

# THE FREETHINKER

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Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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## OVER JORDAN,

*And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) . . . the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap . . . And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan —JOSHUA III., 15-17.*

## PIOUS PUERILITIES.

FAITH and credulity are the same thing with different names. When a man has plenty of faith he is ready to believe anything. However fantastic it may be, however childish, however infantile, he accepts it with gaping wonder. His imagination is not necessarily strong, but it is easily excited. Macaulay held that savages have stronger imaginations than civilised men, and that as the reason develops the imagination decays. But, in our opinion, he was mistaken. The imagination does not wither under the growth of reason; on the contrary, it flourishes more strongly. It is, however, disciplined by reason, and guided by knowledge; and it only appears to be weaker because the relation between it and other faculties has changed. The imagination of the savage seems powerful because his other faculties are weak. In the absence of knowledge it cuts the most astonishing capers, just as a bird would if it were suddenly deprived of sight. Now the savage is a mental child, and the ignorant and thoughtless are mental savages. They credit the absurdest stories, and indulge in the most ridiculous speculations. When religion ministers to their weakness,

as it always does, they gravely discuss the most astonishing puerilities. Indeed, the history of religious thought—that is, of the infantile vagaries of the human mind—is full of puerilities. There is hardly an absurdity which learned divines have not debated as seriously as scientists discuss the nebular hypothesis or the evolution theory. They have argued how many angels could dance on the point of a needle; whether Adam had a navel; whether ghosts and demons could cohabit with women; whether animals could sin; and what was to be done with a rat that devoured a holy wafer. We believe the decision of the last weighty problem, after long debate, was that the rat, having the body of Christ in its body, was sanctified, and that it had to be eaten by the priest, by which means the second person of the Trinity was saved from desecration.

But of all the pious puerilities on record, probably the worst are ascribed to the Rabbis. The faith of those gentlemen was unbounded, and they were so fond of trivialities, that where they found none they manufactured them. The Rabbis belonged to the most credulous race of antiquity. "Tell that to the Jews," as we see from Juvenal, was as common as our saying, "Tell that to the marines." The chosen people were infinitely superstitious. They had no head for science, nor have they to this day; but they were

past-masters in every magical art, and connoisseurs in amulets and charms. Their Rabbis were the hierophants of their fanatical folly. They devoted amazing industry, and sometimes remarkable ingenuity, to its development; frequently glossing the very Scriptures of their religion with dexterous imbecilities that raise a sinister admiration in the midst of our laughter. This propensity is most noticeable in connection with Bible stories. When the chroniclers and prophets record a good solemn wonder, which reads as though it ought to be true if it is not, they allege or suggest little additions that give it an air of ostentatious silliness. Hundreds of such instances have come under my eyes in foraging for extra-Biblical matter for my *Bible Heroes*, but I have only room for one or two specimens.

King Nimrod was jealous of young Abraham, as Herod was jealous of young Jesus. He tried various methods to get rid of the boy, but all in vain. At last he resolved to burn Abraham alive. This would have made a striking scene, but the pious puerility of the sequel spoils it all. The king issued a decree, ordering every man in his kingdom to bring wood to heat the kiln. What a laughable picture! Behold every adult subject wending his way to the crematorium with a bundle of sticks on his back—"For Abraham." The Mussulman tradition (Mohammedans and Jews are much alike, and both their religions are Semitic) informs us that Nimrod himself died in the most extraordinary manner. A paltry little gnat, with a game leg and one eye, flew up his nostril, and lodged in his brain, where it tormented him for five hundred years. During the whole of that period, in which the gnat displayed a longevity that casts Methuselah's into the shade, the agonising King could only obtain repose by being struck on the head; and relays of men were kept at the palace to pound his royal skull with a blacksmith's hammer. The absurdity of the story is transcendent. One is charitably tempted to believe, for the credit of human nature, that it was the work of a subtle, solemn wag, who thought it a safe way of satirising the proverbial thick-headedness of kings.

What reader of the Bible does not remember the pathetic picture of Esau falling on Jacob's neck and weeping, in a paroxysm of brotherly love and forgiveness? But the Rabbis daub it over with their pious puerilities. They solemnly inform us that Esau was a trickster, as though Jacob's qualities were catching; and that he tried to bite his brother's neck, but God turned it into marble, and he only broke his teeth. Esau wept for the pain in his grinders. But why did Jacob weep? This looks like a poser, yet later Rabbis surmounted the difficulty. Jacob's neck was not turned into marble, but toughened. It was hard enough to hurt Esau's teeth, and still tender enough to make Jacob suffer, so they cried in concert, though for different reasons. In short, the Rabbis make them a couple of right down Jews.

Satyrs are mentioned in the Bible, although they never existed outside the superstitious imagination. The Rabbis undertook to explain the peculiar structure of these fabulous creatures, as well as of fauns, who somewhat resemble them. The theory was started, therefore, that God was overtaken by the Sabbath while he was creating them, and was obliged to postpone finishing them till the next day. Hence they are misshapen! The Rabbis also say that God cut off Adam's tail to make Eve of. The Bible origin of woman is low, but this is lower still. However, if Adam exchanged his tail for a wife he made a very good bargain, despite the apple and the Devil.

Captain Noah, says the Talmud, could not take the rhinoceros into the ark because it was too big. Rabbi Janai solemnly asserts that he saw a young rhinoceros, only a day old, as big as Mount Tabor. Its neck was three miles long, its head half a mile, and the river Jordan was choked by its excrement. Let us pause at this stretch, which "stands well for high." Perhaps the Christian will join us in laughing at such pious puerilities. But he should remember that the Bible is loaded with absurdities that are little inferior. Ravens bring a prophet sandwiches, another prophet besieges a tile; an axe swims on the water, a man slays a thousand in battle with the jaw-bone of a donkey, an ass speaks, and a whale swallows and vomits a man. Had these pious puerilities occurred in any other book, they would have been laughed to scorn; but being in the Bible, they must be credited on pain of eternal damnation.

G. W. FOOTE.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SERVICE OF MAN.

THE current number of the *Congregational Review*, in which the *British Quarterly* has merged, contains an article with the above title from the pen of Dr. Fairbairn, principal of Airedale College. The article is a review of, or rather an attack upon, Mr. James Cotter Morison's recent book, *The Service of Man*, and its value may be judged by its calling that work *persiflage* and Mr. Morison a *persifleur*. When Carlyle, in his essay on Voltaire, applied these terms to that great mental emancipator, he was not without some justification. Voltaire never pretended to solemn veneration for the shams that Christians hold so sacred. The brilliant Frenchman attacked superstition with the rapier of wit. His lounge went to the quick, but the touch was so light and airy that there was some excuse for calling him a trifler. Mr. Morison, however, is a deeply serious writer. If he had written nothing but his noble *Life of St. Bernard*, Christian critics would set him down among the most painstaking and thoughtful of contemporary men of letters. When it is discovered that he has discarded the superstition which Dr. Fairbairn is paid to inculcate, he, of course, becomes a *persifleur*. The ground of accusation is curious. Mr. Morison deals with Christianity as revealed in history instead of with "the mind of Christ." Mr. Morison, however, did not write his work to please a teacher of divinity. Doubtless had he confined his attention to that very speculative topic, "the mind of Christ," his criticism would have been equally distasteful to Dr. Fairbairn. When sceptics attack the character and teaching of Jesus, professional Christians either say they are too foul to argue with, or else appeal to the triumphs of the Gospel in history; and when they are shown that Christianity has been rather a curse than a blessing to the world, they boast of the divine exemplar whose character must be perfect because they will not allow it to be criticised adversely.

Mr. Morison's book, as the preface informs us, is incomplete in consequence of illness. It is "an Essay towards the Religion of the Future." As that religion, he believes, will substitute the service of man for the worship of God, he inquires the attitude of the modern mind towards supernatural dogmas. He finds they are everywhere fading. Whereas scientific truth, though opposed on its first presentation, invariably ends by becoming certain and unquestioned, religious dogmas, begin with undoubting acceptance but with the growth of knowledge and more severe canons of criticism, are disputed, and end at last in the class of rejected and exploded errors.

Mr. Morison shows by quotation how theologians have had to modify their views as science has advanced. He points out that this change of front will not do:

"The whole scheme of Christian theology is meaningless except on the assumption of the fall of man from a primitive state of innocence and virtue. Unless theologians are prepared to throw over St. Paul, they must hold that 'as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' . . . But if ever a thesis was demonstrated, it is that man has not fallen, but risen, and that from the lowest level of animal existence."

Such is the conclusion of a man of letters. Dr. Fairbairn, being a theologian, cannot be expected to see it, or to notice such a piece of *persiflage* as the statement that "the belief in miracles is universal in wholly unscientific times. With the growth of culture it diminishes, with the extension of science it disappears." Dr. Fairbairn adopts the new readings of Scripture without noticing Mr. Morison's queries, "If your new interpretation is the correct one, why was it not discovered before?" and "If your predecessors taught error in the dogmas you discard, what guarantee have you to offer that those dogmas which you still maintain may not some day be discovered to be equally untenable?"

The high and mighty way in which Dr. Fairbairn speaks of the standard doctrines of Christianity, embodied in its creeds and defended by the authority of great theologians, as only held by "junior classes at a Sunday school," is vastly amusing. How comes it that "junior classes at a Sunday school" are taught doctrines which Dr. Fairbairn repudiates in controversy? It is because ministers instructed by such as Dr. Fairbairn go on teaching, "Thus saith the Lord," what they and he know full well the Lord never said at all. The supercilious way in which he speaks of Bishop Butler is equally entertaining. "His apologetical deficiencies and inadequacies have long been known and

pointed out. He wrote for his own day; his assumptions are those of his age, not of ours; no man who knows what he is about now cites Butler as a final or adequate apologetic." It is certain Dr. Fairbairn need not fear the treatment which he accords to the great apologist of the last century. In another hundred years he will not be sufficiently remembered to be repudiated.

Mr. Morison finds that although men no longer believe in any of the dogmas that distinguish Christianity from other religions, they hesitate to cast it aside because they believe it to be a solace and a support to morality. A sober examination, however, shows that the consolations of religion have been much exaggerated, and that the darker side, "the fear of wrath to come," has had far greater weight in the history of the past. As to morality, Mr. Morison says that the doctrine of salvation by faith has led to the most disastrous consequences. When Christianity was most believed, morality was most backward. "The temperature of faith rises steadily as we penetrate into the past, almost with the same regularity which marks the rise of the physical temperature of the air as we descend into a deep mine; but a neglect and defiance of morality are found to ascend in a corresponding ratio." In the ages of faith sound belief and crime went hand in hand. How is this to be reconciled with the theory that morality is dependent on Christianity? "Oh," says Dr. Fairbairn, in answer to the array of facts brought by Mr. Morison in his survey of the Ages of Faith, "this is not the religion of Christ." If you want to know the religion of Christ, you must not study the history of the creeds and the fathers of the Church, but go to Airedale College, where Dr. Fairbairn will inform you that Jesus Christ was a highly cultivated Protestant gentleman with a great love of science and scorn for superstition. But why didn't he look after his religion a little and see that it was not so badly perverted?

Mr. Morison does not confine his attention to the Crimes of Christianity. He takes it at its best in such lives as those of Sister Dora Pattison and Mother Margaret Hallahan, yet he shows how much more efficacious science is for good than all their Christian devotion.

The *Service of Man* concludes with a chapter on the cultivation of Human Nature, every word of which is weighty—for every word has evidently been well weighed. To call such a work *persiflage* is indeed trifling. But trifling with words is the business of all professional sky-pilots, and it is Dr. Fairbairn's vocation to teach all who are sufficiently dull or dishonest to study for the pulpit, how they may best hide their ignorance and gloss over the difficulties of their creeds with clouds of jargon.

J. M. WHEELER.

## ACID DROPS.

AN Eastern Counties' newsagent has had no less than three of Sankey's hymn-books stolen from his counter. Perhaps the hymn-books, like the singers, are "Safe in the arms of Jesus," but if Old Nick knows his business (and he used to in old times) he will fish them out, and souse them in brimstone. The books might be hung round the pious thieves' necks, with an everlasting fire-proof label—"Stolen."

NOT far from the same place there is a sky-pilot who feeds his chickens on the remnants of the Sacrament bread. Strange to say, the eggs are very ordinary ones, and not even marked with a cross.

SUPERSTITION seems to be almost as rampant in the Madras Presidency as it was with Jephthah and other biblical heroes. A human sacrifice has been offered to a deity. A woman was believed to be possessed with a devil, and the father with some friends, after various religious ceremonies, selected a victim, whom they sent for. They made him drunk, cut his head off, and offered his blood mixed with rice to one of their gods. Their faith was as great and as commendable as that of Abraham in offering Isaac, yet the police have arrested them as vulgar murderers. We wonder whether such incidents as this enables Christians to realise the moral gravity of kindred atrocities recorded of God's friends in the Bible. The man after God's own heart sent seven men to be hung before the Lord to stay a famine.

THE *Freethinker* is causing a great deal of excitement in the Radical Club of a certain Yorkshire town. After much wrangling, a majority of the members have decided to let this journal be put on the reading-room table; but the president, two committee-men, and several of the older members have resigned. Worse still, the *Freethinker* is stolen by some godly believer in the

eight commandment directly it is left on the table. Fresh meetings are threatened and the bigots mean to move heaven and earth—and hell too, for that matter—to get the obnoxious paper ejected. Well, if Radicals are such bigots, they might just as well be Tories. There are some of them who rave at party meetings about "freedom," and so forth, who stink of the beastly fanaticism of the little Bethel all the time.

A MRS. WILLIAMS, who appeared at Clerkenwell police-court, the other day, had made a little mistake in trying to pick the pocket of a detective. When she recognised him on his seizing her arm, she cried out "Oh, my God!" Piety from pickpockets is not so unnatural as Christians would pretend. Spanish and Italian brigands are remarkably pious. Their oaths and exclamations are exceedingly religious, and they seek the blessing of the saints before cutting throats, and the forgiveness of the Virgin afterwards.

THE *Melbourne Harbinger of Light* reports that its mail parcel of books and periodicals from England was detained because a case from the Progressive Publishing Company was included, in which some old copies of the *Freethinker* had been used for padding to fill up the space on the top. The blasphemous nature of these so shocked the sensitive landing-waiter that our contemporary was put to considerable trouble and expense before the goods were obtained. Quite recently a case of books was detained till the landing-waiter could examine Paine's "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff." Emile Zola's works have also been detained. The *Melbourne Age* points out that if the Customs House starts an *Index Expurgatorius* it will be impossible to define its limits. Hume, Voltaire, Spencer, Huxley, Darwin, Bishop Colenso, will all be fair game for the bigots. If the people of Australia are content to have their reading prescribed for them by Custom House officials they must be a more weak-spirited race than we should have imagined.

A PERFORMANCE of the "Messiah" has been given at St. Nicholas', Coventry. Bills announced that admission would be by ticket, to be obtained by purchase in the shops of the city. If a parishioner presented himself and was refused admission for want of a ticket, he could obtain a remedy at law. The churches are national property, and payment is illegal.

"A DISGUSTED MEMBER" writes to the *Portsmouth Evening News*, complaining that at the annual meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association he was surprised to hear the unchristian invectives that were hurled about the room. He mentions that most unpolite if not actionable terms were freely used, and declares that "Narrow-minded bigotry is the predominating characteristic of the members."

A PERSON styling himself Professor Warren has written a book entitled *Paradise and the Cradle of the Human Race found at the North Pole!* But how about the apple tree?

THE Welsh sometimes contend that Adam and Eve spoke Welsh in Eden. Spurgeon says that cannot have been the language in which God and our first parents conversed, for God himself could never learn Welsh.

THE Queen has visited the monastery of the Grand Chartreuse. She is the second woman who has done so. A special dispensation from the Pope was necessary to enable her to enter the walls. The Fathers are only allowed to talk once a week, but they entertained her Majesty very affably although she is a Protestant heretic.

AT Bloomsbury County Court a lady who sued a dog-dealer for £8 for a dog sold to her under false pretences, was non-suited on the ground that the dog was brought and paid for on a Sunday. The Judge said there were very few who knew that they might sell a mackerel on a Sunday but not a horse. Mrs. Smith apparently has no remedy, and she has to pay all costs. Is it not time these ridiculous Sunday laws were done away with?

IN charging the grand jury at the Newcastle assizes the other day, Mr. Justice Manisty complained that when he wished to attend the cathedral at ten, the vicar replied that the services were at eight and five, and could not be altered for the convenience of individuals. His lordship says he did not attend church in his individual capacity, but as representative of the law.

THE *Bristol Times* reports the examination of Uriah Maggs, a coal-miner of Radford, charged with violently assaulting his wife. Jane Maggs deposed that the prisoner was lazy, and would not work. Uriah would stay in bed all day, and go out and get drunk in the evening. He had recently joined the Salvation Army; since then he had been worse than ever. The previous evening he came in very drunk and with his coat torn. She asked him how it happened, and he cursed her and struck her on the back and legs with a heavy iron-shod stick (produced), and tore her dress nearly off. He then took another thick stick and struck her on the back of the head, causing a severe wound which bled freely. He afterwards took a knife and poker, and

threatened to rip her up, but the knife was taken from him by his daughter. He struck her with the poker. This militant Salvationist was sentenced to three months' hard labor.

AN enterprising pietist of Glasgow is circulating a tract for "Emigrants." One side looks like a business advertisement, the other is a dose of piety. Various information is given about the "GOSPEL SHIP," the funniest item being this—"Wind—The Holy Spirit." We always thought the Holy Spirit was nothing but wind? and it is gratifying to see that the Christians are beginning to agree with us. By the way, does this fact account for pious people being prone to flatulence?

THAT famous picture, Christ before Pilate, is being exhibited at Glasgow. Two natives were heard talking outside the show; one was inclined to go in, but the other, on learning there was a shilling to pay, said, "Come awa', mon, I wudna pay a shullin' to see Christ hissel'."

THE Rev. C. J. Engstrom, secretary of the Christian Evidence Society, has sent us a syllabus of the Boyle Lectures which he is to deliver on Sunday afternoons, in May and June, at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall. It is a very curious document. Mr. Engstrom evidently intends to clean up the face of Christianity, and dress it in a new suit of clothes; but the patent leather boots do not conceal its cloven hoof. The syllabus concludes with this sentence—"The study of human nature should quicken the sense of responsibility for our own belief and that of others." This is simply the old doctrine of salvation by faith in disguise. But after all, Mr. Engstrom is right. This is the very essence of Christianity, and philosophy and history show alike that it *must* lead to persecution. If a man is responsible for other people's belief, he is a fool if he does not do his best to make them believe, or at least profess, the orthodox doctrine. Burning a heretic is, therefore, perfectly logical and consistent. We don't suppose Mr. Engstrom would like to roast us if he could, but he is neither logical nor consistent. He is only going to *Boyle* us.

CANON HOBSON, of Liverpool, has been giving a lecture "to omen only," on the delicate topic of the Virgin Mother. According to a report in the *Liverpool Mercury*, he "took a panoramic view of the birth of Christ." He contended that the Blessed Virgin was a good Protestant, and that "as our Lord had no father, so the Blessed Virgin could not be the Mother of God." Canon Hobson says "she was a very quiet woman," and so she must have been, or when her undutiful son said, "Woman what have I to do with thee," she would soon have exhibited her maternal authority.

FOR some time the inhabitants of Mumbles Head have been excited over the alleged appearance of a ghost, who frightened young women and others into fits. A number of men determined to fathom the mystery and lay in wait for the ghost. It duly appeared, clad in white. The figure was seized, and it proved to be a holy ghost, for the personator was a prominent member of the Salvation Army. He was ruthlessly stripped and soundly flogged despite his protestations that it was only a joke.

DR. CLIFFORD'S election as vice-president of the Baptist Union was opposed by the Rev. J. Douglas, of Brixton, who did not consider him orthodox enough. Besides, Dr. Clifford had championed the cause of Henry Ward Beecher, and that was a dreadful crime. The object of this attack was elected nevertheless. In his reply he maintained that he was perfectly orthodox, not perhaps according to creeds, but certainly according to Scripture. Evidently the old Protestant fetish is to be stuck to, though one says it is black, another blue, another red, another green, and others no particular color at all.

"SUICIDE of a Sceptic." This headline attracted our attention in an evening newspaper. On reading the paragraph we found that a silly young fellow had thrown himself over the Clifton suspension bridge. In a letter to a member of his family he said "I die a sceptic." What he meant by this is a mystery. His brother stated, at the inquest, that the poor youth had suffered from religious mania. The jury returned a verdict accordingly.

THE Rev. Arthur Gregory Jackson, chaplain of the Philanthropic Farm School, Redhill, committed suicide by hanging on Saturday evening, April 23. This gentleman was *not* "a sceptic."

THE Rev. Stephen Gladstone refuses to confirm a young lady because her bonnet, although modest and retiring, is not of the pattern he approves. Mr. Gladstone himself, the father of this priestly maunikin, was intended for the Church. Fancy the Grand Old Man concentrating all his powers on the fashion of bonnets, and coming painfully to a decision as to what cut is nearest the kingdom of heaven!

THE Rev. Father Sebastian Bowden, preaching at the funeral of the late Duchess of Norfolk, did not say much for the efficacy of her frequent pilgrimages to Lourdes. He said, "Not once, but six or seven times that pilgrimage was made. With what result?"

Increasing malady and a weakness of body which made every action a labor and life burdensome."

SOME good Christians have strange notions of justice. Recently at Nottingham when a young man was brought up upon a charge of robbing his fellow-lodger his landlady appeared for him and implored the magistrate to release the prisoner because "he was a Christian and had done nothing beyond robbing a Jew." The magistrate, fortunately, did not view the matter in this light, and had the Christian confined in gaol.

ANNA, the prophetess, who takes up her mundane abode near Cardiff, has prophesied the death of her Majesty the Queen on May 6th. Why does Anna go frightening an old woman in this way? It would go hard with the seersess if the prophecy should be fulfilled. An earthquake is also mentioned for July 26. One thing may be said for Anna which cannot be said for the Biblical prophets. She gives exact dates and events near at hand. The Bible crackbrains raved about obscure events to come off in distant places at uncertain times.

THE Rev. H. Harris-Davies, an Anglesey rector, persistently refuses to pay his creditors. His application for the suspension of an order for committal granted under a judgment summons has been refused.

THOMAS MARLAY, a Cardiff local preacher, has been found guilty of robbing his employer's till. Witnesses were called as to character, and as they all said the prisoner was pious, the magistrates let him off with one day. Evidently godliness is good for this world as well as the next.

De bigger dat you see de smoke  
De less de fire will be,  
And de leastest kind of possum  
Climbs de biggest kind o' tree.

De darkey at de old camp-ground  
Who kin loudest sing and shout  
Is a-gwine to rob some hen-roost  
Afore de week is out.

STATISTICS quoted in the *New York Truthseeker* show that the Roman Catholic charitable institutions of the City and State of New York have received over eight million dollars from the public exchequer during the last twelve years. Over a million dollars were given in 1886. These contributions foster a large and dangerous amount of Roman Catholic pauperism. In view of the fact, often proved, that the Roman Catholics furnish over eighty per cent. of the criminals and paupers of New York, a thoughtful writer in the *New York Times* asks if it is wise or sensible to give up these large amounts to Roman Catholics for manufacturing more Roman Catholics, of whom so many are likely to become criminals and paupers.

WHY is a pig like the Trinity? Because bacon is pig, pork is pig, and ham is pig; yet there are not three pigs, but one pig. Amen.

THE *Tablet* reports that the site of the residence of the Holy Family has been discovered at Nazareth. Of course, as affirmed by a bull of Pope Julius, the house itself flew through the air and settled down at Loretto, where it may still be seen on payment. What is now discovered is the place where the house used to be, or at any rate where some house used to be, which, if not inhabited by Holy Joe, his wife, and her children, was at any rate inhabited by some other Nazarenes. No doubt the faithful will pay well to see it.

A MISSION yacht was run into by a steamer and sunk off Beachy Head. Only one hand escaped. The four who are drowned were mission servants and leave families. The yacht belonged to the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, and was bound for Yarmouth. Prayer and piety are not particularly efficacious in securing safety at sea. Good seamanship is probably of far greater importance.

SURELY the Lord ought to look after his own vessels better. We wonder what the men's relatives think of the efficacy of prayer now. Even the monthly organ of the mission is constrained to say, "Verily, our God sometimes moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

"WHAT did Simon say?" asked the teacher of a little girl, and the reply came, "Thimon thed thumbs up!" Another girl was asked, "Who was it put the youthful Hebrews in the fire?" and she innocently replied, "Why, little Johnny Green!"

THE clergy of Sudbury have been very much flustered by a Secular funeral "in the very midst of the great festival of the Resurrection," as they exclaim with uplifted eyebrows. Both at the parish church and at the Baptist chapel, sermons have been delivered on the distressing event. We tender these clerical gentlemen our heartfelt sympathy.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 1, Secular Hall, 61 New Church Road, Camberwell; at 7.30. "Let us Pray."

MAY 8, Portsmouth; 15, Bristol; 22, Ball's Pond; 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.—W. T., W. Schweizer.
- G. B.—Many thanks. Always glad to hear from you. The capital story about Providence is taken from Dr. Augustus Jessop. It has already appeared in the *Freethinker*, but we shall utilise it again some day.
- D. D.—There is a Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund in connection with the National Secular Society. Applications for assistance should be made to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C. Privacy is maintained, but every case is strictly investigated.
- W. V.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- J. M.—Shall appear. When Freethought "pays" we shall be able to employ Teniels and Proctors. Until then we must do the best our means will allow. We note that you are a converted Churchman, and that you "enjoy nothing better than the *Freethinker*."
- W. G. (Sheffield)—Part III. of our Bible Handbook is already in the press. It will be ready shortly.
- TIM BOLUS.—As a newsagent in such a bigoted little town you do well to be wary. Boycotting is a fine old Christian practice, though it passes under a different name. Glad to hear you think the *Freethinker* "on a par with the *Detroit Free Press* for drollery." We cannot see our way to introduce politics; one subject at a time seems enough, and our space is limited.
- E. GOODE.—We did not endorse all the pamphlet contains. The Runic cross and the *crux ansata* are distinct in form, if not in origin. We think the lingam theory of the cross has been overdone.
- R. B.—The so-called Nicene Creed was drawn up at the Council of Constantinople, 381.
- W. T. LEEKEY.—No doubt it is owing to a mistake that Ahaziah is made to be two years older than his father (2 Chron. xxi. 20, xxii. 2) But Mr. Whitmore should explain why God permitted such stupid mistakes to creep into his inspired word.
- A. HEMINGWAY.—We hope your Bazaar will be a great success.
- D. S.—Too long for a joke, and too Scotch for most of our readers.
- H. R.—We certainly cannot advise you to do anything of the kind. You know the special circumstances of the case better than we do, and you should form your own resolution.
- T. A. WILLIAMS.—Thanks. Mr. Foote is in excellent health. Many readers, besides yourself, have expressed a wish that the articles on *Infidel Homes*, in reply to the Rev. W. L. Watkinson, could be reprinted as a pamphlet. We are inclined to gratify them, but we should like to make some additions before publishing.
- NAPOLIO.—We do not know whether there is any intelligence higher than man's. Certainly there is not on this globe. We do not know what there may be on others. You speak of the "wonderful arrangement of the sexes." The wonder simply means that you are ignorant of the causes of this arrangement, and as religion originates in ignorance, you are inclined to be pious where you fail to comprehend. Advertisements will be inserted at the published rate, but we reserve our right to decline any that might lay us open to misconception.
- CASA BIANCA.—Thanks for the cuttings.
- G. H. COLES.—We are obliged. Jokes and cuttings are always welcome. Our readers could not do us a better service than by keeping us well supplied.
- S. TOLMIE.—Tylor's *Anthropology* is the best book we know for giving a bird's eye view of the whole subject. It is the work of a master in the science of human evolution. The same author's larger works, *Primitive Culture* and the *Early History of Mankind*, will be found of immense service afterwards.
- R. SMITH.—Any Freethinker can attend the National Secular Society's Conference, but only members can speak and vote on the agenda business.
- L. GARDNER.—Mr. Foote's *Royal Paupers* is now on sale. You will find in it all the figures you require as to the cost of Royalty. Mr. Foote has been a Republican ever since he was a Freethinker. He believes with Landor's *Demosthenes* that "Every man in the world would be a Republican, if he did not hope for fortune and favor more than from industry and desert." For the rest, we have no space for politics in these columns. Our views on Socialism are expressed in the Debate with Mrs. Besant.
- W. R. ROBERTS.—Thomas Paine was not an Atheist. We are almost tired of saying that he was a Deist. Why not read the *Age of Reason* for yourself?
- AUSTIN.—No doubt a Secular funeral does much to assist the cause in small towns where it attracts great attention. You can easily form a Branch of the N. S. S. Only seven members are requisite to start with. Mr. Forder, the secretary, will give you all the information and assistance you may require.
- H. CLARK.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- C. D.—Too late for this week. Next.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Yorkshireman—Brotherhood—Freidenker—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Echo—Western Figaro—La Semaine Anticlericale—Bristol Times—Portsmouth Evening News—Essex Free Press—Jus—Lucifer—Ironclad Age—Chat.

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

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THE National Secular Society's Annual Conference will take place on Whit-Sunday at Rochdale. There should be a specially good attendance, for one of the gravest questions the Freethought party has had to face for a long while will come on for discussion; namely, the attitude to be taken with regard to Mr. Courtney Kenny's new Bill for amending (not abolishing) the Blasphemy Laws. The Executive has appointed Messrs. Foote, Reynolds and Robertson to draw up and present a written Report on the subject.

THE Manchester folk are holding a Bazaar in aid of the Building Fund. There are all sort of things on sale, and we hope they will all find customers. There is to be a tea-fight and muffin-struggle as well, and plenty of social chat can be mixed up with a good bit of business. Mr. George Payne opens the ball—we beg pardon, the Bazaar. No one has worked harder for the success of the new Hall scheme, and no one will be more gratified at seeing a big assembly of "the saints." We trust that Mr. Payne will be able to go home after the first day's proceedings, singing "I have been there and still will go, 'Tis like a little heaven below." But it won't be much of a heaven unless the ladies show up in full force.

THE May number of *Progress* contains an article on Giordano Bruno by Mr. Foote, and an interesting review of Mrs. Gilchrist's Life and Writings, in which Carlyle, Rosetti, Walt Whitman, and other great names figure. Mr. Wheeler writes on Voltaire in England, a subject that is sure to attract Freethinkers. Mr. Ball continues his criticism of Socialism, and a new contributor writes on "The Decline of Piety."

MESSRS. CASSELL have just issued their new volume of *Celebrities of the Century*. It is a thick book of over eleven hundred double-column pages. About three-quarters of a column are devoted to Mr. Bradlaugh. One of the ablest contributions is the notice of Comte by James Cotter Morison. W. R. Greg, F. W. Newman, R. Owen, and T. Parker have very inadequate notices. Karl Marx receives extended notice at the hands of Mrs. Wilson, who avails herself of the material in *Progress*. The notice of Prince Kropotkin is not so good. His name is misspelt, and his date of birth given as 1825. It should be 1842. In four and a half columns devoted to Shelley, Mr. H. Buxton-Forman does not notice his relation to Christianity, although he mentions the poet's tract on "The Necessity of Atheism." The article on Mr. Swinburne is evidently written by an admirer.

THE notice of James Thomson is not very satisfactory. It mentions his contributions to *Cope's Tobacco Plant* but not to the *Secularist*. It says indeed "The Secularists claim him as one of them; but though much in his writings, more especially in *The Story of a Famous Old Jewish Firm*, shows hostility and bitterness towards Christianity, still there is much also to be found opposed to Secularist doctrines." It does not say where. If the writer had carefully read the story of the Famous Old Jewish Firm he would have noticed that the writer held "that the corn of the true bread of life is sown and grown, reaped, ground, kneaded, baked and eaten on this side of the Black Sea," which is the essential position of Secularism. If further he had read the whole of the *Satires and Profanities*, which he does not notice, he would have observed that Thomson distinctly classed himself with Secularists and Republicans.

ANOTHER point is the reference to Thomson's pessimism, which the writer says was "not the pessimism of Schopenhauer, but rather the personal weariness of life to which the loss by early death of the woman he loved, is said to have contributed." It is far from complimentary to the poet, to suppose that his conception of life depended upon the fact that a young lady was beautiful and mortal. As a matter of fact James Thomson held pessimism as his philosophy, exactly as Schopenhauer did.

"A PARISH priest, living at Dôle, named the Abbé Beliard, lately died, having left injunctions in his last will and testament that he was to be buried with civil rites only, no prayers or Church ceremonies being on any account to be used." The friends and ecclesiastical colleagues of the defunct curé were, says the Paris correspondent of the *Telegraph*, terribly scandalised at this news. Not so the Republicans, Radicals, Socialists, and Freethinkers of the locality, who hailed the event with unbounded joy. The funeral was splendid and imposing, all the anti-clerical societies from far and near

attending with their brass bands, tricolour flags, and ornamental banners. Prominent Radicals were even invited from Paris and Lyons to be present at the obsequies of a minister of religion who had declined benefit of clergy and determined to go to his tomb unsprinkled with holy water and unaided by the prayers of priests."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

MR. B. R. TUCKER, the editor of the Boston Anarchist Journal, *Liberty*, who is bringing out the entire works of Proudhon, in English, devotes a paragraph to the recent debate between Mrs. Besant and Mr. Footc. He says that in regard to the translation of Proudhon's famous epigram *La propriete, c'est le vol* "Mrs. Besant is grossly in error."

WE understand that a debate will take place at Portsmouth Protestant Hall, on Friday, May 6th, between Mr. Cowley, a converted Roman Catholic priest, and now a lecturer for the Protestant Evangelical Society, and Mr. George Googe, Vice-president of the Portsmouth Branch of the N. S. S. The subject is the Inspiration of the Bible, and if carefully managed the debate should prove of much service to the Freethought cause in Portsmouth.

WE have received from America a book in remembrance of Karl Heinzen, the German Republican poet, orator, and Freethinker, who established in America *Der Pionier* and the *Freidenker*. It contains, in addition to several papers written in remembrance by friends who loved him, a collection of his aphorisms, specimens of his poetical and prose writings, and a biographical sketch. Altogether it is a worthy tribute to a man who did much to leave the world better than he found it.

ONE of our readers in the medical profession north of the Tweed is evidently very fond of the *Freethinker*. "Your little piece of blasphemy," he writes, "I've taken from the first number, and I enjoy it better every week. It relieves the monotony of many a weary minute. My wife enjoys it with myself."

MR. W. A. Newcombe, of Liverpool, has raised the Oath question at the City Sessions. He told the Recorder, Mr. O. H. Hopwood, that he was a person without religious belief. Mr. Hopwood took another jurymen instead, remarking that "he did his best to get the law altered." Mr. Newcombe replied, "Yes, I know it, and we thank you. I don't wish to shrink any responsibility as a citizen." A barrister in court pointed out that Mr. Newcombe had served before Mr. Temple, the Assistant Recorder, as a jurymen; but the Recorder said he could not help that, he was not responsible for the other Court. Mr. Newcombe then asked if he was discharged from attendance, and Mr. Hopwood replied in the negative. "I publicly protest against this injustice," exclaimed Mr. Newcombe, "I am here to do my duty and can't do it." To which Mr. Hopwood simply answered, "It is the law," which is exactly what our old friend Shylock says in the play.

ACCORDING to *Lucifer* of Kansas both the words and music of the "Sweet Bye and Bye" were written by "infidels." The writer of the words was Dr. S. Fillmore Bennett of Richmond, Illinois, and the composer Joseph P. Webster. Neither belonged to any church.

A MONUMENT to Galileo was unveiled in the Pincio at Rome last week. Evidently the world still moves. That which the Church in its power treated as heresy worthy of death is now recognised as truth worthy of all honor. It is the Church that has to recant to save its life, not the aged philosopher.

THE villagers of Freckenham were startled the other Sunday by a well-known resident mounting the corner-stone of the parish and denouncing Christianity. The local paper says that "as there were many of the worshippers of the neighbouring chapel, as well as Church people, among his hearers, these were much shocked." Poor things!

COL. W. H. BURR, writing in the *Truthseeker* says: "Some of Napoleon Bonaparte's biographers have represented him as almost, if not quite, a believer in the divinity of Jesus Christ. But here is something quite contrary to that, and it is well authenticated. It is found in a monthly publication called the *Theophilanthropist*, No 4, April, 1810.—As to Bonaparte's religion, when among the Mohammedans in Egypt, he declared himself a true Mussulman, and on his return to France, and assuming the government, being reproached by Mr. Dupuis (author of the celebrated work entitled, *The Origin of All Religious Worship*) for reinstating the Catholic religion, he said that 'as for himself he did not believe that such a person as Jesus Christ ever existed; but as the people were inclined to superstition, he thought proper not to oppose them.' This fact Mr. Dupuis related to Thomas Paine and Chancellor Livingston, then minister of the United States at Paris [1801-1805], as the former informed the writer of this note."

## THE CHRISTIAN QUACK, OR PIOUS DOCT'RIN'.

*A Revised Version of the Old Recitation.*

LADIES AND GENTLETEN, my name is Brazenface Quack, *alias* Christianity, physician to the bodies and souls of great and mighty emperors and of all the simpletons who buy my wonderful wares. I was born in Judea, and brought up in Egypt. In course of time I left that there country to come to this here, which my surviving patients reckon to be the greatest blessing that ever happened to Europe; for I brought with me the following unparalleled, inestimable, and never-to-be-matched medicines.

The first is called the Unadulterated Hallelujah Faith-mixture, direct from Goosetown in Gullilee. If any of you has cut his nose off because it offended him, a dose of this marvellous mixture will make it sprout out at once to such a length that the parsons can lead you by it wherever they like. Pour a drop of the mixture no bigger than a mustard seed on the top of Mount Chimborazo, and it will instantly leap a thousand miles into the midst of the Pacific Ocean. A single teaspoonful of this infallible remedy will neutralise a ton of arsenic taken internally. This powerful and celebrated mixture is guaranteed by the maker, J. C., and none is genuine or efficacious without his label.

The next is Happy Eliza's Gospel Extract, made up into the wonderful Blood and Fire Lozenges from Bedlam Boodle Boo. Only 1d. a packet, wrapped in a *War Cry*. Take 'em every day and you'll howl like a Hot-tentot, play the tambourine like a madman, and caper about like a monkey on hot iron till your jumping powers are so improved that you can leap straight up into heaven at a bound.

Then there's the Salvation Soap, of which you have heard before. The blackest characters can be washed and starched as white as a shirt-front on the instant by a single penn'orth. Guaranteed by all godly men who've tried it.

I'm also very celebrated with the cure of the eyes. A stone statue that stood in the streets of Pekin was blind as a bat. In the presence of the Emperor and all his court I dabbed some of my famous clay-and-spittle ointment in its eyes, and it saw at once. The Emperor placed the statue at his palace gate, as a sentinel that never slept or required food or wages. If you're blind, try my clay-spittle treatment. The *horse-spittle* treatment ain't nothing to it. You'll look sharp and buy it all up if you're wise, for this cataract ointment is ranning short, owing to the clay being used up for bricks and me having left off chewing tobacco lately. This refined invention of a late lamented professor at Jerusalem also cures deafness, if you say the word *ephphatha* at the same time. Only dab this kind of stuff in people's eyes and ears thick enough, and they're sure to recover their senses in time!

If all these beautiful medicines don't suit, I've a tre-menjus variety more made up from this here physic book. There's Matthew's magic mixture for casting out devils and tapeworms without fasting; there's Dr. Luke's liver pills for gospel-gobblers and hallelujah gluttons; there's John's soothing syrup for Jews and Gentiles; and there's Peter's paregoric that rebuked his mother-in-law's fever so severely that it ran away ashamed of itself. All to be had for the insignificant sum of only sixpence a bottle!

There's Mr. Messiah's celebrated asses' milk for babes, with feeding-bottle attached *gratis*, and there's Professor Paul's patent Revelatio Arabica, which must be taken with it, or else the poor infant will soon have the rickets. Also I have a few cheap samples of Wesley's wind pills, Beecher's balsam, Spurgeon's brimstone and treacle, and Talmage's hell-fire blisters. I've Balaam's voice lozenges for Christian orators, and St. Jacob's oil for rubbing on consciences out of joint. There's Dr. Daniel's lion-taming boluses, and Shadrach's fire pills warranted to save all insurance. If you're getting bald, there's Elisha's bear's grease that made Samson's hair grow as long and as strong as a pickled sunbeam. If you've swallowed poison in the shape of a prophet, there's Jonah's emetic, which is so strong that even a whale can't stand it. And there's Herr Troobleaver's never-failing earthquake pills for the day of judgment, and Apostles' plaisters for drawing coin out of other people's pockets into your own. Walk up, walk up; buy and try, buy and try. All the resources of the Christian pharmacopoeia at your disposal without money and without price, only you must pay for them. Take

them all at once; they'll do you good. Thanks, ladies and gents, for the coppers pouring in. My assistants are so benevolent that they will be sure to attend to all of you so long as there's good business of this kind to be done.

This here bottle what I holds in my hand I've kept to the last a purpose, ladies and gentlemen. It is called the grand deceptical, Asiatical, panticurical, Christian cordial, which cures all diseases and misfortunes incident to humanity. I don't like to talk about myself, ladies and gentlemen, because the man who talks about himself is a Hegotist, but this I will venture to say of myself, that I am not only the greatest physician and philosopher of the age, but the greatest genius that ever illuminated mankind—but you know I don't like to talk of myself. You should only read one or two of my lists of cures, out of the many thousands I have by me. If you knew the benefit so many people receive from my grand deceptical, Asiatical, panticurical, Christian cordial, that cures all evils incident to humanity, none of you would be such fools as to be without it for a single day. I'll just read you one or two cases. (*Reads from letters*).

"SIR,—I was jammed to a jelly under the tower of Siloam. I was dead as a door-nail and began to smell unpleasantly. Two drops from the hands of J. C.—a sneeze—a gasp—and I leapt to my feet alive and kicking as ever I was. Your obedient servant,—LAZARUS. P.S.—Send me ten more bottles at once."

"SIR,—I was cut in half in a saw-pit at Nain. Cured by one bottle.—J. WIDOWSON."

"SIR,—I died on the cross. Cured by half a bottle, and provided with wings extra. Yours truly,—PENITENT THIEF."

Now comes the most wonderful cure of all.

"SIR,—Venturing too near the powder mill at Faversham, I was, by a sudden explosion, blown into a million of atoms. By this unpleasant accident I was rendered unfit for my business (that of a peripatetic preacher), but having previously recommended your deceptical, Asiatical panticurical, Christian cordial to the notice of others, I felt induced at last to try it myself. The first bottle united my scattered particles, the second re-animated my shattered frame, the third effected a radical cure, and the fourth found me bowing at the foot of a big white throne, recounting the wonderful effects of your idiotical, resurrectional, Asiatical, panticurical, Christian cordial, that cures all evils incident to humanity."

[W. P. BALL.]

#### INGERSOLL ON FATHER MCGLYNN.

(Concluded from p. 131.)

THE old dogmas filled the brain with strange monsters. The soul of the orthodox Christian gropes and wanders and crawls in a kind of dungeon, where the strained eyes see fearful shapes and the frightened flesh shrinks from the touch of serpents.

The good part of Christianity—that is to say, kindness, morality—will never go down. The cruel part ought to go down. And by the cruel part I mean the doctrine of eternal punishment—of allowing the good to suffer for the bad—allowing innocence to pay the debt of guilt. So the foolish part of Christianity—that is to say, the miraculous—will go down. The absurd part must perish, but there will be no war about it as there was in France. Nobody believes enough in the foolish part of Christianity now to fight for it. Nobody believes with intensity enough in miracles to shoulder a musket. There is probably not a Christian in New York willing to fight for any story, no matter if the story is so old that it is covered with moss. No mentally brave and intelligent man believes in miracles, and no intelligent man cares whether there was a miracle or not, for the reason that every intelligent man knows the miraculous has no possible connection with the moral. "Thou shalt not steal," is just as good a commandment if it should turn out that the flood was a drouth. "Thou shalt not murder," is a good, and just, and righteous law; and whether any particular miracle was ever performed or not has nothing to do with the case. There is no possible relation between these things.

I am on the side not only of the physically oppressed, but of the mentally oppressed. I hate those who put lashes on the body, and I despise those who put the soul in chains. In other words, I am in favor of liberty. I do not wish that any man should be the slave of his fellow-men, or that the human race should be the slaves of any god, real or imaginary. Man has the right to think for himself, to work for himself, to take care of himself, to get bread for himself, to get a home for himself. He has a right to his own opinions about God and heaven and hell; the right to learn any art or mystery

or trade; the right to work for whom he will, for what he will, and when he will.

The world belongs to the human race. There is to be no war in this country on religious opinions except a war of words. a conflict of thoughts, of facts; and in that conflict the hosts of superstition will go down. They may not be defeated to-day, nor to-morrow, nor next year, nor during this century, but they are growing weaker day by day.

This priest, McGlynn, has the courage to stand up against the propaganda. What would have been his fate a few years ago? What would have happened to him in Spain, in Portugal, in Italy—in any other country that was Catholic—only a few years ago? Yet he stands here in New York, and refuses to obey God's vicegerent; he freely speaks his mind to an archbishop; he holds the holy Inquisition in contempt. He has done a great thing. He is undoubtedly an honest man. He never should have been a Catholic. He has no business in that Church. He has ideas of his own—theories, and seems to be governed by principles. The Catholic Church is not his place. If he remains, he must submit, he must kneel in the humility of abjectness; he must receive on the back of his independence the lashes of the Church. If he remains, he must submit, he must ask the forgiveness of slaves for having been a man. If he refuses to submit, the Church will not have him. He will be driven to take his choice—to remain a member, humiliated, shunned, or go out into the great, free world a citizen of the republic, with the rights, responsibilities, and duties of an American citizen.

I believe that Dr. McGlynn is an honest man, and that he really believes in the land theories of Mr. George. I have no confidence in his theories, but I have confidence that he is actuated by the best and noblest motives.

"Are you to go on the lecture platform again?"

I expect to after a while. I am now waiting for the Church to catch up. I got so far ahead that I began almost to sympathise with the clergy. They looked so helpless and talked in such a weak, wandering, and wobbling kind of way that I felt as though I had been cruel. From the papers I see that they are busy trying to find out who the wife of Cain was. I see that the Rev. Dr. Robinson, of New York, is now wrestling with that problem. He begins to be in doubt whether Adam was the first man, whether Eve was the first woman; suspects that there were other races, and that Cain did not marry his sister, but somebody else's sister, and that the somebody else was not Cain's brother. One can hardly overestimate the importance of these questions—they have such a direct bearing on the progress of the world. If it should turn out that Adam was the first man, or that he was not the first man, something might happen—I am not prepared to say what—but it might.

It is a curious kind of spectacle to see a few hundred people paying a few thousand dollars a year for the purpose of hearing these great problems discussed: "Was Adam the first man?" "Who was Cain's wife?" "Has anyone seen a map of the land of Nod?" "Where are the four rivers that ran murmuring through the groves of paradise?" "Who was the snake? How did he walk? What language did he speak?" This turns a church into a kind of nursery, makes a cradle of each pew, and gives to each member a rattle with which he can amuse what he calls his mind.

The great theologians of Andover—the gentlemen who wear the brass collars furnished by the dead founder—have been disputing among themselves as to what is to become of the heathen who fortunately died before meeting any missionary from that institution. One can almost afford to be damned hereafter for the sake of avoiding the dogmas of Andover here. Nothing more absurd and childish has ever happened—not in the intellectual but in the theological world.

There is no need of the Freethinkers saying anything at present. The work is being done by the Church members themselves. They are beginning to ask questions of the clergy. They are getting tired of the old ideas—tired of the consolations of eternal pain—tired of hearing about hell—tired of hearing the Bible quoted or talked about—tired of the scheme of redemption—tired of the Trinity, of the plenary inspiration of the barbarous records of a barbarous people—tired of the patriarchs and prophets—tired of Daniel and the goats with three horns, and the image with the clay feet, and the little stone that rolled down-hill—tired of the mud man and the ribbed woman—tired of the flood of Noah, of the astronomy of Joshua, the geology of Moses—tired of Kings and Chronicles and Lamentations—tired of the lachrymose Jeremiah—tired of the monstrous, the malicious, and the miraculous. In short, they are beginning to think. They have bowed their necks to the yoke of ignorance, and fear, and impudence and superstition until they are weary. They long to be free. They are tired of the services—tired of the meaningless prayers—tired of hearing each other say, "Hear us, good Lord"—tired of the texts, tired of the sermons, tired of the lies about spontaneous combustion as a punishment for blasphemy, tired of the bells, and they long to hear the dogology of superstition. They long to have Common Sense lift its hands in benediction and dismiss the congregation.

**PROFANE JOKES.**

MISS MOLLY: "Come in our pew, Kate." "Oh, no; come in ours. We've got such nice comfortable, high kneeling cushions! They don't strain your polonaise a bit."

It is said that women have little sense of humor, and it must be true. Otherwise she could never get past the "love, honor, and obey" part of the marriage ceremony without laughing.

MEDIUM: "Whom do you wish to see madam?" Madam: "My husband. He was allers askin' people in this world, 'Is it hot enough for you?' an' now I want to put the same question to him."

A CHINESE writer says that a man can borrow money in China on the strength of his having a son, the idea being that a Chinaman makes it his first duty to pay his father's debts. These heathen are simply hopeless.

SAINT JOHN, or whatever crack-brain it was wrote the Revelation, says, "there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." Many have used this as an argument against women being in heaven. A spirit medium affirms, however, that the accidental silence was caused by the women all happening to be arranging their toilets at the same time, and each had a roll of hair in her mouth.

"PATRICK," said the priest "The Widow Moloney tells me you have stolen one of her finest pigs. Is that so?" "Yes, yer honor." "What have you done with it?" "Killed it and ate it, yer honor." "Oh, Patrick, when you are brought face to face with the widow and the pig on the judgment day, what account will you be able to give of yourself when the widow accuses you of theft?" "Did you say the pig would be there, yer riverence?" "To be sure I did." "Well thin, yer riverence, I'll say, 'Mrs. Moloney, there's your pig!'"

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**SPECIAL APPEAL.**

The Committee of the Manchester Branch N. S. S. gratefully acknowledge the liberal support which has already been given to the scheme for purchasing a Hall, and especially thank the London, Liverpool, and other friends at a distance, for their valued help. In consequence, however, of the shortness of the time allowed for the completion of the purchase, they are compelled to make a Special Appeal to Secularists both in and out of Manchester for further aid, either in donations or in subscriptions for Shares. The amount already subscribed, chiefly by Manchester friends, and in the short space of three months, is about £80; this, with the Spencer Legacy of £500 leaves £580 still to be provided by the middle of June next.

The Committee are very desirous of securing the full benefit of the offer made through Mr. Bradlaugh as mentioned in the N. R. of April 3; 25 Shares have already been taken in lots of not less than five Shares in accordance with that offer, and subscriptions for a further 200 shares will benefit the cause to the extent of £50 additional.

Apart from this, however, the Committee feel assured that there are many friends throughout the country who both can and will help by taking one or more Shares, or by a donation, when they understand that further aid is needed in order that the purchase may be completed at the agreed date.

Prospectuses with form of application can be obtained from the Hon. Sec. of the Company, Mr. Geo. Payne, 20 Kennedy Street, Manchester, who will be glad to furnish any information required. Donations may be forwarded to the Treasurer of the Branch, Mr. E. G. Field, 9 Rye Street, Clarendon Road, C-on-M., Manchester, or to the undersigned at 25 Higher Chatham Street, Manchester.

A. HEMINGWAY, Hon. Sec.

**WALWORTH FREETHOUGHT INSTITUTE.**

28 York Street, Walworth Road, S.E.—On Monday, May 2, at 8.30, a Meeting on Important Business of Members and Friends of Freethought will be held.

**Manchester Branch N. S. S.**

ON May 7, 8 and 9, BAZAAR and SALE of WORK, with Entertainments, in Aid of the Fund for Purchasing Hall, will be held in the proposed New Hall in Bloomsbury, Oxford Road. Will be opened by Mr. George Payne, at three o'clock. Tea at five. Tickets, including tea, 1s.; without tea, 6d. Stalls will be furnished with Useful and Ornamental Articles, Wearing Apparel, Plants, etc. Friends desirous to contribute Articles will please send same to 25 Higher Chatham Street, Stretford Road, by Thursday, May 5, addressed to A. HEMINGWAY.

Price Threepence.

**PROGRESS**

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

The MAY Number contains

- Giordano Bruno. By G. W. Foote.
- Voltaire in England. By J. M. Wheeler.
- The Decline of Piety. By Alter Brown.
- Annie Gilchrist and her Circle. By G. W. Foote.
- The "New Sociology" Criticised.—III. By W. P. Ball.
- Sarpalus of Mardon.—IV. By James Thomson (B.V.)
- Brief Freethought Biographies. By J. M. Wheeler.

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