

THE FREETHINKER

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

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BIBLE SWALLOWING.

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.—REV. x., 10.

PIOUS OPINIONS.

WAS it not the late Lord Iddesleigh, formerly Sir Stafford Northcote, who originated this phrase? Certain opinions, whether true or false, are pious; that is they tend to edification, or to the glory of God. The extreme form of this theory manifested itself in the pious forgeries and frauds of the Church, which are dealt with fully in the *Crimes of Christianity*, and constitute a miserable spectacle to anyone who wishes to preserve a respect for his kind. Milder forms still abound. It is a pious opinion, although there is no evidence to support it, that every leading Freethinker is a scoundrel. It is a pious opinion, although twenty-four hours' study would correct it, that Freethinkers are afraid to die. It is a pious opinion that swearing is an excellent thing in our courts of law, though perjury is rife. It is a pious opinion that belief in future rewards and punishments is conducive to morality, though our gaols are filled with ladies and gentlemen of that persuasion. It is a pious opinion that while scholars and rich people may dabble safely with scepticism, it is a terrible thing for the less educated and poorer classes. Lastly it is a pious opinion, in certain circles, that although religion is played out it will never do to say so, at least in public.

Recently, in writing the life of Moses for my *Bible Heroes*, I have been struck with the taste for pious opinions

entertained by the Jewish historian Josephus. He is a very fair-spoken gentleman, he has an air of extreme candor, and unless you scrutinise him closely you might (I only say *might*) be tempted to agree with Scaliger and Whiston who celebrate his honesty and accuracy, and place him for these virtues above the great Greek and Roman historians. But when you follow him point by point, as I have been obliged to, you perceive his exquisite artfulness. Personally he had nothing to gain by distortion or concealment, but he was a pious Jew with a reverence for pious opinions; and what opinion could be more pious than this, that God's chosen people were the cream of the earth, and God himself (that is, *their* God) the pink of excellence. If accepted history often proved the reverse, so much the worse for accepted history. Josephus wrote in Greek for Gentile readers; he was therefore under no necessity to discuss awkward passages in the Hebrew scriptures; he was able to pass them over in silence as though they did not exist, and that is the method he adopted. According to the Bible, Moses fled from Egypt because he was "wanted" by the police for murder. Josephus says nothing about this little incident, but insinuates that the Egyptians hated him for his superior virtues and made it unsafe for him to remain. When Moses was on his way back to Egypt to bring the Jews out of bondage, God met him at an inn, or, according to the Revised Version, a lodging-house, and sought to kill him. Here again Josephus is discreetly silent. Coming to

the Sinai story he makes Moses ascend the mountain but once. Why? Because if he had made him ascend twice, he would have had to give an explanation, and this would have obliged him to introduce the golden calf, which he piously wished to forget as derogatory to the Jewish character.

Pious opinions prevailed also among the Rabbis. Puerile as was their credulity, senile as was their garrulity, they had a remarkable vein of cunning. Let a couple of instances suffice. They say that at the birth of Moses the Lord was afflicting Egypt with intense heat, which caused the people to break out into boils. Even Pharaoh's daughter was not spared; and one day she escaped from the palace, where she usually bathed, and performed her ablutions in the Nile, hoping to derive benefit from its sacred waters. Now this looks like spontaneous fiction. But it is deliberate. Their object was to explain why the daughter of a mighty king came to bathe in the river so publicly that she could be watched by a Hebrew slave. Further they relate that this princess was married, but had no children. She fancied little Moses, and feigning pregnancy, she went through a fictitious confinement, and presented Moses as her own child. Intention again! By this time Egypt was better known; the system of caste was understood; it was seen that Pharaoh's daughter could not *adopt* a child; and therefore she is made to deceive her father, to give Moses a chance of getting into high position without a gross historical blunder.

This article is not meant to be a set disquisition. I shall therefore be pardoned for leaving Josephus and the Rabbis, and referring to Henry Varley. This gentleman is at his old game, sending private circulars to members of Parliament. He sent them during the Bradlaugh struggle, foully libelling the junior member for Northampton; he sent them before the prosecution of the *Freethinker*, urging the authorities to suppress "these shameless blasphemers." Now he is sending circulars about West-end prostitutes, whom he hates with a perfect hatred; and he induces that old-womanish member, Mr. S. Smith, to mention the circular in a question to the Home Secretary. Varley lives by this kind of self-advertising, and he is doubtless congratulating himself on an excellent stroke of business. The first pious opinion of this self-conscious evangelist is that he is a great man. Against the London Pavilion and the Criterion, he says, "I direct my full blast of righteous and manly indignation." What a vanity-puffed creature, to call *himself* righteous and manly! Many a poor, degraded prostitute is a less repulsive character after all. His second pious opinion is that he is commissioned by God, like Jonah, and that London is his Nineveh. His mind constantly dwells on sexual sins; they haunt him like a nightmare. He hardly sleeps for thinking of the doings of naughty men and women. He tells the male sex, in his lectures "for men only," that he had his sling in his younger days, but now he is older and cooler he wishes the law to prevent others from having *their* sling. We believe in profligacy as little as he does; but we know that nothing but mental cultivation will diminish it. Varley shrieks at it, raves at it, foams at it, especially when he sees it massed on what he delicately calls "a flesh market." He never reflects that God gave these traffickers in vice their superabundance of animality. He is probably ignorant that Christian laws have tried to stop illicit sexual intercourse ever since Constantine, with a ludicrous want of success. He goes to music halls, finds they don't put revival hymns on the programme, and rails at them in robustious Billingsgate. But all is useless. The world *will* go on its way, and improvement slowly follows the wake of education. So Varley shrieks madlier than ever. He screams for "a beneficent earthquake" to swallow Regent Street and the Haymarket, he begs the Lord to serve London as he served Sodom and Herculaneum. Poor fellow! He is far gone, and unless his friends, if he has any, restrain his intemperance, his pious opinions may lead him into a strait waistcoat.

G. W. FOOTE.

AN EVER-PRESENT HELP.—"An infidel doesn't believe in an oath sworn on the Bible, does he?" asked Mrs. Pentweazel. "No," snapped out old Pentweazel, without looking up from his paper. "Well," persisted his better half, "if that's the case, what does a man like Ingersoll say when he is obliged to take an oath?" "S'help me Bob, I suppose," chuckled the old man.

MR. R. A. PROCTOR ON CHRISTIANITY.

MR. RICHARD ANTHONY PROCTOR, who has done so much to popularise astronomy in England, intends, we understand, to become an American citizen. Although he still edits *Knowledge*, that paper will become as much an American as an English one. He himself having married an American lady, the niece of General Jefferson Thompson, of Virginia, is building a residence at Orange Lake, Florida, the centre of the orange growing district of that state, to there study the galaxy of star suns surrounded by a galaxy of orange groves.

But although lost to English audiences as a popular scientific lecturer, Mr. Proctor is by no means lost to the cause of science and Freethought. That he was a Freethinker was well known to those who read his items many years ago in the *English Mechanic*. Since his sojourn in the land of his adoption Mr. Proctor, whether from the direction of his studies or from having less of the fear of Mrs. Grundy before his eyes, has shown himself more radically Freethought than ever. To his article on "The Beginning of Christianity," in the January number of *Knowledge*, I have already drawn attention.¹ In the August number of the *Freethinkers' Magazine* of Buffalo, New York, and in *The Open Court* of Chicago for July 21st, he contributes two more articles, which are of sufficient importance to warrant my directing attention to them.

In the first-named paper, which is on "The Gospel Life of Jesus," he states that there are two features in the gospel narratives which are not usually noticed in "Lives of Jesus." The first is that every detail of the sun-myth is worked into the record of the life of the Galilean teacher; the second is the still more striking circumstance that, with scarcely a single exception, all the events recorded in the gospels which are not manifestly borrowed from the story of the Sun as god of the year, bear a suspicious resemblance to events related by Josephus. Speaking generally, it may be said that all the supernatural events belong to the former category, all the natural events to the latter.

In his article in the *Freethinkers' Magazine* Mr. Proctor points to several of these coincidences with Josephus. He alludes to the notorious forgery which makes a Jew admit that Jesus was the Messiah; the similarity of the doctrines of the Essenes to those ascribed to Jesus, and the account of the Jesus who some six years before the destruction of Jerusalem went about crying "Woe to Jerusalem," which Mr. George Solomon, in his *Jesus of History*, contends was the original of the Christian legend. Other instances are given by Mr. Proctor, and what gives them force is the palpable evidence that the first gospel was written after the time of Josephus. That writer, in his *Wars of the Jews* (iv., 4), tells how the pious Zacharias, son of Barach, was slain in the middle of the Temple in the time of the siege of Jerusalem (more than thirty years after the alleged crucifixion of Jesus). Yet the writer of the gospel according to Matthew makes Jesus declare that the Jews of his generation shall suffer for "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the altar."

In his article in *The Open Court* Mr. Proctor deals with the other aspect under the title "The World's Sun and Savior." Alluding to Renan's statement that had not the religion of Christ become dominant, the religion of Mithras, which unquestionably was sun-worship, would now be the worship prevalent throughout the world, Mr. Proctor says:

"In fact, it might be suggested, without any violent improbability, that the struggle between the religion of Christ and the religion of Mithras, considered by Renan, was only one form of sun-worship prevailing over another, the worship of Serapis overcoming the worship of Mithras. There is a passage in a letter of the Emperor Hadrian—not so often quoted as the very doubtful testimony of Tacitus, but much more significant, and having the advantage of being certainly genuine—in which he specially states that the Christians, as he had known them in Egypt, were worshippers of Serapis, the sun-god, and that their chief priests were known as bishops of Christ."

Just as the compilers of the gospels mixed up with the account of one Jesus events which in Josephus really

¹ See *Freethinker*, Jan. 23.

belonged to the history of other men (most of them also named Jesus), so they thought it necessary that all the remarkable signs, tokens, and events belonging in the ancient solar religions to the successive sun-gods, should appear also in the history of the Son of God—he must restore the dead to life, heal the sick, turn water into wine, still the tempest, die, descend into the under-world, and rise again. The festivals kept by the Christian Church, as Mr. Proctor does not fail to point out, are all astronomical ones, and serve to indicate that Christianity is but a patchwork of Paganism and Judaism.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

HAD we been God Almighty we would have prevented that horrible railway accident in America. The poor fellow who, with broken legs, crawled to the side of his dead wife and child, blew his own brains out with a revolver, and shared their fate, had an infinitely better heart than any deity who saw that doomed train speeding on to destruction without lifting a finger to save its nine hundred passengers. According to the Bible, God "spake to the fish" that swallowed Jonah, and told it to vomit him upon dry land. Why did he not speak to the driver of that train, and warn him of the burning bridge?

REPORT says that the bridge was set on fire by a gang of thieves, who plundered the dead and the dying. Talk about savages burning the world to boil their eggs, is not this a parallel cause among civilised Christians? That such a devilish (we beg the Devil's pardon) deed could be wrought after eighteen centuries of a creed which two-thirds of the Trinity came from heaven to establish, is a singular commentary on the pretensions of "the one true faith."

DURING the night God sent "torrents of rain" upon the poor wounded and dying people lying around in the corn-fields. Why did he not send these torrents a few hours earlier and put out the fire that burnt the bridge? Was it because he was anxious to wreck the train and torment the sufferers?

THE drought which God sends us is causing widespread mischief and inconvenience. Various works are being stopped for want of water. In North Wales 4,000 quarrymen are thus rendered idle and wageless. At Swansea 1,000 workmen are dismissed for the same reason.

A FIRE having broke out at Scutari, Constantinople, God sent a strong wind to fan it. His efforts were so successful that over a thousand buildings, including some of his own churches and mosques, were speedily reduced to ashes. Five thousand people are homeless. A number of people perished in the flames.

GOD also visited India in the shape of cholera, and so during the months of June and July killed 70,000 persons in the North West provinces, being one per cent. of the population. Malta and the towns of Southern Italy are also suffering greatly from the divine mercy in the form of cholera.

ACCORDING to the *Dispatch*, the queer old mother of Edward Langworthy, the South American millionaire, who has figured so disgracefully in the recent *cause célèbre*, has given £4,000 to the South American Missionary Society. The old lady stuck to her son through thick and thin, and did her level best to defeat the claim of the girl he had deserted and left to starve with his child; and during the legal proceedings she made a number of affidavits which all the judges declined to believe. Now, she gives £4,000 to convert some of the heathen to her own noble and truth-inspiring creed.

AN Islington lady has left by her will £50 to each of six curates whose incomes are less than £100, and who have four children each. Mr. Justice Chitty has given the executors twelve months to discover the six needy curates. Surely six months would have sufficed. All the impecunious curates who have now only three children will be having four or more before the twelve months are expired, and the disappointment among the unsuccessful applicants for the legacy will be greatly multiplied.

Mr. H. M. N. CUMMING writes to the *Western Morning News* urging the necessity of religious education. "Rather," he says of the children, "let them go to heaven without a knowledge of the alphabet than risk the loss of heaven for the sake of that which satisfieth not. Better for the welfare of our country that its population should remain ignorant than be learned without the knowledge and inculcation of Divine truth." Mr. Cumming is a refreshing example of the genuine old pious school. He would doubtless agree with the Methodist preacher who demanded, if a little learning was a dangerous thing, what must a great deal be? Evidently he is not the coming man.

Two monks have been arrested in Greece in connection with a number of incendiary fires near the Pentelicus Monastery in Attica.

THE Rev. T. H. Griffinhoofe, vicar of Great Chishall, used to put his wife out of the room by force, and once threatened to knock her brains out with a pickaxe. She has now obtained a judicial separation on the ground of his cruelty. Both were bad tempered, and he was often violent. The cat-and-dog life they led must have been a model of Christianity in practice to the parishioners.

THE attempts of the Church of England clergy to recruit in village districts among the Methodists was much resented at the Wesleyan Conference by the Rev. Ebenezer Jenkins. Ebenezer said it was high time it should be widely known that the Wesleyan Methodist was no longer a transition society, but a permanent church. The remarks of Ebenezer Jenkins were received with approval by the conference.

EX-GOVERNOR GILPIN, of Colorado, who has raised an action for divorce against his wife, seems to have enjoyed some rather lively matrimonial experiences. Mrs. Gilpin, it appears, was in the habit of demanding from him sums of a thousand dollars at a time, for the purpose of taking mysterious trips to California and elsewhere, and when he demurred, of attempting his life with hammers, table-knives, and other lethal weapons. What he considered "the most cruel treatment" was, however, "the compulsory infliction of prayer meetings in his own household, where his wife and children prayed heartily and aloud for his 'removal.'"

Two more saints in trouble. James and Percy Harvey, father and son, have been charged at Bishop Stortford Police-court, with fraudulent bankruptcy. The elder defendant was deacon of the Congregational Church, and the younger one a treasurer of the Salvation Army. How the Lord's people are persecuted.

No wonder the Wesleyans object to amalgamating with the Primitives and New Connexion. The *Methodist Times* roundly declares there are far too many sky-pilots in the Methodist business already. It says: "There is no way of averting connexional bankruptcy except by keeping down the number of accepted candidates for the ministry," and that "If we are captivated by the Romish prejudice in favor of ordained ministers, then we must have the courage of our convictions, and accept the conclusion to which long experience brought the Church of Rome—We must enforce the celibacy of the clergy." Only fancy the Wesleyan ministers, with their house-to-house visitation and change of districts every three years, being vowed to celibacy! It raises a more appalling picture than was presented by the visitation of the monasteries and nunneries in the time of Henry VIII.

THOMAS PAYNE, of Coventry, has murdered his sister-in-law, Charlotte Taylor. Both were members of the Salvation Army. The deceased had made the acquaintance of an "officer" in the "Army" named Dye, and the prisoner wished her to break off the friendship and to "give her heart to God and not to man." He threatened her for attending the services where the two met, and also sent threatening letters to Dye. On the 31st ult. he used violence to the deceased and tore her bonnet from her head. On the day before the murder Payne sat in his room all day writing, with the assistance of a Bible and a dictionary. At night he posted a letter to "General" Booth, and on the following morning he told his wife to take a good breakfast, for it would be the last time they would all be together. He then took up a table-knife, and, going up to the deceased from behind, seized her by the hair, and drawing back her head, attempted to cut her throat. She struggled and took hold of the weapon with her left hand, but a number of slight cuts were inflicted on her face and neck. The prisoner then wrenched the knife violently through her hand, and cut it so badly that it became powerless, afterwards drawing the knife across her throat, killing her almost instantly. His wife while passing downstairs heard a stifled moan in the room, and called her sister, but the prisoner replied, "She will not answer; she is dead. I have murdered her, and there's an end of it." The prisoner followed his wife to the police-station, and admitted the charge of murder.

A CORRESPONDENT in the *Rock* says: "Of all wicked people, those men called 'preachers of the Gospel' who are assisting the movement for the Sunday opening of the museums are the most wicked. They are hypocrites, and traitors to the cause they profess to serve. . . . They are 'false prophets which come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.'" This is a charitable view to take of men who merely wish to allow people to see pictures and scientific specimens on their one day of leisure.

THE arguments of this Sabbatarian correspondent come back upon himself, with crushing effect. He says that these preachers are "full of hypocrisy and iniquity" because they are teaching man the fourth commandment is not binding on Christians. They are teaching men to disobey God, he says. But so is he. He is teaching men not to keep the seventh day holy, for the

seventh day is Saturday, and he has no right to alter God's command. He does not keep holy "the day appointed by God." He is also by example and precept teaching men not to stone people to death for Sabbath-breaking, and so is teaching them to disobey God in more ways than one. Are we to conclude in his own kind brotherly way copied from the meek and loving Jesus, that he is a ravening wolf, a whited sepulchre, a traitor full of hypocrisy and iniquity?

DR. ULLATHORNE, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Birmingham, is in his eighty-second year, and on account of his age and infirmities the Pope has released him from his duties and appointed his successor. This is reported in the papers, but of what importance is it? The only Roman Catholic worthy of much notice in Birmingham is Cardinal Newman, a scholar, a man of genius, and a saint. We would take off our hat to him any day, although we hate his creed and do our best to destroy it.

BISHOP ULLATHORNE believes in prayer. Why then does he not pray for strength and trust in God? Instead of this he gives in at eighty-two, just at the age when Moses began his career as leader of the Jews. After all, bishops are just like the rest of us. They wear a different stamp, but 'tis the same old human metal inside.

THE Rev. Dr. Cox, who for some years has been vicar-in-charge of the united parishes of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, and St. Martin's, Outwich, retires on a pension of £400 a year. Evidently "blessed be ye poor" is a paying game.

AT the Middlesborough Police-court, the Rev. John Hammond, clerk in holy orders, is committed for trial on a charge of stealing a gold watch and chain from the house of Mrs. Armitage, the said house being described as one of ill-fame.

ANOTHER "Peculiar," whose peculiarity lay in not only believing, but following the Bible, has been sent to prison. James Rush, of Steple, Essex, had a child afflicted with measles. He obeyed the directions of the Lord as appointed in the Epistle of James, which admonishes sick people to "call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil." This treatment did no good, and the child became afflicted with ophthalmia, as a result of inattention to the measles. The relieving officer brought in the medical officer of the district, and the father was arrested. He declared that his reason for not calling in medical aid "was because his religious belief prevented him from doing so, for he believed in the Bible, and looked to God to restore his child to health." He was sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labor for his careful observance of the State-supported Bible.

A LETTER to the Colonial Bishops on the liquor traffic with native races, signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of London, makes the following confession: "It is asserted by travellers of repute that in many parts of the world the moral character of the natives gains more by the preaching of Mohammedism than by the preaching of the Gospel, for the former tends to make them sober."

THE *Morning Post*, in a leading article on the subject, says: "As long as this is so it is useless to attempt to benefit natives by missionary exertion." A correspondent remarks: "Just so; but if the gospel were what its fanatical and paid advocates so loudly declare—the 'power of God'—instead of drink thwarting the gospel, the gospel would thwart drink."

A CARDIFF paper states that a "respectable-looking" young man was found in Bute Street reciting the Lord's Prayer to the iron railings. Shortly afterwards he entered a tramcar, and when asked for the fare, he told the conductor to write to Lord Salisbury. The police called in a medical officer to test the state of his intellect. Surely the test was not required. What better proof of a man's idiocy could there be than his reciting the Lord's Prayer anywhere outside a church?

THE article on the Moabite stone by Dr. Ch. Clermont-Ganneau in the current number of the *Contemporary Review* is a very thorough defence of the antiquity of the celebrated Mesha inscription against the aspersions of Mr. Löwy, who, in our opinion, is left with scarcely a leg to stand upon.

TWO of the Liverpool daily newspapers have lately been publishing correspondence arising out of the published reports of the funeral of the late Mr. Taunton, Secretary of the Royal Liver Friendly Society. Some Masonic lodges were represented at the funeral, and this fact induced the Rev. Mr. Taunton, a Roman Catholic priest and brother of the deceased, to write stating that his brother had resigned his membership on July 16th, and that an acknowledgment of the letter had been received, his brother being reconciled to the Catholic Church. The Secretary of the lodge concerned point-blank denied having received any such resignation, and consequently could not acknowledge what he had never received. Several of the contributors to the correspondence expressed their indignation at the narrowness of

spirit evidenced by the Rev. Father Taunton, who, it is noteworthy, did not offer any answer to the criticism he evoked.

A SALVATIONIST party, when on the warpath, is not easily silenced, but they meet their match when on "the briny." A number of the devotees of "Blood and Fire" were on Saturday last returning by steamer from the Isle of Man to Liverpool, and commenced, as is their custom, to make a noisy demonstration—called, by courtesy, singing. The look-out man made several ineffectual efforts to make himself heard by the officer on the bridge, but his stentorian voice, though audible over the roar of the waves, was totally drowned by the din around. An emphatic appeal to the Salvationists to "shut their (porcion of trade-mark) mouths" having met with no response, the irate sailor seized a mop, which had been used to efface the evidence of *mal-de-mer* and swung the practical end of it into the mouth of the leader of the howling gang. Then there was silence upon the face of the deep.

THE *Rock* recently stated that Mr. Spurgeon had asserted that if "the Salvation Army were wiped out of London five thousand extra policemen could not fill its place in the repression of crime and disorder." Like many other Christian statements this assertion has proved unfounded. The *Rock* has the honesty to correct its error. It announces that Mr. Spurgeon has since contradicted the statement, saying he had no occasion to speak of the Salvation Army.

THE *Rock* deeply regrets that thirty thousand copies of Mr. Hastings' lecture on the Bible, and large numbers of the tracts forming the "Anti-Infidel Library" were burnt in a recent fire in Southwark. God doesn't look after these things as he ought to do. He burns infidel literature and Christian literature with equal gusto.

THE *Christian Herald* relates how during the last century a man in London felt compelled to go to America he knew not why. Obeying the spirit, he went to New York, and thence, still obeying the idea that possessed him, he proceeded to the far west. At a certain spot in the rocky wilderness he knew he was to preach the gospel. He did so, preaching a regular sermon to the surrounding boulders. Then he returned to London "without addressing another meeting." A great criminal in hiding had however heard the sermon and was converted. This was the object which God had in view all the while. No names or particulars are given. The moral would be that we are to obey fancies, intuitions, dreams, and so forth. This is consistent with Bible teachings, but it is rank superstition of a most mischievous nature.

THE Rev. Thain Davidson, of London, has been enlightening the natives of Swansea with a scientific lecture on "Red, Yellow and Blue," which he treats as the three primary colors from which all other colors can be obtained. His teachings are somewhat old-fashioned, for Tyndall and others have shown that yellow is not a primary color, while green is. The reverend lecturer's ideas are also peculiar in other respects. He says that the blue rays in sunshine have a magnetic power, and that they bleach and scorch our faces. How they both bleach and scorch at once is somewhat of a puzzle. They also cause freckles, and hence young ladies are to avoid blue parasols and use red or yellow sunshades instead.

A MUCH more daring reform is also recommended by this scientific parson. He says that we should dress more in different colors. He saw no objection to one wearing a red coat and another a green, and he thought the parsons might well set the example in this reformation. Fancy the black army walking about in all the glories of the rainbow! Ministers might perhaps wear red waistcoats and brimstone-colored coats to indicate their loyalty to the old hell-fire doctrine, and they might add sky-blue trousers to temper this prospect with some assurance of heaven.

THIS is the deep and satisfying argument for the Trinity used by William R. Huntington, rector of Grace church, New York: "Of the threefold personality inherent in that eternal one, we are given a hint in the form of the ascription under which he is addressed. 'Holy, holy, holy,' is the cry of those about the throne, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.'" Because the crazy man who wrote Revelation said "holy" three times there are three persons rolled into one in the Lord!

ONE would think drivelling idiocy could not go beyond this, but we do not know whether the elaborate pseudo-scientific bosh on the same subject put forward by one of the authors of "The Perfect Way" in the spiritist journal *Light* is not even worse. He says everything is composed of a Trinity, namely "Force, Substance, and the Result of These." Thus a stone, he says, consists first of force, next of substance wherein force operates, then of their joint product the material object. "Each of these is stone and yet there are not three stones." The writer goes on to say that force is masculine, substance feminine and the joint issue is their son. So that this new version of the Trinity would make the Son proceed from the Father and the Holy Ghost.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

AUGUST 28, Edinburgh.
SEPT. 4, Glasgow; 11, Manchester; 18, Leeds; 25, Milton Hall,
OCT. 2 and 9, London Hall of Science; 16, South Shields; 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.

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.—R. Fox, Heaton Woodville.

H. P. BOWDEN.—Acknowledged this week. Your suggestion deserves consideration, but we are afraid we might lay ourselves open to misconception in using some of the time-honored phrases of Christianity. At the same time it will not do to give the enemy a monopoly of the best words in the dictionary.

B. M. SMITH writes: "I have just read your *Crimes of Christianity* with much interest, and hope that it will meet with the success it well deserves in the shape of a large circulation among our party and inquirers. Your comments on your well selected and studied authorities are very judicious and, it seems to me, quite moderate." Our correspondent has evidently read the volume in no dilatory manner, for he sends us a list of Errata (almost inevitable printers' blunders) which will be of service to us in a future edition.

J. MCLEAN.—You need not pay for an advertisement. We have given you a "Sugar Plum." Always glad to help the cause anywhere.

HENRY NIXON, whose name appeared in this column last week, acknowledges the receipt of our parcel of Freethought literature, which he has much enjoyed, and reports that they persecute him at the workhouse by stopping his weekly bit of tobacco. Good Christians!

J. ROOSE.—Shall appear. We quite understand the feeling, but why should anything be true because we desire it to be so? This is one of the roots of superstition. Dr. Wallace is undoubtedly an able man, but if you read his writings on spiritualism you will find that he deserts the methods he employed in his scientific books. It is perfectly useless for sceptics to study spiritualism. They are called "a disturbing influence." You must have some degree of faith before the phenomena will occur. Real science, however, does not care whether you have faith or not; it has evidences that will compel belief. Where mystery and darkness are essential, where investigation is crippled, and where charlatany abounds, a sensible man will not waste his time and energy. There are more fruitful fields of research.

HENRY PORTER.—We are obliged for the little volume, which will no doubt be of some assistance.

J. CRABTREE.—Thanks for your generous subscription to the London open-air work. Glad to hear you still have such a high opinion of the *Freethinker*, and that it is found so interesting and useful in your district.

A. C. VARLEY, 24 High Street, Bloomsbury, W.C., supplies this journal and other Secular publications.

IXION.—A strong passage is quoted from Wilberforce in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Perhaps that is the one you want. See the article "Was Slavery Abolished by Christianity?" in *Freethinker*, April 3rd, 1887.

W. C. SAVILLE.—Such mishaps will occur. It appears this week. We are pleased with your recognition of the success of the out-door work, and glad that you appreciate our "felicitous defence of Whitman."

R. G.—We have nothing to retract. The kind of thing you attach so much importance to is done infinitely better by professional thought-readers and conjurers.

DELTA.—Thanks for the cutting. The verse is scarcely up to our standard.

E. J. P.—The case is dealt with this week. Glad you find Mr. Wheeler's articles on the dates of the Bible books useful. Byron and Goethe were rightly included in *Infidel Death-Beds*. Byron expressly stated, in more than one of his letters, that he had no belief in the dogmas of Christianity; and Goethe was notoriously a sceptic, as you will see by turning to any biography. The fact, indeed, has been deplored by Principal Caird in the *Contemporary Review*, and made the occasion of a grossly unfair personal attack by the Rev. W. L. Watkinson in his Fernley Lecture. We dissent, in many respects, from your view of the characters of Byron and Goethe, but that is beside the point. The object of *Infidel Death-Beds* is to show that Freethinkers can and do die fearlessly. Schiller shall be thought of for the next edition.

F. M. writes that he has just heard from Mr. W. W. Collins, who has left Sydney and is on a lecturing tour in Queensland. Mr. Collins says that the Government has closed the Sydney theatres on Sunday, and the Freethinkers cannot get a hall. The theatre managers would not fight, although the Freethinkers paid as much as £18 rent for the Sunday evening. Such heavy expenses rendered it hard to make lectures pay, and Mr. Collins seems to have had a roughish time. He speaks of going to Tasmania and New Zealand, and eventually home to England.

W. CABELL.—(1) The view you express of the Golden Rule is precisely what Mr. Ball maintained. (2) Voltaire is no authority on the date of the book of Job. Biblical criticism, except so far as the genius or common sense could carry it, was in its infancy in his days. (3) We do not pretend to omniscience. The sentence you quoted might have been written by anybody.

J. NEATE.—We are obliged, though we knew it before. Such creatures have cowardice to equal their impudence.

W. D. B.—We cannot enter into the subject here. You will find our views on the population question and Socialism carefully expressed in our Debate with Mrs. Besant. See advertisement. You will find a good statement of the first question in Mrs. Besant's *Law of Population*, but all writers on that subject necessarily draw from Malthus.

J. HEMINGWAY (Lancaster).—Thanks. Most of the subscriptions for the London open-air work have come from the country.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Jus—Salt Lake Weekly Tribunal—Calcutta Hope—Western Figaro—Truthseeker—Echo—Boston Investigator—Christian News—Manchester Evening Mail—Australian Sunday Chronicle—Lucifer—Liverpool Echo—Cheltenham Mercury—Edinburgh Evening News—Edinburgh Evening Dispatch.

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.

MR. FOOTE delivered probably the last of his open-air lectures this season in the Bethnal Green Road last Sunday morning. There was a good meeting, which grew larger and larger, and was a splendid crowd at the finish. The libellous spouters, who had vilified Mr. Foote from that spot for five or six Sundays in succession, esteeming prudence the better part of valor, were off to fresh woods and pastures new. A good collection was made for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.

ALTHOUGH the Freethought meeting extended across the open space, and then across the pavement right up to the shop windows, the policemen (there were three or four of them) did not interfere. We begin to think there is deuced little piety in the average policeman.

MONDAY evening (Aug. 22) is fixed for the meeting of the Open-air Committee. There should be a good attendance. The September programme will, if possible, be ready for distribution then. We may add that by this issue of a common programme for all the outdoor stations the printing bill for each branch has been reduced to about three shillings a month. Another result of the new organisation, combined with Mr. Foote's visit to most of the stations, is a striking revival of popular interest. The audiences have been far larger and more enthusiastic. Old Freethinkers have come to the front again, and new sympathisers have been won. There is a glorious harvest to be reaped for Freethought in the London streets among those millions of people. Next summer the work must be better organised and supported, and to this end preparations should be begun soon after Christmas.

WE have received the following subscriptions for the Open-air Lecture Fund:—J. Hemingway, 10s.; J. Crabtree, £1; H. P. Bowden, 10s.; S. Hartman, 15s.

MR. ROBERT FORDER is going to wake up the Brightonians to-day (Aug. 21). He lectures on the beach at 11.30, and on the level at 3. Cheap trains run from London Bridge and Victoria, return tickets being only 3s. We shall be glad to hear of big and successful meetings.

A CONFERENCE of Freethinkers will be held to-day (Aug. 21) at twelve o'clock at 122 Ingram Street, Glasgow. All members of the N. S. S. and friends of the movement are requested to attend.

Bible Atrocities, or Part III. of the Bible Handbook for Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians, will be ready for sale next week. The principal atrocities in the Bible are printed with an appropriate headline for each, giving the point of the paragraph in a single sentence, as in *Bible Absurdities*. The excellent steady sale of these publications shows that they meet a permanent want, and are really useful.

A SICK and Tontine Society has been formed in connection with the Ball's Pond Branch of the N. S. S. The rules are printed in the formidable shape of a sixteen-page pamphlet, but on looking into them we find them all very sensible and necessary. Mr. G. Standing is the President, and the Secretary is Mr. A. Swinney, 92 Holly Street, Dalston, E. The latter will be glad to give any further information on the subject.

AN able writer in the *New York Nation* shows, as against Mr. R. Holt Hutton and Lord Acton, that George Eliot's change from Evangelicalism to scepticism was not made with such "unseemly levity" as they think. He points out that it must have been contributed to by the reading of Lyell's *Principles of Geology* and Isaac Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*. The writer, however, does not seem acquainted with the true cause of George Eliot's scepticism—her acquaintance with Charles Bray and C. C. Hennell. The *Inquiry into the Origin of Christianity* by Hennell was, for the time at which it was written, a most masterly piece of rational criticism. It alone was quite sufficient to show any thinking person the hollowness of Christian-

evidences and orthodox Christianity. "But," as the writer in the *Nation* well remarks, "no one but the dupe of a Hindu juggler can suppose a flower bursts into bloom ten minutes after the seed is sown."

SIGNOR DEPRETIS, the late Italian Prime Minister, was buried without any religious ceremony. His friends offered to send for the sacraments in his last hours, but he refused to receive them. Sheol must be his destination.

THE new religious journal the *British Weekly* confesses, "In the judgment of the vast majority of scholars, Hebrew literature did not begin before the ninth century B.C.; only one-half of the Old Testament was written before the exile; and our Pentateuch, as we have it, was introduced by Ezra in the year 444 B.C." The *B. W.* further admits that "In England all the first-class Hebraists—Davidson, Driver, Cheyne, and Robertson Smith—favor the same side"—that is, the very views which Spinoza and Paine have in the past been so execrated for putting forward. The *British Weekly* absurdly calls this question "The Coming Battle." We rejoice to see the orthodox so ridiculous in their estimate of where the coming battle will rage. While they are half-defending and half-evacuating the long-dismantled fortress of the Old Testament, the very citadel of supernaturalism is being captured.

FROM the *Athenæum* review of James Chalmers's *Pioneering in New Guinea* we learn that the natives practise divination and pray to the great spirit Semese, yet they have none of the darker elements of superstition. They even have the philosophy to say that "Men are good or evil by inheritance, and there are no future rewards for the one or punishment for the other." Yet these people have very good notions of justice. "The evils of over-population are obviated by self-restraint. It is considered disgraceful to have a second child before the first is able to walk. Women's rights appeared to be perfectly secured, and not only do the children of divorced wives or of widows remain with their mothers until they are grown up, but daughters share equally with the sons in the heritage of their parents, and a woman retains her own property after marriage." Evidently these New Guineaites are in some respects ahead of several Christian nations.

SPURGEON puts forth an emphatic warning that certain ministers are making infidels. Avowed atheists, he says, are not a tenth as dangerous as those preachers who scatter doubt and stab at faith. A plain man told him the other day that two ministers had derided him because he thought we should pray for rain. A gracious woman benoaned in his presence that a precious promise in Isaiah which had comforted her had been declared by her minister to be uninspired. And he says that it is a common thing to hear working men excuse their wickedness by the statement that there is no hell—"the parson says so." All this is very hopeful, for it indicates the decay of superstition and the growth of Freethought even among the clergy themselves.

SPURGEON is outspoken in his lamentation—"The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the Resurrection into a myth; and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren." Spurgeon speaks of these ministers as "On the down grade." There is little likelihood of their being deterred by Spurgeon. The truth is, the congregations are beginning to tire of the old nonsense.

THE ROCK ON EVIDENCES.

THE *Rock* has an article on the "Combined Force of Christian Evidences." This comprehensive defence of Christianity commences with significant confessions of weakness. It grants that "Mere intellectual reasoning has, indeed, never made a man a Christian, and never will." It laments that "there are many, alas! in our day who deny that God has spoken to man," and that others are kept back by doubts and difficulties. It admits that "It is not unfrequently impossible to give a direct categorical reply to a particular objection." It has to plead that—

"Butler has conclusively shown that the objections against the wisdom, justice and goodness of Christianity apply with equal force against the constitution and course of nature, and that, as both systems are imperfectly comprehended by us, we are incompetent judges of their consistency with the Divine character and purposes. Such difficulties can be at best only partially solved."

But Butler's proof did not in the least raise Christianity out of the mire. It only pulled the God of nature down to the same ignominious level. The Deist's God was simply shown to be as wicked and malignant a being as the God of the Bible. Such an argument only discredited Deism as Deism had already discredited Christianity. Christians

forget that in moral mechanics the intended fulcrum may be crushed into the ground quite as readily as the weight may be lifted. All depends upon the relative resistance offered by these two objects; for it is this that determines which of the two will be the object moved. In lifting the Bible by the help of nature's God as a fulcrum, the over-weighted deity disappears in the bog of moral condemnation without the Bible being in the slightest degree lifted therefrom.

The separate lines of Christian evidence being weak, the *Rock* wishes that the combined force of all the evidences should be brought to bear simultaneously. It says—

"This view of the subject we could much wish to see oftener pressed upon the attention of the wavering and sceptical. They need to be shown that all the various converging proofs of the truth of revelation, though they may not amount to a positive mathematical demonstration, do present the very highest degree of probability."

The concentrated force of all the evidences of Christianity only amounts to probability even in the eyes of a Christian! Why has God left his evidences in so incomplete a condition? He allows us to prove beyond dispute such trifles as that the angles of every triangle are together equal to two right angles, but he provides no possibility of clearly and absolutely demonstrating alleged facts on which the eternal welfare of all mankind depends.

The *Rock* maintains that each confirmatory point is so strengthened by further confirmatory points that the probability of the truth of Christianity is represented by all these factors multiplied together. But, on the other hand, the same principle would apply to the adverse considerations. The result would be that we should prove that it was a million to one that the Bible was true, and also that it was a million to one it was false. But a single falsehood is as fatal to revelation as the single hole that may sink a ship. The innumerable self-contradictions, blunders, and atrocities of the Bible prove that it is the work of fallible human minds, and not of an omniscient and unerring God. The "combined force" of the anti-Christian evidences, moreover, is of an overwhelming character, for they actually afford the "positive mathematical demonstrations" which the Christian evidences confessedly cannot give. The directly contradictory statements in the Bible, for instance, cannot possibly all be true, and many of its blunders are now demonstrated by science to be the huge mistakes of ignorant men.

When one reflects on the innumerable discrepancies and immoralities of the Bible, it seems almost like comic satire to find the *Rock* exclaiming, in all apparent sincerity and earnestness:

"We cannot but admire and adore the manifold wisdom of God in thus condescending to our infirmities, and by these multifarious testimonies commending his truth to every man's conscience and judgment."

Miracles and prophecy are crowning proofs, it appears; but somehow it is the sublime perfection of Christ's character which is the master proof, without which the many other convincing proofs are miserably ineffective. If a careful study of Christ's words and works does not compel you to recognise in him a perfect and divine Being, "then no other evidences will have any real or permanent effect upon your spirit." This means that there is no hope for people who cannot implicitly admire and worship the alleged hero of such exploits as blasting fig-trees, sending devils into pigs, scourging stall-keepers, being insolent to his mother, reviling the national clergy whose faith he professed to support, damning the bulk of mankind, and so forth. For it is admitted at the outset that no evidence will convince anyone if he cannot begin by the distortion of morality and reason involved in the devoted adoration of such an example of the sublimest and most beautiful forms of virtue possible on this earth. Christianity is evidently in a pitiable condition if this is its only hope. Proofs are acknowledged to be useless if they precede this pious conviction of Christ's divine perfection. They are only to follow it, because "the mind will then be predisposed to bow before his miraculous claims." This adoring belief, it is claimed, will remove "prejudice," and so enable one to study the evidences fairly. As if the "constraining" conviction itself were not a prejudice—that is, a pre-judgment—which must almost hopelessly bias one's judgment of the evidences, which will avowedly be useless until this great emotional avidity of belief has rendered one ready to swallow almost anything! The "inquirer" is further

to implore the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, having already accepted Christ, he is also to accept the third person of the Trinity as a still further means of leaving the mind clear and unbiassed in its impartial inquiries. Such is the "lengthy process of inquiry" which is to "be of great value in removing intellectual doubts." The sincere adoption of worship and prayer are the indispensable essentials of an impartial inquiry into the validity and soundness of such mental attitudes. A true answer is only to be obtained by first begging the question. Such is the Christian method of obtaining the combined force of all the evidences. Such evidences can manifestly be but of little value.

W. P. BALL.

ANCIENT LIGHTS.

WHEN arguing that the Christian religion is a system of absurdities, we are asked how it could be possible that anything so ridiculous as alleged could receive the approval of a supposed common-sense people. But John Bull's fetish was translated in times when the possession of learning by the few was chiefly utilised in the magnanimous task of subjugating and degrading the many. Average Christians have no idea of the trickery and subterfuge which reigned supreme in the lives of those persons to whom England is indebted for her religious superstitions. Thousands of our parson-trained fellow countrymen would shrink in pious horror from one who contended that without Roman Catholicism there could never have been any "Protestantism"; and perhaps more horrified still if told, that to the Papacy we must "return thanks" for the possession of a Christian creed of any color. Knowing as much about protoplasm as about "Protestantism" our untutored ranters inveigh fiercely against Popery, dreaming naught of the almost certain survival of the Romish Church when the little Bethels and Ebenezers shall have been carted into the dust-yard and Calvin's ferocities and Dr. Watts's doggerel puerilities and toy thunder are silent in the buttermilk's shop.

We are informed by certain of the orthodox that multiplicity of denominations in religion is favorable to the development of earnestness and zeal in the faith; but it should be urged, seeing the Bible to be perfectly true in every statement, that the contradictions furnish a *raison d'être* for the thousand and one sects, and that the whole truth could not be spoken unless the thousand corporate antagonisms called each other heretics and liars. To illustrate this it may be permitted to introduce the burning question of that final destruction of the earth promised by religious incendiaries. Some of our spiritual guides say that the earth, corrupted as it is with sin, will not be allowed by God to exist after the Judgment Day, and they quote Jesus and declare that heaven and earth shall *pass away*. Nor are they at a loss to furnish further testimony equally harmonising with their own peculiar prejudices. Others aver that a portion of the universe sanctified by the bodily presence of Christ, can never have said to it "*Nothing thou art and unto nothing shalt thou return.*" One of this class was Mme. Antonia Bourignon, "a pilgrim travelling towards eternity," a lady who wrote an "inspired" work called *The Light of the World* nearly two hundred years ago, long before the nineteenth century and Mr. Gladstone dawned on creation! The work just mentioned was written as reporting a long series of "conferences" between the authoress and a male disciple. In reply to an objection on his part that "All the interpreters who speak of judgment say that the last fire must consume all the world," she said, "Sir, these interpreters could see no further than their sight reached, but hold for certain all that I tell you—the world will not be utterly destroyed." I need make no apology for appealing to her authority: for that sentence about not seeing further than the sight reached is an axiom of such beauty and precision, that no professor of logic would dare to impeach it. And who so ungallant as to discredit a person who graciously commands to hold for certain all that she tells the world. Then she is in agreement with David, or whoever wrote the 102nd Psalm, who said of the earth and the heavens they shall be changed. One reason for our credence of her divinity in addition to her own complete assurance, is the magnificent impartiality displayed by this immaculate nun in taking an idea from that pre-Catholic the married St. David. She further tells us all evil shall be continued; the whole world shall be purged by fire, but will not perish any more than the servants of God for whom he will reserve some little corner of the earth to save them from shipwreck (!) as he saved Noah in the ark. To speak of "shipwreck" in this connection leads one to ask whether she was a retailer of mixed metaphors at so much a dozen. She exclaims further, "How greatly desirable to be of that little number." Now, Genesis tells us that God drowned the world because man had corrupted his way upon the earth, and is it not plausible that the North Pole escaped the pollution, and that the little number will find refuge there when the world generally goes to blazes? This is the more reasonable, seeing that our impious navigators cannot reach the place to stain it with sin.

If our Franklins and Greelys had only recognised the lesson taught by the pilgrimess who travelled towards eternity, and so had left the North Pole alone, we should never have witnessed the spectacle of fools rushing in whose angels fear to tread lest they should get chilblains. I hope it is clear that the world will be annihilated or eternally preserved, just according to what part of "Thy Word is Truth" the reader peruses, and there is solace in reflecting that even as we cannot read the Bible all at once, so we cannot hold it imperative to believe it all at once. It is probable that my reference to the "little number" brings sadness to the breast of some large-hearted being who objects to Satan playing the devil with so many, while the Prince of Peace gains so few applicants for a position in his orchestra. Peace! sad spirits, for although there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage in heaven, the population will increase right

merrily, and who need grieve that millions are eternally miserable, so long as there are many to be happy and glorify their heavenly fathers. To justify the above theory I quote the words of "The Pilgrimess": "There will be propagation eternally in heaven." If the disciple of Malthus approaches the portals of heaven, he will probably be refused admission. It is important to remember that the author of *The Light of the World* established her theology by many hundreds of Bible texts, supplemented by the direct aid of the Holy Spirit in full blast. And although she gained perhaps but few adherents, she seems to have enjoyed the "blessedness" of persecution, for: "The Jesuits, the Jansenists, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Anabaptists, the Quakers, and the Labadists did respectively persecute her," etc. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "She was despised and rejected of men." She seems also to be identified with the character in the 102nd Psalm, whose name is not given, who ate "ashes like bread," just what this virgin of Flanders did before she "struck ile" and found the light. In conclusion this lamplighter of the world satisfactorily proved her contemporary religionists all wrong, and uttered many striking truths such as, "if Envy were lost, it might be recovered in the Cloisters; if Avarice were dead it would be revived by the priests; vain glory and pride is nowhere so prevailing as among the clergy," etc. She was nevertheless so far from being infallible, that the world, of whose end she predicted (being taught of God) the immediate approach, still revolves very much as of old, and her "Light of the World," which was to illumine the ends of the earth, is only raked from obscurity to be made light, and even pipe-lights of. Ichabod.

W. C. SAVILLE.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE CONVERSION OF CATHOLICS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your Madras correspondent, G. Upshorn, finds that Roman Catholics care little for attacks on the Bible, and suggests your writing a book exposing the crimes and follies of the popes. Let me assure Mr. Upshorn that such a work would not be much more efficacious than one assailing the great Protestant fetish.

For some fifteen years I have carried on a bitter war against Christianity in Italy, and I have seen much of Roman Catholics in other countries, including India, so that my opinion on such matters should, I think, have some weight, and it is, that trying to convert adult Catholics is nearly as useful as trying to catch a bird by putting salt on its tail. These people don't want to be converted, for their Church prohibits the reading of *all* literature not sanctioned by itself. Roman Catholics are taught to believe that well-known facts in history unfavorable to their religion are calumnies, and as they never read any literature save their own, they do believe them to be so.

I began my propaganda by attacking the Bible, but I soon found that scarcely one Italian layman I met knew or cared anything about the "blessed book." Many of them seem to be unaware that as their Church pretends to be founded on the Bible it must in reason fall when that is undermined.

Italians are perhaps the most irreligious people in the world, if by "religion" we understand strong moral conviction of any kind; but they are extremely superstitious, and cling to old customs with such Hindoo-like tenacity, that with all their boasted toleration, they are apt to make life unpleasant enough for one who has not, as Sir Henry Tyler would say, "a divinity of some sort," and who is not afraid to confess the fact.

This country is now in full reaction, and, favored as the Jesuits and other clericals are by the court and government in their schemes for gradually recovering the control of education, especially that of females, and the restoration of monastic orders, I foresee in the near future a splendid victory for the Roman Catholic Church, whose doom, though ultimately certain, will be long preceded by that of her Lutheran and Calvinistic rivals.

Never was Rome so wise as when she forbade the reading of the Bible by the masses, and Protestantism struck the first nail in her own coffin when she exposed her idol in all its nakedness to the world's gaze. Pious Italians to whom I have shown certain passages of Holy Writ remarkable for their filth, asked "how Protestants could worship such a thing," and I have sometimes found the same sentiment among heathens. To become a real bibliolater one must have been drilled and coaxed, and frightened from the very first, from the day when loving but mistaken "mamma" first taught one to lisp "Gentle Jesus." I well remember that even as a child the brutalities and obscenities of the Old Testament shocked me, whilst I was even more disgusted by the cowardice, the unmanly submission to tyranny, and the tale of eternal damnation taught in the gospel.—Yours etc.,

R. H. DYAS.

PROFANE JOKES.

"YOUNG man," said a professional revivalist to a youth he met in the street, "don't you want to join our army and become a soldier of Calvary?" "Not to day," replied the young man; "an' if I join at all, it will be in the infantry. I always was afraid of horses."

"AND only man is vile," sang the shrill treble voices in the village choir. "Which shows that the writer didn't know much about women," remarked the churchwarden as he noticed the tenth lady drop a threepenny bit into the plate instead of the half-crown she had begged her husband to give her to put into the collection.

A YOUNG and wealthy curate who indulged in tandem driving was sent for by his bishop and reproved. "But why," expostulated the curate, "is it more wrong to drive one horse in front of another than two abreast?" "My son," replied the Bishop, "when I pray I place my two hands together. How would it look in church were I to place one thumb at the tip of the little finger of the other hand?" The curate retired.

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THE

Freethinker's Magazine.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

The AUGUST Number contains

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

The "Quarterly" on Mr. Morison. By H. Jewel.

The Golden Rule. By J. M. Wheeler.

The Antiquity of the Christian Church. By "A. M."

At Death's Door. (A Poem.) By James Thomson (B.V.)

"The New Sociology" Vindicated. (A Rejoinder.) By James Leatham.

A Reply to Mr. Leatham. By W. P. Ball.

Review.

Brief Freethought Biographies. By J. M. Wheeler.

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6d. per 100, post free 7d.

These tracts are numbered, but the old heading, "Freethinker Tracts," has been omitted, so as not to frighten people. Number 5 consists of a selection from *Bible Contradictions*. The circulation of such leaflets wholesale will be very beneficial to the Freethought movement, as they are all specially designed for the common reader.

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