

# THE FREETHINKER

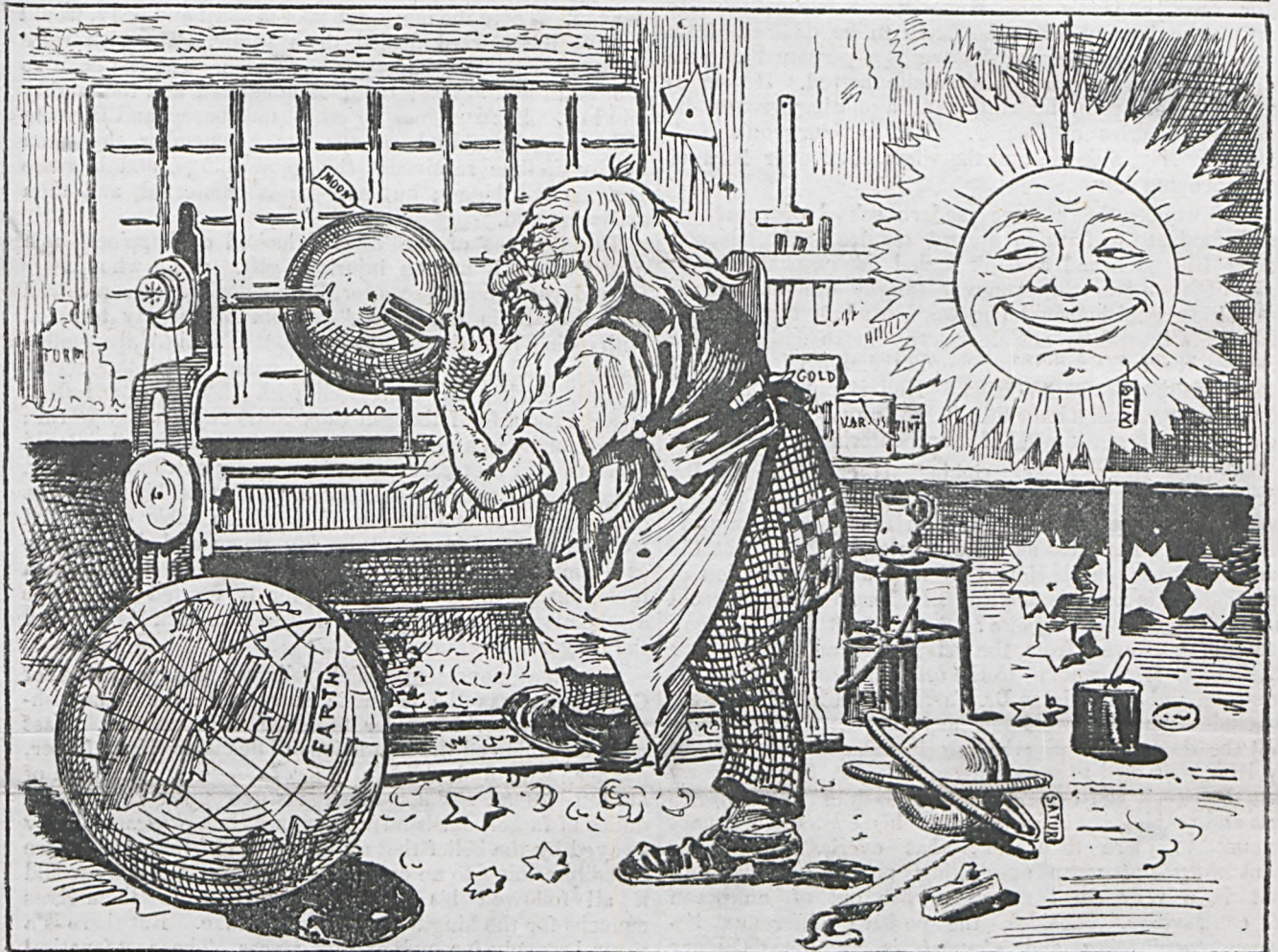
EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



GOD'S WORKSHOP.

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.—GEN. I., 16.

## FOR EVER.

"I GO on for ever," says Tennyson's brook, and the same might be said by the Christian's hell. Men come, but none go, and hell is always filling, yet never full. There is plenty of room for all comers, and God in his infinite mercy has taken care that the stream of immigration shall be unceasing. However restricted the walls are, there is no end of room downwards, for hell is bottomless, though we suppose it is well roofed-in with asbestos, to keep the damned from rising into a cooler atmosphere. "The more the merrier," cries Old Nick, as he shovels on the coals and digs the noisiest of his subject wretches in the ribs with his pitchfork. "Send us your prisoners," he shouts to the Lord, as King Henry shouted to Harry Hotspur and his father; and in they rush pell-mell, devil take the foremost as well as the hindmost, at the rate of over a hundred thousand a day from this world, to say nothing of the multitudes that may come from other inhabited planets in infinite space. Kings and peasants, lords and laborers, ladies and charwomen, prize-fighters and cripples—all sorts and conditions of men and women bustle along to the everlasting bonfire, to frizzle in

"that immortal fry  
Of almost everybody born to die."

Once in, the clothes-question troubles them no more. They have no need to discuss the relative merits of cotton and wool. Dr. Jaeger pleads to them in vain. They are in a devilish hot Turkish bath, though without the luxury

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of shampooing and a shiver under the *douche*. No more tailor's bills for ever! Ye gods, what a relief! Who dares to say, after this, that their misery is complete?

Still, their fate is sad, for the place is literally as hot as hell. They cry out for the turncock, and he cometh not. They protest that they have paid water rates for a great many years, and that the Company ought to send them a pailful of the true *aqua vitæ* for "auld lang syne." They are roasted, baked, fried, boiled and grilled; always cooked, though never quite done.

"Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin'!  
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'!

"Some Christians have a comfortable creed!" exclaims Byron. *Some Christians, forsooth!* Why most of them believe this infernal doctrine. The vast majority of those who profess "the only true religion" believe that the Father of all will go on cooking his own children, or nine-tenths of them, for ever, without granting them the benefit of being eaten for a change. Spurgeon, for instance, who is a perfect type of the ordinary Christian, and whose very success is a success of mediocrity, expresses himself as follows:—

"Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God and it shall be written, 'For ever!' When the damned jangle the burning irons of their torment they shall say, 'For ever!' When they howl, echo cries, 'For ever!'"

"'For ever' is written on their racks,  
'For ever' on their chains;  
'For ever' burneth in the fire,  
'For ever' ever reigns."

What poetry, what humanity, what philosophy! As I write a dog is barking in a neighboring garden, and another is howling replication from the opposite row of houses. I implore a miracle to smite them into silence, yet I unhesitatingly say that this canine duet is sweeter music than Spurgeon's "gospel of glad tidings." Fancy paying a man twelve hundred a year to preach this diabolical shoddy, which is hardly fit for the *Police News* or "a penny dreadful"! I would undertake to preach a better doctrine in better English for half the money.

Spurgeon has no doubt about the fiery punishment being "for ever." God's vengeance never sleepeth. He pursues the damned, whom he made to be damned, from everlasting to everlasting. He works a perpetual miracle of incombustion to gratify his infinite hatred. He smiles at unutterable pain, he laughs at agonising groans, he mocks at the cries of despair. Such is Spurgeon's God. A God? Nay, a devil; and the vilest devil ever born of ignorance and fear.

What wonder that a more modern school of preachers revolt against this faith in eternal torture? Archdeacon Farrar has published a book called *Eternal Hope*, to prove that Jesus Christ never taught the doctrine of everlasting punishment. The word used in the twenty-fifth of Matthew does not necessarily mean endless. He proposes to substitute the word "*eternal*," which is adopted in the Revised Version. Hell is not "for ever," but only for "a very long time." At any rate, there will be a chance of getting out of it and entering heaven.

Doubtless this "fresh wrinkle" is creditable to Dr. Farrar's heart. But is it logical? If everlasting punishment means something short of everlasting, how can everlasting life be regarded as quite everlasting? Is not the duration of heaven shortened as well as the duration of hell? Nay, is not this doctrine of Eternal Hope our old friend Purgatory in disguise? And is not that a Pagan doctrine, borrowed from the religion of ancient Egypt? Dr. Pusey's arguments as to the original Greek are at least as strong and scholarly as Dr. Farrar's, and he deliberately concludes that "if we know anything at all, we know that the doctrine of Everlasting Punishment was taught by Him Who died to save us from it." Dr. Farrar knows that the Greek word translated "everlasting" often means that and nothing less, and therefore his contention cannot amount to more than this, that everlasting punishment *may not* mean everlasting punishment. Surely that is a very small mercy to fish out of an ocean of controversy. Besides, the positive difference between *everlasting* and *eternal* is as unsatisfactory as the slender difference between Hell and Gehenna. Hell by any other name is just as hot, and everlasting by any other name is just as long. Suppose Dr. Farrar were himself in hell—though we beg pardon for assuming the possible damnation of such an immaculate gentleman—how much real comfort would he derive from the assurance that his sufferings would not be everlasting but eternal? To ordinary mortals like myself it only seems that the faculty which enabled the schoolmen to argue how many angels could dance on the point of a needle has not deserted their successors in the art of divinity. Dr. Farrar should face this question. Why did Jesus Christ use language which necessitates endless controversy? Why did he speak so that Dr. Farrar understands him in one way and Dr. Pusey in another, while common Englishmen, who know nothing of Greek, are in a still worse puzzle? Nor is the Greek word itself the one which Jesus Christ actually used. He spoke in some Syriac dialect, and therefore our Greek text is at best a translation, while our English version is at best a translation of a translation. Common sense suggests that Jesus Christ should speak again in plain English, and unless he does so people who possess a fair amount of that faculty will shut their ears to a long-winded controversy, where much is disputed but nothing can be known. Meanwhile an honest man, who would not needlessly inflict pain on the worst of his fellow creatures, will scorn the blasphemous notion that God—if God exist—will torture his own children for being what he made them. Let us be just, the proverb says, even to the Devil. I say, let us be just, even to God; and until he plainly tells us that he really is more cruel and malignant than the worst malefactor that ever cursed the earth, we are bound in justice to treat the charge as a calumny.

G. W. FOOTE.

## WORLDLINESS.

For a right conception of Christianity we must look at the conditions amid which it arose. The Roman Empire was all powerful. The Jewish race, long the subject of wars and oppression, suffered most from its very tenacity. Christianity was a gospel of despair. The earth was so bad that it was expected its affairs would soon be wound up and the greater part of the assets pass into the hands of the Devil, who had long had a deep interest in the concern. For the rest compensation would be found in the kingdom of heaven. There the meek, the poor in spirit and body, would receive the reward denied them below. The rich were menaced with woe simply for being rich. The last shall be first and the first last; the humble exalted and the mighty laid low. Lazarus goes to Abraham's bosom and Dives to Gehenna, when Abraham tells him "remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

The Rabbins of the Talmud looked on happiness as a questionable, if not an injurious gift. "He who passes forty days without discomfort," they declare "has received his full share in the world." Rabbi Eliezar lay tortured with pain; his friends grieved, but Rabbi Akiba smiled serenely. Asked if he felt no compassion, the Rabbi replied, "when all went well with thee I was full of apprehension, for I thought thou hadst enjoyed thy world; now thou art in agony my apprehension vanishes." Rabbi Chanina laid up treasures in heaven by extreme poverty. Urged by his wife to ask for a portion of his reward at once, he prayed and the leg of a golden table descended from on high. Disquieted he lay down and dreamed he saw himself with the saints in heaven, seated at a golden table, but lo his table tottered, for it wanted a leg. He awoke alarmed, and implored God to take back his gift, and the prayer was granted.

The great movement which followed the preaching of Christianity was the monastic movement; the relinquishment of this world in order to make salvation sure. Vast numbers followed the injunctions of Jesus to leave father, mother, wife and child in order to gain the kingdom of heaven. That teacher never insisted upon the human duties of father, husband and citizen, but was manifestly swayed by the belief that all the things of this world were speedily coming to an end, as indeed they practically would if all followed his injunctions, and made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. But there is a natural remedy for such extravagances. The most fanatical leave the world to be peopled by those a few degrees less credulous. Worldliness, however denounced, will always hold its own, for the sufficient reason that those who are really devoid of it must die out, and make room for those better endowed. So far from being a vice it is the necessary condition of all virtue. It is simply worldliness, the strong love of the world, which sustains us in our duties, which sharpens our understanding, and stimulates our action. Otherworldliness is simply the removal to another sphere of selfishness unsatisfied here. Well might Carlyle say, "Thy future fate while thou makest *it* the chief question, seems to me extremely questionable; I do not think it can be good." Christianity has done its best to abstract men's minds from the practical duties of life, and to fix them on faith, grace, regeneration, prayers, sermons, and sacraments. It has taught the religious rich to squander their hundreds of thousands every year on useless missions to the heathen. It has taught the poor to be content with that position of life in which it has pleased the devil to put them. It has directed attention to death rather than to life; to an imaginary future instead of to the actual present; and, so far as it has succeeded in its endeavor, it has distorted human life and warped morality.

The thought of the eternal interests at stake has made the worse kind of Christians intolerant bigots and persecutors. The better kind have been urged to the most painful ascetic observances. The fear of becoming worldly has disinclined them to take interest in schemes for the amelioration of the material conditions of life.

Cardinal Newman says:

"Many pursuits, in themselves right and honest, are, nevertheless, to be engaged in with caution, lest they seduce us; and those perhaps with especial caution which tend to the well-being

of men in this life. The science, for instance, of good government, of acquiring wealth, of preventing and relieving want and the like, are especially dangerous; for fixing, as they do, our exertions in this world as an end, they go far to persuade us that they have no other end."<sup>1</sup>

According to this, those who most seek to make a heaven on earth are nearest to the brink of hell. "Be not conformed to the world. Do all for the glory of God. Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world," said the Christian apostles. Fortunately they cannot be obeyed. Those who desert the world, with its sorrows, duties, and delights, in order to make their own salvation sure, are but eliminated to make room for those better fitted to meet the storm and stress of life. All Christian teaching does is to make its professors hypocrites, boasting of heavenly treasures, yet laying up as snug a store as possible on earth; looking forward to the joys of heaven, yet dreading to depart, and sorrowing when their loved ones are called away; professing to renounce the vanities of this wicked world, yet sharing to the fullest extent in those vanities. What people who say they long for a better world usually mean is that they would like a life as like this as possible, only where they would be more comfortable. How much better simply to set to work to make themselves and others more comfortable here.

J. M. WHEELER.

## ACID DROPS.

A MRS. RILEY, a missionary lady who is "working for Christ" in Chen-tu, in China, thus narrates the conversion of her washer-woman: "After being here she had a dream, in which she saw me beautifully dressed, while she was in rags, and so dirty. On inquiring into the reason of it, she found it was because I worshipped the true God, and she a false one. Since then she has come regularly, and is now as zealous for the Lord Jesus as she used to be for Buddha." The woman was either honestly converted by a silly dream or dishonestly converted by the desire to obtain employment. What is the worth of such proselytes?

THE *Rock*, in its "Foreign Missions" columns, says that "The Christian natives of the South Sea Islands prepare their Sunday food on Saturday. Not a fire is lighted, nor a tree climbed, nor a canoe seen on the water, nor a journey undertaken by land on the Lord's Day." The clergy tell us that the Mosaic law is abrogated. Why then do they enforce a rigid Sabbatarianism on their submissive converts abroad which they repudiate among less submissive Christians at home? Does it not show how they would treat us if they had the power?

SOME of the clergy are doing badly through the fall in agricultural prices and rents. In Nottinghamshire one living which ten years ago was worth £500 a-year now only brings in £160, another which brought in £200 now only brings in £40, another which was of the value of £250 is now worth less than nothing, as the charges exceed the receipts, another formerly worth £500 now only produces £88, while another has sunk in value from £400 to £60.

THE *Rock* announces in its "Church of England" column that the Queen accepted from the Rev. Charles M. Owen, Vicar of St. George's, Edgbaston, Birmingham, a bottle of water direct from the River Jordan for the christening of the infant Princess of Battenburg. Did this convey a double portion of the Holy Spirit to the infant?

AT Ipswich County Court, the Rev. Gabriel Young, curate of Coddham, Suffolk, was ordered to pay £5 5s. as compensation for assaulting his servant and £1 for wrongful dismissal, with costs.

NELLIE WELLS, a young woman, a member of the Salvation Army, was fined 3s. and costs at Clerkenwell Police-court for causing an obstruction by holding a religious service at Newington Green, on the 6th ult.

THE Rev. Herbert Bell, minister of the John Knox parish church at Aberdeen, threw himself in front of the express train while passing Kettybrewster, from Aberdeen to the North, and was killed. There is far more reason for saying that Christianity leads to suicide than that Atheism does. Not that Talmage will alter his views on account of such trivial and inconvenient circumstances as actual facts. Of course they are beneath notice to a pious theorist.

SOME Christians boast that the late Samuel Morley was an ardent supporter of religious liberty. They fail to notice that he voted against Mr. Bradlaugh's admission to the House of Com-

SPURGEON advocates continual prayer that some good may come out of the "Down-grade" split in the Baptist camp. Seeing how little use the prayers of his many followers are in the prevention of his often infirmities, it requires faith to believe that the prayers will be any more efficacious in the one case than in the other.

AT Pesth a congratulatory address to the Pope on his Jubilee has received over a million signatures. It contains a strong declaration in favor of the temporal power of the Papacy. But this power is dead beyond recovery. Signatures are as likely to bring it back again as they are the primeval monsters that tare each other in the slime.

ACCORDING to the weekly faith-healing reports in the *Christian Herald*, Edward Jessep praises God for healing his boy of scarlet fever in response to prayer. Next day the boy was sent out to play in the streets with his schoolfellows. This is how scarlet fever gets spread. Mr. Jessep forgot to pray that the disease might not be contagious as it is usually during the convalescent stage. This pious father ought to be locked up for imperilling life and health in so reckless a fashion.

THE *Church Times* says that the teetotal movement against the use of alcoholic wine at the communion table is taking "the form of a very dangerous heresy. . . reproducing the leading principle of the most immoral of the ancient heresies, Manicheism, by denouncing as inherently evil a substance formed from a natural product by a natural process. . . and thus making God the author of evil, or else setting up a rival Creator." This absurd charge of heresy is of course backed up, in the usual religious fashion, with odious charges of immorality. The teetotal communicant is accused of purchasing "the right of practising other vices by his abstaining from one only."

THE *Christian Commonwealth* complains of the "usual cudgeling and brain-smashing style" of the *Church Times*, and says that this latter journal is "glaringly inconsistent with itself, for it is every week lashing on its readers to do a thousand things which the Lord never thought of doing or teaching his followers to do." Christian journals are a happy family. The *Christian Commonwealth* also reminds the *Church Times* that it is defending the use of a chemical concoction which often contains no grape juice whatever.

COLLISION in the Channel—over a hundred lives lost. Steamer burnt to the waters edge in the Canton River and four hundred passengers drowned. Couldn't God prevent some of these frightful accidents if he really wished and really were as watchful and as powerful as Christians pretend? So pitiful and merciful a God might even condescend to save Barnum's menagerie from being burnt. But elephants and performing ponies are of course beneath his notice. "Doth God take thought for oxen?"

THE Rev. Henry Valentine Pickering, a Church of England clergyman, has been found guilty of committing an act of gross indecency upon a young Dutch hairdresser, named John De Boer. The prisoner has been a missionary to the heathen in Africa and other places. Some time ago he came to live in Lorrinmore Square, Walworth, where, according to the evidence of the police, his reputation for morality was not high. One night at the beginning of November he took De Boer into his house, gave him some drink, which sent him to sleep, and then committed the crime with which he was charged. The reverend gentleman, who is sixty-six years of age, was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labor.

THAT pious journal the *Rock*, has some gleams of sense occasionally. It says for instance: "It is ridiculous on the face of it, that while the Prime Minister of the richest empire in the world receives only £5,000 a-year, the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London should each be getting £10,000, and the Archbishop of Canterbury £15,000!" Well if churchmen were in earnest they could soon reform this. If they spent more of their energy in mending their own faults they would have a little less time to spend in libelling "infidelity."

THE Rev. Percy T. Andrews refuses to have anything to do with the Basingtoke Temperance Society, because he would have to associate with "schismatics," that is, Nonconformists, whom he describes as "living in the sin of schisma, the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat." He now suggests that they are "heathens and publicans" following in the steps of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. One Nonconformist wished to know whether all Christians who were outside the pale of the Church of England would be shut out from salvation. To this the reverend fanatic replied, "Those outside of the ark were drowned." Probably such a bigot does right in not inflicting his presence upon an association of reasonable men.

MRS. ANNA FORBES, the wife of the eminent naturalist, in her account of her experiences in the Eastern Archipelago, entitled *Insulude*, gives a similar account of Christianity there to that given by travellers concerning the converts in Africa. Mrs. Forbes says, "Christians' are inveterately lazy, and think them-

<sup>1</sup> "Parochial and Plain Sermons," vol. vii., p. 30.

selves too much the equals of the Europeans, whose religion they have adopted, to serve them. Their change of religion has done much for them in many ways as a community, but they have benefitted little individually. Intoxication, forbidden in the Mohammedan faith, is too frequent, and they are altogether less reliable than their Islamite brethren."

THE Portsmouth "Christian Defence Association" advertises a special meeting in the Albert Hall, "for the purpose of taking into consideration the spread of Atheism and Infidelity in the Borough." We congratulate the Portsmouth Branch on the activity which has alarmed the local Christians. Of course we shall be glad to see a report of this portentous meeting. Probably a couple of archangels will attend as delegates from heaven, and the proceedings should be lively and interesting. May we advise that a good artist should be present to photograph the archangels?

TWO Christians summon this meeting. Both are in the Service. One is Captain B. H. Key, of the Royal Navy; the other, Major-General M. H. Synge. The duty of both these gentlemen is to defend England. If they have so much time to spend in defending Christianity, the Government should find them something better to do, and occupy their leisure with the work they are paid for.

MR. BRADLAUGH has been lecturing on "The Justification of Scepticism" at Chatham. After his lecture a resolution was passed, with only one dissentient, calling on the Government to repeal all laws that inflict penalties for opinion. We wonder who the single dissentient was. Can it have been the Rev. S. D. Scammell, who has announced a reply—of course in Mr. Bradlaugh's absence—at St. Andrews Church? This sky-pilot is going to give "brief sketches, mostly from personal knowledge," of "sixteen infidel writers and lecturers" who have turned to God. We may, however, safely predict that the "personal knowledge" clause is what Whitman would call "a suck and a sell." Mr. Scammell is evidently going to hold forth on the late C. J. Whitmore's fraudulent tract, which has been reprinted in almost every religious journal in England. It is ten per cent. truth and ninety per cent. falsehood. How on earth Mr. Scammell fancies this an answer to Mr. Bradlaugh's lecture would be a mystery, if we did not know that the clerical intellect (heaven save the mark!) is capable of any absurdity.

"TEMPERANCE SUNDAY" has been kept in a number of the churches. How Jesus and his apostles must smile when they remember the feast at Cana in Galilee.

THE *Church Times* denounces Evening Communion as being "against the mind and practice of the Church Universal, and contrary to our Lord's institution." We suppose the Lord was in the habit of taking his supper early in the morning. At any rate, the *C. T.* has many and lengthy reasons why the Lord's body and blood should only be taken on an empty stomach. Possibly the other food would do the Lord no good, or *vice versa*.

THE following announcement was a few weeks since placarded on enormous posters in the town of Lisburn (co. Antrim), where a series of Lent lectures was being given in one of the Protestant churches:—

Sunday, April 3rd,  
THE REVEREND CANON —  
"Descended into Hell."  
You are all affectionately invited.

TWO children, aged respectively five years, three years and seven months, living in Clarendon Street, Somers Town, were left at home by their mother, while she went to a mothers' religious meeting. A box of matches was on the mantelpiece, and when she returned the children were burnt to death.

ON Monday, the body of Mr. John Beyley, who resided near Llandudno, was found on the shore near Little Ormes Head. The deceased was formerly a contractor, but latterly had been confined in an asylum, suffering from religious mania. A book entitled "The Way of Salvation" was found in his pocket.

AT the recent funeral of a clergyman at Burford, Tinbury, the Rev. Sir Frederick Dusejy was standing too near the vestry stove, when his surplice caught fire. On seeing this, another clergyman rushed up and blew the flames out. Instead of relying on merely human means, he ought to have shown his faith in Providence, by falling on his knees and beseeching the Lord to shield his servant from harm, as he once did the three children in the furnace. But at the critical time just when, if at all, recourse should be had to prayer, because of the golden opportunity which is thereby afforded to God of at once answering it and of thus confirming the wavering in faith, the parsons forget the overruling Providence of which they prate so fondly in the pulpit, and act exactly like those Secularists whom they so bespatter with their slanders.

CANVASSERS are calling round various districts in London asking the residents to sign a memorial in favor of lowering the

School Board rates. When you come to read the memorial you find that it is in favor of giving more religious instructions in Board Schools. The false pretence is quite in keeping with the pious intention of the interested clericals who are getting up the memorial.

THE spirit of charity existing among the various sects, is again illustrated by the Bishop of London prohibiting the vicar of Mill Hill from allowing a Congregationalist minister to give an address in his church even on a week day.

THE Abbé Ressayre, curé of Vessic, has been condemned to six years' hard labor for indecent assaults upon children.

PROVIDENCE seems to continue in a rage with religious edifices. The burning of two churches is reported from France. First, the church of Tregaruntec was completely destroyed and then that of Marck (Pas de Calais).

The liquor store at the corner burnt,  
And the minister prayed next day,  
Telling the Lord he was just and good  
In wiping the pest away.

But lightning struck the minister's church,  
And burnt it to the ground,  
And the liquor people thanked the Lord,  
That he passed such things around.

TALMAGE approves of "the Fire Insurance Business," and wishes it carried out to the fullest extent. He announces that scientific Silliman and the Bible writers alike show "that there is a conflagration coming to sweep across the earth, compared with which that of Chicago in 1871, and that of Boston in 1872, and that of New York in 1835, were mere nothings. Brooklyn on fire! New York on fire! Charleston on fire! San Francisco on fire! Canton on fire! St. Petersburg on fire! Paris on fire! London on fire! The Andes on fire! The Appennines on fire! The Himalayas on fire! What will be peculiar about that day will be that *the water with which we put out great fires will itself take flame*; and the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the St. Lawrence, and the Lake Erie, and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and tumbling Niagara, shall with red tongues lick the heavens." Christians like Talmage make a good living out of the fire insurance business. No wonder they do their best to terrify insurers into advancing full premiums.

THE world pays little attention to the "Epistle of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." Modern scriptures are treated with contempt. Yet the Mormons met with far more rapid success than the early Christians. William Woodruff, who is now the head of the Mormon Church, saw the keys given to the Twelve Apostles by the prophet Joseph Smith. He assures us that "the room was filled as if with consuming fire," and that "the Prophet was clothed upon with much of the power of God, and his face shone and was transparently clear." Obviously Woodruff is either a guarded liar or the dangerously imaginative kind of man who would make a very convenient witness in an otherwise difficult case. He almost goes as far as Luke in describing the fire of Pentecost, or as the writer of the Pentateuch in describing the phosphorescent face of Moses.

THE Lord has rewarded Henry Varley with bronchitis. He is so broken down in health that the doctors have ordered him off to Australia. But why doesn't so faithful a servant of God believe in the divine promises of faith-healing and the omnipotence of belief and prayer? Why, he actually repeats the grievous sin of King Asa, and trusts to physicians rather than to the Lord. He deeply regrets that he has to leave such important work in England, but he deserts the Lord's call in favor of the doctor's advice. The *Christian Commonwealth* says there will be rejoicing among the devil's servants when it is known that "so mighty a man of valor in all crusades" is disabled. When slander, intolerance, and falsehood bring a man such fame as this in the Christian camp, the doom of Christianity is evident. It must die of inward decay and rottenness.

FROM an account of Mr. Henry Varley, jun., given in the *Hackney Mercury*, it seems that the Notting Hill butcher's son has not turned out very orthodox, and is in a fair way to bring the old man's head with sorrow to the grave.

TWO children went to church alone. They became tired during the long sermon, and the elder one, supposing the school's rules held good in churches, led his sister up in front of the preacher and said, "Please, sir, may we go home?" He said, "Yes," and they soberly walked out. If this practice were in vogue with adults, one wonders how many times would the sermon be interrupted?—*Christian Commonwealth*.

OBITUARY.—It is with extreme regret that I have to record the death of Mary Watts, which took place on Saturday, November 26. She was a careful and affectionate wife and a loving mother. She leaves a small family who bitterly mourn her loss.—*A. Hemingway*.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, December 4. Secular Hall, Beck Street, Nottingham; at 11, "Thus Saith the Lord"; at 3, "The Cooling of Hell"; at 7, "The Blood of Christ."

Monday, Dec. 5, Lecture Hall, Back Hotel, Clay Cross, at 7, "Life Death, and Immortality."

DEC. 11 and 18, Hall of Science, London.

JAN. 1, Milton Hall, London; 8, Manchester; 15, Hall of Science, London; 22, Bradford; 29, Blackburn.

FEB. 5, Camberwell; 12, Milton Hall, London; 19, Liverpool.

## 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.

A PORTSMOUTH RADICAL approves our last week's article on "Free Speech," and says he expresses the view of "a large number of South Coast Radicals."

E. H.—The first three verses promise well, but the finish is a disappointment.

F. BROOKS.—Buckle's chapters on the causes of the French Revolution are as good as anything you can read. See his *History of Civilisation*. There are good books in the French, if you read that language.

EX-RITUALIST.—Much obliged.

J. EARLY, 35 Tidy Street, Brighton, sells the *Freethinker* and all Secular publications.

C. J. P.—Always glad to receive cuttings.

W. M.—Shall appear.

J. RUTHERFORD asks us to remind the Sunderland friends that the annual meeting of the N. S. S. Branch is held to-day (Dec. 4) at the Waverley Hotel, High Street, at 7 p.m. Important business has to be done, and a large attendance is requested.

AMOS SAULT.—Glad to hear you are keeping the Christians alive. Peg away. The reverend gentleman's letter is amusing, but of course no public use of it can be made without his consent.

ENDOR.—Under consideration.

H. HISCOCK.—Mr. Foote is obliged to the Finsbury Branch for its vote of thanks to him for "furthering the Freethought cause in London." We hope you will succeed with the Sunday evening lectures at the Patriotic Club.

BUSY BEE announces the formation of a Branch of the N. S. S. at Chester-le-Street. Thanks for cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED—Glasgow Daily Mail—Jus—Lucifer—Liberty—Boston Investigator—L'Union Démocratique—Truthseeker—Le Libre Penseur—Liberator—Hackney Mercury—Western Figaro—Portsmouth Evening News—La Nièvre Républicaine—Banffshire Journal—Glasgow Herald—Pall Mall Gazette—Salt Lake Enterprise.

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.

WILLINGTON is a small town, scarcely more than a village, in Durham, but Mr. Foote lectured to a capital audience there on Saturday evening, Nov. 26, on "Why I reject the Bible." Freethinkers drove, walked or rode in from the neighboring towns, such as Wolsingham, Crook, Bishop Auckland, West Auckland, Quebec, and Langley Park. There was also a strong contingent of local Christians, some of whom were disgracefully noisy. They interrupted so brutally that the rest of the audience wanted to turn them out, and they would have gone down the stairs neck and crop if the lecturer had not advised patience. After that every interrupter got a suitable retort, which generally set the audience laughing at him, and this so quieted the Lord's friends that the second half of the lecture was listened to most attentively. One Christian, who is a well-known wife-beater, cried out, "What is it, then?" when Mr. Foote said the whale was not a fish. "Sir," was the reply, "it is like you, a degenerate mammal."

THE chairman of this meeting was a veteran Freethinker of nearly eighty, and to hear him talk of meetings he attended in 1819, when Woolner and Hunt orated, was like reading ancient history. This brave old Freethinker gets a bigger Atheist, so they say, every day of his life.

MR. FOOTE lectured on Sunday at Sunderland. Unfortunately the Assembly Room in which he lectured before is no longer available, the bigots having put pressure on the landlord; and as the new Co-operative Hall is not yet well known, besides being a bad place to speak in, owing to a nasty echo, the audiences were not so large as on the former occasion. The evening meeting, however, was a very good one, and extremely enthusiastic.

THE Sunderland Branch has as fine a body of intelligent, well-informed, earnest Secularists as any Branch in the kingdom. The chairman at the morning lecture told Mr. Foote how he became a Freethinker. It was through purchasing a chance copy of this journal from a boy in Fleet Street, London. When he got to his hotel he read it, and afterwards fell on his knees and asked God to forgive him. But on board the boat he read the paper again, and found scepticism creeping over his pious soul. He got another copy, then ordered some pamphlets, and finally studied the Bible closely for himself. He is now a confirmed Freethinker, and Christians who tackle him in discussion find themselves overmatched, for he carries about an analysis of the Bible in a pocket-book, and when he uses that dreadful weapon the Christians smell sulphur and decamp.

THIS is one case out of many. People who say that the style of this journal isn't calculated to make men Freethinkers don't know what they are talking about.

IN a recent divorce case, *Byrne v. Byrne and Rawlings*, the plaintiff stated that the co-respondent, "when charged at first with his misconduct swore on a Bible that he was not guilty." Thereupon Mr. Justice Butt interposed, "That would make me disbelieve a man," and there was laughter in court. So much for the value of an oath in the eyes of one of our best and most respected judges.

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK, in his recent lecture on Savages, told a curious anecdote of an Australian missionary, who had great difficulty in pronouncing the letter "S." When this lisping preacher of the gospel went to an interpreter he so misrendered the word "Sin," that the equivalent for *thin* was given to him. Consequently he preached for some weeks upon the evils of slenderness, and found that his congregation were doing their very best to overcome that failing by indulging in very extensive meals. Salvation by fattening was not so bad a gospel after all. Many preachers have preached far worse doctrines.

MRS. ASHTON DILKE's portrait, with a brief biography, appears in the December number of the *Radical*.

MRS. MARY SOWDEN lectures for the Finsbury Branch at the Patriotic Club, Clerkenwell Green, this evening (December 4), at 7, on "The Saviors of the World."

THE December number of *Progress* contains a variety of interesting articles, among them being a criticism of Edwin Arnold's "Death—and Afterwards," by Mr. Foote, and another of "Christian Evidences" by "Lucianus." Mr. Wheeler writes on M. Guyau's "Morality without Obligation and Sanction," and continues his *Freethought Biographies*.

THE Bethnal Green Branch is organising a concert for the benefit of Mr. Dell, a veteran Freethinker of eighty, now—as he well may be—unfit for work. All who are willing to aid in this charitable effort, either as subscribers or singers or reciters or musicians, should communicate with Mr. James Neate, 385, Bethnal Green Road, E.

M. FREYCINET, who on the whole stands as favorite for the French Presidency, is a Protestant. Should he accede to power there will be necessary an alteration of that part of the Concordat which permits the Chief Magistrate to present bishops and cardinals of the Gallican Church, and once touched it is pretty certain the whole of the Concordat will go. M. Clemenceau, who, although out of the running for the presidency, is likely to become first premier, is pledged to the separation of Church and State.

IN the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Professor Bonghi and Signor Sacchi asked that the bishops who have been demanding the restoration of the Pope's temporal power should be prosecuted. Signor Zanardelli replied on behalf of the Crown that it had no intention of affording the bishops the notoriety they sought by means of a public trial.

THE crematorium at Père la Chaise, Paris, is announced as almost completed. There is a chapel attached, in which those of any religion whatever can carry on their own particular service. It is expected that the crematorium will be used chiefly by those of no particular religion.

GERALD MASSEY has a striking article on "Blood Covenanting" in the pages of *Lucifer*, the new theosophic monthly. In giving the natural origin of the custom he does much to elucidate the Christian doctrine of Atonement through blood. His remarks on that doctrine are by no means mealy-mouthed. He writes: "Pindar says 'It is impossible, for me to call one of the blessed gods a cannibal.' But the Christian scheme makes the Only God a cannibal, who offers the flesh and blood of his own Son and Very Self as sacrificial food made sacred for his followers."

MR. SAYCE, in his Hibbert Lectures on the Religion of Babylon, traces resemblances between Moses and Sargon, the Babylonian lawgiver, who was exposed in an ark of bulrushes. Yet the date

of Sargon is set at about 3,750 B.C., or while, according to the orthodox chronology, Adam was still living.

SOME time since we recorded how a French curé, the Abbé Béliard, at Dôle (Jura), created consternation at his death by leaving a will asking to be buried without any religious ceremony. A similar event has happened at Siorac (Dordogne), where the Abbé Laguionie, who has been subject to numerous persecutions from the diocesan authorities on account of his republican sympathies, upon his death left his money to the poor of Siorac, with a request that he might have a purely secular funeral.

WE are asked to acknowledge the following subscriptions to the "Wallace Nelson" Fund:—A Well-wisher, £5; A. H. G., £5; F. Smallman, £2; Dr. Walker, 7s. 6d.; Dr. Laing, 5s.; E. G. F., 5s.; Christian Lady, 2s. 6d.; G. H. D., 2s. 6d.; W. Griffiths, 5s.; W. Vicars, 5s.; Mr. Knorn, 5s.; Denis Lee, 10s.; F. Drummond, 2s. 6d.; A. Wealthall, 2s.; W. Payne, 3s.; Mrs. Jackson, 2s.; C. Pegg, 5s.; J. Bilcliffe, 5s.; P. Black, 5s.; G. Brooks, 2s. 6d.; Jno. Griffiths, 2s. 6d.; J. Counsel, 2s.; S. Crabtree, 3s. 1d.; P. Griffiths, 1s.; Widow's Mite, 6d.; Mrs. Hurregreaves, 2s. 6d.; J. Shuttleworth, 3d.; T. Matthews, 6d. Total—£16 6s. 10d.—T. H. DUKE.

### ANOTHER PROPHETICAL CHAPTER.

HAVING dealt with Isaiah liii. a short time ago, I propose now to glance at another chapter of alleged prophecy. I take the twenty-second Psalm as being about the most striking prophetic chapter next to Isaiah liii., and as requiring a somewhat different kind of explanation.

The psalm in question consists of thirty-one verses, and by selecting those most suited to the purpose, while ignoring the incongruous contexts, Christian prophecy-mongers are enabled to allege that the circumstances of Christ's crucifixion were predicted by David with remarkable particularity of description.

They point to the following verses in special proof of their contention:

1. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
8. He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
16. The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.
17. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.
18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

The famous cry of despair uttered by Christ on the cross is here given precisely as recorded in the gospels. The mockery of the bystanders is graphically depicted, and the piercing of Christ's hands and feet by being nailed to the cross is anticipated, together with the unexpected preservation of his bones from being broken (as was perhaps the custom in the case of crucified criminals), the partition of his garments among the soldiers, and the casting of lots for his vesture.

Of these particulars the two latter are really identical, being merely two forms of the same idea, as was common in Hebrew poetry.

The preservation of bones unbroken is *not* the point referred to by the psalmist, who in describing his miseries in a spirit of rhetorical exaggeration, means to say that he can *see* and count all his bones, because in his extreme emaciation these bones "look and stare upon him." There is no idea of the preservation of bones, but only of the dreadful wasting away of a sufferer under troubles and hardships. The fourteenth verse, indeed, describes all the sufferer's bones as being out of joint, and the Douay Bible translates this as "all my bones are scattered." If Christ's bones had been broken he would still have been able to "tell" them or count them. Christians confirm their interpretation by reference to Psalm xxxiv., 20, which says of the righteous that "he keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken." But the psalmist also speaks of his own bones as broken (li., 8), as consumed (xxxii., 10), as waxed old (xxxii., 3), as burnt (cii., 3). Such expressions are largely figurative. Christians seize upon any allusion that suits their case, and treat it as a literal prophecy, while they reject inconvenient passages as personal or figurative. If Christ's bones had waxed old, or been burnt, or broken, Christians would have pointed triumphantly to one of the above texts as the sure prophecy of the Word of God.

The Douay Bible translates the piercing, etc., thus: "They have dug my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones. And they have looked and stared upon me." Our Revised Version notices that various ancient versions

read "they *bound*" instead of "they pierced," a reading which is evidently the correct and natural one.

Making all deductions for adverse considerations, there remains somewhat greater resemblance between some few of the passages in this psalm and the circumstances of the crucifixion than can be accounted for as solely the result of mere chance. That two persons living a thousand years apart should utter the same striking and passionate exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" would be a remarkable coincidence if the exclamations were really independent of each other and the first had really been uttered as a prophecy of the latter. But it is absurd to suppose that the exclamations were independent of each other. This psalm of lamentation and distress was widely read or recited among the Jews. It was perfectly natural that a crucified Jew should express his anguish and despair in the well-known words of David; and the prophecy, if it were such, would thus bring about its own fulfilment. Even if the legend of the Crucifixion is pure fiction, instead of being only partly or largely so, the inventor of the story might very naturally represent the dying Jesus as repeating the words of his alleged ancestor. With this exclamation as a basis for mythical additions, the introduction of particulars drawn from the remainder of the psalm in which it occurs becomes perfectly feasible. The gospel accounts of the crucifixion are largely (and possibly entirely) mythical, and we see the growth of portions of the myth before our eyes. The mockery and scorn would readily be included in the narrative, which gradually evolved from vague hearsay and the general ideas of believers. The division of Christ's garments by lot may have occurred actually, but more probably it was suggested by the psalm, and gradually took shape till committed to writing in the gospel of our mythical Matthew, who tells us, as he does with most of his clumsily-fabricated fulfilments of real or pretended prophecies, that this was done that the words of the prophet might be fulfilled. By the time John wrote his gospel this idea had become separated into two parts. The soldiers divide the garments into four portions, one for each soldier; but as the coat is a unique one, without seam, they have to cast lots for it to avoid spoiling it. The writer of the fourth gospel probably thought that some such explanation as this was necessary to accord with the separate parts of the poetical reduplication of idea in the psalm, just as Matthew made Christ ride on two asses through his ignorance of the Hebrew idiom. John, too, like Matthew, tells us that this was done "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Such statements are always to be regarded with suspicion. The truth would often be—"This was invented to fulfil a pretended prophecy," or "A belief in this grew up because the disciples naturally felt that such an agreement between the sacred writings and the sacred events of Christ's crucifixion was highly probable and thoroughly desirable." If we may judge from Mark xv., 28, the two thieves crept into the narrative because the Scripture had said, "He was numbered with the transgressors." The piercing of Christ's side may have grown from such a suggestion as that of the text in Zechariah (xii., 10), which says, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced"—though the context, that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should mourn for Christ as for an only son, was certainly not fulfilled. John at least tells us (xix., 36, 37) that Christ's side was pierced and his bones were left unbroken in order to fulfil prophecies which he quotes, but which did not apply to Christ. The one which John gives as, "A bone of him shall not be broken," referred to the troubles of the righteous in general, and can only be perverted into a prophecy concerning Christ by deliberate dishonesty or sheer stupidity. Perhaps the water that came from Christ's side mingled with blood is an echo of the fourteenth verse of our psalm, which says, "I am poured out like water."

The explanation of the few successful "hits" in this alleged chapter of prophecy is that the narrative by adaptation and selection grew into some measure of correspondence with certain phrases that struck the imagination of believers. But the chapter never was prophetic in the particulars relied upon, and was never so understood by the Jews. It was the outpouring of the psalmist's own feelings during his trials and distresses. If Christians claim it as a Messianic prophecy they will have to explain the

<sup>1</sup> But according to Mark xv., 24, the soldiers cast lot for *all* the garments. This is a discrepancy, but not an irreconcilable one.

"roaring" in which Christ bellowed forth from the cross his pathetic exclamation of despair (verse 1). They will have to explain how Christ is "a worm, and no man" (verse 6), and what he meant by asking God to deliver his darling from the power of the dog, and to save himself from the lion's mouth, because God had heard him "from the horns of the unicorns" (verses 20 and 21). Then they will have to account for the failure of the prophecies in verse 27, "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord," and in verse 29, "All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship."

W. P. BALL.

### THE LONG SERMON,

He stood within the vestibule, and peeped along the aisle,  
And, lo! he saw some sight to please, else why that gleeful smile?

It was his sweetheart, and she sat obliviously near:  
She sweetly sang with tuncful tongue, "I'll read my title clear."

The minister announced his text, and then went on to say,  
"Turn, sinner, turn; why will you burn? there's danger in delay."

This was his firstly; next he went to secondly, and said:  
"Shun evil's paths—flee from the wrath! repent ere you be dead."

To thirdly next he tured his speech, and dwelt on knaves who scoff;  
And Chappie cried in rage outside, "Oh, parson, pray come off!"

Ah, ha! the maid perceives him there; her heart goes plump thereat,  
She never heard a single word of sermon after that.

"And, fifthly," droned the parson next, "I wish to briefly state,  
That healthy prime is just the time to mould your future fate."

Then came his "sixthly," and he cried, "Oh, hardened hearts of flint,  
"Turn, turn aside," and Chappie cried—some things we dare not print.

"And in conclusion," let me say—"Thank heaven now,"  
Chappie sighed;  
"He is unwound," and lo! he found the parson simply lied.

For that conclusion limped along, and "finally," was said;  
The maiden fair she gasped for air, and Chappie nearly fled.

And "lastly," cried the minister, "beware the evil one;  
He'll wound you sore. Now one word more, and then my sermon's done."

"Now let me add"—there came a sound behind the shielding door,  
And Chappie lay all worn away and limp upon the floor.

There was a gleam of snowy skirts—at last the twain have met;  
Two forms flit out, and left, no doubt, that parson preaching yet.

### TRURO CATHEDRAL.

The *Rock*, for a wonder, has a surprisingly sensible article on "Cathedrals and their Cost." Speaking of the "extravagant expenditure" over the recently-consecrated cathedral at Truro, it says: "This little Cornish town contains only about ten thousand inhabitants, more than half of whom are Non-conformists, and it already had four churches; yet it has been thought necessary to plant in it a huge cathedral, at a cost of about £200,000. The outlay up to the present time is about £110,000, but as the building is nothing like finished, it is very doubtful if even the sum we have mentioned—£200,000—will cover the whole cost. Then the endowments for the stipends of canons, for choir expenses, and other incidentals to the maintenance of a magnificent cathedral, will have to be raised."

The chalice alone, it seems, cost £700, and all this lavish and wretched expenditure takes place at a time when the unemployed are crying out for bread. The *Rock* points out that one vicar and a curate would be amply sufficient for this little country town. It laments the frivolous waste of money and misdirection of private bounty and episcopal effort. It would rather spend the cash in alleviating the sufferings of the poor in London—in whose richer parishes much of the wasted money has been collected—or in increasing the salaries of the poorer clergy. With all the efforts of the Archbishop

of Canterbury and the Bishop of Truro in raising contributions for seven years past, the building is still £8,000 in debt. Nearly £100,000 still has to be raised to complete the half-finished cathedral, whose aspiring towers and spires are, at present cut short by lack of cash, being represented only by temporary roofing, which gives a very curious and stunted appearance to this latest ecclesiastical toy.

As I often have to show up the follies and bigotries of the religious journal which decries this particular religious folly. I am pleased to have the opportunity for once to show that the *Rock* can display some amount of reason and good sense.

The *Rock* in another column quotes a paragraph in which *Punch* ridicules the ceremony of consecration as an attack of "Scarletina at Truro." Archbishop Benson, it seems, wore his scarlet robe and train as he moved about the cathedral, and this scarlet train was upborne by two little acolytes clad in scarlet cassocks, and wearing tiny scarlet caps upon their heads. *Punch* says that the Archbishop was the big scarlet, and the tiny acolytes the scarletini. He wonders at this outbreak of scarletina in a church which years ago would have inveighed against similar extravagances as trifling with the "Scarlet Lady."

W. P. B.

### RELIGION AMONG CRIMINALS.

THE ex-convict who is giving a series of sketches of prison life, in the *Evening News*, shows clearly how religious tendencies and criminal instincts can run together without any particular conflict. He says:

"When I got on to public works I found that song writing was one of the most popular arts known in literature. The most popular man was a religious poet, who wrote anthems for the Church festivals, and confirmation hymns which were set to original music. I had a good collection of these compositions, which I copied in shorthand upon the backs of my letters. . . . Although we had a decent collection of hymns Portland went in for original compositions on all the great Church festivals. At every confirmation by the Bishop a special hymn would be composed with original music.

At Easter there was always a selection of hymns and anthems from several notorious gentlemen of poetic and religious proclivities. Sometimes the selected poem would be written by a sea captain who had got twenty years for manslaughter; at others by an individual who had committed forgery; while there were several aspirants who had drawn the line at burglary. The chief musical composer was a gentleman who was lucky enough to escape being hung for murder."

### TALMAGE ON THE CREATION.

TALMAGE has been giving an account of "the laying of the foundation of this great temple of a world." He says "the cornerstone was a block of light and the trowel was of celestial crystal. All about and on the embankments of cloud stood the angelic choristers unrolling their librettos of overture, and other worlds clapped shining cymbals while the ceremony went on, and God the architect, by stroke of light after stroke of light, dedicated this great cathedral of a world, with mountains for pillars, and sky for frescoed ceiling, and flowering fields for floor, and sunrise and midnight aurora for upholstery. 'Who laid the cornerstone thereof; when the morning stars sang together.' The fact is that the whole universe was a complete cadence, an unbroken dithyramb, a musical portfolio. The great sheet of immensity had been spread out, and written on it were the stars, the smaller of them minims, the larger of them sustained notes. The meteors marked the staccato passages, the whole heavens a gamut with all sounds, intonations, and modulations, the space between the worlds a musical interval, trembling of stellar light a quaver, the thunder a base clef, the wind among trees a treble clef. That is the way God made all things."

Who would have thought that such a musical performance as this could have been drawn from Job and Genesis?

### PROFANE JOKES.

Foreman (to country editor): "Do you want the Rev. Mr. Goolman's sermon, 'Feed My Lambs,' to go on the editorial page?" Editor (absent-mindedly): "No. Run it in the 'Agricultural Department.'"

"Johnny," said the minister, rather severely, "do you chew tobacco?" "Yes, sir," was the reply, "but I'm clean out just now; Jimmy Brown's got some, though."

What could the woman have meant who when the doctor told her that her husband was dying and that she had better send for a minister, asked: "Will one be enough, doctor, or would you advise a consultation?"

Chinese Sunday-school teacher (realing)—"And Elijah, the prophet—Do you know what prophet means?" Scholar—"Yes, me know velly well." Teacher (surprised)—"Do you? Well, what is it?" Scholar—"Me buy sing fi' cent, sell fifteen cent, *plajit* ten cent."

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