

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. VII.—No. 9.]

FEBRUARY 27, 1887.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 187.



GOD AND OLD NICK.

And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and do down in it.—JOB II., 2.

S'WELP ME GOD.

WHOEVER has seen a Hebrew money-lender in a County Court take up a copy of the Old Testament, present the greasy cover to his greasy lips, and, like honest Moses in the *School for Scandal*, "take his oath on that," must have had a lively impression as to the value of swearing as a religious ceremony. And this impression must have been heightened when he has seen an ingenuous Christian, on the other side of the suit, present a copy of the New Testament to his pious lips, and quietly swear to the very opposite of all that the God-fearing Jew had solemnly declared to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. One's appreciation of the oath is still further increased by watching the various litigants and witnesses as they caress the sacred volume. Here a gentleman wears an expression of countenance which seems to imply "I guess they'll get a good deal of truth out of me," and there another's face seems to promise as great a regard for truth as is consistent with his understanding with the solicitor who subpoenaed him as an independent witness in the interest of justice and a sound client. Hard swearing is the order of the day. So conflicting is the evidence on the simple matters of fact that it is perfectly obvious that the very atmosphere is charged with duplicity. The thing is

taken as a matter of course. Judges are used to it, and act accordingly, deciding in most cases by a keen observation of the witnesses and an extensive knowledge of the seamy side of human nature. But sometimes the very judges are nonplussed, so brazen are the faces of the gentlemen who have "kissed the book." Very often, no doubt, their honors feel inclined to say, like the American judge in directing his jury, "Well, gentlemen, if you believe what these witnesses swear, you will give a verdict for the plaintiff; and if you believe what the other witnesses swear, you will give a verdict for the defendant; but if, like me, you don't believe what either side swears, I'm hanged if I know what you will do."

The fact is, the oath is absolutely useless if its object is to prevent false witness. Should there be any likelihood of a prosecution for perjury, a two-faced Testament-kisser will be on his guard, and be very careful to tell only such lies as cannot be clearly proved against him. He dreads the prospect of daily exercise on the treadmill, he loathes the idea of picking oakum, and his gorge rises at the thought of brown bread and skilly. But so long as that danger is avoided, there are hosts of witnesses, most of them very good Christians, who have been suckled on the Gospel in Sunday Schools, and fed afterwards on the strong meat of the Word in churches and chapels, who will swear

fast and loose after calling God to witness to their veracity. They ask the Almighty to deal with them according as they tell the truth, yet for all that they proceed to tell the most unblushing lies. What is the reason of this strange inconsistency? Simply this. Hell is a long way off, and many things may happen before the Day of Judgment. Besides, God is merciful; he is always ready to forgive sins; a man has only to repent in time, that is a few minutes before death, and all his sins will be washed out in the cleansing blood of Christ. Notwithstanding all his lies in earthly courts, the repentant sinner will not lose his right of walking about for ever and ever in the court of heaven, although some poor devil whose liberty or property he swore away may be frizzling for ever and ever in hell.

We are strongly of opinion that if the oath were abolished altogether there would be fewer falsehoods told in our public courts. No doubt the law of perjury has some effect, but it is less than is generally imagined, partly because the law is difficult to apply, and partly because there is a wide disinclination to apply it, owing to a sort of freemasonry in false witness, which is apt to be regarded as an essential part of the game of litigation. Here and there, too, there may be a person of sincere piety, who fears to tell a lie in what he considers the direct presence of God. But for the most part the fear of punishment, in this world or in the next, will not make men veracious. The fact is proved by universal experience; nay, there are judges, as well as philosophers, who openly declare that the oath has a direct tendency to create perjury. Anyone with a true sense of morality will understand the reason of this. Fear is not a moral motive; and when the threatened punishment is very remote or very uncertain, it has next to no deterrent effect. Cupidity is matched against fear, and the odds of the game being in its favor, it wins. But if a moral motive is appealed to, the case is different. Many a man will tell a lie in the witness-box who would scruple to do so "on his honor"; many a man will lie before God who would scruple to deceive a friend. Let a man feel that he is trusted, let his self-respect be appealed to, and he is more likely to be veracious than he would be if he were threatened with imprisonment in this life and hell-fire in the next.

Why Christians should cling to this relic of barbarity it is difficult to conceive. Their Savior plainly commanded them to "Swear not at all," and the early Church obeyed this injunction until it rose to power under Constantine. It is also a striking fact that the apostle Peter, when he disobeyed his Master, and took an oath, used it to confirm a palpable lie. When the damsel charged him in court with having been a follower of Jesus, he "Denied it with an oath." "You were one of them," said the damsel. "I wasn't," said Peter. "You *were* with him," she rejoined. Whereupon Peter exclaimed "S'w'elp me God, I never knew him." Surely if self-interest made Peter commit flat perjury in the bodily presence of his Savior, it is idle to assert that the oath in any way promotes veracity.

The best and wisest men have always protested against taking oaths. Yet the practice survives in our courts, like the archaic law terms, and the wigs worn by the judges and counsel. It survives also in the high court of Parliament, where so many field-days were devoted to the "Bradlaugh question," and where so many Christians, worshipping as God the man who said, "Swear not at all," talked by the hour on the value and sanctity of the oath. Fortunately Mr. Bradlaugh's new Bill raises the question for further discussion on imperial grounds, and before very long we may expect to see an affirmation substituted for the oath wherever it is at present required by law. That will place Freethinkers on a level with Christians in this respect, and by-and-bye when the nation is accustomed to the new law the oath will probably be swept away altogether. While it lasts, however, it puts the religionists under a stigma, or rather it allows them to inflict it on themselves; for whoever prefers to swear, instead of affirming, implies that his sense of truth needs to be fortified by invoking the name of God.

G. W. FOOTE.

"LOOK here, Deacon Snafflebit," said the horse-dealer, "I want a plain word with you. Last Saturday you traded me a mare that isn't worth 50dls. for that grey colt I'd just put 200dls. into." "So I did, so I did," groaned the deacon, regretting that he hadn't insisted on something to boot, "for so saith the proverb of Solomon, the wise, 'The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.'"

THE CHURCH AND SCIENCE.

A RECENT number of the *Catholic Times* has been informing its readers that the popes have been devoted friends to science. It forgot to add that the only popes who exhibited the slightest predilection that way, have either, like Sylvester, been supposed to have sold themselves to the Devil, or, like Leo X., suspected of heresy. It also quotes with approbation the saying of Monsignor Capel that "the Church is the Mother of Science." It might and with more truth have said it pretends to a motherly interest in science, and would fain keep it in leading strings, as witness the canons promulgated at the last Ecumenical Council at Rome:

"1. *Let him be anathema*, who shall say that human sciences ought to be pursued in such a spirit of freedom that one may be allowed to hold as true their assertions, even when opposed to revealed doctrine.

"2. *Let him be anathema*, who shall say that it may at any time come to pass, in the progress of science, that the doctrines set forth by the Church must be taken in another sense than that in which the Church has ever received and yet receives them."

Yet Mother Church has ever taught that all its children are descendants of Adam, born some six thousand years ago and from his wife made out of his rib!

For whole ages the Church held that the earth was a flat fixed body, round which the sun, moon, and stars revolved. Her holy fathers, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, did not get beyond this for more than fifteen centuries. When some heretic upstarts arose who ventured to question the infallible Mother, then did she indeed show her burning zeal for Science. She claims to have warmed Science into life. She certainly warmed it. Galileo in his Inquisition dungeon, Bruno at the stake, were witnesses to her efforts in the cause of Science. Surely the partizans of the Church must mean, when they speak of Science, *theological science*—the Science of knowing the unknowable, and of finding reasons for the irrational.

This dear delightful Mother of Science who, when her now adopted daughter's life was tender, did her best to crush it out, now that the child has grown despite her, and is able to take care of herself, begins, like the coward bully she has ever been, to cringe and cry: "Oh, my dear Science, let there be no difference between us. Notwithstanding appearances I always meant to act well by you, and if you will only obey me as the elder I will interfere with you no more. You shall have your own way. 'Days' shall be 'periods,' 'creation' shall be 'evolution,' 'miracles' shall be 'higher law,' what you will, only submit to my authority and all will be well."

The Catholics, despite their immutable Church, are being affected by the spirit of the age, and follow the Protestants in their policy of trimming. Science is coming to the fore, so Science is patted on the back and patronised. But the pretence of friendship is a lie. The hope of reconciliation is vain. Religion, conceived in ignorance and begotten of fear, never did and never will affect human knowledge, save to attempt to strangle it. It is Science which affects religion, exposing it as the outcome of barbarous want of knowledge and compelling it to look round for a few rags to cover its dirty hide. Ignorance is the mother of Devotion. The sentiment of fear, even when softened down to religious awe and worship, does not apply to a known power. Men pray not where they understand, but for the unknown. As the knowledge of nature's operations extends, the objects of prayer become more and more remote and intangible. What men formerly feared they are learning to govern. The savage fell prostrate before the lightning, praying pitifully; civilised man uses electricity to transact his business. It was with a true instinct the Swiss clergy opposed the system of insuring growing crops, because it made their parishioners indifferent to prayers for the harvest. It was with a true instinct the Church, in the days of its power, branded the scientists as heretics and unbelievers. As Science advances the sphere of religion diminishes. In a time of transition some few may be beguiled into thinking religion and Science are not antagonistic, and even that Moses and Darwin may be reconciled; but when we have a nation trained in Science it will be found that the old faiths have vanished into thin air and that the Church, with its holy Bible, its three-headed God and its miracles, is mainly remembered as food for laughter.

J. M. WHEELER.

STRAY THOUGHTS BY A SUNDAY-SCHOOL SCHOLAR.

I THINK when I read that sweet (?) story of old,
When Jesus performed amongst men;
Just to prove all I read and the wonders I'm told,
I should like to have been with him then.
I should like that his hands had been placed on my head,
Or else on the crown of my hat;
Or his foot had been placed on my trousers instead—
I might have found virtue in that.

I should like to have seen his great trick with the wine—
'Twas very convenient, no doubt;
I should like to have had him in our place to dine
When the beer in the barrel gave out.
Mr. Satan to tempt him one day had a try,
No doubt by this time he doth rue it;
Then carried him off on his back for a fly.
Pray how did he manage to do it?

How I wish'd I'd been there when all the folks sat
Down to hear him ere having their dinners;
A turn of his wrist—lo! two buns and a sprat
Fully satisfied five thousand sinners.
Then he healed all the sick, and the dead by the way
He restored, did this wondrous physician;
Gave a blind man his sight with some spittle and clay—
What a wonderful clever magician!

Now the Lord he set sail on the ocean one day
When the tempest it raged merrilee,
And of all that ship's crew I am sorry to say
Not one was cut out for the sea.
So God from his slumber was rudely disturbed
By his lubberly fear-stricken crew;
He turned off that storm from the main with a word.
I wouldn't have done it, would you?

When he walked on the sea how I wish I'd been there,
Just to see old Pete trying to follow,
Though some wicked sceptics are heard to declare
That the story's a hard one to swallow.
I would like to have read that they made him a peer,
With a pension per-pet-u-al-ly;
But my Sunday-school teacher he tells me "this here"
Was not in Jehovah's decree.

So those wicked Jews nailed up their God on a tree,
Which was all very right I suppose;
But wasn't it too very shocking to see
Those soldiers toss up for his clo'es?
Then they buried poor Jesus next day, and I've heard
That he paid a short visit to hell.
If you do not believe all this really occurred
You will certainly get there as well.

E. BUTLER.

ACID DROPS.

THE Peace Society asks, somewhat despairingly, whether it is not possible to enlist the influence and authority of the ministers of Christianity against the calamitous system of militarism which crushes the peoples of Europe. There are tens of thousands of clergymen set apart for the purpose of proclaiming the religion of the "Prince of Peace," and if they were "earnestly and unanimously" to proclaim and enforce the doctrines of peace, they could at least do much to lessen the scourge and vindicate the character of the religion they represent. Ah, but the religious sects are too busy quarrelling with each other and saving souls from a hell that doesn't exist to trouble about such a trifle as international peace and disarmament. Bigots and superstitionists are little likely to guide the world aright. They profess much, but nothing is to be expected from them in the way of genuine world-wide reform. Religion is itself an evil. To expect it to prevent war is to expect Satan to cast out Beelzebub.

We observe from a report in the *Southport Guardian* that the Rev. J. Ashby delivered a sermon at the New Jerusalem Church on the Bible in relation to science. Science, he said, was intended to confirm and establish the truths of revelation. Pity it hasn't done so. God must really be a great fool, if he did so intend, for science like Balaam has completely reversed its expected rôle. The Rev. J. Ashby, thanks to the growth of the scientific spirit, finds that the speaking serpent, the talking ass, and the sun and moon standing still, are "manifestly to be understood only in a symbolical sense." Thus science most thoroughly supports the Bible by converting its most remarkable miracles into mere fables. The story of Jonah, however, Mr. Ashby holds is literally true, and Jonah's preservation was not more remarkable than the circumstances by which we are surrounded day by day—such as the wonders of sleep, and how food becomes blood and nerve and bone.

At another "New Jerusalem Church," situated at Camberwell, the Rev. R. J. Tilson announced a series of sermons on biblical subjects, in which he was to show that the Mosaic narrative was

not physical but spiritual, Genesis being simply a "divine allegory." Adam and Eve, it seems, were not individuals, but on'y names representative of primitive mankind in general. Eden and its magic trees were only symbols of the mind. The Serpent was merely a faculty of the mind, which being perverted led man astray. The narrative concerning Cain, Abel, and Cain's wife being "literally impossible" is "spiritually most profitable." Noah's flood was no deluge of waters, but an inundation of ungodliness. Swedenborgianism, however, merely replaces one superstition by another. Its protests against the literal accuracy of the Bible are of little value because coupled with a stronger assertion than ever of its divineness and trustworthiness in mystical and allegorical senses.

THE *Christian Herald* tells us how "Crazy Ann" prayed during a cyclone and was "impelled by an unseen power" to enter "a low office near the main building." She and her son thus escaped while the house itself lay a mass of ruins with three corpses beneath the rubbish. The pious story continues: "And yet many people will say it just happened so, and that the prayer of the half-witted woman was of no avail. But God's children have his word for it that 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the sorrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasted at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. For He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.'"

THE *Christian Commonwealth* says: "There is only one Bible—why are there so many religions?" We recommend the question to the study of all the conflicting sects of Christians as soon as a cessation of their dissensions may leave them a quiet hour for sober thought.

THE Rev. T. B. Browne, Rector of Bodfai, Wales, refuses to have any further connection with the British and Foreign Bible Society while the local secretary remains a member of the Anti-Tithe League. How these Christians love one another!

MR. TOMLINS, a Portsmouth champion of Christianity in opposition to Freethought, and a great boaster of his acquaintance with the Hebrew language, seems to have acquired a partiality for the most objectionable custom of the Hebrew persuasion. He has been wrongfully lending money on soldiers' new boots and thus encouraging them to defraud the nation. Judge Denman, in sentencing a soldier to imprisonment for this offence, said to the pious Tomlins: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. It is robbing the public, and causing soldiers, who ought to be well-shod in the interests of the public, to be ill-shod, by giving them money to spend in drink; it is a blackguardly and low thing for you to do."

AT Wolverhampton a Mrs. Emily Biddlestone has been sentenced to a month's imprisonment for duping young women with a "Devil's looking-glass," in which she professed to show them the image of their future husbands. The chief difference between the common fortune-teller and the clerical prophet is that the latter usually has the prudence to postpone the fulfilment of his promises and threats till after death, so that the fraud cannot be detected. One superstition leads to another, and the true remedy is to sweep all of them away together as fast as possible. Sweep away the Devil and there can be no "Devil's looking-glass."

A NEW sect has appeared in Michigan, one of its tenets being that a paid ministry is ungodly. We recommend this sect to the notice of our bishops. If they would join it some thousands of public money would be saved.

THE anti-polygamy Bill has been passed by Congress. American Christians are determined to put an end to biblical customs as upheld by the Mormons.

THE latest book by Dr. George Macdonald contains a story of an old woman who having listened to a young preacher, criticised his doctrine. He defended himself by quoting from the Sermon on the Mount, to which the old woman replied, "He was a very young man when he preached that sermon."

TALMAGE says that "The capture of this round planet for Christ is not so much of a job as you might imagine, when the Church takes off its coat and rolls up its sleeves for the work, as it will." He says there are about sixteen hundred million people in the world, of whom four hundred and fifty millions are already Christians—so that each Christian has only to bring three others to Christ and the thing is done. He hopes no Christian will be content to bring less than three. He himself hopes to take with him at least ten thousand. But all these converts he has already counted as Christians to make up his four hundred and fifty million Christians. The great difficulty lies in Christianising the masses and the Ingersolls and Huxleys whom he already counts as converted to Christ. When he has accomplished the task of converting his four hundred and fifty millions of Christians to Christianity, he may have some chance with the Hindoos and Chinese and Mohammedans. But the Church had better roll

up its sleeves and commence work at once, or we shall have the second glacial period upon us before this round planet is captured for Christ.

A WORKING man has been imitating Christ at the City Temple. He jumped on to the dais just as Dr. Parker was about to enter the pulpit, and shouted in a powerful voice, "Behold I come as a thief in the night." He continued: "Ye shall worship no other God but me." Being removed from the Temple by a policeman and asked the reason of his conduct, he replied, "I was doing the work of Him that sent me." It was a case of too much Bible or else not enough. Christ did not consent to be removed from the Temple so easily. He drove the other fellows out with a cat-o'-nine tails.

THE *Bombay Catholic Examiner* complains of the Salvation Army in India as effecting no possible good among the natives but only bringing Christianity into contempt by their travesty of its system and their absurdly ridiculous antics and gyrations. So long as there are dupes enough at home, it says, to supply the sinews of war there will probably be fools enough abroad to carry on this infatuated crusade.

THE clergy are lamenting that they can only obtain £23,000 out of the £200,000 needed for the Jubilee Church House, while millions are immediately forthcoming for Guinness's brewery. But the latter promises interest in this world, the former only in the next. People distrust the security, and are not particularly eager for dividend so long deferred. Hence the clerical scheme for making a profit out of the Jubilee appears likely to be a failure, in spite of the patronage of the bishops and the big meeting held at Westminster Town Hall.

At the Archbishop of Canterbury's suggestion, the Jubilee is to be commemorated by a "Clergy Distress Fund." Can't the more highly-paid clergy give of their abundance to their poorer brethren in Christ for whom they profess so much love and sympathy? Why are they always begging of the public on whom they live? There is money enough in the Church to provide comfortably for all of them without passing the hat round. Suppose now we commemorated the Jubilee by an act or two of simple justice, say the abolition of tithes and of the blasphemy laws, or the exclusion of bishops from the House of Lords and the disestablishment of one particular Christian sect in a land where they are not even a majority.

DR. ULLATHORNE, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Birmingham, has issued a Lenten Pastoral, in which he strongly denounces the reading of foul literature, in which of course he links the denial of the Holy Scriptures with "appeals to the worst passions and the vilest inclinations of human nature." Dr. Ullathorne says "Atheism is advocated, and that by a class of men who ignore the first elements of truth and the first principles of life." This is a specimen of Christian truth and charity. Denunciations of cheap trash come with bad grace from a Church which sanctions the wide dissemination of such a work as Father Furniss's *Sight of Hell*. While the Catholic Church continues to produce a far larger proportion of criminals than any other body in Europe, it would do well to look at home before it denounces the immoral literature of infidelity.

THE *Protestant Standard* says that the sceptic is the most credulous of all misbelievers because he believes in "the transubstantiation of a granule into the great system of the universe—the conversion of a particle of dust into the mind of a Milton and the heavenly soul of Paul." But food forms the body, and without the body there is no mind. Mind is the property of the material body. Why introduce a fresh theory of its separate existence, for which there is no proof whatever? Why is the sceptic the "most superstitious and fanatical of all false worshippers" when he doesn't worship at all, and when while believing the undeniable facts of nature, he refuses to go beyond them into wild regions of guesswork and delusion?

THE *Protestant Standard* talks of the beautiful unity of design and a supreme directing intelligence. But where is the moral beauty in skill that designed the shark's jaws, the tiger's teeth, the serpent's fangs, besides the innumerable other instances of evil in nature? What satisfaction is it to believe that cholera and famine and storms and earthquakes are designed by a supreme intelligence? And why are there so many blunders and incongruities in this vaunted unit of design? Why are there so many thousands of structures adapted solely for the purpose of injury and destruction?

THE Church papers are jubilant because in a return of the *personnel* of the Army just issued, it appears that out of 192,929 men 125,522 are members of the Church of England, 39,560 Roman Catholics, 14,364 Presbyterians, 8,714 Wesleyans, and 1,314 other Protestants. It is argued that this disposes of the belief that Dissent has any influence worth speaking of amongst the working classes. But is it not a fact that soldiers, like many others and with even better reason, merely call themselves members of the National Church, of which indeed every dissenter is legally as much a member as those who have sworn to the Thirty-nine Articles?

THE *Sunderland Weekly Echo* gave no report of Mr. Foote's recent lectures in the town, although they caused a good deal of excitement, and brought the ex-Mayor and a leading school-master on the platform to defend Christianity. But that journal gives a verbatim report of a sermon by the Rev. W. H. Harwood on "The claims of Secularism." Referring to Mr. Foote's visit, Mr. Harwood says, "I had not the advantage of hearing him, but understand that he used the common arguments of his school." After reading Mr. Harwood's sermon, we do not need to be informed that he uses the common arguments of his school. His whole discourse is a running fire of excuses for the failure of his faith. Why does not Mr. Harwood defend his creed on the public platform instead of replying to Freethinkers in their absence? We are quite willing to visit Sunderland again for the purpose of discussing in public with him the Christianity which he says we do not understand, or the Theism which he says we ignore. Has he the courage to debate as well as preach? If he has, now is his opportunity. If the truth is all on Mr. Harwood's side, and if his creed is so perfect and sublime, all he has to do is to champion it on a public platform, and he will drive Freethought out of Sunderland for ever.

CONVOCAION has met but not done anything remarkable. It threatened to stop the irregularity of celebrating the communion with other wine than the juice of the grape, and assented to the performance of marriages up till three o'clock in the afternoon, a measure which became law last year, and from which therefore Convocation could not dissent.

WE suppose our archbishops live a little more in the light of day than those of the last century. The Rev. Charles J. Abbey, in his work on *The English Church and its Bishops* (1700-1800), reports what Horace Walpole said of the "jolly old archbishop" Lancelot Blackburne, Archbishop of York, that "though he had been a buccaneer (*i.e.*, chaplain in a buccaneering expedition against the Spaniards) he had all the manners of a man of quality, and retained nothing of his old profession except the seraglio." Mr. Abbey says "there is almost certainly truth in the story."

A CORRESPONDENT sends us the following story:—"While stationed with a battery of the Royal Artillery at Nowgong, East India, we wanted a waiter for the sergeants' mess. Among the applicants was a native Christian, whom we engaged. After he had been with us a few days we found him smoking a sergeant's pipe. The owner remonstrated with him for taking such a liberty, whereupon the Christian waiter coolly pointed towards the cook and said in broken English, 'Sir, I am not like that black — there. I am like you. I smoke, get drunk, swear, and fight the same as you do. I am a Christian.'"

MR. W. J. HARRIS writing in the *Economist* on the cost of our food supplies says: "The laborers that are driven from the soil of England to the towns may, for the moment gain in weekly wages but they also come under the influence of flaring gin-palaces, infidel thought, and vice of all kinds." The connection of infidel thought with gin-palaces and vice of all kinds may be apparent to Mr. Harris's mind, but to those who know anything of what "infidel thought" is, it betrays such "slipshodity" of mind that we wonder at such a sentence appearing in a journal of standing like the *Economist*. It certainly could not have appeared when that paper was under the leadership of Walter Bagehot.

At the annual re-union of Roman Catholics in the Mechanics' Hall, Nottingham, the Rev. Bernard Vaughan gave a special address on Faith and Reason. According to this Jesuit, faith is the most reasonable thing in the world, but as he defines faith as "belief in the authority of another," it is very evident that he has a peculiar view of what is reasonable. When men accept the authority of the Church it is natural for a priest to think them perfectly reasonable, but when the Church plunders and oppresses them, the people are apt to become unreasonable and to do their own thinking for themselves.

MARTIN DOYLE, a Dublin laborer, committed suicide by cutting and stabbing himself in more than fifty places with broken glass and tenpenny nails. He was a temperate man, but is said to have suffered from religious mania. Talmage please note.

PARSON DIGGLE, chairman of the London School Board, lectures this afternoon (Feb. 27) at St. Andrew's Hall, Cambridge Road, E., on "Religious Education." Working men are invited and discussion is allowed. The lecture begins at 4.15, and we hope some of our East end friends will attend to show Parson Diggle that religious education is not so popular as he fancies.

"MARIA," said the preacher, Saturday afternoon, after having read his sermon aloud to her, "what do you think of it? Have I not portrayed the evils of Sunday newspapers in a way that must affect the congregation?" "Indeed you have, John," was the reply. "I thought so," said the preacher, "I feel that in this sermon I have fully demonstrated the iniquity of Sunday publications. I trust there will be a large congregation to-morrow. By the way, Maria, did you attend to mailing the notice of my sermon and its subject to all the newspapers, so that it will appear in the morning?" She said she had attended to it.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 27, Friendly and Trade Societies' Hall, Northumberland Street, Huddersfield; at 11, "Where is God?" at 3, "Bible Blunders;" at 6.30, "Is Socialism Sound?"

MARCH 6, Cardiff; 9, Maidstone; 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.—W. Schweizer.

J. RUTHERFORD.—Many thanks. See "Acid Drops."

W. BARROW.—Thanks for the cuttings.

S. PERREN, 81 Hither Green Lane, Lewisham, will be glad to hear from any Secularists in the neighborhood, with a view to forming a Branch of the N.S.S.

A. BACON.—You should have a little pity for the parsons. Some of them, at least, are sick of the nonsense they have to preach, and would be glad to "turn it up" if they could do so without dragging their wives and families into misery.

H. ALLCARD, who says he is not a Socialist, also says he cannot conceive how an honest Freethinker can oppose Socialism. H. Allcard's powers of conception are obviously limited.

J. COWLING.—Your questions cannot be answered this side of the grave.

G. W. DAVEY wishes to know where he can obtain Freethought literature in West Hartlepool.

W. COOKE.—Your order was handed to Mr. Forder. We constantly warn our readers not to send orders to us. It causes trouble and delay.

W. LEEKEY.—We are obliged.

J. COLE.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

H. W. RILEY asks us to announce that a special meeting of the Leeds Freethinkers will be held this evening (Feb. 22) at 7 o'clock, at Parker's Temperance Hotel, Briggate, to consider the case of Mrs. Smith, widow of the late Secular newsagent, who is in deep distress and needs assistance.

J. CASPAR.—Your letter will be useful. Thanks.

A. HENWOOD.—We are quite aware that there are societies for the protection of women and children, but there is no society which bears the specific name which was given. Glad to hear that your friend in the police takes a common-sense view of the case. We believe Mr. Symes will not return to England. He is doing quite as much good for the cause out in Australia and more for himself.

HUMANITAS.—Unavoidably postponed till next week.

H. H.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

J. TEMPLE.—Received with thanks. We hope there will be an improvement at South Place Institute.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Southport Guardian—Tit-Bits—Western Figaro—Pudsey District Advertiser—Liberator—Boston Investigator—Menschenthum—Jus—Evening Express—Thinker—Vigilance Record—Independent Pulpit—Fair Trade—Hereford Times—Sunderland Echo—Liverpool Daily Post—Birmingham Post.

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.

THE March number of *Progress* contains the second part of Mr. Foote's review of Mr. Cotter Morison's remarkable book, *The Service of Man*, and a reply by Mr. W. P. Ball to Mr. J. Leatham's Socialistic essay which began in the February number. Mr. Wheeler contributes a very interesting article on "A Bible Community."

THE instalment of Brief Freethought Biographies in the March number will be specially interesting, comprising among others Anthony Collins, Auguste Comte, Condorcet, Confucius, Shaftesbury, Robert Cooper, Thomas Cooper the American, James Cranbrook, etc.

WE are glad to see that Mr. Courtney Kenny has re-introduced his Religious Prosecutions Abolition Bill. But we regret that he has damaged it by the introduction of a fresh clause from the Indian Code, which runs as follows: "Provided moreover that any person who, with the intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person or persons, shall in any public place utter any word or make any gesture, or exhibit any object within the hearing or sight of any person or persons whose religious feelings are likely to be thereby wounded, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor; and on being convicted thereof, shall be liable to fine or imprisonment, or both as the court may award, such imprisonment not to exceed the term of one year."

THIS clause may be useful in India, where rabid religionists have to be kept in order, but if enacted here it would be tantamount to a new Blasphemy Law under the guise of toleration. What is a public place? Would a lecture hall come under the definition if a bigot sat on the bench and directed the jury? All our outdoor lecturers would be liable to prosecution, and one year's imprisonment for wounding people's feelings. Every news-agent who exhibited a Freethought paper in his window would be liable to the same punishment. Mr. Courtney Kenny has been very ill advised in introducing this clause. It is so mischievous in its probable results that no Bill at all would be better than the Bill as it stands. We want the Blasphemy Laws abolished altogether and not re-enacted in a form that may give a fresh impetus to persecution. The existing law as to breaches of the peace is quite sufficient to provide against heretical sects making themselves a nuisance. If Mr. Kenny is aiming simply at that his clause is superfluous; if he is aiming at more than that he should plainly say so. Freethinkers will not petition for fresh chains to be made out of old ones.

EVEN the Unitarian *Inquirer* says that Mr. Kenny's fresh clause is "an absurd limitation of free speech, and might be applied by many a Unitarian and by some Trinitarians to the sermons, speeches and placards of bitter controversial opponents." We are pleased to see that the *Inquirer* earnestly hopes "that the British and Foreign Unitarian Association will take stronger and more decided action in reference to this Bill than its Council did on a former occasion."

WE have received a full report of the Sydney Conference of the Australasian Freethinkers. The discussion appears to have ranged over a great variety of topics, but on the whole the proceedings were of a practical character. We observe that Mr. W. W. Collins, who met with a warm reception, is referred to as "just returned from his wedding tour."

AN American gentleman who was pestered for a subscription to foreign missions at last gave a dollar and a cent. On being asked what the cent was for, he replied, "Well, the cent is for the blooming heathen, and the dollar is to take it to them."

WITH the February number, which lies before us, the *Independent Pulpit*, a thoroughly Freethought magazine, edited by J. D. Shaw, of Waco, Texas, completes its fourth year. The articles are all interesting and well written. The present number reprints Mr. Wheeler's article, "Was God Born?" from the *Freethinker*.

THE Sunderland Secular Society has resolved to become a Branch of the N. S. S., a course advised by Mr. Foote on his recent visit to the town. We wish the Branch all success. It has started well, and may it go on conquering and to conquer.

A PARAGRAPH in last week's *Literary World* states that the bones of Thomas Paine, which were brought from America to England by William Cobbett, were in 1849 in a box in the cellar of a house at Guildford. We have, however, recently read in the *Boston Investigator* a statement by a friend of the family into whose possession the relics fell, that they were buried near Liverpool. But it does not much matter where Paine's bones are. His works remain and will remain when the last vestige of his skeleton has crumbled into dust.

SOME RELIGIOUS STORIES.

CHRISTIANS in all ages have provided an abundance of cheerful tales of sudden deaths or miraculous blessings for the consolation and instruction of mankind. I beg to add to their stock a few more solemn examples of God's marvellous dealings with his friends and enemies. As no copyright will be reserved, any religious society that chooses will be free to print the stories in their columns or as leaflets for circulation. The *Christian Herald* will not need to copy, as its pages are already well supplied with similar incidents almost as authentic and quite as edifying as any that my unpractised imagination is likely to frame.

In presenting these deliberate inventions to a pious public, I humbly apologise for the totally unnecessary and somewhat degrading solecism of having founded some of them on fact. I trust that this circumstance, though casting reflections on so many of my Christian competitors in the art of lying for the glory of God, will not prevent the admission of my anecdotes to the Christian story books and penny dreadfuls designed for "the masses"—or "them asses," as I once saw it printed through a suggestive typographical error in spacing the letters. I also apologise for the evident lack of originality, but, as my anecdotes are

more or less based upon some of the solemn verities of the Christian fiction of the day, the want of absolute novelty should be a great recommendation in the eyes of saints. Imitating a prominent standing notice in the *Christian Herald*, I will conclude my introduction by requesting the prayers of the readers of this journal for the success of these pious stories, and that the circulation of this journal may be blessed by the Holy Spirit to the conversion of many sinners and the quickening of God's people.

NO. 1.—THE SABBATH-BREAKER.

The Rev. Ebenezer Jolliboy taught his congregation that of the ten greatest moral commands on earth, one of the most important was that of keeping holy the seventh day. But the hypocrite broke it himself. He pretended that man could alter God's commands, and so could desecrate the holy Saturday as he pleased, working or idly amusing himself on the day on which his God rested and was refreshed, and hence made holy for ever after. But God forgets not, though he often delays his judgments. One Saturday this black-robed Sabbath-breaker sat in his library reading *Punch* and sipping an unholy liquid vulgarly known by the same unseemly designation. He laughed upon that holy day. The cup of wrath was full to overflowing. The angel of death was in the room and he knew it not. With that laugh upon his lips he fell, and spoke no more. God was no longer mocked. Doth he not say of those that forget his words and pervert his commands: "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion" (Hosea xiii., 7, 8). God is more to be dreaded than the cruellest wild beast. Death and destruction are in his hands. Let our clergymen take heed lest like shrieking and dismay invade their households too.

The physician ascribed the minister's death to heart disease, but Christians know better. It is God who does everything. So well known is it that God always pays the wages of death to those who break his commands that the insurance office refused to pay a penny to his widow on the obvious ground that he had virtually committed suicide, a decision promptly confirmed by a jury composed of such readers of the *Christian Herald* as still remained outside Colney Hatch.

This is far from being an isolated instance of the awful effect of breaking God's fourth commandment. Mark this solemn and instructive fact. The enormous proportion of one out of seven among the clergy die on the holy day they profane and an equal number upon the day on which they mock the Almighty with a pretence of sanctity which he never gave it! Many thousands of the presumptuous misleaders of God's people thus suffer under his righteous judgments, and millions of the mockers and desecrators whom they betray unto their ruin. Nearly one-third of the unfaithful shepherds and one-third of their sheep fall victims to their God's just will on the days of desecration and mockery. No cavilling can upset these undoubted facts. The Registrar-General himself must confirm them as beyond the possibility of serious contradiction or attack. And yet the miserable pervertors of God's Word will not take warning and amend their ways. They laugh God's terrors to scorn. But in the day to come God will laugh their calamity to scorn. Take heed while yet there is time. Follow God's plain words rather than man's perversions of them, and all will yet be well with you. Keep his holy Saturday and stone to death all witches and Sabbath-breakers as he commanded you, and heaven will be your portion. God's will, not man's must be your guide. And if you think well of these efforts of ours to help the Almighty, ask the Religious Tract Society to print this story as a leaflet for circulation among the heathen clergy of our native land.

NO. 2.—THE CHINAMAN'S PRAYER.

Ah-men was a rich merchant who dealt in rice and wheat. Influenced by the prognostications of an artful bonze who had grain to sell, he believed that the earth-goddess was angry at the ingratitude shown to her for the good harvests she had given, and that in revenge she would cause the next three crops to be total failures. Ah-men accordingly bought up all the rice and wheat he could, and borrowed

every cash he could upon all his property and from his friends to extend his purchases. But instead of growing dearer as he expected, grain continued to become cheaper, and the ripening harvest promised so well that his stores were not worth half what he gave for them. He could not pay the money he owed, nor even the prodigious interest upon it. He was on the brink of ruin, and was expecting every moment to be sold as a slave to pay his creditors. The earth goddess, and the spirits of his ancestors, and heaven itself, treated his prayers with silent contempt. The false deities of the heathen rejoice at leading their votaries into trouble, but will not lead them out of it. In this despair he remembered that his latest and youngest wife prayed to the god of the foreign devils who came from over the sea and who occasionally bombarded their ports and invaded their country. She was a Christian, blessed fact, and in his despair he resolved to try Christianity too. He prayed to God. Mark the result. The very next day a hailstorm totally destroyed the harvests throughout all China. Grain rose enormously in price. Ah-men was saved. Ten million unbelieving heathen died in the subsequent famine, so thorough and so effective was God's response, but even this did not teach them to recognise the finger of God. What heathen deity can answer prayer in this mighty fashion? Full of gratitude, Ah-men privately embraced Christianity. He divorced his old wives, discarded their pagan children, and elevated his young Christian wife to the supremacy in his household.

W. P. BALL.

BIRTH OF CHRIST.

THE following is a copy of a piece of newspaper that has come into our possession, having no doubt got out of the attraction of some planet—perhaps Mars—and fluttered down to this earth. It bears the same stamp of authenticity as our Gospels, being written in ancient Greek, a language we suppose the Martians have wonderful knowledge of. It is not dated, nor has it any editorial signature. But we print it for what it is worth, having, with the assistance of our printer's devil, made the following translation:

The Picalilly Gazette.

Extra Special Sunday Night Edition.

BIRTH OF CHRIST!

The birth of the Savior took place at the stables of the Tramway Company this morning, at 13 minutes $3\frac{1}{4}$ seconds past 2, as per Dr. Gullio's report; time taken by Dentson's patent chronograph.

Special editions will be printed continuously and as fast as our patent multiplying machine can produce them.

Her Imperial Majesty the Queen of Bumbleland has volunteered for office of wet nurse.

No divorce cases being on, the ladies of the court are now busy on the swaddling clothes.

The King of Perooshia, together with the Kings of Kerusha and Donkestria, have started from their respective kingdoms with presents for the babe, by the East Star Overland Route, Pullman cars being provided.

JOSEPH INTERVIEWED.—Joseph busy on wooden cradle for Christ, his Royal Highness the Prince of Bumbleland assisting.

His Royal Highness the Duke of Nedlyburrow has played a special sonata on his violin as a sedative for the illustrious stranger.

3 A.M.—The infant Christ has taken his first sustenance and wept copiously.

4 A.M.—The divine child has sucked his thumb and attempted to swallow his fist.

5 A.M.—Christ has again partaken of lacteal nourishment, and, feeling strong, has kicked his Virgin Mother. His legs are very prettily mottled.

6 A.M.—The Archbishop of Galopbury was carried exhausted from the stable, having been uttering benedictions for four hours. His salary will be raised.

7 A.M.—Envoys extraordinary have left Bumbleland to procure water from the River Jawlong, to souse the blessed baby in. Due notification of the christening will be found in our columns shortly.

Our readers may be sure our whole staff of reporters will be engaged on this interesting event, and——

Here the fragment ends, the remainder no doubt having been worn away by attrition.

ONE of the candidates for confirmation at a bishop's visitation on being asked by the clergyman to whom she applied for her certificate of qualification what her godfathers and godmothers promised for her, said with much *naïveté*: "I've a yearn that they promised to give me hafe-a-dozen silver spoons, but I 'av never had 'em though."

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER.

OUR Father who in heaven dost hold thy sway,
Teach us to fall upon our knees and pray;
Teach us to cadge, teach us to grumble too,
And let the lies concerning thee be true.

And hallowed be thy name, for it is cheap,
To bounce infinity, and we are deep
To be upon thy side if thou art blessed,
With all the kingdoms thou art thought possessed.

Thy kingdom come, if not already here,
Find us a home away from work and fear,
And those that don't believe in what we tell
Find them a corner in the lowest hell.

Thy will on earth as it in heaven is done—
Of course we cannot stop it if begun;
And if we do impede in any way
Then thou wilt make it square on Judgment Day.

Give us this day our daily bread, poor souls!
We all should be with thee if not for rolls;
Yet when the rolls have left our happy care,
We ne'er forget to beg for more in prayer.

Forgive our trespasses, as we, you know,
Forgive those who forgive us what we owe.
This is a yarn, good Lord, you tell a few,
And, as a yarn, we skip it, so we do.

Deliver us from evil: We don't sin;
We say this just at infidels grin.
We scoff them, curse them, flagellate them—kill;
Our only plea, "Deliver us from ill."

Lead us not into sin. You never do;
We're always godlike, peaceful, good and true;
We always fight for Jesus 'neath the cross,
And do not care about Old Nick a toss.

For thine is the kingdom—that you needn't say;
We love to think we'll have a piece some day.
And so that we obtain all that we please,
Satan can take our brethren at his ease.

The power, the glory too, are ever thine,
And if in heav'n a zealot wants to shine,
Do thou not let him take too bold a lead—
Keep him beneath thy power and curb his speed.

Amen, good Lord, and answer this our prayer;
Curse those in freedom's name who ever dare
Raise e'en a limb against thy holy law,
Or shall dispute thee—make against thee war.

So give us all we want and all we name,
And send what we forget along the same;
Curse all our enemies, let us live free,
And we will give the glory all to thee.

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS.

HEBREW PROPHEETS.—"To play the *Nābi*" [prophet] apparently meant to sing, dance, and violently gesticulate—so violently indeed that the verb *nābā* is used of madness and excited raving. In a well-known passage of Hebrew story this violence of gesticulation is very prominently brought out. Saul has sent messengers to seize David at Naioth, a centre of *Nābi* culture, and the king's messengers, thrice sent, have been infected by the spirit of the place and joined in the sacred festival. "Then Shāūl himself went to the high place and came to the large well that is by the hill, and asked 'Where are Shemūel and Dāvid?' Men said, 'Yonder in Nāyōth, at the high place. So he went thither to the high place at Nāyōth; and even on him came the spirit of God, and, as he walked on, he acted the *Nābi*, and fell down naked before Shemūel all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Shāūl also among the *Nābis*?' (1 Sam. xxi., 22; Ps. xcix., 6). Perhaps the latest survival of the violent gesticulation with which the *Nābi*'s name and worship had been associated among the early "sons of Israel" is to be seen in the symbolical action of later *Nābis*, as when Ezekiel takes a tile and portrays upon it the beleaguered city of Jerusalem.—Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, *Comparative Literature*, pp. 125-126.

O B I T U A R Y.

WE deeply regret to chronicle the early death of Philip Bourke Marston, son of Dr. Westland Marston the dramatist, and himself (although totally blind) a poet of no mean abilities. Mr. Marston was a friend of the late Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and also of the late James Thomson, near whose grave in Highgate cemetery he was buried last week in unconsecrated ground and without other service than a few words from a friend.

DAVID COLVILLE, eldest son of the president of the Ball's Pond Branch N.S.S., was interred at the West Ham cemetery on the 17th inst. Mr. F. Haslam read the Secular burial service, and some Christians who heard it for the first time were greatly pleased with it. David Colville was a very promising boy, and is sincerely mourned by his relatives and friends.

A CAUTION FROM THE OLD ONE.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—I have put up with a good deal from yourself [and took it out in gaol and fire], but I must protest against those Random Notes from my son Christ with which you have for some time past been indulging your readers. Not content with having, from his original position of strict subordination to myself, the Pater, managed to creep along to my right hand side on terms of perfect equality, he for a long time past has managed to draw more attention to himself and the lady I did the honor to make his virgin mother than to myself. It is true the young rascal when on earth taught people to address themselves to me, but I find that he and his no longer handsome mother get three-fourths of the prayers and nearly all the praises. And now in my old age, when I must shortly look forward to that dissolution from which neither gods nor men are exempt, I find myself irreverently referred to as a stupid, senile dad, constantly getting up incarnations on the wrong planet. Just stop it, or you'll find out I am still the same old Jahveh. (Signed) יהוה

At a negro wedding, when the minister read the words "love honor and obey," the groom interrupted him and said: "Read dat agin' sah; read it wunce mo,' so de lady kin ketch de full solemnly of de meanin'. I'se been married befo'."

ROGERS, the poet-banker, once said: "If I were compelled to make a choice, I would not hesitate to prefer despotism to anarchy." "Then you would do," replied Horne Tooke, "just as our ancestors did in the days of reformation, they rejected purgatory and kept hell."

"THERE is a good deal of religion in nature," solemnly remarked a young Aberdeen clergyman while calling upon a lady of his congregation the other evening. "There is," was the quiet reply. "We should never forget that there is a sermon in every blade of grass." "Quite true; and we should also remember that grass is cut very short sometimes."

THE depths of wickedness to which even a Quaker child can sink almost makes one believe in the doctrine of total depravity. Two little Quakers quarrelled, and, after saying words at each other, one of them in a tremendous burst of rage, with clenched fists and blazing eyes, shouted: "Thee's you." The other boy looked at him in horrified silence. Then he solemnly said: "I shall go and tell mother that thee swore."

A LITTLE Magazine street girl asked her mother the other day how it was that Adam and Eve came to leave the Garden of Eden, and was told that the devil entered the garden in the form of a serpent and tempted them, and God banished them. The little child pondered over the reply for a few moments, and then looking up said: "Mamma, why didn't God send the devil away instead of Adam and Eve? They were in the garden first."

ECCLESIASTICAL WASHING.—Dr. Irons once announced to his congregation that during the next month they would be at liberty to attend any other place of worship they might choose, as his church was to undergo repairs. "I can, however," said the doctor, "recommend a course that should be salutary to many of you. If you wish to be washed, the pastor at the adjacent Baptist Bethel is noted for his skill; should you desire to be dried, sit under the Primitive minister, who, they say, is dry enough; when you want to be starched, attend the Ritualist Church, where the priest is sufficiently stiff and formal; and then," continued Dr. Irons, "come to me and I'll iron you!"

HE is a priest, and one Friday he had been giving his congregation a rasping gallop over the mortification and flesh course. Arrived at home, hungry as a wolf, he rang the bell for luncheon, and anon the new servant made her appearance, and weighed in with a small plate of bread and butter, and two hard-boiled eggs. "Why, how now, Bridget," inquired the holy man, "is this a fitting meal to set before your master?" "If you please, sir," said the girl, "I was in chapel this morning and heard your sermon, and oh! it was beautiful, and you told us how we ought to starve ourselves on a Friday, and—" "Bridget," interrupted her master, "did you ever go to a dancing party?" "Yes, your reverence." "And you have observed the guests figuring on the floor, whilst up above sit the orchestra, who play the music for the others to dance to?" "Yes, your reverence." "Very well, then, Bridget, recollect in the future that I am the orchestra."

MRS. JOBLINK'S EXPERIENCE.—"When I first jined the church," said a matron, as she leaned out of the window, speaking to a younger and a severer-looking female, "I had just them kind of notions myself. But I got more light as I grew older." "But, Mrs. Joblink," said the other, "duty is duty, and each must act out his mission." "Yes," rejoined Mrs. Joblink, patronisingly, "that's jest the way I used to feel till I got married. When you have a husband comin' home o' nights an' fallin' up stairs, you won't think the Lord requires so much of you. I used to pray for Joblink till he started to make a stump speech to the hat rack at three o'clock in the mornin', an' then I got more light. The Lord helps them as helps themselves; an' I find now that a metal-backed hair-brush does better with Joblink than all the prayers you can shake a stick at! You'll see when you get married." The young lady sighed, and inquired if there were any poor people in the neighborhood who would be benefited by a tract on "The Sin of Dancing?"

PROFANE JOKES.

THE new baby had proved itself the possessor of extraordinary vocal powers, and had exercised them much to Johnny's annoyance. One day he said to his mother: "Ma" little brother came from Heaven, didn't he?" "Yes dear." Johnny was silent for some time, and then he went on: "Say, ma." "What is it, Johnny?" "I don't blame the angels for bouncing him on to us, do you?"

A MINISTER was sent South from New Jersey a few years ago to labor among the colored people. They received him with many demonstrations of joy, and at the first meeting which he held one colored preacher prayed for him with great earnestness thus: "O Lord! Bless dis yer dear brudder what's come down from the Norf to preach de gosp 1 to us. 'Noint him with the kerosene ile of salvashin, and set him on fire."

CLERGYMAN: "I was disappointed not to see you at prayer-meeting last evening." Deacon: "I wanted to come; but, you see, we are having a clearing-out sale, and we kept the store open until ten o'clock." Clergyman (sadly): "Ah, my friend, I am sorry to see you try to serve heaven and mammon at the same time." Deacon: "I don't try. I never think of serving heaven in my store. I am not the man to mix my religion with business."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL COMPANY (Limited).

Registered Offices: 20 KENNEDY STREET, MANCHESTER.

PURCHASE OF HALL.

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

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

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

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

GEORGE PAYNE, Hon. Sec.

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

Ready early in March.

IS SOCIALISM SOUND?

A VERBATIM REPORT (Revised by both Disputants)

OF THE FOUR NIGHTS' PUBLIC DEBATE

BETWEEN Mrs. BESANT & MR. FOOTE.

Cheap Edition, in paper covers ... 1/-
Best edition, printed on superior paper and bound in cloth ... 2/-

Orders should be sent to Mr. Forder in advance to secure an early supply.

Progressive Publishing Co., 28 Stonecutter St., E.O.

PAMPHLETS by ARTHUR B. MOSS.

ONE PENNY EACH.

Bible Horrors, or Real Blasphemy.
Emphatically the best pamphlet to put into the hands of sensitive Christians!

Bible Saints. When you have read this pamphlet you will probably exclaim, "A man may smile, and smile and be a villain." Or, "O most upright judge; some Jews have come to judgment."

Man and the Lower Animals. This pamphlet demonstrates that the lower animals think and reason, and that some of them possess powers approaching those of man.

NOW READY.
SALADIN THE LITTLE

BY T. EVAN JACOB, B.A.

TWOPENCE.

R. FORDER, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C.

NOW READY. NOW READY.
Colonel Ingersoll's
GRAND NEW LECTURE

SOCIAL SALVATION

Sixteen Pages. Price One Penny.

"Brilliantly trenchant style."—Commonweal.

Progressive Publishing Co., 28 Stonecutter St.

NOW READY. NOW READY.

New Edition of

THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD

By G. W. FOOTE.

With the facts and figures brought up to date and comments on the military condition of Europe and the prospects of peace.

WHAT THE PRESS SAID OF THE FIRST EDITION.

"Aby written... The author deserves thanks for this timely publication."—*Echo*.
"A trenchant exposure of the folly of war, which everyone should read."—*Weekly Times*.
"A wonderfully eloquent denunciation of the war fever."—*Birmingham Outlook*.
"Presents us with some startling truths that are well worth preserving."—*The People* (Wexford).

PRICE TWOPENCE.

BIBLE ABSURDITIES

PART II. OF THE

BIBLE HANDBOOK FOR FREETHINKERS AND INQUIRING CHRISTIANS.

Edited by

G. W. FOOTE & W. P. BALL.

Containing all the chief absurdities from Genesis to Revelation, conveniently and strikingly arranged, with appropriate headlines, giving the point of each absurdity in a sentence.

In Wrapper, price Fourpence.

ALSO

BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

Price Fourpence.

PRINTED IN PARALLEL COLUMNS.

LETTERS TO JESUS CHRIST.

On his Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Miracles.

By G. W. FOOTE.

In Neat Wrapper. Price Fourpence.

SECOND EDITION.

WAS JESUS INSANE? By G. W. FOOTE. A Searching Inquiry into the Mental Condition of the Prophet of Nazareth—an Important and much-neglected subject. One Penny.

COLONEL INGERSOLL'S LATEST LECTURES.

Myth and Miracle - - - 1d.

(Full of Poetry.)

Live Topics - - - 1d.

(Full of Points.)

Real Blasphemy - - - 1d.

SECULAR SCHOOLS, FAILSWORTH.

THE COMMITTEE intend holding a BAZAAR in aid of debt (£300), at Easter next. Since the erection of the Schools in 1880 the members have raised about £430 towards the school expenses and reduction of debt. In making this appeal towards an extinction of the debt we should thankfully accept any contributions which may be sent.—H. Taylor, Secular Schools, Failsforth, Manchester.

Just Published. Fancy Wrapper. 176pp. Price 1s. THE PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH ARISTOCRACY. By GEORGE STANBRIDGE, editor of the *Radical*.—Progressive Publishing Co., 28 Stonecutter Street.

N. S. S. SOCIAL GATHERING.

MARCH 3RD.

The tickets are now on sale, price 4d. each, and may be obtained from the secretaries of London Branches, or Mr. R. O. Smith, at the Hall of Science.

Price Threepence.

PROGRESS

THE Freethinker's Magazine, EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

The MARCH Number contains

God and Humanity. By G. W. Foote.
Sarpalus of Mardon. By James Thomson (B. V.)
A Bible Community. By J. M. Wheeler.
The New Sociology. By James Leatham.
The "New Sociology Criticised." By W. P. Ball.
Brief Freethought Biographies. By J. M. Wheeler

BIBLE HEROES

A NEW WORK

By G. W. FOOTE.

No. 1.—MR. ADAM.

No. 2.—CAPTAIN NOAH.

PRICE ONE PENNY EACH.

Nos III. and IV. will be ready on March 1.

SOME MISTAKES OF MOSES.

By R. G. INGERSOLL.

The only Complete Edition published in England; faithfully reprinted from the Author's American Edition. Accurate as Colenso and fascinating as a novel. Destined to hold a permanent place in Freethought literature.

WITH A BRIEF INTRODUCTION BY G. W. FOOTE.

A Handsome Volume of 136 pp.

Paper Covers, 1s. Bound in cloth, 1s. 6d.

W. J. RENDELL,
CHEMIST AND DRUGGIST,
26 GT. BATH ST., CLERKENWELL,
LONDON, E.C.

Drugs and Chemicals, Surgical Appliances, Patent Medicines, etc.

Particulars of a Malthusian discovery sent on receipt of stamped directed envelope.

Orders by Post promptly executed.

TO FREETHINKERS.

A TRIAL SOLICITED. BEST STYLE, FIT & WEAR.

H. HAMPTON,
TAILOR, 14 Gt. Castle Street, W.
(A few doors from Regent Circus)

Post Free for One Shilling

SHORTHAND WITHOUT COMPLICATIONS.
New Phonetic System, by A. JANES, Parliamentary Reporter. The only simple and easy phonetic method. No other book required. Address A. Janes, 5 Crofton Road, Camberwell, London, S.E.

RUBBER STAMPS.

National Secular Society Monogram 1 0
Any two-letter Monogram 1 0
Name in full 1 4
Postage to any part of England 2d. extra. Agents Wanted.

IRETON AND CO 92 GRACECHURCH ST., E.O.



THWAITES' LIVER PILLS are acknowledged to be the best Family Medicine in the World by the many thousands that are using them in preference to all others. It is almost impossible to enumerate in an advertisement what they are good for; it would take up too much of your time to read it, and after you had read it you might say it was only advertising puff; but I ask One Trial of the LIVER PILLS; if not better than any you have tried before, I cannot expect a continuance of your custom. I recommend them for Indigestion, Loss of Appetite, Dizziness, Nervousness, Biliousness, Costiveness, Palpitation of the Heart, Piles, etc., all of which are, in many cases, caused by the Liver being inactive, or what we call a sluggish liver. Try some of the LIVER PILLS as soon as you can, as they are PURE HERB PILLS, and may be used at any time by anyone without any change of diet or danger of taking a cold. Prepared only by GEORGE THWAITES, 2 Church Row, Stockton-on-Tees. Sold at 1s. 1 1/2d. and 2s. 9d. per box, or by post for 1s or 3s Penny Stamps. A Price List of Herbs free.

Printed and Published by G. W. FOOTE, at 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.