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A HORNY-HANDED GOD.

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran..... He had horns coming out of his hand..... Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.—HABAKKUK III., 3 5.

THAT HORRID INGERSOLL.

INGERSOLL is an embarrassing problem to the Yankee sky-pilots. They can make no impression on him, but he seems to be making an impression on them. For a long while he has done no lecturing, but his discourses have an extensive sale, and "Bob Ingersoll" is a household name in the United States. The newspapers, all over the Union, give his latest "bits," knowing that their readers are on the look-out for them. His eloquence, his humor, his wit, his manliness, and his boundless good nature, are as conspicuous in his life as in his orations. His "record" stands as high as the proudest. Nobody has an ill word for him except a mad opponent like Father Lambert, who calls him a scoundrel for criticising the doings of Jehovah. Ask an ordinary Yankee who is the greatest orator in the States, and ten to one the answer will be "Bob Ingersoll." Ask him who is the best story-teller, and he will say "Bob Ingersoll." Ask him who is the right-down best fellow, and the reply will again be "Bob Ingersoll." He is a mountainous fact that cannot be ignored. And the worst of it is he will not gratify the bigots by losing his temper. He hits hard, but always with a smile. If they say he is a wretch, he says "Well, suppose I am, does that prove that Jonah was swallowed by a whale?" None of their

epithets stick. Ingersoll is known to be a model husband and father, his home is one of the brightest in the world, and although he is not a good Christian everybody knows he is a grand man.

Aye, there's the rub! If he would only cheat somebody, tell a few big lies, countenance a public swindle or two, debauch another man's daughter or run away with another man's wife, the clergy would be extremely grateful. They cannot argue with him, but they would then be able to denounce him. Unfortunately the age of miracles is past, and the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth nothing. No accommodating earthquakes swallow up those who oppose the Lord's anointed ones. God's arm is shortened, and the infidels flourish like green bay trees. Otherwise the sky-pilots would beseech the Lord to remove the horrid man by a *coup celeste*, even as he disposed of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They would perhaps be satisfied if the Lord sent him to graze like Nebuchadnezzar.

Some good Christians try another tack. They expostulate with him on "the mischief" he is doing. Dr. H. M. Field, for instance, has just published "an open letter" to Ingersoll in the *North American Review*, which is doubtless well-meant though its *motif* is childish. Dr. Field states that he spent a "long evening" in Ingersoll's house and talked freely with him on the subject of religion. "I protested," he says, "against your unbelief as utterly without reason. Yet there was no offence given or taken, and we parted, I trust, with a feeling of mutual respect." He confesses that he found Ingersoll a vehement lover of truth and justice, and a vehement hater of hypocrisy and inhumanity. But with these virtues there was one great fault; Ingersoll was opposed to every form of religious belief and worship. "In this matter," says Dr. Field "you made no distinctions; you would sweep them all away; church and cathedral must go with the temple and the pagoda, as alike manifestations of human credulity, and proofs of the intellectual feebleness and folly of mankind." Yet this is not the worst. Dr. Field found Ingersoll "gentle and sweet-tempered" in his home, but when he took up one of the orator's public discourses he "experienced a strange revulsion of feeling." He found that Ingersoll spoke of Christianity with "contempt" and "bitterness," and that he was "like a gladiator, defiant and belligerent." How dreadful! But, after all, is not the complaint a little silly? Does Dr. Field suppose that an orator talks across his dinner-table as he does on the platform, or that a Freethinker with his legs under the same mahogany as a Christian would treat their differences as he would in a public discourse, when personal considerations are eliminated and nothing but the subject remains? Dr. Field was Ingersoll's guest; he was therefore treated with something more than courtesy; but he must be a trifle soft to expect his *creed* to be treated in the same manner when Ingersoll faces three thousand people in a public hall.

A simple-minded young man, says Dr. Field, leaves home, enters a great city, and is prevailed on to drop in and hear Ingersoll; and "for a couple of hours listens to your caricatures of religion, with descriptions of the prayers and the psalm-singing, illustrated by devout grimaces and nasal tones, which set the house in roars of laughter, and are received with tumultuous applause." Henceforward the young man is changed, and he no longer reveres the Bible his mother gave him. Perhaps not, but probably he does better. He fishes it out from the bottom of the trunk where "reverence" placed it. He searches the scriptures; and whose fault is it if he finds that Ingersoll is right and the clergyman wrong?

But Dr. Field does not stop here. He tells Ingersoll that he has persuaded this young man that "There is no God that sees him, no moral government, no law, and no

retribution." He even asks Ingersoll how long it will be before the young man takes to drinking and gambling. Really Dr. Field must be very dull-witted. Had he read half-a-dozen of Ingersoll's discourses he would have found this objection answered again and again. He asks Ingersoll not to oppose Christianity because of its moral influence, when Ingersoll considers its influence is immoral. In other words he says, "Believe what you like, and disbelieve what you like, but don't attack what I happen to believe, because what I believe is necessary to morality." Ingersoll of course demurs to this modest request, and Dr. Field's plea loses all its force. Is it not childish to ask Ingersoll to spare what he thinks an evil because somebody else thinks it is good? And would any person who was not trained in a Church ever think of asking anything so illogical and preposterous? Dr. Field does not understand Ingersoll if he fancies that such a man can be moved from the road he has deliberately chosen for the sake of a few professional tears over a good young man's lost Bible. "The Bible his mother gave him" is a stale trick of the pulpit. Reverencing one's mother is one thing, reverencing her prejudices is another. Suppose she gives her son, as she well might, a copy of Eliza Cook, and he laughs at its wire-drawn sentimentalism; is he therefore going to the dogs? And why may he not, with equal impunity, laugh at her presentation copy of any other book? If our mothers are to decide our opinions on one subject, why not on every other subject? Affection does not mean slavery. Motherhood has no claim on our intellects. Every brain must do its own thinking. All thought is personal, or it ceases to be thought at all.

Our contemporary, the *Christian World*, quite approves Dr. Field's nonsense. After a lot of verbiage that would only raise a smile on Ingersoll's face, this organ of inchoate piety says that, "Even Colonel Ingersoll avows that he can take no exception to religion as enshrined in the Sermon on the Mount." Again we say, What childish nonsense! Ingersoll has never made such an avowal. The *Christian World* states, not what is true, but what it wishes to believe, and still more what it wishes its readers to believe. In this respect it is quite on a level with Mr. Hine, who converted Ingersoll, without seeing him, to a belief which he derides. Still there is something good in all this. Two centuries ago the Christians would have burnt Ingersoll; now they expostulate with him. Two centuries ago they would have damned him here and hereafter; now they try to make out that he is a very good Christian without knowing it. Verily the world moves, and even the Christians move with it.

G. W. FOOTE.

WHO ARE THE INFIDELS?

SOME of our American friends are much exercised about the use and disuse of the word "infidels." A section, represented by an able Freethought organ *The Ironclad Age*, takes up the term applied to men like Thomas Paine and Ethan Allen, and avow themselves "infidels." They look on the new American Secular Union as seeking to sail under colorless colors, and point to the Quakers as an instance of people who accepted a name given in derision and made it honorable. But the Quakers to this day call themselves the Society of Friends. It is certainly right to disregard what term other people may choose to give your opinions, but it is right that they should accurately describe what those opinions are. Just because the term "infidelity" does not connote the attitude of those who do not accept the Christian religion, it should be politely but firmly repudiated. Infidelity is unfaithfulness, and is even defined in some dictionaries as "treachery." An infidel is, according to Johnson "an unbeliever, a miscreant; one who rejects Christianity." The use of the word "miscreant" which in its etymological signification is similar to that of "infidel," suggests how a word may by association gather a sinister meaning. The person who differed from the religion of the people among whom he was bred was in former times supposed to be an outlaw devoid of all principle. No doubt the disposition to so consider him still remains, but it is slowly fading away in the light of evident facts, and it should not be countenanced by the admission of an equivocal epithet.

It has been the sceptics of all ages who have led to investigation and progress. The doubters of theology

have their beliefs and to these beliefs they are not unfaithful. They believe in this world and they earnestly aim at its amelioration. The so-called "infidels" are notoriously active in every cause for furthering social and political reform. I speak not only from personal experience of the present time; I have had occasion in compiling "Brief Freethought Biographies" for *Progress* to look over the lives of hundreds of "unbelievers" in all countries and ages. One and all are characterised by their activity. They may have been mistaken in their aims—that is not the question: but anyone who will say they were unfaithful to those aims is simply unacquainted with the facts.

How stands the case with the Christian? A pattern is set forth for him with which he must square his conduct. Is he faithful to it? Does he faithfully follow in the footsteps of Jesus? Does he even attempt to approximate his conduct to the gospel injunctions? To ask such questions is to answer them. Fortunately for himself he does not. He does not sell all he has and give to the poor; he does not give up wife and houses and land to follow Jesus; he does not give to every one that asks; if robbed of a coat he does not give his cloak also. He acts in the teeth of the precepts he acknowledges as divine. He gathers up treasures on earth, and centres his affections on a world soon to pass away. If infidelity be unfaithfulness to professed conviction the conduct of the Christian proves him to be an "infidel." Why then should Freethinkers, who do not believe in the Quaker policy of non-resistance, accept an epithet which is intended as an insult, and which more accurately applies to those who bestow it?

Even in its modified connotation of "unbelief" the term is inaccurate and misleading. Belief is often, foolishly, supposed to describe a creditable state of mind, while unbelief is held to indicate the opposite. The assumption is absurd for the simple reason that belief and unbelief are but two ways of describing the same position. He who believes that Jesus was born without a father disbelieves in that case the proposition that all children have fathers. He who believes in original sin denies natural goodness. He who affirms a Trinity may also affirm God's unity, but logically he denies it, and admittedly he denies polytheism. He who affirms a creator for the universe denies the adequacy of the universe apart from a creator. The Christian is infidel to the Mohammedan as the Mohammedan is to the Christian. If unbelief is discreditable it must imply a reluctance, not to believe in general, but to believe what is reasonable, and in this sense the "infidel" is he who prefers the least evidence to the greatest. And this, again, is assuredly the Christian, who holds implicit faith to be a virtue.

A disposition to accept whatever is told by the priests is naturally commended by these gentry, whether of the Buddhist, Brahmanical, or Christian persuasion. "Whoever will be saved," recites the beautiful creed of St. Athanasius, "before all things it is necessary that he shall hold the Catholic faith," the faith which it goes on to recite being one for which it is impossible to adduce any evidence at all. Jesus, in the Gospel according to St. John, is made to give pre-eminence to those who believe without seeing, and to preach the abominable doctrine of damnation for unbelief. Faith is, indeed, the stronghold of the theologian. It is only faith which can induce people to hold that God has a revelation for them which he told some one else two thousand years ago. It is only faith that is able to swallow the story of the Fall and the Redemption, Jonah and the whale, and all the credulous and barbaric legends of the Jew-books, as divinely-inspired revelation. No wonder the priests preach up faith. They live by it.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE MORMONS IN TROUBLE.

THE Mormons have come to grief. Their president, John Taylor has died while in hiding on account of the Edmonds law against polygamy, and it is doubtful if the next president will be prepared to stand by the good old Bible doctrine. It is not much good speaking of the example of Solomon and all the patriarchs to the Gentiles of Utah.

The *Salt Lake Tribune*, the Gentile organ of that district, takes off the style of the Biblical elders and prophets in the following description of the capture of a "cohab," as it calls the Polygamists:—

"And it came to pass that Centurions Pratt and Cannon, of the Pretorian Guard, communed with one another about the sixth hour of the day, saying: Go to, now: Behold, there liveth one Thomas Lebrum, a cohab in Nephi, as thou goest down near Edom, by the borders of Salt Creek, in the tetrarchy of John, whose surname is Whitbeck,

It is not meet that he should remain at large longer to curse the genius of the Emperor even Grover Cassar, therefore, let us reach after him, peradventure we may find him, and bring him into the Castle of Antonia. Then, did they get them to their chariots as though they would go a fishing near where the Jordan empties into the Dead Sea by Mount Sinai, and went down from Jerusalem by the way known as Wady-el-hash-bucket. And it chanced as they came to the tent of Aholibamah Kohab Thomas, the son of Lebrum, that he was come in from his threshing-floor and the sweat of his toil was upon him. Then saith Centurion Pratt, "Thou art surely he who in Israel is known as Thomas, the son of Lebrum?" And the man said, "Even so. But wait, prithee, here until thy servant hath gone into the field that he may bring in a kid to see thee in milk and serve it before my lords, for perchance I may be entertaining angels unawares." Howbeit the officer would not suffer it, but closed his left optic tightly, drew up the lee scuppers of his mouth sharply to the windward, and opening the right eye widely, answered and said, "Thou art altogether overmuch previous, friend. The captain of the guard wanteth thee in Jerusalem; gird up thy loins quickly to journey hither and peradventure when thou has paid thy bend then shall we come hither with thee and sup from thy fatted kid." Then did the Israelite's soul sink within him, when he bethought him to give a signal to his tent. Then did the Centurion do that which is called Catch On, and called for his comrade to hurry around to the back of the tent lest any concubines should escape. And behold as the Roman was there that he saw a long tunic fluttering in the fading distance; and it was the tunic of a concubine. Then did he cast aside cuirass and his helmet and his greaves, and take after her like a hunter after a gazelle. So he took her in the reeds by the brook which is called El Debir Kibosh, and had her back to her tent where was the first wife. And so it was when Cohab Aholibamah, known as Thomas, the son of Lebrum, saw it, that his heart was sore within him, and behold he saith, "The jig is up." And the concubine's name was Susan Bathsheemath Baal-Hana, whose surname is Goff. So Aholibamah Kohab, son of Lebrum, and his concubine, were brought up to Jerusalem, and when the morrow was come, were arraigned before Caius Julius Norrelli, the Proconsul. Then did the Israelite plead guilty before the hated Roman, even him, one of whose predecessors had profaned the Temple by slaying swine on the holy altar before the Lord, and gave sureties thereto for his appearance before the Gentile Sanhedrin in 1500 shekels of fine gold, and as surety for his concubine did he add 200 shekels of silver. And lo! his bondsmen were Johannes Glaucus Lebrum and Johannes Horatius Walker. And it came to pass when this was done the holy Saint in Israel and his concubine gat them back to their tent again, but lo! nothing was said about seeing the kid in milk for the angels of the Lord that approached him unawares.

ACID DROPS.

LIPSKI's confession will relieve a good many sensitive people of the horrid apprehension that an innocent man was hung last Monday morning. So much for the general interest in this case, and now for our own special view of what has, in many respects, been a very ghastly farce. We say nothing of the way in which the *Pall Mall Gazette* has been trading on Lipski, denouncing the Home Secretary for not delegating his official duty to the boss of Northumberland Street, and calling him sundry scurvy names, although the *P.M.G.* lauded him to the skies when he used his position as Q.C. to make a virulent attack on Sir Charles Dilke. No, that is not our object. What we want to emphasise is this. Lipski was a religious man. He went short of food in Newgate for several days because he could not get it prepared in the Jewish fashion. This pious scrupulosity was made much of by the *P.M.G.* "Look at this!" it exclaimed, "Do you think such a religious man could have committed that frightful murder?" *Sancta simplicitas!* Poor Stead is a very good man, but he is sometimes a very good man gone wrong. Mention religion to him, and out comes his pocket-handkerchief in a second. He is a perfect sentimentalist in such matters, and fully justifies Mr. Arnold's charge of feather-headedness. Did Mr. Stead never hear the story of the pious brigand who murdered a traveller one morning without the least compunction, but would not eat meat because it was Friday? Were he to keep his eyesight clear, instead of dulling it with such lachrymose streams, he would find that the strictest observance of religious rules is compatible with the most diabolical criminality.

LIPSKI is now in heaven, for that is the place where all converted murderers reside for ever and ever, loafing around the throne, and singing the hallelujah chorus. Heaven is now pretty full of such company. Oh, what must it be to be there?

NOT only did Lipski commit an atrocious murder, but he did his level best, and he was helped by Mr. Stead, to fix the guilt upon two innocent men. While there was hope he kept up a great air of righteousness, and called on God to witness his innocence, and he only confessed when death was a certainty. During all this time, while he was adding to one crime by attempting another, he read the Bible most assiduously, and, according to the newspapers, he "paid particular attention to certain passages of Scripture." Just suppose a very different case. Imagine the murderer a Freethinker, who spent his time in reading a sceptical book, and fancy what a cry would be raised by the religious press! But as it is they are silent. Mum's the word. The least said the soonest mended.

HENRY BEVAN, recently hanged at Knutsford, seems to have been an equally pious character. We read that "on Sunday he

attended divine service and took the Holy Communion, and the rest of his time he spent in copying hymns and psalms, an occupation in which he has largely indulged since his conviction. He slept soundly all night, and was aroused at 5.30. He immediately jumped up, and having made his bed, presented each of the warders with the copy of a hymn which he had written since his trial." Such details are extremely edifying. We like to know all we can of the company we shall have in heaven.

CLERGYMEN ought to be pretty safe from dangers, seeing that they regularly pray to be preserved from them. The Rev. Arthur Newcombe, M.A., Vicar of Granborough, found his prayers of no more use than nothing at all the other day while bathing. The sea was rough and he was drowned just as any less godly person might be.

GOD has ended the long drought with tremendous thunderstorms, which have done a vast amount of damage, and killed a number of people. In the same newspaper we read how birds, dead from thirst, strewed the fields at Dartmouth by the hundred, and how thousands of birds killed by the storm were to be seen in the fields around Paris.

THE Underground Railway was flooded through the bursting of a sewer, and the low-lying parts in many towns suffered severely. Many churches were injured by lightning. Christ Church, Endell Street, was struck twice, the noise caused by the falling masses of masonry so terrifying the worshippers within, that the minister brought the service to a premature conclusion. Neither the parson nor the congregation had sufficient trust in the Lord to see the thing through calmly. Soon after, as if to show the Lord's anger at their want of faith, another flash made a hole in the roof, through which the rain poured and extinguished the flames that had been kindled by the lightning. A number of other places in different parts of the country were also set on fire. Why can't the Lord be a little more moderate in his tantrums? If he cannot play with the lightning without burning farms and striking fathers of families dead in this shocking fashion he had better resign the management into abler and kindlier hands.

A SCHOONER was wrecked off the Californian coast, and eleven persons, including the captain's wife and his four children, were devoured by sharks. God looked on and didn't interfere. He is proud of his handiwork and he sees that it is all very good. Perhaps it was out of his infinite pity for his poor sharks that he sent them so exquisite a dinner.

A GENTLEMAN at Ballston, U.S., has a converted parrot. The pious purchaser found, to his consternation, that its language was extremely profane. But after a while it was taught to repeat the Lord's Prayer. The Christian journal from which we obtain the interesting news assures its readers that the bird "is now able to repeat the whole prayer, and, what is more remarkable, its profanity has entirely disappeared." We suppose such a pious parrot as this must go direct to heaven when it dies.

THE newspapers announce that Mr. Spurgeon is quite restored to health and vigor. Prayers have at last been successful, and the much-prayed-for pastor is as well as any Freethinker whose health is never prayed for except in reverse fashion by amiable Christians who beseech the Lord to correct him with plagues and chastisements, that his heart may be softened.

THE Rev. Thomas Fullerton, who is charged with the forgery of a cheque for £324 on the Northern Bank of Belfast, says he is a victim. Victim to what? To his own cupidity? He says he wants to get his case brought under notice. We assist him to the best of our power. The Bench remanded him for eight days.

If there is a jealous God glaring at you from above and you know it, don't dodge into a church and pay a dollar to avoid his "fierce wrath." The way to avoid this is to take the dollar to your wife, split her an armful of stove wood and carry the week's wash on your back to the laundry. It is astonishing how speedily such conduct as this allays the wrath of God. And no minister has ever found it out, much as he knows about "the master."

AMONG the old New England Puritan laws was one reading: "No one shall eat mince pies, dance, play cards, or play any instrument of music except the drum, trumpet, or jews-harp."

CHRISTIANITY, we are often told, is an historic religion; but we are not told at the same time what a dubious matter history is, and how especially the first ages of Christianity are obscured by falsehood, fraud, and forgery. Within the past week we have been reading two illustrations of the difficulty of history: one the able contention in the pages of the *Academy*, that Lourens Janszoon Coster, of Haarlem, and not Guttenberg, of Mainz, was the inventor of printing; the other the contention of M. le Comte d'Hérison, in his *Cabinet Noir*, that Louis XVII. of France did not die in the Temple Prison, and that, consequently, Louis XVIII. was a usurper. These must now be admitted to be open questions; but Christianity, which arose in more obscure and uncritical times, must be accepted without question.

ANOTHER extraordinary fracas has occurred at Pietermaritzburg, in the St. Peter's Cathedral, between Archdeacon Colley and the churchwardens. The Archdeacon summoned a meeting for the purpose of electing churchwardens, on the ground that the recent election was informal. The churchwardens in office obtained an interdict from the Supreme Court against the meeting. A crowd assembled and forced an entrance into the church, when the Archdeacon, resisting and attempting to extinguish the lights, was knocked down in the confusion ensuing. After compelling the Archdeacon to read the interdict, and hearing the explanation of the churchwardens regarding the position of affairs, the crowd dispersed.

IN many parishes in Wales the clergy are in great distress owing to the refusal to pay tithes.

DESCRIBING the crucifixion of Jesus, Talmage says: "The wave of anguish came up to the arch of his feet, came up to his knee, floated to his waist, rose to his chin, swept to his temples, yet none to help!" This is a good specimen of the absurd balderdash which Talmage palms off upon his congregation as sublime oratory. The oratory of the crucifixion of course must be hysterical. "The murderers have it all their own way," the mountebank cries, forgetting that Pontius Pilate was obliged to allow the execution because Jesus refused to plead not guilty to the charge of sedition. The "miscreants" and "murderers" simply did the ordinary work of the law in such cases. Most civilised states still maintain the punishment of death for such offences. The true miscreant and murderer was Jesus, whose actions and words were simply suicidal. He compelled the authorities to execute him.

IS God a murderer? This is a question for the Mowcop jurymen, who found that a miner who expired suddenly in bed "Died from the visitation of God." They offered no suggestion for dealing with the party implicated.

THE *Church Times* says there is "no difficulty in believing that the sacred race of Shem preserved the Noachic language through the confusion of tongues." Certainly not, and probably Adam spoke exactly the same gibberish that may be heard at the fried-fish shops in Petticoat Lane.

MR. GLADSTONE delivered a speech on horticulture. The subject is a long way off theology, but he managed to drag in the Almighty several times head-over-heels. At the finish he hoped the blessing of the Almighty would rest upon them for evermore. Was there nobody to say "Amen"?

R. T. BOOTH, the well-known temperance missionary, is carrying on another "crusade" in London. We should be sorry to say a word against temperance, but Booth's business is a paying one. Gough made a pile of money at it, as he had a perfect right to; only he need not have indulged in quite so much cant. When he lectured at the Kingston-on-Thames drill hall there was a splendid meeting, but they were pretty well all teetotalers. The committee (there was a Freethinker on it) thought it would be a capital thing if the same lecture were delivered to a drinking audience. They had paid Gough £50 for his discourse, and they offered to pay him £25 to repeat it, and they would throw the hall open free instead of charging for admission. Gough refused. He would not take less than £50, and unless he got that sum, the Kingston lushingtons might drink themselves blind.

BOOTH says that "Gospel temperance, as he understands it, is a divine scheme of deliverance and redemption." Well, *how* does he understand it, and *why* does he understand it so? Does he mean to say that "Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake" meant that the stuff was to be *rubbed in*? And does he mean to say that Jesus's turning a few score gallons of water into wine, to keep a marriage spree going, was a temperance trick?

THE Bishop of Salisbury has strong opinions as to the next elections. There are, according to his reverend lordship, two burning questions on which candidates should be heckled. And what are they? Home Rule? No. Land Reform? No. The House of Lords? No. Faggot voting? No. What then? Why this. Every candidate should be asked (1) whether he will vote against anything that might lead to Disestablishment, and (2) whether he will support any Bill for the benefit of the Church.

"HOME Rule," says the Bishop, "what's that?
It may go the devil—that's pat;
Stand up for the Church,
Leave us not in the lurch,
And fight for the great shovel-hat."

IN New Zealand a man named Read was burnt to death. He had a brother living with him who was a Freethinker. A Calvinist in the neighborhood, thinking it was the Freethinker who was burnt, preached a rousing sermon on the matter. The next day to his great surprise he met the infidel alive and kicking. It was the Christian brother whom God had thought

fit to burn. The minister hasn't preached a sermon on the correct version of the fact yet, and he appears to do his best to keep the matter quiet.

THE American Missionary Societies are still quarrelling in order to decide who shall carry peace and goodwill to the gentle Pagans of foreign lands. Four young women who had their expenses paid at Wellesley college for four years past with the expectation that they were to go out as foreign missionaries, will not be allowed to go as it has been discovered that they do not believe in eternal hell fire.

THE Rev. H. Clere, vicar of Twickenham, who was in his seventy-first year, and one would have thought might have waited for the Lord's call, committed suicide while on a visit to Harvera Parsonage, New Zealand, by hanging himself to a bed-post.

MR. ELLIOT STOCK announces a new book on "The Death of Aaron and the Hidden Grave of Moses." Those who want to see what sceptical criticism has to say on these topics should read the latest numbers of *Bible Heroes*.

THERE must be a frightful lot of fools in Liverpool to furnish three large audiences to Prophet Baxter, of the *Christian Herald*. Although the prophecies of this charlatan have been falsified again and again, he makes fresh ones with the most brazen assurance, and thousands of two-legged asses voraciously swallow his nonsense. He told his audiences that this age would close precisely at three o'clock on Thursday, April 11, 1901. A universal war would rage from October, 1896 to August, 1897; this will be followed by three and half years of tribulation, in which millions of Christians would be beheaded (Baxter we hope among them); and some time between March and October, 1890, a hundred and forty-four thousand watchful Christians will ascend to heaven. The millenium will begin on April 11, 1901. There will be no work to do. People will then attend Bible readings in the morning and prayer meetings in the afternoon. Surely this must be a misprint. Baxter must mean April 1.

THERE is a little bit of truth in all this rubbish. Baxter thinks, as we do, that the millenium cannot possibly begin until the world is well rid of Christians.

THE Manchester *Sunday Chronicle*, alluding to Baxter's performances, says:—"A few years ago a Mr. Foote was sent to prison for turning sacred things into ridicule. If Mr. Foote, after his seclusion, can still see any fun in making blasphemous remarks, he may get all the sport he requires by quoting the remarks of the clerical buffoons who are at present so popular with religious audiences.

THE Rev. G. Horton Scott, vicar of Gringley on-the-Hill, in North Notts, has a pleasant position. The value of his benefice is over £300 per annum, and the average number of his congregation is four. No doubt if he saves four immortal souls from the eternal bonfire it will be well worth the money. But religion, at that rate, gets to be rather an expensive luxury.

A *Misunderstood Miracle* is the title of a little book by the Rev. A. Smythe Palmer, of Wanstead. It relates to the famous miracle of Joshua, which it contends was only an eclipse, the heavens being covered with thick menacing clouds. This is how an honest minister can interpret the words, "So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before or after it, that the Lord harkened unto the voice of man." Probably Mr. Smythe Palmer will say that the sun going ten degrees backward in the days of Hezekiah was an optical illusion.

A YEAR or two ago Christian Spain took over the Caroline Islands and promised the United States that the Protestant missions which had been established for more than twenty years should be respected. It has carried out its Catholic promise by imprisoning the Rev. Edward Deane, aged 79, one of the most influential of the Protestant missionaries. The American Government has remonstrated. Christianity sets people by the ears and then claims to be a religion of peace and concord. If Christianity is a religion of love, why can't Christians love each other? Why must they display their love by imprisoning and ruining each other?

WE see from the *Herts and Essex Observer* that the Rev. J. G. Butterfield is in trouble again. Helpless intoxication and begging in the streets are still his favorite pastimes. The magistrates deal leniently with him on account of his cloth. Why don't the clergy subscribe to send him out of the country? Here at home he is a walking advertisement of their impotence to whiten their own black sheep.

IT is said that some young clerical aspirants possessed of heavy moustaches, who presented themselves for ordination to the Bishop of Worcester, returned in an unrecognisable state to their friends, with their upper lip shaven and shorn. The explanation is that the Bishop's chaplain, having spent many weary years in unsuccessful attempts to rear a moustache, insists that all candidates for ordination at Worcester shall be clean shaven.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, August 28, Roxburgh Hall, Drummond Street, Edinburgh, at 11.30, "Is Christianity True?" At 2.30, "What is the Soul?" At 6.30, "The Blood of Christ."
SEPT. 4, Glasgow; 11, Manchester; 18, Leeds; 25, Milton Hall.
OCT. 2 and 9, London Hall of Science; 16, South Shields; 23, Portsmouth.

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.

R. B.—We do not include all the Christian Evidence lecturers in the condemnation. There are exceptions, and we dare say Mr. Johnson is amongst them, although we do not know him personally. We have never mentioned his name, and he should not apply to himself our remarks on others.

G. WALKER (Manchester).—The judge who dismissed you at the Assize Court because you are an Atheist was a *rara avis*. Judges generally keep such jurors waiting, and as they have the power to do so Freethinkers are helpless. If committed for contempt of court there is no appeal.

MOUNTAINEER.—We used to publish a half a column or so of Free-thought Gleanings such as you suggest, but our space was required by other matter. Perhaps we may resume that feature for a while.

DELTA.—Shall appear.

EX-RITUALIST.—Shall appear.

NEMO.—We have read your brave and cheerful letter with the greatest interest and sympathy. Your advance from Catholicism to Free-thought has evidently been an intellectual and moral one, and we are glad to have assisted your progress. We are pleased to hear that you find the *Crimes of Christianity* "exceedingly serviceable." The second volume is in preparation, and a third volume will complete the work.

W. ROGERS.—Probably Ingersoll does not think Father Lambert worth a reply. Lambert's criticism is little else than a torrent of abuse, and perhaps Ingersoll feels like Guizot who, when he was vilified in the French Chamber, declined to reply, and merely exclaimed, "Your insults do not rise to the level of my disdain."

R. JACQUES (West Hartlepool) reports that a patient named Nicholson, who was healed through faith by "Major" Pearson, and over whose case there was a hubbub of rejoicing, is positively no better and is still wheeled about in a carriage by his sister. Our correspondent says that some of his letters to us must have been intercepted, and he suspects some Holy Willie in the local post-office must be the culprit.

A. NEWSON (Southwold) writes: "About two months ago I persuaded a local newsagent to get me the *Freethinker*, and the work it has done in the time is wonderful. The people here had probably never seen such a thing before, and where there were about three Freethinkers there are now about thirty. Our correspondent's verse shall appear.

J. BRUMAGE.—The date is booked

G. NAEVIGER.—Sorry we cannot find room for the Adam article. You must admit the theme is somewhat hackneyed.

E. A. HAY.—Metaphysical literature is very extensive. Bain's *Mental and Moral Science* is as good a single book as you can get. Price 10s. 6d. Lewes's *Biographical History of Philosophy* is still dearer. You would probably find Ferrier's *Institutes* too stiff. We cannot say anything about the verses till we see them.

W. CUNCLIFFE.—The Abbé Barruel is no authority on Voltaire's life or death. You might as well take a parson's opinion of Mr. Bradlaugh. Read our *Injidel Death Beds*. Your remarks on our criticism of Varley cannot be answered, simply because they are perfectly unintelligible.

G. MORRIS.—Glad to hear from you as a convert from Catholicism though we cannot find room for your letter. The parson seems to have been nonplussed, and his flashes of silence are not good copy.

J. KEY.—Sorry we cannot assist you. We do no business except with our own publications.

W. J. MORRISON.—Glad to learn that you distribute our Tracts and other publications. We are too busy to reply to our correspondents through the post when they can be answered here. The only true sentence in the Christian tract you send us is this: "I believed in the Bible because my mother believed in it." A common but a very poor reason! How can we argue with a man who refers us to his mother? Evidently the argument must be carried on with the old lady herself; and perhaps, after all, she would refer us to her mother.

X. Y. Z.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

HALLELUJAH.—The epigram is good, but few readers will see the point. Everybody does not study the details of the Lipski case.

J. H. W.—It is impossible to satisfy you in a few lines. What you want is *facts*. Read some of the best works on Evolution, and you will see that adaptation can be explained as a result without assuming design as a cause. On the contrary, design is quite inconsistent with the obvious fact that twenty organisms perish through unfitness for every one that stands the test of natural selection. By Nature we mean all that is known or can be known of matter and force. This is what Science resolves everything into. God was always the *unknown*, and those who make him the *unknowable* only change the adjective without altering the sense.

W. CABELL.—Mr. Wheeler's own opinion is that Job was certainly later than Solomon, although in his papers he was stating the opinions of the critics. We do not know the text alluded to.

A. H. HUNTER.—The "Life and Adventures of Poor Old Adam" in the *Modern Owl* of Nottingham, is simply a stew-down of Mr. Foote's "Mr. Adam" in *Bible Heroes*. Every statement is taken from that pamphlet and Mr. Foote's very phrases are frequently left intact. We are glad to see our labors useful to others, but a word of acknowledgment is only just. Perhaps the writer, or the editor, thought Mr. Foote's name would spoil his market. One of our Nottingham friends may feel moved to write to the *Owl* on the subject.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Jus—Portsmouth Evening News—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Ironclad Age—Liberator—L'Union Démocratique—Lucifer—Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags-Blatt—Calcutta Hope—Open Court—La Semaine Anticléricale—Freidenker—The American Idea—Leeds Evening Express—Chat—Menschentum—Staffordshire Sentinel—Sunday Chronicle.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday, if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE September number of *Progress* is now ready. Mr. Foote opens with an article, which should be of great interest to Freethinkers, on Guyau's *L'Irréligion de la Future*. Mr. Wheeler has another interesting article on Mr. S. Laing's new volume, *A Modern Zoroastrian*. Mr. H. S. Salt contributes a felicitous article on Hawthorne, the great American novelist; and Mr. Leatham and Mr. Ball continue their spirited fight over Socialism. The number concludes, as usual, with a further instalment of Free-thought Biographies.

THE Peckham Branch is fighting a good battle on the Rye, holding its open-air meetings in the teeth of truly Christian opposition. We hope it will be well supported. As many Freethinkers as possible should gather round the platform and help to keep order. It will never do to let pious rowdies in black-cloth suits break up any of our outdoor meetings. To-day's (Aug. 28) lecture begins at 3.15.

THE Central London Branch, which we should like to see more active, holds its quarterly meeting this evening (Aug. 28) at the Hall of Science. We regret to learn that there will be no lecture owing to Mr. Proctor's being very ill.

WE learn from the *Athenæum* that Mr. Gerald Massey has received an additional Civil List pension of £30, making £100 in all. Among the memorialists who solicited for this increase for Mr. Massey were Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, Herbert Spencer, Professor Tyndall, Professor Bain, Sir J. Millais, Holman Hunt, Sir Henry Thompson, and Henry Irving.

MR. MASSEY attacks Christianity as unsparingly as we do. He gets a pension, and we get imprisonment. Is not this an instance of gross hypocrisy? We don't begrudge Mr. Massey his pension; on the contrary, we rejoice that he is always a hundred a year above want, and has leisure for exposing superstition; but we do kick at the notion that one man should be rewarded and another man punished for the same thing.

A TRANSLATION of the first part of Giordano Bruno's *Gli Eroici Furori* will soon be published by Mr. Redway, under the title of *The Heroic Enthusiasts*. The translator is Mrs. Louisa Williams.

THE *Nottingham Evening News* inserts a letter from Mr. A. H. Hunter, suggesting that since it is admitted that the drink traffic follows in the wake of the Christian missionary, that functionary should stay at home and engage in the work of civilising the slums. Mr. Hunter points out that the Japanese who came to investigate the result of Christianity in this country were unable to give a favorable report.

THE *Chicago Illustrated Graphic News* gives very good portraits and sketches of the lives of Mr. B. F. Underwood and his wife. Mr. Underwood's new Free-thought paper, the *Open Court*, is winning golden opinions, not only in the vicinity of its publication, but in all parts.

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Echo* asks why Christian names, taken from the Scriptures, are so seldom given to children nowadays. An analysis of a London registry in a large representative parish shows that the proportion of Christian names thus adopted from the old Jew-books has diminished year by year at an almost uniform rate of two and a-half per cent.; and this not only among the unbaptised children, but among those whose names are entered in the church books. The explanation no doubt is that the English are gradually losing taste for the old book. The French have, at least since the Revolution, given up the practice of naming their children from the Bible, and we are gradually following in the same direction. If not to keep up old family names, we suspect many would as soon think of calling a child *Belzebub* as *Habakkuk* or *Jeremiah*, or any of those Hebrew names in which our Puritan ancestors delighted.

ZOZIMOS calls attention, in the pages of the *Leeds Express*, to the open-air meetings of Secularists on Woodhouse Moor. He evidently does not relish the free treatment to which orthodoxy is exposed at the hands of its opponents, but he thinks the best way is to let them alone. He says: "Discussion is invited, and, I am sorry to say, is accepted sometimes." Christians never cut so poor a figure as when they try to defend their creed by argument. No wonder they think it best to avoid discussion.

ALTHOUGH Captain Dyas thinks he sees signs of a clerical reaction in Italy we are very pleased to see that the Catholic papers do not think so. On the contrary the *Tablet* laments that Signor Crispi, the President of the Council is less of a Christian if possible than Signor Depretis. He is in favor of the complete secularisation of schools, and the extension of the law of divorce. The abolition of ecclesiastical titles which has recently become law has given great umbrage to the Church. The Patriarch of Venice telegraphed to the king, urging him not to sign the law. King Humbert replied, "Your telegram reached me after I had signed the law. I feel that in this matter I have fulfilled an important duty. I am not afraid to meet the judgment of God, of the Church, and of Society."

ACCORDING to the Paris *L'Union Démocratique*, two delegates have been appointed to attend the International Conference in London on September 10, 11, and 12. Their names are M. Clemetshaw and Mde. Josephine Rocher.

WE trust the International Conference will be a great success. But the time has not arrived for such meetings to produce any practical fruit. No matter, the time will come.

THE *California Bee* says: "A religious census was instituted in Eureka, Humboldt County, for the purpose of ascertaining just how many people professed allegiance to the various churches. The parsons are alarmed, not because they have found how many nominal Christians there are in the community, but for the better reason that the census uncovered 3,000 Infidels in the town. The Churches proposed to go into politics on a teetotal Sunday-law platform, but the nest of Infidelity which their curiosity stirred up has brought about a halt in their ambitions."

THE same paper says that Colonel Ingersoll's Tribute to Ward Beecher is the only one worth reading in the collection, and fancies "there is nothing superior in the English language."

HERE is another Ingersoll bit from the *Buffalo Times*:—"A pension examiner in Illinois was required to take the deposition of an applicant for a pension who seemed very positive about the date on which he contracted a severe cold, which resulted in a chronic difficulty, for which he claimed the bounty of the government. His positiveness as to the date led to the inquiry how it was that he could swear to an incident which was comparatively trivial when it occurred. He said: "I know that the cold was contracted on the 21st of February, 1862, because Bob Ingersoll was married on the following day. How do I come to remember that so well? Why, Bob was the colonel of our regiment. I was on guard duty near Peoria on the night of the 21st. It was as cold as I ever felt it, and as I stood at my post Bob came along, and after saluting him I said, 'Bob, if you don't give me an overcoat, a bottle of whisky, or relieve me from this duty, I will freeze to death.' He replied, 'I'll do all three.' With that he took off his overcoat, which had been made as a portion of his wedding outfit, and handed it to me. Then from his inside pocket he hoisted out a flask of prime old red-eye and chucked that over too. After that he left me and returned to his quarters; and I'll be blamed if he didn't issue orders for the relief of the entire guard, as he said it was too cussed cold for guard duty that night. You see, that event impressed dates on my memory, and I am not likely to soon forget Colonel Bob's wedding."

NEW TESTAMENT PERSECUTION.

CHRISTIANS make a great point of the terrible persecutions to which the early Church was subjected. They exaggerate, they adopt sheer inventions and gross distortions of the truth, and they ignore the faults and imprudences which often led to unpopularity and sometimes to legal repression of objectionable Christian practices. Criminals were chronicled as martyrs, lunatics as saints, and meddlesome fools as resolute heroes. Christians shut their eyes to all this, and they also forget to note that persecutions were comparatively insignificant until Christianity acquired power, and the Christian sects persecuted each other with all the virulence of infallibility and religious zeal.

I propose limiting my remarks to the accounts furnished by the New Testament records, as Christians can hardly dispute the evidence derived from these sources. I notice that with every disposition to make the most of alleged persecutions, and with all the threatenings and slaughters

breathed forth by the then unconverted Paul, the writers only record two actual deaths as due to persecution, those namely of Jesus and of Stephen.¹ The apostles lived safely at Jerusalem, and when two of them were arrested by the priests one evening they were released the next morning (Acts iv., 3, 21). They preached freely, founded churches in all parts by their emissaries, received subscriptions from these foreign disciples, and were far more seriously troubled by internal dissensions, and by the moral and doctrinal failings of the various churches than they were by external interference. The amount of practical tolerance shown towards an interloping religion, in those fanatical times, can only be attributed to the restraining influence of the Roman power, and to the probable fact that the religion taught by the apostles was more deistic and less superstitious and presumptuous than would appear from records written at a later age of Christian development. Peter, James, John, and Jude, in their epistles, relate no executions of apostles or disciples, and make no particular allusions to persecutions. Throughout the New Testament such references are often merely prophetic or are of the exaggerated indefinite kind one always expects from zealous partizans who make mountains out of mole-hills when the trouble affects them, and reduce Alps to ant-hills when their acts injure others. Christians seem to regard it as an axiomatic truth that deaths inflicted on behalf of their religion, cannot be fairly compared with deaths inflicted in hostility to it. The crucifixion of Jesus and the stoning of Stephen were great crimes, but killing Ananias and Sapphira only showed praiseworthy zeal for religious morality. Peter and the Holy Ghost are somehow not to be blamed for slaying people in support of apostolic authority. Similarly that Paul should be imprisoned is dreadful, but that he should strike Elymas blind is a holy and commendable deed. That Paul should be scourged is also obviously wrong, but that Jesus should scourge the money-changers is as obviously right as that he should ruin a man by drowning his herd of pigs or by upsetting his treasures or stock-in-trade. These acts were evidently just because they were prompted by the correct kind of religious feeling: the sanctity of the temple and the hatefulness of pork being equally items of the Jewish faith of which Christ would not alter a jot or tittle.

Jesus had wilfully provoked his own sentence by refusing to deny the charge of sedition against him; Stephen had broken the laws of God and his country, and on his trial for blasphemy he had wilfully wounded the religious feelings of his countrymen and insulted their judges and priests by calling them all "betrayers and murderers," so that they were "cut to the heart" (Acts vii., 52, 54). Ananias and Sapphira, on the other hand, had merely told a fib in order that they might keep part of their own property from the apostles. Elymas, whom Paul blinded, had merely sought to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith (Acts xiii., 8), which means that he had argued against Christianity. Do not such acts of Peter, Paul, and Jesus, indicate a spirit of persecution on the part of the minority quite equal in zeal and relentlessness to that displayed by the majority, who had custom and law and the established religion on their side? The answer to this question was seen only too clearly as soon as Christianity obtained the sword of temporal power and was free to carry out its own ideas and wishes.

The vehemence of Christ's denunciations of the clergy of the day as hypocrites, vipers, children of hell, whited sepulchres full of corruption, and so forth, was merely an outward expression of intense feelings of wrath and hatred which would inevitably find vent in physical excesses and persecutions when opportunity occurred. His violence in the Temple was but a natural counterpart to the violence of his language elsewhere. His doctrine of eternal vengeance also indicated and inculcated a most horrible conception of the duty of persecution and punishment for religious offences. One need not wonder that his disciples endeavored to imitate the perfections of the divine model.

It is the energetic and overbearing Paul, the thirteenth apostle or troublesome "fourth party" of his time, who complains most of definite acts of persecution. But his oratory is hardly to be taken literally. He says for instance: "Are

¹ The execution of John the Baptist and the Herodian massacre cannot count as instances of Christian persecution. John was executed for a personal matter and not for his religion. The slaughtered infants are represented as being killed for a political reason, and were certainly not Christians, seeing that Christ was still in swaddling-clothes.

they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft" (2 Cor. xi., 23). As a liberal discount must be taken off the frequent deaths inflicted on him, it is possible that the stripes and imprisonments are also a trifle overdone. He once claimed and received exemption from flogging as a Roman citizen (Acts xxii., 25, 29), and the governor was "afraid." Why did not Paul similarly maintain his rights on other occasions? At one time he was scourged for casting out a spirit of divination from a damsel, a slave, who is alleged to have brought great profit to her owners by fortune-telling. As Paul upheld the rights of property in human flesh, he could hardly complain of his punishment, seeing that he had caused such great loss to the owners. Judging from analogy, it seems only too probable that Paul would often offend against local bye-laws and subject himself to legal punishment just as the Salvationists often do at the present day. When Christian zealots of this kind are punished for obstructing the traffic or annoying people by their howlings, they invariably regard such punishments as malignant persecution.

Another noticeable feature of Paul's troubles is that it was usually the Jews who sought to do him evil and the Pagan authorities who rescued him from their clutches. It was God's people who attacked God's people. If the heroes of the New Testament endured persecution it was the Old Testament that instigated that persecution. The Bible is thus a house divided against itself. In proportion as the endurance of cruelty and persecution may prove the sustaining power of one part of God's Word, the relentless infliction of that cruelty must equally prove the malignant effect of the teachings of the other part.

The fiery and indomitable busybody Paul boasts that he takes pleasure in persecution and distresses for Christ's sake (2 Cor. xii., 10)—a frame of mind which only too readily seeks or provokes or manufactures the gratification which it desires.

The germs of the great Christian persecutions of later centuries can be seen in Paul's teachings just as they can in Christ's. He expresses a charitable wish that those who (like Peter and other apostles) trouble his Galatian converts about circumcision might even be cut off (Gal. v., 12). Speaking upon this and perhaps other apostolic perversions of his own supreme version of the Gospel direct from heaven, he says emphatically: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. i., 8, 9). In another passage he cries out: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha" (1 Cor. xvi., 22).

When we compare Paul's utterances with Christ's teaching concerning the dreadful punishments of unbelief (Luke xii., 46; Mark xvi., 16; Rev. xxi., 28) we need not wonder at the subsequent bursting forth of a spirit of persecution of which the germs were sown by the leading teachers of the great Christian superstition that swallowed up the Roman civilisation and landed mankind in the misery and degradation of the Dark Ages.

W. P. BALL.

WHY AM I A HEATHEN?

BY A CHINAMAN.

(From the *North American Review*.)

MEN raised in a certain faith usually adhere to it or drift into one of its cognates. Thus a heathen may wander from simple Confucianism into some form of Buddhism or Brahmanism, just as a Christian may tire of following the Golden Rule, and adopt some special sect—one more latitudinarian or ceremonious, according to the temper of his religious conscientiousness; but the latter continues still a Christian, though a pervert; while the heathen, in Christian parlance, is still a pagan.

The main element of all religion is the moral code controlling and regulating the relations and acts of individuals toward "God, neighbor and self," and this intelligent "heathenism" was taught thousands of years before Christianity existed or Jewry borrowed it. Heathenism has not lost or lessened it since.

Born and raised a heathen, I learned and practised its moral and religious code; and acting thereunder I was useful to myself and many others. My conscience was clear, and my hopes as to future life were undimmed by distracting doubt. But, when about seventeen, I was transferred to the midst of our showy Christian civilization, and at this impressive period of life Christianity presented itself to me at first under its most alluring aspects; kind Christian

friends became particularly solicitous for my material and religious welfare, and I was only too willing to know the truth.

I had to take a good deal for granted as to the inspiration of the Bible—as is necessary to do to Christianize a non-Christian mind; and I even advanced so far under the spell of my would-be soul-savers that I seriously contemplated becoming the bearer of heavenly tidings to my "benighted" heathen people.

But before qualifying for this high mission, the Christian doctrine I would teach had to be learned, and here on the threshold I was bewildered by the multiplicity of Christian sects, each one claiming a monopoly of the only and narrow road to heaven.

I looked into Presbyterianism only to retreat shudderingly from a belief in a merciless God who had long foreordained most of the helpless human race to an eternal hell. To preach such a doctrine to intelligent heathen would only raise in their minds doubts of my sanity, if they did not believe I was lying.

Then I dipped into Baptist doctrines, but found so many sects therein, of different "shells," warring over the merits of cold water initiation and the method and time of using it, that I became disgusted with such trivialities; and the question of close communion or not only impressed me that some were very stingy and exclusive with their bit of bread and wine, and others a little less so.

Methodism struck me as a thunder-and-lightning religion—all profession and noise. You struck it, or it struck you, like a spasm—and so you "experienced" religion.

The Congregationalists deterred me with their starchiness and self-conscious true-goodness, and their desire only for high-toned affiliates. Unitarianism seemed all doubt, doubting even itself.

A number of other Protestant sects based on some novelty or eccentricity—like Quakerism—I found not worth a serious study by the non-Christian. But on one point this mass of Protestant dissension cordially agreed, and that was in a united hatred of Catholicism, the older form of Christianity. And Catholicism returned with interest this animosity. It haughtily declared itself the only true church, outside of which there was no salvation—for Protestants especially; that its chief prelate was the personal representative of God on earth, and that he was infallible. Here was religious unity, power, and authority with a vengeance. But, in chorus, my solicitous Protestant friends beseeched me not to touch Catholicism, declaring it was worse than my heathenism—in which I agreed; but the same line of argument also convinced me that Protestantism stood in the same category.

In fact, the more I studied Christianity in its various phases, and listened to the animadversions of one sect upon another, the more it all seemed to me "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals."

Disgusted with sectarianism, I turned to a simple study of the "inspired Bible" for enlightenment.

The creation fable did not disturb me, nor the Eden incident; but some vague doubts did arise with the deluge and Noah's ark. It seemed a reflection on a just and merciful divinity. And I was not at all satisfied of the honesty and goodness of Jacob, or his family, or their descendants, or that there was any particular merit or reason for their being the "chosen" of God, to the detriment of the rest of mankind; for they so appreciated God's special patronage that on every occasion they ran after other gods, and had a special idolatry for the "golden calf," to which some Christians allege they are still devoted. That God, failing to make something out of this stiff-necked race, concluded to send his son to redeem a few of them, and a few of the long-neglected gentiles, is not strikingly impressive to the heathen.

It may be flattering to the Christian to know it required the crucifixion of God to save him, and that nothing else would do; but it opens up a series of inferences that makes the idea more and more incomprehensible, and more and more inconsistent with a will, purpose, wisdom, and justice thoroughly divine.

But when I got to the new dispensation, with its sin-forgiving business, I figuratively "went to pieces" on Christianity. The idea that, however wicked the sinner, he had the same chance of salvation, "through the blood of the lamb," as the most God-fearing—in fact, that the eleventh hour man was entitled to the same heavenly compensation as the one who had labored in the Lord's vineyard from the first hour—all this was absolutely preposterous. It was not just and God is justice.

(To be continued.)

PROFANE JOKES.

EVANGELICAL vicar, who preaches and practices faith, without works: "I have no time to undertake another duty; there is more work in my parish than appears on the surface." "Yes, vicar, I agree with you; it never reaches there."

THE experience of Naomi, the daughter of Enoch, should not be forgotten by girls. She declared that she would not marry anyone who was not "just perfect," and she did not get a husband until she was five hundred and eighty years old.

"It seems to me," observed the sub-editor, "that the recording angel must have a pretty easy time of it nowadays." "Why so?" asked his wife. "Simply because if a man does anything good or bad it gets into the newspapers." "Well, what of that?" "Why, all the angel has to do is to go over the papers with a pair of scissors."

DURING the course of his prayer last Sunday morning a Western minister said: "O Lord! we desire to return more than the usual amount of thanks this morning for the blessings of the week just closed. Especially would we thank thee for the successful organization of a board of trade and for the gratifying outcome of that little South Side deal in which thy servant was interested. But above all we desire to return our thanks for the completion of the new race-track, which, as thou probably knowest, is the finest half-mile track west of the Missouri river."

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VOL. I.

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PROGRESS

THE

Freethinker's Magazine.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

The SEPTEMBER Number contains

- Guyau's "Irreligion of the Future." By G. W. Foote.
- Nathaniel Hawthorne's Romances. By H. S. Salt.
- "The New Sociology" Vindicated.—II. (A Rejoinder.) By James Leatham.
- A Reply to Mr. Leatham.—II. By W. P. Ball.
- A Modern Zoroastrian. By J. M. Wheeler.
- Review.
- Brief Freethought Biographies. By J. M. Wheeler.

Prisoner for Blasphemy.

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