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A HOLY ECLIPSE.

THE LORD COVERING THE EARTH WITH DARKNESS THAT MIGHT BE FELT.

SWINBURNE ON WHITMAN.

It is difficult to understand the reason of Mr. Swinburne's ferocious attack on Walt Whitman in the *Nineteenth Century*. What if there are Whitmaniacs who laud their idol too highly; is not that always the habit of worshippers, who, from of old, have been prone to say on behalf of their deity "Thou shalt have none other gods but me"? Are the buzzings of silly admirers, such as generally gather round a famous man, any justification for a savage onslaught on a poor old poet, broken-down in health, and chiefly dependent on the kindness of his friends in England and America? Whatever is the measure of Whitman's genius, and whatever his claim to rank with true poets, there can be no question as to the lofty sweetness of his nature; and it seems to us that one who has shown the rarest heroism, and whose virile presence in his prime wrung from Lincoln the ejaculation "There goes a man," might at least have been spared a tempestuous buffeting in his declining age. Mr. Swinburne is too early or too late; he should have emptied the vials of his scorn some years ago, or waited until the "good grey poet" was beyond the reach of human voices. Surely the man, as well as the author, has a claim to fair treatment if not to generosity; and a writer like Whitman, who has rarely said a bitter word of any of his contemporaries, receives less than justice when he is

assailed, and indeed vituperated, because of the indiscreet zeal of some of his followers.

Mr. Swinburne has been counted among Whitman's admirers, and not without reason, although he now protests against his inclusion in the category. His verses "To Walt Whitman in America" have never been withdrawn from *Songs before Sunrise*, and there are the striking passages in his volume on William Blake, in which he found Blake and Whitman so wonderfully alike that he could almost believe in the transmigration of souls. Does Mr. Swinburne recant his splendid praise of Blake? If not, how can he say he has "no palinode to chant, no recantation to intone" as a preface to his present attack on Whitman? Mr. Swinburne may persuade himself that his recent and previous utterances on the American poet of democracy are consistent, but he will have some difficulty in inducing others to share the persuasion.

What is it that Mr. Swinburne now allows Whitman? "A just enthusiasm, a genuine passion of patriotic and imaginative sympathy, a sincere though limited and distorted love of nature, an eager and earnest faith in freedom and in loyalty,—in the loyalty that can only be born of liberty; a really manful and nobly natural tone of mind with regard to the crowning questions of duty and of death." Well, these qualities might have pleaded for a more generous criticism. They are not common, and their possessor is no proper target for abuse.

Whitman, however, is no poet, according to Mr. Swinburne's present judgment. He is neither a maker nor a singer. His highest literary quality is rhetoric, which has often "a thrilling and fiery force." But although he might have made a good orator he never could have made a good poet. Worse still, he exhibits an "obtrusive animalism"—it is Mr. Swinburne who makes the declaration! His Eve is "a drunken apple-woman, indecently sprawling in the slush and garbage of the gutter amid the rotten refuse of her overturned fruit-stall," and his Venus is "a Hottentot wench under the influence of cantharides and adulterated rum." All this is very vigorous and very Swinburnesque. But it is not convincing. Let anyone read Mrs. Gilchrist's "A Woman's Estimate of Walt Whitmore," and he will see that what shocked Mr. Swinburne was hailed with pleasure as wholesome outspokenness by a pure and high-minded wife and mother.

Whitman is too apt to be a rhetorician—there Mr. Swinburne hits a palpable blot; and he is certainly not "a maker" in Ben Jonson's sense of *invention*. But he is certainly is "a singer." Does Mr. Swinburne forget that he himself has called the "Burial Hymn of President Lincoln" the most splendid nocturne ever chanted in the cathedral of the world? James Thomson placed that noble elegy beside Shelley's *Adonais*. Does it matter that Whitman's cadence is not "definable and reducible to rule and measurement"? If such a test is insisted on, Isaiah, who is one of Mr. Swinburne's favorites, will have to be plucked from his throne. And how is the test to be applied to the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, of Keats and Shelley? The cadence does not follow the ten-syllable line; it lingers or hastens, prances or plunges, trots or gallops, with the fancy or passion of the writer. Where, as in the elegy on Lincoln, Whitman achieves a triumph, he does so by sheer force of genius. Had he studied form, instead of despising it, this noble poem would have doubtless been more secure of the applause of posterity. For, as George Meredith remarks,

"what fruitful things and dear
Must sink beneath the tidewaves, of their weight,
If in no vessel built for sea they swim."

That Whitman will stand less chance with the future through his lack of form we must reluctantly allow as

probable, but there is something individual and unique in his genius that will always receive due recognition. With all his defects of culture, he is, to use another poet's expression, the Muse's son, though he does not wear her livery; for surely it must be Whitman who is indicated in Mr. Meredith's sonnet on "An Orson of the Muse." The designation has Mr. Meredith's usual felicity. This shaggy poet would have been the better for cultivating the graces of song, and learning to imprison great thoughts in jewels of expression. Yet with all his blemishes—

"Him, when he blows of Earth, and Man, and Fate,
The Muse will hearken to with graver ear
Than many of her train can waken."

Mr. Swinburne seldom does things by halves. Never to praise with enthusiasm, said Vauvenargues, is a sure sign of mediocrity. The sign does not attach to Mr. Swinburne. He praises and denounces with equal vigor. But his denunciation is generally inspired by his spleen, while his praise is nearly always inspired by generous recognition and just judgment. Let the reader, therefore, accept Mr. Swinburne's tribute to what is great and good in Whitman, and dismiss the rest as an impetuous exercise in literary scalping.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE DATES OF THE BIBLE BOOKS.

(Concluded from p. 255).

THE utterly unhistoric romance of Esther, a tale invented to account for the feast of Purim or lots, copied from the Persian, was—as Zunz, Ewald, Kuenen, De Wette, Bleek, and all rational critics agree—written after the fall of the Persian empire. Zunz, the Jewish critic, has noticed fifty expressions which point to a late date, even in parts resembling the usage of the Mishna. Between 320 and 292 B.C. will be an approximate date for the holy work which never mentions God but mentions Ahasuerus 187 times.

Job, the finest book in the Bible, has been variously dated from times antecedent to Moses down to the fifth century. The absence of any reference to the law, religion or history of the Jews, has been assigned as a reason for early date, but this only shows that the date is difficult to determine. It cannot be older than the age of Solomon, for Job (chap. vii., 17) travesties the ideas of Psalm viii. in a manner which shows that this hymn was well known. Some of the later psalms, however, display acquaintance with Job, and there is still a controversy whether Amos and Isaiah show signs of knowing Job, or whether they were in the mind of the unknown poet who wrote that work. Job is evidently the product of an age of reflection and art. The problems dealt with are those of a late time. There is no trace of the question of evil in Proverbs. Renan places Job at about 700 B.C., but the prevailing opinion reduces it later in the period between the Assyrian and Babylonish exile, from 690 B.C. to 588 B.C. The speeches of Elihu (chaps. xxxii.—xxxvii.) are by a much later hand.

The Psalms are a series of collections of hymns of different dates, intended for singers in temple service. They extend, perhaps, from the time of David (1015 B.C.) to that of the Maccabees (circ. 150 B.C.) It is very doubtful if David wrote any, though 1 Sam. xxii. shows that songs were early attributed to him. A number of them are clearly post exilic, as for instance the one beginning, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." Indeed, the whole of the latter portion must be assigned to the Greek period. The language of many is very late indeed. Psalm cxxxix. is a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, and must have been written when the language was decaying. Psalm lxxviii. refers to the worshipping congregation as drawn partly from Jerusalem and partly from Galilee. The collection must be put at the earliest between the third and fourth centuries B.C.

Proverbs are also a series of collections, though, as a whole, older than the Psalms. They exhibit a phase of thought anterior to Job. The inscription of series xxv.—xxix., "These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out," seems historic, though it of course was not written by the men of Hezekiah. This section is doubtless as old as the end of the eighth century. The large code (x.—xxii.) is of too finished a style for high antiquity. That Solomon put forward any collection of proverbs has little to support it, though no

doubt individual sayings may extend back even prior to his time. The small collection xxii., 17—xxiv., 34, is later than Hezekiah. The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, the words of King Lemuel, and the praise of the capable woman at the end of the book are also later. The entire work seems to have been arranged in the sixth century after the return from the captivity.

The Book of Ecclesiastes purports to be "the words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem;" but even orthodox critics have given up ascribing this work to Solomon. Its language is of an Aramaic cast, and is more like the Talmud than any of the ancient Hebrew literature. It also shows acquaintance with Greek philosophy, and has many traces of Greek expressions and ideas. It was only received into the canon in the first century B.C., and that not without strong opposition. Graetz even assigns it to the time of Herod the Great, but the better opinion is that of Dean Plumptre, who places it between the death of the stoic Zeno (240 B.C.) and that of Ptolemy Epiphanes (181 B.C.) With the exception of Daniel, it is the latest of the Old Testament books.

The Song of Solomon is the most ancient complete work in the Bible. Though evidently not written by Solomon, it can fairly be assigned to the northern kingdom before the disruption, and is plausibly dated by critics 950-946 B.C.

Isaiah consists of a collection of prophecies by different hands, extending from the time of Isaiah, the son of Amos, the brother of Amaziah, in the middle of the eighth century B.C., to the return from the exile in Babylon, 536 B.C. The latter portion, Is. xl.-xli., being a work of the highest order, was a sufficient reason for ascribing it to the royal prophet, to whom only one part can plausibly be assigned, *i.e.*, chaps. xxiv. to xxvii.; and even this is explained as being the work of a later hand, in which are interwoven fragments of old prophecies. The collection as a whole may be placed between 536 and 520 B.C.

The date of Jeremiah is that of Josiah and Jehoikim, 620-590. Chapter x., 1-16, was however written by a prophet of the captivity; chapters i. and li. are a patchwork made at the close of the Babylonian exile; chapter lii. formed the end of the history of the kings of Judah. The Lamentations are of slightly later date than the first portion of Jeremiah. Ezekiel is dated from the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, 593. Portions of it extend to the time of the return.

Daniel is the latest of the Old Testament books. In the Jewish Bible it is placed among the Hagiographa instead of among the prophets, showing that it is later than the time of Ezra when the division was made into law and prophets. It is a forgery, and was not written till the Maccabæan period (170 or 160 B.C.), long after the events prophesied had occurred. The names of angels, hitherto unknown, the mention of the resurrection of the dead, the style of the Hebrew, and the Greek words found intermixed, all speak to its late date. The scope of its historical visions extending from the time of the alleged author to the age of Antiochus Epiphanes (the "vile person" of chapter xi., 21), enables us to give the actual date of the writer as between 168 and 165 B.C.

Hosea, on the other hand, is after Canticles and Amos, one of the very oldest of the Jew-books. The title gives the approximate date, which may safely be put between 750 and 734.

Joel has no sign of date. The orthodox have placed it 800 B.C. It appears however from chap. iii., 1, 2, that Joel wrote after the exile. We place it in the fifth century, allowing that it may be founded on an older work.

Amos is the oldest and in some respects the most important of the prophets. Its date appears at the beginning and it may be safely assigned to the period between 775 and 750 B.C.

For Obadiah we are willing to take the orthodox date, B.C. 587.

Jonah however is placed nearly five hundred years too early. Instead of B.C. 862 it must be put in the fourth century B.C.

Micah is far older and may be assigned to 730 B.C.

The burden of Nineveh in Nahum must be placed about 660 B.C.

The date of Habakkuk is very uncertain. He is placed in the Apocryphal portion of Daniel as a contemporary of that prophet. We incline to refer him to the age of Josiah 640-610.

Zephaniah is assigned to 630 B.C.

Haggai and Zechariah, from their references to Darius Hystaspis, can be confidently dated about 520 B.C.

Malachi, *i.e.*, the angel of the Lord, is dated by the orthodox B.C. 397. Rational critics place it a little earlier, between 440 and 420.

Briefly reviewing the results, we see that a Bible arranged in chronological order would have to place the Song of Solomon first among the complete books. The earliest proverbs, the earliest psalms, the Song of Moses, the Song of Deborah, citations from the wars of Jahveh and the book of Jasher, certain stories of the patriarchs and judges, and the account of David's court in Samuel might also be selected as ancient but undateable fragments embodied in later literature. After the Song of Solomon, the next complete work would be Amos, followed by Hosea, Micah, and the earliest parts of Isaiah. Then in the golden age of Hebrew literature comes the collection of Proverbs, Job, Ruth, the books of Judges, Samuel and Kings, Zephaniah, Nahum, Deuteronomy, and the Jahvist portions of the Hexateuch, followed by Habakkuk, Obadiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Joel, Ezekiel, later Isaiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. To these succeed the Levitical code, Malachi, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, while the list is finished by Jonah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, the latest Psalms, and the book of Daniel.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

A LETTER from Signor Pecci, otherwise his Holiness the Pope, to Cardinal Rampolla has been published. Pecci recites that he has taken up the task of reconciling the Papacy with the governments of the civilised States, but he plainly indicates that whatever concessions may be made he will not abandon one jot of the ancient claims. The Pope must therefore be regarded as "lying low," like Brer Fox, waiting for any opportunity to assert himself. He seems not to know whether to hold on or let go, and hopes to worry along by a combination of two antagonistic policies.

THE other day thirty Roman Catholic bishops and some hundreds of priests assembled at Chatillon sur Marne, France, to witness the unveiling of a statue to Pope Urban II. The *Weekly Register* says the ecclesiastics assembled "to honor and perpetuate the memory of this saintly Pontiff." It may be worth while to cite an item of the saintly pontifical teaching of Urban II, which forms part of the Canon Law to this day: "We judge that they are not murderers who, burning with zeal for their Catholic Mother against the excommunicated, should happen to kill any of them" (*Corpus Juris Canonici*. Decret. Secunda Pars, Causa 23. Quest. v., cap. xlvii.)

THE Protestants and Catholics of Ulster have indulged in still further manifestations of the Christian spirit. The annual excursion of Catholic Foresters from Belfast to Portrush provoked most serious riots. A clergyman was shot in the leg while proceeding to his church to conduct divine service, and several other persons were severely wounded. At Ballymoney Station shots were fired from the train, and a young man was shot in the chest and has since expired. Portrush was kept in a state of constant uproar by crowds of Orangemen, who attacked the excursionists. Many persons were injured on both sides by stones and bottles, but the police succeeded in preventing more serious disasters. The return home was made lively by a battle of stones and bottles and bullets at every station. Nearly all the carriage windows were smashed. When the excursionists left the train at Belfast and got into cars, the Orangemen continued to pelt them, but the police were in sufficient strength to prevent more murderous attacks. These Irish Christians delight in showing the pacifying influence of Christianity whenever they get a chance. If it were not for the military and police, they would probably have exterminated each other by this time.

SOME of the Roman Catholics are calling Dr. Mivart's orthodoxy in question on account of his utterances in the *Nineteenth Century*. A writer in the *Tablet* considers he upholds opinions condemned by the Church, not so much in regard to the Bible as in stating that "in philosophy authority has no place."

ACCORDING to the *Dominion Churchman*, Ecuador is a perfect specimen of a religious state. The Pope nominates the presidents and the priests make the laws. In all the country there is not a railway, telegraph, stage coach, or even good highway save those made by the Incas before the Spanish invasion. A law prohibits the importation of any books save those sanctioned by the Church. No records of the government finances are kept, but when more money is wanted a posse of soldiers wait on the principal merchants to make up the amount. The people are distinguished by drunkenness, idleness and licentiousness, but they are constant attendants at mass and regular in confession. Ecuador seems to exhibit a good specimen of Christian civilization.

UNDER the heading "Ritualistic Blasphemy," the *English Churchman* prints the following extracts from a catechism recently published. "What is a priest? A man who holds the place of God—a man vested with the power of God. Who purified you after you had sinned? Who gives you the body of our Lord?—The priest. The priest has the key of the heavenly treasures; it is he who opens the doors; he is the steward of the good God. Without the priest the death and passion of our Lord would be of no avail." The anti-Romanist journal is shocked at the natural result of its own Church-of-Englandism. For our part we think this priest-worship one degree less absurd than the worship of a God in the clouds, and we have no manner of doubt that the words of any living man whatever are of more efficacy and importance than the death and passion of the Christian's God.

THURGAULTON PRIORY, at present the residence of the Bishop of Southwell, has been bought by a well-known sporting character for about £50,000. The ungodly in the Nottingham district are cracking jokes about the displacement of the bishop by the bookmaker.

A MATRIMONIAL advertisement in the *Liverpool Mercury* reads: "A Lady who loves Christ, wishes to meet a Gentleman who sincerely loves him too." No wonder a lady who so frankly confesses her affection for another, has to advertise for a life partner who must be content to share a divided heart with Mr. Christ. If the godly columns of the *Mercury* fail to supply her want she should apply to the Young Men's Christian Association.

THE Rev. J. Cardwell, M.A., has obtained a divorce, but the judge declared that he had been indiscreet and in a great measure he had himself to thank for the misery and misfortune which had been brought upon himself and the children. If the scandal had occurred in a Freethinker's family, most Christians would have held Freethought responsible as the moral cause of all the evil. But in Christian cases this kind of argument of course does not hold good. Still it is shown that all the superabundant Christianity in a clergyman's family has not sufficed to keep the minister discreet or the wife faithful to her vows.

MR. H. C. RICHARDS, the rejected of Northampton, has dropped into a berth which suits his merits. Through the influence of the equally pious Mr. S. Blackwood, he has been made junior prosecuting counsel at the Old Bailey for the Post Office.

AFTER hearing further evidence against the Rev. P. F. Duffy, alias the Rev. F. Clarke, the magistrates have committed him for trial at the Middlesex Sessions for obtaining money with intent to cheat and defraud. Collecting-books were found at prisoner's lodgings, and a large number of lithographed circular appeals. In one of these he announces that a church at Hatcham will be opened by "the Rev. Dr. Clarke," who is to preach a course of sermons on "The Existence of God," "The Immortality of the Soul," and "The need of a Savior."

THE case of the Rev. J. McAllister, who is prosecuted by the War Office for fraud, is still proceeding. Mr. Hartley, who is churchwarden of Mr. McAllister's church, deposed that he had never heard of the proposed district of St. Paul for which the minister was soliciting subscriptions. He had once reprimanded the minister's sons for throwing a cracker on the fire at a Mission service. The minister's wife was annoyed at the churchwarden's reproof of her sons, and the incident broke up the St. Nicholas Mission, of which Mr. Hartley was treasurer without funds.

IF a man wishes that his days may be long in the land he should aspire to become a Bishop. Three of the Bishops are octogenarians, viz., Chichester, Worcester, and St. Asaph, and two more—St. Albans and Bath and Wells—will be added to the number if they live till next year. Four other Bishops—Winchester, Norwich, Bangor, and Liverpool—are over seventy years of age.

CHELTHENHAM has been afflicted by a scandal, the elopement of an officer of the local branch of the Church Army with the leading lady patroness of that august body. The former has a wife and two children. The *Bristol Mercury* says that as the leading lights of the Church Army have been most active in instituting a crusade against the girls upon the streets, the instance of immorality in their own ranks is not pleasant to reflect upon.

In his "Trials of a Country Parson" in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, Dr. A. Jessopp gives many instances of parsons spoiling their churches, and one of a vicar who cut down and sold seven of the noblest oak trees in the county of Norfolk. He says: "What we want is to make it at least a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for the parson to touch the fabric of his church under any circumstances whatever, except with the consent and under the license of some external authority."

A CONSPICUOUS item among the, we presume God-sent, trials of a country parson is the modern curate. Dr. Jessopp

says: "Nowadays a young fellow at twenty-three, who has become a reverend gentleman for just a week, poses at once as the guide, philosopher and friend of the whole human race. He poses as a great teacher. It is not only that he delivers the oracles with authoritative sententiousness from the tripod, but he has no doubts and no hesitation about anything in heaven or on earth." Modern curates, Dr. Jessop assures us, never condescend to ask questions. "Inquire within upon everything" seems to be stamped upon every line of their placid faces. They don't yet cry out at me, 'Go up, thou bald head,' but I can't help suspecting that they're only waiting to do it sooner or later."

AFTER this *badinage*, Dr. Jessop continues: "It is a very serious fact, however, which we cannot think of without anxiety, that since the *Curate Market* rose, as it did some fifteen or twenty years ago, there has been a large incursion of young men into the ministry of the Church of England who are not gentlemen by birth, education, sentiment or manners, and who bring into the profession no *capital* of any sort—no capital, I mean, of money, brains, culture, enthusiasm, or force of character. This is bad enough, but there is worse behind it. These young curates almost invariably marry, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." What, however, can be expected from a profession in which a man has, as Carlyle said, to solemnly constitute himself an impostor at the threshold? No wonder that it is being left to the dull or dishonest, or that the best men in it take, like Dr. Jessop, to writing for the magazines.

THE *Rock* is disgusted at the official efforts made in France "to disestablish God from his own creation." It seems that the Paris Municipal Council have been removing the expressions of Christian belief from the school books. They have altered a passage in one of La Fontaine's fables which says, "The little fish will grow to full size if God but grant it life." "God" is now cut out, and the phrase reads "if *one* but grant it life." The *Rock* naturally thinks this correction thoroughly ridiculous. But the theological allusion is simply withdrawn, and the child is not biassed by instilling superstition into him in his earlier and more helpless years.

BISHOP WARREN, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, does not believe that the temperature of Sheol has decreased. He complains that there are some pastors who go at it in this style—"Brethren, you must repent as it were, and be converted in a measure, or you will be damned to some extent." We quite agree with the Bishop. As the old Scotch deacon said, "a kirk without a hell is 'na worth a damn."

THE secret of the opposition to Methodist Union came out pretty well during the discussion at the recent Wesleyan Conference at Manchester. It was admitted that there was "waste and friction" in the working of the various sections of the Methodist churches, but then the financial difficulties in the way of union were very great. The influx of 170 ministers of the new Connexion would be a serious burden, especially as while these ministers were quite ready to join the better paid Wesleyan Methodists, it was by no means certain that they would bring over the whole of their congregations with them.

SOME Yankee has invented a fire-proof paper made out of asbestos. We propose printing a few copies of the *Freethinker* on the new material for posting direct to his Satanic Majesty, as he is understood to take a great interest in our journal, and would probably like to keep it by him for reference.

THE rector of a parish in the valley of the Conway, North Wales, who pockets £150 a year of tithes, on mounting the pulpit on Sunday morning began to search his pockets as if in a quandary. "Well, brethren," he exclaimed, "I cannot proceed, for I forgot to bring my sermon, but I will tell you a little anecdote." Having done so, he dismissed the congregation with the benediction.—*Christian Commonwealth*.

A WRITER in the *Christian Commonwealth* notes that he has seen people reading sporting papers during the sermon, and he thinks such conduct shows an abominable contempt for minister, service and sanctuary. Probably the minister, service and sanctuary deserved the contempt. At any rate, the readers—probably worshippers under compulsion—saved themselves from the wretched tedium of a dull, pointless, and perhaps hypocritical sermon. Going to sleep, however, is of course the more orthodox remedy.

ACCORDING to the newspaper reports, Paddy's harvest, owing to the drought, is almost as bad as it can be. He can neither fodder his cattle nor sell them save at a loss. Yet the priest can always get up a scheme for diving into Paddy's pocket. The latest is a grand church to be built in honor of St. Patrick, and to be built not in Dublin, where the Protestants have St. Patrick's cathedral, but in Rome. Collections are being taken up. No doubt Paddy thinks all must go well with him if he looks after the National Saint. It is to be feared, however, that things never will go well with him until he has learnt to put saints and priests aside together.

THE *Padwah News* says: "The fact, if it be one, that W. H. Doane, of Cincinnati, makes 20,000 dollars a-year writing hymns, shows how much better it is to stay in this country than go out among the heathen of Timbuctoo, where they eat the missionary and his hymn-book too."

ALDERMAN BARKAS, of Newcastle, has been holding forth in the Cordwainer's Hall on the remarkable conversations he has had with some anonymous spirits. He gives a long rigmarole, which was written out by a medium at a séance in 1876, telling all about a future life and its various orders of society. Alderman Barkas gravely lays this stuff before a Tyneside audience as a well-attested revelation. We sincerely hope that the Cordwainers' Hall contained all the inhabitants of Newcastle who were ready to accept such preposterous stuff. It is a wonder the spirits don't invite Barkas to join them promptly in the happy land. Perhaps they are only waiting to hear that "Barkas is willing."

A MOB of fifty men waited upon the Rev. J. W. Henry, of Odessa, Missouri, on the 22nd, with the intention of riding him out of town on a rail. The clergyman met them with a shot-gun, and they retreated. The daughter of the leader of the mob had given birth to an illegitimate child, of which she claims the Rev. Mr. Henry is the cause.

WILLIAM B. OAKLEY, of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, has been found guilty of the crime of incest with his two daughters, Alfreda, aged seventeen, and Isadore, aged thirteen. The testimony showed that for several years past, when Alfreda refused to obey him her father would whip her with a strap and kick her. The girls did not dare to reveal their father's conduct, because he had threatened to kill them if they exposed him. Alfreda finally told the story in March last to her mother, and Oakley was soon after arrested. Two physicians testified that the girls had been terribly abused. Oakley, who is forty-five years old, carried his Bible into court with him every day. No doubt he was well up in the story of Lot, and perhaps was prepared to defend himself from the example of the Lord with Abolah and Aholibah.

THE hot weather does not seem favorable to clerical morality. The Rev. A. Palmer, of Preston, charged with accosting between twenty and thirty females in Manchester, escaped by the skin of his teeth, because none of the ladies appeared against him. The Rev. Jarvis Hopkins Brewster, has, however, received two years' imprisonment for his rape on Lucy Johnson, an attractive little girl of twelve.

"THE man who dared to reject the being of God," said a Brighton clergyman last Sunday,— "the man who could not perceive, in the well ordered laws of nature, the divine handiwork, and who sets himself up as what was known as a 'Freethinker'— was, as David put it, a fool, and his spiritual intellect was lower than the barbarian or savage." This is a specimen of the sweet reasonableness with which Atheists are met from the pulpit.

THE grain of fact which the Brighton clergyman has got hold of is one which hardly tells in his favor. The barbarian and savage does believe in a god just as he believes in magic and witchcraft. Like the savage king David he thinks all unbelievers must be fools. Scepticism only comes with thought and intelligence.

A NEW illustrated anti-Romanist journal, the *Christian News*, of Nottingham, offers a guinea prize to the one who best explains 1 Tim. iv., 3, "Forbidding to marry." Readers of the section on Monks, in *Crimes of Christianity*, will see that this doctrine naturally flowed from the ascetic spirit of early Christianity. Jesus commended those who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Paul said, "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I." All the fathers of the church esteemed virginity far above marriage and, according to the Hulsean Lectures of 1885, p. 66, "The Medieval Reformers insisted on celibacy as a duty and condemned marriage as little better, if any better, than fornication."

A CURIOUS pilgrimage to Holy Island is about to take place in celebration of the twelfth centenary of the death of St. Cuthbert. Many Roman Catholics and some enthusiastic High Churchmen will take part in it. The men and women who are to form the procession will have to tramp barefooted to the island, over three miles of wet sands. Occasionally they will have to wade almost knee deep in the sea.

LO BENGULA, king of a South African tribe, does not accept unqualifiedly the doctrines of Christianity. One day a missionary was preaching to a large crowd, among whom the king was an attentive listener. The white man remarked that all men were alike in the sight of God, who would listen as readily to the petition of the humblest man as to that of the greatest king. "That's a lie!" shouted the king at the top of his voice. Everything the king says is echoed by his loyal subjects, so everybody shouted, "That's a lie!" The missionary found it necessary to change the subject of his discourse.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, August 14, at 11.15, Bethnal Green Road (opposite the "Salmon and Ball"), "Is Christianity True?"
Evening, at 7.30, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, E.C.,
"Who Wrote the Bible?"

AUGUST 28, Edinburgh.

SEPT. 4, Glasgow; 11, Manchester; 18, Leeds; 25, Milton Hall.
OCT. 2, 9, and 30 London Hall of Science.

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.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—W. Schweizer, G. Randell, J. M. S.

A. H. HUNTER.—Always glad to receive cuttings. Shall be pleased to pay Nottingham another visit by-and-bye.

H. HISCOCK asks us to state that, in consequence of severe illness (which we much regret), Mr. J. Grout will not be able to lecture on Clerkenwell Green this morning (Aug. 14), but his place will be occupied by an efficient substitute. Our correspondent reports that since Mr. Foote's lecture on July 17 the branch has greatly improved; several new members have been enrolled, many old faces have re-appeared, and the audiences have been large and orderly.

JOHN SALT (Sunderland), has removed his Freethought depot from High Street to more convenient premises in St. Thomas Street, where he continues to supply all kinds of Secular literature.

J. RUTHERFORD.—The alderman is certainly a bit of a crank. Glad to hear you think the *Freethinker* improves with age.

E. T. GARNER.—Yes, Mr. Foote is at the Bethnal Green Branch's stand this morning (Aug. 14), and no doubt, as you say, "the scamps will cry small."

G. A. SAVILLE.—Hardly up to the mark. Versification requires a long apprenticeship.

J. BURRELL (Westminster Branch) reports a collection of £1 18s. 6d. for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund at Mr. Foote's open-air lecture last Sunday morning.

M. CLAY (Oldham).—Thanks for your good wishes. It is satisfying to learn that the *Freethinker* is such a centre of attraction in your Free Library.

W. FROUDE.—You may absolutely rely on every statement in *Crimes of Christianity*. Every reference in the multitudinous footnotes is first hand. The authors never trust to second-hand references. They do their own research as well as their own thinking; and so far as the work is carried they can fairly say that they have exhausted the best literature on the subject of their various chapters in a manner which has never before been attempted. The present volume comprises most of the chapters printed before the fire on our premises, but so much has been added, so much altered, and so much improved, that the previous publication is entirely superseded. The second volume of the work is in progress.

CASA BIANCA.—Glad to hear from such a veteran Freethinker and reformer as yourself, but sorry to learn that pious scoundrels have taken advantage of your helpless old age to rob you. If there be a hell, may they have a taste of it.

T. WELDHEN wishes to know, and thinks other Freethinkers would like to know, where to send read publications for distribution at open-air meetings. Till some arrangement can be made parcels can be sent to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street.

W. LLOYD.—You will find our "*Freethinker Tracts*" just the thing for distribution. They are all pungent and striking. Dull tracts are useless now-a-days.

A. H. B. writes: "Your correspondent W. N., is mistaken. The *Freethinker* can be obtained at Robbins', 244 Edgware Road, W. and W. Smith, 2a Chapel Street, W. Both shops are close to Edgware Road Station. The last named news-vendor told me he sold 200 copies a week."

H. C. mentions two other newsagents in the same district; Payne, 1 Peel Place, Silver Street, Notting Hill Gate, and Pitman, 1 Silver Street.

W. DODD (Newcastle).—Shall be pleased to hear from you when you have something to report. As a rule the clergy shirk discussion, and if you bring one up to the scratch you will achieve something like a miracle.

IN A FOG.—We never said or hinted that Thomas Paine was an Atheist. He was a Deist. He believed in a God, but rejected the Christian and all other revelations. Were Paine living now he would probably go further. Theological questions have altered since his time. His reasons for believing in a Deity are antiquated by the subsequent growth of science. What he will be remembered by is his attack on kingcraft and Christianity.

G. DOUGLAS (Nottingham).—What on earth has the germ-theory of disease to do with the Gadarean swine-story? Do you mean that germs are devils? And do you mean that Jesus cast germs out of the possessed into the pigs? Besides, what has the germ-theory to do with nervous disorders? You seem an instance of the truth of Pope's line that "A little learning is a dangerous thing." However, we appreciate the courtesy of your letter, although it is hard to reconcile with the heading of your tract.

W. MORTIMER.—Always pleased to hear from you, and glad you so appreciate our work.

HENRY NIXON, No. 117 Ward, Workhouse, Barton Regis, Eastwell, Bristol, who is "without a penny or a friend in the world," would be glad if some Freethinker would send him a copy of this journal sometimes and a few pamphlets that can be spared. We have sent him a small packet ourselves for a beginning.

G. MANCO.—The fellow is an invincible liar. Mr. Foote was married for the first time in his life—and it isn't an event that can be easily forgotten—in March 1877. There was an announcement in the *Secularist*. Mr. Foote's present wife is his second, his first having died in the year of her marriage. The discovery of another wife, before the first one, is worthy of the Christian Evidence folk. They were always good at invention. This is our last word on the subject. We have something better to do than advertise these vermin out of the gutter.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Australasian—Jus—Leicester Chronicle—Glad Tidings—Brighton Gazette and Sussex Telegraph—Cambria Daily Leader—Hope—Freidenker—La Semaine Anticléricale—Truth-seeker—Menschentum—Cheltenham Mercury.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was a splendid meeting at Pimlico Pier last Sunday morning. Mr. Foote spoke for an hour, and the audience got larger as he proceeded. After some courteous opposition the meeting broke up with cheers for the lecturer. An excellent collection was made for the Benevolent Fund. The Westminster Branch is increasing in strength every week, and hopes to carry on its work indoors during the winter. The committee includes some good men of business as well as earnest Freethinkers.

THE Christian Evidence lecturer had a very small audience, and the disparity between the two meetings seemed to infuriate him, for he indulged in the foulest abuse. With true Christian charity he said to a local Freethinker, "I know you, I've spotted you, and I'll let your employers know what you are." "Well," was the calm reply, "I've worked twenty-six years for my firm, and I don't think I can be injured by a skunk like you."

MR. FOOTE lectures this morning (Aug. 14), in the Bethnal Green Road, opposite the "Salmon and Ball." This place has been used almost constantly by Mr. Foote's slanderers, but now he is coming they are going off to another station, leaving the black preacher Edwards to stand in the breach. They are to be congratulated on their prudence.

EVERYTHING passed off quietly at Peckham Rye last Sunday afternoon. Freethinkers from several London Branches gathered round the platform, and the chapel-going rowdies sang small. The Christian Evidence Society announced that, as it had received so little support, its lectures on the Rye would be discontinued. Amen.

WE have to acknowledge the following subscriptions to the Open-Air Lecture Fund:—J. H. Whitham, 2s. 6d.; Casa Bianca, 5s.; T. Weldhen, 5s.; W. Mortimer, 5s.; H. C., 6d. R. O. Smith, the Treasurer, has also received the following: J. C. Swinburne-Hanham, £2; G. V. Ball, 7s. 6d.; H. Hiscock, 1s.; H. Hindley, 1s.

THE next meeting of the Open-Air Committee will be held at the Hall of Science on Monday, August 22, at 8.15 p.m. The September lists for the programme should be sent in to Mr. Standing by the 16th inst. if possible.

THE Report on the Examination in Scripture Knowledge at the London Board Schools has been published. The examiners hint that the teachers are not generally devoted to this part of their work. Backward children are, we are glad to notice, often placed apart to continue their secular studies while the others are taking their Bible lesson. The report supplies an amusing instance of the curious lessons derived by children from Bible stories. Among the answers to the question "What lesson may be drawn from the story of Herodias?" were the following:—"We should not give parties." "We should not dance." "Men should never marry widows." The best moral of the story of the princess who danced off the head of John the Baptist, was that of a little girl—"If we try hard we shall get what we want."

MR. A. B. MOSS, who is enjoying a holiday at Ramsgate, writes: "On Sunday I took my son for a sail in a yacht; five of them started at the same time, and they were all well filled. We had singing and dancing on board, and I asked a young lady whom I saw joining lustily in the chorus of a good secular song, whether she did not feel very wicked in acting in such a godless fashion on a Sunday, and she very sensibly replied that she did not think God would be angry with her for enjoying herself." What a change is taking place!

THE Manchester *Sunday Chronicle* indulges in a vein of profanity, and as we understand the proprietor is a professed Christian it is a reasonable inference that the Manchester people enjoy a fling at theology. Referring to the resolution of a branch of the clan-na-Gael calling upon God to kill the members of the British Government, the *S. C.* observes: "Really this is unreasonable. There are quite enough members of the clan to do their own killing without calling in a perfect stranger."

THE *Open Court*, of Chicago, edited by B. F. Underwood, is a high-class Freethought fortnightly, for which the enterprising editor has secured the contributions of some well-known authors. The number before us contains an article on "The Identity of Language and Thought," by Professor Max Müller, which is not

to be published in England. Moncure D. Conway continues his "Chats with a Chimpanzee," There is also an article on "The World's Sun and Savior," by R. A. Proctor, who says, "It is by no means certain that the races which embraced Christianity really gave up sun-worship, seeing that not only do all the days and seasons, with most of the observances of sun-worship, remain in Christian ceremonial, but the whole story of the sun is retained in two at least of the gospel records of the life of Christ."

A PROMINENT Mexican Freethinker writes that the Church in Mexico is fast declining in influence. "The men," he says, "are generally unbelievers, although they are counted as church members, because they do not take the trouble to explain their position. The strength of the church is with the women and ignorant. Attend the services and what do you see? Many men? No; nine out of ten worshippers are women. The fact is, there has been a very rapid spread of unbelief among the intelligent men of Mexico." Mexico seems to be very much like the rest of the world in religious matters.

THE *Freethinker* is now well patronised in the Oldham Free Library reading-room. There is quite a competition for it, and one of our young friends straightens it out when it gets rumbled. Of course the bigots are wroth. One of them, who conceals his identity under the pseudonym of Nemo, calls in the *Standard* for the removal of this blasphemous journal as likely to "sow the seeds of infidelity" in the readers' minds. We are glad to see he entertains this opinion, for that is precisely what we aim at doing.

UNDER the title *The Story of the Creation*, Mr. Edward Clodd has nearly ready for the press a popular *resumé* of the theory of evolution.

TALMAGE ON "THE TWO BIRDS."

TALMAGE has been preaching with gusto on an absurd and disgusting ceremony practised under the Mosaic law for the cleansing of human beings from leprosy (Lev. xiv., 1-7), and of houses from the "plague of leprosy" (Lev. xiv., 39-53). Two birds were to be taken, and the priest was to have one of them killed over running water. The priest was then to take the living bird and dip it in the blood of the bird that was killed. Hyssop and cedar and scarlet were also to be dipped in the blood at the same time. The priest then sprinkled the leper with the blood seven times and pronounced him clean, after which the living bird was set free. If the plague had got into the stones of a house, the priest similarly sprinkled the house with blood seven times and so cleansed it.

Talmage has nothing to say against this senseless and revolting custom. The medical science of the Bible must be defended as the glorious teachings of the Most High. A filthy and childish superstition worthy only of the witches in Macbeth or the savages of Dahomey, is put before a fashionable audience in the nineteenth century as a beautiful and instructive device of the Great Being who is to be worshipped as supreme in power and perfect in all his ways. Sprinkling a man or woman with blood is held to be an excellent method of treatment if the blood is only obtained from a bird held over some gutter or brook or river, while it has its throat cut by a reverend minister of God!

The sermon on "The Two Birds" commences thus:

"The Old Testament, to a great many people, is a great slaughter-house, strewn with the blood and bones and horns and hoofs of butchered animals. It offends their sight. It disgusts their tastes. It actually nauseates the stomach. But to the intelligent Christian the Old Testament is a magnificent corridor, through which Jesus advances."

A magnificent corridor of blood and bones! A magnificent slaughter-house full of disgusting filth and repulsive horrors! Such indeed is the fitting introduction to a religion of blood and fire, a religion in which the Father of All dooms his children to eter hell, and only saves a few on condition of shedding his own Son's blood as a substitute for the vengeance foregone. It is not at all surprising that the religion of the Bible, with its hideous catacomb of skulls and offal, should culminate in the far more fearful insult to humanity of everlasting torture, varied only by the bloody redemption of a favored few. The religion of Dahomey may skulk away thus thoroughly cowed and beaten by the vaster enormities of the conquering creed.

But my subject for the present is not magnificent corridors of human skulls, or animals' bones, nor the massacres of men or animals for blood wherein to daub a king's palace, or soothe a deity's wrath. I must confine myself to one

of the milder and pettier *gree-grees* of the barbaric Bible we have inherited from the past.

Talmage greatly admires this holy *gree-gree*, though he does not venture to recommend it to his congregation as a practical measure of sanitation or incantation. His defence of the silly ceremony is a command to "open your eyes wide, and see that the first bird meant Jesus; and that the second bird means your own soul." Under cover of this supposed analogy or type he shirks the whole question of the efficacy and reasonableness of the divine method of curing disease.

The analogy between Jesus and the dead bird is that he came from the sky and that the feathered victim of superstition was a "clean bird"—Jesus being also a clean man. So pure and holy was Jesus that Talmage says: "Although he spent his boyhood in the worst village on earth, although blasphemies were poured into his ear enough to have poisoned anyone else, he stands before the world a perfect Christ." When this Christian preacher describes Nazareth as the worst village on earth and talks glibly of the incredibly poisonous blasphemies poured into Christ's ears during his boyhood, he is guilty of shameless fabrication of facts to suit his purpose. That Christ is perfect is of course a stock assertion of Christian orators, who are usually as good at ignoring facts on the one hand as they are at inventing them on the other. Talmage, not to be outdone, caps the perfection with the assertion that "The sceptical tailors have tried to find out, for eighteen hundred years, one hole in the seamless garment; but they have not found it. Christ is absolutely perfect." Insulting his mother, blasting a fig-tree in a fit of bad temper, cursing the priests of the religion he professed, scourging money-changers, and scores of similarly vindictive or unreasonable actions, were only feathers in the cap of his perfection. They would be faults or follies in other men, but in Christ they are only stars of perfection shining in all their radiant splendor amidst a world of darkness and depravity. Of course it is so; for where religion begins reason ends.

The second bird is the "soul plunged for cleansing in the Savior's blood." But the bird was not cleansed by the blood; it was defiled: but we must not spoil the analogy by examination of details. Talmage then shows the supposed necessity for blood. He says: "There is not enough water in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to wash away our smallest sin. Sin is such an outrage on God's universe that nothing but blood can atone for it." But why on earth is blood any better than water for washing away a fault or a crime? Physically the notion is as idiotic as figuratively it is contrary to analogy and common sense. Blood is the result of crime, and its sign manual. To be deeply dyed in blood is the figurative expression for murderous criminality. How can the blood of a man or a goat atone for sin, or wash away a past offence?

Talmage holds that blood is perfectly efficacious for such totally irrelevant purposes, because "You know the life is in the blood, and as the life had been forfeited, nothing could buy it back but blood." This idea he proceeds to confirm by biblical instances, such as that of sprinkling the door-posts with blood to keep away the destroying angel, the blood that streamed from the propitiatory altars, the blood of Christ, and so forth; and he says "we must be washed in the blood of Christ or go polluted for ever."

After this, I will quote only one further remark of Talmage's: "There is no straight jacket in our religion." My comment upon this is that there most certainly ought to be.

W. P. BALL.

WILL OUR SOULS REACH HEAVEN?

THIS is a subject upon which an extraordinary large amount of wrangling, preaching, praying, sermonising and argument has been expended. Not only have the intellectual faculties been brought into operation, but physical force has also played its part, as history shows us. Much time has been wasted for a few thousand years, in settling whether our souls—admitting for the sake of argument that each member of the human family is the possessor of one soul—will ever get to the land where flows milk and honey, viz., heaven. Yet we are no nearer solving this vexing problem than we were at the commencement of the Christian era.

Now I am inclined to believe that a "soul" will stand but a poor chance of ever reaching heaven; and I herewith give the reason for my scepticism.

Colonel R. Ingersoll is reported as saying that ninety-nine out of every hundred Christian souls will go to hell, and the hundredth stands but a poor chance of squeezing through the pearly gates of Paradise. "Pagan Bob" may be right, but still I am inclined to differ from him. Having worked out the following problem, I am

led to believe that the chances of admission to the celestial regions are still less than "Bob's" estimate.

Take, as an example, the soul of a leather-lunged, square-mouthed Salvationist of the male gender. It (?) finds its room is somewhat cramped in its abode of clay—as the Bible-bangers call our physical frame—and is desirous of changing its compartments, and severing all further connections with this afore-mentioned member of the "Army." It leaves his body without even so much as asking permission for leave of absence, which so astonishes him, that it takes away his breath, so to speak—and I may add, his body is never regained. Finding itself quite free, it thinks it is best to start for heaven as soon as possible. Having come to this conclusion, it is on the point of doing so, when it is appalled by the thought that it will not find its proper destination, as it has never before been "sky-touring." After having argued with itself for some time, it at last decides to follow General Gordon's example. It takes a penny out of its pocket, and tosses which road it should follow; the result being in favor of the "Milky Way." But this proceeding may in all probability, lead it astray, considering the various roads which lead through space. Let me use a betting term and say that it's ten to one the choice has fallen on the wrong track. Consider it started on its way through the sky. It has other difficulties to surmount if it wishes to twang harps and wave palms of victory. If the "soul" is a part of the Holy Ghost, or a "breath," or a yet undiscovered chemical compound, it will be liable to friction if it travels at the same rate as does the telegraphic spark, or it will freeze and turn to ice if it thinks it will take a reasonable time over its journey. I consider it will be ten to one that it either sets itself on fire or turns to an icicle. This latterly-considered circumstance taken as ten to one, and ten to one on its losing its way, will be a hundred to one that it *will not* reach heaven. Ten times ten. But its chances are still further decreased if the following is taken into account. Considering the many obstacles which will be liable to hinder this soul on its celestial journey, such as suns, moons, stars, meteors, comets, and even shooting stars, will it not be possible that a collision might ensue between them and the soul, or might not the attraction of one of these bodies be too much for this soul? Might not a comet attract it, and draw it to itself, thus forming a part of the comet? In all probability, yes! Therefore taking these circumstances into consideration, it will not be too much if I say that it is twenty to one that such an accident might happen and hinder the soul's journey to heaven. Third count, twenty times one hundred (the hundred before mentioned); result two thousand chances to one, that the Salvationist's soul does not reach heaven. But that's not all. The soul has still a slighter chance when we consider the following verse: "But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost will never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the next." Although this soul has acted up to the Christian principles as nearly as possible, yet it will be uncertain whether it has blasphemed the Holy Ghost unwittingly. This uncertainty reduces its chances by ten to one of ever being able to shout "Hallelujah" in the celestial regions. Fourth count, ten times two thousand, result twenty thousand chances to one that heaven will not be open to him, or rather "it." But that's not quite all yet. When the soul meets and passes many other souls—souls of murderers, vagabonds, idiots, sky-pilots, and others of the same stamp—all journeying to heaven, and big intellectual giants like Thomas Paine, Dickens, Giordano Bruno, and Gambetta, still on their road to Shoel, it will certainly be a hundred to one that it will retrace its steps and follow these Freethinkers. Fifth count, one hundred times twenty thousand; result, two million chances to one that the soul does not reach heaven. In fact, it is hardly worth trying for, when one has such long odds against him. Better go to Shoel straight off, or keep within the wake of the before-mentioned pioneers of progress, and think that if they will ultimately go to hell, then we'll go too.

G. E. C. NAEWIGER.

THE WRETCHED STOCK-IN-TRADE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

I was induced to visit an out-door station of the Secular party to hear Mr. Foote lecture—but his audience being so large, compelled me either to be part of the fringe of his listeners, or go over to the opposition. The last was chosen. A sweet sample of 19th century Christianity, under the auspices of the Christian Evidence Society, was holding forth; his discourse consisted mostly in vilification of the great and noble Freethinkers of the past, and vituperation of those now living. He wound up his peroration with a sentence methought I had heard before, viz.: "And arguments drawn from these men is the wretched stock-in-trade of the Sceptic." This set me musing and made me very angry to think of this midget's affront, and at last I thought, "What is the stock-in-trade of Christians?"—a wretched stock indeed, I mused I—a God debauching a maiden betrothed to a simple but honest carpenter—the shrinking of this God to babyhood—offensively minute particulars of the birth of the third part of this God—this portion of deity wandering about working absurd and ludicrous miracles—driving devils out of men and locating them in marketable pork—raising from the dead bodies that have become like unto venison, for no purpose it seems, but that the individual may have a double dose of dying—cursing fig-trees—getting Mr. Iscariot to sell him to justice for about thirty shillings, although this ridiculous God know when he created Mr. Iscariot he would act in this manner—finally getting himself crucified to satisfy his own egotism and mollify the other two parts of himself—ascension of this deity into space, hoping to reach his home in heaven, little knowing the distance of the nearest fixed star and the infinite space beyond. I find the further stock-in-trade as related by the slack-baked writer in Revelation, consists of Lambs with seven eyes and horns, black suns, blood-red moons, and stars that fall to the earth, no doubt being swept up in some fair lady's dust-pan; angels that stand on the four corners of a globular earth; keys to unlock pits without bottoms, etc.; but the best of all the stock-in-trade of a Christian is the shameful hell he has created to frighten little children, and which the black army use with such telling effect to draw money from weak humanity, promising their dupes a front seat with balcony so they may loll over the edge

of heaven and witness the eternal tortures of those unfortunate persons who have either laughed at a priest or who haven't been baptised. The calm audacity of this Christian Evidence charlatan in ignoring his own wretched stock would be sublime, if sublimity ever dwelt in a Christian Evidence Society's lecturer. If instead of mouthing great and noble names he published a list of his own wares, then poor ignorant humanity would be made acquainted with the stock-in-trade of a Christian.

A.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THOMAS PAINE AND HIS DETRACTORS. TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Dear Sir,—It seems to be the special delight of some of our Christian friends to slander and vilify the characters of those who cannot conform to the popular superstition, or, at all events to the outward profession of it. Among all the great men of the past, none, I think, have been more shamefully slandered and calumniated than Thomas Paine, that pure-minded statesman, patriot and philanthropist, who said, "The world is my country, mankind are my brethren, and to do good my religion." And why? Because he had a mind which was too great, too noble, and too free, to be imprisoned within the narrow and selfish creed of any church, and because he stood up and pleaded the cause of the people, and exposed and condemned the shams and devices of both priests and kings, by which the people were deluded and oppressed. But my principal reason for writing is to lay before your readers the testimony of a gentleman who was a personal friend of Thomas Paine. About 37 years ago I had a very nice neighbor and friend in the person of a Mr. Venables, a gentleman 80 years of age, who resided next door but one to me in Regent Road, Salford. I was then 36 years of age, and my mind had just begun to get troubled with some doubts on religious matters. One Sunday a religious tract was left at my house, giving a horrifying account of Thomas Paine's death, stating among other things that he died drunk in a ditch. A day or two afterwards I was speaking with Mr. Venables, and I told him about the tract which I had been reading. The old man placed his hand upon my shoulder and, in a very earnest and impressive manner, spoke as follows: "My good lad, what thou hast been reading is nothing but a parcel of lies. Don't believe a word of it. I knew Thomas Paine intimately for many years and was a neighbor of his, and was personally acquainted with him up to the time of his death. I will tell thee, lad, how Thomas Paine died. About three years before his death he fell into a gentle consumption, and during the last six months of his life he was confined to his bed. He was no drunkard, my lad. No. He did not die drunk, nor in a ditch. He died in his bed, and he died beloved and respected by all who knew him." This is the testimony of one who could not be biased in favor of Paine, for he was a Wesleyan Methodist of forty years' standing. A strong sense of duty and respect for the memory of a great and much-abused man induces me to trouble you with this letter, and I hope it may meet the eye of the Manchester Quaker who lately went out of his way to slander the character of this great benefactor of the people. In conclusion, I would like to make a simple suggestion to anyone who wishes to know the truth about Thomas Paine's character, and that is to read and study his life and works.—I remain, yours truly,

SAMUEL STELLARS.

1 Factory Lane, Salford, Manchester.

PROFANE JOKES.

"WAKE up, George," said a man to his slumbering friend in a theatre; "you are not in church."

The only fruit crop that did not prove a success in the Garden of Eden: The early "pear" (pair).

A wise man has just rushed into print to declare that Jonah was swallowed by an earthquake. Oh! yes; that's reasonable enough; instead of a fish, it was a fissure!

THE Jews of Berlin have been made happy by the decision of a learned Rabbi that oysters are not fish, but plants, and may be eaten, although the law of Moses prohibits the eating of fish without scales.

CURATE (to old man who is beating his donkey), "Fie, fie, my good friend, do you know what happened to Balaam once?" Old Man, "Ees, sure, zur—the same as has just happened to me, zur—a ass spoke to him."

THE twins were saying their prayers, and the one who got through first pinched the other, whereon said the other, "Please, O Lord, excuse me for a minute while I pinch my sister back," which she did, and then resumed divine service.

A NEGRO woman, a cook, was relating her experience to a gaping congregation of her own color; among other things she said she had been in heaven. One of the brethren asked her: "Sister, you see any black folks in heaven?" She replied, "O, go away, Jim, you fool—don't put a body out—do you s'pose I go into de kitchen when I was dero?"

SCIENCE AND RELIGION.—"The only laws that we know," said Richard Fullerton, "are those which we are slowly finding out for ourselves in the positive sciences, and that educated, and still to be educated, sense of justice, equity, and respect for humanity, which we embody in codes, and call concretely conscience. It is childish to talk of a devil who tempts us to do evil—humiliating to common sense and manhood to fear eternal punishment if we have done evil—and what grosser superstition has the world ever seen than the Christian doctrine of God incarnate in man that we might all have a better chance of heaven?—a better chance, mind you; not a certainty—and the whole universe disturbed that we might be less unfairly handicapped?—Mrs. Linton's *Under Which Lord?*"

JUST PUBLISHED.

CRIMES OF CHRISTIANITY.

VOL. I.

By G. W. FOOTE and J. M. WHEELER.

ENTIRELY NEW EDITION.

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PROGRESS

THE
Freethinker's Magazine.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

The AUGUST Number contains

- Letourneau on Religion and Morality. By G. W. Foote.
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