

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



A STERN ASPECT.

“And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts.”—EXODUS XXXIII., 23.

INFIDEL HOMES.*

JOHN WESLEY was a man of considerable force of mind and singular strength of character. But he was very unfortunate, to say the least of it, in his relations with women. His marriage was a deplorable *misunion*, and his latest biographer, who aims at presenting a faithful picture of the founder of Wesleyanism, has to dwell very largely on his domestic miseries. Wesley held patriarchal views on household matters, the proper subordination of the wife being a prime article of his faith. Mrs. Wesley, however, entertained different views. She is therefore described as a frightful shrew, and rated for her inordinate jealousy, although her husband's attentions to other ladies certainly gave her many provocations.

In face of these facts, it might naturally be thought that Wesleyans would say as little as possible about the domestic infelicities of Freethinkers. But Mr. Watkinson is not to be restrained by any such consideration. Although a Wesleyan (as we understand) he challenges comparisons on this point. He has read the biographies and autobiographies of several “leading Freethinkers,” and he invites

the world to witness how selfish and sensual they were in their domestic relations. He is a pulpit rhetorician, so he goes boldly and recklessly to work. Subtlety and discrimination he abhors as pedantic vices, savoring too much of “culture.” His judgments are of the robustious order. Like Jesus Christ, he fancies that all men can be divided into sheep and goats. The good are good, and the bad are bad. And naturally the good are Christians and the bad are Freethinkers.

The first half of Mr. Watkinson's book of 162 pages (it must have been a pretty long lecture!) is a preface to the second half, which contains his sling at Goethe, Mill, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, Carlyle, and other offenders against the Watkinsonian code. We think it advisable, therefore, to follow him through his preface first, and through his “charges” afterwards.

Embedded in a lot of obscure or questionable matter in Mr. Watkinson's exordium is this sentence—“What we believe with our whole heart is of the highest consequence to us.” True, but whether it is of the highest consequence to other people depends on what it is. Conviction is a good thing, but it cannot dispense with the criterion of truth. On the other hand, what passes for conviction may often be mere acquiescence. That term, we believe, would accurately describe the creed of ninety-nine out of every hundred, in every part of the world, whose particular faith

* *The Influence of Scepticism on Character.* Being the sixteenth Fernley Lecture. By the Rev. William L. Watkinson. London: T. Woolmer.

is merely the result of the geographical accident of their birth. Assuredly we do not agree with Mr. Watkinson that "all reasonable people will acknowledge that the faith of Christian believers is to a considerable extent most real; nay, in tens of thousands of cases it is the most real thing in their life." Mr. Cotter Morison laboriously refutes this position in his fine volume on *The Service of Man*. Mill denied and derided it in a famous passage of his great essay *On Liberty*. Mr. Justice Stephen denies it in the *Nineteenth Century*. Carlyle also, according to Mr. Froude, said that "religion as it existed in England had ceased to operate all over the conduct of men in their ordinary business, it was a hollow appearance, a word without force in it." These men may not be "reasonable" in Mr. Watkinson's judgment, but with most people their word carries a greater weight than his.

Mr. Watkinson contends—and what will not a preacher contend?—that "the denial of the great truths of the Evangelical faith can exert only a baneful influence on character." We quite agree with him. But evangelicalism, and the great truths of evangelicalism, are very different things. It is dangerous to deny any "great truth," but how many does evangelicalism possess? Mr. Watkinson would say "many." We should say "none." Still less, if that were possible, should we assent to his statement that "morals in all spheres and manifestations must suffer deeply by the prevalence of scepticism." Mr. Morison, whose book we have reviewed at great length in *Progress*, asserts and proves that this sceptical age is the most moral the world has seen, and that as we go back into the Ages of Faith vice and crime grow denser and darker. If the appeal is to history, of which Mr. Watkinson's references do not betray a profound knowledge, the verdict will be dead against him.

Mr. Justice Stephen thinks morality can look after itself, but he doubts whether "Christian charity" will survive "Christian theology." This furnishes Mr. Watkinson with a sufficient theme for an impressive sermon. But his notion of "Christian charity" and Mr. Justice Stephen's are very different. The hard-headed judge means the sentimentalism and "pathetic exaggerations" of the Sermon on the Mount, which he has since distinctly said would destroy society if they were fully practised. "Morality," says Mr. Watkinson, "would suffer on the mystical side." Perhaps so. It might be no longer possible for a Louis the Fifteenth to ask God's blessing when he went to debauch a young girl in the *Parc aux Cerfs*, or for a grave philosopher like Mr. Tylor to write in his *Anthropology* that "in Europe brigands are notoriously church-goers." Yet morality might gain as much on the practical side as it lost on the mystical, and we fancy mankind would profit by the change.

Now for Mr. Watkinson's history, which he prints in small capitals, probably to show it is the real, unadulterated article. He tells us that "the experiment of a nation living practically a purely secular life has been tried more than once" with disastrous results. He is, however, very careful not to mention these nations, and we defy him to do so. What he does is this. He rushes off to Pompeii, whose inhabitants he thinks were Secularists! He also reminds us in a casual way that "they had crucified Christ a few years before," which again is news. Equally accurate is the statement that Pompeii was an "infamous" city, "full" of drunkenness, cruelty, etc. Probably Mr. Watkinson, like most good Christians who go to Pompeii, visited an establishment, such as we have thousands of in Christendom, devoted to the practical worship of Venus without neglecting Priapus. He has forgotten the immortal letter of Pliny, and the dead Roman sentinel at the post of duty. He acts like a foreigner who should describe London from his experience at a brothel.

Philosophy comes next. Mr. Watkinson puts in a superior way the clap-trap of Christian Evidence lectures. If man is purely material, and the law of causation is universal, where, he asks, "is the place for virtue, for praise, for blame?" Has Mr. Watkinson never read the answer to these questions? If he has not, he has much to learn. If he has, he should refute them. Merely positing and repositing an old question is a very stale trick in religious controversy. It imposes on some people, but they belong to the "mostly fools."

"Morality is in as much peril as faith," cries Mr. Watkinson. Well, the clergy have been crying that for two centuries, yet our criminal statistics lessen, society improves, and literature grows cleaner. As for the "nasty

nude figures" that offend Mr. Watkinson's eyes in the French Salon, we would remind him that God Almighty makes everybody naked, clothes being a human invention. With respect to the Shelley Society "representing the *Cenci* and other monstrous themes," we conclude that Mr. Watkinson does not know what he is talking about. There is incest in the *Cenci*, but it is treated in a high dramatic spirit as a frightful crime, ending in bloodshed and desolation. There is also incest in the Bible, commonplace, vulgar, bestial incest, recorded without a word of disapprobation. Surely when a Christian minister, who says the Bible is God's word, knowing it contains the beastly story of Lot and his daughters, cries out against Shelley's *Cenci* as "monstrous," he invites inextinguishable Rabelaisian laughter. No other reply is fitting for such a "monstrous" absurdity, and we leave our readers to shake their sides at Mr. Watkinson's expense.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

THE BIBLE AND SLAVERY.

I PROPOSE to maintain and illustrate the following propositions:—1st, That slavery is sanctioned by the Bible; 2nd, That it has been defended by the principal Christian Churches; 3rd, That it was not abolished by Christianity. My task is easy, but the subject is of sufficient importance to merit being treated at some length.

It might be contended that the Bible not only supports slavery but that divine sanction was given to its institution. In the ninth chapter of Genesis, verses 20 to the end, we have a graphic description of Noah getting so drunk as to expose his nakedness. This was bad enough; but it did not end there. One of his sons, Ham, seeing his condition, told his two brothers, Shem and Japhet, who took a cloth and walking backwards, covered their drunken father. When the sot awoke, instead of being ashamed of himself, he set to work to heartily bless Shem and Japhet and to bitterly curse Ham's son in these words: "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." Orthodox Christians say that Ham made game of his father, but in saying so they pretend to more knowledge than the Bible furnishes. But supposing it true, whose fault was it? If Noah had not got into that state the fault would not have been committed, and then instead of cursing the person guilty of the offence he, in accordance with biblical usage, places the punishment on the head of his innocent son. Yet this is esteemed by the orthodox as a divine prophetic drama, in which was clearly laid down the future position and condition of the descendants of Ham and Canaan in the history of the world. Christian evidence writers like Keith appeal to the fulfilment of this prophecy by the institution of slavery as a great argument for the truth of the Bible. The abolitionists were nullifiers of prophecy.

The Levitical law, falsely ascribed to Moses, enjoins slavery in the following terms:

"Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession.

And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession: they shall be your bondmen for ever" (Leviticus xxv., 45-46).

Even Hebrews might on certain conditions be enslaved, though on less rigorous terms (See Exodus xxi., 2-11). In the Ten Commandments, the binding force of which was recognised by Jesus, the man-servant, maid-servant, and wife are classed with the ox and ass as possessions of the master, and in a law which closely follows upon the Decalogue we read:

"And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall surely be punished.

Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money" (Exodus xxi., 20, 21).

This passage shows the meaning of the word "servant," and shows also that the "servants" were the mere "money" of their masters, so long as they were not murdered outright—a sentiment which fairly disgusted a Zulu whom Bishop Colenso was instructing in the beauties of the Bible.

When Jesus appeared slavery was general in every quarter of the world. He never commanded its abolition. He never boldly declared: Human bondage is degrading. It is contrary to human welfare. It curses labor, and corrupts leisure. It should be prohibited by the civil law.

Not a word did he say as to this state of degradation and misery to which one half of the human race was condemned. Not one word did he utter to change beasts of burden into citizens. On the contrary the whole tone of his doctrine was submission. Paul, too, emphatically endorsed the *status quo*.

"Let as many servants [δουλείας, i.e., slaves] as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor" (1 Tim. vi., 1).

"Servants [δούλοι], be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ" (Ephesians vi., 5).

Again to Titus he says:

"Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them in all things" (chap. ii., 9).

No doubt many think that in these passages by the term "servant" a hired person is referred to, at liberty at any time to leave his service. This is quite wrong. The word so translated is "δουλος," defined by Schleusner, Dunbar, Liddell and Scott, and all lexicographers, as "a slave, a bondman." The word is translated "bond" as opposed to "free" (1 Cor. xii. 13, Gal. iii., 28, Col. iii. 11, and Rev. vi. 15). There are separate and different words for "hired service." Ordinary working men were called *θητες*, or *πελα*. These were indigent citizens. *μισθιος* was also hired servant. By his language Paul shows he was no abolitionist but a supporter of the system of slavery. His conduct was consistent. He addressed a letter to Philemon, a slave-owner, sending back a fugitive slave named Onesimus, asking kind treatment, and saying, not that slavery was wrong in general and unbecoming a Christian in particular, but that "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that to my account." Paul was a great-hearted man, who in sending back Onesimus felt confident he would be well treated, but his conduct was certainly not that of John Brown of Harper's Ferry, and the other heroes who died that the slave might go free.

Peter is equally emphatic in enjoining a spirit of submission to servitude:

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Peter ii., 16).

In my next I shall show that slavery has been endorsed by the most prominent Christian Fathers, and practised and defended by all the foremost churches in Christendom.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

WARD BEECHER, the American divine, has gone hence and left his £5,000 a year and perquisites. When in Scotland last year Beecher in addressing a meeting of Scotch sky-pilots in Glasgow, told his brethren that the Americans were going to put up a headstone for Ingersoll when he died, and write the name of the great Scottish poet on it, "ROBERT BURNS." The devil-dodgers with their usual obtuseness didn't quite see the joke at first, but after several severe efforts it did dawn upon them, and they laughed sepulchraly. "Colonel Bob" deserves the epitaph, for he has burned and continues to burn to the blistering point the whole American preaching fraternity, Beecher included. As poor B. has "gone before" Ingersoll however, perhaps he'll write and tell us how he likes it.

A SCRUPULOUS witness at Brighton the other day refused to kiss the book because he had not taken his glove off as is the usual practice. What peculiar sanctity is added by the ungloving of the hand is not explained. The Court, however, let the witness have his own way and waited till he had made the oath duly binding on his conscience by removing his hand-shoe as the Germans call it.

FRIENDS of Jesus will rejoice to know that Mrs. Berry, who poisoned her child and her mother, was pious to the last. As she will be saved by her faith, what matters her crime? She wrote that she was "at peace and in full submission to God." She has gone straight to heaven by express with a first-class ticket printed in the blood of Jesus. In heaven she will join the redeemed murderers of all ages. Oh, what must it be to be there!

ACCORDING to the list in the *Daily News*, God has favored Italy with 280 serious earthquakes since the year 1400. The most disastrous ones on record occurred in the years 1169 at the foot of Mount Etna, with 15,000 victims; 1456 in the Neapolitan provinces, 30,000 victims; 1627 in the Province of Puglia, 4,000 victims; 1638 in Calabria, 9,600 victims; 1693 in Sicily, 93,000 victims; 1703 in Central Italy, 15,000 victims; 1783 in Calabria, 60,000 victims; 1805 in Terra di Lavoro, 6,000 victims; 1837 in Basilicata, 12,300 victims; 1885 in Ischia, 2,515. Praise God from whom these blessings flow.

A MILKMAN'S dog, finding his master buried in the ruins, scrape. I away sufficient to reach him and lick his wounds. Then, by dragging a passer-by to the spot by his skirts, he directed attention to his master, who was then dug out and recovered. Is not the Dog who saved his master a better-hearted being than the god who buried him?

SOME advanced Christians have come to believe that God has nothing to do with sending earthquakes, lightnings, fog, hail, snow or rain. Yet whenever the Bible speaks of these phenomena it always ascribes them to God. See, for instance, Deut. xi., 6-14; Lev. xxvi., 4; Isaiah xxix., 6; Ps. cxlvii., 8, etc.

THE Young Men's Christian Associations of Exeter Hall and Manchester have been holding a public contest in gymnastic exploits. The Exeter Hall Christians beat their Manchester brethren at the dumb-bell drill; but the Manchester Christians won in the high jumping and at the parallel bars. As all this is Christianity—muscular Christianity—and as Christianity is the imitation of Christ, we must suppose that Jesus and the apostles set the example of practising athletics. Fancy Jesus doing the high jump over a lath, Peter on the parallel bars, and Andrew and John having a bout with the boxing-gloves, with Jesus as umpire, and all the apostles presently doing the dumb-bell exercise. Paul, however, says that "Bodily exercise profiteth little."

CHRIST'S principal feats were walking on the sea with Peter tucked under his arm and getting off the pinnacle of the temple after fasting forty days as training. The athletic Christians of to-day don't attempt to imitate these feats. They prefer imitating easier feats which were not recorded. Neither do they trust to prayer for health and strength. They pray for health and strength with a pair of dumb-bells, in the secular fashion. Their ideal of life is altogether different from Christ's, and in their methods of action they repudiate the fundamental teachings of Christianity without knowing that they do so.

BISHOP TAYLOR, being strangely anxious that missionaries should not shoot as many natives as hitherto, has fitted up a hose and nozzle for repelling canoes by a stream of water like that which issues from a fire-engine. The *Christian Herald* calls this an application of Christian principles to warfare. But the Christian principle is to resist not evil and to turn the other cheek also. Knocking people down with a violent stream of water is not exactly turning the cheek also. We hope the water is not scalding hot from the boiler, as in the plan sometimes adopted for driving boarders off the deck of a steamship.

THE Anglo-Israel fanatics find that a "self-evident and undeniable proof of an early settlement of Israelitish tribes in the United Kingdom is afforded by names of towns." Everybody, for instance, they say, will agree that Dover is only a dialectical form of the Hebrew *Debir*, and that Edinburgh is obviously *Eden town*. London is *Lan-Dan*, the dwelling of Dan, so that London was inhabited by the Danites, or Danes, who also colonised Denmark. Sydenham is guessed at as the "home of the Sidonians." Bible fanatics can believe anything. They are trained in credulity and it is no wonder that the appetite thus created for fads and follies seizes on all manner of ridiculous theories.

ANOTHER spiritist "mejum" has been exposed at a meeting of the Kensington Spiritualist Association. Mr. Armstrong undertook to produce a materialised spirit—of course in the dark and to be seen only by aid of a little phosphorus in a bottle. The ghost duly appeared and offered its hand to one of the sitters, who grasped it until a light was fetched, when Mr. Armstrong was discovered without his coat or boots, wrapped in a sheet. The impostor then attempted to appear in trance, but "the application of a kick soon showed he was in a normal condition." We fancy a similar argument *à posteriori* would, if applied to most trance "mejums," soon prove they were in a normal condition.

It is strange that modern Christian apologists have overlooked the strong form of the argument *à posteriori* for the existence of God which is to be found in Exodus xxxiii., 21 to end, and which is illustrated in our Comic Bible Sketch this week. But perhaps they thought Jahveh might be compromised, seeing the law is sharp upon indecent exposure.

THE Clothworkers' Company of the City of London has some money to dispose of before its affairs are scrutinised into, and it therefore donates £25 to the Christian Evidence Society. The sum no doubt should cover a multitude of sins.

THE Rev. J. Mackie, who was imprisoned for assaulting his elder, Mr. Carswell, in church, still has supporters. Mr. Carswell has had to prosecute one of them for libel. In the trial it transpired that one of the means resorted to by Mr. Mackie to make money out of his office was by marrying the Midgets in his church and charging a shilling a head for admission. Mr. Mackie is a big man, so the contrast proved an extra attraction.

THE Bulgarian farmers have their cattle blessed by the priest at regular intervals. The oxen, sheep, goats, asses and pigs are

driven together in the farm-yard, the priest utters his benediction upon them, waves his feathered fan, and sprinkles a few drops of consecrated water around. This secures the prosperity and increase of the live stock. One kind of cattle at least thrives by this means—namely, the black kind of cattle called the priest.

THE *Christian Herald* has a story of a man who, feeling hopelessly defeated in a law suit, asks permission to pray, and presents his case in prayer to the Almighty so effectively that the jury gave him a verdict which without his prayer would have been impossible. Other anecdotes show how some people escaped from a shark by prayer, how two cheques for £120 were found in answer to prayer, how a man with one leg shorter than the other is having it lengthened by faith-healing, how a daughter pronounced dead by the physicians was “miraculously restored recently in answer to prayer,” and how almost any number of further miracles and follies occurred. The *Christian Herald* assumes the literal truth of biblical promises, and shows that the age of credulity and of the exploitation of credulity is far from being over. The bishops, however, pay no attention to its present-day miracles, while expecting us to believe the equally ridiculous miracles of two thousand years ago.

THE *Christian Herald* tells how a floor loft in a cow-shed gave way during a prayer-meeting and a man had his arm disjointed. The *Christian Herald* calls this a “remarkable deliverance,” in answer to the petition being sung at the moment of the accident—“Hold me with thy powerful hands.” If Baxter’s house were burnt down he would presumably call this also a remarkable deliverance. He is welcome to as many remarkable deliverances of this kind as he wishes. For our own part we prefer to be totally free from them.

OWING to the death of Father Beckx, the General of the Jesuits, at the age of ninety-two, Father Antonio Anderledy becomes the “Black Pope,” having more authority over his fellows than his Holiness the White Pope. Every Jesuit Father makes his vow “to Almighty God in the sight of the Virgin Mary and to the General of the Society standing in the place of God.” Happily the Jesuits are not as powerful now as formerly, and the world needs not to regard them much more than it does General Booth, who may be called the “Red Pope.”

THE Jesuits are bound by oath to renounce all allegiance as due to any heretical or Protestant king, prince, or State, or to any of their inferior magistrates or officers, and they further declare that the Pope as Christ’s Vicar-General has power to depose all such kings, princes, commonwealths and governments as being illegal without his sacred confirmation. Nice sort of citizens. No wonder they have been expelled from every civilised country.

WE suppose it is on the principle of giving away what is of no use to herself that the Queen is going to commemorate the Pope’s Jubilee by presenting his Holiness with a copy of the Vulgate Bible.

SIR GILBERT GREENALL, another Warrington brewer, has emulated Sir Andrew Barclay Walker, and further exemplified the sympathetic alliance of Beer and the Bible by offering £5,000 to the Warrington churches in celebration of the Jubilee.

RICHARD EDGE, an “evangelist,” of Welshampton, has been arrested for embezzling to the tune of £50.

DR. LOWE, the medical officer of Workington, Cumberland, points out that one cause of the prolific infant mortality at Workington is the Salvation Army. The mothers go to the Salvation Army hall in all weathers and at all hours, leaving the children to look after themselves, the result being that they “often catch cold, are burnt, or scalded.”

WE hope the report is correct that Joseph Parker is going to succeed Ward Beecher at Brooklyn. Uncle Sam sends us so many quacks it is only fair he should take something in exchange.

THE Rev. A. Garthwaite, of Kimbolton, near Leominster, believes that it is not right to marry in a Nonconformist place of worship. So far so good. A couple of his parishioners having been married in a Primitive Methodist Chapel he persuaded them to have the ceremony over again in church, and in this he was perfectly justified. But he went further and had them registered as having been married at church, they having previously been registered as married at chapel, and for this little slip it is likely that he will have to pay a penalty.

THE farmers of Whitford, failing to obtain any abatement of tithe from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, have resolved at a public meeting to pay no tithes. The Commissioners will have to distraint for it, as they have already done in four cases. Christianity in theory says, Give all you have to the poor. Christianity in practice says, Seize the money and goods of the people. The religion of love in theory is the religion of theft in practice.

At a Disestablishment meeting at Ashton a statement of the borough member was brought forward to the effect that the Church of England, with one or two trifling exceptions, enjoyed no exceptional privileges. Mr. Ashton pointed out to the meeting that the rector of their parish was, by special Act of Parliament, exempted from the payment of any taxes whatever for Imperial or local purposes, so far as that part of his income which was derived from the payment of tithes was concerned. The fact is that the abuses and privileges of the Establishment are far more numerous and wide-reaching than is generally supposed.

JESUS says, Forgive thy brother seventy times seven. The Lancashire Congregational Union have rejected the Collier Street Church, Collyhurst, Manchester, from their Union, the Rev. Thos. Willis remarking that the sooner the Union washed its hands of it openly and publicly the better.

MR. T. H. ASTON, who runs a Christian Evidence Society at Birmingham, appears to be in trouble again. We have just received a fresh circular, signed by E. W. Thurston and Thomas Goddard, who claim to be the legally-appointed assistant-secretary and treasurer for 1886. These gentlemen make a number of charges against Mr. Aston. They openly accuse him of cooking the accounts, and they say that “his balance-sheet has been audited, really, by a non-auditor, and merely signed by two men who are not the legal and proper auditors.” Altogether it seems a pretty quarrel. For our own part, we are unable to say who is right and who is wrong, and we must leave these Christian gentlemen to thresh the matter out between themselves.

THE Salvation Army’s No. 10 Tract, entitled “Was it Truth?” contains about as many lies as could well be crammed into such a small compass. It is chiefly the story of a conversion “told by the Edgware Road infidel.” But not a word is said as to who he was. What was his name? At what number in the Edgware Road did he hang out? And has he a single friend who would swear or affirm that he was ever a Freethinker at all?

ONE choice morsel will give our readers a fair idea of all the rest in this precious tract. The fellow says, “I have seen Annie Besant throwing the Bible on the platform, and put her foot on it.” We should only insult Mrs. Besant by contradicting this absurd statement. Evidently this Salvation Army tract was concocted by one of its regular scribes, who lies to live and lives to lie. We should be astonished at General Booth’s issuing such preposterous falsehoods if we did not know that he was capable of anything. No doubt his answer would be, “Tis all for the glory of God.”

THE Society for the conversion of the Jews have secured the services of Dr. Blyth for their forthcoming May meeting. Dr. Blyth has been appointed not Bishop of Jerusalem, but bishop *in* Jerusalem, in order not to give offence to the Patriarch of the Greek Church, who claims spiritual jurisdiction in the Holy Land. The whole affair is a farce. Neither the few British residents in Jerusalem, nor the few Jewish converts who have been taken there at the expense of the missionary societies, require any bishop. But it looks grand to have a bishop on the spot where the Lord was crucified, and serves to make an appeal for the shekels needed for missionary purposes.

THE *Railway Signal*, a goody-goody journal for railway employees must think that class exceedingly credulous. It gives an anecdote from pastor J. J. Clinch, of West Ham, who relates that once having sprained his ankle while hurrying to catch a train, he prayed to the Lord to stop the train. When he came near the station he found the train at a standstill, and brother Clinch declares emphatically, “God stopped the train for me.” We wonder what brother Clinch would have said if the stoppage of the train in answer to his prayer had been the occasion of an accident upon the line.

THE new edition of *Men of the Time*, 1887, includes the name of Charles Bradlaugh, M.P. The last edition (1884) did not mention him although he had long before then assumed a far more eminent place than that occupied by most of the persons included in the work. Even now it says, “Since his entering Parliament his name has been chiefly heard in connection with the long, arduous, and unfortunate struggle with regard to his right to take, or *dispense with*, the oath of allegiance.” Rather a strange way of putting the case in a standard publication.

CREATION AND EVOLUTION.—On the one side we have a theory, which converts the Power whose garment is seen in the visible universe into an Artificer, fashioned after the human model, and acting by broken efforts, as man is seen to act. On the other side we have the conception that all we see around us and feel within us—the phenomena of physical nature as well as those of the human mind—have their unsearchable roots in a cosmical life, if I dare apply the term, an infinitesimal span of which is offered to the investigation of man! Among thinking people, in my opinion, this last conception has a higher ethical value than that of a personal artificer.—PROF. JOHN TYNDALL, *Fragments of Science*, Vol. II., p. 404; 1879

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, March 20, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street; at 11.15, "The Future of the Working Classes"; at 7, "Christianity and Slavery."
 Tuesday, March 22, Freethought Institute, York Street, Walworth Road; at 8.30, "The Holy Ghost."

MARCH 27, Hall of Science, London.

APRIL 3, Manchester; 10, Birmingham; 17 and 24, Hall of Science, London.

MAY 1, Camberwell; 29, N. S. S. Conference.

JUNE 5 and 12, Hall of Science, London.

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.—G. J. Pankhurst.

W. A.—Gessner was a German writer and author of a semi-religious poem on "The Death of Abel," which had some popularity. The verses of your friend show good promise, but are scarcely up to the mark. We are pleased to note that Freethought is gaining ground among your friends.

T. ELLIOTT.—We know nothing of the Rev. T. J. Gaster.

S. S. S.—If you had read the essay of Tyndall (whose name you misspell) from which you quote a detached portion of a sentence, you would see that he is arguing, though somewhat timidly, for evolution. The phrase you quote is in the nature of a question, and Professor Tyndall goes on to say that such notions of evolution as that "the human mind was once latent in a fiery cloud" are absurd "in relation to the ideas concerning matter which were drilled into us when young." In the same essay he says: "The facts and reasonings of this discourse tend rather towards the justification of Mr. Darwin than towards his condemnation." See also the passage quoted in "Freethought Gleanings."

E. J. PILCHER.—The passage in Josephus about James is also probably spurious inasmuch as it disagrees with the account given by Hegesippus, and this would be the only passage in which he uses the word "Christ." An Egyptian story somewhat similar to that of Joseph was translated by C. W. Goodwin, and appeared in *Good Words* about twenty years ago. We will try and find the date of the number for you. Thanks for the reference to the "Records of the Past," which we shall use on some future occasion.

J. BOTT.—Many thanks. Nobody would expect truth from such a very Christian body as the Salvation Army.

A. E. WRIGHT.—(1) We don't know who Cain's wife was. God only knows. Ask him. (2) Thomas Paine did not reform on his death-bed—he died on it. For the rest see *Infidel Death-Beds*. (3) Catholic priests do not marry because the celibacy of the priesthood has been the rule of the Church ever since the eleventh century. The Buddhist priests are also celibate. We are afraid your Society's name is a little too hot. The "G. T. H. H. Society" might pass muster until its name is printed in full. But you won't find many to join when they learn what it means. We advise you to start a branch of the National Secular Society. The Secretary, Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, will supply you with all information.

J. HODGSON.—Mr. Bradlaugh is no relation to Mrs. Besant.

J. BEAUFOY.—*Sociology* means social science. *Eschatology* means the science of the last things, including the Second Advent and the Day of Judgment.

W. NELSON.—We are obliged.

K., who writes to us from the university town of Bonn in Germany, refers to Mr. Ball's article on "Christianity versus Science," and says that the article in the *Christian Commonwealth* on the alleged rejection of Darwinism in Germany shows total ignorance on the subject. He emphatically denies the allegation, and points to such celebrated German evolutionists as C. Vogt and Hæckel, and to the fact that in the University of Bonn, supposed to be one of the best in Germany, the greater portion of Darwin's doctrines are so far accepted as to be taught to the medical students there.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Liberator—Worthing Intelligencer—Manchester Examiner—Jus—Monroe's Ironclad Age—Bath Argus—Liberty—Thinker—Radical.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current number. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the London Hall of Science to-day (March 20)—in the morning, on "The Future of the Working Classes," and in the evening on "Christianity and Slavery," a subject he has never treated before.

THERE is unfortunately a delay at the printer's, quite beyond our control, and the Debate between Mrs. Besant and Mr. Foote will not be ready till early next week. We explain this for the sake of those who have ordered them in advance.

LAST Monday evening Messrs. Foote, Forder, Reynolds and Robertson, representing the Executive of the National Secular Society, had a lengthy interview with Mr. Courtney Kenny at the House of Commons. Mr. Kenny received the deputation with great courtesy, and listened to all their objections to his Bill with the most candid attention. Before the interview ended he was able to see the real nature of their repugnance to the new clause in his Bill, borrowed from the Indian Code. That clause puts nearly every propagandist agency of the Freethought party at a disadvantage. Every handbill, every placard, every contents-sheet, every journal or paper displayed for sale, every open-air lecture, and every strong sentence at a free lecture, would render the actor or speaker liable to a year's imprisonment for "wounding the religious feelings" of tender-hearted Christians. And while the old law has an obsolete air, despite its occasional enforcement, the new law would probably be put in force as a brand-new instrument of oppression, deliberately fashioned by the national legislature. In short, it would enable Christians to punish Freethinkers without incurring the odium of persecution. It is therefore the general opinion of Freethinkers that no Bill at all would be better than the new Bill with this objectionable clause. This view was forcibly impressed on Mr. Kenny, who promised to reconsider the matter. Mr. Bradlaugh dropped in at this interesting conference, and his practical knowledge of the law was made extremely useful to all concerned.

MESSRS. CHATTC AND WINDUS have published in book-form the sketches by James Runciman, entitled "Schools and Scholars." Mr. Runciman points to the deleterious effect of priestly management upon schools, and in one life-like sketch illustrates how the Ritualist clerical head of a training college for female teachers uses the confessional for purposes of vice.

A NEW Freethought journal has been started at Chicago under the direction of Mr. B. F. Underwood. It is entitled *The Open Court*. Articles are promised from Moncure D. Conway, T. B. Wakeman, and other well-known American Freethinkers. We trust *The Open Court* will prove worthy of and receive extensive patronage.

WE are pleased to notice that the Australasian Secular Association have commenced a Sunday School. Mr. Collins delivered an opening address. There are Secular Sunday schools now at both Sydney and Melbourne.

MR. FOOTE AS A JURYMAN.

LAST Monday morning, in response to a blue-paper summons, I duly appeared as a common jurymen at the Court of Queen's Bench. Mr. Bradlaugh had tendered me his legal advice—"free, gratis, for nothing"—and I was fully prepared to raise the oath question in the jury-box. My services were required in the Ninth Court, where a number of civil actions were to be tried. My name was drawn fifth in the ballot, and I took a front seat among the twelve men and true. Soon after half-past ten Mr. Justice Hawkins took his seat on the bench. Presently the usher produced half-a-dozen tenpenny Testaments, each of which, when the swearing begins, is grasped by two jurymen, who look as if they are going to fight for its possession. Thinking this the appropriate moment, I rise and ask "Is this the proper time, my lord, for me to address the court on my relation to the oath?" His lordship replies, smiling at his own joke—he enjoys his own jokes wonderfully—"You can't address the court at all." Then the tenpenny Testaments were thrust under our noses. My left-hand neighbor grasped a corner, and invited me to do ditto. "Now or never is the time" I thought. So, in the language of Scripture, I "opened my mouth," and began the following conversation:

I: My lord, I am obliged to raise an objection.

JUSTICE HAWKINS: What is it?

I: My lord, I am a Freethinker. I have no belief in future rewards and punishments, nor even in a future life. I understand, my lord, that I am legally incompetent to take an oath, and therefore legally incompetent to sit as a juror. At the same time, I have no desire to shirk the responsibilities of a citizen, and having explained my position I leave the matter in your lordship's hands. I am ready to take the oath or affirm as your lordship directs.

JUSTICE HAWKINS: I shall not direct you to do either. The simplest plan will be to take another jurymen. You had better remain, however, as I may want you again.

I: In what capacity am I to remain, my lord, as a witness or as a juror?

JUSTICE HAWKINS: I may require you again.

I: But in what capacity, my lord?

JUSTICE HAWKINS: As a juror. You cannot excuse yourself because you entertain peculiar opinions.

Of course I was obliged to remain. The judges in the superior courts have large powers, and some of them are very crusty. For the rest of the day I cooled my heels in court, listening to flat perjury from the witness-box and diffuse speeches from gentlemen dressed in wigs and gowns, whose periods were as long as their robes and as convoluted as their horsehair. One

trumpery case of trespass, brought against a hundred-and-twenty-per-cent. money lender, occupied nearly the whole of the day. The witnesses swore in direct opposition to each other on plain matters of fact. It was clear that somebody was lying, yet they all kissed the "blessed book" with the most exemplary devotion.

Mr. Justice Hawkins thinks I hold peculiar opinions. I wonder what he thought of the religious opinions of the gentleman who exceeded cent. per cent. But *are* my opinions peculiar? While sitting in the jury-box I chatted with one of my neighbors. He assured me that he was a bit of a Freethinker himself, although he thought I went a little too far in my journal. "You know," he added, "nine men out of ten believe pretty much as you do, but they don't care to say so." "No," I replied, "many of them have a good deal to lose." "Perhaps so," he answered, "but that doesn't apply to all. I have nothing to lose, yet I keep quiet. I look upon Christianity as a civilising agency. There are many people who would do anything if they did not believe in future rewards and punishments." "I don't agree with you," I rejoined, "men are pretty much what they are born; there are people in gaol who believe in Christianity, and people outside who disbelieve. Honesty is constitutional, and a scoundrel is always a scoundrel." "Well," he said, "I believe you're right after all."

Nine men out of ten believe pretty much as you do! Those were the jurymen's words, and he himself took the oath without a murmur. What a flood of light this throws on my "peculiar opinions"! Not so *very* peculiar, after all, most grave and reverend signior.

I noticed, too, that any joke with a flavor of profanity was highly relished in court. A gentleman whose guttering had fallen after a snowstorm and cut a woman's head, pleaded that it was "the act of God." But the counsel for the other side ridiculed this plea. He said that the phrase was invented by lawyers to cover accidents; it was too mysterious for him, and he would leave it to be explained by his learned friend. Titters and giggles in court.

On Tuesday there was a counsel who put a hypothetical question—"Was it possible" etc. But the judge refused to allow it. "What is *possible*?" asked his lordship. "All things are possible my lord," was the reply, "to those that believe." More titters and giggles.

On Wednesday morning I took down to the Court a letter for his lordship. The following is a copy:—

March 16, 1887.

MY LORD,—I am the Freethinking jurymen whose oath was declined on Monday morning in your lordship's Court. You directed me to remain, and I have remained. But I respectfully submit that your lordship should discharge me from further attendance. If I am incompetent to take an oath as a juror, I am of no possible service in Court, and therefore my detention is a punishment. Your lordship will perhaps recollect that I did not *refuse* to take the oath, having no desire to evade my responsibilities as a citizen. I merely explained my position, as I was honestly bound to do, and left myself at your lordship's direction. There may be dishonorable jurors whose objection to the oath is a subterfuge, but I am not one of them. My name is tolerably well known as a Freethought journalist and lecturer, and I have suffered for my opinions. More than one gentleman of the robe in your lordship's Court remembers me as defendant in the last trial for blasphemy before Lord Coleridge in the Chief Justice's Court. That trial ended with a *nolle prosequi*, but I was at the time imprisoned under a sentence of Mr. Justice North's after two trials at the Old Bailey. Your lordship will, therefore, do me the justice of admitting my sincerity; and I trust you will also discharge me from attendance to duties which the law does not appear to allow me to perform.

Your lordship's obedient servant,

G. W. FOOTE.

Mr. Justice Hawkins.

After reading this letter his lordship said "I have a letter here from a juror named Foote; is he in Court?" "He is, my lord," I replied. Then his lordship addressed me as follows: "I did not order you to remain. You said you were a Freethinker, and that you did not believe in future rewards and punishments. I therefore took another jurymen and directed you to wait, as I might want you. If I want you again I shall have to see what form of affirmation or otherwise you must take. I do not want you take the oath as a mockery. If you do not answer when your name is called I should probably fine you. You cannot expect to avoid the duties of a juror because you are a Freethinker."

"My Lord," I replied, "I should be very happy to perform all the duties of a citizen if the law permitted me to do so."

"Very well then," he rejoined, "your duty is to wait and see if you are wanted." To which I answered "Very well then, my lord."

Mr. Justice Hawkins evidently thinks that in his Court as in the court of heaven, "They also serve who only stand and wait." But what a farce it is! Other jurymen get off for a day or two, although they *can* swear and sit, while the Freethinking jurymen is kept kicking his heels in court every day. Surely the judges ought to know whether a Freethinker can serve or not. If he can let him do so. If he cannot it is a flagrant piece of tyranny to detain him in court. I have no time to write more now, as this journal is going to press; but I shall return to the subject next week.

G. W. FOOTE.

SOME RELIGIOUS STORIES.

No. 5.—THE SPIKED CANON.

THERE was once a certain Canon, a very brazen Canon by the way, who knew that all liars had their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and who nevertheless told lies as glibly as a policeman on oath. He manufactured a wicked slander against a Christian who was dead, and accused him of the most outrageous blasphemy and impiety. The brazen-mouthed Canon partially redeemed his fault, it is true, by adding venomous lies about infidels, against whom the whole of his beautiful and touching concoction was intended to be directed. But he had most rashly and wickedly included a Christian in his malignant falsehoods. So God struck him dumb!—dumb as Zacharias in the Temple—dumb as Balaam's ass was until God permitted her to speak! God's hand was upon his mouth. When the infidel most maligned, challenged him as a shameless liar, and exposed him as a contemptible slanderer, not a word could his palsied tongue utter to save his shattered reputation as a minister of the truth, and his honor as a man. God's awful judgment of dumbness was upon him! Surely a punishment more distressing to a man of feeling and integrity could hardly be conceived. Yet so it was. Spell-bound by the divine sentence, pointed at by the finger of public contempt, the poor wretch had to endure the agonies of such a trial in helpless speechless impotence! Beware, O Christian ministers, beware of lying against your fellow Christians!

But God would not punish the wretched Canon for ever. On his death-bed, his tongue was restored. The dumb Canon spoke, and thanked God most earnestly for the opportunity of retracting the string of falsehoods which his miserable tongue had spoken, and his hand had penned against his late lamented brother in Christ. He hoped God would forgive him, and that the relatives of the deceased would pardon him as sincerely as he forgave them their trespasses against him. The alleged blasphemy, the challenge to God, the miraculous answer of killing half the man while leaving the left side to repent and utter Christian gush and go to heaven, were all falsehoods, he allowed, but it was all done for the honor of God, and he must still maintain that the great infidel mentioned was the cause of all these dreadful scenes which hadn't occurred and of far greater immoralities and crimes in all directions among professing Christians whose belief he had weakened. For his own part, as a redeemed penitent, he knew that Christ had saved him. And he hoped from the very bottom of his heart, as a sincere Christian and a true believer unto death, that the dreadful infidel who had caused all the mischief would repent of his wicked and heartless exposure of Christian arguments so ably and piously designed for the efficient spread of God's truth among the ignorant to whom the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom and the end thereof.

Before the honorable Canon finally passed away to rejoice his Maker, a time of delirium supervened. In this dark hour of Satanic influence he forgot his priestly training and reverted to the ideas and instincts of more childish years. He was heard to mutter strange sentiments, for which of course his weakened mind was not really responsible. God had killed or paralysed the Christian half of his soul and suffered only the depraved human half to speak. In his wild and unseemly ravings the ungodly half of him actually expressed deep sorrow and remorse for having attacked an infidel with statements which he insanely confessed were untrue even where their self-evident usefulness against infidelity proved their thorough accuracy. He said that as a gentleman he must at once withdraw such fabrications as the only possible chance of retrieving his lost honor and atoning for the base slander he had been weak enough and wicked enough to put forth against an unbeliever otherwise unassailable. He trusted that such reparation and apology might even yet counteract and cancel the pain and evil he had caused, and it might in some measure redeem his character, which he felt was of some little importance even to a Christian minister who knew that his soul was already redeemed for ever by the blood of Christ. Of all the rotten planks that man had ever trusted to, pious lying for the glory of God was the rottenest. A strange but salutary change had come over him, and he now felt most strongly that it was an imperative duty to contradict such lies even though he was himself the author of them.

THE Government have decided to treat the Sunday boating question as an open one, and not as a Government matter.

For the brief space of life that remained to him he was firmly resolved that he would deal justly even towards an opponent in religious matters.

[The Rev. Ananias Fergie, Canon of the Church of England, can be applied to for particulars of the above story. The abominable sentiments foisted on an afflicted martyr in the concluding paragraph of the narrative he may perhaps truthfully repudiate as attributing to that stricken man of God the characteristics of a mere gentleman instead of the infinitely higher traits which he thinks most becoming to a humble servant of Christ. Concerning the first part of the story he will of course resolutely maintain a delicately conscientious silence out of consideration for the feelings of a certain Christian clergyman still living.]

W. P. BALL.

COLONEL INGERSOLL A PRISONER.

THE *New York Sun* relates the following incident of Col. Ingersoll's shrewdness when taken prisoner in the war of the Rebellion, and how he managed to make his escape from the Confederate Army. "I served in Col. Ingersoll's command," said a veteran of the Ochiltree Club at the panorama of Bull Run this morning, "and whenever I want to have a good laugh I recall in my mind the incidents connected with his capture in Tennessee. I have seen somewhere a cruel paragraph to the effect that the Colonel surrendered very willingly, and I want to brand that falsehood for just what it is. A braver man I never saw in five years of service. We were scattered over a good deal of territory surrounding a village at the time the Colonel was taken in and cared for by the Johnnies. We were in a skirmish at the time, and the Colonel was trying to get to a demoralised wing of his command. As he was passing through a series of cattle pens he was surrounded by a lot of Confederates and commanded to surrender, but he didn't do it worth a cent. He kept right on running at breakneck speed. He was not so stout then as now, and as a pedestrian he was no slouch. The bullets were flying about him as thick as hail. If he could get to another branch of his command he felt that he could rally the boys and win the fight. A number of his men saw that he was in imminent peril, and that if he didn't surrender he would be killed, and they yelled at him at the top of their voices to stop and surrender. He heeded, but I could see that he did so with regret and disgust. Here is where the humor began. When the Colonel stopped he threw up his hands and screamed out, 'Stop your firing! I'll acknowledge your — old Confederacy.'

"The Colonel was taken over to a store for safe keeping, and proved to be a great curiosity. People flocked around him, listened to his stories, laughed and declared that they were having more fun than they ever had in their lives. That night the Colonel sat around the store till a goodly number of the rebels came in, and then he began to treat and tell yarns. Finally the crowd overflowed the place and blocked up the entrance to it. Then the Colonel went outside. The boys were all feeling well under the potency of words and drinks, and every man, woman, and child within sound of his voice loved him. Directly after the Colonel was asked to make a speech. This was what he was working for, and a minute later he was on a box addressing the crowd—and it was a right rough crowd, too. No lecture that great orator has ever delivered contained so much that was good in it. It fairly bubbled over with good will and the milk of human kindness. He pictured how regretfully the North took up arms against the South, reminding his hearers that they had fired the first shot in their assault on Fort Sumter. Then he went off on slavery, placing the poor whites before him in the place of the unfortunate blacks, a people with souls and all the instincts of the whites, but downtrodden for no other reason than that they were black. He pictured the scene, when those who had held human souls in bondage were called before the judgment throne to answer for deeds done in the flesh.

"It was a touching appeal, and brought out streams of tears and storms of applause from the very men who had but a few hours before shot at and captured him. At the moment when the most pathetic passages in his speech were being delivered, General Forrest, the Confederate cavalryman whose command had made the capture, rushed into the crowd, all aglow with excitement, but not anger, and exclaimed:—'Here, Ingersoll, stop that speech and I'll exchange you for a Government mule!' A short time after Colonel Ingersoll was paroled. He was demoralising the whole of that command, and would have had it revolting against its commander had he been allowed to go on for two or three days as he had on the first day."

JERKED TO JESUS.

THE execution of the woman Roxilana Druse for the ferocious murder of her husband, was converted into a piece of religious sensationalism by her comforter in Christ, the Rev. Dr. Powell. Enormous pressure had been brought to bear upon the Governor of New York by sympathisers and religionists, but he had refused to reprieve her any further. At the execution, the Rev. Dr. Powell treated her as if she were a holy martyr done to death by fiends in human shape. Praying aloud for her, and at the authorities, he assured her she would meet far better treatment

in the future world than she had on earth. He asked pity for those who condemned her. Turning to Mrs. Druse, he said: "Go to thy fate, trembling child of sorrow. Go to thy loving Father, God. Go to thy compassionate Brother, Jesus, and to the side of thy angel child who has gone before. Go bravely, in the strength of hope and faith that there will be a place for thee somewhere above these dark and dismal shadows. Go, penitent and bleeding heart; thy transit from earth to heaven will be short. Go! While we say go the angels say come. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit of truth and power go with and remain with you for evermore." The woman was then jerked to Jesus. We don't wonder at the papers describing the minister's exhortation as "blasphemous."

This blessed soul thus wept over and consoled was a wretched criminal of the worst type. She had led a depraved life and was the cause of her daughter's ruin. She was always quarrelling with her husband, and at last shot him several times with a revolver as he sat at breakfast. Her daughter stood ready with a stout rope in her hand to assist in the murder. Mrs. Druse called in two boys, one of them a son of Mr. Druse, and made them fire more shots at the old man, as he sat in his chair. He then fell, and his head struck the floor, but the work was done in so bungling a manner that he still breathed. The sainted murderess was too impatient to wait till the revolver was reloaded. She seized an axe, swung it around her head, and brought the sharp blade down upon her husband's skull. He looked up and piteously cried, "Oh, don't, Roxie." The blessed soul swung the axe again and cut right through his neck this time, the head rolling away from the body. Then with the help of the children she cut the body up and burnt it in the stove. And of such is the kingdom of heaven!

CORRESPONDENCE.

ARTISAN ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—By his article on "Artisan Atheism" in the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. Rossiter has become a person of considerable interest to many Freethinkers, especially in the South of London, where he is pretty well known by his enlightened efforts on behalf of the Battersea Free Library. The Lecture Column of the *Dispatch* last Sunday announced that the reverend gentleman intended to take for his subject that evening "This week's *Freethinker*." Such an interesting topic induced me to become one of his audience, and perhaps some of your readers may be interested in an account of my impressions. I am fully persuaded that personal vanity is not amongst Mr. Rossiter's failings, so I shall give no offence in describing him as a little insignificant-looking old gentleman, with a shrewd but benevolent face and grey hair. There was nothing of the parson in his dress or manner on Sunday night.

He commenced his lecture by a flattering testimony to the purity of the motives which led Mr. Foote and others to start the *Freethinker*. Then thinking apparently that if he was not clothed in the whole armor of righteousness, at any rate he was sheltered behind the shield of fair play, he advanced to the attack, and in order to afford a foothold for his subsequent criticism he suggested that nothing but the purest, most intellectual, most scientific treatment of any subject should by right be found in a paper bearing the title of the *Freethinker*. Having thus bestowed or inflicted upon your paper an almost impossible standard of perfection, especially in view of the fact that it addresses itself to the working man, Mr. Rossiter proceeded to show in what respects it fell short of his arbitrary and ridiculous standard. With pretty good generalship the learned gentleman chose the frontispiece for his first criticism, after describing which he read the text underneath, and then asked his audience whether from the point of view of the highest type of Freethought (by which of course his audience understood Mr. Rossiter to mean Freethought as explained and possessed by the lecturer), the obvious meaning of the text was fairly treated by the burlesque. This in fact was the only part of the lecture which could be considered worthy the name of criticism and which could by a stretch of imagination be called damaging. The whole of the subsequent time was devoted by Mr. Rossiter to reading aloud the *Freethinker*, straight through from first to last. He did not complain of the literary style or matter; all the offence in his eyes was that such writing was out of place in a journal bearing the title of the *Freethinker*. After reading a paragraph or part of an essay the reverend gentleman would pause dramatically and ejaculate with scorn or surprise, "and this is Freethought!" or this may be so and so "but certainly it is not Freethought!" I venture to think such criticism as puerile and ridiculous as if the lecturer had fallen foul of the *Nonconformist* or the *Rock* because they insert a column of general news. However, the lecture, in spite of Mr. Rossiter, was intensely amusing. The humor of the readings, which he tried in vain to spoil, kept the audience in a continual smile. And when the reverend gentleman came to "The Incandescent Infidel" several broke out into irrepressible laughter, rather to the annoyance of Mr. Rossiter, who it will hardly be credited, had earlier in the evening claimed to possess a keen sense of humor.—Yours respectfully,

March 8, 1887.

F. P. DAVIS.

UNCLE ARTHUR had been giving his little niece (aged 4) a few lessons from the old Testament, and he had dwelt for some time upon the story of Cain and Abel. "Uncle," said the little kitten thoughtfully, "wasn't you very sorry for poor old Cain?" "Why no, my child, why should I be sorry?" "Well, he was the first one that went in the fire, wasn't he?" "Yes, he was first past the post for Hades." "Well, just think how lonely he must have been with nobody but the devil to keep him company."

INFIDEL DEATH-BEDS.

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List of Freethinkers dealt with—

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Lord Amberley | Hobbes |
| Lord Bolingbroke | Austin Holyoake |
| Giordano Bruno | Victor Hugo |
| Henry Thomas Buckle | Hume |
| Lord Byron | Littré |
| Richard Carlile | Harriet Martineau |
| Professor Clifford | J. S. Mill |
| Anthony Collins | Mirabeau |
| Condorcet | Robert Owen |
| Robert Cooper | Thomas Paine |
| Danton | Shelley |
| Diderot | Spinoza |
| George Eliot | D. F. Strauss |
| Frederick the Great | John Toland |
| Gambetta | Vanini |
| Isaac Gondre | Volney |
| Gibbon | Voltaire |
| Goethe | James Watson |
| Henry Hetherington | John Watts |
| Thomas Woolston | |

"Special thanks are due to Mr. G. W. Foote for his new pamphlet. The sketches of the various Freethinkers are very readable, and a double end will be achieved in refuting pious slanderers and reviving the memories of our dead."—*National Reformer*.

"Mr. Foote's little manual cannot fail to be of great service in refuting the ancient and silly death-bed argument. . . . We should be gratified to hear that the little book meets with an extensive sale."—*Secular Review*.

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