

THE FREETHINKER

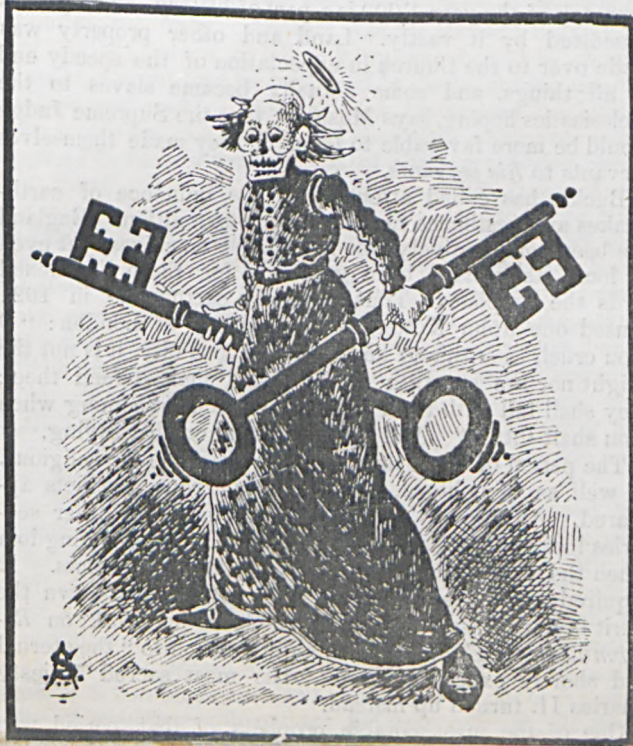
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Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 231.



UP FROM HELL.

Behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.—REV. I., 18.

CHRISTIANITY AND PAGANISM.¹

THE comparative study of Religion is much in vogue, being indeed but a sign that Evolution is everywhere triumphant. He who knows only one side of a question, said John Stuart Mill, does not even know that. Much more may it be said that he who knows only one religion has not the slightest knowledge of its meaning. Christianity has been made intelligible in our age by the study of ancient religions, and perhaps more by the study of savage beliefs and ritual, that furnish us with the basic raw material of superstition, out of which all the great historic systems have been woven.

In face of this change the superior order of Christian apologists are compelled to adopt fresh tactics. They see the necessity of at least pretending to compare Christianity with other systems; and if they do this skilfully, taking full advantage of their reader's ignorance and incapacity, they may give their religion an air of intellectual and moral respectability for another generation or two. But as surely as knowledge advances and logic strengthens their trick will be discovered, and then they will have played their last trump card in vain.

The Essay before us is one of these dexterous imitations of honest argument. Mr. Mitchell has a gentlemanly style, and persons unacquainted with the subject will be apt to fancy him the very pink of candor. Others, however, with more knowledge, and therefore more perspicacity, will see that Mr. Mitchell is little short of dishonest. His Essay exonerates him from the charge of being a fool; it is obvious that he *must* see the trick he is playing; the fallacy of his argument is supported by too much information and

cleverness to be anything but designed. Addressed as it is by necessity, though not avowedly, to Christian readers, it is admirably calculated to countenance their prejudices, and to give their inherited belief the air of a profound philosophy. Evidently the Religious Tract Society knows what it is about in publishing such Essays by the dozen.

Mr. Mitchell claims that his Essay is a comparative study. But what does he do? He compares Christianity with extinct Pagan systems, which were in their hoary decrepitude when Christianity started. By this means he gets a few thousand years to the good. Why did he not compare Christianity with Buddhism, which began only a few centuries earlier; or even with Mohammedanism, which began a few centuries later? Instead of that he draws contrasts between the higher aspects of Christianity and the lower aspects of the far older religions of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Phœnicia, all of which arose in barbarous or semi-barbarous times, before Grecian science, art, and philosophy had commenced a new epoch of history, and before the imperial genius of Rome had subdued the theatre of European civilisation into peaceful homogeneity. Mr. Mitchell does, indeed, say something about the "Grecian System" and the "Roman System," but he says as little as possible, and he is always careful not to let his knowledge interfere with the interests of his argument.

Another extraordinary feature of Mr. Mitchell's Essay is this. He pretends that "Christianity has borrowed no truth from any Pagan creed." Well, we agree with him; but it borrowed a good many falsities. Mr. Mitchell writes as though Christianity had no *dogmas*; his talk is all of *ethics*. Yet the Church of England articles plainly declare that no man can be saved by a good life unless he accept the Christian faith. Dogmas, then, are of the highest importance; and we challenge Mr. Mitchell to show us a single one in his whole creed which cannot be found in those ancient Pagan systems that preceded Christianity.

Nor do we understand Mr. Mitchell when he says that Christianity is the only system that mingles no error with the truth it contains. Whom is he addressing? If Christians, the statement is superfluous clap-trap; if unbelievers, it is a gross impertinence. Mr. Mitchell mistakes assertion for proof, assumption for argument. If he is willing to discuss the subject we will point out fifty, a hundred, or more errors in Christian teaching; but at present we have no room for the catalogue.

Now let us follow Mr. Mitchell through his somewhat discursive Essay. He quotes from Thomas Carlyle very early, representing him as saying that "A man's religion is the most important thing about him." Now Carlyle never wrote thus, as though religion were a thing a man carried in his pocket, like cash or a pen-knife. What Carlyle wrote was this—"A man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him." Mr. Mitchell may call this cavilling. It is not so, however; for the difference between quoting accurately and inaccurately from a work easily accessible is the difference between slipshod and honest work.

Soon afterwards there are digs and sneers at Evolution, which Mr. Mitchell hates yet fears to oppose frankly. He notices the wonderful power and beauty of the Greek mind, and exclaims that "the continuous progress of art and science is purely imaginary." But the Greek mind was not the human mind. An extraordinary concatenation of circumstances made the Greeks the most astonishing people in history. They were, however, merely a handful; their civilisation was surrounded by colossal barbarisms. Modern progress dates from the days of Gutenberg, Copernicus and Columbus. During those few centuries there has been an enormous *widening* of civilisation. Modern progress, indeed, is the democratising of civilisation. We do not multiply Homers and Platos, though we certainly hold

¹ *Christianity and Ancient Paganism.* By J. Murray Mitchell, M. A., LL.D. "Present Day Tracts," No. 51. Religious Tract Society.

our own; but we multiply the handful of Greek freemen into ever increasing millions of busy, thoughtful citizens, whose mental horizon is far broader than that of the ancient Greeks.

Dealing with "The Egyptian System," Mr. Mitchell is perplexed at finding the most refined theism and the most debased polytheism mingled in its records. But *why* is he perplexed? The very same mixture is noticeable in the Old Testament. Writings that extend over several centuries necessarily reflect different strata of religious and ethical development. Nor is Mr. Mitchell clearer-minded when he speaks on one page of the "degrading brute-worship" of Egypt, and on another of the animals' heads as "probably symbols of qualities." The Egyptians did not worship cats as cats; they were not such fools. To talk, therefore, of their "brute-worship" is nonsense, and greater nonsense still to stigmatise it as "degrading." Suppose an Egyptian saw a Catholic kneeling before a crucifix, and were to assert that the Christians worshipped wooden gods; would he not be just as philosophic as Mr. Mitchell? Even if the Egyptians worshipped a calf—which they never did except as a symbol—did not the Jews worship the golden calf in the desert; and did not this "degrading rite" persist among them for centuries?

Mr. Mitchell notices the Egyptian *crux*, which he calls "a kind of cross." What a pretty circumlocution! Surely he knows that the Egyptian cross was *the* cross, and that the chief symbol of Christianity is probably milleniums older than "Jesus Christ and him crucified." He notices also that the Egyptians devoutly believed in a future life, though he forgets to say that heaven, hell, and purgatory were clearly defined in their theology. Now nothing is clearer, as Warburton demonstrated, than that the ancient Jews had no belief in a future life at all; the so-called Mosaic Law, being without the most shadowy allusion to that doctrine. Mr. Mitchell, therefore, seeks to minimise the importance of the Egyptian belief in future rewards and punishments. "We would gladly know," he says, "how the belief affected men during life, and in the prospect of death." Well, if he wishes to know he has but to study the evidence. He admits that "The Egyptian deities were strictly, sternly just." He allows that there was no idea of forgiveness. What more then does he want? Precisely what destroys the moral value of the Christian doctrine of a future life was absent in the Egyptian. Forgiveness of sins is a very pretty concession to human weakness, but a very questionable aid to morality.

No doubt the Egyptians had their share of "spells and incantations," but, according to Lightfoot, the Jews beat them hollow in that respect. It is not true, however, that "little is said of duties in the Book of the Dead." Listen to these parts of "negative confession" which the dead had to make before Osiris and the forty-two judges in Amenti:—"I have not privily done evil against mankind. I have not told falsehoods in the tribunal of Truth. I have not done any wicked thing. I have not made the laboring man do more than his daily task. I have not calumniated the slave to his master. I have not murdered. I have not done fraud to men. I have not committed adultery. I have not changed the measures of the country. I have not withheld milk from the mouths of the sucklings."

Finally Mr. Mitchell discovers that Egyptian architecture was massive, not graceful, while their art soon became stationary. Perhaps so; but the Jews had no architecture or art at all. If the Egyptians were "careless in morals," what shall we say of the Jews? And if the Egyptian sovereign was "a despot ruling a nation of slaves"—which is only a half-truth—what was Constantine when he made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire? The doctrine of the divine right of kings was taught by the Church, and never questioned until Cromwell and the "regicides" solemnly challenged it before the civilised world.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

In the last volume of his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, Mr. W. E. H. Lecky gives some instances of how those who attempted to make improvements were deemed to be going against the spirit of religion and had Bible texts cast in their teeth. When a lady, in a clay district, could not go to church without having six bullocks to draw her coach, because horses could not be used on account of the mire, the people who wanted the roads improved were exhorted to "stand in the ways and see and ask for the old paths."

SOME MODERN PROPHETS.

THE Bible has been the great fountain-head of superstition. Justification for endless fanaticism and folly has been drawn from its revered pages. Christianity, according to its own account, began with the expectation of the near approach of the last day. The terror of this great day of wrath contributed to spread that religion over the degenerate Roman Empire, and drove myriads into deserts and monasteries. As the Church thrived on the ignorance of its followers it found other means of retaining their credulity. Yet ever and anon the old fear would revive and lead to extraordinary outbursts of fanaticism.

The stupendous panic which overrun Europe towards the approach of the year 1,000 is a part of history. The priests benefitted by it vastly. Land and other property was made over to the Church in expectation of the speedy end of all things, and some actually became slaves to the ecclesiastics hoping, says Mosheim, that the Supreme Judge would be more favorable to them if they made themselves servants to *his* servants.

Buckle has called attention to the influence of earthquakes and pestilence in promoting superstition. England has been comparatively free from these scourges, yet even if local they have been godsend for those ill-omened birds the prophets. Thus a slight earthquake in 1621 caused one John Kotteraus to prophesy of London: "O thou cruel, thou thirsty and presumptuous city, it is not the height nor the strength of thy walls shall defend thee; they shall fall with thee. Behold the time is coming when thou shalt totter." And many believed on that saying.

The period of the Commonwealth was one of religious, as well as of political, turmoil. Numerous prophets appeared. Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchy men and other sectaries looked forward to the restoration of God's kingdom when the earth should be the inheritance of saints. It required all the strength of Cromwell to keep down the spirit of fanaticism. Even Milton closes his work on *Reformation in England* with an invocation to "the eternal and shortly expected King." His most sacred Majesty Charles II. turned up instead.

One of the most notable prophets of that period was Christopher Love, a Presbyterian divine, educated at Oxford, and one of the Westminster Assembly. Love followed the Jewish prophets in placing his most wonderful prophecies at a safe distance. The destruction of London was fixed for 1795. Like Jeremiah, who could predict that Jehoiakin should die without posterity and that Zedekiah should die in peace—both falsified by events—but could not foresee that he himself would be put in prison, Love was unable to foretell that Cromwell would discover his intrigues for the restoration of Charles II., and bring his head to Tower Hill, Aug. 22, 1661. Love was long deemed a prophet and martyr by the Presbyterian party.

Poor James Naylor was another regarded as a prophet and indeed hailed as the Coming King. Naylor, ridiculous in his exaltation, was sublime in his degradation. Convicted of blasphemy, he was barbarously sentenced to be pilloried, whipped from Westminster to the Exchange, and to have his tongue bored and his skull branded. This horrid punishment Naylor endured with extraordinary fortitude and meekness, embracing the executioner who branded him. Ludwick Muggleton was a prophet of a far coarser type. Like Elisha he took to cursing. All who did not believe in him and his commission were denounced as fit subjects for the Almighty's vengeance. Yet Muggleton was allowed to live in peace till the age of 90. Some of his followers thought he was going to live for ever. We believe Muggletonians are still to be found in Bristol.

The great plague of London, followed as it was by the great fire, led to a fresh outburst of fanaticism, depicted in the pages of Defoe. One cried, like Jonah to Nineveh, "Yet forty days and London shall be destroyed!" "Another ran about Naked [like Isaiah] except in a pair of Drawers about his Waist, crying Day and Night, like a man [Jesus] that Josephus mentions, who cry'd Woe to Jerusalem a little before the destruction of that City; so this poor naked Creature cry'd O! the Great and the Dreadful God!" The figure of Solomon Eagle denouncing woe to the city of London will be familiar to readers of Harrison Ainsworth's *Old Saint Paul's*.

In 1682 the prophetess Christina Poniatounia, a Lithuanian, created consternation by seeing "the angel of God calling in the nations of the north, the east, and the west, to come

against London, for *now* is the predestined time that it must fall. Oh! how dreadful shall it be laid waste! How irrevocably shall it be destroyed." The revocation of the edict of Nantes drove over many French Protestants to our shores. In their train came a few of the Camisards or prophets of the Cevennes, suppressed by Marshall Villars in 1705. The fanaticism and convulsions by which they were distinguished followed them. They were known as the French prophets and induced many to believe in their gifts. They went so far as to pretend to raise the dead, but Dr. Emes did not rise, though the faithful visited Bunhill fields with the expectation of his re-appearance. Among their followers was one, widow Hughes, who pretended to be the woman clothed with the Sun, mentioned in Revelation, and who said she bore the sins of the whole nation on her body. Another was Sir Richard Bulkely, a very crooked person, of whom it was prophesied he should be made straight, but he happened to die before the miracle could be performed. They worked themselves up into a perfect delirium of agitation and then their utterances were supposed to be inspired. Some of their prophecies were very literal. On the 25th of March, 1708, Queen Anne was to go *as a prophetess* to Barbican. On the 5th of May the City of London was to have been burnt with fire and brimstone. A dreadful famine was to desolate the land. The Devil was to take the French clergyman, who opposed the prophets, out of his pulpit before the whole congregation, "as a crow would carry a piece of flesh in its mouth," and all who condemned the practices of these gentry were to be struck dead. The proceedings of the French and English prophets induced Lord Shaftesbury to write his "Letter on Enthusiasm," in which he recommends treating superstition with ridicule.

In March, 1750, a soldier in the Life Guards opened his commission as a prophet, and announced that London was to be destroyed on the 8th of the next April. He so frightened the religious public that the Bishop of London wrote a pastoral letter exhorting the clergy and people to be patient and resigned. According to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the people "left their houses and walked in the fields, or lay in boats all night, and many people of fashion, in the neighboring villages, sat in their coaches till daylight." The scarcity of provisions in 1767 again brought out one Bell, a prophet, and once more London was to be "utterly destroyed and not a vestige left."

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

ACID DROPS.

THE Christians are having their usual "week of prayer" to open the year with. They are praying with one accord for the same object, no doubt in order that the Lord may have a chance of understanding what it is they want.

CURIOSLY enough, the Christians have this week of prayer every January, yet each year they complain that the outlook is worse than ever. Hadn't they better let the Almighty alone for a bit?

THE Pope's Jubilee Mass at Rome last Sunday was a big affair. His Holiness wore many of his presents from the crowned heads of Europe, and what with red-garmented Cardinals, gorgeous Archbishops, soldiers and policemen, the show at St. Peter's was really imposing. Evidently the Papacy has a good deal of life in it yet, and as Protestantism is gradually dissolving into Scepticism, it seems likely that the final struggle between faith and reason will be fought out between Catholicism and Free-thought.

HIS Holiness fainted away twice during the proceedings. Where was the Holy Ghost that inspires him? How could this Almighty source of his infallibility desert him on such an important occasion, and leave him an obvious prey to mere human weakness?

As the Papal procession entered the mighty church, which was erected by the sale of indulgences for theft, incest and murder, the choir sang "Tu es Petrus." "Thou art Peter (*petrus*—a rock) and on this Peter (*petram*) I will build my Church." That ghastly pun, which the Church fathered on Jesus Christ, is still the foundation of Romish supremacy. Lord, how the world is given to lying! And as the Catholic world is still deceived by this miserable forgery, we must conclude with the author of *Hudibras* that

Doubtless the pleasure is as great
Of being cheated as to cheat.

CARDINAL MANNING did not figure at the Pope's show, but he improved the occasion at the Kensington Pro-Cathedral, which was elegantly decorated and upholstered by way of illustrating the text, "Blessed be ye poor." Cardinal Manning shed fresh tears over the loss of the Pope's temporal power, and the miserable fate of the poor "Prisoner of the Vatican," who is half smothered with jewels and roses. Yet he gloried in the fact that "Leo XIII. reigned over a larger Christendom than was ever known before." Well, if Cardinal Manning thinks the gain of the Irish-descended Catholics in America, and the handful of converts in the East, is more than a set-off against the loss of Germany and England, he is very easily pleased.

CATHOLIC bigotry is being excited against Mr. John Morley who is about to visit Dublin with Lord Ripon. Several leading Catholics have refused to join the Reception Committee, and the *Irish Times* not only reprints a hostile criticism of Mr. Morley's religious views from the *Dublin Review*, but significantly remarks that the Irish people have never hitherto given countenance to principles which assail faith.

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* is fond of sensational politics, but it is also as fond of religion even when it works on the most despotic principles. The other evening its leading article said "We are all for the Pope and all for the Czar." Not all of us, Mr. Stead; speak for yourself. Surely it is a strange spectacle to see "the most advanced Liberal journal in England," as the *P. M. G.* styles itself, praising the spiritual despotism of Rome and the spiritual and temporal despotism of the Czar. The fact is, when religion is in question the editor of the *P. M. G.* is an irresponsible being, a mere bundle of hysterical prejudices; and the London Democracy will do well to be on its guard against this gentleman's heroics.

THE *P. M. G.*, in the very same issue, speaks of the immortal author of *Common Sense*, the *Age of Reason*, and the *Rights of Man*, as "Tom Paine." Probably the author of *The Maiden Tribute* would dislike being called "Bill Stead," yet all he has ever written is worth less than a single page of Thomas Paine.

THE Rev. Stewart Headlam opens the New Year number of the *Church Reformer* with an exhortation to the clergy to educate the rich "into the knowledge that they are doomed to Hell if they allow the contrast between rich and poor, Dives and Pauper, to go on as a matter of course." Mr. Headlam evidently thinks affairs are in a bad way, but he must have a very sanguine temperament or strong *esprit de corps* if he looks for hope from the clergy. Doctors are about as likely to denounce vaccination as the parsons to follow their Savior in teaching "Woe to ye rich" until it suits their own interests to do so. The poor will derive about as much benefit from the preaching of the clergy as consolation from the cheering news of Mr. Headlam, who is, we believe, a connoisseur in such matters, that there is "more good dancing now in London than there has been for some time."

THE *Nonconformist and Independent* is discussing whether ministers ought to go to theatres. For our part, we think it might possibly do them a little good. A few of the fogeys who were brought up in the old school, which stigmatised novel reading and all other amusements as devices of the Devil, protest against the pernicious example; but the younger ones find there is a good deal to be said for the drama, and are reported to have an especial fondness for the ballet.

A YOUNG woman recently leaped into the River Trent at Nottingham, prompted, she said, by a vision. The *Christian Herald*, the Bible, and various other Christian authorities, teach that visions are divinely sent to guide our actions; so why should Christians blame her for obeying the vision?

A STOCK of counterfeit money, together with tools for coining, was found concealed in a church, at Hiasis, in Hungary. The parson himself was the head of the gang of coiners—who have fortunately all been apprehended. Morally speaking, the Church has been issuing false coin to the world for nearly two thousand years, and its degradations have been infinitely more formidable and insidious than those of the petty Hungarian parson and his gang of coiners.

"GENERAL" BOOTH says he has received £34,000 during the year in subscriptions and donations. Salvationism is evidently a paying business.

"A DAMNED FOOL" was the title of a recent sermon by the Rev. J. Robertson, of Stonehaven. No doubt the discourse was autobiographical.

JOHN HAMPDEN still edits a monthly publication to prove that the earth is flat—like himself. Real Christians are scarce nowadays, but John Hampden is one of the good old sort.

THE members of the Methodist Episcopal church of Montgomery, Alabama, refuse to accept the pastor sent them by the Alabama Conference, and in order that the objectionable appointee may not have access to the church building they have nailed up the doors and windows.

IN the law case concerning the marriage of an Englishman with a Kafir girl according to native customs, we find that Montsioa, the chief of the Barralong tribe, said that his tribe recognised no religion or religious ceremonies, and in fact believed in nothing. Yet Christians are always pretending that religion and belief in God are universal.

HERE are a few "poor shepherds" who died and left a pile behind them in 1887. The Rev. J. Hymers, of Brandsburton, £168,000; the Rev. T. Stainforth, of Storrs, £150,000; the Rev. W. M. Currie, rector of Higham, £107,000; Canon Harrison, Canterbury, £42,000; Dr. Titcomb, formerly Bishop of Rangoon, £39,000; the Rev. J. E. Gray, of Wembley Park, £42,000; the Rev. F. L. Cave, of Oxford, £33,000. Blessed be ye poor!

WE wonder how many working men there are in the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association. However it is composed, this august body has issued a New Year's address in which it complains of the number of persons employed on railways, in public houses, etc. on Sunday; but it says nothing about the quarter of a million persons employed every Sunday in keeping open churches and chapels. Keeping the fourth commandment may be all very well, but let the clergy begin first.

A DEPUTATION of ladies waited on the Home Secretary a few days ago to present a Jubilee Memorial to the Queen in favor of prohibiting the sale of intoxicating drinks on Sunday. But why Sunday? If selling liquor is wrong on Sunday it is wrong on Monday. What these ladies are aiming at is Sabbatarianism in disguise, and no wonder they have so many clericals with them.

MR. FREDERICK HARRISON cannot talk for an hour without saying many good things, and there is much that is admirable in his New Year's address at the Positivist Church. But some of his remarks remind one of Mr. Matthew Arnold's observation that Mr. Harrison has impaired his strength by "carrying about an old French pedant on his shoulders." Speaking of marriage, Mr. Harrison said that "the Secularists repudiate the religious rite, and the theologians wish to abolish the civil rite, while the Positivists alone dwell on the importance of both." Well, Mr. Harrison, oil and water can be mixed, provided you have the requisite alkali. But have you got it? Even if you have, the result will only be soap.

DAN CUPID has always made a wry face at the priests, but in future he will smile charmingly while an elderly Positivist professor reads him a lesson on his duties and responsibilities! Is it not astonishing what system-mongers will set up as "aids to morality"? Two young hearts, full of mutual love, are a great deal holier than all the platitudes of pedagogues.

THE Rev. F. R. Conder has a paragraph all to himself in the papers, announcing that he has joined the Church of Rome. No doubt it is a striking event, but after all the world goes round pretty much as it did.

BY-AND-BYE we shall hear that Mr. Artichoke Jones, the greengrocer, has left the Methodists and joined the Unitarians; while Mr. Bullock Stout, the butcher, has removed his patronage from the Baptists and conferred it upon the New Jerusalem Church. To put it plainly, "Who's Conder?" "Never heard of the gentleman before," says our printer's devil, and he's one of the most eminent living authorities on sky-pilots.

THE Rev. E. W. Randall, of Clapham, likes smoking in railway waiting rooms, and punching station-masters' heads when they ask him to desist. For one of these performances at East Croydon he has been fined twenty shillings and eleven shillings costs. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, Randall, my boy; but don't do it in the waiting room. Try the pulpit or the fowls' house.

ANOTHER death in the pulpit. The Rev. William Rudd, aged 83 years, died suddenly in the pulpit of the Methodist chapel at New Bessham, on Sunday night, while in the act of giving out a hymn.

YET another death in the pulpit. The Rev. D. Ferguson, minister of the Free Church, Westerdale, near Thurso, while preaching on Christmas Day, sat down in the pulpit, remarking, "I can say no more," and died almost immediately.

IN its General Religious Notes the *Rock* reports that the new decree of expulsion directed against the foreign Jews in Russia, which affects some 36,000, is pressing with crushing effect upon rich and poor alike, but particularly upon the latter. All have received an intimation to wind up their affairs in the course of 1888, even the largest merchants and bankers having only received a year's grace in which to do so. Why don't the Christian journals protest strongly against Christian persecution of Jews?

A NEGRO "faith doctor" named William Jordan, at Selma, Alabama, was doing good business there until he was carried away by fanaticism. Giving out that he was going to hold a Passover service, he gathered some of his female devotees about him, and said he wanted "a sacrifice." A colored woman named

Drive volunteered; her head was laid upon the table, and her neck nearly severed with a sword; then the body was dragged into the street, where Jordan commenced preaching. When the police arrested him he made a determined resistance, fighting lustily with the sword of the Lord. He is now on trial for murder, after narrowly escaping a lynching, and probably he will soon be on the other side of Jordan.

SUCH is the effect of Bible reading upon weak or inflammable brains. Most Christians are inoculated by civilisation against Bible rabies, but sometimes the worst effects are produced in the shape of frightful madness.

M. HENRI DE LASERRE, whose work on the "Miraculous Grotto" at Lourdes has been extremely popular among Catholics, set himself the task of translating the Bible and adapting it to the taste of the refined and wealthy Catholics of France. To this end he smoothed away and toned down whatever he found in it repugnant to the fastidious. The text, it is said, went admirably with luxurious binding. The Sacred College, however, unwilling to see so strong a satire on the Holy Scriptures in the hands of the faithful, has decided to forbid this translation, and, as an obedient son of the Church, the translator bows to its decree.

THIS is a pity. The taste of the world has advanced a good deal since the old books were written. What it wants is not a Child's Bible, showing where all the obscenities may be found by their omission, but toning down such stories as those of Onan, Judah and Tamar, Lot and his daughters, Ammon and his sister-in-law, and Absalom and his father's concubines, a little more than our translators have already toned down the Song of Solomon. Mary instead of being "found with child," must be put "in an interesting condition," and the Lord's command to Hosea, "Go take thee a wife of whoredoms," must have as substitute some such mild suggestion as "Go take thee a villa in West Kensington."

THE *Sydney Evening News* reports a discussion on Socialism, opened at the School of Arts Debating Club by Mr. F. Jones. Mr. Jones is reported as pointing out that the majority of Secularists were Individualists. Mr. Symes, Col. Ingersoll, Mr. Levy, Charles Bradlaugh and G. W. Foote considered Socialism a cure worse than the evil. To men like these he took off his hat, but could not help thinking they were unable to shake off their dread of bad kings and governments. Mr. Jones has evidently got hold of the wrong end of the stick. The individuals he mentions have less dread of bad kings and governments than of the people who support them.

THE *Telegram*, Yeovil, a pretended Radical paper, defends the existing Blasphemy Laws, and by implication the infamous sentences passed on Messrs. Foote, Ramsey and Kemp. It relies upon the authority of Dr. W. Blake Odgers, whom it curiously regards as "the most eminent legal adviser on these matters." Apparently it adopts Dr. Odgers's arguments without the least reservation, which is more than half the Unitarians have been able to do. "Our religious emotions," say the *Telegram*, "demand from the law as much protection as our moral sense." Underline *Our*, and you have the *Telegram's* argument in a nutshell. The suspicion never crosses the editor's mind that his religious emotions are no more sacred than our Freethought emotions. His position is that of the naked persecutor, only he attempts to hide his shamelessness with the leaves of Dr. Odgers's pamphlet.

IN Ecclesiastes ii, 8, Solomon says: "I got me men singers and women singers, and musical instruments; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit." From this it is evident that Solomon came to grief trying to run an Italian opera. He could manage seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and the Queen of Sheba into the bargain, but an opera was too much for him.

THE editor of the *Workington Free Press* makes merry with a postcard which he has received, warning him that "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God," and "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." As to the first he agrees, for there have always been plenty of gods. On the second item he says: "Well, we received the note on Monday morning, and so far, although some nights have passed and gone, our 'soul' hasn't been required that we are aware of. When it is required we shall be quite willing to give it up, though we humbly confess we don't know where to look for it. We have seen a man taken all to small pieces, but we did not get a glimpse of his 'soul' at all." The editor of the *W. F. P.* is evidently not frightened by the ravings of a fanatic.

OBITUARY.—It is with extreme regret that I record the unexpected death of the affectionate and thoughtful wife of our friend and co-worker, Mr. J. Fitzgerald, which took place on the 27th ult. She was buried on Monday last at Manor Park Cemetery, in the presence of many relatives and friends; and the manner in which Mr. J. Haslam read the beautiful Secular service left a marked impression upon all. Mrs. Fitzgerald always took a bright view of life. She died a calm, decisive Freethinker, and a thorough hater of cant. E. Toleman Garner (West Ham).

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, January 8, Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, Manchester: at 11, "Quack Remedies for Poverty"; at 3, "Darwin on God"; at 6.30, "The Cooling of Hell."

JAN. 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.

W. H.—The joke is rather flat.

G. WEIR.—Always pleased to hear from you.

J. E. STAPLETON regrets the suspension of *Progress*, which he has always "appreciated highly," and which he had just obtained permission to place on the table of the Nottingham Free Library. We thank our correspondent for his good wishes for the New Year.

A. THOMAS.—Letter and paragraph impossible. Have stewed down for "Sugar Plum."

W. JARVIS.—Mill's *Logic* is now published in one volume, at 5s.

L. JACKSON.—You will find a full account of the Crusades in the *Crimes of Christianity*.

S. CAMPBELL.—Mallock's *Progress and Property* might suit you. There is a great deal of truth in what Henry George says on the land question, but he mixes up the truth with a considerable amount of error, and his sentimental piety is enough to raise the gorge of social students. Glad to hear you say, "Your Christmas Number is immense, and my religious friends all enjoy it." Your plan for pushing the sale is an excellent one.

F. SAUNDERS.—We regard Tylor as the most solid and trustworthy authority on his special subjects. His works on *Primitive Culture* and the *Early History of Mankind* place him far above all rivals, while his *Anthropology* is a masterly performance which no other living writer could have equalled. You will find much information scattered over the pages of Alger's voluminous *History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, but it is a great pity we have not a better work on the subject. It is too diffuse and rhetorical. Some day another Tylor may be found for this task also.

A. GARDINER.—It is probably an editorial trick. Neither Mr. Foote nor Mr. Wheeler has sent anything to the journal you refer to.

R. KELLY.—The *Freethinker* has not the "greatest circulation in the world," such as the *D. T.* falsely boasts of; but we doubt whether any journal is more widely circulated. We have readers in every country in Europe, in the United States, Canada, the West Indies, South Africa, India, China, Australia, New Zealand, and a number of minor places too numerous to recite.

HOMO.—Too late for paragraph. Pleased to hear the Dundee Freethinkers kept Christmas so merrily, although their Sunday festivities must have shocked the unco guid.

G. STANDRING desires us to acknowledge £1 from D. Colville for the London Secular Federation.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Jus—Women's Suffrage Journal—Western Figaro—Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Countryman—Church Reformer—Boston Investigator—L'Union Libres-penseurs—Telegram—L'Union Démocratique—Freidenker—Workington Free Press—Le Libre-Penseur—Thinker.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE London Secular Federation holds its first meeting at the Hall of Science next Thursday evening (Jan. 12) at eight. It is hoped that every Branch in the Metropolis will be represented, so that the Federation may begin business at once.

AMONG the Progressive Publishing Co.'s ventures for 1888 is a *Dictionary of Freethinkers* by Mr. J. M. Wheeler. It will include over a thousand names of ancient and modern times, and the author has taken the greatest pains to give the most accurate information about all of them. For years he has been gathering materials, and the work will be simply invaluable, not only to Freethinkers, but to scholars and liberal students. The work will be issued in twopenny parts, well printed on good paper, so as to make a handsome volume when completed. Up to L these biographies have already appeared in *Progress*, but all those will be revised, and fresh names intercalated. Part I. will be ready for sale on March 1. Those who wish to subscribe for the whole series should communicate early with Mr. Forder.

SEVERAL previous attempts have been made to achieve such a work, but some were abortive, and none quite successful. The *Dictionary of Anti-Superstitionists* compiled by Julian Hibbert, and published by Carlile, was commenced on a large scale and with adequate scholarship, but it never reached any further than the letter A. The French *Dictionary of Atheists*, compiled by

Sylvain Maréchal, with its supplements by Lalande, went through more than one edition, but it is now extremely rare. It gave no biographical details and, unfortunately, followed the orthodox in classing as Atheists many who had no right whatever to that title. Mr. Wheeler's work will afford incontestible evidence how large a proportion of the world's worthiest men and women have been Freethinkers.

THE third edition of Mr. Foote's *Royal Paupers* is now in the press. All the figures have been brought strictly up to date, and a large quantity of new matter has been added. Radicals should circulate this pamphlet as widely as possible.

INFIDEL Paris isn't going to the dogs yet. The Paris Savings Bank deposits increased during last year from 117,216,000f. to 118,568,000f., and the number of depositors from 532,270 to 547,894.

THE birthday of Thomas Paine (Jan. 29) is to be celebrated by a Freethinkers' Convention at the Paine Memorial Hall, Boston.

THE Museum of Religions formed by M. Guimet at Lyons, and to be transferred to Paris, will shortly be open. If as complete in the Christian department as it is asserted to be in the representatives of heathen gods, it must have some curious effigies of God the Father and the rest of the holy family.

WE are asked to acknowledge the following subscriptions to the Wallace Nelson fund:—Two Friends, 2s.; C. H. Cheese, 1s.; Nottingham friends, per Albert Lord, 16s. Collected subscriptions still unremitted should be sent to Mr. T. H. Duke, 67 Boston Street, Manchester.

THE Ball's Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society sends us its first annual balance sheet, which on the face of it looks a wholesome document. Members of the N. S. S. in the district can join by applying at 36 Newington Green Road any Thursday evening at 9.

THE Camberwell Branch intends to dine a hundred poor and aged folk at its hall next Sunday (Jan. 15). There will be no sectarianism in the selection of guests. The menu will include roast beef and plum pudding, and "liquid refreshments," which may or may not mean claret and champagne. Tickets can be had of the following gentlemen, who will also be glad to receive any subscriptions for the object—C. J. Ruse, 15 Vicarage Road, Camberwell; R. S. Seago, 209 Hill Street, Walworth; A. Thomas, 128A Grosvenor Park, Camberwell.

Jus, which is an extremely well written organ of Individualism, speaks out boldly on the medical priestcraft which finds Dr. Albutt guilty of infamous conduct for publishing a medical work at too low a price. It says: "We shall follow the steps of the enquiry with interest. The bitterness and virulence with which the State certificated medical practitioners persecute those who have no diploma—commonly called quacks—and those who differ from them on such matters as the proportions of drugs—commonly called homœopathsists—and those who adhere to the old vegetable empiricism—commonly called herbalists—are too well known to require mention."

MR. GEORGE MACDONALD, whose articles and reports were among the liveliest features in the New York *Truthseeker*, has left for San Francisco, where he proposes to start a Freethought paper in company with Samuel P. Putnam, the new president of the American Secular Union.

THE disciples of Schopenhauer, in Germany, are preparing to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the great Freethinking Pessimist, who was born on the 22nd of February 1788.

MR. H. C. LEA, the learned American historian of "Sacerdotal Celibacy," has put forward a *History of the Inquisition*, which will doubtless supersede the very unsatisfactory work of Dr. Rule. The book-reviewer of the *New York Herald*, noticing the work, remarks that "If men had been indifferent about religion there would have been no Inquisition. Agnosticism never builds such an institution. But when a man firmly believes that you will go to hell unless you accept his views, he is bound to make you accept them, even if he uses the thumbscrew to do it. He does it because he loves you and wants to save you from the lake of fire and brimstone. That seems very queer and odd, and rather ludicrous, too, but it is true."

SIR R. S. BALL, Royal Astronomer of Ireland, lecturing at the Royal Institution on "The Small Planets," referred contemptuously to the recent "Star of Bethlehem" delusion. Having been questioned about it only the previous evening, he had remarked "Yes, it rises in the East, and it has appeared this Christmas time;" and he had felt tempted to add, "But where are the wise men?"

ANOTHER interesting point of Sir R. S. Ball's lecture was this. Swift, in his *Gulliver's Travels*, stated that the astronomers of Laputa had discovered two satellites of Mars, one revolving in

the space of ten hours. That was written over 150 years ago; and, curiously enough, the Washington telescope has shown that Mars has two moons, one of which revolves in the astonishingly small time of seven hours and a half. What a wonderful prophecy; Query—Was Swift inspired?

SHIELDRAKE'S *Aldershot Gazette* shows that the alleged re-appearance of the "Star of Bethlehem" is a fraud, and that Venus, so far from only appearing every 315 years as alleged, appears every year-and-a-half as the morning star. Of course pious fools who rise early to catch a sight of the supposed Star of Bethlehem, will prefer the consolation of their own stupid belief to any amount of exposure based on demonstrated fact.

LECTURING at South Place Institute last Sunday afternoon, on "The Common Ground of the Religious Sentiment," Mr. Edward Clodd, the accomplished author and evolutionist, explained that he himself belonged to no religious body; he devoted himself to the problem of the common ground for all religious belief, which, he said, was not to be found in theology. Theology was speculation, not religion. Even Matthew Arnold's definition of religion as "morality touched by emotion" did not really reach the root of the matter. "The only true basis of morality lies in the relation between our actions and the welfare of our fellow-men; morality is essentially social. Morals are relative, and not absolute; there is no fixed standard of right and wrong. Science is in reality the true preacher of righteousness, by showing the true laws of cause and effect, which apply equally to the physical and to the moral world. "If the common ground is not here," concluded the lecturer, "I know not where it is to be found."

THE "ROCK" ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF GENESIS.

THE *Rock* says that "in these days, when nine-tenths of the lesser literary luminaries write a magazine article, it has its petty stone to cast at the Bible and revealed religion." Consequently the *Rock* is highly gratified to find Professor Elmslie putting forth "sound and biblical arguments in favor of the unvarnished simplicity of the account of the Creation, as contained in the first chapter of Genesis." The alleged "disaccord" among the assailants of Genesis is then dwelt upon, as if there were no "disaccord" among those who have God and his Word and his ever-present inspiration to help them. We are then introduced to the view that Darwin's theories, when all is said, make matters no plainer than the first chapter of Genesis did. Similarly, however, the Chinese notions that eclipses are caused by a dark dragon who seizes the sun, and that earth-demons will cause earthquakes if coal-mining is allowed, make matters far "plainer" to the common intellect than science would; but then the *Rock* would not venture to support any other superstitions than its own on the childish pretence of an "unvarnished simplicity," which must really be quite as strong a trait in the credulous believers as in the thing believed.

The *Rock* snatches at the thrice-welcome view that there cannot be conflict between the Bible and science, "for they never actually come into contact. It is not they, but our own theories, which meet and collide." The *Rock* is inclined to believe that this is "as sound and as accurate a statement as has ever been made in this long-vexed controversy." It is "unpardonable arrogance to say that Science refutes God's word." In arguing thus, the *Rock* is like an infatuated counsel whose witnesses flatly contradict each other, but who gets over the difficulty by rebuking the judge for unpardonable arrogance in pointing out the discrepancy and the natural inference. The *Rock*, in effect, assumes infallibility, and says to the judge: "The evidence cannot conflict. It is only your lordship's theories of the evidence which contradict each other."

When Christians express "unqualified admiration of the exquisite symmetry of thought and style which runs through the chapter," and speak of the statement that God rested and was refreshed as "a master-stroke of inspired genius," one cannot help smiling at the infatuated stupidity which can calmly put forth and maintain such nonsense. Christians with their Bible appear to be translated in the Shakespearian sense. Nothing biblical seems to be too childish or too asinine to excite their ardent admiration.

Professor Elmslie holds that the six days of creation are "not literal, but ideal and pictorial." This is demonstrated, he owns, by the fact that the sun was not created till after three days had passed; days, as a product of the sun, being evidently unable to precede their cause. He also says: "Neither is it possible that the days stand for geological

periods, for by no wrenching and racking can they be made to correspond." This favorite explanation of modern Christians being thus hopelessly discredited, the only resource left is to make the "days" of Genesis mean something altogether indefinite—so indefinite, in fact, as to be only "successive links of the chain," or divisions of the programme into convenient paragraphs. All the difficulties of this loose method of explanation are triumphantly conquered by pointing out "how finely from this presentation of the timeless fiat of creation in a framework of days emerges the majestic truth that, not in the dead order of Nature nor in the mere movement of the stars, but in the nature and will of God, who made man in his image, must be sought the ultimate origin, sanction, and archetype of that salutary law which divides man's life on earth into fixed periods of toil, rounded and crowned by a Sabbath of repose."—*Q.E.D.* When God said "And the evening and the morning were the first day" he only meant "End of Part I." So the Professor teaches. How long Part I. may have been is of no consequence. In fact the separate parts or fiats are all "timeless."

It seems we have become accustomed to look too much at the chapter as a mere record of physical creation, and the *Rock* says "It is not that, and it does not claim to be such." We are to look for God himself as working, and "not the manner in which he worked." "Its subject is not creation, but the Creator." All this is very much like impudent imbecility. We are to suppose that the Bible gives a faithful picture of the Creator but not of the creation. We are to study the divine workman but not his workmanship. We are to admire a worker for his work, but are not to look at the manner in which he does it. Evidently in future we must study men themselves, and not the incidents of their lives, not the actions and events which are the only means of developing and exhibiting their characteristics. We must study poets and not their poetry, singers and not their singing, artists and not their paintings, and so forth. The *Rock* narrowly escapes sheer falsehood by the introduction of the word "mere." Of course the chapter is not a "mere" record of physical creation, any more than Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* was a "mere" history of the later Roman Empire. But the chapter is a professed record of creation, and it most obviously on the very face of it claims to be such. The *Rock* could only deny such plain facts by employing mendacity of the most barefaced kind.

The plea in which Christians acknowledge that they have been too much accustomed to follow the Bible is quite correct, and that they must now alter their views at the bidding of science only proves that the Bible has misled them and that science is the more trustworthy guide of the two. It is finally found out that the first chapter of Genesis is poetry. "As portraying God, it is the grandest, sublimest poem in the world." People who can write in this fashion about the crude, half-childish narrative, in which Elohim (literally the gods) created all things and rested and was refreshed, are evidently beyond the reach of reason. They would admire anything in the Bible, just as Titania admired and caressed the long ears of her "gentle joy."

The *Rock* favors the old view that "the keenest test of real scientific truth lies in whether it falls in or not with the broad and sound basis of the Bible." The Bible, in short, is the true test of scientific truth. Then why does not the *Rock* adhere implicitly to the Mosaic account of creation and decisively reject the conflicting geological account? Simply because science is gradually triumphing over the Bible, and even antiquated theologians have to yield some deference to the coming conqueror.

W. P. BALL.

A GROSS MISREPRESENTATION.—Our English contemporary, the *Freethinker*, for Oct. 16, has an illustration of what seems intended for Jacob's ladder, at the foot of which the "father of the faithful" is reposing in a somnolent condition; whilst "behold the Lord" seems holding a colloquy with one of his winged messengers at the summit in the clouds. "Angels of God," with expanded wings, to slow their motion, are descending on toboggans. On the other side the vehicles are ascending, drawn by the adorable train who are on the stairs between, and are using their poultry attachments to aid them in their ascent. This is a gross misrepresentation of the "divine record," against which perversion we enter our solemn protest. It was a ladder and nothing else on which the ascent and descent were made. Remember "the plagues which are in the book," for those who add to or take from it "the things which are written."—*Ironclad Age*, Nov. 19.

THE SONG OF JEHOVAH.

O I'm an Omnipotent, rancorous God,
I revel in slaughter and smoke,
All nations perverse by a twist of my rod
I turn into charcoal and coke.
Encircled by thunder and sceptred with flame
I scatter destruction and death,
Disease and distress my dominion proclaim,
The pestilence goes with my breath.

The world shakes and reels as I pass in my might,
The cities rock madly and fall;
And the lava streams luridly pour from the height
To destroy at the sound of my call.
With famine and warfare and whirlwind and flood
I blast the luxurious earth,
And o'er the dread scenes of disaster and blood
I shriek in demoniac mirth.

When clouds and thick darkness the firmament veil
I lash the wild ocean to foam,
And hurl the red bolt 'mid the roar of the gale—
Then woe to the vessel from home!
The corse toss pale on the breast of the wave,
And the wrecks drift incessantly past,
As I dash down the hand of the shivering slave
Who would cling to the tempest-tossed mast.
I slay the fair babe in the mother's embrace,
I sever the husband and wife,
I murder the maid in her beauty and grace,
And the youth in the springtime of life.
I break up the home by calamities dire;
The breadwinner smite to the dust,
And drive forth his loved ones to glut the desire
Of the demons of Plunder and Lust.

I gloat o'er the multitudes kneeling in prayer,
And laugh their wild sorrow to scorn,
I crush them to earth as their cries of despair
Are up to the "mercy seat" borne.
Oh music divine are the discords that rise
From the chaos of horror below;
The groans of my victims, their sobbings and sighs,
Cause rapture ecstatic to flow.

I'm Jehovah, Jehovah, Omnipotent Ire!
Then tremble and chant ye my praise;
I'm bright and resplendent, apparelled in fire—
The white-headed Ancient of Days.
I dwell 'mid the clouds that are red with the glow
Of the flames in the furnace of hell;
I'm Jehovah the author of Evil and Woe,
Jehovah the ruthless and fell.

EX-RITUALIST.

BELIEF AND CONDUCT.

A NEW-YEAR'S ADDRESS TO CHRISTIANS.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,—A popular dramatic author, during the great controversy over the right of Mr. Bradlaugh to his seat in Parliament, was, in company with others, talking to a gentleman named Crowe, who, at that moment, happened to be inebriated with something stronger than exuberant verbosity. In accents rather thick, yet sufficiently distinct, Mr Crowe affirmed:

"Mr. Bradlaugh's quite right!
I don't believe in Ch-rist!
I don't be-ee-lieve in Christ!"

Whereupon the dramatist knocked off the following impromptu lines:—

"We've heard in language highly spiced
That Crowe does not believe in Christ;
But this, of course, we'd like to know,
Whether Christ believes in Crowe."

A large number of persons believe in Christ with no better reason for their belief than Mr. Crowe for his disbelief. But few indeed have ever asked themselves whether Christ was likely to return them the compliment. Judas Iscariot believed in Christ, yet he sold him for thirty pieces of silver. Peter believed in Christ, but that did not prevent him from disowning him in the hour of danger.

Perhaps if I had heard the conversation reported above at the time of its delivery I should have chimed in by exclaiming that "it was Peter who believed in Crowe—the cock-crow." The disciples of Christ believed in him, yet they all forsook him and fled. How much belief, dear Christian, could Christ have had in them after that? Just as much, I dare say, as he has for any other Christian, viz., none at all. Poor Herbert Freund believes in Christ and you think him mad; I think so too; but I cannot doubt his honesty.

Now let us be candid. What is the use of believing in a man and setting his doctrines at defiance? What is the use of professing to believe in doctrines you dare not practise? Now be honest. I believe in Euclid; and in my daily work when I can put his teachings into practice I do. I believe in Galileo, and in all

my investigations I always proceed upon the assumption that this earth moves round the sun. I believe in Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and I find that the highest morality always produces the best results in this world to-day—whether there's another or not. Now, Christian, do you believe in Christ in the same sense as this? If you do, Christ tells you to "Take no thought for the morrow." Yet you insure your life and join the Hearts of Oak Benefit Society! Christ tells you to "Sell all you have and give to the poor," yet you let the poor go to the D—, or Trafalgar Square, and you go to your daily work like unbelievers.

If you believed in Christ, how could you do these things? Christ said that those who would forsake their wives and families—nay, all—for his sake, would have a hundred-fold in the next world. Yet you send the relieving officer after the Christian scoundrel who dares to put the precept into practice, and afterwards send him to gaol for his pains. And "Serve him right" say I, and so say you, in practice; yet you say you believe in Christ—and I am an infidel! Do you think that Christ believes in you after such conduct?

But Christ said "Blessed be ye poor," "Woe unto you rich." Yet I find you struggling your hardest to avoid poverty and accumulate riches! Yet you declare that you believe in Christ!—and I am an infidel! Fie upon you! Why don't you square your conduct with your belief?

The truth is, "belief in Christ" with you is a parrot cry. As well might you call yourself a follower of Mohammed, as well might you say that you practise the teachings of Epictetus, as to maintain that you follow Christ. And if you will not follow Christ, how can you expect him to believe in you? Now, dear Christian, there is one way by which I can account for your belief and still regard you as honest, and that is that your belief is *blind*. You have accepted it without opening the eyes of your intelligence; you have not thought about the matter at all. You have merely ejaculated the words "I believe," just as the intoxicated gentleman hiccupped "I don't believe." Now, honor bright, is this not so? We shall understand one another much better for our open confessions.

Now you have begun another year of life. Let me ask you to act up to your belief whatever it is. Don't say, "I believe" one thing, and immediately go and do another. Be men! Be honest! Be just! Be truthful! Be industrious! Be independent! But don't say Christ taught you these things when they were taught thousands of years before he was born.

Christ, if he be worthy of your belief, will admire you for your honesty. Some Christians are jolly good fellows, especially when they forget their creed. Go on being jolly good fellows, but if you find other "good fellows" who are not Christians, be candid enough to say so; don't, I pray you, stick to "blind belief" but open your eyes to plain facts, and be honest. You'll find it the best thing to begin the new year with; and the best thing to continue and end it with too. Yes, be honest.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

"ALL SAINTS."

In a church which is garnished with mullion and gable,
With altar and reredos, gurgyle and groin;
The penitent's dresses are seal-skin and sable,
And the odor of sanctity's eau-de-Cologne.
Surely, if Lucifer, flying from Hades,
Were to gaze on this crowd with its panniers and paints,
He would say as he looked on the lords and the ladies,
Oh where is All Sinners if this be All Saints?

H. G. T.

REVIEWS.

The Free Lance, No. 1, January. Watts and Co.—We thought this was to be a Freethought venture, but it turns out to be something very different, and quite beyond the scope of our criticism.

Amerikanischer Turner Kalender, 1888. Freidenker Publishing Co. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.—The American German athletic societies number over 26,000 members. We are pleased to note that their Calendar is published at the office of the *Freidenker*, and that it is bold enough to contain selections from Karl Heinzen. In every respect it reflects credit on the publishers.

PROFANE JOKES.

A candidate having been asked by the examiner to mention the names of the greater and less prophets cloaked his ignorance by answering, that he disliked invidious distinctions.

A clergyman married a couple the other day, received his fee, and sent them away apparently satisfied; but some time afterwards the bridegroom returned and said he had come to pay more, as the woman had turned out, he was surprised to say, much better than he had expected.

A little four year old girl who had questioned her mother as to the omnipresence of God, was left recently to show her bravery by going to sleep alone. Presently she called out in a frightened voice, "Oh! mamma, mamma, come quick and see to God, he's getting into my bed." The mother hurried to the chamber to find the cause of alarm, and discovered the kitten of a neighbor, which had found its way into the house and climbed up beside the little one.

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"Special thanks are due to Mr. G. W. Foote for his new pamphlet. The sketches of the various Freethinkers are very readable, and a double end will be achieved in refuting pious slanderers and reviving the memories of our dead."—*National Reformer*.

"Mr. Foote's little manual cannot fail to be of great service in refuting the ancient and silly death-bed argument. We should be gratified to hear that the little book meets with an extensive sale."—*Secular Review*.

"Mr. Foote is in his element in *Infidel Death-Beds*, and his carefully-stated facts about the last hours of well-known unbelievers ought to be in the hands of every Freethinker."—*Our Corner*.

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