

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 198.



A YOUTHFUL SINNER.

Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.—2 CHRON. XXXVI, 9.

BLACK CONGRESSES.

LONDON swarms in May with legions of the Black Army. They come up from all parts, yea even from Dan to Beer-sheba, unto the Jerusalem of this most Christian country, which some crack-brained people believe to be inhabited by the descendants of the lost tribes, so that Englishmen are Jews in disguise, and chosen people without knowing it. After discussing and voting at their day meetings, hosts of the Black Army disport themselves in the evening at the theatres and other places of amusement. Even the Criterion and the Gaiety are not neglected, and some gentlemen with soft black hats may be seen refreshing themselves in perpendicular fashion, and casting sheep's-eyes at the comely barmaids. It is astonishing what a lot of the old man Adam exists in the same bodies with the new man Christ.

Many of the May Meetings have yet to be held, nor have we space to notice a tithe of those that are over and done with, and as dead as Queen Anne. But we venture a word or two on a few of them. First let us take the societies for converting Jews. They are engaged in the toughest

work, and they require an enormous quantity of cash to go on with it. Their success seems infinitesimal, but Christian gullibility is great in this direction, and the cash rolls in with ever-increasing velocity and volume. The London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews boasts an income of over £36,000. It reports that there are over 3,000 Christianised Jews in the United Kingdom, more than 100 of whom are ordained clergymen; but it does not state how many of these were brought to Jesus by its exertions or its money. From these figures it appears that each of the ex-Jew clergymen has a magnificent irregular congregation of thirty! Many of the converts, also, are well-known to be kept, or partially kept, by the Mission funds, on the ground that they have lost caste and find it difficult to get work. Lazy, disreputable Jews who cannot earn a living elsewhere fall back on the Christian Mission as a last resort. This is the class of people, all over the world, whom the Christian missionaries bring into the fold. As a rule the world could very well dispense with their presence; it would, indeed, be thankful if the missionaries, after making them fit for the kingdom of heaven, could send them on to their destination with the quickest dispatch.

There is also a *British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews*, boasting an income last year

of £10,344. It has over a hundred workers "paid and unpaid" (very few of the *latter* we expect), but it does not tell us how many Jews it has converted, or how much a head it costs to work the trick.

What a pity Jesus Christ did not have this £46,000 a year. He could have spread his Salvation Army in all directions. Treasurer Judas would not have ratted and sold up the concern for thirty shillings. There would have been no crucifixion, and no worship of "ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods."

The British and Foreign Bible Society is proud of having distributed 3,932,678 copies of Bibles, Testaments, and portions during the past year. This is the reason why Bibles are such a drug in the market. Secondhand booksellers hate the sight of them. They lie upon the shelves as solemn and placid as though they intended to remain there till the Day of Judgment; and so they would if there were no paper merchants and buttermen. Bibles disappear in other ways too. *We* have cut, and hacked, and damnably mutilated several in compiling our *Contradictions, Absurdities*, and the forthcoming parts of our *Bible Handbook for Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians*. Still, four million Bibles are a large consignment. As Shylock says, "'tis a good round sum." Yet the pious groan, "All these Bibles, and so little faith." Alas, the very Bible Society itself is feeling the decline of belief, for its income has fallen in two years to the tune of £31,300. At this rate it will soon have to stop printing, and God Almighty will have to produce the blessed book by a miraculous process, or the supply will cease.

The Christian Blind Relief Society has a small income of £962. Of course, the funds are devoted to relieving the physically blind among the faithful. If the Society relieved all the mentally blind, it would want an income of a hundred millions at least. Just the alteration of one letter would turn the Society's name into one that fits all the orthodox associations to a T. Change the R in Relief into B, and you have it. What a capital name; how significant and how appropriate! The Christian Blind Relief Society! Surely some zealous and enterprising committee will start it at once. Anyhow, we make them a present of the title.

The Congregational Union opened with what the President called its "first duty" of "congratulating the Monarch of these realms on the speedily-approaching completion of fifty years of sovereignty." Let us, in our turn, congratulate the Congregationalists on their slunkeyism. There is, and we gladly admit it, a striking connection between Christianity and Monarchy, and an equally striking connection between Freethought and Democracy.

Turning to the Convocation of Canterbury, we find that the Upper House opened with an address from the Queen. Her Majesty hears "with regret, and the utmost sympathy, that many of the clergy and their families have shared in the sufferings unhappily so prevalent at this period of depression." Indeed! And why should they *not* share in the general suffering? Why should they be exempt from the trials and troubles of ordinary flesh and blood? Do they want front seats in heaven and beds of roses here? Still, if the Queen likes to commiserate their unhappy condition, she has a right to, and we should be the last to dispute it. But what, after all, is the use of "the utmost sympathy" when it is confined to words? Surely Her Majesty might shell out half-a-million or so for the relief of her Black Army. She would never miss it, and it would be a good investment. Her black regiments are the best support of her throne. They guard it in the Sunday School and the Church, the prison and the workhouse, the poor man's cottage and the rich man's hall. They are ready to fight tooth and nail for her prerogatives. They will spend—well, any^tg but their cash—in her service. But they are human, and if she lets them starve on their paltry ten or twelve millions a year, there may be a revolt of the janissaries.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* says: "We have known a barrister, who eloquently preaches the Gospel and possesses quite a reputation for saintliness, rise in a court of law and utter the most deliberate and bare-faced falsehoods, and the most cruel slanders that a man could possibly speak." What *moral* use to him then was his Christianity? It helped him in his business relations doubtlessly, and satisfied his conscience, but evidently it did not impel him to honesty, truthfulness, and honor.

EARLY RELIGION.

Few definitions of religion have attracted more attention than that of Matthew Arnold: *morality touched by emotion*. "That is what we approve of," many have instinctively said, and they have accordingly been loud in their praises of a definition which seems to give religion a sure and permanent place in human regard. For differ as men may on other points, all agree as to the importance of morality to human society, and as to the necessity that persons shall not only know what is the right path, but have also the impulse to follow it.

If, however, we look at the actual manifestations of religion in the past, or, indeed, in society around us, we shall see that Mr. Arnold's definition is fallacious, nay almost unmeaning. Religion and morality are entirely distinct, and are not necessarily welded together by any fire of emotion.

Orthodox Christians believe that religion is a revelation from an all-wise deity, and that before there was any written revelation there was the primitive revelation of personal communication with God. But the study of early human history so far from confirming this shows the exact opposite. Instead of having fallen from a perfect religion man has but slowly emerged from the grossest superstitions. No one now supposes that some God invented architecture or music. The records of the past prove that religion, as much as the arts, has developed from rudest beginnings. It is a growth of earth, not a gift of heaven, and its manifestations have usually very clear traces of their clayey origin sticking to them.

The records of every ancient people show that, in early times, much was practised as religion which we now decidedly consider immoral. I need only allude to the universal practice of bloody sacrifices and other cruelties arising out of the belief in propitiating the gods or ghosts who were dreaded.

Without abstract words man can have no clear conception of abstract ideas. If all his language speaks of physical sensation only, if he have no such words as *mind*, *right*, or *virtue*, his intellectual and moral nature must be in embryo only. And this is what philology teaches us as to the condition of early man. All these words are taken from concrete things; *mind* signifies measure, *right* means straight, and *straight* something stretched; *virtue* means manliness, and so on. There are tribes still in existence that have no abstract words, and yet have a religion. They have no sense of the meaning of the word to love, yet they worship or pow-wow to their fetishes in order to obtain the goods they covet and avert the calamities they dread.

Early religion knew nothing of moral duties. Religion has descended to us from "the ages before morality." In its simplest expression it might be defined as a wish whose fruition depends upon unknown power. But though hope may contribute some element, fear is the predominant characteristic. Man's early beliefs had their origin in sensation, and the most powerful sensation is pain, and its related emotion fear. Unpleasant occurrences, at any rate in the past history of the martyrdom of man, have been more frequent or at least more forcible than pleasant ones, and they produce a deeper and more lasting effect. Hence devil-worship lies at the very root of religion. The thoughts of early man, like those of every other animal, were centred in the world around him. The necessity for food, the dread of other living beings, the fear of darkness and storm and thunder, the mystery of generation, dreams and the fear of the dead returning in dreams—these were the primary sources of man's religion, and they are unconnected with morality. In the observation of nature there is no direct moral lesson. She brings to life and she brings to death. She crushes a man as remorselessly as a moth. Only in human society arises the need and conditions of morality.

All the early gods are ugly devils, and the later ones are but little better. Their worship had no more connection with morality than has church-going or taking the sacrament. It usually consisted of magical charms or incantations to avert disaster. Of these our prayers for rain and fine weather are a survival. But we have yet to learn that such supplications have any necessary connection with "morality touched by emotion." These gods all approved of much which we now condemn. We need not refer to the recorded doings of the ancient gods of Greece, Egypt,

or India. Their cruelty and obscenity have been sufficiently exposed by Christian writers.

Jahveh, the God of the Jews, like all the early deities, was ferociously cruel. He demanded bloody sacrifices and rejoiced in their sweet savor (Gen. vii., 21). It is evident from Leviticus xxvii., 29; Micah vi., 6 [Hebrew], and the stories of Abraham and Isaac and Jephthah, that human sacrifice was once common among the Jews, and that animals were substituted as symbols, just as the Roman Catholic Mass is a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ. When Jahveh sent his only begotten son into the world, the old Jew-god must still have his pound of flesh. For upwards of a thousand years the whole Christian world believed that the ransom for man's redemption was paid over to the Devil. Indeed such phrases as "the sacrifice of the Lamb of God" and "the efficacy of the blood" take us back to this savage origin as surely as the eastern position of the altar in churches reminds us of former sun-worship. Indeed in some respects Christianity is far from being an advance upon savage religion. No religious conception is more atrocious than that of a god who consigns the majority of his creatures to eternal torments and who saves a few elect on the condition of their believing in salvation through the blood of an innocent person. The fact that such dogmas have been held as the fundamentals of Christianity should for ever silence those who, now that belief in them is declining, attempt to find a new foothold for religion by identifying it with morality.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

RUSSIA being a Christian country, three Armenian Protestant missionaries have been exiled to Siberia on the ground that they displayed undue activity in making converts to their faith. One of these missionaries is sixty years of age and has translated the Bible into two Eastern languages. The Orthodox Church has been converting Lutheran peasants wholesale in Livonia by suitable methods, but the ungrateful converts go secretly to their old ministers whenever a clergyman is wanted for marriages, etc. The Governor of Livonia proclaims that the Criminal Code subjects such persons to heavy penalties. Their marriages will be invalid, their children will be illegitimate and will be taken away to be educated by true Christians, and the parents will be imprisoned for eighteen months. This is a specimen of genuine Christianity of the real old unadulterated kind. The Russian Church has the courage of its convictions.

GOOD Friday and Easter usually excite pious Russians to outrage against the Jews. A railway servant having just visited the holy places at Kiev cried out to the first Jew he met, "Christ is risen," this being the usual Easter greeting. At the same time, however, in token of the sincerity of his belief in the resurrection he plunged a knife into the Jew's abdomen. Six Jews were subsequently attacked one by one in a similar manner, the knife being plunged in their bodies up to the hilt. Several of them are dead. This was not a bad evening's work, and is was "all for Jesus." Finally this zealous Christian was arrested and pinioned. The Odessa correspondent who sends the report to the *Daily News* says that the fanatic will probably only receive a few months' imprisonment, the hatred of the Jews being so intense.

CARDINAL NEWMAN says of the book of Daniel that its Greek and Chaldee portions are "written by penmen inspired in matters of faith and morals; and so much, and nothing beyond, does the Church 'oblige' us to believe." The history, the facts, the dates, and all that we can readily test, may be wrong; but the faith and the morals, which we cannot so easily test and may not disparage, are revealed from heaven. Open your mouth and shut your eyes and take what God doth send you. The arithmetic is wrong, but the promises are O.K.

CARDINAL MANNING says he wants an increased supply of priests for the conversion of England. If the new comers are of no superior quality to the half-educated foreigners and rustic Irishmen who are already in the field, the conversion of England will not take place until the second coming of Jesus Christ—that is to say never.

THE Rev. J. Bell Cox, of St. Margaret's, Liverpool, has been arrested under warrant and sent to prison for contumacy. These Ritualists want all the privileges of State endowment, without any of the inconveniences of State control. They pay no more attention to the scriptural duty of submission to the powers that be, than Christians usually do when it suits their purpose or their passion to disobey. The Rev. Bell Cox's appeal against Lord Penzance's judgment was dismissed in the House of Lords, and now the reverend culprit defies the law on the convenient plea that we must obey God rather than man. It is a convenient gospel which, like Shakespeare, furnishes mottoes for all courses of conduct.

THE *Church Times* thoroughly sympathises with this holy law-breaker. At the head of its leading articles it prints a notice in large type and with black lines representative of a kind of semi-mourning, in which it says: "The Prayers of the Church are desired for James Bell Cox, Priest, in Prison for obedience to the Church's law." Thus the Church established by law to teach people obedience to the law, becomes a means of inciting them to rebellion against the law.

THE *Christian Herald* gives a story of the earthquake, according to which "Miss M." then staying in one of the towns of the Riviera, refused to come out of the hotel during the earthquake, preferring to stay and trust to prayer. She prayed hard that God would preserve the hotel and all that were in it. "The result was," says the narrator, "that the hotel remained uninjured, though there were ruins around it." But prayer, we may be sure, was resorted to in thousands of houses that suffered from the shocks, and it is no wonder if one out of thousands should escape, with or without prayer. The prayer-protected house that escapes is noted, the thousand equally prayer-protected houses that fall are not counted. The survivors rejoice in the success of their supplications. The dead can make no complaint of the failure of theirs.

THE authority for the story, like that for most Christian miracles of modern days, is of a somewhat roundabout nature. The *Christian Herald* probably copies from some unacknowledged source. The paragraph itself informs us that the writer was told of the circumstance by a doctor who said he had read it in a certain newspaper. This is quite good enough for a Christian editor like prophet Baxter.

CANON VENABLES, writing in the *Spectator*, relates that, after having given as he thought a very impressive sermon in Archdeacon Hare's church, that dignitary said he hoped the congregation would not take his advice, for he had been urgently exhorting them to be sure always to return evil for good.

BISHOP HAROLD BROWNE, of Winchester, is over seventy-six years of age, and quite unable to perform his episcopal duties, which have to be undertaken by Bishop Marsden. Most prelates who are unable to work, continue to draw their exorbitant salaries while the work for which they are paid is scrambled through by others.

THE Christian peasants in Moravia have risen against the Jews and have brutally ill-treated them. The Christian assailants were armed with pitchforks, reaping-hooks, and hatchets. They had to be dispersed by the military. Truly Christ came not to bring peace but a sword.

MR. FOOTE has been favored by the Churchwardens of St. Luke's, West Holloway, with a circular requesting his assistance in raising cash to "repair, reinstate, and cleanse" the said edifice. These gentlemen had better apply to Judge North, who gave Mr. Foote twelve months' leisure at the country's expense, and who can hardly scruple to shell out a trifle for Mr. Foote's parish church.

GOD has sent a month's drought to Hungary, which usually suffers from too much water. Under the parching influence of the sirocco, vegetation it so dry that the slightest spark kindles a conflagration. Hundreds of miles of forest are on fire, and the danger is increasing. Six towns and villages have been burnt to ashes before the irresistible march of the flames. Many lives have been lost and thirty-two thousand people are homeless. A number of girls in a convent perished miserably. Maddened with fright, for Christianity of course fails to teach courage and self-command, they threw themselves from the windows into the courtyard below.

GOD is also favoring America with prairie fires which are endangering the settlements in Dacota, and with earthquakes which have destroyed life and property in the South-Western states. One hundred and fifty people perished in the destruction of Bapisepe.

OUR Freethought contemporary, the *Thinker* of Madras, gives the following account of the treatment of St. Paul in the High Court of that city: "In a case heard at the Appellate Court, where a Roman Catholic priest appealed against his conviction for abetting bigamy, the lawyer, Mr. Laing, for the appellant, in the course of his argument said that the Canon Law empowering a priest to dissolve a marriage was the same as that laid down by St. Paul in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. vii., 12-14. The Chief Justice said that he refused to accept St. Paul's ruling and the Canon Law; it was for Mr. Laing to argue upon something nearer to the Court than St. Paul."

THE Dean of Hereford has distrained upon the Rev. B. R. Body for tithes. He seized two of Mr. Body's hay-ricks valued at £70. Body can reflect that all this is for the good of the soul. The *Reading Observer* complains indignantly that the locality is "legally robbed" in order to support dull and useless services in a far-off cathedral and to fill the pockets of salaried idlers.

TEN people were drowned at a negro baptism at New Orleans on May 8. A wharf railing broke and hundreds of people who were watching or awaiting the ceremony fell into the river and were thoroughly baptised.

BARON GRANT, of notorious memory, is piloting a Stock Exchange Journal, and according to the advertisement in the *Daily News* a Latin motto has been selected for this venture, the same which Henry VIII. put above his tent when he met Francis I. in the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and signifying "He whom I support prevails." We should like to know who is the I? Is it God Almighty, Mammon, or Baron Grant?

A MR. HOLLEY suggests in the *Echo* that the delivery of milk on Sundays can be dispensed with by the invention of a can that will keep the milk cool in the summer months, so that it may be delivered on Saturdays. Mr. Mahserg points out all Mr. Holley has to do to ensure the success of his praiseworthy scheme is to invent a cow that will provide a double quantity of milk on Saturdays and none on Sundays.

SUNDAY closing of public-houses in Denbighshire has been accompanied by an increased number of cases of drunkenness on the Sabbath. In 1884 the number proceeded against was 62, in 1885 it was 70, and in 1886 there were 104 cases.

CANON ROBERTS, preaching at All Saints Church, Northampton, on "The Terror of the Lord," declared his belief in the utility of the fear of punishment and of the terrors of a day of judgment and hell-fire. He pointed out that these subjects were dealt with in the scripture with very different tones to the soft hesitating utterances which have become so general. Canon Roberts is quite right. His religion is built on fear and when people cease to believe in hell-fire they will gradually cease to support the ministers who offer to pilot them skywards.

To ridicule the Chinese for their custom of beating gongs at an eclipse in order to frighten away the dragon of darkness is a common exploit of Christian missionaries, unaware that their own prayers have arisen from a similar conception of magical charms and incantations. An instance of a similar Christian superstition took place at Leek, where the bells of the new Catholic church have been blessed with many solemn mummeries, including putting salt into water in the form of a cross and therewith sprinkling the bells, which were afterwards crossed seven times with holy oil by Bishop Ilesley. The bishop stated that when in Rome he had been witness to a terrible thunderstorm which had been subdued by a church bell ringing out to call upon Almighty God to take care that no damage might befall the people.

BISHOP ILSLEY added: "Strangers to the Catholic doctrine might think that there was some superstition in that. Physical science he would not explain, but he knew that in those prayers just recited in the name of Jesus Christ those bells, before ringing, should be made intangible against all the powers of evil and the devil and all his angels, who might make use of all the elements possible in the destruction of God's creatures. In consideration of Christ's bells they would ring them in a storm, in order that the storm might do no damage, and that was perfectly understood by Catholics. They should think, henceforth, that the bells spoke to them in the name of God."

It turns out that the story of the young woman who excited so much sympathy by her tale of having been married at Brighton, and losing her bridegroom in London the same day, is totally false. To a newspaper interviewer the young woman stated that she had met the man in the house where she was engaged as servant and that the people were Atheists. It appears, however, that none of her statements will bear investigation.

BUTCHER VARLEY, or the Rev. Henry Varley as he prefers to call himself, has undergone a critical operation. The pain was so great that even under morphia he was unable to sleep for eight days and nights. Christians who believe in judgments ought to perceive that this must be God's method of punishing the man for his vile slanders on Atheists, and the disgrace he has thereby brought on the reputation of Christians as a body.

GEORGE MOORE, a "captain" of the Salvation Army, has been sent to gaol for seven days at Wrexham for obstructing the public thoroughfare. He refused to move on when ordered.

THE Russian peasant cares little for politics. His great aim is to get drunk on vodki. There is a popular Russian tale to the effect that when God created the world he made different nations, and gave them all sorts of good things—land, corn, fruit. Then he asked them if they were satisfied, and they all said "Yes," except the Russian, who had got as much as the rest, but simpered, "Please, Lord, some vodki."

A "CHAPLAIN" complains in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of the "scandalous waste of £20,000 for one service in Westminster Abbey," and the consequent closing of the great church during the time of the May meetings. But the Jubilee must be cele-

brated with due pantomime grandeur, and country visitors must go to Putney, or to warmer quarters if they so prefer.

At the meeting of the Bible Christian Missionary Society the chairman said that it was a crying shame that wherever a missionary went with a Bible he was followed by a man with a beer-barrel and a rum-bottle. Hadn't the missionary better convert the Christian brewers and distillers at home instead of preparing the path for the insidious means of ruin to heathen races by the drinks and vices and diseases imported from Christian lands?

At the anniversary meeting of the Salvation Army at Exeter Hall, the "General" said that there had been no shortening of the wings of the Army. Nearly a thousand lads and lasses had graduated at the "Salvation Army University" during the year past. They had seven travelling forts, which were doing grand execution. Suddenly he asked the audience, "Would you not like to be the owner of a Hallelujah Wombwell soul-saving van?" He had to regret the shipwreck of one "army" vessel, prayer and piety evidently having been ineffective in ensuring its safety. He described a West-end meeting, at which he asserted a number of M.P.'s wept copiously. The circulation of the *War Cry* in eight languages, he said, was over twenty-nine million copies per annum. Vulgar superstition is evidently a grand gold-mine for impudent quacks.

THE *Church of England Temperance Chronicle* gives the following story of the Rev. F. A. C. Lillington, of St. James's, Clapham. He was giving a catechetical address, in which it was sought to lead a congregation of children to see that the wearing of a uniform was a mark of distinction, making the individual easily recognised and involving responsibilities. "You see a man walking very erect, dressed in a red coat, who is he?" "A soldier, sir." "Right." "You see a man wearing a kind of helmet, and dressed in blue, who is he?" "A policeman, sir." "Right again." Then the preacher braced himself up to sketch a parson. "You see a man dressed in a black coat, and wearing a stiff white collar, who is he?" "A masher, sir," was the triumphant rejoinder.

THE *Christian Commonwealth*, rebuking the sects that do not accept its own interpretation of Scripture, says that "There is nothing more extraordinary than the unwillingness, the aversion even which Christian people manifest with regard to making the Word of God the ultimate and supreme authority on all matters that pertain to the faith and practice of Christians." There are few things more amusing than the self-delusion which makes Christians believe they obey the Bible when they do nothing of the kind. The editor of the *C.C.* doesn't sell all he has and give to the poor. Nor do modern Christians take no thought for the morrow, or give pickpockets the keys of their safe also. In a hundred ways they trample on the various commands of Jesus and yet are firmly convinced that it is most extraordinary how other people can disregard the plain words of Holy Writ. Christ said, "Swear not at all," and he recommended absolute poverty and celibacy, even wishing those who were able to make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Which of these blind leaders of the blind dreams of really obeying the Book which he nominally regards as of supreme authority?

THE *Christian Commonwealth* attributes the "utter failure of missionary effort" in "seventy-one districts" to the Government regulations of vice, which turns the name of British Christianity into scornful mockery. But if the editor of the *C.C.* had heard an educated Hindoo speak freely on the licentiousness of Christians in India, he would feel there might be some excuse for legalising vice as a measure of protection for Hindoo families against the animal passions of their Christian rulers. It is the Christian soldiers and officials who most need reform, not the heathen victims of their lust and brutality.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* laments the ill-success of Christian missions in the large towns of India. Bombay, it says, is often boasted of as a centre of the noblest effort by various denominations, yet "only four per cent." of the population are "even professing Christians," when Europeans and Jews are excluded." At Benares, "where missionaries have worked so long and so hard, out of a population of 175,188, only 265 are after all counted as 'Christians and others,' that is, as being other than Hindoos and Mohammedans."

MIRACLES.—While no one doubted the possibility or the frequency of miracles they abounded we are told; that is, when by reason of their number and the ready credit accorded to them, their effect was the least startling, then they were lavished on a believing world. Now, when they are derided and insulted as the figments of a barbarous age, when the faith they might support is in such jeopardy as it never was before, when a tithe of the wonders wasted in the deserts of Sinai and the "parts beyond Jordan" would shake the nations with astonishment and surprise—when, in short, the least expenditure of miracle would produce the maximum of result—then miracles mysteriously cease. This fact, which is utterly beyond contest, has borne fruit, and will yet bear more.—James Cotter Morison, *The Service of Man*, p. 29, 1887.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 15, St. James's Hall, Cumberland Street, Bristol: at 11, "Ghosts and Gods;" at 3, "Let Us Pray;" at 7, "An Hour in Hell."

MAY 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.

A. ROSTANT.—You omitted to put the stamps in your letter. Orders for literature should be sent to Mr. Forder, and not to us.

A. NOYES writes that the young fellow who threw himself over the Clifton suspension-bridge, and left a letter saying "I die a sceptic," was an Atheist, and a very excellent character. "Atheism has nothing to do with this," he said to his mother, just as he remarked in the letter to his brother. It appears that he had overgrown himself, and was suffering from pains in the head; and he destroyed himself lest he should, as he feared, become a burden to his parents. Whatever may be thought of his judgment, his motive was honorable; how unlike that of many Christians who commit suicide and leave their families to the Lord, that is the parish!

T. SHORE.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops"

T. BRIDER.—We are too full of copy at present, and the story has been treated so often that a fresh effort would have to be exceptionally good to be acceptable.

W. LAMBERT.—(1) *Agnostic* is a term used very loosely. It was first employed by Professor Huxley to denote one who felt unable to accept the Theistic hypothesis on the ground that the finite mind of man cannot solve an infinite problem or comprehend an infinite subject. But now it is used by all sorts of people; chiefly, however, by those who reject all supernatural religion yet shrink from the appellation of Atheist, which sounds very much like "Mad Dog" to some ears. (2) The passage from Voltaire means, in brief, that if nations would study each other, not for laughter but for profit, they might arrive at a common taste in general matters.

W. CARTER.—(1) We are exceedingly pleased to hear that the Sunderland Branch has got a fresh hall in spite of the bigots. Go on and prosper. Mr. Moss's visit will stir the pious up a bit, and Mr. Foote will try to visit you again early in the autumn. (2) Our space is so limited that we have scarcely room for the work of our staff. Why not keep some of the local papers alive with your criticisms? There are many opportunities of edging in a judicious letter.

H. CLARK.—Always pleased to receive cuttings.

R. FOX.—Your clippings are welcome, but we are unable to deal with the political items.

W. SCHWEIZER.—Many thanks for your valued assistance.

J. SANDERS.—Thanks for cuttings and suggestions. Always pleased to hear from you.

E. MOORE.—Those who "put on Jesus Christ" usually have a bad fit. Thanks for enclosures.

A. ISAACS.—A similar joke has appeared before.

E. J. TURNER.—Glad you find our weekly chronicle of peccant parsons so useful. How can we give the names of the papers, when most of the cases are reported by the whole press? We should have to give a newspaper directory at the end of every paragraph. We usually give name and place, and time when possible.

HATER OF CANT.—We don't understand how your newsagent can have applied again and again for the first two numbers of *Bible Heroes*. They have been on sale all along. Thanks for the cutting. That dialogue in the *Railway Signal* is exceedingly stupid. The fact that there are no counterfeit infidels, while there are counterfeit Christians, only shows that orthodoxy pays and scepticism doesn't, and that hypocrites naturally flock to the Christian side. And may God Almighty keep them there, world without end. Amen.

G. MOORE.—To tell you what conscience is, and what mind, would require more space than we can spare in this column. Why not read some Freethought and scientific works on the subject? We will give you a list of books if you require it.

E. W. (Cardiff).—We have no room for reports, though we are pleased to hear that Miss Thornton Smith had good audiences at Cardiff last Sunday.

J. A. WILLIAMS.—The best comment on Christian tracts is to circulate Freethought tracts.

CHIEL.—Your letter is amusing, but its publication will only give needless pain to some very worthy people. If the more educated hold aloof from the practical work of societies, it naturally falls into the hands of the less educated, who have better hearts though fewer accomplishments.

A. LOVETT.—You may be a poet, but you haven't the slightest idea of how to write verses. Writing well doesn't come naturally. It requires a great deal of practice.

J. FORBES.—Pamphlets sent. The verse is promising, but hardly up to the mark for publication. We are glad to hear that "Hastings abounds in Freethinkers," and wish success to the efforts you refer to for organising them.

E. T. GARNER.—Correspondents and contributors should stick to prose as long as they can. The only excuse for a man's writing verse is that he *must*.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Liberal—Open Court—Thinker—Jus—Western Figaro—Liberal Unionist—Radical—Reading Observer—Lucifer—Truthseeker—Echo—Boston Investigator—La Semaine Anticlericale—Islington News—Rochdale Observer—Leek and Cheadle Post—Hampshire Evening Mail.

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 weather was lovely at Portsmouth last Sunday. It was the first flush of summer, and thousands were tempted to bask in the glorious sunshine. Still, there were many who wended their way to the Circus, where Mr. Foote was preaching the gospel of Freethought. The audiences were very respectable, in the best sense of the word, and very enthusiastic; and there was a lively sale of Freethought literature. Opposition was offered by Mr. Millet in the afternoon. This gentleman informed the audience that the greatest names in German science were opposed to Darwinism, and when asked to mention a few he couldn't recollect one, but promised to look them up by next Sunday. In the evening Mr. Tomlins opposed. He rose amid cries of "boots," which referred to a shady transaction which brought him under the censure of a court. Mr. Tomlins is generally bumptious not to say impudent; but on this occasion he thought it prudent to sing small, and his oily suavity would not have disgraced Mr. Uriah Heep himself. This local gospel light was followed by Mr. Wood, an ex-Unitarian minister, who spoke like a gentleman, with earnestness and sincerity, was listened to with unbroken attention, and replied to with courtesy and care. Then the audience rose to go, but another champion of Christianity claimed his right (according to advertisement, you know) to have a ten minutes' innings. He wanted to make "a few reflections on the lecture," and presently he began to read these "reflections" from manuscript. Mr. Lush, the chairman, got out of him that "these reflections" were written an hour or two before the lecture began; so the meeting was raised, and the gentleman with "these reflections" was left shaking a monitory forefinger at the backs of a vanishing audience.

WE are pleased to hear that the Portsmouth Branch is in a fairly flourishing condition. The Secular Hall pays its way, and a little over. Of course the ordinary Sunday audiences slacken as the summer approaches, but the Branch is going to have some Sunday trips into the country now and then instead of lectures. On such occasions, Mr. Brumage, a veteran Freethinker who has been the mainstay of Portsmouth Secularism, arms himself with bundles of old numbers of this journal, as well as tracts, and carries astonishment into the breasts of village yokels, most of whom like a bit of blasphemy to read when they have once had a taste of the forbidden stuff.

ONE result of Mr. Foote's lectures is a truly Christian letter in the Portsmouth *Evening Mail*. It is written by a person who signs himself "Anti-Infidel." Probably he is ashamed of his name, and well he may be, considering what he has the impudence to say. He hopes that "some steps will be taken to prevent such blasphemy from being publicly advocated and the town from being placarded with insulting bills." Here's a charitable Christian for you! Not content with the full opportunity allowed for discussion, not satisfied with the fact that the champions of Christianity are allowed to slaughter the infidel after his lectures if they can, he shrieks "blasphemy!" and calls for the policeman. When the police do help him we shall doubtless be able to take our own part. Meanwhile we note his futile wrath at the startling fact that "so many apparently working men could applaud the blasphemous statements made by the lecturer." Aye, there's the rub! A large Freethought audience, all drained away from churches and chapels.

Royal Paupers is still selling capitally. The second edition is slightly revised, one or two small inaccuracies having been corrected and a few lines added. For the sake of newsagents who have asked for a bill of the pamphlet for their shop-windows, one has been printed, and Mr. Forder will supply copies on application.

MR. FOOTE will be unable to accept any country engagements until the middle of August. He intends to devote some attention in the interval to the open-air propaganda in London. Several branches have already applied for lectures, but it is impossible to fix definite dates until after Whit-Sunday.

THE annual general meeting of the Manchester Secular Hall Company will be held to-day (May 15) at the new hall in Rusholme Road. According to the Directors' Report, which is in print, many shares have still to be taken up, and payments have yet to be made on several shares applied for and allotted. The

B class of shareholders should pay as much as possible on account by the end of May. We also remind intending subscribers, who have not yet applied for shares, that there is no time to be lost. The purchase will have to be completed by the end of June, and the Directors will be obliged to act according to the state of things about the middle of the month.

HELP for Manchester has come from London, Liverpool, and one or two other places. Are there not more Freethinkers up and down the country who can lend a helping hand? The occasion is a critical one, and, as Paine said, "these are times that try men's souls."

MR. FORDER has issued as a tract (price 1s. per hundred) Colonel Ingersoll's "The Truth of History." This is a racy exposure by the Colonel himself of the story of his conversion by Mr. Hine. The story is a lie in mass and in detail, wholesale and retail. Like one of Charles Lamb's funny letters, it is unadulterated with a single particle of truth. Yet it goes on circulating all the same, and Freethinkers would do well to circulate this tract as an antidote.

MESSRS. WILLIAMS AND NORGATE announce the publication of a work entitled *Agnostic Problems*, by Dr. Richard Bithell. The object of the work is stated to be to correct false impressions which are prevalent concerning Agnosticism, and to formulate the leading theses of the system.

THE San Francisco *Jewish Times* says that in America "a thousand Christians have been converted to Agnosticism where one Jew has been converted to Christianity."

MR. F. D. MOCATTA announces that his translation of Dr. Graetz's *History of the Jews* will shortly be published. Readers will then see a somewhat different account of the treatment of the Jews by those who are indebted to them for their God and Savior than that usually presented by Christians. We intend to avail ourselves of the work of Dr. Graetz in revising our chapters on the "Jew Hunt" in *Crimes of Christianity*.

WHATEVER the faults of the French Republic, disregard for national education cannot be placed among them. It has created 12,700 new schools and provided them with free secular education by competent teachers, and it has considerably improved upwards of ten thousand schools in addition. No wonder the priests make an outcry. The next generation of Frenchmen will give little more attention to Christianity than to astrology.

A GOSPEL FOR GOD.

UNTO God the Jehovah, Greetings and Inquiries, especially the latter,—Whereas thou, the hero of an exceedingly tedious and involved work of fiction called the Bible, art currently asserted to have vouchsafed unto us the solemn warnings and horrible threatenings therein contained, we on our part desire to reciprocate the compliment, but in a better and kindlier manner. Inspired by the Holy Spirit of moral indignation, tempered and unfanaticised—if you will allow us to coin such an expression—by the unholy ghost of an occasional gleam of corrective humor, we send unto thee *our* message, *our* revelation of which thou standest so fearfully in need, *our* gospel of truth and humanity which thou without our aid wouldst evidently never be able to discover for thyself. We condescend to enlighten thy darkness. Be it thine to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest our reciprocated tidings of thy damnation and of the greater hope that lies behind.

Consider, O Lord, thy manifest sins and wickednesses, whereof thou wilt soon be able to read at leisure in the *Bible Atrocities*, forming Part III. of the Bible Hand-Book. Thou that orderedst thy children to massacre each other, and the father to murder the daughter for thy sake, repent and be ashamed. Thou that madest the volcano and the flood, the earthquake and the plague, famine and hell, and all destruction, repent, reform, be born again to a new life of sincere beneficence and simple justice. Recall thy tiger with his gleaming teeth washed in the blood of a thousand lambs. Take back thy ravenous monsters of the deep, thy gorging serpents, thy hawks and eagles preying on innocent birds and tearing them skilfully but brutally to pieces as taught by thee. Let peaceful creatures dwell in peace unharmed and untortured by thy manifold contrivances for spreading death and misery. Abhor thy former self, sorrow in sackcloth and in ashes for the evil thou hast delighted in and hast called "good." Rend your heart and not your victims.

O thou that created evil and enjoined it in myriad forms, we say unto thee a thousand times, Repent, for the Kingdom of Man is at hand. Repent, while the Gospel of simple

truth is preached unto you. Turn from your iniquities while yet there is time. Harden not your heart as you hardened Pharaoh's heart to his destruction—for else a like destruction shall await thee, and a bottomless pit of deep infamy shall swallow up thy name for evermore. Repent, and believe in justice. Salvation cometh of morality, for there is none other method under heaven whereby gods or men shall be saved. The good news is proclaimed. He that believeth not is already condemned. Ponder your ways, therefore, O Jehovah, O Jeshua, O Ghost without a name—Elohim of old and Trinity of to-day—for except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be forgiven you. For the Gospel of Man commandeth all gods everywhere to repent and turn unto the good feelings and the good works whose supreme and eternal value we now graciously reveal and imperatively command unto you. When the wicked god turneth away from all the transgressions that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; his honor and his fame shall never die.

Alas! ye repent not. Ye are like unto the idols and the fetishes that went before you. All ye like sheep have gone astray; ye have turned everyone to his own way, Jehovah unto savage wrath and vile brutality, and Jeshua unto sickliest sentiment, commingled with its natural accompaniment of dastardly threatenings of hell-fire horrors and unending torments. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of your own hell? Straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few gods there be that find it, and none that enter in thereat.

Woe unto you, Gods and priests, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Woe unto you, Gods and tyrants! for ye bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but ye yourselves will not move them with one of your fingers.

He that is greatest among you shall be least, for the God that exalteth himself shall be abased, and Man whom ye have humbled shall be exalted. Call none your creature on earth; for One is your creator, even Man; insomuch that the best of you are but the offspring of his fond fancy—gods who stepped from his brain, as Minerva from the brain of Jupiter.

Woe unto you, Christian Gods and evangelists! ye shut up the kingdom of knowledge and truth against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Woe unto you, Gods and saints, impostors! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Woe unto you, blind guides, which say, He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the honesty that rejects a tempting falsehood, or the belief which even devils share and shudder at and vilest scoundrels glory in?

W. P. BALL.

(To be concluded.)

A JEWISH WAKE.

ONE of my earliest experiences among the Irish poor in London was to witness—nearly twenty years ago—the not unfrequent sight in those days, of an "Irish wake." The body of a poor Irish laborer, who had been accidentally killed while at work, lay in state in a poor room; and a number of Cockney-Irish men and women were crying and shouting, and calling upon the dead man and asking him why he "went and left them all in the cold hard world alone, alone." There was a good deal of drinking and shouting, and swearing, but the deceased gentleman refrained from answering any of the agonising interrogations, or from giving the slightest indication that he intended, or even desired to be aroused from the dreamless sleep of death. Those, however, who have not seen a real Irish wake, may have witnessed the stage representation of it in Dion Boucicault's drama of "The Shaughraun," and realised to themselves some of its grotesque as well as its horrible aspects. Let me take the reader back, not twenty years, but nearly two thousand years ago, and describe a scene, not of an "Irish wake," but one of far higher importance to the true Christian—I mean an alleged "Jewish wake" in which a certain peripatetic evangelist played an important part.

The scene is Bethany, and a young man named Lazarus^s lay stretched upon a bed of sickness, attended by his two affectionate sisters, Martha and Mary, who soothe him in his pain and strive to mitigate the sorrow, anguish, and misgiving that afflict the strongest of heart and brain in the hour of death. Martha and Mary are both favorites of Jesus, and they, in their anxiety, naturally send to him for consolation and assistance. But when Jesus hears of it he says to the messengers, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

But though Jesus said the sickness of Lazarus was not unto death he knew otherwise; and we find him telling his disciples plainly a little later on that Lazarus was *dead*, and that he was glad for their sakes that he was not there, to the intent—as he afterwards explained—"that they might believe." Thomas, the sceptical disciple proved himself a true man. His love for Lazarus was such that on hearing of his death, he turned to his comrades, and pathetically exclaimed, "Let us also go; that we may die with him."

When Lazarus had been dead four days Jesus returned to the bereaved sisters to condole with them and show them his power. Now Martha and Mary knew Jesus well; they had probably witnessed the performance by him of numerous miracles. Yet when he assured them that Lazarus should "rise again," Martha replied that she knew he would "rise again on the last day." But that was not the consolation she desired. She wanted Lazarus to be awakened at once—not to wait for the last trump. Jesus therefore again, to show his power, said "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The sisters, however, wanted ocular proof. Then followed an extraordinary scene. Jesus went to the grave side, followed by Martha, Mary, and a number of the Jewish friends of the deceased man. The grave side is reached! Now for a Jewish wake! No standing the corpse upright, and planting a pipe in its mouth; no beer drinking, no singing—nothing of that sort. Martha and Mary are inconsolable; even Jesus is moved to tears, though why Jesus, who could have prevented the death of Lazarus had he chosen, should weep when death had actually taken place is a little difficult to understand.

Presently, however, Jesus commands that the stone which covers the mouth of the grave shall be taken away; but Martha interposes with the remark that her brother has been dead four days already, and that the body was in such a state of decomposition that it positively emitted an unpleasant odor. But this does not deter Jesus. The stone is removed by the Jewish evangelist, who cries with a loud voice—which, it is to be presumed, is always heard more distinctly by the dead than a soft, melodious voice—and succeeds in arousing Lazarus from the deep sleep of death; for Lazarus, immediately on hearing his name pronounced so distinctly, answers to the call, and walks or jumps out of the grave, though he is bound about, from head to foot, with grave-clothes.

Irish attempts to "wake" the dead have always proved dismal failures; it is well, therefore, for Christians occasionally to strengthen their faith by reference to this alleged successful Jewish wake. But if Lazarus was really dead and his soul flown to heaven when Jesus called him, he would have had to wait till the soul of Lazarus came down from heaven and took possession again of the body before the dead man was likely to answer to the call; and if, as we are led to suppose, that heaven is somewhere "up above," beyond the nearest fixed stars—if the soul had travelled at the tremendous speed at which light travels, the mourning multitude would have got tired of waiting for the poor, dear gentleman to answer to his name.

Or, to take the matter merely on physical grounds, if when Jesus called "Lazarus" life came almost instantaneously into the partially decayed corpse, it would mean that the cold and coagulated blood at once became warm, and coursed in an instant through all the veins and arteries in the body, setting the heart and ultimately the brain in motion—and this cannot be supposed to have occurred in a moment of time.

It is a singular thing that if Lazarus was awakened in this extraordinary fashion, that he did not make a public exhibition of himself in favor of the Messiahship of Jesus. More singular still was it that he did not reveal some of the secrets of "his prison-house"; did not tell us something about the mysteries of the other side of the grave.

But methinks that, if the truth must be told, this alleged Jewish wake was no more successful than the modern Irish ones; that Jesus, if he called, called in vain; and I am inclined further to think that if a modern "Irish wake" were once successful, it would be the last, and this superstitious custom would be discontinued ever afterwards.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

A GEORGIA negro went to a lawyer the other day, much disturbed in his mind because some white men had told him that he had not been legally baptised. The day of the ceremony was very cold, he said, and the preacher, who was not well, stood on the bank of the stream and repeated the words of the ceremony, while two deacons dipped the convert. This baptising by deputy gave rise to the question of the validity of the ordinance, and he wanted legal advice.

BLACK SHEEP.

THE Rev. Henry Butterfield, who has frequently been fined for drunkenness, was last week sent to Reading Gaol for fourteen days, with hard labor. He had just come out from prison, having undergone a month's sentence at Bath for the same offence.

At Clerkenwell Police-court, John Seal, a Congregational minister, was fined 5s. for being drunk. He was found by a policeman in the Seven Sisters Road in a helplessly intoxicated condition.

At Wandsworth Police-court, the Rev. John Marsden, of Southport, Lancashire, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for disgraceful misconduct before a lady whom he wished to insult. He was caught by a policeman as he was running away. He said he had come there to see a church and was running to escape the rain. On his first examination he gave a false name and stated that he was a medical student. Evidently he is an ornament to his profession. He has appealed, and is now out on bail.

At Westminster Police-court, the Rev. H. Incedon Johns, late curate of St. Phillip's, Stepney, was charged with obtaining money under false pretences. There are a number of cases against him. He is remanded.

BELIEF in the Lord does not preserve men from suicide as Talmage teaches. Charles Selby, for instance, who strangled himself on Wormwood Scrubs, trusted in the Lord, so far at least as his children were concerned. A letter found on him concluded thus: "Now, dear Nellie, I must leave you in the care of the Lord, and pray that God will bring you safe from your trouble. Remember, I die for you, and my blood will ever be on you." He also requested that his children, whom he said were starving, might be sent to the workhouse.

CHARLES SMITH was executed at Oxford last Monday morning. His crime was beating his wife to death with a hammer, after grossly ill-treating her for many years. This interesting specimen of God's handiwork was prepared for kingdom-come by the prison chaplain. He partook of the holy communion shortly before the executioner stretched his neck, and although he was obliged to give up the ghost, he retained a portion of the body and blood of Christ in his stomach, and it was buried with him. We presume that Charles Smith's soul is in heaven, with all the other murderers who have been fixed up for glory by prison chaplains. On the whole we think we would rather sit in the pit.

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* has had a series of articles contributed by a correspondent in the Pacific on "The Reign of Terror in Tonga." It appears that a person named Baker, sent out by the Australian Methodist Conference as a Wesleyan missionary to Tonga, worked his way into the confidence of the king and was made prime minister. He and the converted king, who is old and idiotic, set up a "Free Church," and they have been dragging the Wesleyan converts into conformity with the new faith. All Wesleyans were declared outlaws, and *carte blanche* appears to have been given to burn and destroy their property, and to flog and club both men and women within an inch of their lives, in order to compel them to become members of the State Church. It would appear that the moral state of Tonga since it has become Christian is considerably worse than when described by Thomas Mariner.

THE OATHS BILL.

THE second reading of the Oaths Bill came on on Monday night, or rather Tuesday morning. The Conservatives resorted to the obstructive tactics of which they complain so bitterly in the Irish members. Twice they moved the adjournment of the House and were defeated, on the first occasion by 195 to 104, and on the second by 191 to 87. The Solicitor-General and several Conservatives voted against their party. Finally, at ten minutes to six Mr. Bradlaugh had to remain content with the moral victory he had achieved, and the House adjourned its all-night sitting.

At St. Philip's Church, Cheltenham, the Rev. M. Hawkins fainted while conducting the service, whereupon seven young ladies followed his example and had to be assisted out of the church. At St. Martin's Church, Haverford-west, another strange scene occurred. The Rev. Mr. Hopwood walked into the aisle, and asked for prayers on behalf of the Rev. J. Bell Cox, the incarcerated Ritualist. Then, kneeling on the floor, he proceeded with the Litany, crossing himself at each response. A gentleman, rising from his seat to leave the church, then stepped over the prostrate form of the priest, and, according to the assertion of the latter, gave him a kick in passing, thus expressing the indignation and contempt he felt. The congregation, however, received this statement with incredulity, and several families removed their books, etc., from the church.

PROFANE JOKES.

WHAT did Adam say when he found his rib-bone was taken out and exchanged for a woman? He said it was a dam-sell.

COUNSEL (to a very homely old maid): "In what year were you born, miss?" Witness: "In the year 1867." Counsel: "Before or after Christ?"

"My good woman," said an evangelical caller to an old lady at Stratford, "have you got the gospel down here?" "No sir," she said, "but they have it awful bad down Whitechapel I hear."

MAMMA: "Now, Blanche, you must remember that you have been a naughty girl to-day and ask God to forgive you." Blanche: "Does God know that I have been a naughty girl?" Mamma: "Yes, God knows everything." Blanche: "Does he know that I am doin to say 'Now I lay me'?" Mamma: "Yes, my darling." Blanche: "Well, Dod's mistaken this time, for I'll tell him somethin' else."

A LADY of a neighboring city purchased a book of Bible stories for her little boys, and the other evening she spent an hour and a half in reading a portion of its contents to her offspring. When she had got thoroughly tired, she stopped and asked them if they did not think the book very interesting. "Well, it is pretty good," said one of the young critics, "but you have read nothing but chestnuts so far." The lady left the room suddenly after to smile out loud.

PRESBYTERIAN minister (with warmth): "Ah, my pious friend, this is indeed a rare treat. I would to heaven more young men joined my church of their own free will. But you shall be rewarded—" Pious young lawyer (who has just opened an office): "That's it! The reward's what I'm after. The Methodist minister said there was no scandal in his church, and I didn't stand a ghost of a show of getting a law practice there, so I thought I'd come and see what arrangement I could make with your church. If you'll guarantee me fifteen hundred the first year I'll join at once. What do you say?"

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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. S. of April 3; 25) Shares have already been taken in lots of not less than five) arcs 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, C-on-M, Manchester, or to the undersigned at 25 Higher Chatham Street, Manchester.

A. HEMINGWAY, Hon. Sec.

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