

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



SWEET RELIGION.

If thy brother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods . . . thou shalt surely kill him.—DEUT. XIII., 6-9.

AMONG THE CHRISTIANS.

THE Centenary of Protestant Missions has been celebrated at Exeter Hall. There was a public meeting on Tuesday afternoon, and speeches were delivered on Christianity in China and Japan. Some of the facts disclosed are very instructive. The Church Missionary Society boasts of 20,000 members in Japan, and it appears that no fewer than 5,530 converts were baptised during last year. This is a startling statement. Why, the ordinary reader will ask, has the Society made over a fourth of its total converts in twelve months? The answer is furnished by the Rev. C. Warren, who confessed that "Christianity was to some extent being advocated in Japan for political purposes, and this was having the effect of promoting an interest in Christian doctrines." Such a confession will not astonish any student of history. Political reasons have been at the bottom of a host of religious changes. Christianity itself took three centuries to convert a twentieth of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire; but the rest were converted in a century by Constantine and his successors, who patronised the religion of Jesus as one which taught their subjects to suffer and obey. The change was not effected by preaching, but by bribery, intimidation, social and political boycotting, fines, imprisonment, torture and death. Many centuries later, during the Reformation, political causes

were again at work. More than one German prince converted and reconverted his subjects. When the Prince was all-powerful he imposed his religion on his people, just as Clovis, the king of the Franks, on his conversion to Christianity, had his whole army baptised in batches. Henry VIII., in England, had no religious motive in opposing the Papacy; and Elizabeth, who was a Catholic in heart to the very last, had dynastic reasons for fighting the Papacy and establishing the Protestant Church. The people have, for the most part, been driven and fleeced like sheep. Their religions have been manufactured for them, and imposed upon them by the State; and what the Church Missionary Society tells us of its success through political causes in Japan is in keeping with the lessons of universal history.

On the other hand, there is in Japan a still more rapid spread of Rationalism. The Rev. John Gulick, of America, stated that "the country was fast receiving Western ideas and impressions, and it depended upon prompt action whether the Japanese would be drawn into Christianity, or whether, by the reading of Western literature, they would fall into irreligious tendencies." Here is at least a grain of satisfaction. The bane and the antidote come from Christendom together. Costly and elaborate machinery is needed to give the Japanese the Gospel; but without cost, and without machinery, the ideas of Darwin and Mill pene-

trate into the France of the East, and turn thousands of young men, not only from the superstitions of their fathers, but from all other forms of spiritual pestilence.

Professor Macalister presided over a public meeting on Medical Missions. He stated that Christianity cared for the body as well as for the soul; and in a certain sense this is true. Christ cured the deaf, the blind, the lame, and the diseased. He also multiplied loaves and fishes and fed people gratuitously. Should the missionaries be able to imitate his performances, they will speedily convert the heathen. But this is not the medical practice which Professor Macalister refers to. He wishes the ministers to learn a little medicine and carry a drug store; probably in the hope that, abroad as at home, those who survive such treatment will be regarded as saved by the medicine man. The Bible, however, does not sanction such proceedings. Its one prescription is faith. King Asa was punished for consulting doctors instead of priests, and the New Testament distinctly orders the faithful to resort to prayer in sickness. The Christian pharmacopoeia, besides prayer, includes only one article. Holy oil is permitted, and as no special variety is indicated it is presumed that paraffin will do as well as Macassar.

Another meeting considered the evangelising of the Turkish empire and Central Asia. Dr. Post expressed his belief that Confucianism, Buddhism and Brahmanism would soon disappear, leaving Christianity and Mohammedanism to strive for the mastery. But it is easy to prophesy. Christianity is dissolving more rapidly than any other great religion. For every convert made in heathen lands a hundred are lost from the Christian fold in Europe and America. Yet it cannot be denied that Christianity and Mohammedanism will fight a mighty battle. They are fighting it already in Africa, but Christianity is worsted along the whole line, and Mohammedanism is achieving the proudest triumphs. Not only does it convert the black populations, but it makes them sober, industrious and truthful; while, according to the testimony of Thompson, the African traveller, Christianity includes all the liars, thieves, drunkards and loose livers of the black continent. Surgeon-Major Gunn, at the meeting we are dealing with, declared he was able to assert from long experience "that the Turk hated, not Christianity but the drink which Christianity often brought in its train." We doubt, however, if the Turk makes such a fine distinction. His religion tells him to abstain from alcohol, and he is sober. His religion abolishes prostitution, and he is relatively chaste, but he sees the Christians are drunken and lascivious, and he sensibly concludes that their religion is a poor one. Should he study the Christian Giaour's Bible he would find that drinking at least has many texts in its favor. The missionaries therefore have but one chance of converting him. They must send him expurgated Bibles, in which civilisation has corrected the blunders of Jehovah.

The Salvation Army also boasts of its missionary work. General Booth has been holding a big demonstration at the City Temple. The platform was filled with a motley crowd, wearing the costumes of half the world. Had they been decked in the lack of costume of the other half, there would have been still more curiosity and excitement. Ching-wing sang a Chinese song, and gave his testimony—for what it was worth. An aboriginal Australian followed suit. Then came a Hindoo female and a Hindoostanee song. It was like another feast of Pentecost. General Booth "explained" the success of his Army. The first cause was "the possession of a real enjoyable salvation"; in other words, tambourines, music-hall tunes, unlimited slang, bastard uniforms, and general high jinks. There have been many religions in the world before—some mad, some monstrous, some infamous, and some silly; but never was there a religion that came within a mile of Salvationism for downright vulgarity and deliberate trading on human atavism. Booth's last cause was "willingness to pay the price." But the last shall be first, or rather it is the first. Booth is a fine old showman. His speciality is raising the wind. He has exhausted every device for extracting cash from Christian pockets. He has even married his daughters in public and taken gate money. Perhaps he would go a step further if the law permitted.

Down at York the Church Education Society has been addressed by the Archbishop. His Grace said he was satisfied with the prospects of religion in our public education, which is a great deal more than the clergy as a body seem to be. He also twitted the other side with having no

ethical manual, while "the voluntarists had a moral treatise in the Bible." Yes, a moral treatise so pure and perfect that scores of passages cannot be read before a mixed audience, and hundreds of passages cannot be read out to children; a moral treatise so pure and perfect that a famous publishing firm has pruned away its most offensive parts and issued the rest as a Child's Bible; a moral treatise so pure and perfect that it contains some pretty story or filthy allusion with regard to every crime and vice which the imagination can conceive. G. W. FOOTE.

CHRIST'S PARABLES.—XIII.

THE TARES (Matt. xiii., 24—30, 36—43).

In this parable, which follows that of the Sower, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. When the tares appear the astonished servants ask their master if they shall pluck the tares from among the wheat—a suggestion which does not commend itself to him as a sensible one, for he replies: "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

Christ explains that he is himself the sower of good seed, but the Devil—whom he does not or cannot restrain—sows evil seeds to spite him. The good seed are the "children of the kingdom," and the tares are the children of the wicked one. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world." Christ will send forth his angels, who will gather all that offend and "shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." So that this parable is another forcible inculcation of a belief in the fiery hell into which all those who reject Christianity are to be cast by Christ's angels. Thus did Christ debase the popular imagination by ministering to and confirming its ideas of supernatural horror. If true, the doctrine of hell is the worst infamy ever conceived by mortal or immortal minds, and Christ is responsible for it. If false, it is a despicable lie, and Christ equally makes himself responsible for it. Whether Christ is a fiend who will carry out his threats, or only a liar who libels a just and merciful God, is a matter for Christians to consider. Parables like those of the Rich Man in Hell, and the Tares, will remain as standing proofs of the way in which Christ terrorised and deceived the people. Probably, however, as time goes on, Christians will abandon or soften those parables and other forcible passages of Scripture, and will decide that the Bible is incorrect, and that Christ only taught a mild doctrine of mitigated and reformatory punishment. Such alteration indicates the revolt of the civilised conscience against the Christianity of the Bible, and is no ground whatever for withdrawing the condemnation due to the original fables and the original doctrines as taught in God's Word.

Broadly considered, this parable of the Tares is an attempted excuse for the conduct of God in permitting evil to exist. He only sanctions it temporarily and for fear of punishing the saints as well as the sinners. God's angels can pick out the sinners unerringly at the end of the world, but somehow they could not do so now without carrying off the saints by mistake. The attempted explanation is seed sown on rocky ground. It springs up but withers away in the sunshine of clear thought. A man might excuse his tolerance of evil by his helplessness, but an Almighty Being cannot. God's excuse, moreover, is far worse than imperfect or illogical in a far more important respect. God does not set things right. The revolution which the Day of Judgment will bring about, does not remedy the state of things, but makes them far worse. The majority of souls who disbelieve in Christ will be cast into the devouring furnace where the worm dieth not. For the limited evil of human unbelief, or sin, or suffering, an eternal evil of infinitely huger proportions is substituted. The attempted justification is a fearful aggravation of God's permission of evil—it is God's deliberate infliction of useless and endless evil in forms of agony and horror that are irreconcilable with the slightest trace of humanity or conscience in the awful Being who can thus glorify himself by the sight of the torments of his children in hell. W. P. BALL.

ACID DROPS

THE Bavarian peasants, it appears, do not believe their late King was drowned. They imagine he is hiding in the mountains, and will some day reappear. Such a superstition will not surprise the historical student. When Napoleon (the *great*, not the *little*) disappeared from French politics, hundreds of thousands of peasants believed he was still alive and would return; and it is actually stated that when Prince Napoleon stood for the Presidency in '48, many voters in the rural districts gave him their ballots in the belief that he was the Emperor himself. Similar legends existed as to Barbarossa, Arthur, and Arminius. Suetonius tells us that the people would not believe that Nero was dead; they held that he was still alive, and would reappear and avenge himself on his enemies. This carries us back nearly to the time of Christ. Is it any wonder, then, that a handful of superstitious Galileans refused to credit the actual death of their Rabboni, and believed that he still lurked about the world? When we study Christianity in the light of general superstition, it becomes as plain as though we saw it grow before our eyes.

JOHN WILLIAM GREEN, aged fourteen, was a witness at a recent inquest held by Mr. W. Carter at Blackfriars. He had been educated at St. Patrick's School, Stamford Street, and had passed the fifth standard; but, according to the newspaper report, he "displayed an extraordinary amount of ignorance." He did not understand the nature of an oath, and so far his ignorance is extraordinary; for a boy of fourteen who hasn't heard a few thousand oaths in the streets, must be very dull or very deaf. But the rest of his "ignorance," we venture to say, he shared with the worthy coroner. Being asked "If you tell a lie where will you go to?" he replied "to church." This answer shocked the court; nevertheless it was a capital guess. Half the liars at least go to church in this world; and why shouldn't they go to church in the next world? "Do you know where people go to when they die?" said the coroner. "To church," answered Johnnie Green. Again he was right, however; for most of them, after death, are taken into a gospel-shop, before being buried. Of course the coroner pretends to know better, but he has no more knowledge on the subject than the poor boy he insulted.

"If you tell a lie, whom do you offend?" asked the coroner. "My master," said the boy. It was a true and sensible answer, but it wouldn't do. "Can you repeat the Lord's prayer?" "Only part of it." "Who is 'Our Father which art in heaven'?" "The Devil," said the boy. Johnnie Green hit the bull's-eye with the first shot. If the Bible God isn't a devil there never was one. All the stories told of Old Nick pale before the infamies related of Jehovah. Yet the coroner said the boy's "ignorance was disgraceful" and refused to let him be sworn. Johnnie Green's evidence, however, had to be taken. His friend had fallen into the water, and Johnnie, though disgracefully ignorant, and not even knowing anything of Heaven and Hell, bravely tried to save the lad's life. Some people's theology wouldn't have prompted them to do so much.

THE Zetetic Society, that is to say John Hampden of Croydon, calls the globular theory of the earth "this satanic device to bring discredit and contempt on the Word of God."

GAMBLING is considered quite legitimate in the interest of religion. We have seen some raffle tickets on behalf of St. Macartin's Cathedral, in which many of the prizes are cases of wine and brandy. No doubt the pious winner will have a jollification, all for the glory of God.

ONE Gordon Gorman has published a list of 3,000 noted converts to Romanism within the past half century. Among them are the wives of a hundred clergymen, who held, or are holding, preferments in the Church of England.

SWINDLERS find the "pious lay" is a paying one, and a widow lady at Tarvin, Cheshire, has just discovered it to her cost. A gentleman called to look at her apartments, took them, and stopped to dinner. Afterwards he read the Bible and prayed unctuously. Then he locked up a pocket-book stuffed with flash notes, on the strength of which he borrowed an umbrella and four pounds "till the morning." The morning came, but not the gentleman. He had gone off to humbug a fresh victim.

CHRISTIAN Socialism was explained at St. Catherine's Church, Rotherhithe, last Sunday afternoon by the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam. Christianity is Socialism, said Mr. Headlam. So it is, if we are to go by the New Testament. But it is not Mr. Headlam's Socialism. Christian Socialism, as taught by Jesus and practised by the primitive Church, is downright Communism. Now, Mr. Headlam, do be honest and go the whole hog. Half-and-half measures are unworthy a man of your spirit.

THE Rev. E. G. Mason, of South Shields, was to deliver a lecture on "Moses." When the evening arrived a number of persons were crying "Holy Moses!" Mr. Mason found the weather "too cold and damp," and did not turn up. He advertises his regret at disappointing them, but "hopes, weather permitting,"

to give it at a future date. This is, to say the least of it, a bit uncertain; and probably, on the evening in question, there will be little interest felt in either Moses or Mason.

WISE as serpents, though far from harmless as doves, are the Black Army. Holloway, of "pill and ointment" fame left nearly a million to establish a ladies' college. Half a million has been spent on the building, and an endowment of £300,000 is left. The college was to be unsectarian, but somehow the Church of England has bagged the whole pile. The result, of course, is nice mismanagement. About forty ladies are educated, at a cost of something like £800 a year each!

THERE is one picture. Now look at another. Mr. Spencer leaves £500 to help build a Secular hall in Manchester, and the legacy is set aside as illegal. Yet England is a "free" country. So it is, especially for Christians.

CANON RAWLINSON, as a tardy concession to public opinion, has decided not to retain all his appointments. He will keep the living to which he had appointed himself and the Oxford professorship for a year in order to see which is worth most. A letter in the *Daily News*, protesting against the whole business, asks, "Is it right that a Canon of Canterbury who is aged, infirm, and physically incapable of properly carrying out the parish duty, should be allowed to confer upon himself any living?"

MR. CHAMBERLAIN has shown that the denominational schools, which in 1871 accommodated a little over two million scholars, now contain places for nearly three-and-a-half millions. The average attendance was then 1,231,000; it is now 2,187,000—an increase of about 75 per cent. Government then granted 10s. per scholar on the average attendance; it now grants 17s. And yet the religious sects are continually complaining of being ruined by the School Board, and they do what they can to cripple its action under the plea of economy or protecting the poor down-trodden denominational schools.

As one of the Salvation Army lasses was going round South Shields begging with her tambourine in her hand, she was accosted by a policeman. "De ye knaa what ye're doin'?" said the man in authority. "Yes, I am begging." Policeman: "De ye knaa aa can lock ye up for that?" "Yes, but I am begging for the Lord." "Weel, dovent de it agyen or aa'll lock ye baith up!" —*Newcastle Chronicle*.

A DUDLEY correspondent sends us a copy of "Our Savior's letter," which he says is being sold in his district at a halfpenny a time. If the letter has the virtue it promises it is a wonderful half-pennyworth. It says, "He that hath a copy of this My letter and publisheth it to others shall be blessed of Me, and though his sins be in number as the stars of the sky, believing in this, he shall be pardoned. And whosoever shall have a copy of this letter, written with My hand, and keep it in their houses, nothing shall hurt them; neither lightning, pestilence, nor thunder shall do them any hurt. And if a women be with child, and in labor, and a copy of this letter be about her, and she firmly puts her trust in Me, she shall be safely delivered of her birth." There must be a deal of superstition in the black country if they place faith in this cheap method of insurance.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS, of University College, Aberystwyth, says that

Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

But he doesn't say why. We believe the reason is this. Satan knows the weakest saint is groping about for something another saint has dropped.

THE *Cambria Daily Leader* waxes wroth, as well as facetious, over Martin's picture of the Day of Judgment, which is now exhibiting at Swansea. "Talk about the illustrations of the *Freethinker*," it cries, "why they are not a whit more blasphemous." Our Welsh contemporary ventures to disbelieve that either Catholics or Protestants for the sin of heresy, will "end on the grill." Well, why not extend the same charity to Freethinkers?

PARKER the other day, just as he was entering the pulpit, received a telegram which asked, "Will prayer avert the laws of nature?" He had to answer "No," and he deprecated the "desperate attempts to turn prayer to miraculous uses." Were all the biblical instances of prayer for divine interposition "desperate attempts"? Christ says that "all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." But Parker knows better than the Christ whom he adores and preaches.

THE Rev. James Ferguson was summoned at Croydon for assaulting a boy eight years of age. At the suggestion of the magistrate he settled the case by paying 10s. to the father as compensation.

DR. WALSHAM HOW, upon being installed as bishop in the new diocese of Wakefield, preached on the necessity of having "a clear definite dogmatic faith." No doubt the creeds of his church are dogmatic enough, but they have never been distinguished for clearness. He said "he could not love and trust in

a beautiful dream." Well, his God, who makes a hell for his creatures and lets his own son be murdered, and then pretends he was a sacrifice for the sins of others, is more like a hideous nightmare than a beautiful dream.

WE gather from the *Liberator* that Robert Bear has been fined £5 by a Sydney magistrate for selling Mrs. Besant's *Law of Population*. It appears that although that was the work for which he was prosecuted and fined, it was within covers bearing the title *Fruits of Philosophy*. Those who vindicate the right of free publication should do so without any underhand deception of this kind.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* is annoyed that Mr. Gladstone should have replied to Ingersoll. Its candid opinion is that the whole matter has received far too much attention, and that Mr. Gladstone's article is "nothing very remarkable to begin with." If Mr. Gladstone's article had been a remarkable success, the *C. C.* would probably have altered its tone.

THE *C. C.* says that "Nobody in that country cares one whit for anything that Ingersoll says," and that he is using his opposition to Christianity as a "purely money-making instrumentality." How he can make money out of lectures that nobody cares a whit for, the *C. C.* does not attempt to explain. Nor does it explain why the writings of a man whom nobody cares a whit for should have so greatly raised the circulation of the *North American Review*. The accusations which the *C. C.* proceeds to put forth against that "notorious Ingersoll" are of the usual character. It seems to be assumed by Christian writers that any religious statement they may make against Infidels, no matter how baseless or inaccurate or uncharitable, must be true because it is convenient and soothing.

THE same journal explains Christ's disappointment at the fig-tree. It says that "As the fig-tree bears fruit before leaves, a tree should have had figs already ripe on it." Can any explanation be more childishly imbecile? The Gospel says that Jesus "found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet" (Mark xi, 13, 14), and the asinine expounder of sacred problems clears away the whole difficulty by blankly contradicting the Scripture account and simply declaring that the time of ripe figs was come.

NEWS of a yachting party being devoured by sharks comes from Australia. How good God is to make these hideous specimens to testify to his cunning in designing means of destruction and cruelty.

IN the case of Abdallah Pasha, who was otherwise an Englishman named Richards, the Mohammedans will hardly admire the superiority of Christian law as carried out in England. Richards, after the death of his Mohammedan wife, "married" his own niece, and by his will left the property derived from his Egyptian wife to the Christian lady and the children she had by him. The Mohammedan law only allows a man to bequeath away from his legal heirs one-third of his real and personal estate and one-fourth the estate of his wife. The Christian law provides no such limitation to injustice and favoritism, so the Christian niece and her children take all the property, worth about £20,000, with the exception of a legacy of £800 and some jewels bequeathed to the children of the Mohammedan wife.

THE Duke of Aosta, brother of the King of Italy, is about to marry his niece, Princess Letitia. The Pope will grant the necessary dispensation. Romish Christianity thus sanctions this kind of thing among the rich and powerful who can pay for the permission in money or influence. But it cannot allow the marriage of first cousins among the poor. So strict and yet so indulgent is Christian morality.

PROFESSOR DRUMMOND thinks that it is the bad conduct of professing Christians that makes "infidels." This may be a comforting delusion, but it is a delusion still. Those who reject Christianity do so for the simple reason that it isn't true.

THE Rev. Whyte-Melville Higginson is now divorced, or rather a decree of nullity of marriage is pronounced. At the time of his marriage with the rich widow of the novelist he had a wife alive. He had taken her to Newfoundland and deserted her there. Subsequently, finding himself unable to obtain a divorce in England, he went to Michigan and obtained a divorce there, and professed that that set him free to marry again in England.

THE Church Association is going to prosecute two bishops for Ritualism. The Bishop of London, whose heretical tendencies have remarkably subsided since the days of "Essays and Reviews," is to be prosecuted for not allowing the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's to be prosecuted for erecting the new reredos in that cathedral.

PROCEEDINGS have already been commenced against the Bishop of Lincoln for using lighted candles, for adopting the "eastward position," for mixing water with the communion wine, for making the sign of the cross, for rinsing the paten and chalice

and drinking the ablutions, and for other trivial matters which are naturally of the most overwhelming importance in the eyes of the Christian reformers and philanthropists who prosecute.

THE missionaries are having a ten-days' babble at Exeter Hall upon the occasion of the centenary of Protestant missions. Only a hundred years ago, it appears, did Protestants wake up to the fact that the mass of the world was heathen. Now representatives from all parts are having a nice little holiday with mutual admiration at Exeter Hall. A meeting of the heathens to express their honest opinion of the missionaries would be far more interesting to us.

WHO is the Pagan emperor alluded to in the *Echo*, who destroyed every known MS. of the Gospels? Such a preposterous statement would be unworthy of notice were it not printed in big type in a well-known journal. We advise the *Echo* to prevent its scribes from making blindfold excursions in ecclesiastical history.

THOMAS SMITH, of Long Lane, London, having got into difficulties, committed suicide and left his wife and family to the protection of God. This is a poor provision for the widow and children. A life assurance policy is better than a prayer.

HOSPITAL SUNDAY this year is not a success. Trade is reviving, but Christian charity is colder. Spurgeon sent a special appeal to his flock, yet the collection amounted to little more than half of the previous year's.

THE Japanese have been discussing the advisability of embracing the Christian religion. Those who suggest this do not say they believe in it, but only recommend it as the religion of the most civilised nations. They are probably unaware how far Christianity is rejected in nominally Christian countries. One, Mr. Suguira, who is described as "a diligent student of Western philosophy for many years," argues that the youth of Japan being free from the thralldom of creeds are so far in advance of Europeans, and instead of talking about adopting a foreign religion, the Japanese should go abroad and preach their religion of reason to other countries.

THE Roman Catholic priests in the Argentine Republic are out on strike. The Government issued an order lowering the fees for masses, marriages, burials, etc. But the Church won't stand a cash reduction, so all the gospel-shops are closed.

THE Rev. J. D. Munro, of Eyemouth, accused his sexton of drunkenness and indecent assault. This proved to be a baseless libel, and the loose-tongued sky-pilot has to pay £25 damages and expenses. Priests are no longer chartered slanderers, at least of their fellow Christians. If Mr. Munro wishes to libel with impunity, he must select an Atheist.

THE correspondent of the *Church Times*, who has been making an Eastern tour in Turkey and Asia Minor, says: "No Mohammedans are converted by the Americans, or by any of the Protestant Missions." Further: "All that remains for the Protestant missions to do is to prey upon the unfortunate Greeks, who seem to be the happy hunting-ground of every sect which can afford to send a missionary to harass them." He says, moreover, that the faith which the missionaries supply to these already Christian converts "is of a very nebulous character, and a poor substitute for the old faith which they take some pains to destroy. A consular official, who has spent many years in Syria, told me that he thought it would be a good day for the country if all the missionaries, Roman and Protestant, were turned out. They create religious division, and make the government of the country difficult."

WE read in a Christian journal that "God in heaven by His Spirit fills the universe, pervading everything in existence." God then pervades hell and the Devil. The spirits of good and evil must be inextricably mixed. God, however, appears to have a "located existence" in heaven at the same time that he is everywhere else in a subsidiary degree. But how did God forsake God on the Cross? Both forms of God being always everywhere how could they ever be exiled from each other's presence?

THE *Christian Commonwealth* explains the discrepant genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke by saying that the genealogy in Luke is that of Mary, who is not mentioned merely because it was not customary among the Jews to insert the names of females in their genealogies. Any piece of impudent imbecility is good enough for a Christian argument. Religion gives it the needful strength and validity. When Luke says, "Joseph, which was the son of Heli," he means Mary the daughter of Heli, although the Jews always traced descent by the male line, and never by the female. How easy it is to explain away difficulties by Christian methods. Anything means anything, and all is harmony at once.

"TRUST in Providence" is no longer the motto of the Churches. An "Ecclesiastical Buildings Fire Office," which was started last year, reports itself as a great success.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

June 24, Hyde Park. July 1, Wood Green (morning), Hall of Science (evening); 8, Midland Arches (morning); Hall of Science (evening); 22, Kingsland Green (morning); 29, Camberwell (morning and evening). August 5, Hall of Science (evening); 12, Hall of Science (evening).

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. CHAPMAN.—Thanks for the papers and cuttings. See paragraphs.

H. PORTER sends 1s. for the London Secular Federation, and writes "You were the means, through the *Freethinker*, of bringing me out of the darkness of superstition into the light of reason." Mr. Foote is not lecturing on June 17. He is in good health, but is giving his voice a rest.

J. CRABTREE.—Mr. Forder will send the papers weekly from the publishing office. Sorry to hear your newsagent refuses to supply this wicked journal any longer. Smith and Son have always refused to supply it; they prefer to sell profitable libels on Mr. Parnell, to say nothing of what Browning call "scrofulous French novels." Your 10s. 6d. for the London Secular Federation to hand.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Your letter to the *Echo* was excellent. The post-cards you received come from a Christian lunatic or a lunatic Christian. We have had letters in the same handwriting. The letter you enclose is very interesting; in some respects it corroborates the paragraphs we had written before seeing it. Do you wish it returned?

H. HISCOCK.—We much regret to hear that Mr. J. Grout was unable to lecture last Sunday morning on Clerkenwell Green; and still more to learn that, owing to ill health, it is doubtful whether he will lecture again. Mr. Grout has for many years worked hard and disinterestedly for the Freethought cause.

A. SHAW.—Mr. Forder has handed us your letter. Communications for the *Freethinker* should be addressed to us as above. We cannot answer your question. Hogg, the Freethinker, who died at ninety-three, calling on God to pardon him, is a gentleman we never heard of before. Perhaps your muddle-headed friend means Hobbes. If he does, you will find all the facts in *Infidel Death-Beds*.

J. E. ROOSE.—No doubt religion was founded on fear, but how far the germs of worship may be discovered in animals is a point not easily determined.

A. DE LA VEGA.—Many thanks for your jokes. Mr. Wheeler is much obliged for your list of foreign Freethinkers, some of whom are unknown to him. He has at command the biographical works you mention. We have not seen the work on the Inquisition you kindly offered to lend us.

J. E. BROADBENT.—You will see in "Sugar Plums" an outline of what the London Secular Federation proposes to do at the approaching School Board Elections. We hope it will furnish you with a few useful hints for your own struggle at Oldham. We agree with you that it is useless to rely on Liberals to make a determined fight against the Church party. Freethinkers must do it themselves.

D. PROVAN.—Cuttings received with thanks.

J. H. BIRTLES.—Before you challenge us to a written debate you should learn to spell.

J. C. CREBBIN.—We shall publish Ingersoll's Reply to Gladstone directly it arrives. Thanks for your good wishes. There is no room for politics in the *Freethinker*; but we agree with you that Home Rule will not cure all or half the evils of Ireland, though that is no argument against Home Rule.

W. COOKNEY, 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C., invites subscriptions towards the Hall of Science Children's Excursion to Epping Forest on Sunday, August 12.

J. TURPIN.—Sorry to hear your Freethought has cost you your situation. Christian and bigot are nearly always convertible terms.

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.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—South Shields Daily Gazette—Freidenker—Echo—Lucifer—Cheltenham Free Press—Ensign—Western Figaro—Earth and its Evidences—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Liberator—Wakefield Express—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-blatt—Open Court—Two Worlds—Boston Investigator—Freethought—Liberty—Menschentum—Sunday Chronicle—Porcupine.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE London Secular Federation held its monthly meeting at the Hall of Science on Thursday, June 7. Mr. G. W. Foote presided, and there was a full attendance. The North London Branch, having just affiliated (sixteen branches are now included), sent Mr. J. M. Wheeler as its delegate. Mr. R. O. Smith, treasurer, reported a continued increase of funds. Mr. G. Standing, secretary, read correspondence and made a general report, showing good activity everywhere. The July lecture-list was ordered to be printed to the number of 13,500 copies.

FOUR social parties, in different parts of London, have been held by the Federation, for the purpose of promoting friendly

intercourse among Freethinkers. This is excellent work in its way, and supplies a long-felt need. The last party was held at the Hall of Science on Monday evening.

THE Federation discussed a report, read by Mr. Foote on behalf of the sub-committee (Messrs. S. Standing, Seago and Taylor), on the duty of Secularists in relation to the approaching School Board elections. The following recommendations were adopted:—(1.) Obtain a complete list of candidates at the last elections, with their programmes and number of votes polled. (2.) Prepare and issue a list of candidates whom the Federation can recommend as quite sound, or the best in the circumstances, for each division. (3.) Take counsel with Radicals and Socialists for promoting the candidature of selected names. (4.) Arrange for a committee of action in each division, through the Branches within it or near it. (5.) Find a few pronounced Secular candidates, let them stand for the likeliest divisions, and push their candidature to the uttermost. (6.) Appeal to the Freethought party for special funds for this object, asking the editors of the *National Reformer* and the *Freethinker* to co-operate. (7.) Call a mass meeting of N.S.S. London members in August, to hear the Federation's statement, and to pass resolutions of support.

NINE names were decided upon, and the Secretary was instructed to communicate with them, with a view to ascertaining whether they were disposed to accept the Federation's invitation. We hope to be able to report on this matter more fully in a few weeks.

MR. R. O. SMITH, treasurer, has received the following subscriptions for the London Secular Federation:—G. Anderson, £5 5s.; Humanitas, 10s.; T. W., 5s.; G. Burton, 5s.; H. C. Byshe, 10s.; J. W. Rumble, 2s. 6d.

WHAT is the Paddington Branch doing? Mr. Standing is anxious to know. Will whoever is acting as Secretary, or whoever is prepared to act as such, communicate at once?

PADDINGTON has gone in for a Free Library, and Lord Coleridge has opened it. Some people were disappointed that the Prince of Wales did not honor the show: just as though a distinguished gentleman like Lord Coleridge was not infinitely superior to the fat, commonplace mortal who earns nothing yet spends £132,000 a year of the people's money.

LORD COLERIDGE, in his brief speech, thanked God he wasn't a parson. He also told a good story about a pompous, muddle-headed bishop, who said that people with money should give money, while farmers might give the draught of a load of bricks. "Thus," the bishop added, "every one in his degree would manifest the true principle of Christian charity by giving up to Almighty God that which he could best spare." (Laughter.)

Truth, of Pittsburgh, has put on an improved appearance under the editorship of Mr. F. A. Pierce, and now reaches us regularly. The articles are well written, and among the contributors is Mr. B. F. Underwood, who is now editing the *Chicago Graphic News*, where we are glad to learn his editorial duties will not interfere with his work as a Freethought lecturer and writer.

ARCHDEACON FARRAR got a terrible wiggling from A. W. Benn in last week's *Academy*. The copious Archdeacon has been engaged, with others under Dr. Wace, in editing the Apocrypha in the *Speaker's Commentary*. He is convicted of many inexcusable misquotations, and slipshod, second-hand scholarship. He is accused of mis-writing six of the few Hebrew words he uses. He actually blunders about the number of Solomon's wives, though he has lately written a life of the "wise king." He libels the Epicurean philosophy, like any little pulpiteer, by ascribing to it the motto "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Mr. Benn remarks that "it originated with the Jews, and would have been repudiated by Epicurus himself and by all his genuine followers."

SCHOLARS outside the Church are getting agreed that Moses is in all probability a purely mythical figure. Dr. A. H. Sayce writes as follows in the *Academy*:—"In my Hibbert Lectures last year, I pointed out that the Hebrew Mosheh or Moses is letter for letter the Assyrian Masu, and I gave reasons for believing that Masu would prove to have originally been a name of the Sun-god. One of the tablets from Tel el-Amarna has confirmed my conclusions sooner than I expected. It contains a reference to the Sun-god rising from the divine day, whose name is Masi or Masu. Masu was, therefore, a name already known in Egypt a hundred years before the date assigned by Egyptologists to the Exodus, and it is further proved that it was the name of the Babylonian Sun-god before it was the name of a man."

THE Italian Chamber of Deputies, after a very excited debate, has almost unanimously rejected the petitions of the Bishops to strike out of the Penal Code Bill the articles providing penalties for abuses committed by the clergy in the exercise of their functions.

A TRANSLATION of Emile Burnouf's *Science of Religions* has been published by Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein and Co., with a preface by E. J. Rapson.

THE following passage in Mr. Romanes' article on "Recent Critics of Darwinism," in the current number of the *Contemporary Review*, bears on the question of design. "No one has hitherto been able to point to any instance of incipient variations tending to occur only in definite lines; while, on the other hand, the success of breeders and horticulturists furnishes overwhelming proof that variations occur in such a number of directions (even within the limits of a single species), that they may practically be regarded as 'omniferous.'"

FREETHINKERS who can write with any effect do well to send a letter to the local press when an opportunity occurs. Mr. Leslie Johnson has a capital letter in the *Shields Daily Gazette*, in reply to an editorial article defending the pulpit against the censures of the pew. We should like to see the correspondence kept up.

THE *Gazette*, we notice, hits upon a happy idea. The editor should patent it, for it will be used by all the ministers in the district. Here it is. When sky-pilots get a "call" to a bigger salary, it generally means a call to a bigger congregation; and, in accepting it as the voice of God, they are not tempted by lucre, but by the prospect of saving souls. "Catch 'em alive, oh!" is the real meaning of a "call."

DR. HATCH'S Hibbert lectures this year were on the subject of the great influence exercised by Greek thought upon early Christianity. In his tenth lecture, on "Mysteries," he showed that a kind of Baptism and Eucharist were common among the Greeks.

Menschentum for June 18 contains the first part of a lengthy report of the Freethought Congress at Cologne, at which Prof. Buchner, Drs. Specht and Rüdte, and Messrs. Geisel, Martin, and Stern assisted.

Freethought announces Mr. B. F. Boyd as a new American Freethought lecturer. We are pleased to notice that our San Francisco contemporary keeps up a brisk, vigorous war on superstition. A gentleman in San Diego offers a corner lot worth three hundred dollars to the person who procures the most subscribers to *Freethought*. This is a practical way in which to push his principles.

THE Manchester *Sunday Chronicle* has a capital article on "Heathenism, British and Foreign." It contrasts the many societies and the elaborate and costly machinery for "sending armies of missionaries to lie to the blacks," with the oppression, degradation and immorality which may be found at home.

PHALLIC WORSHIP AMONG THE JEWS.

III.—CIRCUMCISION.

AMONG the many traces that the Jews were once savages I place the distinguishing mark of their race, circumcision. Many explanations have been given of this curious custom. The account, in Genesis xvii., that God commanded it to Abraham, at the ripe age of 99, critics agree was written after the exile—that is, thirteen hundred years after the death of the patriarch. Now, there is evidence from the Egyptian monuments that circumcision was known long before Abraham's time. This constrains Dr. Kitto to say: "God might have selected a practice already in use among other nations." If so, God must have had a curious taste and an uninventive mind. Some writers have absurdly argued that the Egyptians borrowed from the Jews, whom they despised (see Genesis xliii., 32). Apart from the evidence of Herodotus and of monuments and mummies to the contrary, this view is never suggested in the Bible, but the testimony of Joshua (v., 9) implies the reverse.

The narrative of the Lord's attempted assassination of Moses (Exodus ii., 24-26) has the most archaic complexion of any of the biblical references to circumcision, and from it Dr. T. K. Cheyne argues that the rite is of Arabian origin.¹ I have already minutely examined that story,² and only here remark that, if instituted in the time of Abraham under the penalty of death, it is curious that Moses never circumcised his own son, nor saw to its performance in the wilderness for forty years, so that Joshua had personally to circumcise over a million males at Gilgal.

Let us now look at the various theories of the origin and purpose of circumcision. Rationalising Jews say it is of a sanitary character. This view, though found in Philo,

may be dismissed as an after theory to meet a religious difficulty. Most Asiatic nations are uncircumcised. The Philistines did not practice the rite, nor did the Syrians in the time of Josephus. Even if in a few cases it might possibly be beneficial, that would be no sufficient reason for imposing it on a whole nation, under penalty of death. The fact is the rite is a religious one. Indeed, upon its retention the early controversy between Jews and Christians largely turned.

The view that it is an imposed mutilation of a subject race has the high authority of Herbert Spencer. He instances the trophy of foreskins taken by David as a dowry for Saul's daughter (1 Sam. xviii., 27), and that Hyrcanus having subdued the Idumeans, made them submit to circumcision. This, however, may have been a part of the policy of making them one with the Jewish race in being tributary to Jahveh. I cannot easily see how a mutilation imposed from without should ever become a part of the pride of race and be enjoined when all other mutilations were forbidden.

I prefer a view, which, although in accord with early sociological conditions, I have never yet seen stated. It was suggested to me by the passage where Tacitus alludes to this custom among the Jews. It is that circumcision is of the nature of savage totem and tattoo marks—a device to distinguish the tribal division from other tribes, and to indicate those with whom the tribe might marry. If, as has been suggested, the meaning of Genesis xxxiv., 14, is "one who is uncircumcised is as a woman to us," this view is confirmed. The Jewish abhorrence to mixed marriages and "the bed of the uncircumcised" is well known.

The Hebrew distinguishing term for male—*zachar*, which also means record or *memorial*—will agree with this view, as also with that of Dr. Trumbull, which associates circumcision with the rite of blood-covenanting. It seems evident from the narrative in Exodus iv., where Zipporah, after circumcising her son, says—not, as generally understood to Moses—"A bloody husband art thou to me," but to Jahveh, "Thou art a *Kathan* of blood"—i.e., one made akin by circumcision—that this idea of a blood-covenant became interwoven with the rite. It is to be noticed that in the covenant between God and the Jews women had no share.

Dr. Kuenen holds that circumcision is of the nature of a substitute for human sacrifice. No doubt the Jews had such sacrifices, and were familiar with the idea of substitution; but with this I rather connect the Passover observance. If a sacrifice, it was doubtless phallic—an offering to the god on whom the fruit of the womb depended; possibly a substitution for the barbarous rites by which the priests of Cybele were instituted for office. Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos, speaking of the neighboring nations, says: "Many of them devote their genitals to their divinities." According to Gerald Massey, "it was a dedication of the first-fruits of the male at the shrine of the virgin mother and child, which was one way of passing the seed through the fire to Moloch."

General Forlong, who maintains the phallic view, also holds that "truth compels us to attach an Aphrodisiacal character to the mutilations of this highly sensual Jewish race." This view will not be hastily rejected by those who know of the many strange devices resorted to by barbarous peoples. Some have believed that circumcision enhances fecundity.

With the exception of the two first views, which I dismiss as not explaining the religious and permanent character of the rite, all these views imply a special regard being paid to the emblem of generation. This is further confirmed by the manner of oath-taking customary among the ancient Jews. When Abraham swore his servant, he said, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh" (Gen. xxiv., 2). The same euphemism is used in the account of Jacob swearing Joseph (xlvii., 29), and the custom, which has lasted among Arabs until modern days, is also alluded to in the Hebrew of 1 Chronicles xxix., 24. In the law that no uncircumcised or sexually-imperfect person might appear before the shrine of the Lord, we may see yet further evidence that Jewish worship was akin to the phallic rites of the nations around them.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article "Circumcision."

² See "Moses at the Inn," *Freethinker*, Oct. 30, 1887.

The first person who "struck illo" was Job, where he says "the rocks poured me out rivers of oil."

THE ASSASSINATION OF SISERA.

MR. RUSKIN thus describes the effect upon him of Maurice's denunciation of the treacherous crime committed by Jael:

"I loved Frederick Maurice, as every one did who came near him; and have no doubt he did all that was in him to do of good in his day. Which could by no means be said either of Rossetti or of me: but Maurice was by nature puzzle-headed, and, though in a beautiful manner, *wrong-headed*; while his clear conscience and keen affections made him egotistic, and in his Bible-reading, as insolent as any infidel of them all. I only went once to a Bible-lesson of his; and the meeting was significant and conclusive. The subject of lesson, Jael's slaying of Sisera. Concerning which, Maurice, taking an enlightened modern view of what was fit and not, discoursed in passionate indignation; and warned his class, in the most solemn and positive manner, that such dreadful deeds could only have been done in cold blood in the Dark Biblical ages; and that no religious and patriotic Englishwoman ought ever to think of imitating Jael by nailing a Russian's or Prussian's skull to the ground—especially after giving him butter in a lordly dish. At the close of the instruction, through which I sat silent, I ventured to inquire, why then had Deborah the prophetess declared of Jael, 'Blessed above women shall the wife of Heber the Kenite be'? On which Maurice, with startled and flashing eyes, burst into partly scornful, partly alarmed, denunciation of Deborah the prophetess, as a mere blazing Amazon; and of her Song as a merely rhythmic storm of battle-rage, no more to be listened to with edification or faith than the Norman's Sword-song at the battle of Hastings. Whereupon there remained nothing for me—to whom the Song of Deborah was as sacred as the Magnificat—but total collapse in sorrow and astonishment: the eyes of all the class being also bent on me in amazed reprobation of my benighted views and unchristian sentiments. And I got away how I could, and never went back. That being the first time in my life that I had fairly met the lifted head of Earnest and Religious Infidelity—in a man neither vain nor ambitious, but instinctively and innocently trusting his own amiable feelings as the final interpreters of all the possible feelings of men and angels, all the songs of the prophets, and all the ways of God."

The *Christian Commonwealth*, dealing with this passage, defends the Bible and its disgraceful praise of treachery and assassination. First it acknowledges the folly of "numberless preachers" who thought they "triumphantly vindicated" the "Bedouin fury who slew Sisera." Then it maintains that the way out of the perplexity and difficulty of the case is easy if the Christian can only "fling over all the cargo of inspirational theories of any and every kind." When Deborah blessed assassination it seems she was really inspired, but Jael was only "blessed" in "some sense" and certainly not in the modern Christian sense. To allow her to be condemned would be impossible, because, in the words of the *C. C.*, "Samuel, as well as Joshua and the Judges, become monsters of assassination in the light of the method which staggered Mr. Raskin, as he so vividly remembers and strikingly records at this hour." The *C. C.* perceives that under this infidel method of impartially attacking crime where it appears, "the whole of the historical section of the Old Testament is quickly deprived of all value."

The "easy" excuses of the *Christian Commonwealth* are as follows:

1. "Sisera was the doomed enemy of the very people whom God had chosen to protect for the purpose of blessing the whole race." But this method justifies the extermination of the Canaanites, the massacre of St. Barthomelew, or any religious crime whatsoever.

2. "The poor peasants of Naphtali and Zebulun knew that the victory of Sisera meant the ruthless slaughter of every man among them and the cruel slavery of their wives and children at the best." This is a religious assertion. The Israelites had been under the dominion of Jabin (whose general was Sisera) for twenty years (Judges iv., 2, 3), and there is no mention of any massacres. The heathen never treated the Jews with the remorseless blood-thirstiness with which the Jews treated them. The pious manner in which the Jews exterminated the Canaanites by God's order, and the pious assassination of leading heathens by Jael and Ehud, show that the Jews were far more merciless and treacherous than their less pious neighbors.

3. "What light she had was feeble and flickering and had come to her poor barbarian mind as the doctrine of the one God of Abraham." Then why did not God put forth a better doctrine?

4. Jael was a "pious, ignorant child of the desert"—a very questionable assertion; and Sisera had "forfeited every claim to life by his own murderous career"—which is a baseless slander for which no proof whatever can be found, unless all military men forfeit every claim to life by adopting such a career.

5. Jael had not the light of Christ, and the "blessing" of her act is a "purely relative benediction." But the Bible blesses the act and treats it as a divine deed. The inspired words run on thus: "Behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. So God subdued on that day Jabin the King of Canaan before the children of Israel." The approval of the prophetess Deborah is far stronger and is part of the Bible.

The *Christian Commonwealth*, in spite of all its pretentious sophistries and shallow falsehoods, feels the case is a bad one and has to wind up with the remark that "the human mind with

its gamut of emotions is a poor standard by which to judge the authenticity of the old Hebrew documents left for the ages by inspired pens." Then why accept them if we are such incompetent judges? Why appeal to our incompetency as if it were a justification of our acceptance of such barbarous and questionable documents? W. P. B.

KRISHNA AND CHRIST.

THE paper by M. Edouard Schuré in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, for May 15, entitled "La Légende de Krishna et les Origines du Brahmanisme," is an interesting account of the Indian hero, whom M. Schuré considers a historic personality, and whom he calls "Ce premier des messies, cet aîné des fils de Dieu."—"This first of Messiahs, this eldest of the sons of God." In speaking of his birth by the virgin mother Devaki, who was adumbrated by Mahadeva in human form, M. Schuré argues that the doctrine of the Incarnation came from the belief in pre-existence, which made the earthly parent of little moment. He says (p. 294) "Some of those who have appeared in the world as divine messengers were the sons of initiates, and their mothers had frequented the temples in order to conceive the elect." He further remarks (p. 306), "The legend of Krishna enables us to conceive at its very source the idea of the Virgin mother, the man God, and the Trinity. In India this idea appears, from the origin, in its transparent symbolism." We may remark that these ideas are found no less certainly in Egyptian mythology, whence they are more likely to have been transplanted than from India. M. Schuré further observes that the father, mother and son are the original triad. "From the time of the Apostles, and in the first ages of Christianity, initiated Christians revered the feminine principle of visible and invisible nature under the name of the Holy Spirit [which in Hebrew is feminine, and is so found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews] represented by a dove, the sign of feminine power in all the temples of Asia and of Europe. If since the Church has concealed and lost the key of its mysteries, their sense is nevertheless written in her symbols." M. Schuré, beyond stating the beliefs of the Brahmans, does not enter into the important question of the date of the Krishna legend, to which question we shall invite our readers' attention on some future occasion. J. M. W.

PROFESSOR DRUMMOND AND CHRISTIANITY.

The following letter appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*—

Sir,—Referring to your brief report of Professor Drummond's address on Christianity, will you permit me, through your columns, to put to the ingenious Professor one or two questions?

1. Christianity being a term which has hitherto connoted certain theological doctrines, how does Professor Drummond justify the application of that term to the undefined and undefinable tissues of still palpitating, perhaps, but soon putrefying, sentiment which he has cut from that bony skeleton of "Christian theology" to which it has hitherto been attached, but which Professor Drummond has "thrown aside"?

2. Would Professor Drummond think it desirable similarly to use the terms "Buddhism" and "Islamism" without connoting thereby the doctrines historically distinctive of these religions?

3. If Professor Drummond would think this desirable, how would he define and "distinguish" "Christianity," "Buddhism," and "Islamism," without reference to the distinctive doctrines of those religions?

4. How particularly would Professor Drummond define the "Christianity" the "truth of which is manifest" in a certain affirmed "fact," yet which, on a certain condition, Professor Drummond is prepared to "throw over"?

5. Does Professor Drummond seriously maintain that "the life of man and the virtue of woman" are, as a matter of fact, "safe" in the great centres of Christian civilisation; that, so far as they are safe, it is because of "Christianity"—whatever that may mean—and not because of a very strongly organised police; and that nowhere "outside of Christianity" are the statistics of murder and seduction so low as in the capitals of Christendom?

Perhaps Professor Drummond's lectures will "create" greater "interest in intellectual London" if he deigns to give definite and categorical answers to some such questions as those—questions which will naturally and not without some heat of indignation rise to the lips of every clear thinker, whether man of science or theologian, who may care to listen to Professor Drummond's exposition of his "very broad view of the Christian religion."—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

6 Crown Office Row, Temple, June 5. J. S. STUART GLENNIE.

PROFANE JOKES.

Scene: a Sunday-school. Young lady (catechising the children on the plagues of Egypt): "And what became of the plague of locusts?" A pause; then a small boy at the bottom of class suddenly: "Please, miss, John the Baptist ate them up!"

A reader of the first lesson when he came to the passage "He said unto his sons saddle me the ass, and they saddled him the ass," laid great emphasis on the words "him" and "ass," as though forsooth the meaning were "saddled *him* the ass."

Canon Wilberforce should mind his composition and punctuation. It is said that recently, while dilating on the evils of intemperance, he declared that "A young woman in Southampton died suddenly only the other Sunday while I was preaching the Gospel in a state of intoxication."

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These Tracts are numbered, but the old heading, "Freethinker Tracts," has been omitted, so as not to frighten people. Number 5 consists of a selection from *Bible Contradictions*. The circulation of such leaflets wholesale will be very beneficial to the Freethought Movement, as they are all specially designed for the common reader.

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