

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

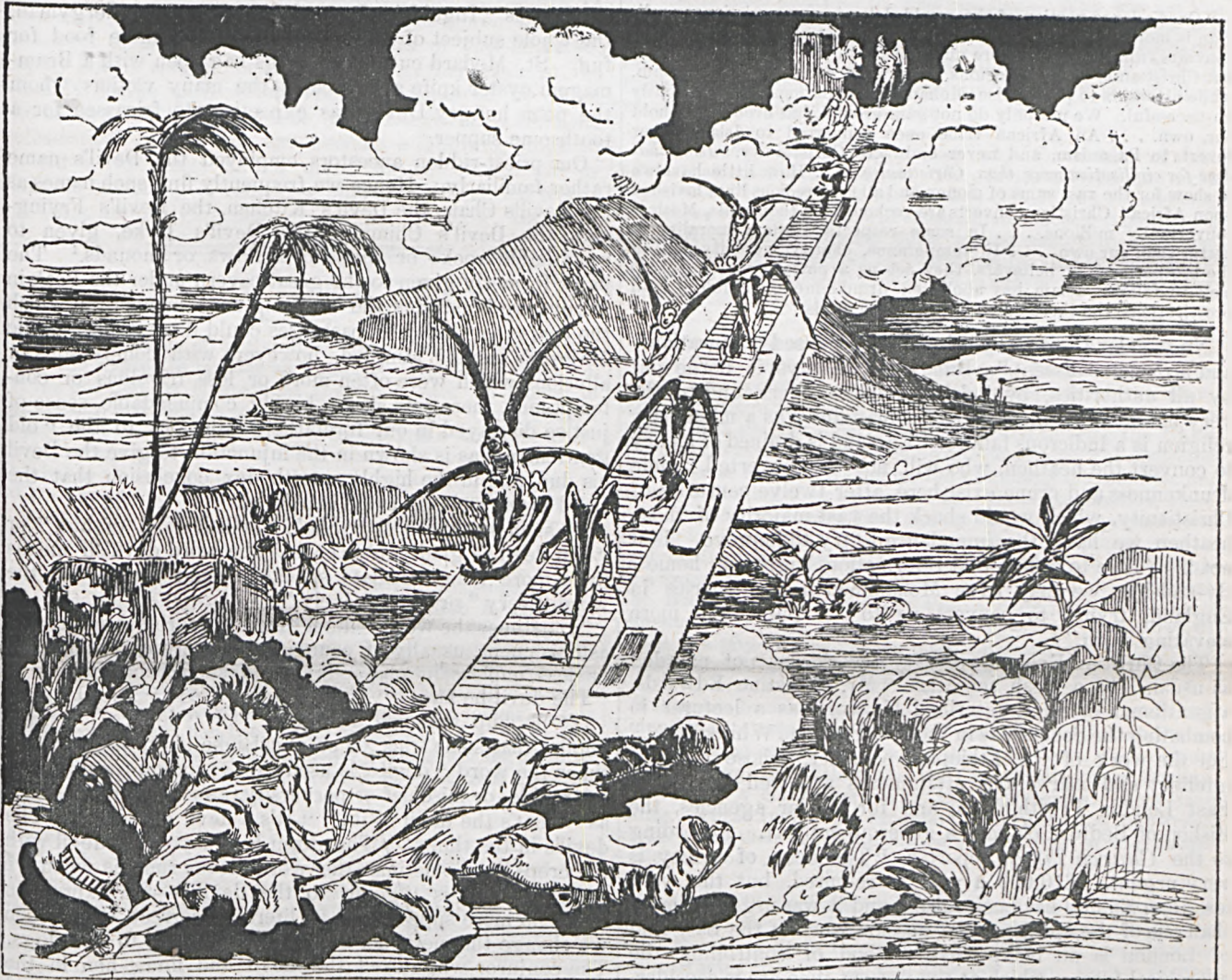
Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. VII.—No. 42.]

OCTOBER 16, 1887.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 220.



JACOB'S LADDER.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Anà, behold, the Lord stood above it.—GENESIS XXVIII, 12, 13.

SKY-PILOT MEETINGS.

THIS is an age of Congresses, and the fashion is not neglected by the gentlemen who undertake to pilot us to glory. The Church of England has just held its annual palaver at Wolverhampton and the Baptist Union has held its at Sheffield. Both are busy, grimy, manufacturing towns, which it would very much surprise Jesus Christ to set his eyes upon. He would behold thousands of men paying not the slightest regard to his pious, sentimental maxims about taking no thought for the morrow, laboring not for the meat that perisheth, and trusting in providence for daily bread and raiment; but working away steadily from Monday morning till Saturday noon, producing a myriad articles of necessity, comfort, and luxury, for the ever-increasing demands of a complex civilisation. Such a spectacle would fill him with astonishment, and he would probably wish himself back in his Galilean valley, like Livingstone's negro who embarked with his master for Europe, but was so utterly knocked up by the strange mass of scientific intricacy called a ship that he went mad three days after leaving his native shores. The modern representatives of Jesus Christ, however, are more accustomed to such sights and do not suffer an attack of vertigo. Nay, they actually meet together in two of our busiest industrial centres, and

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maunder about old superstitions which are contradicted by the spirit of everything around them. Where science reigns they talk about miracles; where systematic self-help prevails they prate about prayer; where man easily produces more than Jesus Christ and the Apostles ever dreamed of they chatter about providence; where the steam-engine thuds they gabble about the inspiration of a book which relates the adventures of a talking jackass.

Nothing in the Baptist Union Conference is noteworthy except the President's address. Dr. Culross's admissions as to the spread of Freethought are worth recording. Here is one.

"We cannot fail to see that there are subtle and powerful influences abroad adverse to faith, penetrating everywhere. We cannot draw intellectual breath without being affected by them. Reason, passion, learning, sarcasm, historic and scientific knowledge, the keenest critical skill, the most amazing faculty of creating hypotheses—all have come forth against the Gospel, if not to disprove, at least to throw it into doubt."

Still worse, if possible, science is making life better worth living, and "worldly" men can go on refining their enjoyments of sense and spirit without a thought of the great hereafter.

What has Dr. Culross to recommend as a means of stemming the torrent of infidelity? Absolutely nothing. He will not reason with the unbeliever, but simply preach

to him. The resurrection of Jesus, for instance, is widely doubted; but for us, says Dr. Culross, the question "is foreclosed. It is not open to debate; it cannot be so much as entertained." His sole prescription against Freethought is unlimited panegyric of Jesus Christ; but as this is weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable to the sceptic, however grateful to the ears of orthodoxy, it is obvious that Dr. Culross's recipe is as efficacious as the celebrated pill to cure earthquakes.

Coming to the Church Congress we find Canon Isaac Taylor's speech on Mohammedanism the most remarkable. We wish we could reproduce it in full, but the following extracts must suffice:

"Over a large portion of the world Islamism as a missionary religion is more successful than Christianity. Not only are the Moslem converts from paganism more numerous than the Christian converts, but Christianity in some regions is actually receding before Islam, while attempts to proselytise Mohammedan nations are notoriously unsuccessful. We not only do not gain ground, but even fail to hold our own. . . . An African tribe once converted to Islam never reverts to Paganism, and never embraces Christianity. *Islam has done for civilisation more than Christianity.* . . . How little have we to show for the vast sums of money and all the precious lives lavished upon Africa! Christian converts are reckoned by thousands, Moslem converts by millions. . . . In some respects Moslem morality is better than our own. . . . In temperance, charity, veracity, and in the brotherhood of believers, they set us a pattern we should do well to follow. Islam has abolished drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution—the three curses of Christian lands."

No wonder Canon Taylor's address caused "sensation" and aroused "dissent." But what he says is borne out by all authorities, by independent travellers, and by the very missionaries themselves. Christianity as a missionary religion is a ludicrous failure. England is drained of money to convert the heathen, who will not be converted, while drunkenness and crime exist here, after twelve centuries of Christianity, which would shock the vast majority of those heathen we have the impudence to try to improve. Is it not high time to reflect that reformation begins at home? By-and-bye we may have Mohammedan missionaries in England, trying to convert us to "a purer and more elevating faith."

The Christian Evidence Society's work was not paraded as usual. As a fresh sensation "Mr. Celestine Edwards, a gentleman of color, described his work as a lecturer in combating the Secularists in Victoria Park and Whitechapel." For the work of the Ethiopian preacher, whose majestic intellect and marvellous attainments are well known to East London Freethinkers, and for similar agencies, the Bishop of Bedford claimed a generous support. According to the *Church Times* reporter, "The need of money is very urgent. £10,000 a year is required, but this year less than £6,000 has been raised, and it was urged by more than one of the speakers that mission work at the East End of London is an inexpensive method of controlling the anarchical forces, which at the present time are in considerable activity." Only £10,000! Truly the gospel is without money and without price. Our Freethought open-air work has been carried on vigorously and successfully this summer in every part of London; yet the whole cost of our campaign will probably not exceed £60.

Mr. Champion, the Socialist, was another sensation. We do not question his motives, but we should like to know who paid his expenses, and the exact length of the bill. The clergy cheered his denunciation of capitalists, who will not let the legislature regulate wages and the hours of work; but as the proposal was not at their expense they showed a very cheap generosity. On the other hand, they hooted his remarks on the iniquity of spending £17,000 in thanking God that one woman had been allowed to live fifty years. "Shame," "rot," "withdraw," greeted the orator. Why? Simply because the crown, the Church, and the aristocracy are integral parts of the great system of privilege, and "a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." Mr. Champion talked a good deal about the Cross of Christ and the spirit of the New Testament. Will his next rôle be a leader in the Church Army? As for the clergy who cheered the nonsense about Christian Socialism, we ask them to show a little sincerity. Christian Socialism in the New Testament means giving all you have to the poor, and living in common. Suppose they try it, and let the platitudinous Archbishop of Canterbury begin with his £15,000 a year. That would, at any rate, be more honest than mouthing to working men that they are "very dear" to him, when the truth is he is very dear to them.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE COLLOQUIAL DEVIL.

(Concluded from page 326.)

DEVIL'S-DUST is old woollen material made up with the addition of new wool into shoddy.

A "devil's advocate" is one who takes up a cause he does not believe in, in order that that cause may not be totally unrepresented and the one-sided argument fall to the ground for lack of opposition.

Names like Teufelsdröckh, Devilshoof, the Devil on two sticks, and so forth, indicate a spirit of irreverence which is displayed still more fully and familiarly in the common appellations of Old Nick, Old Harry, Old Scratch, etc. In the famous "Ingoldsby Legends," written by a clergyman, the whole subject of diabolism is treated as mere food for fun. St. Medard cuts the Devil's bag open with a Brummagem oyster knife and releases the many victims whom the poor hungry Devil was expecting to fricassee for a toothsome supper.

Our priest-ridden ancestors employed the Devil's name rather familiarly. Hence we frequently find such names as the Devil's Chair, the Devil's Kitchen, the Devil's Frying-pan, the Devil's Chimney, the Devil's Dyke, given to remarkable rocks or caves or hollows or mounds.¹ The name formerly given to the great cavern under the Peak in Derbyshire illustrates the contemptuous manner in which the coarse jocularity of past ages could drag in his Satanic Majesty's name. Mingled, however, with comparisons or allusions which were often more or less frivolous or contemptuous, there was also a highly commendable sense of justice displayed in our forefathers' allusions to the "old gentleman," as is shown in the injunction to give the Devil his due, and in the highly unorthodox conclusion that the Devil is not as black as he is painted.

In such sentences as "She's devilish fond of him" or "I'm devilish glad you've come," the word devilish means little more than a sedate speaker would convey by the word "very" or "excessively."

Sometimes the word "devil" merely expresses surprise or astonishment, usually of course, but not always, of a more or less unpleasant character, as in such exclamations as "The devil he has!" "The devil you are!" "The Devil!"

To be "up to some devilment" or "devilry" usually implies that some trick or practical joke is brewing. Sometimes the word "devil" is used as a synonym for difficulty or trouble, or mischief or perversity, as in such expressions as "That's the devil of it!" "It's a devil of a job," "The devil's in the thing," "The storm has played the devil with the crops." Sometimes the word means ruin, as when we say that a man is "going to the devil"—the expression being no more supposed to be literally correct than when we change the metaphor and say he is going to the dogs. The conjuror who raised the devil and flung him in the face of his disciple in the shape of an empty purse, showed the modern tendency to make his Satanic majesty only a forcible figure of speech. "Devil take the thing" only expresses anger or annoyance by an otherwise meaningless phrase. "Devil take the hindmost" only means that each man must look after himself, and that the last man in the race must fare the worst.

One idiomatic use of the term is in such phrases as "Who the devil did this?" "What the devil do you want here?" "When the devil are you going to send me that money?" In parsing such sentences "the devil" must evidently be taken as the concluding part of the phrase, "in the name of the devil." Sometimes the name of the devil's abode is substituted as a means of obtaining still stronger emphasis. The "devil" in such connection is merely an expletive expressive of irritation, and, in some cases, of astonishment, as when King George wondered how the devil the apple got into the dumpling.

The most striking idiom, grammatically considered, is that in which "the devil" is used as a humorous negative, as is seen in the old couplet:

"The devil was ill; the devil a monk would be.
The devil grew well; the devil a monk was he."

¹ Often, however, these names indicated some sense of awe or terror which we of modern days are apt to estimate too lightly, now the terror has faded into mere comicality or grotesque tomfoolery of the imagination. God's name also was used lightly as well as the Devil's, but to a very much smaller extent; showing that our ancestors had more respect for God than for Satan, or else that Satanic ideas occurred more readily to their imaginations in the presence of the peculiarities or sublimities of natural scenery.

"The devil a monk was he" is the idiomatic equivalent of "he was *not* a monk." "The devil a bit you'll get" means "Not a bit will you get." "The devil you will" means "You *won't*." Must "the devil" in such cases be taken as an adverbial phrase qualifying the verb by negating it? Anyhow, the expression illustrates the association of the word "devil" with the idea of contradiction and sarcasm. The devil is the great negationist, the "Everlasting No" personified.

This brief examination of some of the liberties commonly taken with the Devil's name in colloquial speech shows, I think, that the general belief in diabolism is far from being of a really deep-seated or influential character. The little jocularities, familiarities, buffooneries, and trivialities so often seen in the popular use of the quasi-sacred name of the leader of the opposition in the affairs of the universe, display him in a comic or familiar view rather than in the solemnly hostile spirit which would be displayed by those who believe and tremble. The world has revolted from the ecclesiastical Devil. He has become a laughing-stock in his old-world guise, and a mere figure of speech or idiomatic seasoning of rollicking phrases in the actual words and thoughts of living men.

W. P. BALL.

ACID DROPS.

AGNES HEADFORD, of Totterdown, Bristol, joined the Salvation Army and wanted to become an "officer." Her father objected, but the girl told her companions she would save up money to buy clothes, and then go to the training college. She obtained employment of Mr. J. C. Marsh, a draper, and a fortnight afterwards three pounds' worth of his property was found in her box. This led to an introduction to the magistrates, but Mr. Marsh did not press the charge, and the hallelujah lass is spared a taste of prison. We hope she will never steal again for the glory and honor of God.

CARDINAL MANNING has been wailing at the Kensington Pro-Cathedral on the injustice which the poor Church is suffering. "When the world became Christian," he says, "it began to lay its offerings at the feet of the Apostles. And now that the world is falling away from Christianity it is beginning to rob the Church." But it appears that what Cardinal Manning means by robbing the Church is declining to support it any longer. It is exactly as if a quack had been living on a family for years, and on being found out, and refused further payment for his delusive services, he should exclaim that he was robbed because he had a vested interest in fleecing them.

CONTINUING his discourse, Cardinal Manning explained how the Church was first endowed in England. Besides tithes and first-fruits which "were imposed upon the population," there were Peter's-pence, and "the householder who failed three times to make year by year his proportionate offer to the successor of Peter had his goods estreated." Well, this was very hard lines, though Cardinal Manning does not see it in that light. "Such," he exclaims, "was the generosity of our Saxon forefathers." Surely a very little sense of humor would have saved Cardinal Manning from such an egregious blunder. Robbing a man of all his goods because he failed to send pence to the Pope is a most curious form of "generosity." If this is the generosity of priests, what must their wrath be? History furnishes the answer—Imprisonment, torture and burning alive, all for the glory of God.

LADY SANDHURST informs the world, through the medium of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, that "The basis of the Christian religion is self-sacrificing love," and that "the basis of all true politics is the same." Her ladyship is wrong in both statements. The basis of true politics is not self-sacrificing love but justice, and no reformer ever made any headway unless he was backed up by a solid interest. Where would Parnell be without the Irish tenants? And those tenants don't want to sacrifice themselves at all; on the contrary, they want to better their material position at the expense of their tyrannous landlords. Now let us look at Christianity. The Christian doesn't want to die for Jesus; no, he says "Jesus died for me." And what is his chief idea? How to get into heaven and keep out of hell. Nothing could be more purely selfish, and to talk of this sort of thing as self-sacrificing love is really too absurd.

A WRITER in the *Echo* gives an account of a visit to Jung-Si (corrupted into Johnson), the East-end opium dealer, who makes his living by charging opium-smokers sixpence a pipe for the luxury on his establishment. Jung-Si seems too shrewd for the missionaries who warn him to flee from the wrath to come. They tell him that everybody who smokes tobacco or opium will go to hell, but he replies, "God made tobacco and opium, and so we may smoke them." The argument is more plausible than cogent, yet it appears to dumbfounder the missionaries, who are not a match for the Heathen Chinee at any game.

JUNG-SI, however, is not without a religion of his own. Inhaling a cloud of smoke, and letting it out with a rush, he exclaimed to his visitor, "Me dream beautiful; me dream of God and heaven and friends and country, with beautiful trees and rushing water." Quite so. Religion is a mental disease, and no wonder God and heaven figure in the dreams of an opium debauchee. Without the opium, but under the stimulus of hymns and preaching, the Christian dreams of Kingdom-come; and instead of regarding it as a symptom of overwrought imagination, he looks upon it as a sign of his spiritual superiority.

THE Dean of Armagh brought some Irish wit to the Church Congress. Speaking after Mr. Champion, who dealt out some of Champion's vinegar, the Dean said "he had mingled among many thousands of working people [during the Jubilee show], and not one of them said with the first Socialist—'Why was not this sold and given to the poor?'" The gentleman who asked that question in the New Testament was Judas Iscariot. Evidently the Dean of Armagh is a livelier debater than the Rev. G. F. H. Rowe, who is defending Christianity in the dreariest god-bless-us-all fashion against Mrs. Besant.

THE Sunday School Union asks why the results of their efforts have not been greater. They invite universal prayer on their behalf on Sunday and Monday, Oct. 16 and 17, and trust that these special prayers will cause a more efficacious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are quite willing that Christians shall go on amusing themselves by praying or braying to their heart's content. The more time they spend in prayer the less time they will have for persecuting Freethinkers.

At the annual meeting of the Metropolitan Association of School Board teachers the Chairman read a further report of the committee appointed to inquire into the reports of the Board inspectors upon Scripture examinations. They were strongly of opinion that the said reports were calculated to bring the Christian religion and Christian teaching into contempt. The inspectors should never have been employed in examining the children, and then in ridiculing their answers. The whole examination, moreover, was of a haphazard kind, and the inspectors' reports showed glaring inconsistencies. They were strongly of opinion that in applying the usual examination tests and "cram" to what should be a sacred thing the School Board erred greatly in judgment. The Board should be content with a daily quiet half-hour of religious instruction. The Association approved of this report, but it is a pity they hadn't the intelligence and the pluck to ask to be relieved from clergymen's work altogether.

THERE has been a remarkable exodus of Indians from British Columbia to Alaska, which is now part of the United States. The provoking cause, according to the *Daily News*, was a dispute with the Anglican Bishop and the Church Missionary Society, followed by a controversy with the Government about land claims. These Indians are exceptionally civilised and industrious workers, and their departure will be a great loss to the British settlement they are leaving.

ACCORDING to the *Italie*, the present Pope is a shrewd hand at making investments. A short time ago Monsignor Czacki, the Papal Nuncio at Paris, received a million lire from him which he was instructed to invest in the Five per Cent. Italian Rentes. The purchase was made at Paris to avoid the scandal to the Ultramontane party of the Pope supporting the Italian Government at Rome. The *Italie* concludes that Leo XIII. is convinced of the stability of the present régime, though no doubt if the removal of his million lire at a convenient moment would embarrass the Italian Government it would be sold out immediately. The whole income of the Pope is about £300,000 per annum.

PIO NONO, the last occupant of St. Peter's chair, put fourteen million lire in the Bank of England, giving out that it was to provide pensions for the officers of the Papal army. Not a single officer, however, ever got the handling of a single cent.

THE modern Jeremiah, Herbert Freund, has been remanded again. Captain Sergeant, who endeavored to prove the modern prophet's sanity, claims to belong to the New Dispensation, a curious and we are afraid mythical society with 120,000 members, including Roman Catholics, Protestants, Dissenters, Mohammedans and Buddhists. Captain Sergeant deposed that the prisoner was perfectly sane and had deeply studied the esoteric nature of religion. Probably Freund would also swear that Captain Sergeant is perfectly sane. Mr. Mansfield, the magistrate, however, said he would not believe Freund to be sane if five hundred doctors were to certify to his sanity, and he should send the case for trial. Pity Mr. Mansfield wasn't magistrate in the time of Isaiah and Ezekiel. We might have been spared many chapters of prophetic raving and rubbish.

DR. ANDREW CLARK has been delivering another screed against Materialism before the Young Men's Christian Association. But would it not be better if, as a doctor, he ceased talking about the universal force, which he calls Father, although he might as well call it Mother, and explained to these Christian young men how Jesus turned water into wine, how he cured the deaf and dumb, how his clay ointment cured blindness, and how his mother

conceived and gave birth to him while in a state of virginity? We invite Dr. Andrew Clark to give these questions his attention the next time he stands up as a scientific champion of Christianity.

Two Salvationists, Albert Mullins and Henry Jenkins, got to fisticuffs in the S. A. Barracks at Chippenham and cross-summoned each other, much to the edification of the unsaved.

"COLONEL" NICOL, of the London Division of the Salvation Army, wants a "Saved, Sanctified, Shorthand Reporter." Gentlemen connected with the press, unfortunately, don't go in for piety, unless there is a better screw offered than the Salvation Army is likely to give.

THIS is a copy of a circular recently issued by the Salvation Army in a Kansas town: "Smiling Belle from Wichita, Kas., the girl who jumped out of a two-storey window to get salvation, will be at —'s rink on Monday, April 18th, at 8 p.m. Cyclones of salvation! Tornadoes of powers! Gales of grace! Celestial breezes! Collection at the door to defray expenses."

THE *South Australia Register* reports an "all-night Salvation Army meeting," from which it appears that the Army over there are fully as unrestrained as in our own country. The report says: "From beginning to end the affair was a scene of wild, maddened religious enthusiasm." Among the congregation were women with suckling babies, and girls of twelve and upwards, unaccompanied. "Every man and woman present, save the one spectator, was greatly excited. They jumped to their feet, danced, clapped their hands, hugged, kissed, and embraced one another, and uttered, in the most thrilling tones, exclamations it would be irreverent to repeat. Many threw themselves to the ground. Men and women alike grovelled on the floor, rubbing their faces and hands in the dust. Their bodies were contorted into the most trying positions. The shrieks were more like those Dante tells of than of the saved." We should think it highly desirable that police officers should be present at all-night Salvation Army meetings.

ANY stuff seems to go down with the Spiritists. Miss Fay, who we believe was patronised by Alderman Barkas of Newcastle, advertises that various members of the Royal Society of London have given her letters "signed by such men as W. Crooks, Wallace, Sargant Cox and Ionides the Greek philosopher." One need not know how to spell the name of Mr. Crookes or the word Sergeant to succeed as a medium. But a watchful providence has carefully adjusted the credulity of the fools to match the ignorance of the knaves.

THE New York papers are laughing at Dr. Parker and his Ward Beecher oration, but mostly at him.

THE following answers to the query, Why is Dr. Parker like a black key in the piano? have been sent in:—Because he can't be natural. Because he's a flat. Because the "Star Spangled Banner" can be played without him. Because he's painfully prominent. Because directly a finger is laid on him he goes down. Because he's only accidentally useful.

AN article in the orthodox *Church Quarterly Review* for October, on "Sceptical Christianity," takes the Rev. H. R. Haweis as an exponent thereof, and shows excellent reasons for considering him an ignorant and puzzled-headed charlatan, who tries to retain all the theological treacle while dispensing with the brimstone, which is so essential in all true Christianity.

THE new Islington chapel, now being built with the compensation money paid by the Board of Works, is to have a gymnasium. Fancy Jesus and the Apostles doing athletics, Peter hanging on the horizontal bar by one leg, Matthew and John climbing the poles like the wooden toy monkeys of our childhood, James sailing out on the giant-strides, and Jesus with his feet in the air walking on his hands along the parallel bar.

IN Hamilton City a Baptist church and a Chinese laundry stand side by side. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

No eel in the grasp of a cook ever squirmed and wriggled more than the orthodox Christian minister will in his endeavors to reconcile the Word of God with common sense and common justice. Here is the Rev. Dr. Moody Stewart, in this month's *Expositor*, setting up a defence for Jael's assassination of Sisera on the ground that he had forfeited his life under Arab law by intruding into a woman's apartment in the absence of her husband. The narrative (Judges iv., 18) states explicitly that "Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not." To kill the man while asleep in her tent after this invitation was treacherous murder. Yet the angel of the Lord, through the prophetess Deborah, declared Jael "blessed above women."

HERE too is the Rev. A. Smythe Palmer, who, under the title "A Misunderstood Miracle," publishes a work on Joshua's staying the sun. Mr. Palmer makes out that Joshua only prayed that the storm-clouds would continue to darken the heavens

until the enemy was routed, although according to our version he said "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon." Such are the expedients by which the clergy hope to retain faith in a divine revelation which can be made to mean just whatever they like.

THOMAS EDWARD TURNER died at St. Thomas's Hospital, London, from injuries he received through flinging himself in front of a train at Vauxhall Station. The jury returned a verdict of "temporary insanity." Deceased's mind was unbings by his wife's unfaithfulness. He left a brief letter for her in which God was mentioned twice.

ENGLAND boasts of being the most Christian country in the world. London, for instance, has seven times as many churches as Paris. Yet Mr. Samuel Smith, writing from Berlin, where there are fewer churches still, is so impressed with the superiority of the people that he actually describes the English as "The most drunken, demoralised, and utterly incapable population to be found in any modern State."

AN amusing incident occurred at a harvest festival at All Saints' Church. The preacher was laying down the doctrine that the goal of glory lay through the path of duty. The congregation was very much impressed with the discourse, and a hush of awe was upon them. Suddenly a German band struck up outside with a more than usually fiendish lot of clarionets and trombones, with "Roy's Wife of Aldivaloch," "Jenny Dang the Weaver," "Willie Brewed a Peck o' Mawt," and a few other choice Scotch airs. As the reporters would say, the effect on the awe-struck congregation may be better imagined than described.

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* followed up the Church Congress debate on Socialism with one of its sensational articles on "The Citizen Christ." Like all the articles on such subjects in Mr. Stead's paper, this one was as amorphous as a jelly-fish. No reader could decide whether the writer regards Jesus as a man or a god. At the very end it was observed that the English elector is going in for justice all round, "and in so doing he believes, rightly or wrongly, that he is doing as Christ would have done if he were an actual carpenter duly entered on the register of parliamentary electors in Bethnal Green." Begging Mr. Stead's pardon for differing from such an infallible gentleman, the English elector does nothing of the kind. In politics he no more thinks of Christ than he thinks of the man in the moon. Electors who are *not* Christians pay Christ very little attention at any time, and electors who *are* Christians must regard it as blasphemy to talk of him as an East-end Socialist.

"CHURCH carriages" are to be added to railway trains on Sun" days, in Russia, to enable railway officials and others to attend religious services on those days. They are getting on in Russia.

WHEN Mr. Fox Bourne edited the *Weekly Dispatch* it was possible to get notices of publications issued from a Freethought office. But since Dr. Hunter, who is supposed to be extremely heterodox, assumed the editorial chair, a different policy has been pursued. We have forwarded for review at various times a number of our books and pamphlets, including the Socialism debate with Mrs. Besant, *Royal Paupers*, and *Crimes of Christianity*, but not one of them has been so much as acknowledged. What can be the reason of this systematic silence? Is the editor of the *Weekly Dispatch* scared at our name or imprint; or is the gentleman who writes the reviews given *carte blanche* to display his partiality?

THIS is the way the ex-slaves of the South express profound thought in simple language at praise-meetings:

"You say you're travelling to the skies,
Yes, my Lord!
Then why don't you stop tellin' lies,
Yes, my Lord!"

SPURGEON was confined to his house last Sunday by another attack of rheumatic gout in the right hand and knee. Another preacher had to take his place at the Tabernacle. Probably this means a soul or two lost for ever for the want of Spurgeon's rousing fervor. Why don't he go down on the knee he can still bend and pray for the health without which he cannot convert souls and save them from hell? He believes in the power of prayer, or says he does. Either he don't try it, or else it fails; for we cannot suppose that Spurgeon lacks the mere grain of faith which is necessary to render the prayer effective. Spurgeon should break a window and get six weeks in prison. That would ease his gout—at least for a while.

"BULLY, if True," is the headline which the editor of a paper in Crete, Neb., prints over the announcement that the pastor of the Congregational church will not preach for a month.

A LOCAL grocer, named Hoad, has recovered the sum of £12 from the Corporation of Hythe, in Kent, for damage done to his stock through the overflow of a drain, which, it was alleged, had not been cleared. The contention of the Corporation was that the overflow was "an act of God," being caused by extraordinary rainfall. If God did the mischief they had better call on God to pay the damages.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, October 16, Free Library Hall, Ocean Road, South Shields; at 11, "Thus Saith the Lord;" at 3, "The Cooling of Hell;" at 7, "The Blood of Christ."

OCT. 23, Portsmouth; 30, Hall of Science, London.
 NOV. 3, North Lambeth; 6, Birmingham; 13, Liverpool; 20, Camberwell; 27, Sunderland.
 DEC. 4, Nottingham; 11 and 18, Hall of Science, London.
 JAN. 1, Milton, Hall, London; 15, Hall of Science, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

GERMAN FREETHINKER.—We have handed your 2s. 6d. for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund to Mr. Forder, to whom all such subscriptions should be sent direct. Politics cannot be treated on in this journal. You will find our views on the monarchy in *Royal Paupers*, a pamphlet which, after running through six thousand in a few months, is still in constant demand.

M. CLAY.—Cuttings are always welcome.

E. H.—Shall appear.

F. W. JONES.—The *Church Times*. Mr. St. George Mivart's article appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* for July. The second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* is being prepared as rapidly as possible.

DEVIL'S HOOF.—Your orthodox friend must be joking. Cromwell did not "burn large cities in Ireland," and nothing could be more ludicrous than the notion that he was animated by "the principles of Hobbes." There is only one book quoted in Cromwell's letters and speeches; it is quoted incessantly; and that book is the Bible. Hobbes's *Leviathan* was not written till after Cromwell's Irish campaign.

J. T. V.—You will find the lines "Roll on thou deep dark Ocean, roll," etc., at the conclusion of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

R. FOX.—Your batch of cuttings received with thanks.

E. A. HAY.—This journal is conducted for a special purpose. If you want to read astronomy you will find other publications devoted to physical science, and plenty of cheap books. Buchner's *Force and Matter* is published at 7s. 6d. Meslier's (not D'Alembert's) *Bon Sens*, English translation, 2s. For Mr. Foote's South Shields lectures see top of this page. Pope's line "Whatever is is right" is meaningless if all things happen necessarily through the laws of matter and force. It can only have a meaning on the theory that there is a God behind Nature. In that sense we differ from Pope. Heaps of things are wrong, and honest sensible men are always trying to set some of them right.

J. TEMPLE sends 1s. for the Open-Air Lecture Fund. The joke he sends has appeared already.

VOLTAIRE.—You choose a big *nom de plume*. Why not take God Almighty while you are about it? The essay you refer to never reached us.

INQUIRER.—The Jewish year is 243 years less than the Christian era added to 4004, the presumed date of the Creation, because the ages given to the patriarchs in our version differ to that extent from what we call the received Hebrew text. The Septuagint makes the period from the creation till Jesus 1,386 years longer.

MONSIEUR DE PARIS.—(1) The treatise *De tribus Impostoribus* (the three impostors—Moses, Christ and Mahomet) was the most noted heretical work of the sixteenth century. It was ascribed to Frederick II., Emperor of Germany, but really was not in existence until long after. Brunet conjectures it was written by Bona-venture Desperiers. There are both French and English versions, but they are scarce. (2) John Fiske is an American professor who largely follows Herbert Spencer and writes on *Cosmic Philosophy*. (3) Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* is anti-Christian and well worth reading.

MEPHISTO.—Political verses are out of our line.

J. FITCH.—Your opinion of our courage is of infinitesimal importance. We have debated with the Rev. Dr. McCann, the Rev. Dr. A. J. Harrison, and other Christians of some standing, but we are not going to enter the lists against nobodies; still less shall we condescend to engage in a formal discussion of personalities. When a scoundrel assaults us we deal with him in our own fashion, but we are not so silly as to furnish him with an audience to hear his groans.

F. E. SIMS.—Roscoe's edition of Swift is the cheapest complete one; a second-hand copy (2 vols.) would cost from 14s. to 18s. The terrific "Modest Proposal" is included in Nimmo's excellent selection, price 5s.

H. E. RICHARDSON, 46 Brunswick St., London, S.E., thanks those who have sent him Freethought literature for distribution, especially the donor who sent books, etc., probably from Southampton. Tracts would be welcome.—The five points of Calvinism are particular predestination, limited atonement, natural inability, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of saints.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Jus—Neues Freireligioes Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—Radical—Fun and Gossip—Liverpool Daily Post—Lucifer—Liberty—Suffolk Chronicle—Burton Evening Gazette—Nottingham Evening News—West Sussex Gazette—Sunderland Echo—Bristol Mercury—L'Union Democratique.

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.

PROFESSOR BAIN, the sceptical Lord Rector of Aberdeen University, has induced the Court to abolish the religious test imposed on graduates in medicines and arts, by which they were required to profess belief in Christianity as it is usually preached. This is good news indeed, and Professor Bain deserves the warmest thanks of every liberal-minded person.

ACCORDING to the *Oldham Chronicle*, at a meeting at the Hall of Science, Horsedeg Street, the following resolution was proposed by Mr. C. Callaghan, seconded by Mr. J. E. Broadbent, and carried unanimously: "That the best thanks of this meeting be given to the Free Libraries Committee for refusing to withdraw the *Freethinker* from the tables of Union Street Reading Room."

THE *Chronicle* comments in the following vigorous manner on this subject: "It is a pity that people cannot agree to differ without importing the bitterness of uncharitableness into the dispute. Among the publications on the tables of the Oldham Public Newsroom is a copy of the *Freethinker*. It is supplied gratuitously, and, therefore, the poor excuse that it is paid for out of the Free Library rate does not hold. It appears that there are bigots in Oldham, as in other towns, and some of these men of small mind cannot tolerate the presence of the *Freethinker*, although there are hundreds of papers, magazines and other periodicals of a corrective character. Frequently offensive remarks are written in the copy of the *Freethinker*, and in various other offensive ways these bigots of little mind seek to gratify their spleen against the propagation of opinions which if they were wise they would strive to controvert by honest argument and logic. They do not do so simply because they possess not the mental, and still less the scholastic, ability. Recently a memorial was presented to the Library Committee praying that enlightened body of gentlemen not to allow the *Freethinker* to appear on the tables of the newsroom. The Committee, to their credit, refused the absurd application, and for their boldness I think they deserve the thanks of an intelligent public. I say nothing about the principles of the *Freethinker*, but I do think that in doing their little best to suppress the paper, so far as Oldham Free Library Newsroom is concerned, those people adopted a very foolish policy, and did more to advertise the periodical than to retard its circulation."

THE *Literary World* devotes a paragraph to the *Crimes of Christianity*. Apparently finding that the book can neither be refuted nor ridiculed, being a terrible impeachment of Christianity compiled chiefly from Christian writers, this literary organ of Dissent, which is published at the *Christian World* office, thinks it best to stand on its dignity, and this is what it writes:—"If we are not mistaken, the first-named of these authors is the same gentleman who was imprisoned for blasphemy. We may be excused from any detailed review of a work animated throughout by the bitterest hatred of Christianity." This is, of course, intended to be dignified, but it is infinitely silly. First of all, does the *L. W.* expect that a writer who has been imprisoned for blasphemy should entertain an intense love for Christianity? Next, is a man's imprisonment a reason for declining to review his book? Mr. Parnell has been in prison, but what would be thought of any Tory scribe who should write, if the great Irishman published a volume, "we believe this author has been inside a gaol, and therefore," etc., etc.? Thirdly is it a literary crime to be animated by hatred of Christianity? If so, would the *L. W.* be consistent and decline to review Clifford's *Essays* or Swinburne's *Songs before Sunrise*? The fact is, our orthodox contemporary dares not criticise the volume, and its dignity is nothing but a masked retreat.

JUST a word in conclusion. Undoubtedly the two authors of the *Crimes of Christianity* detest that religion when they do not despise it. But what has that to do with any reviewer? All he is concerned with is this—Do the authors let their hatred of Christianity distort the facts? Now the work is cram-full of what are facts or lies. If they are facts, admit them; if they are lies, expose them. There are also hundreds of references to standard authors, and if any of them are inaccurate let it be shown. As it is, the friends of Christianity treat the book as Mr. William Sikes's friends might treat his indictment if there were no power to bring him into the dock. The game may succeed for a while, but not for long. However reluctantly, Christianity will have to come up for trial, and every reader of its *Crimes* knows beforehand what must be its sentence.

THE fourth and concluding part of the *Bible Handbook for Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians* is in the press and will be published shortly. It will contain the Unfulfilled Prophecies and the Indecencies. The latter, however, will not be printed in full; though expressive headlines will be given, and precise references to the texts, which every student can hunt up for himself, and copy out if necessary. It has been held by the

superior judges that printing such extracts, even with the best intention, is a crime, punishable with the utmost severity; and of course we have no ambition to be imprisoned by Christian hypocrites for publishing their own filth.

The next two numbers of *Bible Heroes* will be "Jephthah & Co." and "Professor Samson." They will be published on October 26. As the work will probably extend to twenty-five numbers, the first twelve will for convenience' sake be bound up in paper covers at one shilling. When complete it will be bound in cloth.

THE parish church of Molin de Rey, a town in the neighborhood of Barcelona, has been the scene of a disturbance not common in Spain. The priest, preaching against the Liberals and secular schools, said that these latter taught children the road to the brothel. "You lie," shouted one of the high functionaries of the town, and the congregation rose *en masse*, most insisting that the preacher should withdraw his imputation, and the row became so violent that the preacher had to take refuge in the sacristy.

MR. W. S. BELL, an American Freethought lecturer, is to have a four nights' discussion at Salem, Nebraska, with Elder Williamson. The meetings begin on Nov. 1st, and the questions for debate are: Resolved, That Christ is an historical character, the *logos* of God, and hence the savior of the world. Elder Williamson affirms. 2. Resolved, That the Bible is of human origin, and hence not a revelation from God. W. S. Bell affirms.

THE Liverpool Town Council, despite the vehement opposition of Alderman Livingstone and Dr. Hamilton, decided by 15 to 11 to let the Rotunda Lecture Hall to the Sunday Society for Sunday lectures.

PROF. W. ROBERTSON SMITH, in an article in the current number of the *Contemporary Review*, contends that archaeology lends no support to the theory of the early date of the Pentateuch. He shows that Mr. Poole, in attempting to prove the antiquity of the Pentateuch from Egyptian monuments, has proved too much, for he makes tribes of Jacob and Joseph settled in Palestine two hundred years before the Exodus.

MR. POOLE says that the story of Joseph's trial is thought to have suggested the central incident of an Egyptian romance written about the time of the Exodus. Prof. Smith retorts that the resemblance is indeed very remarkable, but it cuts both ways, and equally lends itself to the suggestion that the story of Joseph may have been colored by the influence of Egyptian folklore. He says: "In post-biblical times the Jews borrowed folklore very freely from other nations, and the researches of the Assyriologists go to prove that in olden times legends were borrowed from Babylon, whether directly or through the Phœnicians. If from Babylon, why not from Egypt?"

SUNDAY afternoon free lectures will be delivered at South Place Institute, Finsbury, beginning with to-day (Oct. 16) when Mr. J. Allanson Picton occupies the platform. Chair taken at 4. The subjects are all political, and mostly on Ireland.

IS MR. BRADLAUGH RIGHT?

MR. BRADLAUGH devotes two paragraphs, in two different parts of his paper, to my two articles, and both paragraphs are equivalent to silence. Mr. Bradlaugh says his speeches "do not appear to him to require defence." I never said they needed defence. What I said was that they needed explanation; and I said it with studied courtesy. Mr. Bradlaugh says I have misapprehended him. But the statement conveys little information. I am anxious to know *where* I have misapprehended him; or, in other words, what he really means. Mr. Bradlaugh might, on such a vital matter, condescend to make himself intelligible even to such unperceptive Freethinkers as myself; for, after all, he is President of the National Secular Society, and leaders should not be above explicitness with their own party. Never to explain, is too much like the policy of the ancient oracles.

I confess I do not understand Mr. Bradlaugh's reference to "other versions" of his speeches. If he refers to my articles again he will find that my criticisms were based on the report in the *National Reformer*. I pointed out, indeed, where it differed on an important point from another report, but I distinctly said that Mr. Bradlaugh should be judged by what appeared in his own paper. When Mr. Bradlaugh states that I have been doubtless "misled as to his actual words," I am constrained to think he has given my articles a very hasty perusal. I quoted extensively from the *National Reformer* report, which gave, as he allows, "substantially what he sought to express."

Mr. J. M. Robertson writes in Mrs. Besant's "Daybreak" that I "challenge" the accuracy of his report; and, in the same breath, he confesses to having taken that part of the report bodily from the *Weekly Dispatch*. I did not "challenge" its accuracy; I merely acted on the assumption that even the *National Reformer* reporter might be mistaken, and where he differed from another reporter I gave both versions. Mr. Robertson's accuracy or inaccuracy was not in my thoughts. I was concerned about the far more important matter of Mr. Bradlaugh's meaning. Yet I will add, if the remark seems called for, that Mr. Robertson's summary reports are always admirably done.

G. W. FOOTE.

WHY CHRISTIANITY LASTS.

A FAVORITE argument of Christian apologists is that Christianity has outlasted its opponents. This divine religion, we are told, has withstood the attacks of unbelievers from the days of Celsus and Porphyry. The objections of modern sceptics are not new. They may be found for the most part in the work of Celsus, which was answered by Origen. Christianity triumphed over its early opponents by the force of its inherent truth, and it will equally triumph over the cavils of the modern unbeliever. It not only survives but flourishes in spite of the intellectual forces which assail it.

Before proceeding to examine the question why Christianity lasts to-day, let us see if it is a fact that in the past it triumphed over its opponents by the force of truth. Of those who wrote against Christianity in the early ages Christian historians have preserved the names of five—Celsus, Fronto, Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian. The works of all these writers have been destroyed, not by the hand of time, but by Christian bigotry.¹ The edict of Theodosius remains, in which he condemns the work of Porphyry and all other writings against the Christian religion to be burnt. Even the works of all the early Christian heretics have been destroyed. Whole libraries were devastated. As all those who concealed heretical works incurred the penalty of death, many men of letters even destroyed their entire libraries lest some suspected work should bring them unknowingly within the power of the law. Not only were the heretical books hunted out and burnt, but also, where possible, the authors shared the fate of their works. From the first Christianity discouraged the reading of all profane literature, and did its best to destroy it. The Catholic Church, in this as in much else, preserves the early spirit of Christianity. It does not permit its devotees to read works assailing the faith. Heretics it doomed to death, and Protestants have not been slow in according the same treatment to those whose heresy went further than their own. Hence, from the time of Julian (331-363) till the sixteenth century, not a single work is known to have been openly directed against Christianity. Multitudes were burnt simply on suspicion of being unbelievers. In England as late as 1612 Bartholomew Legate and Edward Wightman were burnt to death merely for denying the Trinity; and the statute *de hæretico comburendo* was not abolished until 1678. When torture and death were the penalty for the expression of doubt, the prudent kept their doubts to themselves. Directly Christianity was assailed force was used to suppress criticism. Woolston died in prison in 1733 for contending that the miracles were allegories. Annet, in 1762, had to stand in the pillory, and was imprisoned for a year for criticising the Pentateuch. Even the mildly heretical writings of Servetus were seized by Bishop Gibson and served as Calvin had served their author over one hundred and seventy years before. For selling Paine's *Age of Reason* scores of men have been imprisoned. How vain is it, in the face of these facts, to boast of the triumph of Christianity. It silenced its opponents by the gag and the stake. To this day it is a penal offence to deny the Scriptures or the truth of Christianity. The wonder then is, not that Christianity lasts in spite of its assailants, but that any should dare assail it at all.

Further, in so far as Christianity has been assailed, it has given way. If we go back to the days of the

¹ The work of Celsus is in part preserved in the writings of his opponent, Origen; but even Christians now admit that the answer of Origen left much to be desired. See "The Early Opponents of Christianity" in the current number of *Progress*.

Reformation, we find that Christianity stood then for the whole system of the Church of Rome. The Reformers successfully assailed a part of that system. Still more was attacked by Voltaire and the great French heretics of the last century, and although they were obliged to resort to *nomms de guerre* and other artifices in their attack, Christianity on the Continent has never recovered from the blow, but stands discredited in the eyes of most intelligent men.

And how has Christianity modified itself to meet the attack of the nineteenth century? Fifty years ago the creeds were preached in their integrity. The whole of the Bible was held to be inspired, and eternal torments were believed to be the lot of all who disbelieved God's Word. Who preaches this now? Science, once spurned, is now supplicated to be friendly to religion, and Christianity seeks to keep afloat by throwing out most of its original cargo.

That it manages, even while slowly disintegrating, to keep up a strong appearance of vitality, is by no means surprising if we consider the forces in its favor. It inherits an enormous prestige from the past ages, during which it crushed out as far as possible all minds it could not mould in its favor. Every generation is suborned in its behalf. The receptive minds of children, credulous and imaginative as those of our barbarous ancestry, form a rich soil for the culture of Christian superstition. Taught in the nursery and school-room to regard the dogmas of religion with unquestioning reverence, the child is prepared to stifle his reason when he reads the sacred book or hears the minister from the pulpit:

"The priest continues what the nurse began,
And thus the child imposes on the man."

Religion is the one thing which is taken on trust without examination. About the last thing a believer thinks of doing is to make his faith the subject of reason or argument. Habit, which is one of the strongest forces of human nature, is a great upholder of Christianity.

Then there is the dread of scepticism: the fear that inquiry into religion will disturb the foundations of morality and lead to the unsettlement of society; the hope that an hypothetical hell may serve as an auxiliary to the policeman. I do not mean to imply that Christianity is not upheld by some amount of genuine faith. No doubt some do look on it as a sort of cheap and easy remedy for sin, and find consolation in the woes denounced on unbelievers; but very few have real belief in its dogmas compared with the many who acquiesce in them rather than incur the frowns of Mrs. Grundy.

Consider, too, the power of a State-endowed Establishment, providing livings for some twenty thousand persons, and with prizes valuing from one thousand to fifteen thousand a-year. How much this serves to keep Christianity respectable, and to ally on its side those aiming at social position and influence. If equal prizes were open to unbelievers; if the bishops and parsons were free to think and speak what they really think without interference with their livings; if every writer and speaker were able to utter his true thoughts without fear of any ill-consequence to himself or to those he loves; if, finally, children were brought up with minds unbiassed on religion, would Christianity then endure against the forces that would assail it? We would not give it more than a quarter of a century.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE CHURCHMAN'S PRAYER.

At night I kneel me down to pray
(Just for to say my little say)
To God whom I adore.
I ask him just, to me, to give
All that I want while I may live—
And just a little more.

I bid him keep me, during life,
From work, from want, and also strife;
To make me just his own;
That all those horrid wicked folks,
Who make profane and vulgar jokes,
May quickly be o'erthrow'n.

O keep me, Lord, with the elect,
My goods and person well protect;
In fact be my defence,
Grant that thine enemies may be
From pain and anguish never free,
And blind and void of sense.

Grant that my houses and my lands
May still remain in Christian hands,
Safe from each creed that's vile;
May fanes that spurn the true belief
Sooner or later come to grief,
And be without a tile!

O Lord give me full length of days,
And guide my feet through pleasant ways,
Till I am called to bliss.
As for the wicked, send them soon,
To regions—far beyond the moon—
Where they will burn and hiss.

WAS JESUS SINCERE?

I CANNOT understand Jesus of Nazareth. If he had any character, it seems to me to have been tinged with hypocrisy, lunacy, and cowardice. We are told in Matthew, Mark, and Luke that he "healed all" (Matt. xii., 15). The infallible apostles exaggerated terribly; and, to be on the safe side, we may assume that, quack as he was, he cured "many." If this really happened, it could not be kept secret; yet the author of the miracles enjoins secrecy: "They should not make him known" (v. 16). Jesus cures a leper, and says: "See thou tell no man" (Matt. viii., 3, 4). He restores the sight of two blind men, and says: "See that no man know it" (Matt. ix., 29-30). Peter declares him to be "Christ the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi., 17-20). He commands his disciples to "tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ" (verse 20). According to Luke ix., 20-21, Peter said: "Thou art the Christ of God!" Jesus commanded them "to tell no man that thing" (vide also v. 36). The transfiguration was witnessed by Peter, James, and John (Matt. xvii., 9). When what I call "the trance" was over Jesus said: "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man (why not Son of God?) be risen again from the dead" (Cui bono? Jesus to the leper he had cured: "See thou say nothing to any man" (Mark. i., 44). Jesus cures a deaf man, and says: "That they should tell no man; but the more he charged them (the multitude), so much the more a great deal they published it" (Mark. vii., 36). What a farce! If Jesus knew aught of human nature, he must have been aware that the multitude—nay, some of his own disciples—would blab it out. Jesus asks his disciples: "Whom do men say that I am?" (Mark viii., 27-30). Peter retorts: "Thou art the Christ" (v. 29). "And he charged them that they should tell no man of him." He raised Jairus's daughter from the dead, then charges them "that they should tell no man what was done" (Luke viii., 56); but Matthew, *au contraire*, plainly states: "And the fame thereof went abroad into all that land" (ix., 26). I should like to know what progress Christianity could make when the watchword of Jesus was, "Tell no man," or "Keep it dark." If his religion was "to redeem the human race," the sooner all was known respecting it and the thaumaturgic originator the better for mankind. To delay such knowledge, if necessary for the salvation of our race, a single hour, would be nothing short of a crime against the millions. If P. T. Barnum had started a religious show, depend upon it he would have boomed it becomingly, with the assistance of those modern apostles called "sandwich-men." Christ was certainly not sincere in enjoining the witnesses of his miracles to secrecy. He must have had doubts as to the success of his doctrines, and in such a case alone secrecy is necessary. The truth scorns trickery, mystery, miracles, and secrecy.

CHAS. KROLL LAPORTE.

REVIEW.

The Agnostic Annual, 1888; London: W. Stewart and Co.—The only very noticeable article is one by Mr. Samuel Laing on "Agnosticism and Christianity." Mr. Laing is usually an excellent writer, but the present article does him little credit, or rather considerable discredit. What could be looser than to talk about "that great region, the Unknowable, where nothing is known, and therefore all things are possible"? The tautology and the logic of this utterance are worthy of each other. Mr. Laing concludes that doubters and believers should all shake hands and become Christian Agnostics, which, if Christianity means anything and Agnosticism means anything, is a flat contradiction in terms. These Agnostics, with all their talk about the Unknowable, pretend to a remarkably good knowledge of it, and God comes as pat from their lips as it does from the most superstitious parrot. One poet in this number exclaims:

"Know every path that e'er was trod,
Leads devious to the heart of God."

Probably he has tried them all. Gerald Massey's article is worth reading, but it contains nothing new to those who are acquainted with his books. Dr. Bithell is of course, thoughtful, but why does he feel so acutely when Freethought journals speak "contemptuously and abusively" of Abraham, Moses, and David? Would he feel so acutely about Agamemnon, Hector, and Achilles? And if not, why not? Thomas Mead's translation from Marmontel is the most readable article in the number.

PROFANE JOKES.

At what season did Eve eat the apple? Early in the Fall.
The man who sold his birthright for a mess of potash was evidently not afraid of a lye.

"MAMMA, the teacher says people are all made of dust," "Yes, my dear, so they are." "Well, mamma, are white people made of dust?" "Yes." "Yes." "Well, then, I suppose colored people are made of coal dust, ain't they?"

MINISTER (at the baptismal font, to father).—Name, please? FATHER (with impediment in his speech): "Jo-Jo-Josephine Smith." MINISTER (unaware of the impediment): "Joe Joe Josephine Smith, I baptise thee," etc. (consternation of the family).

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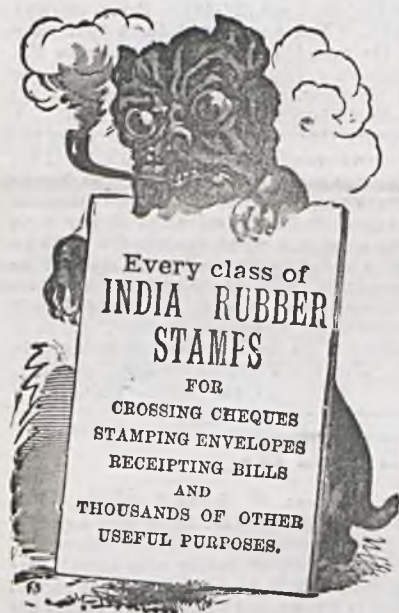
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