

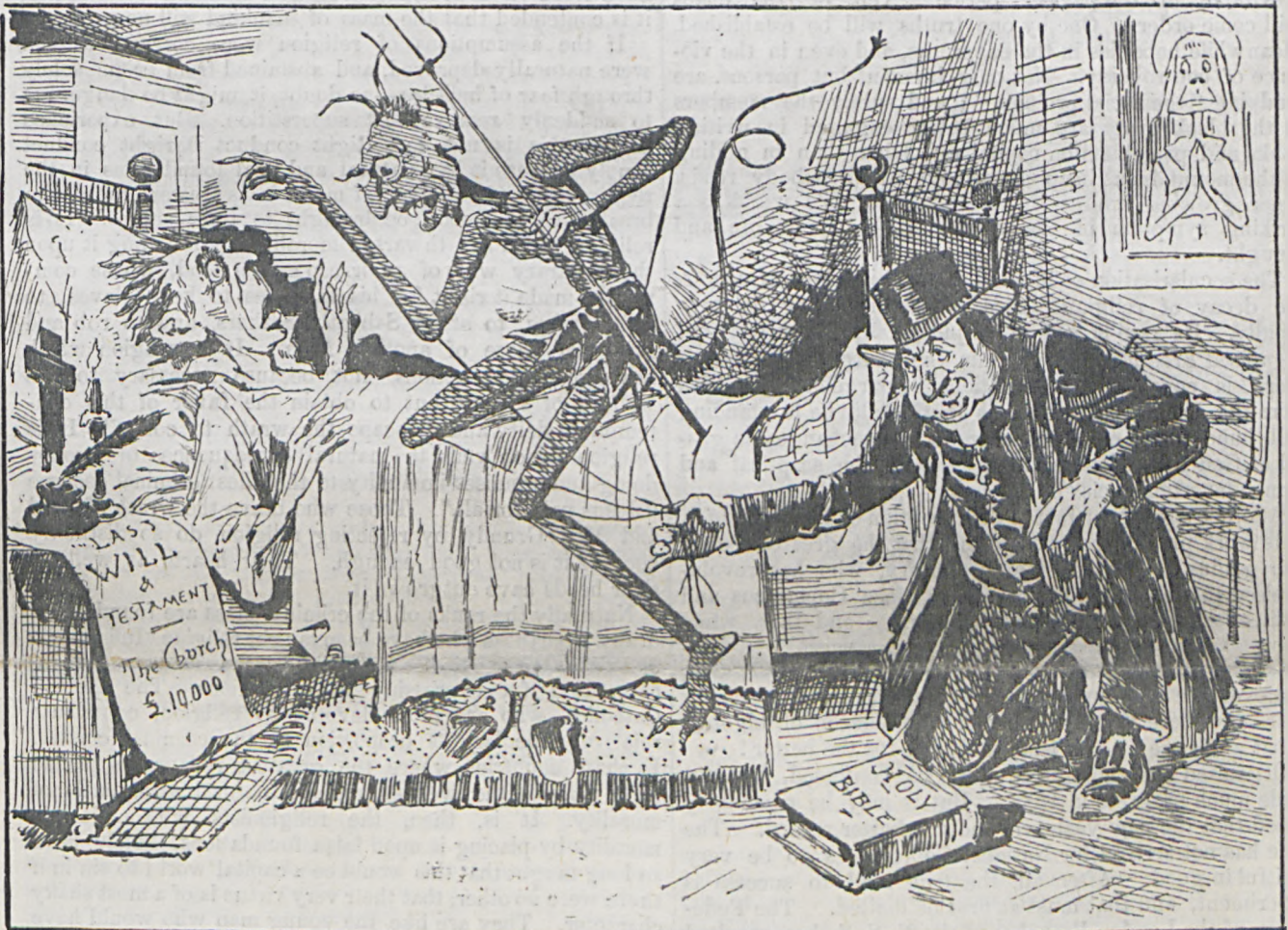
THE FREETHINKER

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

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JANUARY 1, 1888.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.



WORKING THE ORACLE.

THE NEW YEAR.

CHRISTMAS being over, and its festivities a thing of memory, it is well to look ahead to the New Year, and see if possible what it holds in store for us, or at least what it promises to yield. Every new year is like a fresh friend. We are uncertain how he will turn out, but we are hopeful; and so, as the old year vanishes, we "welcome the new and speed the parting guest."

Party politics are out of place in a journal like this, but there are general interests of humanity which transcend party lines, and with respect to which every intelligent and conscientious person may adopt the words of the Roman poet—"A man, I think nothing human alien to me." One of these interests is peace. The function of war in the evolution of man has been very great, but in these days it works little else than pure mischief. While it operates to weld tribes into nations it is an evil which "like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head." But now that the civilised world is a collection of mighty states, it is difficult to see how warfare can promote unity. At the point we have now reached further unity can only be brought about by science, commerce, and international intercourse. Besides, another European war would probably kindle a frightful conflagration of hideous passion, that would rage from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, and from the Russian steppes to the Atlantic

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Ocean. Whoever precipitates such an awful catastrophe is a frightful criminal. Fortunately there are signs that the general unrest is abating. The French fire-eaters have grown quieter since General Boulanger left Paris, and still more so since Carnot succeeded Grevy as President. Russia still chafes at her discomfiture in Eastern Europe, but the French alliance is further off than ever, and the Czar perceives the wisdom of keeping his generals in check. Austria has little to gain and much to lose by war; and fortunately Bismarck, the strong man armed, is honestly, though for selfish reasons, striving with all his might to preserve the peace of Europe. We may, therefore, hope that the threatened war of races will be averted. Yet what a satire such a possibility is upon the pretensions of Christianity! After eighteen centuries of the gospel of peace Europe is armed to the teeth, the fear of war is almost chronic, and over an area scarcely larger than the Roman Empire there are twenty times as many soldiers as sufficed, under the great Pagan emperors, to maintain internal peace and repel the barbarians from the frontier. "Peace on earth," as sung by the herald angels near Bethlehem, must surely have been a colossal joke. Jesus was nearer the truth when he said "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Another general interest is popular comfort. "The poor ye have always with you," said Jesus, and up to the present the facts have not contradicted him. But the time is coming when they will. All this cry about "the unem-

ployed" does not mean that society is getting worse; but, on the contrary, that it is getting better. The spirit of humanity is growing, our sympathies are becoming keener, and we raise a hubbub over privations and sufferings which, a generation or more ago, would have excited very little attention. The "have nots" are not increasing relatively to the population, but the "have's" have more sympathy with them in their misery. And this sympathy, combined with rational attempts at social improvement, will do infinitely more good than "Christian charity," which has been an immense agency of pauperisation as well as a perpetuator of all sorts of injustice. Doubtless a great deal of nonsense is talked and written by social reformers, especially by those who have patent nostrums for inaugurating the millenium. But this is inevitable in the pioneer period. Out of the chaos will come order. One by one truths will be established. Meanwhile hope lies in the eagerness, and even in the violence of controversy. Not only laymen, but parsons, are studying "the social problem"; and surely the members of the black army are much better engaged in writing books and pamphlets on capital and labor than in adding to the mountainous heap of sermons which nobody reads. Their growing interest in the affairs of this world is a striking symptom of the secularisation of our life and thought.

The secularisation of life and thought involves, of course, the decay of religion. This process is going on very rapidly. Its rate is not to be judged by the progress of organised Freethought. Within the churches themselves there is constant disintegration. Spurgeon's secession from the Baptist Union means that, while he is standing still, hundreds of other preachers of the unchangeable gospel of God are adjusting themselves to the sceptical and humanitarian tendencies of the age.

Another significant fact is the reception of Darwin's *Life*. This work puts it finally on record that the greatest scientific genius of the nineteenth century, who has revolutionised thought more than any man since Copernicus and Galileo, was a disbeliever in Christianity; and that, while he was not a professed Atheist, his Agnosticism was irreconcilable with any serious Theism. Yet no one is alarmed, and even the religious press is not much perturbed. Forty years ago there would have been a convulsion of bigotry. What a change! And what a change for the better!

Organised Freethought, it must be confessed, has not made much progress in 1887. But it may be reasonably hoped that the new year will show a better record. The time has not arrived for National Conferences to be very fruitful in good. After all, the true road to success is experiment, and that must at first be limited. The Federation of the London Branches of the N. S. S. has resulted from the combination during last summer for the purposes of outdoor propaganda. Should this experiment succeed—as we feel sure it will—it will form a central germ of organic progress for the whole country.

Personally, I have done something to bring about this Federation, and I trust I shall do more to ensure its success. Meaning, if I am permitted, to devote considerable time to this object, as the one promising new feature in our movement, I am obliged to make suitable arrangements. One resolution I have come to is to discontinue, or at least suspend, the publication of *Progress*. This will liberate a good deal of my time and energy, as well as a good deal of my means, for the magazine has always been a financial loss, besides absorbing a large amount of work. My publishing business will, on the other hand, be more vigorously developed. Projects I have long been contemplating will be realised. The *Crimes of Christianity* will be more rapidly completed, *Bible Heroes* will be finished, *Bible Romances* will appear in an entirely new edition; and other works at present embryo, but all of them calculated to be useful to the Freethought cause, will stand a better chance of being born. My opinion is that, after all, such publications, circulating widely and serving a permanent need, are likely to be more serviceable and satisfactory than a monthly magazine of limited sale and more ephemeral utility. There is also another consideration. Since *Progress* was started there has been a very wide extension of Freethought in older periodicals. Ordinary magazines, appealing to the general public, find room for sceptical articles of the most pronounced character, and there is no longer the same necessity for a separate organ of such speculation.

G. W. FOOTE.

MORALITY AND RELIGION.

AS ministers of religion find that faith in their dogmas is decaying, they increasingly dilate upon the perilous consequences of disassociating morality from faith. Just as the stage-coachmen thought the good old times departed with the advent of railways, the black-coated apostles of obscurantism find danger to their craft in the spread of science and infidelity, and think, or pretend to think, that society will never stand the shock of losing their services. The world will certainly go to the bad if the sky-pilots are no longer looked to for guidance. They seek to retain their power by holding up the *spectre rouge* of "immoral infidelity." Even if eminent unbelievers are allowed to have lived virtuous lives apart from belief in Christianity, it is contended that the mass of mankind will never do so.

If the assumptions of religion were correct—if men were naturally depraved, and abstained from crime solely through fear of hell-fire—no doubt it might be dangerous to suddenly remove that superstition. But experience proves this is not so. Right conduct is right conduct simply because it has natural and real foundations in the requirements of society. If moral laws are real, those who break them will soon be brought to their senses. It is religion which has thwarted morality by founding it upon the arbitrary will of an irresponsible God, whose commands made it right for his favorites to keep slaves, to kill witches, to stone Sabbath-breakers, and to rob and slaughter those of another faith. It is religion which has commanded actions, not because necessary to the welfare of society, but to obtain the favor of this contemptible deity and "escape the wrath to come." It is religion which veils the natural consequences of wrongdoing and promises immunity to the vilest criminal because "Jesus paid for all." Those who brave the wrath of God and Mrs. Grundy by rejecting religion do so distinctly because it is not good enough. Their hearts as well as their heads have outgrown it.

Naturally the ranks of the criminal class are found to be drawn from those who have been taught religion. Infidels are conspicuous by their absence from prisons—except when incarcerated for expressing their opinions. The Roman Catholics, who are most devoted to religion, contribute relatively the largest proportion to the criminal classes. In those countries where the greatest reliance is placed upon religion the weaker are the natural safeguards of morality. It is, then, the religionists who endanger morality by placing it upon false foundations. They have so long taught that this would be a capital world to sin in if there were no other, that their very virtue is of a most shaky character. They are like the young man who would have had a high old time in Paris if he had not been converted just before starting. The remedy is to remove the baseless supports of morality, and let it rest upon its true foundations. Macaulay well says: "There is only one cure for the evils which newly-acquired freedom produces, and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to distinguish colors or to recognise faces. But the remedy is not to remand him to his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun."

It is true that times of transition are times of trouble; but the pretended danger to morality through the decay of religion is vastly exaggerated if not completely false. The serpent does not slough its skin till a new one is prepared. Beneath the religious sanctions of conduct the natural ones have been growing. With most people the religious theory is at best never more than one of the motives to conduct, and it usually is by no means the most important. There is indeed no necessary connection between religion and morality. Prayer, sacrifice, praise of a deity, and the other accompaniments of worship may figure as substitutes for right conduct, but they can do little to ensure or increase it. Religion, indeed, has been the enemy of morality by directing human attention to another world; and because this other world has been esteemed all-important, religion has encouraged reliance upon credulity, superstition, dogmatism, sectarianism, and persecution. Much which the Bible and the Church have declared to be right, the best part of the world now feels to be wrong. Even those who pretend to follow these authorities select, modify, add to, and sink out of sight some or other of their express teachings. Those, more-

over, who claim supernatural authority are found to be as much at variance as those who put forward no such pretence. Few will now argue that morality derives any support from the belief in the Trinity or the vicarious Atonement. These doctrines are slowly sloughing off from Christians themselves. Yet there was a time when they were believed to be all-essential. A Unitarian will not deny that the highest moral life is compatible with a disbelief in miracle and the freest handling of Scripture, while the Deist will possibly allow that it is compatible with the rejection of a God.

It is certain that as enlightenment spreads morality must be founded, not on our ignorance, but on our knowledge. Those are its worst enemies who maintain that it needs the support of the supernatural. These clerical alarmists are doing their worst to make men palter with their consciences, and pretend to beliefs that are no longer credible. Society, under their guidance, becomes an organised hypocrisy, each pretending to believe in a heavenly providence, and to be looking forward to celestial happiness, while his true object is comfort here on earth. Religion is thus responsible for the errors of those who are gradually escaping from its influence. The only manly course is to repudiate religion and its sanctions, which, by making morality dependent on another life, have turned it upside down. The safety of morality, as Professor Huxley says, "lies neither in the adoption of this or that philosophical speculation, or this or that theological creed, but in a real and living belief in the fixed order of nature, which sends social disorganisation upon the track of immorality as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespass."

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

CAPTAIN DUNNE is on trial at Dublin for attempting to shoot the Rev. Peter Higginson Whyte-Melville. This unreverend parson had seduced Captain Dunne's daughter. His views on sexual matters are of the old patriarchal type; in fact he seems to have devoutly studied the lives of Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon, and to have imitated those Bible heroes as far as the laws of this age will permit. The following are some of his admissions under examination. In 1875 he was beaten by Captain Eames for insulting his wife. In 1877 he took holy orders, but three years ago he ceased to officiate except in a private chapel at home, where there are fourteen or fifteen servants kept by the wealth of his wife, who was the widow of the famous novelist Whyte-Melville. Miss Dunne was this lady's friend and companion, and the clerical Don Juan took her over to Paris and seduced her "as an act of charity," because her father had made her unhappy. Being asked whether he thought he had made her happy by seducing her he replied, "I hope so; I suppose happiness generally follows." His first wife is still living in America where she was divorced from him.

HERE is a fine parson for you! We hope the Church is proud of its protégé. But this is not all. The Rev. Peter is fond of liquor as well as forbidden fruit. "I think no more of drinking whiskey," he said, "than of drinking water," and he snapped his fingers to emphasise the boast. Really the Lord should call such faithful servants as the Rev. Peter home. The world could very well dispense with their presence, while a few more rascals in heaven would make very little difference to the society there.

THE Pope's Jubilee show knocks Queen Victoria's into fits. His Holiness's presents from all parts of the world are too numerous to count, and their value amounts to millions. Gold and precious stones are as common at the Vatican as lying. The Emperor of Austria sends a cross and ring set with jewels, valued at several thousand pounds, while the Empress sends a suit of pontifical millinery that cost £1,200. Even the Sultan, the chief potentate of a hostile faith, sends "a priceless solitaire diamond." But why continue the catalogue? The Vatican galleries are blazing with costly gifts from the faithful to the "poor fisher" who sits in the chair of St. Peter; and meanwhile thousands of people are half dying of starvation. Evidently "blessed be ye poor" pays—at least to those who preach it.

WE see that the *Eton Mission* is at work in Hackney. Wouldn't this name have been more appropriate for some of the extinct missionaries who comforted the Cannibal Islanders with their too tempting presence.

SOME of the religious ones are charitably comparing the pious *Rock* to Judas, because it has spoken out against the absurd expenditure on the half-finished Truro Cathedral, which it describes as a white elephant practically putting the diocese into a state of bankruptcy.

Two high Chinese officials have petitioned the Emperor to

reward two deities with tablets, namely the god of war and the guardian deity of the city of Hsu-chow. These deities have specially assisted in putting down rebel bands and in securing rain for the crops. They therefore deserve a pat on the back, and we hope they will get it. We should also like to see the Trinity patted on the back, and if the concussion snapped their spinal cord (we suppose they have one between them) it would not require a very large handkerchief to dry our tears.

CANON LIDDON preaching on the Second Coming of Christ from the text "Behold I come quickly," gives an artful interpretation to it in order to avoid the difficulty arising from the failure of J. C. to put in his expected reappearance. He says these words are fulfilled when we come to die, "In death our Lord comes to each of us." His whole sermon is built upon the speedy approach of death. But this interpretation will not do. The evident expectation of the author of the Apocalypse, was a literal appearance of Christ bringing reward and vengeance with him, and the words attributed to Christ himself are "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

THE Council of the Baptist Union has been considering a scheme for making peace with Mr. Spurgeon. They proposed to draw up a creed pledging the ministers to believe in the inspiration of the scriptures, the incarnations, resurrection and atonement. But the idea was not much relished, and instead of adopting it, the Council resolved to send four D. D.'s to Mentone to confer with Mr. Spurgeon. That gentleman as soon as he heard the proposal telegraphed a request that they would wait till he came home, and there the matter rests.

SPURGEON writes to his congregation that he will stay at Mentone till the second Sabbath of the new year. He is now free from pain in body, and refreshed in mind. The earnest prayers of his followers have encompassed him like an atmosphere of peace, and he asks for a double share of this praying just now. Prayer and Mentone really are efficacious against rheumatic gout, just as Voltaire noticed that incantations and arsenic would destroy flocks of sheep. But why don't the prayers encompass Spurgeon with peace and health when in England? Is the climate too cold, so that such prayers can only be efficacious in summer or in warm climates abroad?

THE Catholics have been making a great fuss about the recently canonised English saints and martyrs in the reign of Elizabeth, but the truth is that a considerable number of them were simply conspirators who were punished for asserting the Pope's right to dethrone and murder sovereigns who dissent from the Catholic faith. But they will make worthy companions of the saints of old.

THE Porte is about passing a new law prohibiting religious instruction in foreign schools in Turkey. As the Christians make use of this means of proselytism, they are indignant at the prospect of such repression. When it comes to putting down Mormonism by force or by law in America, the missionaries only see a scandal suppressed. When the supporters of another polygamous religion suppress religious teaching adverse to their own, the missionaries perceive how intolerant Mohammedans are, and how readily they break their pledges of religious liberty. It is expected that the Christian Powers will notify to the Porte that the new law cannot be tolerated. Fancy Mohammedan Powers dictating to us what laws we may pass. Hadn't the Christian Powers, by the bye, better notify to Holy Russia that the Christian persecution of the Jews must cease?

SOME Christians are explaining the Star of Bethlehem as having been caused by the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the year 7 B.C. They use the name of Professor Pritchard as confirming this view. But Professor Pritchard contradicts this statement. He says that the two planets did not approach each other within two diameters of the moon. To suppose that they appeared as one bright star is therefore absurd. Professor Pritchard shows the folly of following a star which would have led the poor magi into the Pool of Solomon, and could not have pointed out a house by standing over it any more than over any other house in Bethlehem. He suggests that an angel may have been commissioned to hold a celestial lamp above the spot where Jesus was born.

THE gipsies have a simple method of checking the member who makes the collection. They give him a plate to hold in his right hand and a live fly which he has to keep imprisoned in his left hand until he hands over the collection. There are many preachers to whom this method might be recommended. "Collectionists" ought to be the title of a religious sect, but somehow it isn't. The feature is too common to be distinctive.

ACCORDING to the *Christian Commonwealth* a minister recently announced as his weekly lecture the subject, "What fools think of life," and a deacon who took the chair, said that their "pastor could speak from experience." Much difficulty is now found in reconciling the pastor and the deacon.

THE Rev. Charles Stirling, vicar of New Malden, is more Protestant than loyal. He publishes a correspondence with the

Queen's private secretary, in which he charges Her Majesty with visiting a Roman Catholic Cathedral at Mentone during the service of Blessing the Palms; of attending services at a Romish church; of visiting the Monastery of the Grand Chartreuse by special dispensation from the Pope; and of visiting a Romish church at Weybridge, and a Jesuit College near Windsor. The clergyman finally says: "As many of Her Majesty's Protestant subjects are persuaded that by the renewal of 'communion with the See of Rome' the Throne has, according to the Act of Settlement, become vacant, I deem it necessary to forward this correspondence to the public Press." Will the Rev. Charles Stirling have the courage of his opinions and take steps for dethroning the Queen?

THEY seem to preserve curious courting customs in County Antrim. In an action for seduction it transpired that the defendant came home from church with the plaintiff's daughter and stayed with her till three in the morning. This was made a regular practice. The father of the girl deposed that he had no suspicion of the defendant, as he was a religious man and generally started the singing of a psalm when he came visiting.

THE *Church Times* does not exactly say that the late A. H. Mackonochie was killed by Christian persecution, but it says: "Had he been unmolested, he would be now actively employed with Christmas preparations in Holborn, and not dead in a Scotch snow-drift." This High Church organ ranks the late distinguished Ritualist among the Confessors and Martyrs. A confessor he certainly was, of as many High Church ladies as would confide the knowledge of their sins to his keeping, but he was only a martyr to his own obstinacy.

WILLIAM HARPER, of the Brighton Salvation Army, has got off easy with a fine of twenty shillings and costs or twenty-one days hard labor, for stealing a pair of trousers.

ACCORDING to *Le Libre-Penseur* the statistics of French prisons prove that the overwhelming majority of criminals profess the Catholic faith.

THE *Rock* quotes the following as a beautiful thought: "Life is a shipwreck, but the vessel is saved when the anchor is cast in heaven." It would take a good strong throw to cast the anchor to such a height. Suppose the anchor knocks an angel in the eye, whose fault will it be? Talking seriously, the assertion that "life is a shipwreck" is a most absurd piece of pessimism. It is a religious falsehood, calculated to drive people to despair or to the Church—which is, of course, its object.

ACCORDING to the *Rock*, Mr. Celestine Edwards, the negro libeller of Atheists, has put forth a "black indictment" against the liquor traffic by which Christian England demoralises and swindles the heathen. Mr. Edwards modestly offers to become a candidate for Parliamentary honors in order to suppress the African drink trade by legislation. Hadn't Mr. Edwards better go home to his black brethren and convert them from drunkenness and ruin? Surely they have the first claim on his sympathies. But preaching to blacks does not pay as well as religious clowning and ranting and slandering does among semi-civilised whites in Christian England.

JOHN WESLEY'S chapel near the Seven Dials has been just sold by auction. The stipulations, however, prevent its being used as a theatre or a beer-shop, or in connection with Roman Catholicism, Unitarianism, Secularism, Positivism, Agnosticism, or Atheism. Roman Catholics and Atheists are not often in the same boat, but here they are lumped with players and publicans.

A FEW years ago Coventry Patmore, the poet, built a hermitage at Hastings for the use of rickety sky-pilots. But these gentry would not patronise it. The fact is they like to be a little more "on the loose" when they visit the seaside, where it is quite amusing to see them trying to look like men of the world, when everybody can see they belong to the third sex.

THE *Christian World* rebukes the Rev. Mr. Bonus, rector of Hulcott, for insulting Nonconformists by saying "They have nothing to do with me, and I have nothing to do with them." Our contemporary reminds him of the famous line in Terence, "A man myself, I think nothing human alien to me." But the Rev. Mr. Bonus might reply that the Holy Ghost says, "Hold no fellowship with unbelievers."

SURELY good phrases ever were commendable! Here, for instance, is a pretty euphemism from a Christian weekly: "There is a good deal of what may be called friction between the culture and the religion of the day." This is worthy of Bottom the Weaver in his dove-like mood.

THE same journal says that "Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of gentleness, of mercy, of consideration for the weak, of pity for the erring." Gentleness! Why the Roman historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, remarked that the Christians were more savage towards each other than wild beasts; and civilisation has not yet toned them down into decent behavior. Consideration for the weak! Yes, the consideration of a Clanricarde for his

tenantry. Mercy! Yes, the mercy that induced the bench of Bishops to vote against Romilly's bill for abolishing the death penalty for a five-shilling felony. Pity for the erring! Yes, the pity of Galileo's dungeon and Bruno's stake; the pity of Mr. Bradlaugh's five years' bitter persecution, of Mrs. Besant's desolated home, and of our own imprisonment like a felon for joking at Bible absurdities. Our pious contemporary had better try again.

WE do not know whether the Rev. R. S. Stoney is a muscular Christian, but he belongs to the school of muscular Christianity. He feels proud "in these degenerate days" to see a couple of fine fellows like Smith and Kilrain stand up and pound each other for two hours. This delicate announcement was made at a Church tea meeting. Surely the Prince of Wales will invite this sympathetic soul to dinner at Marlborough House, or run down to Wrea Green and dine with him instead. Guelph and Stoney are birds of a feather. Both are religious, and both love "slogging."

EVEN the *Christian World* is obliged to regard Dr. Parker's little enterprise, in relation to interviewing Gladstone for the Yankee journals as "an unusual and unworthy proceeding." After this it is amusing to read that Dr. Parker flew into a passion at Brooklyn because the Y. M. C. A. put his lecture on Gladstone down as Part II. in the programme, after a musical entertainment.

THE Rev. C. A. Berry is *not* going to Brooklyn, and unless the Wolverhampton congregation has increased his stipend for staying at home, the refusal is very much to his credit. Mr. Berry is thirty-five, and he is offered some thousands a-year to preach the gospel of poverty. The original preacher of that gospel was crucified at about the same age. Christianity pays better than it did. Had the exchequer been as flourishing in J. C.'s time, Judas, who was cashier, would never have rattled for thirty shillings.

BARNUM has been purchasing a lot of things in England for his "biggest show in the world." But there are several interesting articles that would attract a great deal of attention which he has omitted to buy. There is prophet Baxter, who would amuse people at the show immensely by his lecture on the final flare-up, with illustrations from Daniel and Revelation. There is the worthy "Dr." Kinns, who demonstrates to a nicety the scientific character of Genesis, and he would fetch the thousands who have heard Ingersoll lecture on the Mistakes of Moses. Then there are some Christian Evidence lecturers, who would strike most Yankees as an eccentric species of animal, and who would certainly draw if one of their stock lectures were given "to men only." There is likewise Henry Varley, whose preternatural modesty would secure a large attendance of ladies anxious to study a good model of that virtue.

THE Rev. W. A. Pippett complained to the Luton Board of Guardians that most of the boys were so backward in their scriptural knowledge that they could scarcely answer a question on the life of Moses, and couldn't even tell the name of his brother. The master said he did not know it himself and the Guardians seemed to be quite as ignorant, for they asked the astonished clergyman to inform them. What on earth is the use of teaching workhouse boys the useless rubbish called religious knowledge, and why should the ratepayers be taxed to pay for it? Let the children be taught something useful and real, something relevant to the lives they are likely to lead when they are sent out into the world.

HERE is a little bill for a burial at Finchley. Third-class interment, 10s.; fee to vicar of St. Pancras, 4s. 2d.; fee to church trustees, 2s. 6d.; fee to parish clerk, 1s. 6d. That is, the sum of 8s. 2d. is paid to persons utterly unconcerned; indeed, the vicar need not know that the person buried is dead. The London parsons claim these fees by an Act of Parliament compensating them for their not being allowed to bury corpses in the midst of the people. They have a vested interest in using the dead to poison the living.

BIRKENHEAD has been the scene of two visitations from the Lord who descended suddenly and removed his faithful servant the Rev. Sabine Knight, curate in charge of St. Nathaniel's Church, immediately after his concluding church service. In Holy Trinity Church a worshipper was equally suddenly seized and died in the vestibule within a few minutes.

THE Rector of Bury, Lancashire, says the *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*, made an interesting experiment by way of testing the desire of the laity to obtain information from the clergy. He gave notice in his church that a box would be fixed accessibly, in which might be placed any texts for explanation or questions to be answered. In the space of a year he only found two suggested texts, both of which would seem to have been selected with the object of exercising the ingenuity of the preacher. Mr. Hornby's conclusion is, that either the congregation are (1) satisfied with the sermons they hear, or (2) that they take very little interest in the matter, and he believes the second to be the true answer. We agree with him.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOT'S LECTURES.

Sunday, Jan. 1, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, N. W., at 7.30, "The Cooling of Hell."

JAN 8, Manchester; 15, Hall of Science, London; 19, Plaistow; 22, Bradford; 29, Blackburn.

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

MARCH 4 and 11, Hall of Science, London; 25, Milton Hall.

APRIL 1, Manchester.

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.

R. D. C.—Your fresh suggestion is also a good one, but we hardly see our way to adopt it at present, as we have many irons in the fire already.

J. ROSS.—Fear and tremble, caitiff! The profane inscription you put inside that waiting-room Bible will be cited against you at the Day of Judgment. Such is the style in which you would be addressed if you told a parson. For our part we can only smile.

J. BRIERLY.—Received with thanks.

NEMO sends 10s. for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.

R. CHRISTIE.—"J. N. R. J." on the Crucifix is the Latin initials for Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. The passage from Mr. St. George Mirart about "virgin reproduction" is worthy of a Jesuit. The writer knows better, and he has destroyed the little belief we still retained in his honesty. As to miracles, it is useless to argue their credibility. Every alleged miracle must stand or fall on its own evidence, and we never heard of one that would bear investigation. Miracles never happen in your own street, but a long way off.

J. DAWSON.—The subject of Jephthah's vow is fully treated in *Bible Heroes*, where it is clearly proved that the Jewish chief actually offered up his daughter as a burnt offering to the Lord.

A. J. WILLBRAHAM.—Many thanks, but we receive a copy of "The Parson's Creed" about once a month. It has for some years been printed as a tract and sold at our office. You can have some for distribution at 6d. per hundred.

G. H. DANN, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, says: "The Freethought movement in this part of the world is gaining ground every day."

M. MEDDRINGTON.—Pleased to hear you find the December number of *Progress* so excellent, but, as you will see in another column, it has been decided to suspend the publication.

S. S.—Judge North would hardly be such a ninny. A prosecution for a personal satire would make him a public laughing-stock. Glad to hear you find the *Crimes of Christianity* very useful. Thanks for the cutting.

JAMES TAYLOR, Billington near Whalley, Lancashire, has four years' *Freethinkers* with odd numbers, which he will present to any N. S. S. Branch—the receiver to pay carriage.

O. BASS (Montreal).—The second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* is in preparation. Vol. III. will complete the work. Pleased to find you think it is invaluable.

J. E. ROOSE.—Always glad to receive your cuttings. You wish us "health, wealth, prosperity, and a successful crusade against the dark forces of ignorance." We have a good chance of all but number two, but perhaps the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Duke of Norfolk will leave us a handsome legacy.

R. S. SEAGO reports that he has obtained permission to place *Progress* and *Our Corner* on the reading-room table of the West Newington Reform Club.

GEORGE WILSON, 220 Great Francis Street, Birmingham, supplies the *Freethinker* and all Freethought publications.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Church Times—Jus—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—Liberator—Menschentum—Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freidenker—L'Avant Garde—Journal du Peuple—La Semaine Anticléricale—Le Libre-Penseur—Truthseeker—Lucifer—Folkstone News—Birkenhead News—Liverpool Weekly Post.

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.

At a meeting at the South Place Chapel and Institute, Dr. Stanton Coit was elected as permanent minister at a salary of £400 per annum. The position has been vacant since the retirement of Mr. Moncure D. Conway. Dr. Coit accepted the post on condition that the name of the South Place Religious Society was changed to the South Place Ethical Society, an alteration strongly supported by Mr. Moncure D. Conway, and carried by the meeting with only two dissentients. Thus religion finally takes a back seat, and moral culture comes to the front. This is typical of the change now going on in men's minds.

WE believe there is no foundation for the statement in the London *Echo* that Colonel Ingersoll is suffering from cancer in the throat. May the Colonel's life long be spared, is the wish of

every Freethinker on this side of the Atlantic. His death would be a terrible loss to the Freethought cause in America, for he towers so above his brethren in the holy war against superstition that it is "Ingersoll first and the rest nowhere."

THIS much at least is certain—there is no falling off in Ingersoll's power of thought and expression. Everybody says that his last utterance, *Faith and Fact*, is the best of all. The *North American Review* in which it appeared has gone through seven editions.

A NEW Freethought paper called *Common Sense* has been started at Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is edited by Arthur C. Everett.

L'Union Démocratique, for December 23rd, contains a paper on "The Reform of the Calendar" from the pen of Clemetshaw Cilwa, secretary of a Federation of French Freethought groups formed for this purpose, which is an important one in that country, owing to the custom of celebrating the birthday on the day of the saint whose name coincides. The new calendar will substitute the names of illustrious benefactors of humanity, for these obscure and often apocryphal saints, and will, we believe, follow the one proposed by Fabre d'Eglantine in dating from the autumnal equinox of 1792.

WE are pleased to notice that the *Independent Pulpit*, an ably conducted Freethought monthly edited at Waco, Texas, is still living. Its numbers have come somewhat irregularly, and we had doubts of its continued existence. But here it is again with lively and solid articles on "Christianity and Mohammedanism," "Woman and the Church," and other important topics. Mr. Shaw, the editor, is doing good work and we trust his pulpit will have extended influence and supersede the orthodox ones.

OUR American contemporary *Lucifer* says our Christmas Number "is as 'blasphemous' as any of its predecessors, and fully as varied and entertaining in its contents."

As an instance of the liberal-mindedness of Americans, we extract the following passage from a sermon by the Jewish Rabbi, Kraukopf, reported in the *San Francisco Jewish Times*:—"The terms 'unbelief,' 'Infidelity,' and 'heresy,' would never have found their way into the people's vocabulary had it not been for the intolerance of believers, and millions of human lives would never have been sacrificed, and oceans of tears would never have been shed, and also countless human hearts would never have been broken. If unbelief means a refusal of blindly following a particular set of people's religious conceptions, why of us is not an unbeliever? And who of us is not proud of such unbelief?"

At the Catholic church of St. Vincent Ferrar, New York, four infants were presented for baptism on Sunday the 4th inst. One of them was a son of Edward L. May, of 301 East Sixty-second Street. "What do you wish to name this child?" asked the officiating priest of the father. "Robert Ingersoll May," responded the proud parent. "What," asked the priest in astonishment, "is not that a peculiar name to give a child in this age? Can you not find another more appropriate?" "No," replied the father, "I like the name and I like the man." All present, says the *World* (U.S.), had been very interested listeners of the colloquy, and wondered what would come next, when the priest, without another word, christened the baby "Robert Ingersoll May." When the friends of Colonel Ingersoll are found even in Roman Catholic churches, who shall say that the signs of the times do not indicate that the kingdom of man is at hand? Mrs. Ingersoll has bought that baby a mug which will make him the laughtiest of all infants; and Colonel Ingersoll has written the father a letter which ought to make him the proudest of all parents.

ON Jan. 1 *Menschentum*, the organ of the German Freethinkers' Union, commences its seventeenth year. It is edited by Dr. August Specht, and, although but a small sheet, has a number of excellent writers among its contributors.

IN no place is Freethought literature sold cheaper than in England. We notice that the first volume of *Crimes of Christianity* sells for eight shillings in Australia.

THE *Boston Investigator*, which has now upheld Freethought in America for nearly sixty years, gives prominence to a capital lecture by Mr. L. K. Washburn, entitled "What have we to fear from Atheism?" Mr. Washburn points out how much the world might be improved, if the time and money spent in worshipping God were devoted to helping humanity.

WE are asked to acknowledge the following contributions to the Wallace Nelson Fund. Amount already acknowledged, £50 3s. 7d. Sheffield friends (2nd list), per W. Nelson £1 10s. 9d.; Sheffield Radicals: Marshall £1; Herbert 2s. 6d.; Cartwright 2s. 6d.; Eagers 2s. 6d.; Clowes 2s. 6d.; Moxon 1s.; Skinner 2s.; Jarc' Bo 1s.; J. Bingham 2s. 6d.; Leicester friends: W. Slater 1s.; Mrs. Slater 1s.; Carter 1s.; Stoughton 6d.; S. Gimson 5s.; J. T. Thacker 1s.; W. Payne 6d.; Wilber 1s.; T. Richards 1s.; Woodford sen. 1s.; T. Slater 2s. 6d.; W

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MR. NELSON left Plymouth on Saturday, Dec. 24, in the Orient steamer "Liguria." He writes: "I shall never forget the noble generosity of the Freethinkers of England to one so humble as myself. Their generous response to a call for help is a splendid refutation of the pious slander that Freethinkers lack the virtue of charity. I hope to prove by my life that I do not lack the virtue of gratitude." His wife and family have been sent to friends in Aberdeen.

THE *Folkestone News* has a very outspoken Christmas article. The writer seems to believe in Jesus Christ, but he cannot help seeing that the fruits of Christianity are anything but wholesome. Our contemporary will discover some day that the vice, injustice and poverty of our civilisation are largely due to our silly veneration of the Bible, and our degrading worship of the Bible God.

W. COOKNEY, 1a Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C., acknowledges the following subscriptions for the Hall of Science Children's Party:—Horace Seal, £1; G. Nightingale, 1s.; A. Macpherson, 2s.; George Anderson, £2 2s. Intending subscribers should forward at once. Members of the N. S. S. will be supplied first with tickets on application to W. Cookney.

A CONCERT takes place on Monday, Jan. 9, at eight, at the Monarch Coffee Tavern, 166, Bethnal Green Road, E., for the benefit of Mr. John Dell, a veteran Freethinker and Radical, over eighty years of age.

JOSEPH SYMES is writing an account of his Freethought career in the *Liberator*, which promises to be interesting. "Some day, if time should permit," he adds, "I shall write sketches of the old English Freethinkers—although I wish Messrs. Foote and Wheeler would do it, as they have access to books and sources of information that the colonies do not furnish, and I believe they have more time than falls to my share. Besides, they are good, painstaking workers, admittedly adapted to carry out my suggestion."

WHAT Joseph Symes wants will be included in a future work which is among Messrs. Foote and Wheeler's projects. Unfortunately, they have not as much time as their far-off colleague supposes. Joseph Symes is a busy man, and somehow every busy man thinks he is the busiest man in the world.

SOME of the Australian Socialists are pitching into Joseph Symes for rejecting and even opposing their nostrums. They appear also to have devoted some of their energies to denouncing Messrs. Bradlaugh and Foote for the same reason. One of them says that Mrs. Besant has been "slandered" by the Freethought party on account of her Socialism. Mrs. Besant has been told she is wrong, and that is all the slander we have heard of. Perhaps the rest has been manufactured by an imaginative Socialist *en voyage* from England to Australia.

CHRISTIAN PUNS.

I MIGHT collect such instances of pious punning as Pope Gregory's reference to certain English slave-children sold at Rome as "not Angles but angels"; or the decision of the politic court chaplain, who, when asked by his queen whether she might do knotting on Sundays, replied, "Your majesty may (k)not;" or to some of the grim jokes and pleasantries in which Christian persecutors have indulged. But my object is more serious. I wish to point out some of the puns upon which the Christian pundits—if I may borrow a Hindoo word for religious teachers—have built up portions of the fabric of Christianity.

Lack of the sense of humor—or of the intellectual perceptiveness of discrepancies or incongruities, of which the sense of humor is an enjoyable aspect or pleasure-giving fruit—is a great danger. People who lack such a sense have no idea how much they may be misled even by an undetected pun. They cannot laugh at it, and healthily and naturally destroy its mischievous tendencies. They suffer from it as a reality. It lodges in their brain as fact because they cannot appreciate it as fallacy. Thus a latent or unrecognised play on words becomes one of the many grave sources of error in argument. The faculty of detecting puns, and all their kindred is therefore valuable. The relish for such prey (I am speaking of *detecting* puns, not of

making them) promotes the habit, the sport, of hunting down such intellectual incongruities and fallacies. The early Christians, however, were conspicuously deficient in wit and intellectual shrewdness, and so were apt to mislead and be misled by verbal devices or traps of the simplest nature. With this prelude I will proceed to give a few examples of Christian puns. These were perfectly serious, it is true, and no one ever laughed at them; but I suppose it is tolerably self-evident that a pun does not cease to be a pun because no one laughs at it.

1. Roman Catholicism—the trunk of the Christian tree—had a pun for its root. From this its great pretensions and authority sprung, and on this pun it based its claims. Peter signifies a rock, both in Latin and in Greek. Cephas, the original name of which Peter is really only a translation, had the same meaning in Hebrew. Hence Christ, or the early Christians, regarded Peter as the rock on which the Church was founded; and Rome, by claiming Peter as its first bishop, justified her succession to the authority conferred by Christ, or by early Christians, on the hero of this great Christian pun. Solemnly punning on Peter's name, Christ is reported to have said to him: "Thou art Peter [=Thou art *Rock*], and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi., 18, 19). Whether this was uttered by Jesus, or only subsequently fathered upon him by tradition, the pun remains unaltered. Its wide acceptance is self-evident. Rome took over all the authority to bind and loose that sprung from this play on words. The See of St. Peter, as it calls itself, still keeps the keys of heaven and hell as its outward sign and as its spiritual prerogative.

2. Early Christianity appears to have been greatly aided by the pun on the word *Chrestos* (*χρηστος*), which was confounded with *Christos* (*χριστος*). *Chrestos* was a widely-used word, signifying good, upright, useful, gracious. It was frequently used on epitaphs and in commendation of citizens. *Christos*, from which we take "Christ," "Christian," etc., simply meant "anointed." The Christians and their first leader were thus called by names which seemed to signify they were thoroughly good people; and the words of commendation on old epitaphs, and so forth, were easily taken to signify that the persons whom they had concerned were honored adherents of the Christian faith. It must, of course, be remembered that our peculiar British pronunciation of "i" in such words as Christ was unknown, the letter "i" being almost universally pronounced like our "ee" when long, and like our "i" in Christian when short.

3. Jesus, which is only another form of Jeshua or Joshua,¹ signifies "Savior." Who can say how much the Christian doctrine of salvation by Jesus was aided by this play on his name? It seems to me quite possible that such a pun, in conjunction with the circumstances of the time, may actually have been the originating germ of the Christian ideal of a grand Savior. Matthew shows the connection of the ideas. He says (writing long after the event, of course) that Jesus should be so named because he should save his people from their sins (Matt. i., 21). Some will deny that this development of a name-signification into a realisation was of the nature of a pun. I grant the difficulty, or perhaps impossibility, of appreciating puns in foreign languages, and also the difficulty of appreciating puns which have long been accepted as truisms. But to call a man a savior because his name was "Savior" is the same sort of pun as to make Peter a rock because his name was "Rock"; or paralleling the cases with modern commonplace names, it is the same thing as supposing that a Mr. Barber must be a professor of the tonsorial art, that a Mr. Carpenter must be well able to use the saw and jack-plane, that Mr. Bright must be brilliant, and Mr. Chamberlain a court flunkey. Many biblical names are suggestive of the tendency to make the event correspond with the meaning of the name; but there is often uncertainty as to whether the name originated the legend or the legend the name, or whether both were invented or evolved together as related parts of the same myth.² "Abraham,"

¹ The "Jesus" of Hebrews iv., 8, is Joshua, the conqueror of Canaan.

² These remarks may apply to Jesus. It is possible, though perhaps not probable, that the legend of a Savior naturally caused the applica-

however, is clearly a pun on "Abram." God Almighty also made a corresponding pun on "Sarai" when he converted that name into "Sarah."

4. Matthew plays upon the word *Nazarite* when he says that the prophets foretold that Jesus should be called a Nazarene, or native of Nazareth (Matt. ii., 23). The prophets said nothing of the sort. There are references to Nazarites, who, as specially pious people, vowed not to shave or drink wine. But where we can see only an utterly irrelevant pun, early Christians could see a solemn prophecy and a sure foundation for faith. How far they were stupid and how far dishonest in such sacred punning is hard to discriminate. I should not be surprised if critics finally concluded that this pun on the word Nazareth was the original source of that portion of the Christian myth which gives Nazareth as Christ's birthplace. The evolvers of Christianity were extremely "hard up" for material, and the slightest hint or suggestion was soon seized upon as a means of evolving legendary particulars to fill up the suspiciously scanty and ill-regulated story.

I think the four examples I have given are sufficient to show that Christianity was founded on puns as well as on ordinary myths, popular legends, Jewish scriptures, pagan religions, and so forth. I do not doubt but a little research would show further instances; but these would probably be of minor importance, and the relationship to the recognised modern art of punning would not always be clear. Jesus, for instance, said to the Jews that if they would destroy the Temple he would raise it up again in three days (John ii., 19, 21). But secretly, as the evangelist informs us, "he spake of the temple of his body." How far Christ's confusion of the Temple with the alleged "temple" of his body may have been of the nature of a pun in the original Aramaic I cannot say. It was at the best a play upon words for the purpose of deceiving his hearers. At the worst it must have been a deliberate falsification of his real meaning, without any play upon words to excuse the substitution of one allegation for another which was widely different. It was either a secret and deceitful pun, or a deliberate, deceitful misrepresentation of a secret meaning.

To me it is tolerably evident that many Christian doctrines (and other widespread beliefs of all kinds) have originated in mental confusion of sound and sense more or less akin to the process which culminates in deliberate punning. Words and phrases are loosely played with, and are not clearly confined, as they should be, to a definite meaning. But we must be on our guard against carrying this idea too far, or else we shall be led away by mere accidental resemblance of sound. Those, for instance, who think that God means Good and Devil Evil, are probably no nearer etymological truth than those who punningly remark how curious it is that the Devil should be Abaddon. We must remember that, if we make mistakes of this kind, we are actually guilty of the very failing which we fondly imagine we are condemning and exposing in others. We are mistaking our own fancies for facts, our own attempted puns for matter-of-fact explanations and demonstrations of truth.

W. P. BALL.

CONVERTING THE ARISTOCRACY.

The Wesleyans' Mission to the West-End of London will be inaugurated to-morrow. The Rev. Price Hughes, in the course of an interview, explained the object of the mission. The West-End of London, was, he said, the Vanity Fair of the world and Christians must compete with its attractions in their efforts to catch souls. The service will be popular in character, and conducted with orchestral accompaniments. Concerts will be given. Good women will also be sent forth to attack the social evil in its lairs.—Melbourne, D. T.; Oct. 20.

Glory hallelujah! let us shout with one accord—
The swells of Piccadilly are coming to the Loard;
A mission, lately started by some clever Christian men,
Is really doing wonders for the British Upper Ten.
'Twas perfectly apparent that in order to compete
With entertainments offered every day to the elite,
This mission must provide a pretty giddy sort of show,
And so put on the gospel as to make it fairly "go."
At last they're taking measures jaded sinners to ensnare
With a well-appointed ballet as the prelude to a prayer;

tion of the significant but quite ordinary name Jesus to the mythical hero of the popular religious romance. This would hardly be regarded as a pun worked backwards, yet the relationship of such methods of nomenclature to punning may be worth considering.

And when the prayer is over (it is never very long)
The pertest of the parsons slugs the company a song.
An orchestra of fifty, picked performers to be sure,
Before the sermon opens plays a brilliant overture;
Then (worked in silver thread upon a satin ground of blue)
The blessed text is handed round to every blessed pew.
No need to say the discourse moves the haughtiest of hearts,
Since the fiddlers play slow music at the sentimental parts;
And when the D——!'s mentioned, how countesses do jump!
For an ever-wackful drummer gives his instrument a thump.
If a dude grows rather weary of providing for his soul
He lights a cigarette, and leaves the building for a stroll;
But the ladies keep their seats until the minister has done,
Then gather round the altar for their sherry, and a bun.
This mission, too, has agents always eager in a search
For any stray nobility that never come to church;
The naughty dukes and marquises are tackled in their lairs
By rosy-cheeked young charmers who convert 'em unawares.
There's a wonderful improvement in the morals of the earls,
Solely brought about by visits from these pretty Mission girls;
And as for all the barons, viscounts, baronets, and such,
They have also been converted and they like it very much.
Thanks to the attractions of this merry Mission then,
Religion's quite in fashion with the British Upper Ten;
And many noted parties are coming to the Loard
Who were hitherto prevented by the dread of being bored.

(*Sydney Bulletin*, Nov. 5, 1887.)

REVIEWS.

My Experiences in Modern Spiritualism. By an Investigator. South Shields: R. Smailes (2d.).—The author withholds his name, and thus deprives his pamphlet of most of its value. He appears to have investigated at first hand, and his verdict is that Spiritualism is simply a mixture of credulity and imposture.

Christian Solidarity. By H. S. NEWMAN. London: Partridge and Co.—A handsome volume, finely printed and beautifully bound. The author is evidently a sincere and generous man, and modest withal; but his attempt to bring Christianity into harmony with the progressive tendencies of our age is foredoomed to failure. There are some excellent ideas, rather hinted than expressed, in his final chapter on "The Human Race"; yet surely the fate of the growing sympathy of civilised people is not bound up with that of belief in old-world superstitions. "Love for our fellow man," says Mr. Newman, "is begotten of God's love for us"; a statement, by the way, which the New Testament flatly contradicts. The truth is, that human affection is apart from religion, and according to evolution it must have preceded religion. Nor can we understand what Mr. Newman means by "the final and Christian form in which production and distribution will develop themselves." "Labor not for the meat which perisheth" is a strange law of production, and "sell all that thou hast and give to the poor" is a no less strange law of distribution. Mr. Newman appears to possess a good heart, but his head seems somewhat inferior.

Present Day Tracts, Vol. IX. London: The Religious Tract Society (2s. 6d.).—Contains Essays XLIX. to LIV. inclusive. We defer criticism, as we intend to notice one or two of these essays separately. But we may venture to say that Christian ministers are better occupied in arguing than in persecuting, and we would rather answer their writings than wear their prison clothes. Those essays are carefully written and polite in tone, and they claim fair consideration.

PROFANE JOKES.

Old Farmer in Connecticut (to the pastor of his church): "Look here, Dominie, do send over to my orchard and get some o' them pears. They're all going to rot. My horse won't eat 'em, and I kinder think your children might like some on o'm."

Well, how did you like the sermon on Sunday?" asked one lady of another. "The sermon!" "Yes; you were at church, weren't you!" "Yes, certainly." "Well then, how did you like the sermon?" "I didn't hear any sermon, I belong to the choir," was the self-satisfied rejoinder.

Last Sunday a clergyman in Bermondsey was speaking to children regarding the benefits of a temperate life. "Why," said he, "the strongest man that ever lived never tasted liquor. Who can tell me the name of the strongest man?" "John L. Sullivan," came instantly from a little fellow in the infant department of the Sunday-school.

An ignorant lecturer explained the passage of the Red Sea by saying that the Israelites crossed on the ice. "There is no ice under the equator," exclaimed an auditor. "Ladies and gentlemen," retorted the lecturer, "the event to which I refer happened thousands of years before there were any geographers in the world, and consequently, before there was any equator. I think, my friends, I have answered the gentleman completely."

THE BEST OF EVIDENCE.—"Do you suspect any of the clerks?" asked the detective, who had been called in to investigate a robbery. "Decidedly not," replied the merchant. "The only one who has the handling of the money is above any suspicion. He is such an exemplary young man that he curtails his time for luncheon so as to be able to read the Bible he keeps in his desk." "Point him out to me," cried the detective, rubbing his hands in delight; "he's the very man I want."

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