

THE FREETHINKER

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

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 272.



EZEKIEL ROBBING THE BARBER.

And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.—EZEKIEL v., 1, 2.

THE PARSON AND THE DUKE.

"TIS a pretty quarrel as it stands, and 't would be a pity to spoil it." So said the Irish second, when the other second proposed to settle the affair without fighting. And so say we of the squabble between the rector of Woodstock and the Duke of Marlborough. His graceless Grace, whose domestic affairs were once the talk of England, was divorced from his first wife, or she from him; and in the Colin Campbell case he appeared as the faithful friend of a beauty on bad terms with her husband, escorting her about Paris, and lending her philosophical volumes from his own library. About the same time the public learnt that his Grace's finances were disordered. There was an extensive sale of the Marlborough pictures, as well as other property; and, after that, nobody was astonished to hear that the divorced Duke was looking out for another wife, who might repair the family fortunes with her money in consideration of being made a Duchess. His Grace found a suitable rich widow in America, where the idle wealthy are said to yearn for an alliance with the British aristocracy. During his wooing, the Duke had a painful experience of "the license" of the American press. The Republican scribblers dealt with his "record" as freely as

though he were an ordinary plebeian. Still the Duke married his widow, bore her off in triumph from the land of the Stars and Stripes, and brought her to England, where her rich dresses excited the eloquence of all the Jeameses of the daily press. But down at Woodstock, close to what the Yankees would call the Duke's own dunghill, the rector kept a grim countenance; and when the Duke brought his American wife to the palace, which was built by a grateful nation for handsome Jack Churchill, that rascal of genius, and conqueror of the French at Blenheim and many other battle-fields—the parson refused to welcome him with the ringing of church bells. Thereupon the Duke pettishly stopped his colossal subscription of ten pounds a year to the parochial schools. Nay more, as the rector writes to the *Times*, the Duke "has forbidden myself and my curates to give any religious instruction in the schools at Bladon, which is part of my parish. He has also, through his agent, withdrawn the privilege of driving through Blenheim Park from myself and family."

This is sad, very sad; nevertheless, we cannot help saying it was scarcely likely that the Duke would put up with a public snub from—so to speak—his own parson. It would have been more manly to take no notice of the parson or his bells; but human nature is human nature, and

ducal nature is ducal nature; so the Duke says "If you strike me I'll strike you, and if you won't ring your bells I won't let you drive across my park."

God only knows, as the saying is, what will happen next. Will the parson excommunicate the Duke, or will the Duke ruin the parson? We await either or any event with the greatest serenity. Disreputable as the Duke of Marlborough's past may have been, it is hardly the best time to remind him of it when he is settling down as a sober married man. Nor, we believe, is the parson's back up because of the Duke's character. His opposition to the Duke, we understand, is based upon the fact of his second marriage after a divorce. According to the High Church party as well as the Catholics, and according to Mr. Gladstone as well as Cardinal Manning, divorce itself is a sin against God; and the second marriage of a divorced person is a double sin. Acting on this ecclesiastical theory, the rector of Woodstock affronts his powerful patron. We respect his sincerity, but we dissent from his policy. He forgets that the Duke was legally married, not at a registry office, but in a church. He forgets that the Church of England parson is a State official, who has no right to act on his private opinions. He forgets that he cannot have a Dissenter's freedom with a Churchman's living. He forgets that the Duke of Marlborough is one of his parishioners, and that the legal rights of parishioners are as well defined as those of incumbents. What would he do, for instance, if the Duke presented himself at the communion table? His Grace has a legal right to communicate, and the rector has no legal right to refuse him the sacrament. Were he to give the Duke a communicant's share of the body and blood of Christ, and let him eat and drink damnation to himself, he would certainly be climbing down from his present haughty position. On the other hand, if he declined to give the Duke his bread and wine, he would lay himself open to a prosecution.

We frankly confess our preference for the prosecution. How delightful it would be—at least to Freethinkers—to see a brisk litigation over the body and blood of Christ! The Duke claims it, the rector refuses it, and the Court decides the question between them. Poor Christ has absolutely no voice in the matter. His province is to be devoured. He is like Antonio in the play. When the Court decrees it, he must give his flesh, and his blood also, to the gentleman who will have his bond. We pity him with all our heart; and, were it not for the fun of the thing, we should lament the fact that litigation is possible over cannibalism in an age which boasts of its progress and enlightenment.

G. W. FOOTE.

ROME OR REASON?

IN the title of Colonel Ingersoll's reply to Cardinal Manning he has summed up the real issue between the rival forces which agitate the religious world. There are many sects but there are only two consistent paths—the path of Authority and the path of Reason. It has always been the great argument of the Catholics that the exercise of reason upon religion is the letting out of water, and that the stream leads onwards to Atheism. Protestantism, argues the great Bossuet, leads to Socinianism, that to Deism, and that to Atheism; therefore Protestantism is wrong. Not so, says the Freethinker; if its method is right it matters not how you dislike its conclusions provided they are logical.

As against the orthodox Protestant we believe the Catholic to be in the right. The mind that can credit the dogma of the Trinity need not stumble at transubstantiation. In the eye of reason it is no more absurd to believe that the power of working miracles continues in the Church than that it existed in the apostles. A person who is prepared to believe in creation from nothing, the making of woman from man's rib, and the thousand and one fables of the Jew books, cannot object to anything in Catholicism on the score of irrationality. It is as easy to believe in the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary as in the virgin birth of Jesus. Just as much is authentically known concerning God's grandmother, Ann, as about God's mother, Mary, and that is exactly nothing. It is no more unreasonable to suppose that a living priest can give absolution for sin than that it can be wiped away by the blood of Jesus.

In substituting an alleged infallible book for an alleged

infallible Church, Protestantism stultified its principle of private interpretation. The inconsistency of its compromise between sense and nonsense was seen in Luther himself. "Strangle reason like a wild beast," said he, "if it dares to question scripture." Yet he himself rejected the Book of Revelation, and, finding the doctrine of James on faith and works at hopeless variance with Paul, stigmatised the epistle of the former as "a downright epistle of straw." It is a striking fact that Protestantism in Europe has gained nothing during the last two centuries. The principle of private judgment commends itself to the most energetic nations and they propagate it wherever they go. The superiority of Protestantism to Catholicism is probably best seen in the United States and Canada. But in Catholic countries, where the issue is clear, ninety per cent. of the converts are Freethinkers. In Protestant countries one by one the orthodox doctrines are disintegrating. The Apostle's Creed, upon which Protestantism built, is found to be as much a forgery as the decretals upon which the Pope builds his temporal sovereignty. The Bible, its great text book, will no more stand the light of criticism than the claims of the Pope. Indeed, one of the best arguments for the papal infallibility is that an infallible book needs an infallible interpreter.

The Church of England shows the rival tendencies of the age in the Romanising High Church and the Rationalising Broad Church. Even the Dissenters display the same sections, one party relying upon authority, another progressing with the spirit of the times. It is the old contest between Past and Future. The Church of Rome, by the necessities of its position, has, like Lot's wife, a suicidal propensity to look backwards. It cannot but dream of the days when nations submitted to its rule. But not only the Church but Christianity itself, of which it is the most consistent representative, is now seen to be but one of the many faiths which have in time risen to sway the minds of men, and then departed never to return. The Church of Reason looks to the future assured that progress did not come to a full stop either at Mount Sinai or Mount Calvary, and that its creed cannot be dictated by the aspirations and beliefs of two thousand years ago.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE CHILD'S BELIEF.

"Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto minors [miners]."—J. CHRIST.

As down a quiet road I strayed,
I chanced to see a blue-eyed maid;
With tiny spade the soil she turned,
And wriggling worms with *hauteur* spurned.
Tender her eyes, and simply gay,
The world around unheeded lay,
While she her self-set task pursued,
With infant eagerness imbued.
Heedless of my intrusion there,
She worked within her little sphere
As men should work who hope to win
Glory, or Paradise, or "tin."
Inquisitive to know the why
And wherefore of her industry,
I thus addressed her: "Missie, dear,
You're working much too hard, I fear;
And what you wish to find I might
Enable you to find 'ere night."
'Thus unto me replied the child,
In tones angelically mild:
"Good gentleman, put down your hand
And feel how warm the stones and sand,
And notice, too, the brimstone smell.
Hell is below. I dig for hell!"

W. C. SAVILLE.

ACID DROPS.

PROFESSOR FISKE is an able man, but he is not an inspiring writer. He has a cart-horse style, though we admit he pulls a good load of learning, especially second-hand learning. He is, therefore, a very poor judge of Thomas Paine. Yet he has just written a paper on that immortal Englishman, in which he tells the world that Paine was "coarse," which it has often heard before, and "dull," which it hears of for the first time. Bishop Watson, who wrote good, clear, forcible English, did not complain of Thomas Paine's "dulness." On the contrary, he thought him a very lively writer, and replied to him for that very reason, lest people should be led away by the charm of his composition.

PROFESSOR FISKE reminds us of Wordsworth, who, in the *Excursion*, called Voltaire a dull scoffer. Charles Lamb did not object to the "scoffer," but he asked Wordsworth, "Why dull?"

PAINE'S *Age of Reason*, says Professor Fiske, is "fast sinking into complete and deserved oblivion." But the statement is false. Thousands of copies of the volume are still sold yearly. And even if the statement were true, it would not amount to much, for very few books last a hundred years. Professor Fiske is a worthy man—in his way—but his head must be turned if he expects to be read at the end of a century.

THE Rev. Joseph Diggle, as chairman of the late School Board, asserted that his Board had saved the ratepayers a quarter of a million. Mr. Mundella challenged this statement of saving and wanted it referred to a firm of trustworthy accountants. Mr. Diggle—who evidently ought to be re-christened Mr. Wriggle—publicly professed to accept the challenge, only he struck out the word "saving," introduced all manner of irrelevant inquiries, and delayed matters so that nothing could be done till after the elections. The reverend shuffler then prepared a letter for appearing in the press on the morning of the elections, so that no opponent could answer it in time. In this letter he evades the point at issue and misrepresents Mr. Mundella's challenge, even placing his own version of the matter in inverted commas as if it were Mr. Mundella's own statement.

As the *Daily News* says: "Not only does he thus make *suggestio falsi*, but he makes a still worse *suppressio veri*, by omitting all reference to the question of saving a quarter of a million, although that was the sole matter on which the challenge hung. There is no need that we should characterise this method of conducting a controversy. It is only necessary to ask whether a controversialist who acts on it is quite the kind of person whom the people of London would desire to place at the head of the Board which has in its hands the teaching of 400,000 of their children."

DIGGLE proceeds to say that he has been unable to induce Mr. Mundella to adhere to his challenge—which is the exact opposite of the truth—and states that he put "the accounts" into the hands of an accountant on the Friday. Diggle gives the report of this accountant—a judge selected by himself and working solely on evidence selected by himself—and the hasty report proves to be a series of answers to seven questions which Mr. Diggle tried to drag into the controversy with Mr. Mundella. Mr. Diggle avoids the question of "saving" which is the one at issue.

FIVE Catholics head the poll in the Liverpool School Board elections. There is nearly 3,000 difference between the lowest Catholic and the highest Churchman. We presume this is to be attributed to the Irish vote, which in all matters of education and enlightenment is solid on the side of reaction. When Home Rule is disposed of, it is to be feared that the Tories will be able to count on the support of the pious multitudes from Ireland who are at the beck and call of Catholic priests.

THE Liverpool School Board comprises six Catholics, six Churchmen, and three Nonconformists. What a happy family! And what fun there will be if the three Nonconformists are clever enough to play off the six Churchmen against the six Catholics!

MR. W. A. NEWCOMB polled less than before as a labor candidate on the secular ticket. But there was another labor candidate in the field who polled more than the difference. The labor party does not seem very united.

THE Rev. Mr. Snell, of Salford, is a Congregational minister and a bit of a Radical. He stood for the School Board and excited the animosity of the bigots. A particularly cranky specimen of that disgusting species issued a flaring protest against Mr. Snell for having conversed with infidels without insulting them. "Fellow electors," he said, "are you aware that the late President Grévy and the present General Carnot are infidels? Who on earth is General Carnot? President Carnot is a civilian."

HERE is another illustration of the Salford bigot's knowledge of history. He declares that the unsectarians are "trying to bring about the form of government which now exists in France, and which may at some future day bring about a repetition of the cold-blooded massacre of 1852." The muddle-headed fellow, we presume, is referring to the massacre of 1851, which was perpetrated by the pious Louis Napoleon. Were it not that the effort might unsettle the small amount of understanding he possesses, we should ask "Sectarian" why a Republican government is bound to imitate an Imperialist massacre.

THE Grand Lodge of Masons of Missouri has upheld the action of a local lodge in expelling a member who denied the "divine authority of the Bible." They thereby certify the nullity of their own pretensions to be a world-wide system. The Missouri Grand Lodge cannot even speak in the name of universal Masonry. The Grand Orient of France abolished the theistic test, and we believe this is also the case with the Grand Lodge of Louisiana.

"If one take from thee thy coat, give him thy cloke also," said Jesus Christ. "Not for Joseph," cries one of the priests of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Birmingham. His reverence found a burglar rifling the alms boxes, pursued him, and handed him over to the police. When that burglar breaks into a church again he had better be sure that the priest or parson is an obedient disciple of the Master.

AMELIA SMALL, a gipsy, is in trouble at Portsmouth for fortune-telling. She got the trifling sum of two sixpences for her performances. A Catholic priest will take a much larger sum for praying your soul out of purgatory, or a Church of England parson for burying your corpse in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. The law strains at gnats and swallows camels.

A NEAT story (says the *Bendigo Advertiser*) is told of a Catholic priest down South, whose sermons are usually of a practical kind. On entering the pulpit one Sunday morning he took with him a walnut to illustrate the various Christian churches. He told the people "the shell was tasteless, that was the Wesleyan Church; the skin was nauseous, disagreeable and worthless, that was the Presbyterian Church." He then said he would show them the Holy Roman Apostolic Church. He cracked the nut, and found it rotten! Then his reverence coughed violently, and pronounced the benediction.

ACCORDING to the Rev. Obadiah Bates, the end of the world is to come on November 30. Nobody takes any notice.

MONSIGNOR KARE KIN, an Armenian archbishop, has abjured Christianity and gone over to Mohammedanism. Our Christian journals would have made a great fuss over the case if the conversion had been the other way.

GOD's worshippers have recently been repairing and beautifying All Souls' Church, Manchester, and now God allows everything to be spoiled by a fire which has completely ruined the communion end of the church, while the heat, smoke and water have made sad havoc with the rest of the interior. God might do a little to help those who delight to honor him. As it was, he left everything to the fire brigade, which acted on purely materialistic principles.

ARCHDEACON LEFROY has been coming it strong at Liverpool on the sin of having marriages performed before the registrar. He calls this "a disparaging of Christ's presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee." If the white-chokers preserved the secret of turning water into wine, no doubt they might do better business; but even then the teetotallers would have to go to the registry office.

AFTER a violent debate the convention of the Hungarian Reformed Church has established celibacy for the clergy of Hungary. No chaplain who marries is to be appointed as clergyman. The reformed Christians are following the ideas laid down by Paul and Jesus, but they forget that Paul made an exception in the case of bishops.

THE Rev. Guinness Rogers urges the necessity of a many-sided gospel, none of whose aspects are to be neglected. There were some of the sides of the gospel, he said, which had been systematically ignored. The many-sided gospel will clearly have to include such instructions as these, for example:—Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live—Thou shalt not put witches to death. Thou shalt stone the Sabbath-breaker to death—Thou shalt do nothing of the kind. Thou shalt not resist evil—but thou shalt defy all ordinances of man, or obey all ordinances of man, for the Lord's sake. Thou shalt not render evil for evil—but thou shalt boycott heretics. Thou shalt bless—and anathematize; love and hate; pity and persecute. Thou shalt provide for thine household by taking no thought for the morrow and by deserting wife and family to preach the gospel. No wonder that some of these aspects of the gospel have to be ignored. Civilisation and morality would be impossible were it otherwise.

THE Bishop of Argyle and the Isles went through the newly-opened Protestant Nunnery at Haggerston, and sprinkled the gates and dormitories with holy water. What benefit does he expect will result from this religious tomfoolery?

THE Rev. Mr. Miller has applied to the magistrate at Hammer-smith for protection against the cries of milkmen and costermongers during the time the congregation are assembling. The clergy care a great deal for their own comfort, but they take no steps to stop the ringing of huge church bells either on Sundays or week-days. Religion may disturb the sick or nervous with loud noises where ordinary tradespeople must be quiet as mice under penalty of prosecution and punishment.

THE Polish Jews, who suffer so much from Christian persecution, appear to be equally relentless in wreaking vengeance on apostates from their own religion. Franz Platkowski had abandoned Judaism and entered the Greek Church fifteen years ago. After a long period of vindictive opposition his friends appeared to be reconciled. On pretext of some property being left to Platkowski, a relative induced him to take a journey, and

while passing through a certain wood he was suddenly attacked by two brothers and an uncle. They beat him severely and pinioned him. One of his brothers knelt on his chest while a quantity of vitrol was poured down his throat and splashed over his face and head. They then left him for dead. He was discovered next morning still alive, but is not expected to recover. He is scarcely recognisable. Both eyes and the tongue are destroyed and the head and face horribly burned. Such is the effect of the religious zeal which has so often displayed itself in Inquisitions and wars and crimes innumerable.

Now the Jews have obtained the same religious and political rights as Christians, they are becoming Conservative. A religionist, as such, is only Radical or Liberal when he is fighting against a personal injustice. When his own claim is satisfied his religion makes him blind to the claims of others. It is not surprising, therefore, that Professor Marks, the Jewish Rabbi, advises his fellow Hebrews to vote for the Conservative candidate in Holborn. Mr. Samuel Montagu, M.P., and Sir John Simon protest against this advice, but it will probably be followed by the bulk of the Jewish voters.

GENERAL BOULANGER is improving. First he becomes a fire-brand, next he hob-nobs with the Church, and now he goes into the divorce court. What will be the next move—bankruptcy, suicide, or marriage with the millionaire widow?

"Is Marriage a Failure?" is booming in the *Melbourne Herald*. Mr. Symes should reproduce our recent illustration bearing that title. He may as well have his share of the boom.

MISSIONARY CUST has been advising that converts should not be made acquainted with differences between rival Christian sects which have defaced the history of Europe. If converts knew more of the history of Christianity, they would be less anxious to join its ranks. Missionary Cust, who has had some experience in India, says truly that civilisation is not the object of missions. "Civilisation may possibly choke the good seed and retard Gospel teaching."

THE spiritist organ, *The Two Worlds*, has discovered a flaw in the exposure of spiritism by the Fox sisters. It seems that they now say that the first rapping manifestations appeared at Hydesville when they were respectively eight and six years of age. But, says *The Two Worlds*, their father said they were then fifteen and twelve. We respectfully submit that their understating their ages, if they do so understate them, does not affect the question. They say the spirit-raps which started the spiritist movement were produced by their toe-joints, and they give evidence that they can still produce them in the same manner.

THE boasting of the clergy as to the flourishing state of Christianity appears at some disadvantage in connection with the admission of Canon Taylor that it is absolutely impossible for all Christian agencies united to overtake the increase of heathen population.

THE Rev. S. Chadwick, of Clydebank Wesleyan Church, has been tackling what the *Christian World* calls "the knotty subject of Old Testament morality." In the course of his sermon he remarked that "if any man were to regulate his life now by the law of Moses, he would be regarded as a criminal and punished as such." Mr. Chadwick says this ought to be admitted frankly. Well, we did admit it frankly, and Mr. Chadwick's co-religionists gave us twelve months in Holloway Gaol. We should like to see the "admitted frankly" Mr. Chadwick in the hands of Judge North.

MR. CHADWICK'S excuse for the immoral morality of the Old Testament is that God gave the Jews as much good advice as they were able to receive. But why did not God make them capable of receiving a little more? Not even Omnipotence could put a quart of liquid into a pint pot, but couldn't he have made it a quart pot?

"GOD comes down to the imperfect," says Mr. Chadwick. From our reading of the Bible we should say there wasn't much coming down in the case. Jehovah did come down on Mount Sinai, and showed Moses—well, the seat of his inexpressibles. Was this a necessary incident in the moral training of the Jews? What lesson could be learnt from a view of the Lord's "glory"?

CHRISTIANITY in Spain resists all the efforts of the Liberal Government to render it tolerant. A Jesuit Father at the head of twenty Catholic students has attacked an agent of the Bible Society at Biscay, and seized his Bibles, Testaments and tracts, which were then torn up and consumed in a holy bonfire. The Spanish judges decline to deal with the case. While Protestants are treated thus, journalists are sentenced to penal servitude for criticising the State religion. Who says that Christianity does not make men fair and just and brotherly in their conduct towards each other?

SALVATIONIST to Sinner: "Ah, my friend, I have been praying for a week that God would give you a new heart." Sinner to

Salvationist: "My heart is all right, but if the Lord has a good second-hand pair of kidneys I should be glad to receive them."

THE following verse, of a somewhat unorthodox hymn, is from the backwoods of America—

The Lord is great, I calculate,
He will the godly bless;
And if I tries to tell no lies
I shall be saved, I guess.

THE Puritans, it was said, went to America to worship according to their own consciences and to prevent anybody else doing the same. It would seem that a good deal of the old leaven remains even in New York, for it appears that Louis Jacob, evidently a Jew, seventeen years old, has been arrested and committed for trial for selling a loaf of bread on Sunday. If the Americans submit to this they might as well have God in the Constitution at once.

THE Rev. J. D. Munro, parish minister of Eyemouth, has recently had to pay James Kerr damages for slander. He has since, at the Parochial Board, tried to reduce Kerr's salary, but the spiteful attempt only produced indignation.

IN Yorkshire last century preachers were often interrupted during their sermons. In a rustic part of the county one of them in the midst of his discourse was addressed in the following terms: "Speak up, sir; we can't hear at this end of the church." The reverend gentleman, being equal to the occasion, promptly retorted: "You have not paid your church rates, farmer Smith, for two years; can you hear that?"

THE Rev. Frank S. Webster, an Oxford curate, has at length, it is believed, accepted the living of Spitalfields, which has been offered to some dozens of Christians, eager to serve their Master, and respectfully declined.

ACCORDING to the *Rock*, Mr. Bright, when asked how he liked Forster's Education Act, replied: "Not at all; had it not been for Mr. Forster the secularists would have very soon swept away all voluntary schools." The *Rock* regards Forster as "one of the truest friends to religion this country has ever had," and it is surprised that the friends of religious education have not been more grateful to him. And yet there are pious people who denounce the School Board system as "godless," so extravagant are they in their expectations and so reckless and bigoted in their assertions.

THE *Rock* has to remind ecclesiastics that the suppression of the true is closely allied to the suggestion of the false. But why should ecclesiastics have to be told of such faults? Is the *Rock* anxious to show that Christianity is a failure?

PROTESTANTISM is spreading. The Hon. Lionel Tollemache tells a story of an Egyptian fellow who claimed the protection of Great Britain on the ground that he was a Protestant. Being asked in what sense he was a Protestant, he answered: "I eat meat on Friday and do not believe in God."

THIS story reminds us of one told in Vaux's *Nineveh* of a Kurd who addressed a European as follows: "Our religion is very like that of the Franks; we eat hog's flesh, drink wine, keep no fasts and say no prayers."

THE Vicar of Gorsley removed the candlesticks, verses, cross and super-altar from the communion table in his parish church. In consequence of this the *Rock* says he "suffered considerable persecution from two or three members of his congregation." Subsequently a ritualistic Dean was appointed who ordered the Vicar to replace the Romish articles. The Vicar refused to obey, and the Bishop of Gloucester tells him he must either replace these articles or get a faculty to authorise their removal—which is an expensive matter. Thus Christianity favors peace and harmony by setting people by the ears about ecclesiastical toys which they regard as of tremendous importance. The *Rock* complains bitterly of the way in which the Bishop allows Ritualistic and popish clergyman to break the laws of the Protestant Church of England, while a truly Protestant minister is "worried and persecuted in this manner" for being faithful to his trust.

THE litigation about the reredos at St. Paul's is another instance of the way in which religion fosters great quarrels about unimportant things. Christianity makes one man regard a sculptured image of the Virgin Mary as highly religious, and another equally hates it as blasphemous or idolatrous. One delights in a representative of the Ascension, while another knows that such a representation in a church is the sure road to the everlasting bonfire.

THE Vicar of Teddington says "Prayer will do anything," and requests his parishioners to send him the names of drunkards and others to be prayed for. An ungodly correspondent has sent him our article on Jehovah the Ripper, with a request for his prayers on behalf of the conversion of that hoary sinner.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, Dec. 2, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.; at 11.15, "The New School Board"; at 7, "Mr. Balfour's Praise of Christianity."

Dec. 9, Hall of Science; 16, Manchester; 23, Camberwell.

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. 7¹/₂d.

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.

GREEN-HORN.—Are you not a little too quick in perceiving analogies? Why could not Paul foretell events so plainly that there could be no possibility of a different explanation? You must be aware that the greater part of the Christian world, viz., the Roman Catholics, utterly reject the idea that the Papacy was "the mystery of iniquity."

J. SHUFFLEBOTHAM writes that he is running as a candidate for the Bolton School Board. He goes in for Secular education, and the abolition of school fees.

A. E. NEWCOMB.—No doubt such a register as you propose would be useful.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—We have no room for extra copy at present, and in no case do we care for continuations.

E. LUCAS states that the *Freethinker* is sold at Preston by Mr. Briggs, Church Street, who supplies every kind of Freethought literature.

F. MILLAR.—Received with thanks.

H. CALASCA.—We know nothing of the religion of E. W. Bailey, "the famous orator of London." His fame hasn't reached our office yet. Still, he may be famous—in his own street. Thanks for the cutting.

F. A. FOX.—Glad to hear you are promoting our circulation in the Woolwich district. See "Sugar Plums."

R. S. SEAGO.—You, Mr. Thomas, and other members of the Camberwell Branch, deserve the highest praise for your efforts in support of Mr. Ellis, although his candidature was not in your division. We wish your example were imitated in other localities.

H. W. CHICKEN (Capetown).—Mr. Forder says the *Freethinker* has been regularly forwarded. Did the twelve numbers fail to reach you consecutively or at intervals? It is easy for the post office to assert that it delivers all the papers it receives. It certainly does not deliver all the letters it receives.

JOHN RICHARDSON.—We never heard of the book before. Thanks for the leaflet, which we return as desired.

UNKNOWN.—We quoted from the Authorised Version, which is appointed by Act of Parliament to be used in all the churches. We are under no obligation to use the Revised Version. When the Christians elect which they will stand on it will be time enough for us to follow suit.

H. W. S.—Your MS. to hand. We will look through it as promised. Sorry to hear your change of opinion has led to domestic unhappiness.

R. J.—The statute under which the writ *de heretico comburendo* was issued was originally directed against the Lollards. It was passed 2 Henry IV., c. 15., and abolished by 29 Charles II., c. 9.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Manchester Evening News—Western Figaro—Porcupine—Undercliffe Magazine—Thinker—Liberator—Freethought—Kingston Express—Leeds Times—Echo—Ironclad Age—Leeds Daily News—Fair Play—Truthseeker—Southampton Times—Menschentum—Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags-Blatt—Liberty—Freidenker—Gloucestershire Echo.

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.

SCHOOL BOARD NOTES.

Both the candidates of the London Secular Federation have been defeated, and we are not altogether surprised, although we expected a better polling. Freethinkers have (we regret to say it) been so long unused to work together for anything practical, that it will require more than one such struggle to bring them into line.

Some Freethinkers in Finsbury were working for Mr. Conybeare, simply because he was the Radical candidate, despite the fact that he stood up for religious teaching, and declared the Bible an excellent book for children. We hope they will reflect on their strange inconsistency, and work and vote in accordance with their principles at the next election.

Several Socialists also were working for Mr. Conybeare, though, Mr. Bland ought to have received all their support. One Socialist newsagent actually refused to put Mr. Bland's address in his window. The Clerkenwell Branch of the Social Democratic Federation, however, worked heartily for Mr. Bland's success, though we fear it did not command many votes.

Mr. Bland was absolutely boycotted by the *Daily News*, and even the *Star* only gave him a grudging paragraph or two towards the close of the contest. It is therefore very improbable that Mr. Bland received much support outside the Freethought party. Yet he polled 3,876 votes; while Mr. Conybeare, with all his advantages, only polled a little over twice as many.

HAD all the Freethinkers in Finsbury plumped for Mr. Bland his success would have been assured. But they did not. Many who supported him only gave him half their votes. Others said he stood no chance, and gave their votes to other candidates. These were bad mistakes.

Next time we shall have to hold a great many more public meetings; and if we cannot always afford halls, or if halls are unprocurable, we must go into the streets.

Mr. J. H. Ellis, unfortunately, fared worse than Mr. Bland. He only polled 2,257 votes. Every elector in West Lambeth had five votes, and six in Finsbury.

Mr. Ellis had a double disadvantage. The Socialists ran a rival candidate, and the "secular" candidate was boycotted in the *Daily News* and almost so by the *Star*. Evidently, also, the Freethinkers did not all plump for Mr. Ellis or he would have been nearer success. It is feared that the *National Reformer* recommendation of Mrs. Dilke took away some votes, and the Central Democratic Committee's circular a good many more.

Still, we are not discouraged. This is only a beginning. Rome was not built in a day, and the Secular party will not triumph all at once. The first step is taken, and we must keep on marching. One lesson of the struggle is this. Freethought is still hated by the hypocrites. The general cry is "Come in any shape but that." There is a big fight before us yet.

Mrs. Besant, we are glad to say, is returned for the Tower Hamlets at the top of the poll. We rejoice at it, but we cannot regard it as simply a Freethought victory. Mrs. Besant's candidature has turned on many other questions than secular education. She was recommended by the *Daily News*, the *Star*, and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The Radical Clubs favored her as a politician. Above all, perhaps, there was Mrs. Besant's personal popularity, and her womanhood, which is at present a distinct advantage. We frankly admit, however, that a good deal of Mrs. Besant's success must have been due to the energy with which she fought the election, and the wide publicity which a good subscription enabled her to secure.

Anyhow, Mrs. Besant is in. So is her friend, the Rev. S. D. Headlam. Both are in favor of secular education, and we look forward with great interest to their work on the London School Board. Mrs. Besant is a woman of great ability and energy; and she can do drudgery as well as make eloquent speeches. Mr. Headlam is more easy-going, but he is an honorable man, who may be counted on to redeem his pledges.

SUGAR PLUMS.

OUR Christmas Number will be ready next week. Subscribers should order at once. Those who desire extra copies should lose no time in securing them. The type will be distributed after printing one edition. Among the illustrations is a series of sketches on the visit of the Wise Men of the East to little J. C. in his manger.

MR. FOOTE had good audiences at Birmingham; better, indeed, than were expected in such boisterous weather. Mr. Daniel Baker, a veteran of nearly eighty, was present at all three meetings, and presided in the evening.

TO-DAY (Dec. 2) Mr. Foote lectures at the London Hall of Science. In the morning he will discourse on "The New School Board." His evening lecture will be a reply to the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour. Mr. Balfour as a theologian is entertaining, and this lecture should be interesting to a large circle of people.

MR. R. O. SMITH, honorary secretary of the London Secular Federation, desires to acknowledge the following subscriptions to the School Board Election Fund:—N.W.L. Branch, £1 6s. 3d.; N. Middlesex Branch collection, 8s.; D. Colville, 10s.; collected by E. Pownceby, 4s.; T. Pearce, 10s.; Atheist, 2s.; H. T. Umford, 2s. 6d.; W. Temple, 1s.

THE French clericals are much annoyed at the Paris municipality having ordered the cross to be taken off the Pantheon, late the church of Sainte Genevieve. But this is only part of the secularisation which was decreed at the time of Victor Hugo's death. The cross had been only permitted to remain on account of its extreme height. It is understood that the remains of Gambetta and possibly also of Blanqui will be removed to the Pantheon.

THE Archbishop of Paris, in the time of the first Napoleon objected to preaching in the Pantheon, on account of the tombs of Voltaire and Rousseau being there. "Nonsense," said the Emperor, "they would doubtless object quite as strongly to you, could they hear you."

OUR High Church and Conservative journals continually speak of the French Republic putting the clericals in the same category with other citizens, as persecution. M. Lemoine points out that it is nothing of the kind, and that it was only by sheer and unmistakable persecution that Popery was got rid of in England. The clericals have never returned to power without re-enacting their old persecuting laws, and were Englishmen in the place of Frenchmen, they would doubtless put a wholesome restraint on "the ancient Mother Church," who, as *Aurora Leigh*, says—

"would fain still bite,
For all her toothless gums."

Secular Thought maintains its excellent character. The last number before us contains a reprint of Mr. Wheeler's articles on the "Great Missionary Failure."

WE see from *Secular Thought* that Mr. Charles Watts goes on a lecturing tour in Kansas, Colorado and Utah in January and February. Utah seems a promising field for Freethought propaganda now that Mormonism is breaking up.

COLONEL INGERSOLL was to have visited Toronto this winter, but he writes to say "It is impossible for me to fix a date at present. My business makes me a stone." We are glad to see the Colonel's business is flourishing, though we regret it takes him away from the platform. It is consoling, however, to reflect that his articles in the *North American Review* reach a wider audience than he could address with his voice.

CANON TAYLOR's article on "The Great Missionary Failure" is reprinted in *Hope* of Calcutta, and will doubtless enjoy a good circulation in India.

THE *Truthseeker* has a good sketch of "a puzzled pilgrim." The pilgrim is at the parting of the ways. Finger posts direct him in different paths. "To glory—Roman Catholic Route; to glory—Mormon Road; to glory—Protestant Road." But a warning placard admonishes him—"N.B. Be sure to take the right road or you will be eternally lost."

THE *Truthseeker*, which it will be remembered followed in our footsteps in the matter of Comic Bible illustrations, commenting upon our recent plebiscite says: "If the question of pictures or no pictures were put to the readers of the *Truthseeker*, we judge that nine out of ten would vote for the pictures."

DR. MONROE continues to run his *Ironclad Age* in lively style. Under the heading "Freethought Abroad" he gives his readers some items out of our own columns.

RENAN is progressing with his *History of the People of Israel*, which he intends to connect with his works on the origin of Christianity. The eminent French critic holds that the Hebrew prophets were advanced Socialists, and the chief agents in evolving the conception of Jahva the Just out of Jahva the Ripper.

THE Woolwich and Plumstead Branch, considering its extreme youth, is in a very flourishing condition. During December it is conducting a course of Sunday evening lectures in the Lord Raglan Hall, Burrage Road. Mr. F. Millar leads off this evening (Dec. 2). The other lecturers are Mrs. Sowden and Messrs. Hyatt, Stanley, and Marchant. We shall be glad to hear that the meetings are well attended.

THE age of miracles is *not* passed. There was a meeting at Lambeth on Sunday morning in favor of Mr. Ellis's candidature, and among the speakers was Mr. Fisher, a Christian Evidence lecturer, who promised to plump for the Secular candidate.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

JAHVEH was not a God of piety and mercy to all peoples, but the protecting deity of Israel alone; jealous and ferocious, who sometimes even demanded human victims to appease his irrational and unjust anger.—*D. Castelli*, "Storia D'Egl'Israelite," vol. ii, p. 462.

ST. JOHN.—In the criticism of the New Testament there is nothing established with such certainty as that the apostle John cannot have written the Apocalypse, if he be the author of the Gospel and Epistles, or that, if he be the author of the former, he cannot also be the author of the latter.—*De Wette*, "Einleitung," § 189, 4.

OBITUARY.—We regret to record the death of Mr. George Gamsby an old Sunderland reformer. The funeral at Bishopswearmouth Cemetery took place under the auspices of the Sunderland Branch of the N. S. S., Mr. J. Salt, the president, reading the secular burial service.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

III.—GIVING SIGHT TO THE BLIND.

MARK records two cases of healing the blind. At Bethsaida Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town before commencing the work of restoring his sight. This he accomplished by the elegant process of spitting in the man's eyes and putting his hands upon him. When the omniscient Jesus went through the form of asking if he saw aught, the man replied, "I see men as trees, walking." Perceiving that the miracle was only half accomplished, Jesus resolved that the second attempt should be a perfect success. Putting his hands upon the man again and pouring more magical influence into him, Jesus finally completed his work, so that his patient was thoroughly restored and "saw every man clearly."

Mark's second case is that of Bartimæus, the beggar, who was healed outside Jericho just before Christ made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

Matthew also records two cases of giving sight to the blind. Not being quite so ancient and archaic as the Gospel according to St. Mark, the later work of inspiration improves on the former and doubles the blind man in each case. The single blind beggar of Mark x., 46 becomes the two blind beggars of Matthew xx., 30. In this case the circumstances and the language employed by the blind man or men are too closely identical to allow of any reasonable doubt that these two accounts are merely varying versions of the same story.

That the other story of the two blind men in Matthew ix., 27-31, is only a duplication of the story of the one blind man in Mark viii., 22-26, is far from being indisputable. Where, however, variation can take place in one particular—of which we have decisive proof in the doubling of Bartimæus and of the Gadarene demoniac (compare Mark v., 1-16, with Matthew viii., 28-34)—other alterations or additions may also easily be made. But the story is more probably another version of Matthew's account of the two blind men sitting outside Jericho. The number is the same; their unceasing appeal to the "Son of David" to have mercy on them is the same, and the means employed, the touching of the eyes, is also the same in both cases. As these are the only two instances of which particulars are given in Matthew the resemblances must evidently be drawn from some common stock of ideas. There is community of origin or invention rather than the variety and originality of historical records.

Luke gives no particular instances, but he says that when John the Baptist's messengers came to inquire of Jesus if he was the expected Messiah, Jesus "in that same hour" gave sight unto "many" that were blind. The "many" must have apparently have been few, unless we suppose that great crowds of blind people habitually followed Jesus in expectation of a miracle.

Matthew believed in touching the eyes, Mark in spitting into them, or in simple faith-healing by word of mouth, while John believed in spitting on the ground, mixing up dust and saliva with the fingers, and daubing the filthy compound into the blind man's eyes (John ix., 6). Why did Jesus adopt such disgusting methods, when his mere word was amply sufficient? Did he wish to set an example of uncleanness, or did he play down to the medical ideas of foolish and ignorant people?

The total number of cases described in the Gospels is five, to which must be added sundry cases of which no particulars are given. This is poor work for a God. Mere oculists who totally abandon Christ's discredited and unseemly modes, have given sight to hundreds. The worldly science and learning decried by Jesus, and well nigh extinguished by his followers in subsequent centuries of darkness, can now surpass Christ's traditional miracles of healing a thousand-fold; and the miracles of science are always verifiable and *always* at command. By surgical operations, by medical and hygienic treatment, by the invention and improvement of corrective glasses, secular science is continually helping man to neutralise the grave faults of God's workmanship as displayed in the human eye. Christ's miracles ceased. Those of science remain. We may doubt the few alleged feats of Jesus and despair of his assistance. The numerous and growing achievements of science cannot be doubted and are open to all.

W. P. BALL.

Why should Jesus Christ remind one of Ireland? Because He is a shamrock.

AN EXAMINATION IN THEOLOGY.

1. WHERE is our Christian hell?
2. Show that it is perfectly right that an Almighty God, who made us, and who can direct our hearts as he pleases, should also have the right to torture us everlastingly?
3. Where is the Christian heaven?
4. Give a description of the bliss we are to enjoy therein.
5. When do we go to either of these places—when we die or on the Day of Judgment?
6. State the events that are to take place on the Day of Judgment.
7. Show that it is perfectly right that the worst criminal, if he repents and believes in the truth of the Bible, should go to heaven, and that a man who has led a moral life, without believing in the divine inspiration of the Bible, should go to hell.
8. Show how a man can control his belief.
9. Show that Christ expressed himself perfectly well when he said "Love your enemies." Infidels say you cannot love your enemies; all you can do is to treat them as if you loved them. Show the erroneousness of such an assertion.
10. Our Church teaches that we can only go to heaven through Christ. State what will be the fate of those who never heard of Christ.
11. Give the reason why Christ was sent to a small nation who he knew beforehand would reject him.
12. How do you explain that our Church persecuted the Jews for having crucified Christ, and yet we say if he had not been slain we should all be lost?
13. State the reasons why Christ did not preach and perform his miracles before the more enlightened people of that time, the Greeks and Romans?
14. Infidels say that as Jesus easily travelled through the air to his father he might just as well have preached one day in Rome, another in Athens, another in Pekin, and so forth. Show the ridiculousness of such an assertion.
15. They further say: Why did he begin his mission only at the age of thirty, when many great men have already acquired celebrity; and why did he allow himself to be crucified so soon? State his probable reasons for acting thus?
16. Infidels say he would have served his cause far better if he had only groaned and sighed on the cross, instead of exclaiming, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Show that they are in the wrong.
17. They further say there was nothing meritorious in his death, as he knew beforehand he would rise on the third day. What would you say against such an assertion?
18. How do you explain this seeming contradiction—He said to one of the criminals who were crucified with him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"; and three days later on he said to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my father"—a statement which is confirmed by the teaching of our Church, which declares that he went to hell during these days?
19. State why he called himself the Son of God, knowing that he was as old as God himself.
20. Infidels say: When God saw that Adam and Eve were not the right couple to start a world with, he ought to have "translated" them and begun with a better couple. How would you prove the fallacy of such an assertion?
21. Explain why we pray: "Our Father who art in heaven," when we know that he is everywhere.
22. Show that the many disasters where hundreds or thousands of people perish are perfectly compatible with our doctrine of a divine providence.
23. Explain why God does not step in and say which is the true religion, although he sees the persecutions and bloodshed committed for the sake of religion.
24. If the Infidel says: "It does not prove the divine origin of the Christian religion that it has existed so long, because superstition and crime have existed quite as long," how would you refute him?
25. Point out the moral doctrines taught by Christ that had not been taught by heathen philosophers.
26. Explain the seeming difference in the genealogy of Christ in the first chapter of St. Matthew and the third chapter of St. Luke.
27. How do you explain the contradiction between these two passages: Ex. xx., 13: "Thou shalt not kill;" and Ex. xxxii., 27: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor."
28. What is meant by: "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord"?

W. UHLENBURG.

REVIEW.

Freidenker Almanach für das Jahr, 1889. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.—This is the twelfth year of this excellent publication. In addition to the usual features of a calendar it gives a variety of articles and poems, by Dr. Paul Carus, Otto Soubbron, Max Grossmann, the editor, C. Hermann Coppe, and other writers. We heartily commend it to all readers of German.

EXTRA SPECIAL DISPATCH FROM OUR EXTRAORDINARY AERIAL COMMISSIONER.

"EGERIA," November, 1888.

AFTER leaving "Parthenope" I incurred great danger by attempting to land on some small asteroids not quite cool enough to be pleasant, and having learnt lately "that it's better to be a coward for five minutes than a dead man all the rest of your life," I steered as far as possible from these sultry planets, and was fortunate enough to land at "Egeria." I found my arrival had taken place at a most interesting time, for a baby Jesus Christ had been incarnated a short time before, and was now about eighteen months old. I made haste to visit this interesting child, and am pleased at being able to send you a report so early. The reputed father was a poor but honest carpenter, who rented a small four-roomed cottage, and whose constant care was to increase his store; so with very little difficulty I introduced myself, and soon got permission to visit the mother and child in an inner apartment. I was astonished to find this very juvenile Jesus Christ so fearfully precocious, for he was rating his mother in a most decided manner concerning some nursery tales which she had evidently been telling to amuse him. I sat down aghast as I heard the dear babe tell her never to try and impose such attenuated tales on it in the future, but to well weigh the evidence pro and con before impressing records of this description on its cultured intellect—for, as he sagely argued, a leguminous vegetable like the bean would not have radical power enough to sustain the weight of Mr. John, should he be so infatuated as to climb up it, and besides, where would its support be?

"And ma, dear," continued the infantile Jesus, "I must request you not to be so familiar as to call this young gentleman by the coarse appellation of Jack."

"I'm very sorry, my cherub," replied the mother.

"You took the same liberty the other day," answered little Jesus, "with Mr. John Horner, and I now doubt if he ever did really sit in the corner partaking of pie. You must really be more careful, my dear ma, in future, and disabuse your mind of the idea that you can impose these tales on a child of my experience."

The mother blushingly hung her head, no doubt with some amount of shame at having followed the usual course, not thinking of the colossal intellect she had to cope with.

Jesus then went on to say, "Learn to be more reasonable and try to instil useful knowledge into my august cranium. Do not talk such nonsense as that about a person having to fill his pockets with rye before singing a song of sixpence."

After noticing me by lifting his little woollen cap about three inches from his head, the infant phenomena said, "You also know, ma, the correct number of beans that make up the grand total of five, as last week I proved it to you by logarithms; and please also tell pa that the vaccinator animal cannot acquire impetus enough to jump over the moon."

Christ then applied himself to lacteal nourishment and gradually fell into a sweet sleep, his face still retaining a shrewd expression which was enhanced by his right eye being more tightly closed than the left.

I was too astounded to ask many questions, but I learnt that this wonderful child had at the early age of twelve months, registered one or two most useful patents. One—"The milk-condensing machine," was to produce solid cubes of milk and fill an infant to repletion in four seconds. Another invention of this juvenile Jesus was "The Electric Coaxing Pad," for the assistance of children teething warranted to produce a complete set in three days without pain.

As the child slept I looked around for the ordinary childish toys, but found that this interesting babe rejected the Noah's arks, boxes of bricks, monkeys up sticks, etc. No! his colossal intellect could only be satisfied with machines, etc., showing the latest productions from the scientists' laboratories. His favorite plaything was an ordinary wine bottle, which he fills with water. He says a few words over it, and then pours out wine of a very good quality. Joseph, the reputed father, who had just come in from a hard day's work at carpentering, was especially interested in this happy result.

This infant genius, I found, was about to write a treatise showing how to get rid of the devil from pork, so that all the porkers in the locality might be made happy and live a life of greater purity, and so be more healthy when they come to the inevitable sausage.

I find that there is great competition amongst the priests to secure this infant prodigy, large sums being offered to his parents in the hopes of securing him for one or two representations daily at their churches. They intend advertising him as "The Infant Evangelist." I think there's money in it, and only wish I could stay and see the result, but my time being limited I must leave this very interesting planet, and try, if possible, to reach earth about Christmas.

PROFANE JOKES.

In a small town not many miles from Liverpool, during revival services, a policeman was at the penitent form. He had been there some time when the minister, going up to him, said, "Well, my good man, have you found peace yet?" "What," exclaimed the policeman, "has that devil got loose again?"

A clergyman says that once when he was a young curate he was returning home late at night, when he saw one of his parishioners quietly leaning against a lamp post, and, as it was not the first time he had seen him in this elegant position, he went up to him and said:—"Well, James, drunk again!" Imagine his surprise when James replied with a hic, "Sho am I."

Mother: "And if I tell you the story about the babe in the manger and the wise men from the East, Bobby, will you go to sleep?" Bobby (after studying a moment): "No, ma; you tell me the story about Jack the giant-killer first, and then I'll go to sleep while you're telling about the babe in the manger."

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