

# THE FREETHINKER

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

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ELIJAH FED BY THE RAVENS.

*And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening.—1 KINGS XVII., 6.*

## WHO KILLED CHRIST ?

A JOLLY jack-tar came on shore and went to church for the first time in his life. The sermon was on the Crucifixion. The preacher waxed eloquent on the sufferings of Jesus and the frightful sin of his "murderers." Indignation glowed in the bosom of the honest salt, who felt his fingers itching to thrash the wretches. The next day he was looking in a shop window at a figure of Jesus on the cross. "Poor young fellow," he muttered, "poor young fellow? What a damned shame!" Just then a Jew came up and looked into the window. "Do you know *him*?" asked the sailor, pointing to the crucifix. "Oh, yes," answered the Jew, "dat's Jesus." "Oh, you know him do you," said Jack, "then take that," giving the Jew a blow which knocked him down. Picking himself up, and chafing his sore limbs, Mr. Isaacs asked, "Vat's dat for?" "Ain't you a Jew," said Jack, "and didn't you crucify Jesus?" "Oh," exclaimed Mr. Isaacs, "dat vas 'undreds of years ago." "Was it?" said Jack, "Well, never mind, it's all the same; I only heard of it yesterday."

That unsophisticated salt acted like the vast body of Christians, who persecuted the Jews century after century

for the alleged crime of killing Christ, and hardened their hearts against the evidences of his divinity. It is no exaggeration to say that the sufferings inflicted on the Jews by the disciples of the religion of love form the most appalling chapter in history. No ignominy, no outrage was neglected. They were degraded, disabled, robbed, tortured and butchered wholesale. Yet they always remained obstinate; their miseries never converted them; and who can help thinking, with Diderot, that the grand miracle of history is not the Resurrection but the incredulity of the Jews?

We deny altogether that the Jews did kill Christ. We say that he was actually executed by the Roman governor, and virtually killed by himself. His death was a species of suicide. His fate might have been averted by the slightest exercise of common sense.

Had Jesus been killed by the Jews, he would have been stoned. That was their method of execution, as may be seen in many passages of the Old Testament. Indeed, in the early part of his ministry, his countrymen *did* try to stone him, but he escaped from them; and Stephen, the protomartyr, whose death is recorded in Acts, was killed in that way. Being crucified, Jesus was, of course, executed

by the Roman law, as is further attested by the report of his trial. He was not even executed for a religious offence. It is perfectly true that he was charged before the High Priest with blasphemy, but the accusation had to be changed when he was brought before Pilate. The Roman governor looked upon "blasphemy!" and such cries as mere squabbles between Jewish sects. Like Gallio, he cared for none of these things, and he would have discharged Jesus had there been no other indictment. But he was bound to try Jesus on the charge of sedition, although he certainly did his best to get the poor fellow acquitted. "Art thou the King of the Jews?" asked Pilate, with mingled pity and derision. Jesus answered, "Thou sayest," which was simply pleading guilty. Setting himself up as King in a Roman province was sedition. He may have been unaware of the fact, but Pilate could not help that, and the rash enthusiast paid the natural penalty of his ignorance or his presumption. Indeed, the very inscription on the cross clearly showed the nature of the offence for which he perished. Surely, then, it is idle to make the Jews responsible for his want of gumption. That he had enemies, and powerful enemies, we have no doubt; and his conduct in Jerusalem before his arrest was calculated to exasperate instead of conciliating them; but they could not have compassed his death, except by assassination, if he had not played into their hands in a manner which can only be understood on the theory that he was half insane, or that his faculties were paralysed by danger.

Suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that the Jews did kill Jesus. Suppose he was put out of the way, not only by a powerful party at Jerusalem, but by the unanimous vote of his countrymen. We still insist that they were not to blame, if Jesus and they both believed (and we have *his* assent) that the law and the prophets declared the will of God. He had set himself up to be God, saying that he and the Father were one. Such language was shocking to an orthodox Jew, and on consulting his Scriptures he found the clearest instructions from Jehovah how to deal with the utterer of this blasphemy. God's order is contained in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy. The words are perfectly plain. A child could understand them.

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

Now we should like to know the ground on which Christians deny the propriety of the Jews carrying out this sanguinary order. The Old Testament, as well as the new, is a part of the Christian Bible, and it is the same God throughout, from the curse on Adam and Eve to the brimstone lake of Revelation. Freethinkers may object to the whole business, but how can a Christian do so without the grossest hypocrisy? The supposition that Jesus was God only makes the case worse, for then he was literally dished in his own sauce. *He* told the Jews how to serve those who sought to divide their attachment to Jehovah; *he* prescribed the stoning to death; and *he* was the chief victim of his own brutality. His own curses came home to roost. It was a splendid case of poetical justice. Were Jesus very God of very God, the Crucifixion was a play of "Tit for Tat, or the Biter Bit."

G. W. FOOTE.

A BALLOON story from the Black Country narrates how some superstitious old cronies were talking over the probable fate of an old friend, whose corpse lay in a cottage close by awaiting the funeral. Suddenly an immense balloon looming in the darkness descended and caught in the tree beneath which they were sitting, and the aeronaut himself descended from the entangled car. With a tremendous yell the entire audience fled, all but one poor old fellow, who lost the use of his limbs in his terror, and who called out with chattering teeth, "Good Mr. Devil, Mr. Devil, Mr. Devil! I am not the dead man. There he is; you'll find him there." pointing at the same time to the door of the cottage in which lay the coffin.

## THE EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIANITY.\*

WERE to swagger the sign of a brave spirit we should call the Rev. Dr. Cairns a bold man. He ventures to maintain that it is incredible that Christianity was evolved from "mere natural sources." To thus challenge the possibilities of nature looks like the temerity of foolhardiness. but an examination of Dr. Cairns's pamphlet shows him to be possessed not of bravery, but of bounce. It is impudence rather than courage which distinguishes this worthy divine. He would have us believe that Christianity must be supernatural simply because it is not to be found completely in any of the religions which preceded it. No doubt many a Mohammedan doctor is equally ready to contend that Islam is divine because it is neither to be found in the old Arabian religion, Judaism, nor in Christianity.

To carry out his argument on the method proposed, Dr. Cairns ought to show that the Christian revelation is entirely original, and that it could not be arrived at by other than supernatural means. He does not attempt either the one or the other. He does not even examine how far Christianity was anticipated by Pythagoras, Zoroaster, and Buddha, or by the religion of Egypt.† He does not mention the Essenes, who certainly taught some of the alleged characteristics of Christian doctrine, such as the equality of men, and meekness and purity of heart, and who abstained from swearing and animal sacrifices, and who practised baptism and community of goods before Christianity was known. What he does is to show that there are certain doctrines in Christianity which are not to be found in Platonism or in Philo. Of course there are, but are they therefore divine? Plato taught no such dogmas as a three-in-one deity or that the salvation of men depended upon the blood of an innocent person, but he did teach righteousness and the belief in immortality. Philo, Dr. Cairns admits, taught a doctrine of the Logos which connects him with Christianity. And this Logos is the word made flesh, the first-born of the Father, his only begotten son, by whom the world was made; the light of the world and the physician who cures all evil. But then, says Dr. Cairns, the relation of Philo's Logos to the doctrine of redemption is not fully made out as in Christianity. Of course not. No one quotes Philo, or the wisdom of Solomon, or the Book of Enoch, or the writings of Josephus as embodying the whole of Christianity, but as manifesting from natural sources the same tendencies of thought which in Christianity are supposed to be supernatural.

The truth is that until the triumph of what is now known as orthodoxy at the Council of Nice (325) Christianity was in a chaotic condition. It was an amalgam of various superstitions, contributed to by Hillel's and Philo's reformed Judaism, and by Essenism, Gnosticism, neo-Platonism, and Egyptian mythology. The Logos of John was not an exact reproduction of the Logos of Philo, but neither was it exactly the Logos of Justin Martyr; but all three have sufficient resemblances for us to be assured the one is no more divine than the other. We do not expect to find Christianity fully embodied in any one of the systems which preceded it. None the less it may safely be asserted that there is no single moral precept, religious doctrine, symbol, or ritual which cannot be proved to have been in existence in pre-Christian times.

The main features of Christianity, according to Dr. Cairns, are the Incarnation and the Atonement. Yet nothing is more common in the ancient mythologies than the miraculous birth of incarnate gods. "When we say that the Word was produced without sexual union," says the first great Christian apologist, Justin Martyr, "we propound *nothing different* from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter." As for the Atonement, no doubt Plato and other sages of antiquity were too far advanced to believe in the pardon of the guilty through the punishment of the innocent. The doctrine is a remnant of savagery, and its prototype was seen in the offering up of children, often the firstborn or only son, in order to avert the displeasure of the gods.

As for the moral teaching of Christianity, the doctrine of overcoming evil with good was taught by Buddha and the

\* *Present Day Tracts*, No. 49, "Is the Evolution of Christianity from Mere Natural Sources Credible?" By the Rev. John Cairns, D.D. Religious Tract Society.

† The curious reader may consult on these points "The Fathers of Jesus," by the late Dr. Kenningale Cook

so-called "Golden Rule" by Confucius. Every one of the moral precepts can be paralleled from heathen teachers who needed no inspiration from on high in order to inculcate them. Whence then the necessity for a revelation which revealed nothing?

Dr. Cairns's method of proving that Christianity is supernatural, is that of the conjurer who, after showing an empty hat, produces a big ball therefrom and declares "it must be magic." Only he does not show the whole of the hat. Dr. Cairns leaves out of sight many of the influences which contributed towards the formation of Christianity, and would have us jump to the conclusion that because it was not fully anticipated by Plato or Philo, it is therefore divine. This is nothing but theological charlatantry. The question whether it is easier to understand Christianity as derived from supernatural, rather than from natural sources, would not be decided even if Dr. Cairns succeeded in showing that difficulties attend any and every explanation put forward by rationalists. The difficulties on the supernaturalists' side must also be faced. If Christianity is divine, why is it not altogether differentiated from other faiths? Why was it rejected by the Jews, to whom alone Jesus declared himself to be sent? Why are its records full of contradictions? Why has it led to contentions, persecution, bloodshed, and misery? Why does belief in its supernatural elements decline with the progress of knowledge? Why does it not even yet commend itself to the majority of the world. In short, if God has spoken, why is not the world convinced?

J. M. WHEELER.

## ACID DROPS.

THE Council of the Unitarian Association has had a long discussion on Mr. Courtney Kenny's Blasphemy Bill. From the report in the *Inquirer* we infer that the Unitarians, as a body, are as selfish as ever on this question; and so long as they are safe, it matters not who is in danger. Mr. Marshall made a brave speech for fair-play all round, in accordance with the letter read from the Rev. W. Sharman, but he was very poorly supported. Dr. Blake Odgers played the bigot as usual, and we trust Freethinkers will remember him if he stands for Parliament again. He drew a distinction between blasphemy and heresy, and he assured Mr. Freckleton and other Unitarians that they would be perfectly safe if Mr. Kenny's new clause were carried into law, as it would only touch the infidels. Under the influence of this selfish bigot, the amendment of Messrs. Marshall and Tayler, approving the general character of the Bill, but objecting *in toto* to the Indian clause, was lost, or rather withdrawn; and a resolution was carried, approving the Bill "subject to some modification of the concluding proviso, so as to prevent any restriction whatever being imposed on the freest expression of opinions however heretical."

WE venture to call this a hypocritical resolution. Under a vague form of words, that smack of toleration, it manages to evade the very point at issue. Not Unitarians, but Freethinkers, are the persons in danger of blasphemy prosecutions. If the Unitarians are not only satisfied with their own immunity, but content that Freethinkers should be prosecuted, let them plainly say so, and have the courage of their evil opinion. But do not let them pretend to a perfect love of toleration while they sanction the prosecution of all who are more advanced or less mealy-mouthed than themselves.

MORE rioting at Belfast. The shortest method will be to chronicle the peaceful weeks whenever the rival Christians are sufficiently cowed by soldiers and police to allow the peaceful Sabbaths to pass unimproved by pious strife and brotherly bloodshed.

A CURATE at St. James's Church, Yarmouth, is deeply offended because a Sunday-school teacher and his boys will not stand up when he enters the church. This dignified Jack-in-office threatens the teacher with the penalties of the law. Thus he teaches practical Christianity. The *Rock* calls him a domineering young priest, and says he has secured the contempt of all honest sober members of the Church.

"THE burling question of the day," according to the *Rock*, is—what would our readers guess? Home Rule? The Coercion Bill? The land question? Disestablishment? No; the burning question of the day is "the appointment of Bishop Blyth to fill the vacant see at Jerusalem." We pity the vacant heads that can be filled with such trivialities as this to the exclusion or disparagement of matters of real importance.

THE age of miracles has returned. The Rev. W. J. Monk, vicar of Doddington, has returned to the farmers in his parish the whole of the extraordinary tithes that he has collected from them during the last fourteen years. One farmer receives £120.

The total is £500. The press, at least, reports the foregoing incident, but one cannot help wondering whether so strange a report can possibly be true. A clergyman obeying the better injunctions of the Bible to his own disadvantage! Some day we may even hear of a bishop really obeying Christ by selling all that he has and giving the proceeds to the poor.

GOD has sent a hurricane which has almost destroyed the Australian pearl-fishing fleet. Forty vessels are missing, and it is estimated that 550 lives have been lost. Christians who have lost relatives by this act of God have the consolation of knowing that he doeth all things well.

MR. WARDROPER, plaintiff in a suit tried at the Liskeard County Court, was asked in cross-examination whether he kissed his thumb or the blessed book. He replied that he had kissed his thumb, because he was a Catholic and could not swear on the Protestant version. A Douay Bible had to be hunted up, and Mr. Wardroper was sworn again. Even this, however, did not satisfy the judge; for, in giving judgment, he said he placed no reliance on the plaintiff's evidence, and nonsuited him accordingly.

AT Hammersmith, the magistrate refused the evidence of a little girl, aged eight, on the ground that she did not know the nature of an oath. What absurdity. The girl had been violently struck, but she could not be allowed to say who gave her a black eye. If she had been trained as a little canting prig who could parrot-like rattle off the customary falsehood about going to hell if she told a lie, her evidence would have been accepted as truthful. She had attended a Sunday school a few times, but had never heard of a God in heaven. This is described as a "shocking state of ignorance." The superstition which masquerades as reason and knowledge is still more shocking in the eyes of the true philosopher.

MR. EBDY, a churchwarden, ran away to Australia with the wife of a member of the congregation. They first made each other's acquaintance in the church. Having grown tired of each other, the pious pair have now returned to their respective spouses. The churchwarden's wife forgives her husband, but the other fellow is not satisfied to forgive unto seventy times seven. He has obtained a divorce and £300 damages. Moral: If you want a divorce send your wife to church.

THE Mission Church at the Beckton Gasworks has been burnt to the ground. Why don't God look after his own buildings? Couldn't he send one of his spare water-spouts to extinguish a burning church instead of sinking a fishing smack at sea with it? The Christians in this case trusted to an insurance office, and not to God. They will find their ungodly faith rewarded in hard cash. Practically they act as Secularists, for they rely on insurance and not on prayer.

WE often have a fling at the sky-pilots, but we are always ready to give them whatever credit they deserve. Most of them are a self-seeking, half insincere lot, but there are a few good fellows among the white-choked gentry. One of these is the Rev. Mr. Henesley, who jumped off from a Thames steamer to rescue a drowning man. We take off our hat to this plucky parson. He worships a God who is going to burn most of us for ever and ever, but he himself cannot bear the sight of a fellow creature's struggles against the comparatively mild death of drowning.

ONE of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* is entitled "God in a Box." That is rather an ignominious position for the Almighty, but he was in a still worse position last Sunday week, when his very life was submitted to a popular vote! It appears that the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale and Mr. Donald debated the existence of Deity at the Midland Arches, and at the close of the discussion the chairman put the question to the vote, "Is there a God?" We understand that the result was mixed. But suppose the meeting had decided that God was a nonentity, what would have happened? Would the Godites have given up their idol, and would the outvoted God have gone off and buried himself, as a dead deity ought to do? We pause for a reply.

A YOUNG lady of Ipswich has drowned herself and left the following note addressed to her mother: "Just one word to say good bye till we meet for ever in heaven. God give you strength to bear your trial, as He has indeed given me." Religion hasn't helped Miss Wall very much, unless her escape from trouble by means of suicide is to be reckoned a benefit.

ACCORDING to Mr. Löwy (the secretary of the Anglo-Jewish Association) the celebrated Moabite stone is a forgery. It was found by the Rev. Mr. Klein, formerly of the Church Missionary Society, but he only copied a few words from it. He says that the stone was then in a most perfect state of preservation. Some "squeezes" were subsequently obtained, but before the stone could be secured some Bedouins or others had taken the trouble to burn and break the stone, so that only the burnt and disfigured fragments could be brought to Europe. Mr. Löwy, in an article in the *Scottish Review*, contends that while the stone is ancient, as most stones are, the inscription is exceedingly

modern. The dressed surface of the old stone is roughened and weather-worn, but the inscription has not, he says, suffered in the least, although the inscription, as a rule, would suffer much more than the smooth even surface of the stone on which it was cut. The fragments have, however, been examined by many competent authorities, who are convinced of their genuineness. The characters are the same as on the Baal-Lebanon bowl, discovered in 1872. Mr. Lowy cannot be held to have proved his case, but his article will doubtless lead to more careful investigation.

THE POPE is going to celebrate the Jubilee of his own priesthood in a cheap and inoffensive fashion, by canonising 261 of the English martyrs who suffered under Protestant persecution two or three hundred years ago. This is better than our Protestant method of celebrating the Jubilee by coaxing and threatening soldiers, sailors and factory girls till they surrender part of their slender earnings.

CHURCH petitions in Wales are manufactured in a very reprehensible fashion. A correspondent of the *Daily News* says that in one family he knows of three or four children under seven, whose names are appended on one of the petitions against Disestablishment. The youngest of these is but eighteen months old, and he already figures as one of the pious protesters against any interference with the Established Church. Children at Sunday Schools and National Schools are induced to sign wholesale. Some of the bigger boys in the Aberayon National Schools refused to sign, however—which is encouraging.

OUR chief mystery-man, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been directed by the Privy Council to prepare "a special form of prayer and of thanksgiving to Almighty God for the protection afforded to the Queen's Majesty during the fifty years of her auspicious reign." We expect the Almighty is on the tiptoe of expectation to see what the Archbishop will write. When the "special form" is out we shall tell both of them what we think of it.

SPEAKING at the Royal Academy Banquet, the Archbishop expressed his great solicitude for art. He would like to see every child in the land able to draw, etc. If his solicitude is genuine, why does he not propose, instead of stoutly opposing, the opening of the people's museums and art galleries on the one day upon which they could be taken advantage of.

THE poor dear Bishop of Wellington was coming down-stairs about a fortnight ago when his foot slipped and he turned head over heels. He flew through the air for about twenty feet and finished with a hollow thud, a howl, and three groans, after which all was still. It took an hour and a half to bring him round, and he might not have been round yet had not somebody yelled in his ear that a quarter's salary was due.—*Sydney Paper*.

WE presume that the Rev. J. Jenkins, rector of Fillingham, Lincolnshire, has saved all the souls in his parish. At any rate he has time to come up to London and quarrel with the ticket collectors at the railway station. This curious sky-pilot thinks it sufficient to put his ticket on the seat of a railway carriage, and declines to give it up at the barrier. Indeed he feels so deeply on the question that he has published a pamphlet upon it entitled, "Railway tyranny." Possibly he is a trifle cracked, but for all that he is better occupied in quarrelling at a railway station than preaching hell in the pulpit.

JOSEPH BELL, of Greystoke, Cumberland, is a very pious man, who utilised a Sunday in attempting to debauch a servant girl. After a struggle of about half an hour he went away to chapel saying he had never been better mastered in his life. When he came back he took down the Bible and showed the girl the text of the sermon to which he had been listening. Joseph Bell is now undergoing a sentence of twenty calendar months with hard labor.

ANENT the new work on Giordano Bruno, reviewed by Mr. Foote in this month's *Progress*, it is noticeable that there has just been published at Rome the autobiography of Cardinal Bellarmine, who not only defended the putting to death of heretics, but was personally present at the condemnation of three heretics at Rome, including that of Bruno.

MR. H. L. HASTINGS, the Yankee revivalist, was recently announced to lecture to "infidels and sceptics" at Stratford on "The Inspiration of the Bible." Questions were to be asked, but it turned out that Mr. Hastings' plan was to have them put before the lecture instead of after. They were not asked  *viva voce*, but written on paper and handed up to the platform. Mr. Hastings dealt with a few of them, but when requested to deal with the rest he said he "might have something to say about them to-morrow night." Thereupon one of the Freethinkers present got up and wished him good evening, which was more courtesy than he was entitled to. This Yankee revivalist is a mere self-advertising humbug, who boasts himself as the great infidel-slayer, and is not only afraid to meet any leading sceptic in debate, but unable to deal on the spot with questions arising

out of his own lectures. The Americans must be laughing in their sleeves at the gullibility of the London Christians, who are taken in by such a preposterous windbag.

THE Rev. W. T. Kevill Davis, vicar of Yarpole, Herefordshire, has to seek protection at law from a woman whom he admits having seduced some twenty years ago.

A RELIGIOUS luminary in the North—a dull sort of Northern Light—lately cautioned his hearers against "religious inundations." Did he mean the Flood? or did he mean "innovations"? Perhaps he is suffering from water on the brain.

ACCORDING to a correspondent in the *Weekly Times*, the master of the Board School at Woking gave a Scripture lesson in which he informed the children that the Irish are accursed of God, being descended from the Canaanites, who are accursed of God through Ham's exposure of his pious father's drunkenness. The propriety and the ethnology of such scriptural teaching are alike open to the most serious condemnation. How are English and Irish children to "love" each other, as Christians say, or to be friendly and kindly towards each other, as Secularists would teach, if one race is to be insulted by the other as "accursed" by the all-wise ruler of the universe whose decision settles everything?

A CABMAN committed suicide at Paris the other day and left behind a letter, in which he said: "I have had enough of driving people about in this world. I am going to see if in the other world people drive differently." Evidently they must. Elijah drove up to heaven in a red-hot cab, drawn by incandescent steeds. Novel methods of driving of course must be necessary. When this enterprising Jchu has learned the heavenly methods he had better come back and open an entertainment surpassing Buffalo Bill's "Wild West."

THE Liverpoolians are smiling audibly at the pious nonsense of Father Nugent, who has been lecturing on a miraculous picture at Genezzano. Father Nugent is a thorough believer in the efficacy of pilgrimages to this place. He also says that when he was crossing a mountain the leading horses of his carriage took fright, and he expected every moment to be hurled over a precipice; but he prayed to our Lady of Genezzano, and the carriage was miraculously overturned, so that it stopped on the very edge of the cliff. On another occasion in Liverpool, his driver was thrown off the box, the reins were broken, and the horses galloping wildly in the direction of the Custom House; but again he prayed to our Lady of Genezzano, who must have pretty long ears to reach from there to Liverpool, and the carriage was stopped and the Father rescued without a scratch. This is a good advertisement for our Lady of Genezzano, and we daresay the pilgrims will leave cash enough this year to give her a fresh coat of paint.

WOULD Father Nugent like to stand on the edge of our roof, and let our printer's devil give him a running shove behind. There is a nice row of spikes below, and it would tax all the powers of our Lady of Genezzano to save an inquest.

THERE has been an Anti-tobacco meeting at Liverpool, at the lecture hall of the Young Men's Christian Association. Dr. Townson, who took the chair, observed that smoking "retarded the study of the Word of God." What does Spurgeon think of this? He loves a cigar. Does he find it interfere with his Bible studies? We don't.

THE Rev. Henry Rudge, curate of Plemondestall, near Chester, has been fined 5s. and costs for being drunk in the streets of the cathedral city. He did not put in an appearance at the court, but he admitted the charge through his solicitor. According to the evidence, he was seen staggering along Hoole Road, and on nearing All Saints' Church the spirit completely overpowered him, and he disappeared into a ditch. Being assisted out by a police officer, he said he was only "tired," and gave his name as "Snooks." Mr. Snooks Rudge, or Mr. Rudge Snooks, will probably get drunk in his own house in future; at any rate, his vicar or the bishop should give him instructions to that effect.

The *Christian Commonwealth* says that the only way to preserve Christianity is to rid it of all human accretions. But if this were done there would be nothing left of Christianity to preserve.

PREACHING about the "70,000 destitute children" of New York, Talmage speaks of these "suffering little ones sacrificed on the altar of every iniquitous passion," and yet says that "It is not the will of your Heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish." Then if it is his will to save them, why doesn't he save them? Is the Almighty such a fool that he permits his omnipotent will to be baffled by the Devil? Or is he asleep, in which case he is not omnipotent or omniscient for the time being? Or is the whole theological hypothesis a piece of nonsense? An omnipotent being who can't do what he wills is manifestly an impossibility. And if the Christian God existed, evil can only exist because he wills it, or at least permits it, thus being responsible for it.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 8, The Circus, Bow Street, Portsmouth; at 11, "The Jubilee: a Radical Protest;" at 3, "Eve and the Apple;" at 7, "Who made God?"

MAY 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. Schweizer.

F. J. K.—Your article is interesting but scarcely in our line. May-day is not claimed as a religious festival by the orthodox.

D. KAY.—Thanks for the cutting. You should *always* send orders and remittances to Mr. Forder; *never* to us.

H. COLE.—Jokes are always welcome.

W. T. LEEKY.—We are obliged for the cuttings.

W. FARLEY, 40 Abingdon Road, Southsea, being nearly blind, would be very glad if any Secularist would drop in and read the *Freethinker* to him.

J. HODGSON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

H. FOWLER.—We don't know. Apply to a bookseller.

E. T. GARNER.—The Yankee revivalist is a thorough-paced charlatan.

J. COLE.—Mr. Foote intends to give some of the open-air stations a turn this summer, but he can say nothing definite until the end of May. You had better write him again.

J. B. SMITH.—Archdeacon Farrar's letter does not appear unreasonable. If he receives so many letters about his books it is impossible to answer them all and find time for his work.

J. NEATE.—Thanks, though we had seen it before. Mr. Symes is not likely to get into Parliament with such a budget of political and social as well as religious heresies.

A. J. (Birmingham).—We decline to trouble ourselves any further about Mr. Aston's squabbles with his colleagues. As we said before, we must leave them to fight it out among themselves.

G. B. ATKIN.—(1) We don't know how many Freethinkers there are in the House of Commons. John Morley is certainly a disbeliever in Christianity. Mr. Labouchere does not say *what* he is, but we guess a new-born babe could wear his theological outfit. (2) The lines appeared in an old number of the *Freethinker*, but we are too busy to search the file. (3) We gave the correct title of Polwhele's book. (4) Glad to hear the *Freethinker* is so well appreciated in your district. Lending the paper about is sure to extend its circle of subscribers.

C. BAXTER.—Pleased to learn that *Infidel Death-Beds* has proved so useful. Answering it is impossible, and it will probably not be attempted. Mr. Wheeler's "Brief Freethought Biographies," now appearing in *Progress*, will ultimately be published in book form. You will see the advertisement of Part III. of the Bible Handbook next week.

CONSTANT READER.—Thanks. We chiefly prefer newspaper cuttings relative to current matters of fact.

T. J. K.—There is naturally a difficulty in procuring Freethought literature in small towns. It is impossible for us to open agencies throughout the country. The best plan is for readers of the *Freethinker* to pester their newsagents until they supply it, threatening, if need be, to take their custom elsewhere. Glad to hear that Freethought is spreading in the Army. Mr. Bradlaugh's Bill, we understand, will relieve Tommy Atkins as well as other people.

J. E. D.—Mr. Forder will supply you with the Secular Burial Service. Thanks for the cuttings.

G. G. R. sends £1 for Mr. Kemp, and A. FISHER 1s.

THE February number of *Progress*, 1886, destroyed by the fire, is wanted to complete the set for the British Museum Library. Can any reader oblige?

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Western Morning News—La Semaine Anticléricale—Church Reformer—Liberator—Jus—Truthseeker—Chat—Ironclad Age—Countryman—Hereford Times—Freidenker—Menschenthum—Bristol Mercury—Carlisle Express.

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.

THERE was a fine audience at the Camberwell Secular Hall last Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Let Us Pray." The lecturer was listened to with rapt attention, and very heartily cheered. Some opposition was offered by the irrepressible Mr. Morden, who did not think the Archbishop of Canterbury insincere in praying for his daily bread, and taking £15,000 a year to go on with; for, said Mr. Morden, "What is the use of £15,000 a year with no bread?" This colossal bull set the audience in a roar, and the fun was heightened by Mr. Morden's inability to see the point of the joke.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE BLASPHEMY LAWS.—At a meeting of the Committee of the above Association on April 28th, the Rev. S. D. Headlam in the chair, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:—"That this Committee views with great regret the changes made this year in Mr. Courtney Kenny's bill, believing that they will tend to increase the number of religious prosecutions and to give them a new sanction."—W. SHARMAN, *Hon. Sec.*

*Royal Paupers* is selling well. The first edition is nearly exhausted, and a second edition is in the press.

THE Bethnal Green Branch of the N. S. S. is now carrying on Sunday evening lectures at the Monarch Coffee Tavern, opposite the Post-office, in the Bethnal Green Road. The admission is free. We shall be glad to hear that the lectures are well attended.

THE *Boston Investigator* has commenced its fifty-seventh volume. It has been forty-eight years under its present management by Messrs. Mendum and Seaver.

THE inscription on the column just erected in Rome in honor of Galileo runs thus: "The neighboring palace, once the property of the Medicis, was the prison of Galileo Galilei, guilty of having seen the earth revolve round the sun."

WHEN M. Leconte de Lisle was recently received into "the sacred forty" of the French Academy, he greatly disconcerted the religious people of France by alluding to the character of Moses. Referring to the different methods of the romantic and national schools, he remarked that when Alfred de Vigny wrote his poem on "Moses," he did not represent the semi-legendary hero of the Israelites as we know him to-day, that is, as "the chief of a horde of ferocious nomads." This expression of the opinion of the greatest living poet in France upon the divine legislator has given umbrage to both Jews and Catholics.

THE *Brooklyn Morning Journal* illustrates its notice of the New York Academy with a view of Colonel Ingersoll before a painting representing the ceremony of washing the feet in St. Mark's, Venice. It says: "A very stout man, with a large bald head and a smooth pink face, which was so full of good nature that it might be taken for that of a very jolly and very corpulent baby's, stood regarding the canvas 'Washing the Feet.' He seemed very much interested in it, leaning on his cane and scrutinising the painting critically with one eye half shut. 'Well, Mr. Ingersoll,' said some one at his side, 'I didn't suppose anybody could get you to look at a religious picture, least of all of a religious ceremony.' 'Humph!' grunted the doughty Robert, 'I go in for this sort of religion every time. If the Church inculcated the doctrine of cold water early and often, why I don't know but I should take a hand in it. That's the kind of religious ceremony I approve of, though I never heard it called by that name before.' And the mild-looking apostle of the ungodly rolled deftly through the crowd to the painting of a young lady combing her hair, and with her mouth full of hair-pins, which appealed to the colonel's mood just at the moment."

IN an article on the Veda, in the April number of *The Century*, Professor Whitney says, "The epoch of the Veda must be fixed at considerably more than a thousand years before Christ; indeed it does not seem as if much less than two thousand would satisfy the conditions of the problem." Yet Dr. Kuenen and Prof. Wellhausen have shown that the earliest Hebrew writings cannot be dated before 800 B.C. So that the Hindu Bible would appear to be almost a thousand years older than the Christian one.

W. CURRAN, brigade-surgeon, writing to the *Echo*, says that he cannot understand how Mohammedanism and Buddhism have supplanted Christianity in Asia, and he might have added in North Africa. "I confess," he adds, "I do not see how this can be reconciled with the promises of the Gospel." He further remarks that Mohammedanism, and not Christianity, is the civilising agency in Africa.

ACCORDING to M. Emile de Laveleye's new book, *The Balkan Peninsula*, the Mohammedans have a better system of land tenure than obtains in any Christian country. By Mussulman law, the trees planted or buildings set on another man's land form an independent property. The man who has, as a good tenant, built or planted on another's land, may become the owner of the soil at a fair price, if the value of his work is greater than that of the land, which is generally the case in the country. If the culture of the ground ceases for three years, unless the land is pasture or lying fallow, the soil is lost to the owner, and becomes the property of the State. The famous Arabian juriconsult Sidi-Kebil lays down the following principle:—"He who revivifies the dead earth becomes its owner. If the traces of former occupation have disappeared he who revivifies the soil acquires it." According to Mussulman law the general interest limits the right of the private owner. He may only use and not abuse, and he must maintain the productive power of the land. He is not free to sell to whomsoever he may like. The neighbors, inhabitants of the village, and the tenantry have a right of choice or preference.

### WAS MOSES A SOCIALIST?

A PAMPHLET by "J. C. K." on *Social Religion* has a chapter or section entitled "Moses the Socialist." The author, advocating Christian Socialism, naturally likes to believe that the Divine Law of Moses was Socialistic. Many land reformers of the cruder and semi-religious kind also have a tendency to admire the land legislation associated with the name of the alleged author of the Pentateuch. Let us examine the Mosaic land system to see if it was Socialistic as "J. C. K." alleges, or if it is any way admirable or desirable as a solution of the land question.

Our Christian Socialist thus describes the system :

"Very simply and thoroughly the Law of Moses disposed of the Land, Labor, and Capital questions. Under it the land was divided into portions of a suitable size; a portion was given to every family and fixed in the possession of that family for perpetuity by the strictest entail. By no process of sale or mortgage might the land be alienated from the family, save that it might be mortgaged from any time until the next year of jubilee (which occurred every fifty years), at an agreed price into which no consideration of interest entered. But at the year all lands inevitably returned to the family originally owning them."

"Strictest entail" is a sign of aristocracy and of a landlordism of an evil and artificial kind. It is certainly not Socialistic. A family which diminished in numbers would still retain its too ample estate, whilst another family which had increased a hundredfold would have only the little farm which sufficed to support the original couple from whom they were descended. Fixing the tenure of land in families would thus make some rich and others poor. There would be no equality either of possession or of opportunity. The entail would prevent a redistribution of the land according to either the necessities or the abilities of the proletariat. Those, too, who were illegitimate, or were immigrants, could never by their own efforts acquire any permanent share in the ownership of the soil. By intermarriages, too, among the wealthier landowners there would be a tendency to the concentration of wealth. Where the sole surviving heir of one family married the sole surviving heiress of another, the two estates would descend as a double portion to their descendants, who might repeat the process, as aristocratic families so commonly do in modern times.

When we also remember that Moses limited the priesthood to one tribe, that he allowed no popular election or voting, and above all that he sanctioned slavery, it becomes evident that Moses neither supported Socialism nor the principle of the freedom of the individual. He cared more for genealogy than for either liberty or equality.

Houses in cities, moreover, were freely bought and sold, and did not revert to the original owner in the jubilee year. "J. C. K." alleges that Moses strictly commanded that "nothing might be lent for profit." Moses simply commanded the Israelites not to take usury of each other: but he left them perfectly free to take usury of strangers (Deut. xxiii., 19, 20), a permission of which the Jews have since largely availed themselves.

"J. C. K." comments as favorably as he can on the Mosaic law of slavery, and is maladroit enough to proceed thus :

"Means were also provided by which the bond-service was easily terminable, but not at a day's or a week's notice.

"Could any law be more calculated than this to ensure the temporal prosperity of a whole people: to care for the weak and helpless: to give plenty to all who work and riches to none: to promote virtue, and with virtue true happiness: to make men brothers indeed, and to exhibit God, the giver of the law, as a loving Father to his children?"

The slavery was usually "for ever," and was not easily terminable, but "J. C. K." evidently does not trouble about strict accuracy. His comments are, perhaps, intended to apply to the Mosaic law as a whole rather than to the law of slavery which "Moses the Socialist" enacted.

"J. C. K." reminds his fellow Christians that Christ, by his own declaration, came to insure "the fulfilment of this Law down to its last commandment;" and he rebukes them thus :

"And now, O pretended Christians! come and compare our British law with that which you believe came direct from God. Moses gave enough of land to each family, and made every man secure of his right to the earth and to the results of his labor. We have given all the land to a few landlords, and sold the laborers into bondage to them."

Moses, as the model Socialist, gave enough of other people's land for each family, having first stolen the land and killed the inhabitants, or having enjoined that course on the recipients of his Socialistic blessings. If this divine plan is the correct one, as "J. C. K." apparently imagines, Socialism has so ugly a start that few Socialists will openly avow such a policy of murder and theft. The better Socialists, indeed, will reject the methods of this alleged Socialist with the utmost emphasis of sincere and honorable indignation.

The Mosaic land legislation ensured private persons in the perpetual right to family estates. It did not secure the whole of the value, or any part thereof, for the benefit of the community at large. Entail was its essence; but the abolition of the principle of entail in favor of the principle of freedom is the essence of modern land reform. Spendthrift families, drunken families, incompetent families, are continually reinstated by the Mosaic law, whereas the more just and sensible spirit of modern reform would leave them free to part with their encumbered estates for good; those who are best able to carry on the work of agriculture or to discharge the duties of ownership being thus gradually and naturally substituted for the idle or ne'er-do-well class of landlords, who are left to go to ruin in their own foolish way until they have to work for their own living, and so learn some very needful lessons of life in the only way they can possibly be taught them.

The difficulties of carrying out the Mosaic scheme of entail, unless primogeniture were added to it, would be as serious as the evils resulting from it. How could a family, increased almost to the dimensions of a clan, resume and maintain possession of a plot of land insufficient for a hundredth part of their number? Who would have to give way? And what land will be left for the excluded part of the family? One difficulty was obviated by restraining marriages outside the tribe, in order that the inheritance might not revert to other tribes (Num. xxxvi., 6). Is the Christian admirer of "Moses the Socialist" willing to prevent all intermarriages between the inhabitants of different counties? Another difficulty was got over by giving the Levites forty-eight cities by lot, together with tithes (Lev. xxvii., 30).

I fail, however, to perceive any signs in the historical parts of the Bible that this jubilee scheme was ever carried out, and I suspect that it was only the dream of a would-be legislator incorporated into the works he compiled or edited or manufactured.

W. P. BALL.

### THE SAINTS AT BRIGHTON.

THE "Army of the Lord" at Brighton still carries on its religious mummeries daily. A public meeting has denounced their proceedings as blasphemous and degrading to public morals. The "Army" failed in its recent prosecution of the tradesmen who interrupted its meetings. In the course of the trial, however, the Saints succeeded in exposing themselves to the public in their true colors. Mr. Wood, the leader, who used to work miracles of faith-healing in Australia and elsewhere, is known by the faithful as "King Solomon." His underlings are dignified with various scriptural titles, such as "King David," "Brother Jonah," "King Eli," "Caleb," and so forth. They obtained their chief supply of money from a silly half-paralysed old lady, who gave them £2,500 to buy a meeting-house and a residence. The Brethren subsist on the proceeds of the jewellery and other contributions that they draw from the religious simpletons who come to see the orgies of pious dancing, in which decency is so far in danger that rugs are now provided to cover the limbs of the excited females as they drop promiscuously on the floor, giddy and exhausted with their holy leapings unto the Lord, but still kicking vigorously, although they can no longer stand. The "King" always worships in red shoes, and dances on painted rings on the floor of the hall, until the epileptic effect of this religious dancing intensifies into convulsions and faintings. The frenzied women as they fall cry out for contributions of jewellery or money to the Army. Some of them call out that all property is to be given to "King Solomon," and their hysterical sentences are always alleged to be directly inspired by the Holy Ghost in person. When David danced before the Ark in public he hardly expected to have female imitators, almost as scornful of scandal and decency as the royal psalmist himself.

Under the platform is a small room, called "The Glory Hole," and another covered with red baize, where the Brethren repair to be "under the blood."

According to the evidence of "King Abraham," who three months ago was a railway navvy, Wood used to kiss anybody's wife, King Abraham's included. King Abraham viewed this

as an honor. He says "it was Scripture," and in this he was quite correct if we may judge from the lives of the biblical patriarchs and kings. Hence he no more resented it than the original friend of God resented Pharaoh's appropriation of Sarah, his wife and sister in one. The modern King Solomon, it appears, receives his lady favorites in his bedroom, as the fittest and holiest of spiritual reception rooms. Young women attend "Communion Services" attired only in night dresses.

The Brethren claim that all this is a return to primitive Christianity, and that they are not so far out as modern Christians choose to maintain is evident from the accusations of licentiousness which the early Christian sects used to make against each other, and the fact that the Christian love-feasts had to be put an end to by the councils of the Church, on account of the intolerable evils and scandals they gave birth to. Unless there is strong practical moral sense among people to regulate and control religion, religion almost necessarily becomes a frightful evil, for it loosens all moral ties. The dispensations and indulgences officially issued by Rome are outdone by the direct first-hand dispensations of the God, or the Holy Ghost, who according to religion will inspire the true believer's wishes and actions. Weak minds are easily led away by this conviction, and the gratification of the baser passions naturally appears to them to be the permitted and ordained reward of their faith and piety. Such at least has in all ages been the most common result of religious enthusiasm. It is morality that has had to keep religion in check, not religion which has fostered morality.

### CONVERTING CANNIBALS.

A MISSIONARY man essayed to practise his devotions  
Among a tribe who were possessed of cannibalish notions,  
Most powerfully he preached and prayed, and pointed up above him,  
Until he felt that he had made those savage people love him.  
With eloquent and burning words he earnestly besought them  
To come as sinners and receive the mercy he had brought them ;  
He called upon them one an' all, in language most impassioned,  
To spurn the gods of stone and clay which they had rudely fashioned,  
And told them there was but one God for mankind to adore,  
Which one, he said, was also three, in case they wanted more.  
So day by day he labored on, and felt he was succeeding,  
Till, in an evil moment, he began to teach them reading.  
Those savages then set to work with such determination  
That Bible reading soon became their leading occupation.  
Alas ! alas ! poor Brother G., that missionary preacher,  
Was sorry then that ever he had turned scholastic teacher,  
For every day those natives brought a brain-distracting series  
Of biblical bewilderment and contradictory queries.  
He felt the ground he stood upon was slippery and miry,  
And vainly tried to stem the tide of curious inquiry.  
But Rangaboo, a native chief, who always call'd him brother,  
Relieved him from this trouble, and indeed from every other,  
Before a meeting of the tribe he caused him to appear,  
And Brother G. felt pained to see in every eye a tear ;  
Said Rangaboo : " From this, your book, a passage I will read you :  
' If son or brother, wife or friend, should tempt, or try to lead you  
To worship gods thou hast not known, gods known not to thy father,  
Thou shalt no mercy for them feel, but take and kill them rather.' \*  
Since reading this, thy sad, sad fate, in tears I have been rueing,  
For this, O missionary man, is just what you've been doing,  
And now, alas !—excuse these tears, my grief I cannot smother—  
I am compelled to take your life, O dear beloved brother.  
Observe each eye, not one is dry ; true hearts, they share my sorrow,  
They know that you must die to-day—our feast-day is to-morrow ;  
Your virtues we have long admired, and 'tis some consolation  
To know that you will fill us now with more than admiration,  
For when we inwardly digest the lessons you have taught us,  
We p'rhaps may better understand the goodness you have brought us."

Then at a sign those natives rose, and—tho' in tribulation—  
Dispatched that missionary man with Christian resignation,  
This shows that they agreed with him and what his Bible stated,  
But whether he agreed with them I do not find narrated.

CARLOS.

A RICH Russian peasant at Obodny, in Podolia, was visited by three clerically attired persons who announced that they were Christ and the apostles Peter and Paul. They accused him of uncharitableness and demanded his money. He gave them all he had in the house and sent out to borrow more. The credulous neighbors came flocking in to see the holy visitors ; but the impostors mistook their motives and thought the peasants were come to apprehend them. When Christ drew a knife from under his clothes and attacked a too forward peasant, the crowd awoke from their credulity and found courage to attack the thieves, who were overpowered and carried off to gaol. It is a pity the peasantry everywhere cannot wake from their credulity and pack off the gods and priests who crush them and plunder them. The imposture or delusion called Christianity ought also to have been self-exposed by its resort to the knife and the stake, but few have possessed understanding enough to perceive this and fewer still the courage to attack the impostor, thief, and tyrant in one.

\* Deuteronomy xiii., 6.

### NOTES ON THE MAY MEETINGS.

THE Merry May Meetings of professional philanthropists are upon us once more. We notice that the Christian Evidence Society have secured the services of the Bishop of London for their annual meeting. It is fitting that one who, like Dr. Temple, assisted in promoting scepticism when he was only a minister, should do something in the opposite direction now he is a bishop.

THE Society for the Promotion of the Gospel is one of the first to state its accounts this year. The S. P. G. boasts a total revenue of £105,711, which was a decrease of £2,242 since last year. The Archbishop of Canterbury, who presided, regretted that their means were sinking when they had most need of them. He remarked "if we are to turn the subtle intellect of the Hindoo, it was absolutely necessary for our missionaries to receive higher and higher education." He declared himself overwhelmed by learning that there are parts of the world where more good is done by Mohammedanism than by Christianity, and that while their funds were going down, there were two hundred thousand more Mohammedans and Buddhists in the world than there were five years ago. Altogether the proceedings were most lugubrious. Who will come to the help of the Lord against the mighty ?

THE report of the annual synod of the Presbyterian Church of England notifies debts on churches and manses amounting to £102,939. There was a diminution of £9,573 in the total receipts in 1886 as compared with 1885. The report on the Presbyterian College was still more depressing. The college account was overdrawn to the amount of £772, and the committee had to recommend a reduction of salaries and an additional fee to students. This last policy was recommended reluctantly, as it might "discourage entrants, who are already too few." The synod have drawn up a report upon the Confession of Faith, which they propose to modify, in order to accommodate the consciences that cannot quite swallow election and reprobation whole.

THE Religious Tract Society report a falling off in their trade account of nearly £10,000 during 1886.

### REVIEWS.

*The Philosophy of Anarchism.* By Henry Seymour. International Publishing Co., 2d.—Contains a good deal of sense mixed with a good deal of nonsense.

*Married Life: Comfort or Misery.* W. H. Reynolds: New Cross 1d.—A little Malthusian pamphlet, for a wonder readable. It is a conversation between three ladies on the population question.

*The Hope of the Future.* By Col. Ingersoll. R. Forder: London.—A reprint of an admirable article by the great American Freethinker dealing chiefly with the politico-social question. While ardently desiring reform, and the elevation of the masses, Ingersoll holds that "Socialism seems to be one of the worst possible forms of slavery." He says, and we agree with him, that "the human race cannot afford to exchange its liberty for any possible comfort."

*Home Rule and the Irish Question.* Speeches by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain. London: Sonnenschein. 1s.—Politics is out of our line in this journal. We must satisfy ourselves with saying that the volume is well-printed and wonderfully cheap. Mr. Chamberlain is a man of mark, and many will be glad to have his spoochos on the question of the hour.

*Our Corner.* May. Freethought Publishing Co.—Mrs. Bosant opens with a spirited article on the Present Day Tracts. Mr. Wheeler writes agreeably on Some Advanced Women, and Mr. Robertson begins a sensible paper on the Rational Treatment of Criminals. There are other readable contributions.

*A Reply to Professor Maguire's pamphlet "England's Duty to Ireland."* By James Pearse. London: Standing. (2d.)—Not having read Professor Maguire's pamphlet, we cannot judge of Mr. Pearse's reply. He writes vigorously, however, though a little diffusely at times, and his pamphlet is a plea for Home Rule.

*The Life of Sophy Poulson.* A True Love Story of a Good and Beautiful Girl. By EDWARD POULSON, Christian Evidence Lecturer.—We presume it is the author who sends us this little memoir of his dead wife, which, to himself and personal friends, may be very affecting. His virulence against living and dead "Atheists" does not tempt us to criticise his private sorrow.

*Dat Sherman Band.* The People's Jubilee Song, with Chorus. Composed by CHARLES DE LAPORTE. London: 8 Citizen Road, N.—An amusing skit at royalty and its Teutonic following. Both words and music are lively, and if produced at our popular music-halls would contribute to turn the Jubilee mania into ridicule.

OBITUARY.—We regret to notice the death, at the advanced age of 73, of Mr. G. French, of New Swindon. Mr. French was one of the oldest and most prominent of local social and political reformers. He took a prominent part in the Chartist movement and the Agricultural Laborers' Union, and was an active member of the Swindon Branch of the N. S. S., being faithful to his principles to the end. The funeral—which, according to the wishes of the deceased, was a Secular one—took place on Thursday, April 28, and was attended by some nine hundred people. Mr. F. Haslam read the Secular Burial Address, written by Austin Holyoake.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER.**

A PRINTED set of "Hints to Communicants" which has been forwarded to us, is rather amusing. The "Hints" are really most particular injunctions emphasized by the language of priestly authoritativeness and by the plentiful use of special large type for the most important part of each regulation. The authoritative hints commence thus, the words italicised being in extra large black type:

"1. The Blessed Sacrament should be received fasting: this means that you should take no food or drink after midnight, not even a drop of water or a dose of medicine is allowed."

The thought of the precious body and blood being allowed to mingle in the stomach with an early rasher or cup of coffee, or in the intestines with a dose of jalap or castor oil is too distressing for the Christian to contemplate.

Passing over minor instructions about removing gloves and veils and the manner of kneeling and bowing we come to the following:

"7. Your hands should be held up as high as your chin, and the Sacred Host should be received in the palm of the right hand resting flat upon the left, and so conveyed carefully to the mouth. Take care that no particle remains unconsumed on your hand."

The dreadful consequences of leaving particles unconsumed, is illustrated in the tale of the rat, which we took from the columns of *La Semaine Anticlericale*. The parson of this East London church would hardly like to be compelled to swallow all the rats and mice that frequent his church; and to allow any of the sacred crumbs to be swept away with the ordinary dust would be the height of impiety. "Hint" number 8 gives a number of separate commands which run thus:

8. Guide the Chalice firmly with both hands to your mouth.

Do not take more than one small drop of the Precious Blood.

Draw your lips together, so that no drop may escape.

Men with hair on their lips should be most careful.

Never wipe your lips with your handkerchief. Never take your hands away from the Chalice with a jerk, or bow your head suddenly: women with large hats or bonnets should be particularly careful about this."

**COUNSEL:** "Do you know the nature of an oath, my good woman?" Witness (with a black eye): "I did ought to, sir. Which my ushan's a Covin' Garden porter, sir!"—*Punch*.

"My friend," said a lantern-jawed Apostle solemnly, to the Prompter, "do you realise when you retire at night that you may be called before the morning?" "Yes, sir," replied our much married critic, "I realise it fully. I'm the father of a three weeks' old baby."

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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 £800; this, with the Spencer Legacy of £500 leaves £500 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 Bye Street, Clarendon Road, Cannon-M, Manchester, or to the undersigned at 25 Higher Chatham Street, Manchester.

A. HEMINGWAY, Hon. Sec.

**Price Threepence.**

**PROGRESS**

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- Giordano Bruno. By G. W. Foote.
- Voltaire in England. By J. M. Wheeler.
- The Decline of Piety. By Alter Brown.
- Anne 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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