

THE FREETHINKER

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

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POST HASTE.

The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment.—ESTHER III., 15.

KINGDOM COME.

THERE are nearly twenty thousand sky-pilots in the United States with regular congregations, according to recent statistics, and there is a still larger number in Great Britain. How many there are on the continent we have no means of ascertaining at present, but the Black Army of Europe must be vast indeed, and its total cost an enormous burden on the people. The Gospel is "without money and without price" in theory, yet in practice it is remarkably expensive. Christians often say that their religion is *dear* to them, and undoubtedly it is.

We should, however, be less inclined to grumble at the extraordinary cost of the Black Army if it were engaged in useful warfare against the multitudinous evils of this world. There is plenty of work for men of learning and leisure, shielded by regular salaries from the pinch of want, in stirring up discontent with the countless wrongs and mischiefs of society, and in studying how to redress them. But this is not the work of the ministers of Christ; it is rather the business of the scientist, the statesman, and the social reformer. The white-chokered gentry of every denomination are occupied, week after week, and year after year, in preaching

kingdom-come; teaching the geography of an unknown world, instructing us in its unascertainable secrets, and telling us how to reach a place they have never seen except in "dreams of the night." These professors of skyology are worse than useless. Not only do they *not* inform us what we require to know; they *do* inform us of what they know nothing themselves. They are blind leaders of the blind, and if both fall into the ditch it is not surprising; nor is it surprising that, even in this predicament, the dupes are at the bottom and the quacks at the top.

The sky-pilots, we say, are worse than useless. They block the way to better things. The people cannot support *two* Churches. While religion is well-fed science is starved. While the next world is studied this world is neglected. Priests take the honors and profits, and the men of genius, who illuminate history and accelerate the progress of mankind, too often suffer poverty and reproach.

Longer than history records, ever since men were cunning enough to trade on the credulity of their fellows, the mystery-mongers, the quacks of superstition, the charlatans of theology, have been preaching kingdom-come, and living handsomely on the occupation. But what have they contributed to secular progress, to the removal of poverty, the extirpation of ignorance, the growth of culture, the development of industry, and the elevation of the people? Nothing.

On the contrary, they have always, or nearly always, been identified with reactionary movements. What great cause, which has triumphed, have they not resisted? What great cause, which is now struggling, do they not oppose? They have a marvellous facility in patronising every success, but history shows that they have, with striking uniformity, set their faces against liberty and progress.

Theology has never assisted mankind, but has always been a hindrance. How could it be otherwise? It is only a mental disease, and at best it is like the pearl of an oyster—a splendid malady. Look at a noble church dedicated to God, or a mighty cathedral, erected by architectural genius, wrought by cunning hands, and adorned by painters and sculptors. In itself, like the pearl, it is a glorious sight. But when you look at the hovels and slums where the worshippers live—too often amidst hunger as well as squalor—you see that the gorgeous church is also, like the pearl, a sign of unhealthiness and suffering.

Why talk to us of kingdom-come? It will be time enough to study it when we get there. All the guide-books we have now are mere bundles of guesses. What we want is knowledge of this world. Knowledge is power, said Bacon, Ignorance means barbarism. Science means civilisation.

Theology disappears before culture. Religion has been called the poetry of unpoetical natures, and theology is the science of the unscientific. Who that has studied the wonders of nature cares for the miracles of the creeds? Who that has steeped his mind in the highest poetry cares for the fairy tales of the pulpit? You and I, said Schiller to Goethe, have art and do not need religion. We doubt whether any earnest student of Shakespeare retained much respect for priestly teaching. What are the dreams of theologians compared with the magnificent dramas of the mightiest of the sons of men? Jejune, fantastic puerilities, fit for the nursery or the asylum.

Among the thoughtful theology is falling into disrepute; among the educated and thoughtful its claims are derided. Thousands of people see that sky-pilots themselves display no real belief in the doctrines they preach. They go into skyology, as other men go into trade, law, or physic, simply for a living; and they teach the little orthodoxy of whichever sect finds them in bread. So little do they think for themselves, either from want of inclination or capacity, that scarcely one in a thousand ever finds reason to alter his opinions. Another point they have in common is this. They believe in getting as much as possible of the good things of this life, and in enjoying them as long as possible. Kingdom-come is attractive, but there is no need to hurry! Heaven is a capital place, but sky-pilots are loth to reach it before their time! Well, if they show so little faith in their doctrine, why should they be astonished if other people show none at all?

G. W. FOOTE.

A NEW REVELATION.*

IN the East, where insanity is accounted inspiration, prophets are an every-day feature. New religions may be said to be constantly arising, like bubbles soon to burst, and be lost in the general stream of the religion from which they spring. Occasionally, as with the founder of Bábism and the Mahdi of the Soudan, political or social movements may give an importance to these men which enables us in some measure to understand how a Mohammed or a Jesus attracted the fervid fanaticism of myriads.

It is not generally known how many persons, even in England, in the nineteenth century, are ready to put forth their ideas as supernaturally inspired. The lunatic asylums, fortunately, keep out of sight some of the more deep-seated manifestations of the religious faculty in man. Occasionally, however, these cranks—who share, with the old Hebrew prophets, the idea that their utterances are “the word of the Lord”—find their way into print, make followers, and establish a sect. A following need never be despaired of by any fanatic who can make himself heard. Religious teachers are found never to depart from the basic features of superstition—they only fall back on

older elements that have been for a time left out of sight. The idea of separateness from the rest of mankind flatters, if it does not awaken, a feeling of superiority; and the hope of special favor as the reward of special credulity is a substantial crutch to any weak-kneed believer.

The student of religion cannot but be struck by a common feature of three of the latest attempts to establish a new faith. I allude, first, to Mrs. Girling, the Shakeress, who declared herself “the second appearing of Jesus, the bride, the Lamb’s wife, the God-Mother and Savior.” Then Mr. Jezreels to whom was revealed *The Flying Roll*, and whose sect still hobbles on near Chatham, proclaimed that as by woman came death by woman also must come regeneration. Lastly, here is the author of *The Mother: the Woman clothed with the Sun*, I believe Mr. J. R. Collett, a man in education and general capacity very superior to Mr. Jezreels, though, like him, turned cranky by Bible belief, proclaiming that “God having once declared himself as the Father, yearned in his great love to reveal himself also as the Mother.” We are told, moreover, that this second manifestation of the deity, who we are happy to learn is no longer a bachelor, is actually incarnate on earth and has been seen somewhere in the neighborhood of Cardiff. The Mother, it appears, has enemies who sought to incarcerate her in a lunatic asylum. This, however, need be no reflection upon her mission. The very relations of Jesus wished to restrain him as one beside himself, and thus declared their conviction that he was mad and had a devil.

Unlike Jesus, the Mother appears to have been married, but to be separated from her “false and unfaithful” husband. This appears to have been one of the trials she had to undergo during her sojourn upon earth. She now expects the appearance of the Lord as her true husband, and “the suggestion was made to her by the angels to lay down in her reception room rugs for the Lord’s own feet.” We suppose the Lord is particular about his feet. In another passage we are reminded of the elaborate preparations made for the birth of Shiloh by Joanna Southcott. These particulars, however, in no way militate against the claims of the new religion. As the writer of *The Mother* points out, “The Truth of the First Advent was strange to the Jews.” They could not understand that God Almighty would consent to take up his abode in a woman, to submit to be circumcised, and to work as a carpenter. It was, as he says, necessary that the understanding even of the chosen should be opened in order to receive the sublime verity of the incarnation. Yet just as there were indications in the Jewish Testament of the Christian Messiah, although the Jews were unable to see them, so in the Bible may be found traces of the new revelation of “the quality of the Divine personality.” Paul, in the third heaven, learnt there hidden things, but was forbidden to utter them. Even in that which he was allowed to utter he made a distinction for the advanced and unadvanced converts, giving milk to babes and strong food to men. Among this food are hints as to “the fulness of Christ,” the “mother of us all,” and other dark sayings, cleared up by the light of the new revelation. In the Revelation of St. John the author finds the duality of divine manifestation set forth in the passage where the Lord is described as “clothed with a garment down to his feet, and girt about the *paps* with a golden girdle,” and in the references to the Woman clothed with the Sun, and to the Spirit, and the Bride.

There is nothing new under the sun. Startling as is the proposition that God is feminine as much as masculine, this new revelation belongs to the very earliest ages of human thought. Indeed, as children knew their own mothers before they were sure of their paternal ancestors, it seems likely that goddesses were thought of before gods. In most of the ancient faiths we find a consort linked with each deity, as Isis with Osiris in Egypt, and Ashtoreth with Baal in Phœnicia. The worship of feminine deities was found to become associated with licentious practices, and the stern Jehovah of the Jews and his angels are represented as strictly masculine. The idea of God become incarnate through the medium of the inferior sex is one very repugnant to the Jewish mind, and it was probably introduced from Egypt. The worship of Mary displaced that of Isis, and enabled Christianity to gather in its fold many whose devotions had become attached to feminine deities. Mary is still a strong card in the hands of the Catholic Church. She obtains more real

* “The Mother: The Woman clothed with the Sun.” London: Field and Tuer.

* “The Star and Cradle of the New Life.” Cromford near Derby.

devotion than all the Trinity put together. Protestantism has emasculated its bachelor god in order not to make his sex too prominent, but there seems to be a growing feeling that justice is not done to woman in considering God always as a male, and hence, now that the notion of woman's equality with man is spreading, we find various heresies arising with the claim that God is also feminine.

We have no means of computing the number of cranks who believe in *The Mother: the Woman clothed with the Sun*, but from the fact that they publish a weekly journal, *The Star and Cradle*, which acknowledges subscriptions from various quarters, we suppose they must amount to more than a small roomful. As a specimen of the sort of revelation which goes down with people educated in, and continually quoting the Bible, we copy the following from the latest number: "The Resurrection Soul (*i.e.* the coming Man-Child) is one but many, for it is contained in the unity of a duality, and is the outpouring of a Trinity. Thus one is in two, and three in one—two is three and three is one." This is almost worthy of the concoctors of the creed ascribed to Athanasius. The faith of the people who swallow this sort of rubbish must be of the robust order, for it was this paper which prophesied that the Queen would die on the 6th or 8th of last month, yet it goes on without giving any explanation of its unfulfilled prophecy. We suppose, like the second coming of Jesus, it is adjourned until a future date. We might wonder that new revelations of this character could obtain any credence in the nineteenth century did we not reflect how deep seated is human ignorance and superstition, and how amazingly it is fostered by Christianity. "However do you get people to believe that in swallowing the consecrated bread they are taking the body, bones, and divinity of their Savior" was once asked of a Catholic priest by a Protestant clergyman. "Why we first of all get them to believe in the Trinity," was the reply. All is easy after that. Those who swallow the dogmas of orthodox Christianity must need little straining of the œsophagus to gulp down the wonders of any new revelation.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

A PRIEST named Trouilloud has just been condemned to three years' imprisonment. He was a curé at Chappelle-de-la-Tour, near Lyons. He seduced a young girl whom he offered to prepare as a schoolmistress, and who often came to his house and even stayed there all night for the lessons that this hypocritical scoundrel was to teach her. She was admitted to the Normal School, but finding herself in the family way she returned to the priest's house. He endeavored to procure abortion, which caused the girl's death. Trouilloud had previously been guilty of immoralities in other parishes to which he had been attached.

THE English Church at Boulogne is falling down in pieces. The incessant heavy rains have undermined the foundations. Extensive repairs will be necessary. Why don't God look after his own churches and rebuild them himself if he wants them? He acts exactly as if there were no God in existence.

SINCE that was written the Church has tumbled in, though fortunately no one was injured, as the accident happened in the night. It is believed, however, that several thousand cubic feet of the Holy Ghost was unceremoniously displaced, and what has become of it the Lord only knows.

A "BOYCOTTED Priest of the Church of England" complains in the *Daily News* that he is "completely boycotted" by his clerical brethren because he interests himself in Liberal organisation. He is convinced that if his bread depended on his profession, Radical opinions would mean for him "nothing less than death by starvation."

MARGARET TOZER, daughter of a former mayor of Sheffield, committed suicide by swallowing a large quantity of sulphuric acid. She was suffering from religious mania. Perhaps she trusted in Christ's promise that true believers shall not be hurt by swallowing deadly things. Another lady arrested as a lunatic at large abjured the medical man to depart in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Most appropriate names in the mouth of a lunatic.

WHAT infinite "rot" that Yankee revivalist, H. L. Hastings, is talking to the Londoners! Verily the Christians are thankful for very small mercies when they regard this man as an antidote to "infidelity." We have received a report of a lecture he delivered at the Kilburn City Mission Hall, and his "smart" drive seems fit for Colney Hatch. Hear him on Evolution:—"They had been asked to believe that they were descendants

from monkeys; if so, they would expect to find infidels raising monkeys for the British market." This scientific and witty remark was greeted with "loud laughter." Evidently there is no need to raise monkeys for the British market. Mr. Hastings finds they patronise him wherever he goes.

MR. HASTINGS talked "an infinite deal of nothing" about Moses and the seventh day. He forgot to say (but perhaps he does not know) that the seventh day, as a period of rest and worship, is far older than the Jews, and that the explanation of the fact is very simple to those who have a little knowledge and thinking capacity. We are used to calendar months, but savages of course reckon by lunar months. Now a lunar month is twenty-eight days. Halve that, and you get fourteen; halve that, and you get seven. But there you must stop, for seven cannot be divided. That is one way in which early men got the seven days period. There was also another. Sexual periodicities run in lunar months, and as the first rag of clothes around the middle is connected with that fact, it was one of general, continuous, and striking importance. Putting these two things together—the first reckoning of time, and the first step of decency—the early men naturally regarded the lunar period as holy, and hence the sacredness of the seventh day. Moses had less to do with it than the man in the moon.

A JEWISH cabman, being unable to afford the 35s. demanded as fees at the synagogue, got married at a registry office. The synagogue at first refused to bury his child, except as illegitimate, because no religious ceremony had been performed. But they have at last given away and the child is to be buried under its father's name. The Jews are not the only people whose religious prejudices cause them to stigmatise lawful wives as mere mistresses and legitimate children as bastards.

GOD has been blessing Hungary with a flood. After a drought which caused terrible forest fires and the burning of six towns, he puts 800,000 acres of fertile land under water. The inhabitants of the villages are escaping in boats. The cattle are gathered on every available piece of high ground, where they will probably starve if not swept away by the rising flood. Three towns, it is expected, will be destroyed. God doeth all things well, of course, only he might do them a little better. Even our English weather would bear a little improvement. Last year the fruit-growing farmers lost heavily by the superabundance of fruit which became too cheap even to pay the cost of picking. This year God ruins the poor farmers by nipping off the corn and the fruit blossoms with cold and wet.

CHARLES WALLACE, a colored man, was remanded by the Liverpool magistrates, charged with stabbing Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Lawrence, the latter being the wife of the proprietor of the house in which Wallace lodged. Going into the kitchen, Wallace said that the Lord had bid him work in the vineyard, and he must cut women down as stubble. It was alleged that he then attacked them, and nearly cut off Mrs. Lawrence's hand. The prisoner, who is said to be suffering from religious mania, was remanded.

AT the annual meeting of the Pontypridd and Rhondda Licensed Victuallers' Association, held at Pontypridd, it was stated that the Sunday Closing Act had acted very detrimentally in that district, the convictions for drunkenness having gone up during the last three years 300 per cent.

AT the meeting of the Church Association, the Rev. T. Gaster "pointed out that there was a strong tendency to introduce worldliness into Evangelical congregations, and instanced the case of one 'brazen-faced woman' who had ascribed her conversion to dancing with the vicar." David's feats in this line only provoked the contempt of Michal, but no doubt now-a-days a good deal might be done towards converting the fairer sex, by clerical feats on the light fantastic toe.

THE Lord does not seem over pleased with the Jubilee arrangements at Westminster Abbey. Two bad accidents have happened already, and we may hear of more before the twenty-first. One workman has been dreadfully injured and another killed outright.

F. E. BERNARD, who hails from Stowey Villa, Drayton Park, Highbury, and who is probably a sky-pilot, is circulating a tract for "our girls." He reminds them that their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, and warns them to "flee fornication." Any decent girl who had this "nice" tract put into her hands would be justified in boxing the distributor's ears, and if it happened to be the appendages of F. E. Bernard himself nobody but the wearer would be likely to complain.

Glad Tidings has the impudence to describe Mr. Foote as "a Socialist of the communist pattern." Considering that Mr. Foote has just been opposing Socialism in a four nights' debate with its most eloquent advocate, it is obvious that the editor of *Glad Tidings* is as accurate as Christians generally are when they write about Freethinkers.

MRS. RUSHTON, of Colne, near Burnley, having cut her three children's throats, informed her sister that she had "sent all her children to heaven." Belief in heaven isn't the preventative of

crime that Christians pretend. Perhaps it caused the crime—Acting on a weak mind such a belief would be an inducement to murder, as the children would be benefited by the transfer from this vale of tears to the bright heaven of the misguided mother's imagination.

A SIMILAR shocking tragedy has occurred in France. A widow named Agathe Bourgeois, residing at Besançon, killed herself and her three children with charcoal fumes. She left a letter addressed to her deceased husband, saying that she heard his voice calling her, and that she had resolved to go to him with her three little angels. For their sakes, she added, God would forgive her.

STILL another case! At the inquest on the bodies of Rosa Cartwright and Henry Thomas Guy, of Smethwick, two lovers who were found drowned together in a pool, a letter from the young fellow was read, in which he said "It is our wish that we should be buried at the Holy Trinity Church." What a rumpus the religious press would have kicked up if he had said "We wish to be buried in unconsecrated ground, and would like Bradlaugh or Foote or Mrs. Besant to read the Secular Burial Service over us!"

THE Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, writing in the *Methodist Times*, says that the "classes" are suckled on the Greek and Latin classics, and therefore they go in for the "religion of enmity," while the "masses" are suckled on the New Testament, and therefore they go in for the "religion of amity." Indeed! But what about the Old Testament, O Hugh Price Hughes? Did any Pagan writer ever glory in such atrocious wars as those of the Jews in Canaan, the horrors of which were directly ordered by Jehovah himself? For a man who says Moses was inspired to rail at Plato and Aristotle, is about as cool a piece of impudence as could well be conceived.

THE Rev. H. P. H. admits that "a few men who do not accept Christianity, enjoy the confidence of the masses, but," he says, "in every instance they are men who reject Christianity verbally and accept it in their hearts." Another piece of impudence. When he says that "The appeal even of avowed Atheists is to the ethical teaching of Christ," he is simply grotesque. The ethical teaching of Christ is chiefly to be found in the Sermon on the Mount, and we challenge the Rev. H. P. H. to point to a single "avowed Atheist" who would think of appealing to that hodge-podge. "Avowed Atheists" are not in the habit of appealing to any man's ethical teaching. They appeal to the moral instincts of human nature, which are quite independent of Christianity and very often opposed to it. Mr. Hughes may pass off all that stuff about "avowed Atheists" on the Methodists, but if he uttered it in a Freethought hall without being laughed at, we would undertake to do another "stretch" in Holloway Gaol.

SOME time ago the proprietors of the Westminster Aquarium startled the religious public by announcing the engagement of the Ober-Ammergau troupe to perform their celebrated Passion play. The notion of the London public paying a shilling a head to see Jesus Christ crucified was too much for Dr. Jackson, the then Bishop of London, and he bestirred himself vigorously to prevent the performance, and succeeded. There is however now advertised as on view "a chromo plastic tableau," representing Jesus Christ on Calvary, grouped and modelled after the Ober-Ammergau Passion players, and the *English Churchman* calls upon the authorities to suppress the exhibition.

THE Duke of Argyll, opening a bazaar on behalf of the Brockley Presbyterian Church, took occasion to say that "he deeply regretted the education of this country could not be carried on exclusively by the Christian churches, but, owing to the growth of population and other causes, Parliament had established a system of primary education which must more and more tend towards secularism." We believe in the sincerity of the duke's regret in this matter. An ignorant population would be so much more ready to cry "God bless the Duke of Argyll."

THE Rev. H. Grattan Guinness declared, at a meeting of the Protestant Educational Institute, that "it is distressing to find that the leaders of all political parties in this country knew so little of holy prophecy." Just as the French Revolution was foretold in Scripture, so a much greater revolution was very close upon us. Mr. Guinness must know a good deal of holy prophecy if he finds anything about the French Revolution in the Bible. If he does, he no doubt could also fully describe the centenary of that event as it will be celebrated in 1889.

"THE Sister of the Sufferer" writes to the *Daily Telegraph* complaining of the constant ringing of church bells in her vicinity, South Kensington. She states that she had waited through the night by the bedside of a sister. Sleep had only come at 7 a.m., to be ended at 7.45 by the clanging of a harsh and grating bell, telling most needlessly to those possessed of clocks and watches that service began at eight. In response to an earnest appeal to the clergyman that this morning bell might be stopped, as the sufferer's house was facing the church, the clergyman replied that "the ordinances of the Church could not

be interfered with; bells were a command of God, and were even worn by the priests in the time of Moses." This pious sky-pilot frankly places the ordinances of the church above the needs of Humanity. He even goes so far in his devotion to God as to lie for him, since there is no command of church bells in the Bible. Reminded by the lady that in old times church bells were supposed to be efficacious only in exorcising evil spirits, the clergyman replied, "And so they do: they drive the devil out of men's hearts and out of their houses." He affords a good specimen of the sacerdotal pretension and superstition countenanced by the Ritualistic portion of the Church of England.

OTHER letters have appeared protesting against the "intolerable nuisance," "constant annoyance," "unfeeling cruelty" and so forth of the ringing of church bells. One objects to the depressing effect of the "ghastly practice" of tolling the minute bell. "Another Sufferer" is "continually on the verge of distraction in consequence of having to attend to business amidst the din which proceeds from the neighboring church of St. Lawrence." It is of course the sick and the nervous who suffer most from these privileged noises.

AT Nottingham, Henry Warren was charged with sending a threatening letter to his wife, in which he said: "Prepare to meet thy God . . . the next thing you hear from me will be a bullet. . . . There shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth . . . God has commissioned me to do it." Religious influence don't seem to have benefited this man much.

A CYCLONE has swept the Northern Seas, and wrecked many vessels, including one with 730 passengers on board, all of whom have perished. Many houses were blown down on land.

MR. EDWARDS, the darkie preacher, held forth last Sunday morning at the Christian Evidence Society's platform in the Columbia Road. He discoursed at length on the wickedness of Thomas Paine, calling him "rascal," "villain," "seducer," "thief," and other pretty terms from the vocabulary of Christian charity. But these are hackneyed slanders, and the Darkie's genius being unsatisfied with them, he resolved to invent a new one; so he informed the audience that Thomas Paine "helped to murder Louis the Fourteenth." This grotesque blunder raised a hearty laugh at the Darkie's expense. Louis the Fourteenth died long before Thomas Paine was born. The French king who perished in the Revolution was Louis the Sixteenth. He was condemned to death by the National Assembly, but Thomas Paine, who was one of its members, spoke and voted against the king's execution. Soon afterwards he paid the penalty of his courage and humanity by being imprisoned in the Luxembourg, where he narrowly escaped the guillotine.

THE leaders of the Christian Evidence Society know this very well, yet they let a grinning Darkie get upon their platform and talk in opposition to history and common sense. Mr. Edwards went on to say—no doubt to show how much truth there is in Mr. Engstrom's boast that this Society cultivates kindness towards infidels—that the Secularists of Liberal Town have no marriage, that they live like beasts, and select their females like bulls in a field, and that no man could go amongst them with three thousand dollars without having his throat cut! Mr. Spurgeon has apologised, in the *Sword and Trowel*, for having published this lying nonsense about the inhabitants of Liberal Town; but by the time a sense of truth and decency percolates down to the Christian Evidence Society the Greek Kalends will have arrived.

THE Bishop of Liverpool has been urging on the clergy of his diocese the necessity of raising the standard of religious education in schools. He says that if the children are not thoroughly armed with Christian doctrine, they are lost to the Church of England when they leave school, and too often to Christianity altogether." The bishop understands that if his dogmas are not forced upon children when they are ready to resign their faculties to authority, they will never be accepted when the children come to think for themselves.

MR. BIRCH, the amateur preacher of the Manchester Free Trade Hall, has published a sermon, or a lecture, or whatever he calls it, on "Burned Alive for Christ's Sake." About a sixth of the discourse is devoted to the early persecution of the Christians by the Pagans, and five-sixths are devoted to the burning of Protestants by Catholics. We would also draw his attention to the fact that he is obliged to give most of his space to the murder of Christians by Christians. Let him read the *Crimes of Christianity*, which will be ready shortly, and he will see that the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus have been industriously occupied through all the centuries in hating, tormenting, and killing each other "for Christ's sake."

"ADELPHOS" writes to the *Christian World*, calling attention to the fact that the British and Foreign Bible Society has circulated four million copies of a version of the Scriptures "teeming with historical, cosmological and doctrinal errors." "Adelphos" suggests that the B. and F. B. S. should celebrate the Jubilee by making a bonfire of its whole stock and expending part of its large income in giving a true translation.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 12, Hyde Park, at 11, "The Bible;" Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, E.C., at 7.30, "God and the Queen."

MR. FOOTE'S OPEN-AIR LECTURES.

June 19, Midland Arches; July 3, Kingsland Green; July 10, Victoria Park; July 17, Clerkenwell Green; July 24, Central London Branch; July 31, Camberwell; August 7, Westminster Branch; August 14, Bethnal Green Branch.

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.—C. Skeuss.

H. M.—Always glad to receive cuttings.

T. EVANS, who sends us a copy of the *War Cry* in Welsh, says, "I am sure the Welsh want stirring up in Freethought. I wish some lively Freethought lecturers would have the courage to advance among them before the Salvationists drive them crazy."

J. TITHERINGTON.—You are on the right track, but don't go rushing into print. Writing doesn't come as naturally as eating and drinking.

A. LOVETT.—Bain's *English Composition* is a good book. Hood's *Laws of Rhyme* is also useful. We are too busy to answer such questions through the post.

T. BRIDGES.—Too long, and would require much revision.

W. SCHWEIZER.—Many thanks for your packet. We are often interested in the cuttings even when, as at present, we have not space to deal with the whole of them.

W. T. LEEKEY.—In regard to the assertion that "Justin Martyr quoted hundreds of instances from the Four Gospels," it should be noticed that quoting means giving the very same words and stating accurately where they are taken from. Justin has many passages similar to our Gospels, but he never mentions them by name, but only the "Memoirs of the Apostles," which may have been as different from the four gospels as these are from each other. Indeed, his mentioning the fire in the Jordan at the baptism, etc., indicates that the documents he had were not the same although similar.

J. RUTHERFORD.—Glad to receive your good news. Mr. Foote hopes to pay Sunderland another visit in the autumn. Let us know how you are fixed for halls.

LA CROIX.—Pleased to hear that the books we referred you to gave you so much satisfaction. As you say, it is a pity that works like Tylor's are not cheaper and more generally accessible. Publishers are very conservative, and some of the old houses keep up the price of books from motives of "dignity," for it is difficult to see what other principle can animate them. Sometimes, however, a high price is necessary, as the demand for first-rate solid books is still limited. Spencer's works are very dear. If you want, or can not afford, one book of his, get *First Principles*. Huxley's *Physiography* is a capital book, but his philosophical utterances are to be found in *Lay Sermons, Critiques and Addresses*, and *Science and Culture*. Thanks for your efforts to push our circulation.

E. A. H.—(1) The expression is inelegant and incorrect. (2) Darwin's Life is to be published shortly, and it will no doubt enlighten us further as to his religious opinions. See Mr. Wheeler's article on Darwin in the *Freethinker* for April 24. (3) Shelley's poems can be had at various prices, from one shilling upwards. Apply to any bookseller.

J. M.—Shall appear.

W. SOWDON.—Our space being limited, we can only answer questions relating to Freethought.

H. E. BROMLEY.—We answered you in this column last week and told you that we could not undertake to correspond with our readers through the post.

LIVERPOOL.—Members and friends of the Liverpool Branch should make a point of attending a meeting after Mr. Slater's evening lecture (June 12), as business of great importance has to be arranged.

C. D.—Other matters too late for this week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Women's Suffrage Journal—Jus—On and Off Duty—Glad Tidings—Protestant Times—Countryman—West Cumberland Times—Look Times—Truthseeker—Nouvelles Freireligieuses—Sonntags-Blatt—Witness—Earth—Evening News.

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.

"God and the Queen" is the title of Mr. Foote's Jubilee lecture at the London Hall of Science this evening (June 12). Flunkies and sky-pilots admitted free. For honest, sensible people the admission is as usual.

The meeting of those interested in the London open-air propaganda at the Hall of Science last Sunday morning was thoroughly successful. There was a good attendance, including most of the hardest workers in the movement, and the feeling was unanimous in favor of something being done to improve the organisation of the out-door work. Mr. G. Standing moved,

and the motion was carried, that a delegate meeting of the London Branches should be called for Thursday evening, June 16, at 8 o'clock. Each Branch is invited to send two delegates, with power to act. All the open-air lecturers are also invited; they will have the right to speak, but of course not to vote. At the conclusion of the meeting a hearty vote of thanks was given to Mr. Foote for calling them together.

We hope every London Branch will be represented on June 16. Nearly all were represented (informally) last Sunday morning, but next Thursday not a single Branch should hold aloof. Mr. Foote will be present, and Mr. G. Standing and Mr. A. B. Moss have intimated that they will attend.

AFTER the meeting Mr. Foote booked dates for gratuitous open-air lectures for the following Branches: Hyde Park, North London, Ball's Pond, East London, Finsbury, Central London, Camberwell, Westminster, Bethnal Green, and Peckham and Dulwich. Mr. Foote will endeavor to give one or two afternoon or evening lectures as well.

"MILORD P.," a French writer who has lived in this country, writing in *La Semaine Anticlericale* on the Jubilee of the Queen of England, notices the pious wish of the editor of the *Victoria Jubilee Journal* that the writers of the *Freethinker* could be served as he served the Freethought paper that was sent to him. The French writer is favorably impressed by our journal. We translate the following passage: "Mr. G. W. Foote, a writer of talent and a notable platform speaker, has all that is necessary to defend himself. He goes straight to his point and laughs at the baying of this well-nourished cur. As author of *Royal Paupers*, he is bound to draw on himself the anger of loyal editors. Mr. J. Wheeler is another writer who is too learned and too serious to be moved by jubilee yelpings. Mr. Ball is another bold collaborator. In short, all who have the honor to take part in this bold journal disdain menaces and continue their struggle without heeding them. The clericals of all sects are aware that they are losing ground, and that the propagators of Freethought are making recruits all along the line. If we speak favorably of the writers of the *Freethinker*, it is because, like ourselves, they combat against all kinds of clericalism whatsoever. They are English—we are not political friends—Anticlericals, they are our brothers."

At the twelfth annual meeting of the Sunday Society, Sir George Macfarren took the chair and the Rev. Septimus Hansard, rector of Bethnal Green, moved that a petition be sent to Parliament authorising the opening of the museums at South Kensington and Bethnal Green on Sundays. Another resolution was passed in favor of the repeal or amendment of the Act under which a fine art exhibition may be stigmatised and put down as a disorderly house if open on Sunday. The National Art Treasures Exhibition at Folkestone had been closed under this Act last year. Another resolution was one of congratulation on the opening of the People's Palace on Sundays. Both the *Standard* and the *Daily Chronicle* had articles warmly supporting the work of the Sunday Society.

THE Children's Trip from the London Hall of Science to Epping Forest will take place on August 14. Subscriptions should be sent, as usual, to William Cookney, 1A, Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C. We make the announcement in good time in order that the fund may be large enough to provide for as many children as can join the party.

M. J. RUTHERFORD, the able and energetic secretary of the Sunderland Branch, writes to us as follows:—"A capital meeting assembled on Sunday evening, being the close of our first year. Mr. John Salt, president, Mr. Arthur Lovell, treasurer, and myself as secretary, were all re-elected unanimously. I never saw a more determined lot. An appeal for more funds met with a most hearty response. We are stronger and more able now than ever to face the foe."

ON Tuesday evening a meeting was held at the "Sailor Prince," Gordon Road, Peckham, for the purpose of resuscitating the local Branch of the N. S. S. Mr. Foote attended by invitation to render any possible assistance, and Mr. A. B. Moss came over from Bermondsey. Mr. Mackintosh took the chair, and Mr. B. Ellis stated the objects of the meeting, which proved a thorough success. A committee of twelve was formed, Mr. Hughes kindly consenting to act as Secretary for the present. Mr. Foote promised to give an open-air lecture on the Rye on June 26, and Mr. Moss promised a lecture at an early date. Next Tuesday evening at 8.30 another meeting will be held in the same room.

PIOUS FICTION TESTED.

THE *Christian Herald* has a picture entitled "The Atheist's Prayer in Prospect of Immediate Death." The accompanying story is rightly described by the *Christian Herald* as a "surprising" one. It bears all the usual signs of being one of the numerous specimens of pious mendacity which a large but diminishing number of Chris-

tians still delight in. It professes to be narrated by "a gentlemen, who for many years was identified with the Lord's work in the United States." One would like him to be "identified" in a more specific manner, but all names, dates, and localities are modestly omitted. The only way left of testing the truth of the story is by examining the internal evidence afforded by the "surprising" and "thrilling" particulars that it gives.

The anonymous laborer in the Lord's vineyard, it seems, found that there was no public worship in the "village" where he tarried one Sabbath. So "after the darkness had come on, and the crowds began gradually to desert the streets" he bent his steps towards the woods. The idea of "crowds" in the "streets" of a backwoods village is rich—and the gradual desertion of the village streets by these crowds *after* the darkness has come on, is evidently due to the imaginative genius born of a town life and tolerably innocent of rural reality. After wandering for some time in the dark woods through a "wild yet lovely scene," the narrator comes across a curious "pulpit made by felling trees, and forming a breastwork with their trunks." The hour is late, but nevertheless from this pulpit, lit by torches, a young man is haranguing an assembly in a flippant style in defence of infidelity. Of course he "only rehearsed the stale and oft-refuted objections of all Freethinkers," but it is difficult to see how the narrator could honestly make so sweeping an assertion, seeing that he immediately afterwards confesses that the infidel "had almost concluded when he arrived." To counteract the general applause, an old grey-haired man (whose name, of course, is not given) rises and addresses the meeting. He first calls the attention of his "dear neighbors" to the number of years he has lived in their midst, and to his locks bleached by seventy winters. Then he describes how "out of that copse" (which copse is not mentioned, but it is poetically "lighted up by the pale moonlight") he "buried two hardy, noble sons." (He must mean *in* that copse.) He declares that their two sainted spirits went up from that copse to the abodes of everlasting joy, to the heaven derided by yon scoffer. But how does he know this? His assertion would, if the story were true, show how fatally he mistakes subjective impression for actual fact. The Bible itself postpones resurrection till the judgment day, yet this Christian is perfectly sure of the contrary, just as he is sure that he is upholding the Bible thereby, and just as he assumes for certain that he knows enough of the inner lives and thoughts of his sons to guarantee their salvation. A thoughtful, conscientious Christian could only hope or believe that his sons had ascended to heaven. This aged Christian is so confident in the reality of his own waking dreams or private beliefs that he announces as realised fact an alleged event of which he could have neither knowledge nor proof.

After this introduction he proceeds to expose the hollowness of the infidel's professions. In eloquent, or rather mock eloquent words, which are "ineffaceably stamped" upon the narrator's memory, the old man says:

"I will show you that there is a world which he not only conceives of, but which in his secret soul he fears.

"You all know the cataract, which is even now sending its sullen whisper through these woods. I stood but a few days ago upon the brink of the swiftly flowing river, just above where it casts itself headlong from the precipice. I noticed suddenly a skiff, containing a single man, shoot out from the opposite shore, and prepare to cross. Just as he attained the middle of the stream, one of his oars broke, and the other was jerked from his grasp. I shall never forget the look of agony which convulsed his face when he saw that all his supports were gone, and that the boat was rushing down towards the fatal cataract. At first, loud calls for help awoke the mountain echoes for miles around.

"Soon the cries of agony were over, and he fell upon his knees within the boat, and he prayed. Oh, what burning words, what ravings of terror, what promises for the future, what reproaches for the past, were shrieked to Heaven! Just then I succeeded in obtaining help; and he who had been within one short moment of eternity, stood safe again upon the shore. That man sits there! Yes, he who prayed when God's strong hand was hurrying him, as he thought, on to eternity, is here, cursing and even denying that very Being whom he then acknowledged, and who saved his life."

Supposing that the infidel was so bold or so idiotic as to attempt to cross the "rushing" river close to the cataract, is it likely that "just" as he reached the middle of the stream one of his oars should break, and the other be simultaneously jerked from his grasp? What jerked it from his grasp? Had God prepared a big fish to seize and

swallow that oar, as he prepared one to swallow Jonah whole?

The old greybeard of seventy had good eyesight to perceive the distant look of agony that "convulsed" the face of the infidel, especially as the man was rowing towards him, and therefore had his face turned away from him. He must have had keen powers of hearing too—or of imagination—to have heard the "mountain echoes" of the man's voice "for miles around." He forgets that at first the cataract was amidst woods; now it is amidst mountains—wooded mountains presumably, if the discrepancy is to be reconciled; and these would not easily echo for miles around, since the foliage would break up the sound-waves. The aged Ananias takes full note of the words and actions and ravings and shriekings of the apparently lost man, and then calmly adds, "Just then I succeeded in obtaining help." How, on earth? Why not explain so interesting and vital a point? An aged man, alone in the woods or on the mountains, after watching the man being carried to his doom, boasts of having somehow or other obtained help in time, without telling us how. Are we to suppose that it came in the form of a legion of angels who rescued the man in the nick of time in answer to the old man's prayer and watching? The peril is purposely made as imminent as possible. The infidel is just about to plunge over the cataract; he is "within one short moment of eternity." The boat in the illustration is depicted close to the cataract, which is of an extent that Niagara itself could hardly rival. The illustration and the tale are both alike works of imagination, in which everything like accuracy is obviously sacrificed for the sake of effect. The rescue under the conditions described and depicted would have been impossible except by miracle. The boat is far out in the middle of a wide and swiftly flowing river. There is no time for rescue, and the infidel and his would-be rescuers would alike have been swept over the cataract.

The infidel, on being exposed before his open-air audience, is more idiotically melodramatic than when drifting to the fall. For, curiously enough, the literary narrator continues in *exactly* the same loosely-emotional and absurdly-exaggerative style as the aged speaker employed—the style in each case being that of the penny romancer or thrilling melodramatic liar. The rubbish runs thus:

"Every eye was turned towards the first speaker; and that countenance will haunt me while I live. Pale as the moonbeams in whose full lustre he sat, his eyes turned in a fearful gaze to the sky, his hands clenched, he had risen to his feet, and stood for one moment; then, breaking through the throng, he disappeared in the forest. A thrill of fear, and a cry of horror, ran through the assembly, as they sat an instant chained to the spot. Then dispersing, the old man and myself were left alone. I clasped his aged hand, and our tears and thanksgivings flowed out in unison."

The infidel is represented as a bold man and a practised hypocrite. Why should he be so terror-stricken and dumbfounded? Why should he turn so fearful a gaze to the sky, and then fly as if for his life, without a word of contradiction or explanation? Was it because he was so horrified at the lies told about him by so aged and reverend a tongue? Why, too, should such a cry of horror run through the assembly because he bolted away into the woods? Ordinary Americans would be far more likely to laugh at his discomfiture, and to revel in the utterance of rough and uncomplimentary witticisms at his expense. Why, too, had the infidel been lecturing so boldly, close to the scene of his alleged praying and shrieking? He knew that this must be known not only to the aged Christian, but to the person or persons by whose help that Christian rescued him. Nay, he knew—unless, indeed, he was a perfect idiot—that such a remarkable rescue and its accompanying circumstances would not remain a secret: the whole community would certainly ring with the striking news before the day was over. As, according to the old man's account, "a few days" had elapsed, it is evident that the incident must have been widely known in that neighborhood, and the infidel's flippant discourse and the applause it excited would have been impossible.

The inconsistencies, improbabilities, and peculiarities of the tale are such that, on examination, it stands self-convicted as a specimen of the numerous concoctions manufactured by systematic liars on behalf of the Christian religion. Journals like the *Christian Herald* that introduce stories of this kind to a wide circle of the poorer and less intelligent Christians, cannot escape responsibility because they do not happen to have invented a particular

story. Those who circulate such fictions share the guilt of deceiving the credulous and the ignorant, of slandering unbelievers, and of fostering false and debasing doctrines by fraudulent and debasing means.

W. P. BALL.

ANOTHER TRIAL FOR BLASPHEMY.

WE have received the American Freethought papers, giving an account of the trial of Mr. C. B. Reynolds for Blasphemy at Morristown, New Jersey. The proceedings commenced on Thursday, May 19, and concluded on the following day. Three judges sat on the bench; Mr. Francis Childs presiding, with two lay judges, Mr. De Witt C. Quimby and Charles H. Munson. Mr. Childs appears to have played the part of counsel for the prosecution. He is obviously a bigot, and his summing-up was an effort for a verdict of guilty; in fact, he ended by saying, "Do not acquit him by violating the law yourself." The jury consisted of twelve nobodies, who are described by the *Truthseeker* as "Jersey jackasses." Colonel Ingersoll conducted the defence. His speech occupied the whole of the afternoon and an hour of the next morning. "His voice," we are told, "has recovered its strength and tone, and its lowest note was heard to the farthest corner of the court-room. The speech was full of imagery, purest patriotism, the grandest of pleas for liberty, and the most exquisite and touching pictures." We hope to publish, from the American papers, a verbatim report of Ingersoll's speech in our next issue. It evidently created a great sensation, though it did not shake the bigotry of the twelve Christians in the jury-box. They took an hour to consider the matter, after the plainest directions from the bench, and then returned a verdict of guilty. Mr. Reynolds was told to "stand up," which he did, facing the judge with unflinching courage. The sentence was as follows:—"You have been convicted of circulating blasphemous matter. Inasmuch, as the law has for so long been unused, you may reasonably be expected to have been ignorant of it. And while ignorance of the law excuses no man from its penalties, the Court feels bound to take the fact of your ignorance into consideration in passing sentence. The judgment of the Court is that you pay a fine of twenty-five dollars, together with the costs of prosecution, and stand committed till paid." Ingersoll wrote out a cheque for the full amount, facetiously adding that they might send him on a corrected bill if there was any mistake.

The lightness of the sentence—which contrasts with the severity of Judge Childs's summing-up—may be thus explained. The two lay judges were opposed to the punishment of heresy, and insisted on a small fine as the penalty. On the other hand, Ingersoll's speech stirred Morristown to its depths; it made an impression even on the Methodist and Baptist preachers; and perhaps it was thought there was as much truth as wit in Ingersoll's saying that if they tried Mr. Reynolds upon the other indictment, which was discreetly abandoned, he would come down and convert the whole town.

From the summary report of Ingersoll's speech we see that he alluded to the cases of G. J. Holyoake and Thomas Pooley as the last instances of imprisonment for blasphemy. We can scarcely suppose that he is ignorant of our own imprisonment in 1883, and we therefore suppose that he thought it injudicious to mention a recent trial that ended in such a severe sentence.

It should be added that Ingersoll has moved for a new trial. Being asked whether he thought his cause would meet with defeat, he replied, "No; I think the trial will do great good. Hundreds of people for the first time have the opportunity to hear a little good sense. The question will be discussed. The Christian will be interrogated on a thousand points. The answers will fail to satisfy, and the result will be that Morristown will soon boast of a good many sensible Liberal people. Folks will lose confidence in preachers who insist on putting their opponents in the penitentiary."

Mr. Reynolds is still impenitent, and intends to go on blaspheming. Interviewed after the trial, he said, "I am sorry the fine was imposed, for it entails additional expenses upon Mr. Ingersoll, who assumed the entire affair. How nobly he has defended me—giving up an important case even; and once he forced upon me a cheque for my wife and children. There is no kinder man lives." Being asked whether he was going to give up preaching Freethought, Mr. Reynolds answered, "Emphatically no! If it were not for the sake of the Colonel, upon whom it would reflect in a way, I would pitch my tent in Morristown to-morrow."

On the whole the result may be called satisfactory. There is nothing surprising in Mr. Reynolds being found guilty by a bigoted jury, urged on by a bigoted judge. But the paltry fine of twenty-five dollars makes the Blasphemy Law contemptible. To kill a man for insulting God is one thing, to fine him five pounds is another. If the Lord's dignity is valued at that sum, he is fallen miserably from his old estate. It looks in fact very much like a civil suit. God Almighty brings an action for libel against Mr. C. B. Reynolds, and gets twenty-five dollars damages! Surely if courts cannot treat the Lord more handsomely they should let him avenge himself on blasphemers. The Bible tells us his arm is strong, and there must be plenty of thunderbolts in stock.

Colonel Ingersoll, as we said, has moved for a new trial. The case will therefore be heard of again, with what result it is impossible to predict. But this at least can be said—The prosecution of Mr. Reynolds, and the defence of Colonel Ingersoll, will set the Yankees thinking, and thousands of people who hate tyranny will be apt to feel more than sympathy with those who are championing freedom.

FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN.

THE Rev. Henry Harris Davies, vicar of Llangoed and Llaniestyn has passed his examination in the bankruptcy court. His debts were mostly to doctors, solicitors and dealers in alcoholic liquors.

A YOUNG clergyman in the West-end is said to have made his way in society by inducing the ladies of his congregation to believe that they were responsible for the best portions of his sermons. When visiting his congregation he carefully notes the ladies' utterances, which he introduces on the following Sunday with the preface "One of the brightest minds I know has observed" or "From a beautiful source comes the idea." Could the ladies fail to pet him? He is now the lion of a hundred parlors.

THE Church House scheme, for which the parsons are utilising the Jubilee craze to raise the wind, does not appear to be very flourishing. The pious promoters have, therefore, hit upon a beautiful device to assist the enterprise. They send about to the newspapers a pamphlet by the Rev. T. Moore, and with it nine brief reviews, from which the editors are invited to choose and insert the selection as their own independent criticism. Such impudence, not to use a darker word, shows that, although the parsons may not be as harmless as doves, they are wise as serpents—and no wiser.

MANY months ago we were bothered by a perfervid Scotch Christian who demanded that we should place our columns at his disposal and enable him to disabuse the minds of our dupes. We declined for two reasons. First, we had no wish to kill the *Freethinker*; secondly, a writer of R. McIntyre's superlative genius would find plenty of Christian editors eager to receive his contributions. We now see his name at the bottom of a long screed on Atheism in the *Protestant Times*. He refers to us and his noble offer to supply us with gratuitous copy, adding that he made the offer "respectfully." As his letters to us were similar in tone to his article in the *Protestant Times* our readers may estimate his notions of "respectfully" when we inform them that the following epithets have been taken at haphazard from two of his paragraphs:—Besotted, contumelious, inflated, demoralised, scurrilous, blasphemous. Twice in six lines he calls the *Freethinker* "a rag." This is the sort of thing at the end of which the valorous McIntyre would sign himself "Yours respectfully." The absurdity would be obvious to ordinary minds, but Mr. McIntyre may be pardoned for not seeing it. He is a Christian and a Scotchman.

REVIEWS.

Bible Saints. Part III. By A. B. Moss. London: Watts and Co. (1d.)—Mr. Moss continues to add to his chances of perdition. His *Bible Saints* is smart and "blasphemous." We wish it a good circulation.

Our Corner for June opens with a few words on Socialism from Mr. Bradlaugh, followed by a final reply from Mrs. Besant. Mr. Robertson concludes his thoughtful paper on "The Rational Treatment of Criminals." He contends that the criminal code having settled what action calls for imprisonment, offenders should be sentenced to that punishment, their liberation depending upon prison judges whose business it should be to take close cognisance of the offender's prison life and to liberate whenever they see good reason to believe or hope that a particular person will not offend again. Percy Macloghlin writes with spirit on "Supernaturalism and Morality."

OBITUARY.—Mr. George Payne, of Manchester, who has just suffered a very painful bereavement in his own family, writes us as follows about the death of a veteran Freethinker: "A few hours later—about 2.30 p.m. yesterday—another death took place. Our old friend N. J. Ridgway, about whom we were talking only a week ago, and who spoke at the Rochdale Conference, seems to have caught a little cold there or during the journey to or from. Dr. Guest was called in, but our old friend gradually sank and breathed his last yesterday. Almost his last thoughts and words had reference to our new Hall scheme, the success of which he has all along ardently desired and worked for according to the ability of his advanced age. He was in his seventy-eighth year and in but poor circumstances. I have understood from him that in times past he suffered much loss in consequence of his opinions." Mr. Ridgway's death, although somewhat sudden, is hardly surprising. He bore his great age lightly, but there was no strength to resist an indisposition. His bright, intellectual, and cheerful face will be universally missed by the Manchester Freethinkers and the lecturers who visit their Hall. We do not believe a more benevolent man existed than Mr. Ridgway, or a more devoted lover of Freethought. Mr. A. Hemingway, secretary of the Manchester Branch, has since written to say, "I was with him (Mr. Ridgway) just before his death, and he was as firm as ever in the old cause. He said he had nothing to regret and only wished for a rest."

PROFANE JOKES.

ABOARD a steamer. A clergyman, addressing himself to a fellow voyager: "Have you ever considered that in the midst of life there is death?" "Often." "Have you reflected that at any instant we may be launched into eternity, and that we ought to be prepared for such an event?" "It is what I have said a million times." "Is it possible that I am talking to a brother clergyman?" "No, oh no! I am a life-assurance agent. Let me show you some figures."

A YOUNGSTER at Liverpool, who has picked up many shipping terms, recently asked his father if it were wrong to say "damn." Believing the youth meant the article as we have spelt it, the pious parent replied that it was very wrong indeed. "But it isn't wrong to say coffer-dam, is it papa?" further inquired the child; to which the father replied, "Certainly not, my boy; but why?" "Because," replied the youth, "that cow in the back-garden has swallowed a turnip, and if someone doesn't go to her soon she'll coffer dam head off."

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