story to be true, seems to us sensible and satisfactory. We are pleased to hear that you are, not without success, trying to make converts to Freethought.

PRISON OFFICER, referring to Mr. Foote's lecture on Christian Morality, writes: "Such a lecture would be very instructive to our prisoners. It is seldom impressed upon them that they wrong their fellow men. They are generally told that, however bad their crimes, they may be all forgiven through the blood and suffering of the innocent."

J. WIDDICOMBE.—We can quite understand that your Atheistic opinions occasion you much annoyance from your Christian neighbors. But surely the story that you are converted to orthodoxy, because you were naturally affected in the death-chamber of an intimate acquaintance, is too silly to be worth the trouble of confuting. Besides, you cannot confute such stories. Christians believe them, not because they are true, but because they are agreeable. They do not inquire for evidence, and they will not trouble about your contradiction. Your only remedy is to go on living as a Freethinker, and let the story die a natural death of old age.

HUMANITAS.—Received. Will be noticed next week.

J. P. CHACE.—We shall be as good as our word. Neither the man nor his work will receive any further notice at our hands.

D. WOFFENDEN.—It will be impossible to get the Debate published by the 27th. Mr. Foote will bring other literature. Thanks for the *Huddersfield Echo*. We notice that it gives a lengthy report of Mrs. Besant's evening lecture on Socialism, but not a line of her

morning and afternoon Freethought lectures. It is quite obvious that the odium against Freethought is far stronger than against anything else. The "capitalist press," as Mrs. Besant calls it, gives columns to Socialism. It will not give a paragraph to Freethought.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Thanet Free Press—Christian Witness—Jus—Avant Courier—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—Chat—Ironclad Age—Lucifer—Southwark Recorder—Essex People's News—Echo—Huddersfield Echo—Park Record—Cambria Leader—Middlesex Independent—Le Journal du Peuple—Southend Standard—Sheffield Evening Star.

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.

NEXT Wednesday evening the debate on Socialism between Mrs. Besant and Mr. Foote will be concluded. The verbatim report is being printed, and it will be published in one volume early in March. There will be two editions—a cheap one in paper covers at one shilling, and one for the library, printed on fine paper and bound in cloth, at two shillings. Those who wish to secure an early supply should order of Mr. Forder in advance.

MR. C. B. REYNOLDS, the American Freethought lecturer, is happily still at large; and as he is to be defended by Ingersoll when he stands his trial for Blasphemy, there is reasonable ground for hoping that, if he is not acquitted, the jury will at least disagree. Even that small mercy will be thankfully received, for until the jury agrees on the wrong side Mr. Reynolds will remain a free man. It takes twelve to hang a man, but one can keep his neck out of the noose.

AN American correspondent informs us that Mr. Reynolds lectured in January at the Newark Liberal League on "Persecutions of the Nineteenth Century." Our correspondent says: "He referred to your case, and your name was received with loud applause."

MESSRS. SYMES and Collins's *Liberator* reaches us fitfully. We have not yet received the copy containing a report of the Conference of Australasian Freethinkers held at Sydney on December 26. But a correspondent sends us an extract from the *Sydney Globe* of December 27, by which we learn that there was a good attendance of delegates and a large number of spectators, besides a crowded audience in the Theatre Royal in the evening. We notice that the Australasian Freethinkers have unanimously elected Mr. Joseph Symes as president. They have also done Mrs. Besant, Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote the honor of electing them as vice-presidents.

MR. BRADLAUGH has at last to bring in the Affirmation Bill himself. It is called "A Bill to Amend the Law as to Oaths," and it provides that "every person shall be permitted to make his solemn affirmation instead of taking an oath in all places and for all purposes where an oath is or shall be required by law." The Bill is backed by Mr. Bradlaugh, Sir John Simon, Mr. Courtney Kenny, Mr. Burt, Mr. Coleridge, Mr. Illingworth, Mr. Richard and Mr. Jesse Collings.

ACCORDING to the *Schoolmistress*, Northampton stands out well for education and orderliness. In the Board Schools examinations, each department—boys, girls, and infants—has earned the "excellent" grant; and although the population of the town has increased by ten thousand in the last ten years, the number of borough prisoners has decreased from an average of eighty to thirty-three. At the last borough Quarter Sessions there were no prisoners for trial, and the Deputy Recorder was presented with the customary pair of white gloves.

OUR Sub-editor is going to appear as a lecturer to-day (Feb. 20) at Portsmouth. He will discourse in the Wellington Hall, Wellington Street, in the afternoon at 3, on "Christian Missions," and in the evening at 7, on "The Religions of the World." Lecturing is a novel rôle for Mr. Wheeler, but the Freethinkers who attend will hear something worth listening to.

Two prizes of twenty guineas each are offered by Mr. Allsop, care of Messrs. Trübner and Co., Ludgate Hill, for the two best essays (one from the orthodox and one from the sceptical standpoint) on the following subject: "Assuming the tenets of Christianity to be disproved, what would be the social and moral effects of the discontinuance of its teachings and the abolition of its institutions." The Rev. Septimus Hansard, Clair J. Grece, Esq., and the donor, will adjudicate as umpires. The essays must not exceed seventy-five pages of 300 words to each page, and must be sent in not later than the end of July.

MISS FLORENCE GREGG has woven the facts known concerning Bartholomew Legate, the Freethinker who was burnt at Smithfield for anti-trinitarian heresy in 1612, into a story which Messrs. Sonnenschein and Co. have published. The facts are anything but creditable to the modern Solomon, to whom our Bible is

dedicated. A letter of Archbishop Abbot, in "The Egerton Papers" (p. 268) tells us that King James I. did not want Lord Coke to be consulted in the matter of putting Legate to death "leaste by his singulartie in opinion he should give staye to the businesse." Time rectifies popular judgment, and the world is beginning to see how far superior to the king was the Freethinker who dared to uphold his opinions in his sacred majesty's presence.

THE body of James Lick, the infidel philanthropist of California, who died Oct. 1, 1876, has been removed to Mount Hamilton, where the great observatory which he gave to his countrymen is erected.

THE *Cincinnati Enquirer* reports at length a lecture on Universal Mental Liberty by the ex-Rev. Samuel P. Putman, secretary of the American Secular Union, delivered in that city before a large audience, who are said to have been heartily in accord with the speaker. "Nearly every sentiment was applauded, and the more radical the sentiment the more boisterous the applause."

THE *Siècle*, of Paris, points out that the question of the separation of Church and State in France will be much facilitated by founding Freethought societies, the members of which would pledge themselves to do without the clergy, not to get married at church, not to have their children baptised, and to have themselves buried without religious rites.

SINCE Gerald Massey's lectures the spiritist organ *Medium and Daybreak* has put on a more Freethought complexion. It now says: "Are we longer justified in perpetuating the errors embodied in the Christian views on 'Jesus.'" We think not. "Many of our speakers," it continues, "go half-way and rail against what they call 'orthodoxy,' while all the time they secretly or openly refer to the 'teachings or miracles of Jesus'; thus they nurture the stem from which all the mischief springs." We are glad to notice these signs of returning sense in our contemporary.

M. C. CLEMETSHAW writes in the *Journal du Peuple*, Paris, on Hell and Purgatory, and wonders how in the nineteenth century people can be found to believe in such nonsense.

"ANTIQUA Mater; a study in Christian Origins," is the title of an important work shortly to be issued by Messrs. Trubner and Company. The writer examines all the evidence to be found in the second century with the conclusion that they afford no ground for belief in any historical founder of the new religion. Christianity, the writer thinks, began with a theology which was gradually converted into a history of past earthly events.

HERESY IN THE PULPIT.

MODERN science and modern thought are modifying Christianity itself. As a body, Christians are more Secular and less religious than they used to be. But the effect on some is necessarily more marked than on others. The public is being continually furnished with examples of the growing unbelief in the Bible in the persons of clergymen themselves, although these as a class have been selected by the weeding out of the thoughtful, practical young men who indignantly turned aside from the easy and attractive career offered by the Church to the indolent or hypocritical minds that could swallow its absurd doctrines and practise its mummeries.

Hence we have cases like those of Voysey, Colenso, Haweis, Shuttleworth, Newman Smyth, Principal Caird, and innumerable other greater and smaller lights of the Churches, whose heresies vary almost infinitely in degree from mild corrections of absurd or horrible Christian doctrines to absolute rejection of the Bible as a special revelation.

The latest case is that of the Rev. C. J. H. Fletcher, one of the select preachers to the University of Oxford and rector of the city church. Having preached before the University on the fall of Adam, he was charged with heresy by the Rev. E. Ffoulkes. The six doctors who tried the case were divided in opinion. The Vice-Chancellor, while agreeing that there was reasonable ground of suspicion from the ambiguity of the language, gave his casting vote in favor of Mr. Fletcher's orthodoxy, so that this particular heretic stands acquitted, although he believes that Adam was not the first man and that modern science is to be believed where it conflicts with God's Bible. He gets over the whole difficulty by regarding the indisputable contradiction of science as merely supplementary information or explanation vouchsafed by God to aid Bible readers in the intelligent understanding of his will and of the evolution of his religion, which is progressive like all other forms of human thought.

Encouraged by his escape, the reverend heretic still openly persists in following the light of human reason. On the Sunday evening after his acquittal he preached another sermon on the fall of Adam, in which he taught that science is truth from God equally with revelation, and that Christians must read Moses and Darwin side by side as mutually elucidative. Revelation and science are not at variance; they merely supply each other's deficiencies. In studying Genesis, the following principles, he says, must be understood (I quote from the condensed report in the *Daily News*):—

"In the first place, the contents of these chapters were poetry, a work of the imagination, not a literal history of facts. Their letter killeth, but their spirit giveth life. They were to be read in the spirit, that was they were not to regard the form or outward story as their essential part, but they were to seek the ideas or truths of which the story was a frame. If they insisted on reading them in the letter, if they would have it that God made the universe in six days of twenty-four hours, that his hands moulded man out of earth-dust after the fashion of a human modeller, that he put him in a garden, which besides containing an erect and talking serpent, had in it two trees with wisdom in the fruit of the one and immortality in the fruit of the other, if, he said, they would thus turn the imagery of sacred poetry into actual fact, intent on the shell of the story and blind to its inner kernel of truth, they would resemble one who in reading our Lord's parables should be so attracted by the earthen vessel as to forget the spiritual treasure it contains. The other principle which must be accepted as preliminary to a right study of Genesis was this, that the Bible was not meant to teach us those truths which man could by means of scientific inquiry discover for himself. Its object was moral and spiritual, to set forth the eternal relations between God and man. Whenever therefore, the Bible referred to things that were within the scope of science it should be read, and, if necessary, it should be corrected by the light of science."

But with all this liberty of correcting the errors of the Bible what will be left of it? If the congregation find that Christians have all along been deceived in believing the story of the fall of man, what security have they for the truth of the equally mythical story of his redemption? Nay, what need is there for his redemption? If one is but poetry the other cannot well be fact. It has often enough and strongly enough been pointed out that they are interwoven as warp and weft, connected together as foundation and superstructure, indissolubly united as a sequence of events. If one is fiction the other should equally be fiction. And if the moral kernel be precious who is to find it except by guesswork, if the Bible itself is not allowed to decide? Such a religion is of no use whatever to common people and they will have none of it.

Most of the clergy of the Church of England mentally reject Genesis but avoid speaking the plain truth on the matter to their congregations, who will have to learn it by degrees from other sources. Meanwhile there is encouragement to be drawn from the example of those paid servants of Untruth who honestly and openly reject such portions of their creed as they perceive to be untrue. Such men must inevitably increase in numbers and in influence. They commence the journey what will end in full mental freedom for all, and they lead their congregations some few steps along that glorious path.

W. P. BALL.

LORD SHAFTESBURY ON THE CLERGY.

LORD SHAFTESBURY had a poor opinion of the clergy. In 1841, after attending a meeting of factory operatives for the improvement of their position, he wrote: "The clergy here, as usual, are cowed by capital and power; I find none who 'cry aloud and spare not'; but so it is everywhere."

Earlier in the same year, while agitating for a "Children's Employment Commission," he wrote: "To whom should I have naturally looked for the chief aid? Why, undoubtedly, to the clergy, and especially those of the trading districts. Quite the reverse; from them I have received no support, or next to none; one or two, in their individual capacity, have given me encouragement, and given me God-speed; but, as a body, or even numerously, though singly, they have done, are doing, and will do, nothing. And this, throughout my whole career."

On June 13, 1874, he describes how he was "roiled" by the bishops for his hostility in parliament.

In 1869, he wrote: "Never again will I interfere in Church matters. All establishments are doomed and perhaps wisely." On May 15 he writes: "I have now, thank God, closed my ecclesiastical career; nothing shall again stir me to move Bills in defence of the Establishment."

WHY was Noah the first eminent financier? Because he succeeded in floating a limited liability company while all the rest of the world was in liquidation.

RANDOM NOTES FROM CHRIST.

THE egotism of you earthmen is to me truly astounding, for of all the discourses I have listened to not one treats of the probable need of the descent of a savior for any other planet but this particular little chandler's-shop concern, called by its inhabitants, the earth. There is not one thought of the wants of the millions of other planets. No, everything is supposed to happen for the delectation of you men and women—never even thinking of the incessant labor mother and I have to undergo in carrying out the same old programme, the constant diminishing of yours truly for infantile incarnation. It's very tiring; and, after my long service in the same business, very monotonous. Besides, at times the old man, in his growing senility, gives us a wrong address, and we turn up on the wrong planet, finding out to our cost how blundering Jehovah is becoming. One earth we visited at dad's instigation for the salvation business, placed the old lady and myself in a most ludicrous situation, for we found the old 'un had sent us about three or four thousand years too soon, and on arriving at a sub-tropical part, found a youthful old gentleman, about six hundred years old, and his sons, busy building an enormous ark on the true toy-shop lines—for it seems Jehovah makes all planets undergo the same bitter experience and was about putting a damper on the inhabitants. But what made the situation more embarrassing was the double blundering of the old man, who had started the animals, etc., on their journeys from different countries about two months too early. Mr. Bore (the aforesaid old juvenile) and his sons were working like galley slaves to get a proper receptacle ready for the flood business, but were perfectly astounded at the arrival of the intending inmates and were having a terrible time of it, surrounded by elephants and animalculæ, blue-bottle flies and tigers, fleas, wasps and snakes—all thronging round the ark and anxious to get in. Mr. Bore's sons had to divide their attention between boiling the pitch and keeping the lions from being too familiar with the lambs. The women folk had to try and pacify the neighbors, who thought Bore was going into the circus business; and the young men were constantly making application for situations as bare-backed riders, lion-tamers, etc. Mother and I were extremely glad to clear off, especially as the animals seemed to have a desire to assimilate us.

Another planet visited by us (again in consequence of wrong address given by dad) we found in a glacial state, in consequence of its sun having cooled down and almost gone out. The sight was anything but exhilarating; nothing but death and desolation—the kindly ice covering up the played-out bodies of men and animals lying around. The view of this earth's central sun was of a very melancholy description, only a dull red glow being visible, and of course not much heat being felt. Mother was quite disgusted at having been sent on such a fool's errand, her teeth chattering in her ancient head with the cold. I told her to be careful, the old girl being rather proud of her teeth (four pounds the set). We were glad to escape, and thinking to save time, took a planet or two on our way back. In one we arrived just in time to witness the performance of one of the old boy's friends (Josh Davis, I think he is called) dancing in a state of nudity round an old box he called "a ark." I took the liberty of telling him there were ladies present, and said "Put on your 'duds,' old man; if the whiskey is powerful in this locality don't make a beast of yourself. Get your harness on and be decent." With sundry expletives he challenged me to "put my thumbs up," as he described a posture of defence, and wanted to know "who the —" I was. I could at once see we were too early for this earth, and if we stopped to perform our salvation dodge here, it wouldn't take; the people wouldn't understand what we were about, for they seemed to have no idea of a hereafter, and so the promise of a front seat in heaven would have no effect. *En passant*, this is the planet where hair-cutting has such a detrimental effect; barbers are at a discount. Poor Jamson, the athlete, entered a barber's shop at the instigation of his lady-love, Jemimah—a splendid specimen of the *genus-homo*—had his hair cut, and came out limp and enervated like a new-born baby. Oh! fatal effects of hair-cutting; to think a barber should have the power to take a man's strength away by simply reaping his wool. So mother and I slunk off, landing safely on another earth, which we found to our cost very much civilised. They wouldn't recognise us at any price, telling us if we attempted any of our miracles, prison would be our lot; so thinking a first-class crucifixion would fetch them, I tried it on, but found they derided me and had me up for attempted suicide, and I was bound over to keep the peace. They said salvation in the dim future was no use to them. They could save themselves—the study of science and hygiene causing more happiness in the present than all the post promises of a tropical Hades or a metallic heaven. These people were a terrible race of practical rascals; in fact, their late priests had to labor like ordinary men. How mother and I sighed for that beautiful but small world lately visited, governed entirely by General Smooth and his brave army of Christians, whose decrees were so just—one of them being "that all who do not publicly play an instrument to the glory of God should be put to torture, the torture being twelve months' solitary confinement with a big drum." The commotion this earnest band makes when on the march is cheering and splendid. Sordid business has to stop, as each performer plays

his own composition. Horses are even affected by the sweet strains, and sometimes brain their drivers, and smash up old ladies and children. Ah! that is a happy planet.

I am so afraid, if the old man allows education to advance as it is advancing, my occupation will be gone, and this beautiful religion of consistency will sink to the burlesque writer; and mother, myself and Jehovah will one day form characters in a comic opera or pantomime, the same as Jove, Pau, Minerva, etc.

AN ATHEIST'S "CREED."

WHAT is an Atheist's creed, sir? I really don't think I can tell,
For as things keep a-changing and changing our notions must alter
as well.
We don't want to fashion a creed, sir, and cram it down ev'ry ono's
throat,
But we launch our respective opinions, and leave them to sink or to
float.
And as long as a man does his best to behave as a man should
behave
I don't see the need of a creed to carry him safe through the grave.
And as for the creed of the Christian, it's splendidly suited, I say,
To set men disputing o'er trifles; to juggle their reason away;
To lead men to torture their fellows, to plunder and murder—and
why?
Because some departed transcriber put a "e" p'raps, instead of an "i."
It's a very long time since they did so? But if, somehow the priests
took the lead,
I wouldn't give much for my life if I questioned the truth of their
creed.
For as long as the good of the body is subject to that of the soul
There's a full and sufficient excuse for their arrogant claim to control.
And the impotent malice and hate still shown by their slanders and
lies,
Would flame forth in the cruellest tortures that devilish brains could
devise.
We are all apt to differ I know, and Atheists differ as well;
But we don't snap and snarl as the sects do, nor send one another to
hell.
We like to discuss our opinions, to constantly sift them anew,
Till by sifting, and sifting, and sifting we find out what's false and
what's true.
But, go where you will in the world, not an Atheist differs from me,
In respect of our duties in life, whereon Christians can never agree.
That it's better to love with a love more deep as the years roll by,
One's wife and one's children below, than a probable something on
high.
That it's better than seeking for heaven by means of a book that
defiles,
To secure them their heaven on earth; to be paid by their kisses
and smiles.
Well it somehow appears, sir, to me that I've fashioned a creed after
all,
But take it or not as you please, I leave it to stand or to fall.
And when I look back on the past and remember that Christians
have dealt
All the blows that I ever received, the injustice and wrongs that I've
felt,
I can't help a-thinking a bit, that their creed, their vain glory
and boast,
Is nought but a fetish or charm, and a jumble of words at the most.
EX-RITUALIST.

REVIEWS.

Revealed Religion: Its Claims on the Intellect and the Heart Impartially Considered in a Series of Letters from a Father to his Son. By a Wrangler and Ex-Member of the University of Cambridge. London: E. Truelove, 256 High Holborn. Price Sixpence.—These thoughtful letters expose the evils of orthodoxy in a temperate and earnest manner, and are well adapted for young inquirers.

The Coming Millenium. Plymouth: Printed for the Author.—A skit upon Idealism and passing events.

A HUNGRY English tourist, specially fond of soles, arrived at an Irish hotel, and met the landlady. "Now then," he said, "first of all, have you a sole?" "A sowl, is it?" replied the landlady, indignantly, "Sorr, do I look like a baste?"

In a rough sea one night, when the vessel was in danger of getting on a sandbank, Quayle shouted down to the stokers, "Work, you rascals, or you'll all be in hell in five minutes." It is said that the archdeacon of the island (Man) was on board, and that on anxiously asking the captain whether there was any danger, the reply given, in consideration of his cloth, was, "Sir, you are very likely to be in heaven before morning;" on which the venerable gentleman lifted up his eyes, and exclaimed, "The Lord forbid!"

"Ah," said the Superintendent, "and here is Tommy Goodboy's missionary offering, £5. That will make some little heathen hearts glad. Now tell us how you got this money, Tommy." "Yes, sir," said Tommy, speaking up loudly and distinctly, like the good boy that he was; "part of it pa won on 'Change,' some of it ma won on a crazy-quilt raffle, some of it sister Laura won at progressive euchre, ten shillings brother Bill won on the horse race, sevenpence I got for marbles I won playin' keeps, and the rest I won in a grab-bag and a prize cake at the church fair." After a brief consultation the brethren decided that they would send the money on to the heathen, but wouldn't tell them how it was raked in. There are some things in modern Christianity it isn't best even for the heathen to know.

PROFANE JOKES.

CLERGYMAN—"I hope, my young friend, you lose no opportunity for attendance upon the means of grace and are careful to mingle frequently with the Lord's people?" Young Friend—"Yes, sir; I haven't missed a Sunday-school picnic this summer."

A **FAST IRISHMAN**, in a time of revival, joined the congregation, but was found sinning grievously not long afterwards. "Didn't you join the Methodists?" inquired a piously-disposed person. "Faix an' I did—I jined for six months, and behaved so well that they let me off with three."

"**WHAT** is the devil?" asked a Sunday-school teacher of the latest addition to her class. "I don't know what it is; but it can't run as fast as papa." "How do you know?" "Because my papa says that he always catches the devil when he comes home late at night from the lodge."

"**MOTHER**," said a fair-haired urchin, "I don't want to go to Sunday-school; I want to go fishing." "But the fish won't bite a Sunday, my son. They're good and go to their Sunday-school." "Well," responded the probable future president, "I'll risk it anyway; maybe there's some 'at's like me."

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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. Deducing the Spencer Legacy of £500, and £300 already promised, or in hand, the further sum of £1,040 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 Rye Street, Clarendon Road, C.-on-Medlock, Manchester.

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BETWEEN

MRS. ANNIE BESANT

AND

MR. G. W. FOOTE,

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