

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 201.



A HOLY MILLING.

"God hath overthrown me."—JOB XIX., 6. "Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand."—PSALM LXXXIX., 13. "And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath."—JEREMIAH XXI., 5.

PIOUS MURDERERS.

WALTER WOOD, who was hung at Strangeways Prison last Monday morning at eight o'clock, died a sincere Christian. He went straight to glory, after the hangman stretched his neck, and spent his Bank Holiday in heaven. We suppose he is now hobnobbing with the late Mr. Peace, of Sheffield, and perhaps he has been introduced to Guiteau. For all we know, also, he may have been honored by a brief interview with David, the man after God's own heart, and other illustrious scoundrels, who have left this earthly scene of their villainies for the blissful regions of kingdom-come. When it is considered that heaven is half full of such two-legged cattle, the prospect of spending eternity there can hardly be attractive to an honest man. One the whole, it would certainly be preferable to go "down below." The climate there is severe, but the company is more select than in "the upper circles"; and when one had got used to the temperature, and found it really salubrious, except now and then when Old Nick banks up the fire, one would congratulate himself on having escaped the tedious *te deums* and the nauseous society of heaven.

Walter Wood, who is now one of the noble company of saints, was twice married. Of his first wife we know

nothing. His conduct towards his second wife was so bad that she was obliged to leave him. She went to live at Bolton, while he resided in Bury. This arrangement, however, did not suit his lordship. He thought he had a vested interest in her society, whether she desired his or not; and as she entertained a contrary opinion, he decoyed her from her lodgings, and cut her throat on a public foot-path because she declined to live with him again. Never was there a more vulgar murder. The man's motives were purely selfish and commonplace. There was no jealousy, no feelings maddened by another's infamy, nothing but an animal resolve to have the woman, despite herself, dead or alive.

Being sentenced to death, however, Walter Wood became quite an interesting figure. Christian noodles seem to gather round such a personage like flies round a treacle pot—probably for two reasons; first, because their religion is mainly for people who have "gone wrong"; secondly, because their Savior was executed, and they have a fellow-feeling for anybody in the same predicament. No less than 2,300 signatures were attached to a petition for his reprieve, among them being the names of several clergymen. But the law, and the hangman, were allowed to take their course. Capital punishment may be a mistake; it may be condemned by wisdom and humanity

yet until it is legally abolished exceptions should not be made in such cases of irredeemable brutality as that of Walter Wood.

Being vigorously taken in hand by the prison chaplain, Walter Wood was soon prepared for glory. Seven days before his state-assisted emigration, he wrote a long letter to his brother, full of gushing piety. After quoting a verse of a hymn from memory, which shows that he had received a religious training, he exclaimed, "I hope when I vanish from this world the Lord Jesus will be waiting to receive me in his arms. Oh, how beautiful this meeting must be!" We scarcely agree with this jubilant murderer. Jesus Christ suffered a sad fate at Jerusalem, but if it is his perpetual duty in heaven to cuddle all the Walter Woods on their arrival, we fancy his heavenly fate is worse than his earthly one.

Feeling perfectly satisfied that Jesus had forgiven him, Walter Wood bethought him that he had better forgive his wife, and this is how he did it:

"It is my duty to forgive my wife, who has so falsely deceived me and laughed me to scorn, and treated me in a very improper manner, as I was not deserving of, as I loved her dear as my own life, and she has paid me back in the change of death in the prime of my life; also brought herself to an early grave, while if she had tried to make herself at home we might have been happy to-day instead of her sleeping in the silent grave, and me just on the point of death. It is done. She will never return again. Soon I shall have to follow her, and the Lord above knows that I have forgiven her for all she has done to me truly from the very bottom of my heart, and shall leave this world without the slightest malice against her or anyone else in the world."

Perhaps the prison chaplain is highly gratified by the pious tone of his *protégé's* epistle. To the secular mind, however, it is a reeking mass of selfish hypocrisy. Walter Wood forgave his victim, but he was not solicitous about her forgiveness. Why? Simply because she could do him no injury. But Jesus could send him to heaven or hell, and as he preferred the former place, he was anxious to be all right with his Savior. Walter Wood was not even satisfied with adding the insult of his forgiveness to the murder of the woman he professed to love; the pious scoundrel could not refrain from throwing the blame of the catastrophe on his victim. According to his religious logic, she "brought herself to an early grave," when he had obviously sent her there himself. He also charges her with having "deceived him," when, as a matter of fact, he decoyed her out with a lie, and killed her because she kept to her word. Walter Wood expected to meet his "foolish and unfortunate wife" in heaven. Probably she was less desirous of such a meeting. She would hardly be so "foolish" as to welcome the blackguard who had traduced her after murdering her, and she must be very "unfortunate" if she cannot find a more congenial partner wherever she now resides. Religion did not mitigate, it intensified, Walter Wood's selfishness. He regarded his wife as his property on earth, and he appeared to think that he would resume possession of her in heaven.

The murderer's logic is of a piece throughout. "We might have been happy to-day," he says, after declaring that "the very sound of Jesus fills my heart with joy," and that his wife was happy in heaven, where in a few days he expected to join her. Further on in the letter he forgets all about his crime, and bursts into praises of his noble self as a "dear and beloved and kind father." If this is Christian penitence the less we have of the article the better. Any man with a spark of decent feeling would, after committing a great crime, hold his tongue and pay the penalty; but when Christian scoundrels get the love of Jesus in their hearts, they are filled with loquacious egotism, and pose as martyrs to the obstinacy of their "foolish and unfortunate" neighbors.

He who repents, says Spinoza, is *vice miserabile*. May we not say that he who repents like Walter Wood is twice a scoundrel? No doubt the chaplain who labored for the conversion of this interesting criminal is highly satisfied, but we ask any reflecting person whether the doctrine of repentance, as illustrated in Walter Wood's letter is not an infamy. What could be conceived more debasing, or more inimical to human society, than the doctrine that a man may commit any enormity, or any series of enormities, and by means of a judicious repentance when he can sin no more, not only escape the future penalty of his offences, but actually receive the full reward of a virtuous life?

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIANS ON AGNOSTICISM.

A PERIODICAL called *Great Thoughts* has two strenuous utterances upon modern Agnosticism—one by Prebendary Anderson, and the other by Cardinal Manning.

Prebendary Anderson complains that, by avoiding the declaration of avowed unbelief and assuming that of contemptuous indifference, "the Agnostic escapes the moral stigma which is associated with Atheism." But why do Christians slander their outspoken enemies, and then call this widespread slander by the name of "moral stigma"? Why do they smother their foes with mud, unless it be from lack of argument, or as an excuse for persecution? Christian slanderers are the last people in the world who have the right to complain that unbelievers avoid being put into their pillory by refraining from a direct avowal which would subject them to such defamation and abuse.

The Agnostic escapes this moral stigma, it seems (that is, this Christian slander), by claiming "to have taken up a neutral position between the two parties, whose hatred of each other has passed into a proverb." The Prebendary acknowledges that the widely-recognised hatred is mutual. But the Christian professes deep love even towards his enemies. Hadn't he better carry out his professions by some other method than that of hatred and slander and persecution? Hadn't he better pluck the beam out of his own eye before he complains so bitterly of the mote in his enemy's? The majority, the people in power, the men with the Almighty to help them, surely ought to set the examples of forgiveness and love to the minority who have only puny human virtues to rely upon? But it is almost impossible for men to forgive those whom they have wronged. The Atheist, burned and imprisoned in the past, may put by the "hatred" thus engendered, and may forgive, may seek to live in peace with his defeated persecutor, but how can the exposed and baffled criminal who figured as a saint ever forgive the cruel humiliation thus inflicted upon him by his escaped victim? Of course he must slander him to the end. It is his only resource in defence of his own unsullied reputation.

Prebendary Anderson declares that Agnosticism expresses "an obstinate determination not even to look into the question, or to listen to what may be said in favor of it." He says: "The infallibility of freethought is no better than the infallibility of Ultramontaniam. Both equally refuse to examine what may be said on the other side." This is so monstrously contrary to the fact that one wonders what can induce an educated man to make such an assertion. Facts (if such impertinent intruders are of any validity in a religious discussion) show that it is the Freethinkers, the Atheists, the Agnostics, who *do* examine, and who encourage debate and inquire into *both sides* of the question. Facts show that it is Christians, and not Freethinkers and Agnostics, who habitually stifle inquiry, refuse to allow discussion, and even punish and terrorise those who endeavor to put forward the side which as yet has never had an adequate hearing. A party that still maintains the Blasphemy Laws to protect its opinions from attack ought from very shame to refrain from charging its opponents with faults that still disfigure its own character.

The remaining charges brought against Agnosticism are equally preposterous. "It is unphilosophical, because it fixes an arbitrary limit to the capacities of mankind." "It is unnatural, because it sets itself against the universal sentiment of mankind," and "condemns without inquiry." Falsehoods and ridiculous assumptions make up the principal part of the Prebendary's discourse. To say one don't know is in his eyes an arrogant limitation of human capacities. To set oneself against what he falsely describes as "universal sentiment" is unnatural and unbecoming, as if majorities were infallible, and to be in a minority were a vice. Modern science would simply have been impossible if its pioneers had not defied the ordinary ideas of what was natural and becoming.

Cardinal Manning's protest against Agnosticism treats the Agnostic as "stone blind" like the beggar at the street corner, with this difference, that the "unbelievers glory in their self-inflicted blindness" instead of seeking help. Ages ago the Church cured this kind of blindness by fire. The ashes of these poor blind gifted many with a power of seeing and believing, which without this system of pious terrorism they would never have acquired. Hadn't the Cardinal better express his regret for the conduct of his Church, and

apologise to the survivors for the method of cure at first adopted? This surely should be a preliminary before he has any right to lecture us in a tone of moral superiority. Otherwise the Church he represents is a criminal reprimanding those whom she can no longer massacre or plunder on the pretence that they are blind, and that *her* eyes are infallible. But the Cardinal does not *see* as he maintains, he only believes or thinks he believes. He takes his dream for a reality, and those who are free from delusion he accuses of wilful and self-inflicted blindness because their eyes are too sound to see the visions of his disordered imagination.

The Cardinal is as blindly reckless as Christian dignitaries usually are in the use of misrepresentation and actual falsehood. He assumes that Agnostics repudiate "right and wrong and conscience" as "superstitions of theology or abstractions of metaphysics." He slanders their system out of all recognition, and then styles the monster he has produced a "brutal philosophy." He says: "They will not let other men know God, or have the use of reason to know God. And there are none so bigoted, none so intolerant, as those who do not believe in the existence of God." Pretty charges for a criminal Church to bring against those whom it can no longer torture and annihilate! The Cardinal must have read history upside down. In his edition the Inquisition was an assembly of bigoted Agnostics, who carried out the blind and brutal philosophy of their creed by cremating thousands of live Christians. The Albigenses were good Papists murdered wholesale by tyrannical predecessors of Professor Huxley. The massacre of St. Bartholomew was carried out by scientific materialists who watered the streets of Paris with the blood of the poor, gentle, long-suffering, all-forgiving Roman Catholics. But the blind tools of the Vatican are as incapable of reading facts as they are of a sense of shame at the enormities perpetrated by their Church in the past. Without the slightest blush, and with the matchless effrontery which is one of the leading characteristics of his kind, the Cardinal goes on to say:

"We have come at last to know that there is a fanaticism worse than that which they impute to us. These are truths very shameful and humbling to human nature. The men of the nineteenth century who profess to be the guides and lights of men, the creators and promoters of progress and modern civilisation, are beyond all men intolerant, despotic, and tyrannous."

This reproduces the old fable of the Wolf and the Lamb with a vengeance. The chief difference is that the wolf now is aged and cannot bite. It can only howl or whine its pious condemnation of the intolerant lamb who dares to object to being swallowed. The lamb is now grown, and even has horns of its own—which somewhat dismays the poor toothless old wolf in search of a meal. The ecclesiastical wolf still charges the unbelieving lamb with muddying the stream of history upwards—with exhibiting the blindness and brutality and ferocity so long displayed by the Church in the dismal historic past when the heretic was at her mercy. The acts of this Church towards those who dare to differ from her are indeed, "truths very shameful and humbling to human nature." And the glaringly false accusations still launched against her foes by men as eminent and as good (in some respects) as Cardinal Manning show that the Church in her heart justifies the past, and would renew her atrocities if she could only regain the overwhelming influence she once exercised over men's minds. For the moral views, even of her best servants are still so hopelessly distorted that in their eyes our simple insistence on the rights of freedom of opinion is far more shameful and humbling and bigoted and tyrannical than the wholesale murders and dastardly atrocities committed by their Church in attempting to crush that honest freedom of thought which is the vivifying source of all moral and material progress.

W. P. BALL.

ACID DROPS.

THE revenue of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland has decreased £21,000 during the last year; and during the same period the Free Church revenue has decreased £31,000.

SOME parsons are very unworldly, wise men. The Rev. Thomas Anketill was convicted at last week's Sussex Sessions of fraud at various hotels. He had been in the habit of going to hotels, living luxuriously, and then leaving without paying his bill. His excuse was that he had no intention to defraud, but was under the impression that if a person went without luggage into an

hotel, and the landlord supplied him with provisions, it was "a commercial transaction."

St. Thomas's Church, Birmingham, has been partly destroyed by fire. The congregation can thank God for displaying his wonderful power and mercy in saving the part of the church which escaped, and they forget all about his want of understanding in not saving the whole of the newly-erected edifice.

SPEAKING of the predicted assassination of the Queen on May 8th, the *Christian Commonwealth* says: "Our modern prophets foretell so copiously, that some day something may happen to come to pass which they have prophesied, and the accident will be claimed as a proof of their infallibility while all the stupid failures will be forgotten." The *C. C.* forgets that this is exactly what happens with the Bible prophecies. Christ's prophecy of his own return to judge the world during the lifetime of some of his personal followers is altogether forgotten, for instance.

A BODY of a man was fished out of the Basingstoke Canal. A Salvation hymn-book and the *War Cry* were found on him. If a copy of the *Freethinker* had been found on him the religious journals would have pointed out the demoralising and suicidal effects of Freethought. As it is they say nothing.

CHRISTIANS are continually teaching people to rely on God for help in perils by sea and by land, yet facts show that this trust in God is perfectly useless. The Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, for instance, has to appeal for the widows and orphans of the members of the Mission who are lost at sea. God neither saves the fathers from drowning nor the children from starving. Men have to do the good work so far as it can be done, and God takes the credit. During 1885 three lives were lost from the Mission ships. In 1886 two men were washed overboard but were rescued—which of course is a proof of God's mercy and helpfulness. In 1887 four men were lost, all leaving widows, children, or aged parents dependent on them. This also in some manner proves the excellence of God's mercy. One of these lost ones was heard in the dark crying out aloud with terrible distinctness, the piteous prayer, "O Heavenly Father, don't let me be drowned!" But he perished all the same, which proves the power of prayer. The writer of the appeal says he is "intensely thankful that his 'Heavenly Father' permitted that prayer to be heard although in his perfect wisdom he saw fit not to answer it." When the answer to prayer is favorable it demonstrates God's loving kindness, when unfavorable it demonstrates his perfect wisdom.

OUR Dutch neighbors are not much impressed with the Salvation Army. A writer in *De Amsterdammer* says the only thing remarkable about the speakers is their bad English and worse Dutch.

THE Rev. H. Mills who sits as chairman at the Kineton Police Court, is a nice specimen of the union of clerical and civil functions. He fined a man ten shillings for allowing a donkey to stray on the highway. The defendant had sufficient money, with the exception of three half-pence. The reverend magistrate however insisted upon his being kept in custody till the whole amount was paid. In the next case—one of assault—the clerk asked if the Bench would allow the expenses of Dr. Hutchinson, one of the witnesses. The Rev. Chairman exclaimed, "Oh, yes; he has done things for me and has not charged me a penny, so I think I am disposed to make other people pay him."

THE Tithe War in Wales is assuming serious proportions. At Llangwm, in North Wales, the alarm of the approach of the police and auctioneer was given by six cannons being fired from the mountain side. Horns were blown from the farms and hundreds of men, women and youths, armed with long sticks, hurried to the spot. The police endeavored to take away the cattle from Vron Issa farm, along a narrow lane, but a powerful horse harnessed to a large iron roller was driven into the lane and completely blocked it up, to the enthusiastic delight of the continually increasing crowd. The resistance became so formidable that the police became powerless and had to be withdrawn.

NEXT day at Meifod, Montgomeryshire, 110 police came down in ten brakes to enable the distrainers and sales to be effected. Thousands of people collected, and the wildest excitement and uproar prevailed. The crowd refused to make way for the police, who then received orders to charge them. But the mob were stronger than the police and forced them back. The ranks were broken and a hand-to-hand scuffle ensued. One farmer, mounted on horseback, plunged into the midst of the constables, who seized the horse and tore the rider from its back. After this the police were pelted with rotten eggs till a shower came on and cooled the ardor of the combatants. Cakes and sandwiches were then thrown from the hall over the heads of the police to the laborers who had been so vigorous in the conflict. The police had to give up their task, as it was feared that the riot would lead to most serious consequences if the sales were persisted in.

NEAR Llangwm, the auctioneer who had conducted the sales there, was overtaken in his trap by an immense crowd. The conveyance was wrecked and the occupants were more or less seriously injured. The auctioneer was roughly handled. He

was stripped of his coat, which was replaced wrong side outwards. He was then forced to promenade the streets of Corwen in this fashion, and was not released until he had signed a promise never to visit that part again as an auctioneer.

A REVIEW of Captain Conder's *Altaic Hieroglyphics and Hittite Inscriptions*, in the *Athenaeum* for May 28, says "it still remains to be proved that the Chita, Khalti and Hittites are one and the same people." So that the new confirmation of Holy Writ, which only went as far as establishing that there was a great Hittite nation, seems not so very certain after all.

THE vulgar Christian plea for persecuting the Jews in Russia and Germany has usually been that they sacrificed Christian children. At Zala-Apati a woman ran about the streets crying out that the Jews had murdered her daughter. The Jews succeeded in persuading the authorities to search the mother's house, and the girl was discovered concealed there.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* speaks of Buddhism and Mohammedanism as "hideous enlargements from diabolical germs." If we spoke of Christianity as the C. C. speaks of other religions, our language would be denounced as hideous blasphemy. That in the Christian is beautiful piety and exquisite charity which in the infidel is coarse railing and ruffianly insult. But the more modern school of defence regards the great religions as *divine* germs gone somewhat wrong, but all supporting the main truths of morality and religion. We must leave the old and new schools to fight the matter out. Perhaps they will compromise the matter, and confound the wicked infidel by showing conclusively that the great historic religions are beautiful-hideous developments of divine-diabolical germs.

C. HAUPT, 41 Danson Road, Manon Place, Walworth, is getting up a society for evangelising the Germans in London. At present they prefer songs to hymns, and lager beer to the blood of the lamb. But all this is to be altered. C. Haupt says that the pressing need of his society is cash. Of course.

A VERY well-known Congregational minister in Birmingham is in the habit of conducting a mission for bargemen every Sunday evening after the conclusion of his ordinary labors. A few Sundays ago the rev. gentleman, the weather being very wet, was compelled to take a cab from his chapel in Edgbaston to the mission hall. He left his cab, and after spending a moment or two in the ante-room, went into the hall, where he found that his audience consisted of a single individual. He approached this solitary enthusiast and asked him if he didn't think it would be best to abandon the service for that evening. The man, however, entreated that the service should proceed as usual. Accordingly the minister read the lessons, two or three hymns were sung, and an impassioned address was delivered with telling effect. At the conclusion of the service the minister discovered that the solitary auditor was his own cabman, who, of course, charged him for waiting. Never did presence of mind meet with a more immediate result.

CANON FLEMING is in an awkward fix, something like that which a Canadian clergyman got into through plagiarising wholesale from Dr. Parker's sermons. The Canon has published as his own, without a word of acknowledgment, a sermon by Dr. Talmage, altering the title prefixed by the latter to the sermon. In the preface the Canon has made it appear that the sermon was, with another, wrung from him in indignation at Bradlaugh's admission to the House of Commons. Dr. Fleming has attempted to account for the incident, but in a way which does not relieve him from the uncomfortable charge to which it exposes him.—*Christian Commonwealth*.

THE Canon of York pleaded in excuse for his plagiarism that he thought fit to introduce a little of Mr. Talmage's matter into his sermon, but it turns out upon examination that over seven-eighths of the whole discourse is in the very words of Talmage. We will give Canon Fleming a "tip." To use the old sermons of South, Barrow, Taylor, or Hooker, would be a compliment to his congregation, and would be in little danger of being discovered. But to palm off the well-reported Talmage is indeed playing it low down to his audience.

ANENT this case a writer in the *Church Review* states that a distinguished English clergyman published a volume of sermons, in which appeared one which had previously been preached and published by the Rev. A. Maclaren, a Baptist preacher of Liverpool. Messrs. Macmillan, the publisher, admit the fact is indisputable, but they decline to give the offending party's name on the ground that he has offered an apology.

THE Rev. Father Rémy has just arrived at Paris from Thibet. While missionarying in the regions of the Grand Lama he was condemned to be quartered, but the four horses that were attached to his limbs could not pull him asunder. He is a very strong man, but the grace of God must have assisted his bodily vigor to enable him to discomfit four horses. His triumph over the quadrupeds was hailed as a miracle, and he has made a host of converts by the performance. The story is a strange one, but it is as true as Gospel.

MR. BASTENDORFF, like the prophets of old, is in direct communication with the Almighty. The police, however, not having the fear of the Lord before their eyes, have actually charged this friend of God with being a lunatic not under proper control. He came to Bow Street police-court and exclaimed, "I have been sent by Almighty God to claim £30,000." In the gaoler's room he saw the portrait of the late Mr. Flowers on the wall. Glancing at it the inspired messenger of God exclaimed: "That man has no business there. The Lord told him to discharge me, and he would not." The prisoner was remanded. A thousand years ago he would have made a good prophet or saint or martyr. Now he is a subject for restraint by public authority. The Church outdoes him in pretensions, but is not yet put under proper control. People do not yet perceive that the lunacy of the individual is less dangerous than the lunacy of the race.

ANOTHER servant of the Lord named James Lambkin, a local preacher at Canterbury, was charged with stealing a watch and chain of his employer. He endeavored to throw suspicion on others. An innocent man was apprehended by the police on the strength of false information given by him. While preaching he expressed a hypocritical hope that no innocent man would suffer, and that the guilty would be brought to justice. The police somehow grew suspicious, and insisted on searching the preacher. The watch and chain were found upon him. He pleaded guilty to the theft, as also to another trifling robbery, and was ordered to undergo one month's imprisonment.

AT the General Assembly of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, held in Liverpool, the Moderator, the Rev. Hugh Jones, lamented in Welsh that the most talented of their young men preferred qualifying as surgeons, solicitors, barristers, or merchants, rather than entering the Christian ministry. "The harvest is great," said he, "but the laborers are few." Where are the celebrated preachers we were delighted to listen to in the days of our youth? Their places are vacant. Moreover, there was a spirit abroad tending to despise dogma and deprecate the great labors of the chief divines of former ages. He thought a race of enervated and feeble Christians will be the result of thus resigning the traditions of the past.

THE Episcopal Diocesan Convention of South Carolina has been rent as with another earthquake. Two ministers and the lay delegates of fourteen parishes seceded rather than admit coloured clergy to attend as delegates. Evidently the negro Christian must have a mansion of his own upstairs. If white saints cannot abide the man and brother a few days here below, how do they think the Lord and his holy angels are going to live with him for ever and ever in heaven? But as the editor of the *Ironclad Age* suggests, if it turns out that God Almighty should be a blackamoor, he may give the colored Christians the preference "over there." The Revs. Sambo and Squashee may sit near the Great White Throne singing "Rolling over Jor dan," while the South Carolina white seceders are being tumbled into Hades.

THE trial of Mr. C. B. Reynolds for blasphemy, at New Jersey, has again been deferred, but we expect to report it in our next. Colonel Ingersoll is apparently well enough to conduct the defence, since we learn from the *Truthseeker* that the District Attorney, who is prosecuting, handed to Colonel Ingersoll a fresh indictment against Mr. Reynolds for distributing his pamphlets in Morristown.

La Critique Philosophique, a French Theistic review, has the following "prehistoric dialogue between 'Darwin et le bon Dieu'":
Darwin: Are you there, God?
God: What do you want, Darwin?
Darwin: Construct me, please, a little cell.
God: What for? to put you inside?
Darwin: Me and all other beings.
God: Behold it is done. Is that all?
Darwin: Kindly add the faculty of producing other creatures.
God: I will refuse you nothing. It is done.
Darwin: Now I have no more need of you. You can go. I can manage the rest myself.

WE have just read an interesting account of Divine Service as practised among the Moslems in Algeria, and after reading it we are compelled to regard the average Englishman as terribly behind the times. The Arab clergyman, instead of droning out a long sermon in a hot church in fly-season, holds his devotions in a circus, and when he has worked up the fervor of his congregation by a short and impassioned address, he fills his mouth with live scorpions and bites them off in the middle. Next he runs skewers into his eyes and nose, bites pieces out of a glass bottle and chews them up, and has three epileptic fits. When he recovers from the fits he sits down in a pan of burning charcoal. Then he runs a knife through his tongue, twists his ears upside down, sticks his nose full of red-hot needles, and, impaling himself on a sword, spins round and round like a top. From this brief description it will be observed that the followers of the Prophet are a devotional crowd; and a little of this sort of thing, it seems to us, would shake off a lot of the dull and hideous lethargy from the chloroformed performances at some of our West-end churches.—*Modern Society*.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 5, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, E.C., at 7.30, "The Blood of Christ."

JUNE 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.—E. Kennett, R. Brown.

A NEW SUBSCRIBER.—Cuttings are always welcome.

J. STAINTON.—Many thanks. See "Acid Drops."

W. H. SMITH.—Gambetta's ministry was, we believe, entirely composed of Freethinkers. As a rule, French cabinet ministers, since 1870, have been Freethinkers. The President, M. Grevy, is a Freethinker. There are few Christians among the leading men in France, except in the Bonapartist and Orleanist ranks; but, of course, these ranks do not provide the cabinet ministers of the Republic.

E. STOR.—Jokes are welcome, but they should be profane, like those we print.

J. BRUMAGE.—Thanks. The Portsmouth Branch is a hard-working one, and in that respect no other Branch excels it. It is gratifying to see that you have members who can hold their own and serve the cause in public debate.

D. C. DAVIES.—It was only printed for private circulation. Our copy has disappeared.

H. E. BROMLEY.—We cannot undertake to correspond with our readers on such matters through the post. Our necessary correspondence is already a heavy burden. It is no use "turning over in your head," "the question of the origin of this planet." You should get a few scientific books and study them. What you want is *facts*, without which all the thinking in the world is useless. Always remember this—there is no *making* in nature. That is a term of art. In nature everything *grows*. You will find our *Bible Contradictions* and *Bible Absurdities* the very thing you require to meet your Christian friends with.

J. H. (Bristol).—Thanks for the cuttings. We agree with you that much can be done for Freethought by judicious conversation in private circles and in travelling. Your plan of distributing back numbers of the *Freethinker* is also a good one, and we are pleased to hear that in your case it has led to such fortunate results.

J. RUTHERFORD.—Keep pegging away, as Lincoln said. Sunderland will feel the influence of your Branch despite itself.

B. ELLIS asks us to announce that Freethinkers are invited to attend a meeting on Tuesday, June 7, at 8.30 p.m., at the Sailor Prince, Gordon Road, Peckham, for the purpose of re-forming the local Branch of the N. S. S.

R. FOX.—Thanks. Cuttings to be of use should reach us on Tuesday.

J. BARTON.—See Mr. Foote's leading article.

J. ROBY.—All orders for literature should be sent to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C. Mr. Foote has nothing to do with the actual sale of his publications, and correspondents who persist in sending to him, give him unnecessary trouble and cause themselves delay.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Church Reformer—Menschentum—Liberator—Birmingham Daily Post—Jus—Ironclad Age—Freidenker—Thinker—Sunday Chronicle—Britain's Inheritance—Literary World—Newcastle Daily Leader—Bath Argus—Kent Times—Boston Investigator—Lucifer—Justice—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Open Court—Truthseeker—Western Figaro—Independent Pulpit.

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 Blood of Christ" is the title of a new lecture which Mr. Foote will deliver at the London Hall of Science this evening (June 5).

We beg to remind those who are interested in the open-air work in London of the meeting which Mr. Foote has called at the Hall of Science this morning (June 5) at 10 o'clock, for the purpose of talking over the best way of organising and improving it. Mr. Foote intends to give some more gratuitous lectures at the outdoor stations this year, and representatives of stations that attend this meeting will have the first chance of a date.

We are pleased to record that the National Secular Society's Conference has passed a unanimous resolution condemning the third clause of Mr. Courtney Kenny's Bill, and declaring that no Bill at all would be better than his Bill as it stands. By the way, Mr. D. Patteson, one of Mr. Kenny's election committee, went on a deputation to that gentleman with other members of the Liberal Association. He reports that they found Mr. Kenny rather fond of the clause they objected to. On being reminded that he had, in his election address, promised to vote for the

entire abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, Mr. Kenny remarked, "Well, the first part of my Bill is in that direction, and when you have been to prison a few times on the third clause you will be able to agitate for the repeal of that." We confess, if Mr. Patteson correctly reports his member, the utterance does not look like that of a man who is thoroughly in earnest for perfect religious freedom.

THE *Church Reformer* devotes some paragraphs to Mr. Courtney Kenny's Bill, denouncing the third clause, and adding that "We shall next have a clause to punish heretical *thinking*." Mr. Headlam always keeps sound on this question. He hates persecution, and sees through the disguises it assumes.

MR. A. B. MOSS's recent visit to Sunderland was very much enjoyed by the Secularists, and it seems to have caused a stir among the Christians. The half-yearly meeting of the Sunderland Branch is held to-day (June 5), and there should be a large attendance.

MR. GERALD MASSEY's course of six Sunday afternoon lectures in St. George's Hall, Langham Place, will commence on June 12, at 3.30. The lectures bearing on the Christian religion will be: "The Primitive Christians and Gnostic Spiritualists," "The Testimony of the Roman Catacombs to the Truth of Christianity," "The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ," "The Mystery of Paul, Apostle of the Heretics, not of Historic Christianity." The others, e.g., "How Language was formed in the Human Likeness," and "Moon-Myth and Religious Luniatry" will be of an evolutionary character.

THE *Radical* for June contains a portrait of our veteran friend Mr. Edward Truelove. A sketch of his long and honorable career is also given, and should suffice to make the number of interest to all Freethinkers.

A SOUTH Lancashire paper, whose name has slipped us, contains the following paragraph: "FACIT LIBERAL CLUB.—On Sunday afternoon a meeting of the members of the above club was held, when a paper was read by Mr. John Heyworth, entitled 'Royal Paupers, or a Radical's Contribution to the Jubilee.' The paper had been written by Mr. Foote, editor of the *Freethinker*. There was a good attendance, including several members from the Shawforth Liberal Club. The chair was occupied by Mr. J. T. Butterworth."

THIS will furnish a useful hint to many of our readers who belong to Liberal and Radical Associations. They might introduce *Royal Paupers* to their political friends in such circles, and show that Freethinkers are always ahead in thoroughgoing Radicalism.

THE Glasgow Auxiliary of the Christian Vernacular Education Society for India (holy Moses, what a name!) asks for God's assistance and human subscriptions to "counteract the baneful influence of the teaching of the Sceptic and the Atheist, whose publications are being issued broadcast, and greedily read, throughout India."

THE *Thinker* of Madras reprints Mr. Foote's article on "Faith" from our columns, no doubt thinking it as needful in India as in England. Our contemporary is also treating its readers to a budget of profane jokes.

"A MINISTER," who is evidently a broad-minded man, writes to the *Kent Times* declaring Mr. Hasting's anti-infidel lectures "full of invective and spleen and ridiculously empty of argument." He exposes several of the American infidel-slayer's points and recommends him to try and answer works like *Supernatural Religion*, *Hume on Miracles*, and *Rénan's Life of Jesus*.

SUNDAY evening parties are becoming quite fashionable. The Marquis of Tweeddale had one last Sunday week, at which Mr. Charles Collette gave his drawing-room entertainment, which was highly successful, his burlesque lectures and songs being most thoroughly appreciated.

FATHER M'GLYNN is still a rebel against the Pope, and the German papers report that the Catholic vicar of Heiterschaft has been fined twenty marks for calling the Pope "an old woman in politics." There are other signs that Catholicism is breaking up as well as Protestantism. The world moves, as Galileo said, and it carries even the religious people along with it.

THERE is a good story about Professor Huxley and his opinion of the Bishops which is worth repeating. Some time ago the Professor was lecturing before his class at South Kensington on the structure and function of the heart, when he said that for a long time after he commenced his biological studies, he was perplexed as to the mitral valve of the heart, and he could not remember with perfect certainty on which side it was. At length a happy thought occurred to him. "Mitral" was an adjective formed from "mitre," the capital adornment of a bishop. Hence the *mitral* valve of the heart became associated in his mind with the occupant of an episcopal see. "And,

remembering," said he, "that the bishops are always on the *wrong side*, I have from that day to this had no difficulty in remembering that the mitral valve of the heart is on the left side of the organ."—*Modern Society*.

WAS JESUS A MONK?

THE early career of Jesus is involved in mystery. What the incarnate deity was doing between the age of twelve and thirty we have no record. Tradition, confirmed by Mark vi., 3, has it that he assisted among the shavings in the shop of his mother's husband. It is, however, open to anyone to speculate as to his having received some sort of earthly preparation for his career beyond that of having made the doors or coffins of his neighbors at Nazareth. Catholic writers have not hesitated to assert that he lived a life of meditation and asceticism, and that he was, in the words of the great Catholic Dictionary of Asceticism, "the first monk."

Long anterior to the time of Jesus there were both hermits and monks in the world. Among the oldest records of India we read of the *Rishis*, who separated from the world and dwelt apart in the forest and jungle. The tendency to return to a solitary life has been observed in other gregarious animals besides man; and hermits, or solitary prophets, are among the earliest phenomena in religious history. Elijah living and fasting upon Mount Carmel, and yet coming and rebuking a king, is the type of a familiar figure in superstitious times, when to hold oneself aloof from the common lot of humanity was a sure certificate of sanctity.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, records how in the second century before Jesus the Essenes were renowned as prophets. These Essenes were a community of pious Jews. They rejected the sacrifices of the Mosaic law and in other respects showed foreign influences. They baptised those who were initiated into their order, they practised celibacy and community of goods, avoided oaths, and devoted themselves to works of healing. Some writers, notably Dr. Ginsburg, the author of *Rabbi Jeshua*, and Mr. Arthur Lillie, have contended that Jesus belonged to this order. There are many objections to this view, and in a notice of Mr. Lillie's recent work, *Buddhism in Christendom, or Jesus the Essene*, I have gone more fully into this matter than I can do here. Mr. Lillie's case indeed depends upon the rejection as interpolations of those passages which speak of Jesus as freely eating and drinking and living the reverse of an ascetic life.

There are many different pictures of Jesus to be drawn from the gospels, and the one which represents him as turning water into wine and feasting in contradistinction to the ascetic John cannot be easily reconciled with the other representing him as a man of sorrow, who inculcated taking no thought for this life, selling all to give to the poor, cutting off offending members of the body and other precepts instinct with the monkish spirit. Yet if there is any historical truth in the gospels at all, we must at least believe that he was baptised by the ascetic John, and that he lived a life of celibacy and of poverty, if not of obedience. It was the recognised duty of every Jew to marry, and fulfil the command to increase and multiply. The Talmud fixes the age of eighteen as the latest at which a man should wed. Although this point seems unregarded by Mr. Lillie it has some weight in determining the affinities of Jesus to the Essenes. He never denounced this sect, while bitterly vituperative against the Scribes and Pharisees, and he seems to commend them when he says "there be eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." This was exactly the doctrine of the old ascetics. Celibacy was a far higher condition than marriage, but the latter must be tolerated in concession to the weakness of humanity. The ascription of virginity to his mother reflects the same monkish idea, and the author of the Revelation speaks of the elect as those who were not "defiled with women." It was no doubt very unascetic to go about accompanied and ministered to by women, and to rejoice in being anointed by a harlot with costly ointment which would have sold "for more than three hundred pence." But on the other hand his relation to his mother and brethren was that of one who had renounced the ordinary ties of human life, and his injunctions to his disciples to give up father, mother, wife, and children are quite in the monkish vein. Like the anchorites in every country and in every age, Jesus made

his abode in deserts and on mountains. He said he had not where to lay his head. When at Jerusalem, we read, "and every day he was teaching in the temple; and every night he went out, and lodged in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives" (Luke xxi. 37; see also John vii. 53, viii. 1). The Mount of Olives abounds with caverns. On Mount Quarantania there are still shown the grottoes known as "The Monastery of the Lord."

It is evident from what Hegesippus, in the second century, says of James the brother of Jesus, that he at any rate was of the ascetic sect of Nazarenes. He drank no wine or other intoxicating liquor. He never cut his hair or used a bath, and he knelt so long on his knees that the skin became horny like that of a camel.* There is then something to be said for the thesis of M. Lillie, and before him of Evan Powell Meredith, that Jesus was an ascetic. But, on the other hand, there is so much to show that he lived the life of an ordinary Jew—that if we are to accept this view a large portion of the gospels would have to be rejected as interpolations. The truth is that those documents were written so long after the events to which they refer, and they have in addition gone through so much revision at the hands of various parties in the early Church that it is now extremely difficult, if not impossible, to say what substratum of historical truth, if any, they contain as to the personality of Jesus.

J. M. WHEELER.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

THIS year's Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held last Sunday at Rochdale. Mr. Bradlaugh presided throughout the day. The attendance was not so large as on some previous occasions. Most of the delegates appear to have come from Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the Midlands.

The following is a list of delegates:—*Ball's Pond*, D. Colville, W. Davey; *Barnsley*, D. Patteson; *Belfast*, W. Schweizer; *Bethnal Green*, R. Forder; *Birmingham*, C. J. Bridges; *Blackburn*, J. Umpleby, J. Titherington; *Boldon Colliery*, A. Keyho; *Bolton*, J. Primrose, J. F. Hampson; *Bradford*, H. Brooksbank; *Brighton*, R. Forder; *Burnley*, E. Evans, W. Jackson; *Camberwell*, S. Soddy; *Cardiff*, C. Jones; *Central London*, J. Robertson; *Darwen*, S. Berry; *Derby*, T. O'Neill; *Deptford*, W. Reynolds; *East London*, R. Forder; *Edinburgh*, J. M. Robertson; *Failssworth*, J. Taylor; *J. W. Dawson*; *Grimby*, G. Alward; *Hackney*, J. M. Robertson; *Halifax*, J. Wilson; *J. Setete*, J. W. Crowther, C. Mills; *Hanley*, F. Dean, J. Hilton; *Heywood*, M. Bolton; *Huddersfield*, J. Brook, Mrs. Brook, A. Gee, W. Sliffe, E. Moorhouse; *Hyde Park*, J. F. Henley; *Leeds*, J. G. Fisher; *Leicester*, T. Slater; *Liverpool*, V. Hardwicke, C. Doeg, W. Newcomb; *Manchester*, N. J. Ridgway, E. G. Field, A. Hemingway; *Newcastle*, J. H. Cresswell; *North Lambeth*, R. Forder; *North London*, W. Shrimpton, W. Davey; *Nottingham*, J. R. Anderson, H. Snell, R. Porter; *Oldham*, J. Lees, E. Jagger, W. Mallalieu; *Paisley*, R. Forder; *Plymouth No. 1*, R. S. Smith, W. Searle; *Plymouth No. 2*, R. Forder; *Rochdale*, G. Priestly, J. Clegg; *Sheffield No. 1*, J. Nelson, J. Brown, J. Gorrill; *Sowerby Bridge*, C. T. Mill; *Stalybridge*, S. Maden, W. Rowbottom; *St. Helens*, J. Marsh, W. Wogan; *South Shields*, S. M. Peacock, R. Taylor; *Todmorden*, J. Hines, W. Stansfield; *West Auckland*, R. Forder; *West Ham*, D. Colville; *Westminster*, E. B. Rose; *Wigan*, J. Graham, W. Jump, W. Worsley.

Several individual Freethinkers were also present, including Annie Besant, Alice Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, Edward Truelove, W. H. Reynolds, and Thomas Slater.

After the minutes of the previous Conference had been read, Mr. Bradlaugh introduced the Annual Report of the Executive. There was a balance of £155 17s. 7d. in hand. The Literature Committee had been more active than ever in circulating Secular publications. The Science Classes maintained their efficiency, but there was a financial loss, borne by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, of over £40. Mr. Courtney Kenny had introduced a Bill dealing with the Blasphemy Laws, which stood as the second order of the day for July 6. Mr. Bradlaugh's Affirmation Bill was making good progress, and in a fair way of being carried. Arrangements had been made for the holding of an International Freethought Congress in London in September. There was also cheering news from India, where branches of the N. S. S. existed, and displayed much activity. A special subject of congratulation was the acquirement by the Manchester Branch of suitable freehold premises at a cost of nearly two thousand pounds.

Mr. W. H. REYNOLDS then read the Treasurer's Report, after which Mr. Bradlaugh was re-elected President. The following were re-elected as Vice-Presidents: G. Anderson, Annie Besant, Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, Alice Bradlaugh, Professor Ludwig Buchner, W. W. Collins, G. W. Foote, John Lees, P. A. V. Le Lubez, W. Pratt, W. H. Reynolds, Dr. E. Schlager, Thomas Slater, R. O. Smith, Joseph Symes, George Standring, J. Swaagman, E. Truelove.

* Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, ii. 23.

Owing to continued ill-health, Mr. Le Lubez retired from the Treasurership, which he had occupied for many years. Mr. W. H. Reynolds, previously sub-treasurer, was elected in his stead. Mrs. Besant moved, and Mr. Foote seconded, a vote of thanks to Mr. Le Lubez for his past services. This was unanimously agreed to, and the resolution was ordered to be inscribed on vellum. Mr. Robert Forder was, as a matter of course, re-elected as Secretary; and the old auditors were re-appointed.

Mr. BRADLAUGH then made a statement as to his Affirmation Bill, explaining very satisfactorily why he did not press the second reading. On Mr. Fisher's (Leeds) motion, it was resolved that the Government should be requested to grant facilities for the consideration of the Bill.

After a special vote of thanks to the Madras Society for its energetic work during the past year, Mrs. Besant, Mr. Foote, and Mr. Robertson, were appointed delegates to the International Freethought Congress in September, and the Executive were authorised to defray all the necessary expenses of the meeting.

Mr. J. M. ROBERTSON formally moved on behalf of the Hackney Branch "That a list of Freethought lecturers willing to give their services gratuitously to Branches of the National Secular Society be printed and circulated throughout the Branches, the cost of printing such list to be borne by the funds of the N. S. S." Considerable discussion followed, and on Mr. Foote's motion it was resolved that the matter should be referred to the Executive with a view to possible useful action.

Mr. Baldwin Smith, of the N. W. London Branch, was not present to move the resolution he had given notice of: "That the opinion of Conference be taken on the ruling of the President at the Executive Meeting held on March 30." At this meeting the Secretary reported that the voting of the Branches for a place for holding the Conference had resulted in a tie. A question was asked whether members of the Council representing Branches that had already voted by proxy were eligible to vote again. The President ruled that such delegates could not vote again. Mr. Smith entered a protest against this ruling at the time, and on Mr. Bradlaugh's suggestion he submitted the question for the decision of the Conference. Mr. Bradlaugh's ruling was unanimously supported.

The Afternoon Sitting opened with a vote of thanks to the Rochdale Branch for entertaining the Conference, which was moved by two veterans, Mr. Ridgway of Manchester and Mr. Slater of Leicester.

The Conference then received the report of the Sub-Committee (Messrs. Foote, Reynolds, and Robertson) on Mr. Courtney Kenny's Religious Prosecutions Abolition Bill. The report, being in print, was taken as read. Mr. Foote then moved the following resolution: "That, in the opinion of this Conference, the second provision of the third clause of Mr. Courtney Kenny's Religious Prosecutions Abolition Bill is a serious danger to the Freethought party, and that it would be better for the Bill to be dropped or defeated than carried in its present form." Mr. R. Porter (Nottingham) seconded the motion. Mr. Bradlaugh contributed a lengthy speech to the discussion, partly for and partly against the resolution. In the end, however, there proved to be no serious amendment, and on the resolution being put it was carried without a single dissident.

Mrs. BESANT then moved, and Mr. ROBERTSON seconded, that Mr. Bradlaugh be requested to vote for the second reading of Mr. Kenny's Bill, and to do his utmost to strike out or effectively modify the third clause in committee; and if he failed in that attempt to vote against the third reading of the Bill. Mr. Bradlaugh accepted this resolution, and it was agreed to by the Conference.

Mr. S. SODDY (Camberwell) appealed to the Conference on behalf of his Branch against the action of the Executive. The Camberwell Branch had put itself in nomination for the Conference, but the Executive declined to receive the nomination on the ground that, in such a matter, the London Branches had no right to act separately. Mr. Soddy was supported by Mr. Rose, who came two or three times into collision with the Chair. Eventually Mr. Foote proposed "That invitations for the Conference to be held in London be always made through the Executive, or through a delegate meeting of the London Branches specially called for the purpose." This resolution on being put was carried with three dissentients.

Mr. PEACOCK (South Shields) moved that a printed form of balance-sheet be sent to the Branches to assist them in making up their yearly return. This was withdrawn after some remarks from the President. Mr. Hampson (Bolton) moved that a pictorial almanack be issued by the N. S. S. This was also withdrawn.

The Evening Meeting was of a public character. The Secular Hall was filled with a most attentive audience, including a large number of ladies, and one or two babies who sometimes applauded in the wrong place but were on the whole remarkably well behaved.

Mr. A. B. WAKEFIELD opened with a carefully-delivered speech which was well received. The other fresh speaker was Mr. J. M. Robertson, who was fluent and interesting, and created a very favorable impression. Mr. T. Slater was as vigorous and earnest as ever. The other speakers were Mr. Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, and Mr. Foote. We regret that space does not allow us to give even a summary of their speeches. The meeting lasted an hour-and-a-half, and broke up with every sign of satisfaction with the day's proceedings.

PETER AND THE WEALTHY FISH.

A SHORT time ago a correspondent accused the artist of the *Freethinker* "of having drawn a cartoon which was a work of pure imagination." The cartoon alluded to went under the designation of "A Wealthy Fish." He also wished the artist to answer him a few questions, such as "Did Peter cast a hook? If so, did he catch a fish? If so, did he find a piece of money in his mouth? and if so, did he pay tribute?"

It certainly is not my duty or place to answer these questions; but an incident has occurred which may throw some light on the matter in question, and, at the same time, give this inquiring correspondent the necessary information which he seems to be seeking. The facts of the case are as follows:

One day, having a little time at my disposal, I made my way to a second-hand bookstall, which I had lately been patronising, and from which I had become the possessor of many valuable books. Whilst carefully turning over the stock of literature I caught sight of an old book, minus its covers, which was written in the Hebrew language. Asking the bookseller the price of it, I was told that I could have it gratis on condition that I stood him a glass. The bargain was speedily effected. The bookseller soon put himself outside of the stipulated beverage, and me in the possession of the coveted volume. I went to the house of a learned acquaintance, to whom I lent this book. Next day, after having carefully read it through, he informed me that it was a portion of the New Testament written in Hebrew, and that it was not improbable that the first part of this book was written by Saint Matthew himself—for a name was faintly discernible on the first page, which seemed to be spelled "Matthei" or "Matthew."

He further informed me that the contents of this book and our St. Matthew were exactly alike, with one exception: the seventeenth chapter of this Matthei contained thirty-eight verses, whilst our St. Matthew only had twenty-seven. My friend then gave me a careful translation of the rest of these verses, which do not occur in our Bible. They are as follows:

"And when Jesus had finished speaking, Simon Peter went forth on his way leading unto the sea-shore.

"And behold, as he came nigh unto his boat, he remembered that he had no hooks to cast unto the fish; for had he not lent the hooks as well as the fishing-rod to his uncle, and had not his uncle lent him five shillings thereupon? For lo! is not this transaction written in the books of his uncle Threeballs?"

"And Simon Peter was vexed with himself, and he wept: for he was sore afraid of returning unto Jesus (his master) without the particular penny which he was to find in the mouth of the fish.

"Then sat Simon Peter himself by the wayside, murmuring. Alas, why did I lend my uncle my fishing-tackle; for, behold, if I go unto him and ask him to lend them to me, he will refuse, and answer No.

"After a while he ceased weeping, and his face beamed forth with smiles and was no longer sad; for he had argued with himself thusly: If I sit here and sing that beautiful 'Song of Solomon' peradventure some Gentiles will think that I am blind, lame and destitute, and am asking charity. And he did so.

"And it came to pass that many travellers gave him their mites; and as they were dropped into his outstretched palm, his heart bounded for joy; for he would soon journey to his uncle in Petikote Leign.

"And when Peter discovered that the people had returned home (it being dinner-time), and that he was alone, he counted his money; when lo! he findeth six shillings and one farthing in copper, and ten brass buttons.

"And Peter then forthwith went unto his uncle saying, behold, I have brought you tidings of great joy and a ticket to redeem my fishing-rod and hooks.

"And his uncle immediately delivered unto Peter the articles, after having received the money due unto him.

"Then Peter immediately went to the sea and fished. And ere he had yet time to light his pipe, he found he had a bite, and at last he bringeth the fish to land, when lo a penny droppeth out of the mouth of the fish.

"As it was evening, Peter returneth unto Jesus. Jesus then said unto him, 'Well done thou faithful servant. Give me the fish, and see thou, that they who receive tribute money obtain the penny for which thou hast fished.'

The book from which these verses are translated seems to be very aged. Great care must have been taken of it since it was written. How it came into the possession of the bookseller is not known. He does not know himself. If this book is really written by St. Matthew—as I believe it is—it must be very valuable. Genuine or spurious, it at least settles a very vexed question, whether Peter did or did not fish, and whether he found the penny in the mouth of the fish for which J. Christ bade him fish. G. E. C. NAEWIGER.

A LITTLE Birmingham girl came home from church greatly troubled over the bottomless pit. After a while she cheered up, saying: "I didn't think of it before, but if the bottom of the pit is out, I could get out on the other side, couldn't I?"

PROFANE JOKES.

A CHICAGO man paid 1,000 dollars for an Indian Bible recently. It is peculiar how much more a man will give for a Bible he can't read than for one he can.

A PREACHER was one time holding forth to a numerous crowd in Hyde Park on the iniquities of horse-racing, card-playing, and gambling generally, when suddenly two dogs had a dispute, and, as the saying goes, they went for each other, with the result that Mr. Preacher found himself minus the attention of his audience; so he wound up his oration thus: "Dear Brethren in the Lord, it is no me preaching to you if you will not listen, so I will close the Holy Book and—I'll have a shilling on the white dog."

"ARE you prepared for death?" the clergyman asked, with a tremor of emotion in his voice, as he took the sick woman's hand in his own. A shade of patient thought crossed the invalid's face and by-and-bye she said she didn't believe she was; there was the bedroom carpet to be taken up yet, and the paint upstairs had hardly been touched; and she did want to put up new curtains in the dining room but she thought if she did not die until next Monday, she would be about as near ready as a woman with a big family and no girl ever expected to be.

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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. E.* of April 3; 25J 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, C.-on-M., Manchester, or to the undersigned at 25 Higher Chatham Street, Manchester.

A. HEMINGWAY, Hon. Sec.

PROGRESS.—Vols. I. and II., neatly bound in red cloth, published at 7s., reduced to 3s. the two. Postage 6d.—R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street.

EDWARD TRUELOVE'S Portrait and Biography appear in the *Radical* for June, price 1d., now ready.—R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C.

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PROGRESS

THE Freethinker's Magazine,

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

The JUNE Number contains

- New Wine in Old Bottles. By Philip Sidney.
- Giordano Bruno.—II. By G. W. Foote.
- Buddhism, Essenism, and Christianity. By J. M. Wheeler.
- The Decline of Piety.—II. By Alter Brown.
- Anne Gilchrist and her Circle.—II. By G. W. Foote.
- The "New Sociology" Criticised.—IV. By W. P. Ball.
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