

THE FREETHINKER

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

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 193.



ADAM'S SWEETHEARTS.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them to Adam. . . . And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.—GENESIS II., 18—20.

F A I T H.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."—HEBREWS XI., 1.

PAUL, or whoever wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, discourses long and learnedly on faith, beginning with the pretty definition at the top of this article. The Revised Version suggests in the margin that "substance" should read "the giving substance to." In that case, faith is the faculty which enables us to see what does not exist. It gives a body to our hopes, it helps us to play the fool's game of philosophising with wishes. From this there is but a single step to the faith which was defined by an Oxford divinity student as that faculty which enables us to believe what we know to be untrue.

Christians have always possessed this noble faculty in a marvellous degree, and if faith will save them, nearly all of them are sure of heaven. There is nothing a Christian will not believe if it is agreeable. He ravenously swallows whatever pleases his religious palate. No story is too gross for his credulity. He may be, in the ordinary affairs of life, a sensible, cautious man, but in all matters

affecting his creed he displays faith enough to sanctify a regiment of devils.

Let us take a recent case in point. It is a favorite trick with Christian apologists to openly assert or vaguely hint that Freethinkers invariably die in an agony of terror. There is absolutely no truth in this assertion, as we have superabundantly proved in *Infidel Death Beds*; but it tickles the appetite of credulity, and is always received with the most perfect confidence. Not only are the old and oft-repeated fables circulated without shame, but fresh ones are invented and passed into currency with the greatest ease. At this very moment there is a Yankee evangelist who has concocted a fresh insult to the memory of Thomas Paine, and it is cheered to the echo by the Christian audience he addresses, who never trouble to ascertain whether it is true, or pause to reflect that it rests upon evidence, if evidence it may be called, that would be laughed out of any court of law if it were adduced to prove a charge of petty theft. Mr. H. I. Hastings alleges that he "has before him" a letter from a Mrs. Benjamin who, when she was a young woman, saw Thomas Paine die in paroxysms of remorse. He asserts that he received this letter in 1876, and having

said this, he thinks he has proved his case. Probably he has to the uncritical people who attend his lectures. They swallow all he says in a spirit of faith, and faith is the substance of things hoped for, or, in other words, the proof of what you wish to believe. But anyone who is not given over to delusion, anyone who retains a vestige of common sense, would naturally wonder at the audacity of a man who expects the public to believe such a story on his unsupported word.

Mrs. Benjamin is still living, and Thomas Paine died in 1809. Supposing she was eighteen then, she must be ninety-six now. That being a remarkable age, she must be a well-known figure wherever she resides. It would be easy, therefore, to find her out, produce her in public, and submit her testimony to proper criticism. Why did not Mr. Hastings do this before he left America to save souls and cash in England? Why did he not substantiate his case on the spot? Why did he not obtain the assistance of a competent committee of unprejudiced investigators, and have their report properly attested? Why does he circulate the woman's story in London without proving it in New York?

Where is Mrs. Benjamin's letter? Why does not Mr. Hastings produce it? Where is Mrs. Benjamin herself, and why is she not produced? There are many accounts of Paine's death by eye-witnesses, which have been in print for more than two generations. No such person as Mrs. Benjamin is ever mentioned by any of them, and as Paine's sufferings necessitated quietude it is difficult to understand how she gained admittance to his chamber. Even on the supposition that Mr. Hastings speaks the truth, which is exceedingly doubtful, his story simply amounts to this. A woman who was never heard of in connexion with Thomas Paine until 1876, a woman whose name never appeared in any of the slanderous stories about his death, although dozens were published within thirty years, writes to Mr. Hastings *sixty-seven years* afterwards, and informs him that she saw the great sceptic die raving mad. No attempt is made to trace her antecedents, or even to ascertain her age. Mr. Hastings does not even say that he has taken the trouble to ascertain whether she exists. Yet his pious hearers applaud his story as though they were listening to the gospel. What infantile credulity! What a flagrant outrage on the most elementary principles of reason!

Yet another question remains. Is Mr. Hastings speaking the truth at all? Has he any such letter? If he has, was it written by any person who can be produced? Is there any Mrs. Benjamin in existence? Mr. Hastings may resent these queries; he may stand upon his dignity as much as he likes. But the burden of proof lies upon him; and if he has the slightest sense of honesty, or even of decency, he will accept the responsibility. We fear, however, he will do nothing of the kind. He will probably continue to rely on the "faith" of his auditors, and illustrate in the nineteenth century the gullibility which Lucian and Celsus derided in the Christians of the primitive Church.

G. W. FOOTE.

EASTER A PAGAN FESTIVAL.

If an intelligent Pagan were able to revisit "the glimpses of the moon" and observe the Christian celebrations of Good Friday and Easter, how he would smile when told that all the observances were in celebration of a certain Jesus who was put to death in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago, and who, on the third day, rose again. "Why," he would say in astonishment, "is not this your Spring Festival such as has been observed by every nation? How came you to hold the anniversary of a man's death on a movable date? The man who stole the saucepan and made a new lid for it took good care that the lid fitted. But the Christian lid, put on the old Pagan saucepan, does not fit. The fact that your Easter shifts according to the phases of the moon shows it is our astronomical festival. But you say it is not a man you celebrate, but a God. Of course, it is; and it is the great god of gods, the visible luminary, the life-giving sun, who has now crossed the vernal equinox and rises again triumphant over winter and death. Have you never heard how we celebrated the resurrection of Adonis, even as the Syrians did that of Thammuz, the Egyptians that of Osiris? Go,

read in Theocritus how those delightful gossips, Gorgo and Praxinoe, babble at the festival of the god, how they listen to his dirge, and rejoice at the decorations."

What says Matthew Arnold:

"Adonis was the sun in his summer and in his winter course, in his time of triumph and time of defeat; but in his time of triumph still moving towards his defeat, in his time of defeat still returning towards his triumph. Thus he became the emblem of the power of life and the bloom of beauty, the power of human life and the bloom of human beauty, hastening inevitably to diminution and decay, yet in that very decay finding 'hope and a renovation without end.'"

What does the name Easter tell us? What connection has it with Jesus of Nazareth? It is from Eostre, the Saxon goddess of spring and resurrection, sometimes identified with the Phœnician Astarte, whose festival was celebrated at this season. It was at this time the Egyptians held their feast to celebrate the nuptials of Isis and Osiris, and carried about the palm as the symbol of reproductive power long ere Palm Sunday was supposed to commemorate the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. The most characteristic Easter rite, and the one most widely diffused, is the sending of Easter eggs as presents. They are often stained of various colors. Now "dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt."† The ancient Persians, "when they kept the festival of the solar new year (in March), mutually presented each other with colored eggs."‡ The egg, as a natural symbol of fecundity and new life, was appropriate to the time. Indeed, the spring equinox was observed among all the ancient nations of the East as the beginning of the new year, and among all nations as a season of rejoicing in honor of the sun-god, and of his return to clothe the earth with verdure, and "fill men's hearts with food and gladness." He appeared then to rise triumphant over darkness and death, and to bring back life and light to the world. Hence the fable of the sun's dancing on Easter Day. It is difficult for Christians to realise how close was the resemblance which the rites adopted by the Church in honor of Christ's resurrection bore to those practised by the Greeks, Phœnicians, Syrians, Egyptians, Hindoos, and many other nations in honor of the solar deity, under the name of Adonis, Dionysos, Thammuz, Osiris, Krishna, etc. Godfrey Higgins, in his *Anacalypsis* (vol. ii., p. 106) says:

"We have already seen that in Hindostan and Britain the procreative power of nature was celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox by Phallic rites, Huli festivals, May poles, and April fools, and is even yet continued in these extreme points of East and West—of India and Britain—where the young girls, with their swains, little suspect the meaning of their innocent gambols—gambols which, if our devotees understood, they would view with horror. On the same day, in Persia, the triumph of the Good over the Evil Principle took place—the triumph of Light over Darkness, of Oromasdes over Ahriman. At the same time, in Egypt, Phrygia, Syria, were celebrated the deaths and resurrections of Osiris, Atys, and Adonis. In Palestine, again, we find, on the same day, the Jews celebrating their Passover, the passage of the equinox from the sign of the Bull to that of the Ram, and of the sun from the inferior to the superior hemisphere; and, to conclude all, on this day we Christians of Europe still continue to celebrate the victory of the god Sol, known to all nations above enumerated by his different names—by us, 'The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world' on Easter Sunday, having risen to life and immortality, triumphing over the powers of hell and of darkness."

The ancient Christian year began with Easter. Religious worship was celebrated by night; and the vigils continued till cock-crowing announced the birth of the new sun. Then the stillness of the midnight vigils was broken by the joyful acclamation, "The Lord is risen! The Lord is risen! The Lord is risen indeed!" Easter day was celebrated with every demonstration of joy. In the Roman Catholic Church we may see more of the Pagan element. At cock-crowing tapers are lighted. St. Peter's at Rome is illuminated, and the vicar of Christ, his vestments blazing with gold, pronounces a blessing upon the world from a high balcony at mid-day. Eusebius, in the sixth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, chapter viii., tells us that on one occasion the early Christians were celebrating "the solemn vigils of Easter," when, to their dismay, they found that oil was wanted. Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, commanded

* "Pagan and Mediæval Religious Sentiment," *Essays in Criticism*, p. 196.

† Bonwick's "Egyptian Belief in Modern Thought," p. 24.

‡ Chambers' *Encyclopædia*, article Easter.

water to be brought, and this he miraculously changed into oil in order that the celebration might be duly observed. This story shows that the early Christian Easter was quite similar to the pagan solar festival.

There is no trace of the celebration of Easter as a Christian festival in the New Testament (Acts xii., 4, is a mistranslation, *Easter* should be *Passover*), or in the writings of the apostolic fathers. The Jewish Christians kept the old Paschal feast on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan. Their tradition, as expressed in the three first Gospels, made out that Jesus had taken the Passover before his death. The Gentile Christians took their Pagan ancestral festival of the resurrection, and held that Jesus had died on the very day of the Passover, thus substituting himself for the Paschal Lamb. Bitter was the controversy between these sections of believers in the early days of the Church. The diversity of usage was, after many feuds, brought to an end by the authority of Rome. The Roman Christians kept up their Pagan usages, and celebrated the Lord's resurrection on the day of the sun. Pope Victor insisted that this should be adopted by the Asiatic Churches, and excommunicated all those who differed. At the Council of Nice it was fixed, as now, on the first Sunday after the full moon happens upon or next after the vernal equinox, the actual day being left to be determined each year at Alexandria, the home of astronomical science, and the bishop of that see was to announce it annually to the Churches under his jurisdiction, and to the Bishop of Rome, by whom it was communicated to the Western Churches.

The fact of Easter being a movable feast sufficiently shows its astronomical origin, and the differences among early Christians as to the time of keeping it prove their ignorance of the date when their god-man is alleged to have actually burst the bonds of death. They have never even fixed the year of that extraordinary event with any certainty, and the ascription of the crucifixion to a Friday, the first day of Passover, is most unfortunate, because, according to fixed rules of the Jewish calendar, the first day of Passover never can fall on a Friday, and to suppose that Jesus was crucified during that sacred festival is as absurd as to allege that some English criminal was hanged on Sunday or Christmas Day.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

CECILIA FRANCIS, a farmer's wife, has been fined £2 and costs at Chepstow for badly assaulting her daughter Rosy, a diminutive girl of fourteen. A letter was put in from the clergyman of the parish, saying that the defendant was a communicant and a constant attendant at church.

BEING a communicant, Cecilia Francis must have assimilated into her constitution a good deal of the body and blood of Christ. The results are not very gratifying. We should like to hear the clergyman's explanation.

A WRITER in *Light*, the Spiritist organ, wants to know what the message is which John the Baptist Freund has been so often imprisoned for attempting to deliver at St. Paul's. He believes it a message from the spirit world that London will be destroyed by fire, as he finds prophesied in *The Star and Cradle*, another Spiritist journal.

MRS. EMMA HARDINGE BRITTEN, who is said to make a good thing out of her trance orations, and declines to give her services free, says, in the *Medium and Daybreak*: "I have crucial proofs, beyond the power of denial, that the Professional Medium is not the only deceiver, and that fraud prevails quite as largely amongst those who disdain to call themselves professionals as with the paid mediums." She is very wrath with Spiritists who "would rather pay a pound to see tinsel crowns and spangled trumpery than give a penny to hear the noblest ethics taught by an angel of heaven." Mrs. Britten in her trance orations deals largely in "the noblest ethics."

PROF. ST. GEORGE MIVART, who is a Roman Catholic, has an article in the *Forum* to explain that "confidence in the perdurability of the [Roman Catholic] Church" is sustained by the fact that the Church changes its mind about things as often as occasion arises. In his own words (lest it should be thought that any paraphrase might misrepresent him): "Little by little the invincible advance of historical, as of other, science permeates and transforms the whole Catholic body, and ultimately reacts upon the supreme head." The infallibility of this Church seems

to rest upon the fact that it never acknowledges a mistake.—*Truthseeker*.

At Carlisle, the Salvationists recently selected a church for their visit. At first they did not display their usual enthusiasm—probably because the presence of respectable surroundings made them feel uncomfortable. The "General" noticed this reserve, and attacked it at once. "Wake up," he shouted; "think you are in your own barracks; never mind this swell p'ace, but open your mouths." Still the brave "soldiers" seemed ill at ease, and a certain Mrs. Walker was laid on as a stimulant. She opened by saying that "if God wanted her to stand on her head she would do so." Fortunately she was not wanted, but that remark made them feel at home straight away. And then the "General" completed the task of making them feel quite comfortable by telling them that "three acres and a cow" were nothing to the freehold mansions in Heaven which he had to offer along with the "chariot and pair when the trumpet sounded."—*Liverpool Echo*.

THE Salvation Army in Nevada City, U.S.A., has been required to pay a licence, the authorities holding that their praise meetings are "shows." No doubt the authorities are in the right. But do not the Ritualist churches come within the same category? We notice that several churches are having magic lantern views of "The Lord's Passion" during Holy Week.

WE read in a Christian contemporary that at Gratton Guinness's "Medical Lecture" men faint away and have to be carried out, so revolting are the sickening and hideous details he gives. At Exeter Hall after several fainting fits and the retreat of many disgusted hearers, one man "requested Dr. Guinness to 'preach the Gospel.'" "Turn the gentleman out" cried a voice. "No, not the gentleman," replied the genial and long-suffering saint who was lecturing, "Turn the man out." And so "amid loud applause the poor deluded fellow was kicked out." This is the Christian account of Christian proceedings. Christians certainly do not shine as a particularly pleasant and tolerant set of people.

SPURGEON has been addressing the Christian Police Association, which now includes 129 branches. He told them on behalf of Christ that he wanted to run them in, and that he had a splendid staff but did not want to knock them down with it. The staff was that of conviction—not conviction before a magistrate of course, but spiritual conviction. But what is a Christian policeman to do when a thief asks to be set free on the ground that X 42 of the Christian Brigade should do unto others as he would have others do unto him? And when the thief or the wife-beater demands to be forgiven unto ninety times nine on the authority of the Bible, what will the Christian policeman do?

"SCENES" have been occurring at St. John the Baptist Church, Toxteth Park. The squabbling is over money matters. The churchwarden hid the collection bags and the vicar threatened to give him into custody. Large crowds collected of an exceedingly demonstrative character.

A WOMAN in France has been imitating Jael. She hammered a pair of scissors into her sweetheart's head while he was asleep. The papers call her a female fiend. The Bible pronounced Jael "blessed above women."

THE Protestant mission-house at Smyrna, named the "Sailors' Rest," has been attacked and damaged by the Greek Christians. The house has to remain closed, to prevent further disturbances. Demands are being made by the representatives of the United States and of England for satisfaction. It was expected at first that a war-vessel would have to be sent to Smyrna. Thus Christians fall foul of each other even in a Mohammedan land, and do their best or their worst to embroil nations in religious quarrels. Hadn't the Protestants better civilise the Christians before attempting to convert the followers of the prophet?

EDWARD DAVIS has been charged before the Bath magistrates with indecently assaulting seven boys. He was remanded for a week, in order that he might procure legal assistance, but bail was required to the tune of two hundred pounds. The defendant is a Sunday-school teacher, and it is alleged that some of the offences were committed in St. James's Church. We understand that Edward Davis is one of Henry Varley's protégés.

GEORGE TAYLOR, of Darlington, a prominent member of the Salvation Army, has been sent to prison for three months, with hard labor, for indecent exposure. The prisoner had previously served twelve months' imprisonment for similar offences.

CANON SCOTT, addressing the Young Men's Christian Association in the City of London, remarked that "the grandest thing of all in David was that he was godly through and through." He particularly dwelt on David's "chastity." Evidently Canon Scott has a special version of the Bible, which omits all reference to David's large stock of wives and concubines, and his little affair with "her that was the wife of Uriah." Canon Scott should publish his special edition at a cheap rate, for an expurgated

edition of the Bible is sadly needed for Sunday schools and domestic use.

WE learn from the *New York Tribune* that a New Jersey bookseller has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of five hundred dollars for selling Balzac's *Contes Drôlatiques* and the Queen of Navarre's *Heptameron*. Yet the Bible, which contains some of the most brutal filthiness extant, is circulated with impunity. Nay more, it is put into the hands of little children, to instruct them in virtue and modesty.

THE roof of one of God's houses at Linguagrossa, in Sicily, suddenly fell in last week without a note of warning while church service was in progress. One hundred people are said to have been buried in the ruins.

THE Bishop of Gibraltar "had the honor" of preaching before the Queen last Sunday at Cannes. According to the *Daily News* he held forth on "the value of suffering as a purifying and elevating influence upon the human character." The Bishop cannot object to our hoping that his character will be purified and elevated to a miraculous degree.

CALEB WHITE was indicted recently at the Little Pedlington Petty Sessions for using blasphemous language in the public streets. But the magistrate took a charitable view of the case, and imposed a nominal fine. It appears that Caleb White had invested 2s. in a bottle of stuff which was advertised as a certain cure for rheumatism, but as it had no effect whatever on his rheumatism, he was naturally indignant, and gave vent to his feelings. The authorities who indicted him must entertain peculiar notions. Things have come to a pretty pass if a man cannot damn a bottle of quack physic. Stop that way of blowing off the steam, and the victim's only resource will be to commit a breach of the peace upon the quack himself.

Book Lore for April speaks of Thomas Paine as "the defunct Atheist." How little is known about great Freethinkers by orthodox scribes. Thomas Paine is defunct, of course, but he never was an Atheist. He was a firm believer in the existence of deity.

THE Manchester *Sunday Chronicle* makes the silly assertion that Colonel Ingersoll intends to deliver no more Freethought lectures, as his law practice takes up all his time. The fact is, Ingersoll is suffering from an affection of the throat, and cannot lecture until he is fully recovered.

THE Rev. Canon Ryder has made another exhibition of Christian charity by dismissing his curate, the Rev. Mr. Sandys, because of his Home Rule principles. Mr. Gladstone has written expressing his willingness to contribute to any fund that might be set on foot for the benefit of Mr. Sandys.

MR. DUNN, the out-door lecturer of the Christian Evidence Society, thinks he has found another mistake in the *Crimes of Christianity*. At least he was asseverating so at the top of his voice last Sunday. He alluded to the assertion that John in his Revelation "denounces the doctrine of Nicolas, one of the seven first deacons of the Church, as hateful." The reference is to Rev. ii. 15. "Oh," says the learned representative of the C. E. S., "it does not say Nicolas, it says the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate, and the Nicolaitanes were a vile set of people, while nobody knows who their founder was." Whereby Mr. Dunn shows his ignorance. Every early Christian Father who refers to the Nicolaitanes says their founder was Nicolas, one of the seven deacons, "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," mentioned in Acts vi. 5. Irenæus, the first Father who mentions by name the four Gospels, says in his first Book against Heresies, chapter xxvi., "The Nicolaitanes are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence." We quote from page 97 of the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*. Perhaps Mr. Engstrom will supply Mr. Dunn with a copy to look it up.

EPIPHANIUS, with whom Tertullian, Hilary, Gregory of Nyssa, and other Fathers agree, throws some light on the primitive Christians in his account of the Nicolaitanes, who evidently lasted for some time in the Christian Church. He says that Nicolas had a very beautiful wife, and following the counsels of perfection, i.e., the counsel of Jesus, to leave parents and wife, and make oneself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake, he separated from her, but the poor carnal man not being able to persevere in his resolution "returned like a dog to his vomit," which was very naughty in the eyes of these early Christians, who regarded marriage as little better than fornication.

CLEMENT of Alexandria, however, and Eusebius, give a different version of the affair, and one which despite their efforts does not redound any more to the credit of primitive Christianity. They say that the apostles reproved Nicolas for being jealous of his beautiful wife. Whereupon Nicolas produced her and said, anyone might marry her who pleased. Apparently Nicolas was of the opinion of those who held that Christians should share all

things in common, and thought Paul meant to abolish both exclusive property in women and other goods when he said "it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none . . . and they that buy as though they possessed not."

A CATHOLIC magazine has an article on the nature of the water and the blood said to have issued from the side of Jesus when pierced by a soldier. The presence of water, it says, cannot be satisfactorily accounted for on natural grounds, so we are bound to believe it was produced miraculously as a symbol of the union of spirit water and blood. Others may escape the difficulty by contending that their blessed Savior was troubled with the dropsy.

THE Catholic organ, *The Month*, deploring the leakage from the Church of Rome in England among the young lads when they leave school and mix with the world, advocates the establishment of boys' clubs to prevent the same. It says: "A boy should be passed on from the school to the patronage, and from the patronage to the men's club; we must never entirely lose sight of him." What is this but an acknowledgment that lads will bid adieu to the Church if once they slip from the clutches of the priests.

A YOUNG man named Percy Ball having been killed by the bursting of his gun, while shooting crows on a Sunday, a pious correspondent in the *Shooting Times* writes thus: "I cannot regard this case as an accident; it seems to me a terrible visitation of God, which may perhaps act as a warning to Sunday shooters in general." This godly sportsman must imagine that guns will not burst on week-days. But God commanded that the seventh day should be kept holy, and it was on the first day of the week that the gun burst. So the theory won't hold powder any better than the gun did.

THE *Islington News* reports a lecture by Miss Finkelstein on "City Life in Jerusalem," in which that lady refers to a little gate in the city called the "Eye of a Needle." She said she had heard many discussions with regard to Christ's saying, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." She had no doubt that Jesus Christ had in view one of those gates when he said that, and it was not a sewing-needle, "as infidels tried to argue." If Miss Finkelstein is correct, how came the disciples to be amazed and ask "Who then can be saved?" and Jesus to answer "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible"?

MISS FINKELSTEIN produces no evidence that there was a gate called the "Eye of a Needle" in the Jerusalem of the time of Christ. Moreover, there is a fact which proves that the early Christians took the saying literally. It is related in the *Acts of Peter and Andrew*, an early Christian document, that to convince a rich man Peter took a small needle, fixed it in the ground, and ordered a camel to go through the eye. The eye thereupon miraculously expanded and the camel went through twice.

THE Canadian Customs office appears to arrogate to itself the censorship of the press. A paragraph states that "A gentleman living in Montreal recently ordered from England the works of Professor Huxley, Professor Tyndall, and Mr. Herbert Spencer. But the books were all stopped by the collector of Customs and confiscated as being 'immoral, irreligious, and injurious.'"

THE British and Foreign Bible Society boasts an income of £318,026 0s. 2d. The National Secular Society would undertake to double the amount of work done by this society for half the money. The expenses of the Depository, including the salaries of clerks, warehousemen and porters, are all lumped up at £2,161 17s. 1d. This is hardly fair, for these poor fellows have the heaviest work and the poorest pay. Mr. "Depository" gets £400 a year, two secretaries £500 each; foreign do., £400; assistant do., £250; accountant, £350; agency do., £240; clerks, £925; servants, etc., £389; library and clerks, £193; office stationery, £368; postages, £425; collector, £115. The heavy sums for furniture, repairs, coals, gas, wood, etc., will be taken for granted, and the little bill for the May Meetings was £157.

BESIDES this, there are thirteen canvassers with salaries from £300 to £440 a year, and their travelling expenses run up to £1,996, while foreign agents, mostly in lands where the Bible is not wanted, get from £400 to £500 a year and travelling expenses. Evidently the B. and F. Bible Society can make some nice little appointments at home and abroad out of the church and chapel collections on its behalf.

THE *Church Times* says "That the Church, and with it the Gospel, have won the respect and even the veneration of the masses is happily quite true." This statement is hardly borne out by the figures of attendance at the churches. No minister in the East End is more respected than Mr. S. A. Barnett, of St. Jude's, Whitechapel. Yet, although that church accommodates six hundred people, the morning attendance at the recent census was set down at 96 and the evening attendance at 154.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Easter Sunday, April 10, at Baskerville Hall, the Crescent, Cambridge Street, Birmingham; at 11, "Mansions in the Sky;" at 3, "The Holy Ghost;" at 7, "Where is God?"

Wednesday, April 13, North Lambeth Branch N. S. S., 122 Kennington Road, S.E., at 8.30, "Heaven and Hell."

APRIL 17 and 24, Hall of Science, London.

MAY 1, Camberwell; 8, Portsmouth; 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.—R. W.

W. H. COOPER.—Always pleased to receive cuttings. See "Acid Drops."

F. D. SUMMER.—The figures are approximately correct, but it must be remembered that all the inhabitants of Christian countries are classed as Christians.

Z.—The writer you refer to is evidently ignorant of the facts of the case. We cannot, however, deal with the subject any further at present. Any person who wishes, can ascertain the truth for himself, by consulting the authorities we mentioned. We are as confident as it is possible to be in such a case, that Harriet Westbrook's suicide was entirely unconnected with any act of Shelley's. Pleased to hear that you are satisfied with our "effective replies" to the Rev. W. L. Watkinson.

EX-RITUALIST.—Shall appear.

F. SMITH.—Thanks for the cutting. *Progress* sent.

A. JAGGER.—We suppose your note is meant for Mr. Forder, to whom we have handed it.

W. T. L.—We hardly see anything that calls for notice. Cannot someone be found to sell the *Freethinker* at the Midland Arches? There was no one there last Sunday.

OAKENSHAW.—Many thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

E. MOORE.—Of course, if you believe in God you have a right to "stick" to him. Whenever you are in trouble we hope he will "stick" to you. You can let us know if you get any practical help from that quarter.

H. ROBERTS.—We should be glad to "expose" the passage in the *Evening News* if we understood it. The writer appears, to use Earl Beaconsfield's phrase, simply "inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity."

R. H. NESER.—Thanks for the suggestion. We know nothing of the Mr. Rawlings you inquire after. The degree of M.A. is conferred by a university, but anybody who likes can call himself a reverend.

S. PERRIN writes that the *Freethinker* will be sold at the Sunday morning open-air meetings, corner of College Park, Lee Road, Lewisham.

W. GARDNER.—We have handed your note to Mr. Forder, to whom all orders for literature should be sent. Sending them to Mr. Foote causes trouble and delay.

W. JACKSON.—We have read your letter with interest, but we have hardly space to insert it. We know nothing of the Mr. Atkinson you mention. Do you mean Watkinson?

W. V.—We should say that the best "attitude and action in relation to current religious opinions" is to fight and destroy them.

G. NAEWIGER.—Shall appear as you desire.

S. S.—We are obliged. See "Sugar Plums." Glad to hear you find *Bible Contradictions* so useful.

W. H. REYNOLDS, secretary of the Malthusian League, asks us to solicit subscriptions for the defence of Dr. Allbutt, who is threatened with expulsion from the Edinburgh Royal College of Physicians, on account of his *Wife's Handbook*. The Malthusian League is sending an able and careful address on the subject to all the fellows, members, and licentiates, who number altogether about six thousand. Whether they share Dr. Allbutt's views or not, Freethinkers should maintain his right to publish them. Subscriptions can be sent to Mr. Reynolds, Camplin House, Hatcham Park, London, S.E.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Sporting Times—Chat—Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Liberal—Railway Signal—La Semaine Anticlericale—Jus—Liberator—Boston Investigator—Islington News—Modern Society—Barton County Enquirer—Thinker—Western Figaro—Truthseeker—Keene's Bath Journal—Echo—Personal Rights Journal—Women's Suffrage Journal—Glad Tidings.

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.

LAST Sunday the new Secular Hall at Manchester was formally opened by a course of three lectures by Mr. Foote in aid of the Building Fund. The hall was densely packed in the evening by a most enthusiastic audience, and the lecturer was in first-rate form. Mr. George Payne presided, and forcibly urged the claims of the Building scheme, Mr. Foote adding some earnest words on the subject. We have not yet learned the full result of this

appeal, but we can safely say that there was a very considerable addition to the funds. Many fresh shares were taken up, and the collecting-boxes for donations were well filled. Mrs. Besant lectures in the hall early in May, and after that the Company should have all the requisite money to complete the purchase.

LIKE the Portsmouth hall, the new Manchester hall is a converted chapel. The christening font, in fact, is not yet removed. Converting chapels into Freethought halls is an excellent idea. Probably this is the way in which Christianity will gradually expire. It will be worth living to see a Secular orator holding forth in St. Paul's.

SOME London friends have taken shares in the Manchester Hall Company. We are delighted to learn the fact, and we trust that their example will be followed by other Freethinkers in various parts of the country. Manchester is so important a centre, and the present opportunity is such a rare one, that the friends of the movement might lend a helping hand although they reside at a distance.

It is refreshing to witness the earnestness and vigor with which the Manchester Branch, and one or two outside Freethinkers, are working to make the scheme a success. From the younger ones, like Mr. Hemingway the active secretary, to veterans like Mr. Ridgway, who carries a genial heart although the snows of seventy-eight winters crown his head—all are doing their level best. They certainly *deserve* success, and it will be a shame if they don't achieve it. Two months remain in which to raise the rest of the money. The time is brief, and therefore all the laggards should "come up to the scratch" at once. Some who have already taken shares might also see whether they cannot take a few more, for the investment is sound and safe.

MR. FOOTE's article in *Progress* entitled "A New Religion," deals with Mr. Belfort Bax's new book, *The Religion of Socialism*, in a way that gentleman can hardly be expected to relish. In addition to the able discussion of "The New Sociology" by Messrs. Leatham and Ball, Mr. Salt contributes a paper on "Shelley and the Christian Faith," which deserves the attention of all Freethinkers. Mr. Wheeler condenses a deal of information in his paper on "Religious Dances" as well as in his valuable "Freethought Biographies."

THREE members of the Young Men's Christian Association at Plymouth have turned Freethinkers through reading our literature.

THERE has been another grand fight at the Oakenshaw Literary Institute. The bigots made a fresh attempt, at the recent quarterly meeting, to expel the *Freethinker* from the reading-room, but they were beaten by fifty-six to ten. As they get a worse beating every time, we should imagine they will have sense enough to relinquish the contest.

THE Rev. M. G. Pearce, preaching at St. Mary's Wesleyan Chapel, Bedford, bewailed the fact that "there are in London 2,600,000 souls outside all religious provision by any of the sects. Each day 287 were added to the population, yet Christianity seemed paralysed in the face of it." The reverend gentleman said he felt inclined to wish "that God would bury all the Christians and burn all the churches."

MANY of our London readers will remember Mr. W. Willis, who was once a familiar figure at the Hall of Science. He is now settled in Sydney, where he is engaged in the sale of Freethought literature. His advertisement in the *Liberator* contains a complete list of Mr. Foote's publications.

COL. INGERSOLL declines the tempting offers which are made to him to go upon the stage, despite his fondness for it and the fact that Col. Hayden offers him the part of Falstaff, a character for which Nature, increasing years, and prosperity have in a great measure fitted him. That the brilliant advocate would have succeeded had he adopted the stage as a profession, no one doubts; and it is equally certain that had he turned his attention to divinity he would have been regarded as a gem of the purest water.—*New York Earth*.

AMONG the hitherto unpublished letters by Thackeray now appearing in *Scribner* is one wherein the great novelist mentions a visit to Blenheim. Thackeray says: "What you would have liked best was the chapel dedicated to God and the Duke of Marlborough. The monument to the latter occupies the whole place almost, so that the former is quite secondary."

THE Nonconformists are not satisfied with the Government Bill which proposed to allow marriage by Nonconformist clergymen. At a conference at Manchester, a resolution was adopted which declared that the Bill is hopelessly spoiled by ignorance of Nonconformist organisations. A second resolution was also passed declaring that the only satisfactory solution was the extension of the system of civil registration. This is undoubtedly the true policy. A legal contract such as marriage, should be registered by the civil officer of the State which has to recognise and enforce that contract. Those who wish are perfectly free to add

whatever religious ceremonies they please. That State clergymen alone should celebrate marriages without the presence of the registrar is an unfair privilege. That any and every clergyman of any other sect whatever should be allowed a similar privilege is fraught with serious objections and difficulties. If, too, the head of a chapel celebrates marriages, why should not the head of a Freethought association, or a Freethought lecturer?

THE ROCK ON CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

AFTER lamenting the grievously unorthodox views of Beecher, who taught Darwinism and "did not preach what would really be called the Gospel," the *Rock* thinks it as well to give a leading article on "Christian Evidences"—possibly with the idea of restoring the disturbed balance of belief produced by the contemplation of a brilliant and successful revolt against the strict orthodoxy of both Church and Chapel.

In an article on Evidences one expects to discover some idea of the nature and relative force of evidence. But the logical or intellectual sense seems lacking, and assertion is continually mistaken for proof. The *Rock* says:—

"So far as we are aware, the attempt to question either that the authors were the persons to whom the Books are attributed, or that the records themselves mainly assert matters of fact, has long since passed away from the arena of infidel controversy."

The "attempt" (!) to question the Mosaic authorship and historic genuineness of the "Books of Moses" a failure? Has the *Rock* been asleep, like Rip Van Winkle? No scholar can possibly dispute the fact that Moses was *not* the writer, unless he owns that Moses wrote the account of his own funeral and mentioned circumstances and persons utterly unknown till five hundred years after his death. The Book of Isaiah was written by two different persons. Were they both the genuine Isaiah? The book of Daniel is little better than a forgery of later date. The only thing known about the authorship of two of the Gospels ascribed to apostles is that they could *not* have been written by the persons whose names they bear. And the other two are written by nobodies. Mark and Luke were not apostles or known witnesses. They are little better than short names or labels attached to practically unknown authors for convenience of reference. They give no more clue to the real personalty behind them than the name of Junius did to the writer of the once famous letters. And the *Rock* has the indomitable audacity, the brazen stupidity, the calm, blind impudence, to tell the world that this dispute about the authorship and *bona fides* of the books of the Bible has "long since passed away from the arena of infidel controversy." It might as well tell us, with the calm, unwavering assurance of holy infallibility, that the sun has passed away from the heavens.

The *Rock* goes on to say:—

"We may take for granted this, that the records themselves were transmitted by men who had no purpose to serve by deception, and from the nature of the case could not themselves have been deceived."

We are to take all this "for granted," it seems. Why, it is the whole question at issue. To assume, as a matter of course, that the writers and custodians of Scripture could have had no motive for deception (which includes self-deception) is absurdly foolish. Vanity and religious fanaticism are most powerful motives, to say nothing of self-interest. The assumption that writers who transmitted certain accounts of miracles *could not* have been deceived is an assumption of infallibility and personal perfection which it would be absurd to make on behalf of the wisest of men, and which is monstrous when made on behalf of credulous, ignorant, fanatical men like the early Christians, who taught and believed almost incredible follies, and who were demonstrably guilty of altering Scripture, and of many other pious frauds, for the glory of God and the good of the Church.

The *Rock* continues:—

"What, then, do these men themselves say on the subject? Everywhere they assert, with no conceivable motive but truth—and oftentimes they suffered for the testimony—that their message was from God himself."

"Everywhere?" The books of the Bible, as a rule make no such pretence. The book of Esther does not even mention the name of the Deity from beginning to end.

Forcible assertion is made to take the place of feeble fact. Emphatic assertion, together with apologies for the scientific and sociological imperfections of the Bible, are the means by which the minds, "not a few," that are "perplexed by contact with infidel speculations," are to be shown the "shallowness of infidel opinions" and the superabundance of Christian evidence.

The real "evidence," we find, that convinces the earnest Christian is purely subjective or emotional. He is comforted with a "sense of the soul's rest and satisfaction nowhere to be found but in God." "This sort of evidence," as the *Rock* calls it, "becomes more and more a moral conviction" till revelation is in accordance with conscience—or, rather, till conscience is perverted by the requirements of revelation. The chief evidence of the believer is the same as the beer-drinker's—personal satisfaction. This guarantees the high character and unassailable virtues of the intoxicating article. Satisfaction of "spiritual" appetite—of other-worldly covetousness and overwhelming self-conceit, it may be—is the test of truth rather than cold fact and logical reasoning. This form of argument, if valid, leads to strange conclusions. The delightful satisfaction which the flirt finds in believing herself "beautiful for ever" proves the objective truth of her pleasant assumption, and a consolatory belief in a bouncing legacy or splendid wages ensures the speedy receipt of such boons. A beautiful poem must be true. An exquisite novel cannot possibly be fiction. A touching drama at once convinces the heart of its historic accuracy. Popular myths are facts because they gratify the people. Vanity, pride, self-conceit, ambition, love, desire, greed, personal arrogance, and covetousness of all kinds prove the truth of the most outrageous theories which minister to the satisfaction of such passions. All pleasant beliefs are necessarily true. Roman Catholicism must be true, Mohammedanism must be true, Buddhism must be true, and the mythologies of all nations must have been true at the time they were believed. Such are the absurdities in which Christians are landed by this peculiarly religious doctrine. Other reasoners are constantly on their guard against the deceptive bias of strong personal feelings and desires. The believer welcomes that bias as a mathematical demonstration of its own infallibility.

The other Christian evidences are, that the Bible is "never found to be contradictory" (!); that its "miraculous testimony" is of a particularly satisfactory nature (!); that its teachings agree with the conscience (!); and, above all, that "the man Jesus Christ is the sum and substance of the testimony of the Inspired Word," and by his presence in our hearts must reproduce in our lives and actions "the life of Jesus made manifest in the mortal flesh." "Such an evidence," we are assured, "will in due time carry conviction to the most sceptical." Judging from the past, this "due time" may be thousands of years yet; for eighteen hundred years of Christian example in the way of persecution and bloodshed have only alienated the leading minds of the world, and forced them to secularise politics and science as the only means of securing freedom and truth, and their concomitant, progress.

W. P. BALL.

A LEADING paper in Chicago informs its readers that at the recent consecration of a new church "upon the altar was seated the venerable Bishop McLaren and twenty-five or more deans and rectors from the diocese." They must have good sized altars out in America. But probably the reporter and editor, like Gallio and ourselves, care nothing for these things.

THE Young Men's Christian Association of New York has expelled a gentleman because he happens to be of African extraction. The chairman says: "No one regrets the necessity of excluding this estimable young colored man more than we do, but no other course was open to us. He graduated from Cooper Institute, and was in every respect a worthy man, but there is a strong prejudice against colored people among those we are particularly anxious to reach, and we cannot ignore it." Christianity boasts loudly of its universal brotherhood, and this is what it comes to in practice. A man and a brother is driven out from a Christian society in spite of his excellent character and attainments, and solely because he has a dark skin. What hypocrites these professors of Christian love must be. They recite the Golden Rule with the greatest unction, and then in their actions laugh it out of court as if it were fit only for silly children and mad fanatics.

CHRIST AT "THE SCIENTIFERIES."

By the help of a talisman in the shape of a metallic disc, I was enabled to be present at the Hall of Science Students' Association conversazione, last Wednesday, where was provided a "feast of thimgumy and a flow of what's its name." It was with trepidation I entered, expecting either to find a bloodthirsty crew, as depicted by my followers, or a set of soft-brained cranks, but was surprised instead to meet the most courteous gentlemen and such a galaxy of feminine gracefulness, such sweetness, such—well, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these." I even met sweet dimpled childhood, full of lovely prattle; for the moment I couldn't help quoting an old author (taking one of these flower gems on my knee) and said "Suffer little children to come unto me," and she "comed." This little scientific maiden of two summers evincing a desire for "feets," I blushed, thinking she referred to my pedal extremities, but found succulent "sweets" was the massive thought that filled her mind; all the vast array of scientific instruments being as nothing compared to "Scotch mixture" in this illustrious maiden's thoughts.

I am pleased to think I was dissuaded from appearing in my conventional costume, and was arrayed in the costume of nineteenth century civilisation—"bell topper, claw-hammer coat and clean billed rag," as your tutelary demon observed. I trembled once, thinking some member would raise a point of order, when a chunk of old red sandstone (from the specimens) would fetch him in the abdomen. But no, all went smoothly, only one jokist asking me the price of figs, alluding to some bygone "cussing" business. This jokist also led me to the refreshment buffet. Calling for a glass of liquid having the appearance of water, he requested me to turn it into wine. It was only his fun, and I turned it into my "tummy" instead, finding it was very pleasant, being flavored with the dew off Ben Nevis. I took another.

Having re-entered the Hall and taking my stand by the platform, I scraped acquaintance with an articulated lady hanging from a peg. She noticed me while saying, "O that those osseous cavities had language!" She gibbered at me, and with a movement of the foot seemed to be beating time to a sonata then being performed. There was certainly a whisper from the skeletonised lady when "Phil Blood's Leap" was being read, for she audibly remarked "That's bully." The rayless socket lady looked wistfully with a broad grin on her poor thin face when the Hall was being cleared for dancing, asking me plainly as if she could talk, "would I mind giving her a spin round in the mazy dance." Later on I had made up my mind to try and perform the Lazarus trick or the Elijah bone business with her, and then hand her over to the jocular young man, when a rude person forcibly removed her, folding her in his arms and actually waltzing with her, shaking her poor bones lamentably. The look of anguish that fell from those eyeless caverns almost made me try a miracle, so that that gentle breast could be relieved by a gush of tears. The gentleman who exhibited the Japanese swords said rather ostentatiously "I come to bring peace, not a sword"—an evident misquotation. The microscopes—(didn't have them 1800 years ago)—showed some flies my brothers and myself had originally made, but I found they had been added to by the old man in a vindictive spirit, he having put a kind of lancet on most of them so as to cause annoyance to anybody on whom they suddenly sat down.

The evening was spent by me very pleasantly, and I shall certainly tell the old man that this genial company must not be mixed with those rascals he has got together up above. They must have a place where they can intermingle with as genial and happy fellows as they are themselves; and their sunny-hearted children must not be doomed to those metallic streets, but rather a special flower paradise must be provided for them, so they may be knee-deep in them at their play. And don't forget the "feets," as my scientific maiden tells me.

A LITTLE girl, so the *Christian Herald* says, dreamt that her grandfather, who wouldn't pay his debts, was too heavy for the angels to carry to heaven. The foreman angel told him it was his debts that weighed him down. On being told of this dream, the old gentleman promptly repented and paid all he owed. "Not long after he really died," says the *Christian Herald*, "and the angels had no trouble in carrying him to heaven." How does the editor know this? If the Bible is true, the statement must be sheer lying, because people will not go to heaven till after the resurrection and the last judgment. Perhaps the moral is that if a Christian pays his debts he will die soon after. Captain Henry Drummond Wolf acts as if he believed this to be the correct theory.

OBITUARY.—We deeply regret to learn of a calamity which has befallen Mr. Mendum, the proprietor of the *Boston Investigator*. We had just chronicled in type, under the heading of "Sugar Plums," the announcement of the marriage of Mr. Ernest Mendum, assistant conductor of the *Investigator*, with Miss Isabel Crowell, daughter of Captain Gorham Crowell, of West Yarmouth, when we learnt from a private source that the bride was dead. After the marriage had been performed by Mr. L. K. Washburn, who unites the functions of a Justice of the Peace with those of a Freethought lecturer, the bride and bridegroom went for a week's sojourn in New York, and upon their return the bride suddenly expired. We wish to express our deep sympathy with the family in their affliction.

RESURRECTION.

I AM a spirit on furlough from purgatory—no small boon I can tell you, taking the very pronounced state of the climate into consideration—and I wish to give you Freethought chaps a little lecture, to save you landing into a place where the temperature, to say the least, is abnormal. When I first went to purgatory I was decorated with a long tail, which it has taken me centuries to get rid of, but I have at length lost it, having matriculated with honors; I hope to get a degree soon, and then farewell to sulphur for ever. It is recorded in the 27th chapter of Matthew that "Many bodies of the saints which slept, arose," and that they, "Went into the holy city and appeared unto many." Now you mock at this, and cynically ask how it is that we hear no more of the resurrected saints, of where they had been, what they had been doing, of the manner in which they got return fares, and other items of slight moment to mortals. This only shows the crass ignorance of moderns. The explanation is at hand, plain and simple. Miracles and resurrections—we didn't call resurrections miracles—were of every-day occurrence, and resurrections were taken scarcely any notice of; the dailies would not even report them unless paid for it, and then they appeared under the general head of "Resurrections," such as: "On the 15th inst. at Capernaum, Joab Smith, (died B.C. 119) cordially welcomed, won't say where he has been, but smells strongly of phosphorus. Friends kindly accept this, the only intimation." Or again: "On the 12th, at Bethany, Abel, the son of Hartful Kuss, three weeks overdue; will not report, but this being his third animate, it looks like a bad hat—no cards." Such things were quite common, and you never knew when your grandfather who died (last) say fifty years ago, was going to take it into his head to resurrect, and prospect around. Side by side with these announcements you would have: "Lost: a right thigh bone and knee-cap, property of Simeon Williams, supposed to have been left in Gehenna, just outside the city, funder please return to Buz Williams, pork butcher, Jeru.

At times an old fossil who had perhaps been petrified for ages, and who ought to have known better, would take it into his brainpan to animate, saying he felt lonesome and wanted a stretch, and would appear to his relations (the nearest he could find) when they were perhaps sitting down to supper. Would that family evince surprise? Not a great deal. One would perhaps say, "Sit down; will you take some tripe, or a rasher? Ah—beg pardon; old Uncle Sol, I believe?" Then the nondescript would doubtless remark, "Don't be so frivolous!—of course it is; who the devil should it be?" Then he would perhaps smoke a bit to keep off suggestive odors, and the friends would stuff muffins and Australian mutton into his abdominal cavity, and all would be calm and bright, and they would have a good time.

I don't know but what things are managed better now though, because it led to intricacies and law-suits without end, and a fellow could never call his soul his own, so to speak; and when a man married a widow a shindy was likely to occur any day. You never knew such a place as Judea, there were no less than two hundred and nineteen resurrection law-suits on when I died time before last. The modern corpse is more sensible, and stays away, and don't come fooling around where he isn't wanted. He has too much respect for himself. There is almost bound to be a row over the old clock, and the china, and other scattered heirlooms; and when you consider the outlay on black, the price of show collins, and—but there, this has nothing to do with old Jerusalem, and I should advise you chaps to suck in that twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew, or you won't stand a ghost of a chance. Ta-ta, I'm off. ENDOR.

IF railway employés were judged by the literature provided for them, they would be set down as a particularly credulous class of people. The *Railway Signal* is full of remarkable providences and other rubbish unfit for even the most infantile mind. Here is a cutting from the April number: "We heard recently of a poor railway-man who lay a-dying; and as one of his mates went to see him, he said, 'It is no use your coming here, I've got nine devils round me, I can see them; they mean to have me, I'm lost.' Another friend called, but he would not listen. He may be gone now, but where? Christ can cast devils out—even a legion. If you have any in you, come to Christ. He is mighty to save."

THE great, the horrible crime which the Church abominates, is simony. Yet it is as clear as daylight that all the Bishops are flagrantly guilty of this sin. Simony is paying money for the reception of Holy Orders, and every candidate is called on to pay a sum of from £4 to £6 (nicely called "fees") both for deacon's and priest's orders. It is no answer to say that the Bishop does not get this really vast annual revenue—because if he does not actually pocket it himself, it is a piece of splendid patronage for a relative, often a son, always someone he desires to well provide for. If this money is of no consideration to their Right Reverend Lordships, why not forget it, or pay it out of their enormous salaries rather than defile themselves so foully with this pitch? Moreover, Bishop Burnet assures us that he actually knew an old prelate who ordained people of all kinds, merely for the sake of these "fees!" Let anyone propose the abolition of this glaring simony, and we should soon see how tenaciously the Bishops would cling to it.—*Modern Society*.

BLASPHEMY LAWS IN AMERICA.

THE *Truthseeker Annual* gives a complete collection of the laws of the United States relating to blasphemy, the Oath, and the Sabbath observance. In the Connecticut Code of 1642 blasphemy was punishable by death, and was so punishable even after the Revolutionary war—till 1784—when the penalty was changed to whipping on the naked body, not exceeding forty stripes, and sitting in the pillory an hour. At present—since 1821—the penalty is a fine of one hundred dollars, imprisonment for not more than a year, and the heretic may also be compelled to give bonds that he will not again so offend the kind-hearted Christians. Dakota describes blasphemy as “casting contumelious reproach or profane ridicule upon God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, the holy scriptures, or the Christian religion,” and it is a misdemeanor unless it shall appear beyond question that such language is used in serious discussion. Delaware puts religion into her constitution, has strict Sunday and blasphemy laws, and ignores the federal Constitution and tramples upon right by compelling every county to pay to each Sunday-school fifty cents annually for each white scholar in the school. The negroes may pay their own Sunday-school bills. Maine has two years' imprisonment for the bold man who shall deny that God created, governs, and will finally judge the world. Anyone who profanely speaks of the Trinity in Maryland, may be placed in gaol for six months. Massachusetts has a blasphemy law very nearly like New Jersey's. Other states have equally unjust legal discrimination against Freethinkers, and the Sunday legislation is enormous. The compilation occupies forty-five large pages, in small type.

PROFANE JOKES.

RILEY: “Shpakin of religun, me wife, Mary Ann, is an infidel.” Rafferty: “Shure, an' that's too bad. Why don't ye git a divorce?” Riley: “On phwat grounds, Rafferty?” Rafferty: “On the ground of infidelity av coorse.” “WHAT wuz de tex dis mornin', Mister Johnson? I war too late.” “It war 'bout de meracles, Brother Snow. Whar de Lor' fed seven people on five thousand baskets ob fish.” “I doan' see any meracle 'bout dat.” “Oh, de meracle am dey didn't all bust.”

PARSON: EASY giving a lesson about the loaves and fishes, read that “they that had eaten were about five hundred.” “Five thousand,” whispered the clerk. “Five hundred's quite enough for them to swallow,” whispered back the parson.

GEORGIE: “Do babies cry in heaven, mother?” Mother: “No, dear; they are all good.” Georgie: “Are there many there?” Mother: “Yes, dear, a great many.” Florrie (who is trying to pacify the baby): “A good job too; there's too many left down here as it is.”

A GERMAN priest was walking in procession at the head of his communicants over cultivated fields, in order to procure a blessing upon the crops. When he came to one of unpromising appearance he would pass on, saying, “Here prayer and singing will avail nothing until it have manure.”

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A New Religion. By G. W. Foote.
Shelley and the Christian Faith. By H. S. Salt.
The New Sociology.—III. By James Leatham.
The “New Sociology” Criticised.—II. By W. P. Ball.
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SECULAR SCHOOLS, FAILSWORTH.

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