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EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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THE SNOW GOD.

He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth.—JOB XXXVII., 6.

KIT MARLOWE AND JESUS CHRIST.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, whose "mighty line" was celebrated by Ben Jonson, is one of the glories of English literature. He was the morning star of our drama, which gives us the highest place in modern poetry. He definitively made our blank verse, which it only remained for Shakespeare to improve with his infinite variety; and although his daring, passionate genius was extinguished at the early age of twenty-nine, it has reverent admirers among the best and greatest critics of our English drama. Many meaner luminaries have had their monuments while Marlowe's claims have been neglected; but there is now a project on foot to erect something in honor of his memory, and the committee includes the names of Robert Browning and Algernon Swinburne.

This project raises a howl from an anonymous Christian in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He protests against the "grotesque indecency of such a scheme," and stigmatises Marlowe as "a disreputable scamp, who lived a scandalous life and died a disgraceful death." That Marlowe was "a scamp" we have on the authority of those who denounced his scepticism and held him up as a frightful warning. His fellow poets, like Chapman and Drayton, spoke of him with esteem. An anonymous eulogist called him "kynde Kit Marlowe"; and Edward Blunt, his friend and publisher, said "the impression of the man hath been dear unto us, living an after-life in our

memory." Assuredly Shakespeare's "dead shepherd" was no scamp. He apparently sowed his wild oats, like hundreds of other young men who were afterwards lauded by the orthodox. He was fond of a glass of wine in an age when tea and coffee were unknown, and English ladies drank beer for breakfast. And if he perished in a sudden brawl, it was at a time when everyone wore arms, and swords and daggers were readily drawn in the commonest quarrels. Nor should it be forgotten that he belonged to a "vagabond" class, half-outlawed and denounced by the clergy; that the drama was only then in its infancy; that it was difficult to earn bread by writing even immortal plays; and that irregularity of life was natural in a career whose penury was only diversified by haphazard successes. After all is said, Marlowe was no man's enemy but his own; and it is simply preposterous to judge him by the social customs of a more fastidious and, let us add, a more hypocritical age.

Our Christian protestor is shocked at the suggestion that the Marlowe memorial should be placed in Westminster Abbey, "an edifice which I believe was originally built to the honor of Jesus Christ." "The blasphemies of Voltaire," he says, "pale into insignificance when compared with those of Marlowe;" he "deliberately accused Jesus Christ and his personal followers of crimes which are justly considered unmentionable in any civilised community," and "any monument which may be erected in honor of Christopher Marlowe will be a deliberate insult to Christ."

Now those "blasphemies" are set forth in the accusation of an informer, one Richard Bame, who was hanged at Tyburn the next year for some mortal offence. Marlowe's death prevented his arrest, and it is somewhat extravagant—not to give it a harsher epithet—to write as though the accusation had been substantiated in a legal court. One of Bame's statements about Marlowe's itch for coining is upon the face of it absurd, and the whole document is open to the gravest suspicion. It is highly probable, however, that Marlowe, who was a notorious Freethinker, was not very guarded in his private conversation; and we have no doubt that in familiar intercourse, which a mercenary or malicious eavesdropper might overhear, he indulged in what Christians regard as "blasphemy." Like nine out of ten unbelievers, he very likely gave vent to pleasantries on the subject of Christian dogmas. There is nothing incredible in his having said that "Moses was but a juggler," that "the New Testament is filthily written" (Mr. Swinburne calls it "canine Greek"), or that "all Protestants are hypocritical asses." But whether he really did say that the women of Samaria were no better than they should be, that Jesus's leaning on John's bosom at the last supper was a questionable action, that Mary's honor was doubtful and Jesus an illegitimate child—cannot be decided before the Day of Judgment; though, in any case, we fail to see that such things make "the blasphemies of Voltaire pale into insignificance."

We candidly admit, however, that a memorial to Marlowe would be incongruous in Westminster Abbey if Darwin were not buried there; but after admitting the high-priest of Evolution it seems paltry to shriek at the admission of other unbelievers. It will not do to blink the fact of Marlowe's Atheism, as is done by the two gentlemen who took up the cudgels on his behalf in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Setting aside the accusation of that precious informer, there is other evidence of Marlowe's heresy. Greene reproached him for his scepticism, and every editor has remarked that "his plays are heathenish in spirit. Lamb not only calls attention to the fact that "Marlowe is said to have been tainted with Atheistical positions," but remarks that "Barabas the Jew, and Faustus the Conjurer, are offsprings of a mind which at least delighted to dally with

interdicted subjects. They both talk a language which a believer would have been tender of putting into the mouth of a character though but in fiction." Dyce could not "resist the conviction" that Marlowe's impiety was "confirmed and daring." His extreme Freethought is also noticed by Mr. Bullen and Mr. Havelock Ellis. There is, indeed, no room for a rational doubt on this point. Marlowe was an Atheist. But a sincere Christian, like Robert Browning, is nevertheless ready to honor Marlowe's genius; quite as ready, in fact, as Algernon Swinburne, whose impiety is no less "confirmed and daring" than Marlowe's own. There is freemasonry among poets; their opinions may differ, but they are all "sealed of the tribe." And surely we may all admire genius as a natural and priceless distinction, apart from all considerations of system and creed. What Atheist fails to reverence the greatness of Milton? And why should not a Christian reverence the greatness of Marlowe? If creed stands in the way, the Christian may keep his Dante and his Milton, his Cowper and his Wordsworth; but he loses Shakespeare, Byron, and Shelley; he loses Goethe and Victor Hugo; he loses Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Pindar, Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, and all the splendid poets of Persia whose lyres have sounded under the Mohammedan Crescent.

The distinctively Christian poets, as the world goes, are in a very decided minority; and it is a piece of grotesque impudence to ban Christopher Marlowe because he declined to echo the conventional praises of Jesus Christ.

G. W. FOOTE.

AN ALLEGORY.

I MADE a little marionette,
With strings his limbs to jerk;
Then with a cudgel armed my pet,
And made the figure work.

But once, while in a festive plight,
I thought I'd make him fling
His arms about with all his might,
So blithely pulled the string.

He jumped, he danced, in frantic style
He flung his cudgel round;
He hit my head—dismissed my smile—
And laid me on the ground.

I rubbed the bump, I swore a swear,
And seized the doll in ire;
Ere I myself was quite aware
He frizzled in the fire.

When lo! as still I held my head
And softly cursed the blow—
"You mean old beast," I thought he said,
"Why do you serve me so?"

"You made me, sir; you tied the thread;
You pulled and made me do it;
You caused the blow that cracked your head—
Poor puppet has to rue it."

My plaything spoke the truth, I guess,
I should have burnt him never;
But still with god-like stubbornness
I damned him worse than ever.

Our childish God his dolls equips,
And eke controls their action;
But if, because of godly slips,
They don't give satisfaction,
He does not seek to set them straight,
Himself the culprit owning,
But slings them off in wrath and hate,
To endless flames and groaning.

EX-RITUALIST.

A gentleman passing a country church, while under repair, observed to one of the workmen that he thought it would be a very expensive job, and would come heavy on the ratepayers. "Why, yes," replied he, "but in my opinion, we shall accomplish what our Reverend divine has endeavored in vain to do for the last thirty years." "What is that?" said the gentleman. "Why, bring all the village to repentance."

IT MADE A DIFFERENCE.—A little Sixteenth-street girl was interviewing the preacher. "Ain't God good?" she asked earnestly. "Of course, he is, my child," said the pastor. "And it isn't wrong to say so, is it?" she continued. "Certainly not." "That's what I told mamma." "Why, my child," said the pastor in amazement, "your mamma did not say he was not good, did she?" "No, sir, not exactly; but at breakfast this morning, when papa took a mouthful of coffee he said 'Good God!' and mamma told him there was no use in swearing, even if the coffee wasn't the best in the world."

ACID DROPS.

GENERAL BOOTH'S "week of self-denial" has brought him in £15,000. As Shylock says, "'tis a good round sum." But the expense of raising this amount was no less than £1,961. Such a fact reduces the whole affair to sheer commerce. Booth laid out half-a-crown in advertising and begging for every sovereign he got; and we fancy that is the usual rate of outlay and income in the cadging business.

We have not looked up the *War Cry* for the details of this "self-denial," for when we consulted it on a previous occasion we were sickened with the mingled imbecility, hypocrisy, and vanity. But we should imagine that some of the cases will run as follows:—

- (1) Ninepence, from two old bachelors, who forewent their Friday tripe supper.
- (2) Twopence, from a chimney-sweep, who denied himself soap for six days.
- (3) Threepence, from a Christian mother, who, instead of buying a needed new spoon for baby's sops, makes him eat them with a fork.
- (4) One shilling, from Mary Ann, who told the tally-man to call again.
- (5) Half-a-crown, from a true believer, who sold his best parlor Bible, and thinks he won't buy a new one.
- (6) Threepence, from Adonis Prayerful, being the cost of a clean shirt.
- (7) Sixpence from Florrie, Tommy, Harry, Nellie, Willie, and Carrie, whose mamma stopped their daily penn'orth of sweets.
- (8) Eighteenpence, from a pious family, being three shillings saved by using butcher's offal, less eighteenpence for a bottle of physic.

"GENERAL" BOOTH has asked the Government for a modest £15,000 just for a start. Don't he wish he may get it. According to the memorial he has sent in to the Home Secretary, he wants the cash to assist the Army in rescue work and providing food and shelter for the destitute. Mr. Matthews promises to give his best attention to the proposal.

THE Salvation Army is gradually working down. General Booth, or rather Major Mackenzie, is working up a children's corps, the members of which are said to have "all given by their lives and testimony evidences of a genuine conversion." What wretched spiritual debauchery is this! Fancy these thousands of little soldiers for Christ telling the world all about their little sins, boasting of their little conversions, and posing as little brands plucked from the burning! Booth has only one step lower left to take. Let him organise a baby corps, excluding every child over three; let him parade them as "saved" at Exeter Hall; let him teach them to sing "Safe in the arms of Jesus," and cant and whine like their elders; and let him fall on his knees—in public, of course—and say to his Master, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected thy praise."

BOOTH, however, is no fool. Religious charlatans have frequently found, before now, that children can be exploited by those who will condescend to abuse their innocence. During the Crusades, for instance, some damnable scoundrels took advantage of the boys and girls who marched in armies to capture Palestine from the Saracens. The poor children were plundered of everything they possessed; and, to crown the infamy, a couple of Christian merchants, under pretence of conveying them to Palestine, shipped off hundreds, selling the boys as slaves and the girls as victims of lust. Twenty-five years later there was another child crusade. Thousands perished in unspeakable misery, as though the Devil, says old Fuller, "desired a cordial of children's blood to comfort his weak stomach, long cloyed with murdering of men."

LORD SALISBURY'S treatment of the Dissenters at Hatfield is notorious, but he endeavors to escape the charge of refusing to allow them a place of worship by offering inconvenient and unsuitable sites which he must know cannot be accepted. Every site which the Methodists wanted has been consistently refused. They have, however, after great difficulty, secured a site in the village independently of Lord Salisbury's help. Unfortunately they cannot get possession till March, and meanwhile they are ordered to quit the miserable shanty in which they have worshipped for nearly forty years. The ground is wanted by Lord Salisbury for the purpose of building a rectory or making a rectory garden for his son. The Methodists refuse to submit to this religious eviction till compelled. Their congregation will be scattered, and the Sunday school children will be driven into the Church schools. This, of course, is regarded as highly desirable by Church of England landlords. Such is the harmony and fellowship which Christianity promotes.

A WRITER in the *Academy* gravely states that Shakespeare's plays are "frequent and dear in the peasant homes of England." Why did he not say that champagne and '47 port are habitually drunk by the English peasantry? We wish the *Academy* writer spoke the truth. If a copy of Shakespeare—our real English

Bible—were possessed and studied by every household, there would be a vast improvement in the intellect and *morale* of the people.

BISHOP RYLE, preaching in the Cathedral, said he could not understand how any clergyman holding office in the Church of England could read the Fourth Commandment to his congregation and then give his support to movements which must inevitably prevent the Sabbath being kept. A correspondent in reply informs his lordship that there is another thing he cannot understand, and that is, "how any bishop having the slightest regard for the Fourth Commandment can drive about the streets of Liverpool on the Sabbath Day, with liveried lackeys in attendance upon him." The correspondent wants the Bishop to explain how he does this and yet observes the commandment that neither horse nor man-servant shall do any manner of work on that day.

THE Bishop has not ventured to publish any reply, but a gentleman explains for him that bishops must not preach in consecrated churches without wearing heavy official robes, and that hence they are obliged to use carriages. But perhaps the Bishop is equally unable to understand the inconsistencies of his Church and the inconsistency of his own preaching and practice. If otherwise, he should enlighten the world on the subject.

CANON LARKIN, from Surrey, is larkin' in Donegal. He is working all sorts of miraculous cures and beating J. C. hollow. But the Catholic clergy of the district do not countenance his proceedings. Trade jealousy, we suppose.

THE Rev. John McNeill must have a cronie on the *Star* staff, judging from its high-pitched eulogy on his sermon at Spurgeon's Tabernacle. This Scotch preacher has received a "call" to the West-End of London, which, according to the *Star*, is greatly in need of "an uncompromising preacher of the Christianity of the heart and conscience." What a childish belief some people, even of the Radical persuasion, still have in the efficacy of sermons! We await, with becoming patience, the report of the Rev. John McNeill's impression on the heart and conscience of the West-End.

MRS. BESANT should beware of one of her colleagues on the London School Board. Mr. H. H. Raphael, one of the members for Marylebone, sits on the Board for the express purpose of upholding Bible teaching and opposing those dreadful Radicals who want to abolish the State Church in order that they may "destroy religion altogether." Mr. Raphael is the true Messiah of sectarianism, and he bears a name well-fitted for the part.

THERE is a good story about Mr. Raphael's candidature. One old lady ratepayer was in a quandary as to whom she should vote for. Several candidates sent her their addresses, which she couldn't make head or tail of; and at last she decided to vote for the only candidate who sent her his address in an envelope. Mr. Raphael received her seven votes. But imagine her disgust when she found she had plumped for a gentleman of Hebrew extraction, a specimen of the *genus homo* to which she has a rooted aversion!

MR. KELLY, M.P. for North Lambeth, has blocked the Bill for the Protection of Children. This is the same pious legislator who pursued Mr. Moss for daring to write to him, as one of his constituents, on the subject of a Bill before the House.

By the way, there is a good chance for Mrs. Besant or Mr. Stewart Headlam to undo the gross act of injustice towards Mr. Moss. The least they can do is to broach the matter at an early Board meeting. If the order, under which Mr. Moss is forbidden to propagate his principles on Sunday, applies to all the employees of the Board, there is all the greater necessity for its being exposed and abrogated.

CANON TAYLOR says of the reply made by the Church Missionary Society to his indictment, that the defence amounts to this—that the committee possess two sets of accounts; an esoteric one for themselves—satisfactory, full, correct and explicit; and also an exoteric set which is published for the use of the subscribers, which is admittedly incorrect, imperfect and misleading.

THE Mayor of Liverpool is a bigoted Sabbatarian. He could not stand the shock of hearing Sunday opening discussed at the recent Art Congress. But he is a patron of the Licensed Victuallers' Association nevertheless. Sunday opening, in his opinion, should be confined to gospel-shops and gin-shops.

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* has a pious editor, and the Hall of Science is barred from its Sunday lecture announcements. But Mr. Stead is able to relish a bit of blasphemy when it comes from a "respectable" quarter. Describing the annual dinner of the Savage Club, the *P. M. G.* says that loud cries for "Max O'Rell" brought that gentleman to his feet with the remark "that he was sure the members would not wish to part without hearing 'some good English,' and he then told a story—such a

naughty one!—illustrative of what I may call American 'dual morality,' the religious blasphemy that sounds so funnily incongruous." Yes, yes, blasphemy—even *blue* blasphemy—is all right at the Savage Club among the swells; but blasphemy—even clean blasphemy—is all wrong in a penny paper for the "mob."

IT is stated in some of the Irish papers that "Miss Nellie Southwick begs gratefully to acknowledge receipt of bank cheque, value twenty pounds, won by her at Monaghan Cathedral Bazaar." And lotteries in this country are illegal—unless they happen to be religious ones. Pious gambling is as moral as gambling without the piety would be reprehensible and mischievous.

DR. PARKER'S congregation at the City Temple has been addressed by Mr. Henry George, who naturally introduced his economic doctrines under the theological aspect which would best catch his audience. He commenced by saying that man, not God, is responsible for the vice and misery to be found in the highest civilisation. If God existed, however, all the Georges and Parkers in the world could never free him from responsibility for the outcome of the instincts and imperfections which he has implanted in his own workmanship.

MR. GEORGE proclaimed that "All human creatures came into the land with the permission of their Creator, in his eyes they were equal, and therefore they were entitled to all he had provided for the maintenance of life, the satisfaction of their wants and the development of their power." All this is purely gratuitous assumption. Human conceit always makes up for lack of evidence by audacity of assertion, and Mr. George only shares the common weakness—or strength—of his fellow theologians. If all human beings are equal in God's eyes, then Jack the Ripper is equal to Gladstone, and the differences of good and evil are abolished. But how can all men be equal in God's eyes when he sends them such different capacities and such different fates? What meaning can there be in asserting that a degraded cannibal is equal in God's eyes to a Florence Nightingale? How can an infant sent into the world only to die of disease or hunger be equal in God's eyes to another infant surrounded by all the circumstances that promise a healthy and happy life?

MR. GEORGE tries to shame the Christians into adopting his views by telling them that "among the lowest savages no such gross inequalities prevailed as were to be found in Christian communities to-day." What do Christians, and especially Christian Socialists, say to this? Will they acknowledge that in this respect at least Christianity is a failure?

JOHN EDWARDS married his deceased wife's sister in the Lutheran church at Neuchatel. Returning home, the vicar caused a considerable stir by repelling them both from the communion table. Ultimately Archbishop Tait recommended the excommunicated couple to take the communion in some parish where their history was not known. They were to partake of the body and blood of their God by deception, to solemnise the holiest rite of their religion by fraud.

JOHN EDWARDS has since died, and the law deducts 10 per cent. from the thousand pounds due on the insurance policy made over to his second wife. The father indignantly asks in the *Daily News*—"What can be said of this amazingly inconsistent law which declares two people to be so closely related that they cannot marry, yet when one of them dies taxes the survivor as an absolute stranger?"

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* has made a remarkable discovery, namely, that Mr. Gladstone and Cardinal Manning are "our two oldest and greatest men." Certainly Mr. Gladstone is our greatest politician, but whether our greatest politician is also our greatest man will be decided by posterity. Cardinal Manning's greatness, however, is far more questionable. What does his greatness consist in? He is neither a great thinker, a great writer, nor a great orator; and his leadership, such as it is, is confined to his own Church.

CARDINAL NEWMAN is a great man. Compared with this master spirit, Cardinal Manning is a pettifogging priest. Read their respective criticisms of Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet on the Vatican Decrees, and you will see at once that they belong to very different orders of mind.

STILL more wonderful is the *P. M. G.*'s discovery that Cardinal Manning is "tolerant." The very opposite quality is written in every line of his face. How many articles has he written to show that "infidels" ought not to enter Parliament? Has he not left the platform when men as honest as himself, though of different opinions, profaned the platform with their presence? Was he not the moving spirit of bigotry on the Education Commission? Did not every sinister, reactionary proposal emanate from his bigoted brain? Cardinal Manning is "tolerant" as tigers are kind and sharks are merciful.

IN the discussion on the Oaths Bill Lord Addington urged that "it would be a dangerous thing to admit the principle into legislation that a person who had a religious and personal aversion

to take the oath should not be required to take it." This stupidly bigoted remark is described by the *Rock* as "characteristic not only of the man who put it forth, but of the party with which he is allied in religion."

THE *Rock* speaks very sensibly on the matter. It says: "What is the good of a man taking an oath if he does not believe in a God? To compel a man to take an oath to a God in whom he does not believe is little short of blasphemous. Force is no remedy in religious matters, and physical compulsion sooner or later must recoil on the heads of those who use it. We believe strongly in winning over infidels by love and kindness, and by respecting their difficulties; but when we resort to disabilities and penalties, which are but another term for physical force, we do not convert the infidels into Christians, we merely make them into hypocrites."

WILL the *Rock* translate its sentiments into acts, and work hard for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws? Somehow, Christian journals seem to accept the nobler ideas of tolerance and justice just so far as they are compelled by the logic of accomplished facts. Christian journals and Christian bishops fight hard against liberty and progress while the struggle is going on, and then try to go with the majority and gain some credit for the victory which they could not prevent.

MISS JOY, a Wiltshire lady, left a thousand pounds to the Rev. R. A. Chudleigh for carrying on a society for suppressing cruelty to animals by united prayer. It was decided that the society ended with the death of the lady who had carried it on during her lifetime, and that the legacy was therefore void. It certainly would have done little good if it were spent on nothing but prayer.

THERE is a paragraph in the papers about "The Sale of a Hindoo God." Isn't it about time the English God was sold off? How much would he fetch under the hammer?

How the pious differ! Some of our curates, who go in for Socialism, and fancy that when the millenium arrives they will be paid to talk sentimental nonsense, are fond of telling us that Jesus Christ was the first Democrat who ever lived. Prince Bismarck, on the other hand, says he is a Royalist because he is a Christian, his natural bent being towards Republicanism.

BISMARCK is now a Doctor of Divinity, so we may listen to him for a few moments as a theologian. He believes that God has revealed himself in the Gospels, and that there is a future life. Without the latter belief, he says he would never have toiled for Germany; though all who know the man are aware that this is one of his delusions. Bismarck professed to love toleration, but he vehemently opposed civil marriage, he believes in a State Church, and he holds that people who differ from the State religion ought to suffer in purse or person.

SUCH are the puerilities to which a great man can be reduced by the bigotry which is inherent in all religions! According to this doctrine, Catholics should be persecuted in England, Protestants in Ireland, Christians in Turkey, Mohammedans in Europe, and Freethinkers everywhere. In other words, every form of opinion is to be privileged here and persecuted there. Truth is no standard, liberty is no man's right, orthodoxy is a question of geography, and the only eternal verity is the just claim of the majority to oppress the minority.

WHO will wonder, after this, that Prince Bismarck believes God has revealed to him the day of his death, and that Providence specially directs the foreign policy of Germany? It reminds one of the parody on the Emperor William's telegram to his Augusta—

Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below,
Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

FIVE members have given notice of their intention to move the rejection of the Sunday Closing Bill. Mr. Labouchere will move that the question be left to the settlement of local bodies.

THE Rev. J. Gallie, writing against prayers for the dead, says: "A great deal is made of the fact that Christ was silent as to praying for the dead—that he did not condemn it. Neither did he condemn polygamy, nor slavery." Yet at other times Christians claimed that Christ abolished polygamy and slavery. The damning admission that Christ never condemned two such notorious evils as polygamy and slavery would probably not be made if those subjects were under discussion. It is only made incidentally for another purpose, but, as the fact is incautiously stated and insisted on, the Rev. J. Gallie might ask himself why Christ declined to condemn two of the worst evils that have afflicted mankind. Was it from cowardice, or from a Jesuitical policy of concealment, or from sheer ignorance?

WE regret to see that Mr. Barker, the Liberal candidate for Maidstone, is trying to catch the Temperance vote by promises of which every Liberal should feel ashamed. According to the *Daily News*, "Mr. Barker thought clubs should be closed on

Sundays as well as public-houses." For our part, we fail to see why public-houses, if they are to be open at all, should not be open on Sunday as well as any other day; indeed, we can see nothing in Sunday closing but a miserable concession to Sabbatarian bigotry. The Sunday closing of clubs is still worse. It is as direct an infraction of personal liberty as can be conceived. Radical as he is—at least by profession—Mr. Barker will find the Radicals against him if he ever attempts to redeem his pledges to the Midstone teetotallers. Working men will not have their clubs closed on Sunday, and Mr. Barker is egregiously deceived if he thinks it can be done.

THERE are, alas, a good many "Radicals" going about now-a-days, who are adepts at shouting the shibboleth of the moment, but are burdened with just as many principles as the American circus manager who, on being asked what were his principles, replied, "Princerpuls? I've nare a one; I'm in the show business."

THE Rev. W. F. Laidley, a Methodist minister, was indicted for the seduction of Alice Alderman, at Boone, Iowa. At the trial the girl testified that her unlawful relations with Laidley began in 1884, when she was fifteen years old, and continued until September, 1887. At the trial the other day the clergyman took advantage of the statute of limitations, and the case was dismissed. Several other charges of lewdness against the Rev. Mr. Laidley were likewise dismissed without trial.

THE Bishop of Wakefield, writing in the *Contemporary Review* on the East End of London, says "The verdict of *The Record* upon its report of the spiritual state of London, South of the Thames, is 'Christianity is not in possession.' I dare not reverse this verdict for East London." He adds, however, that it may be reversed if only "men full of the Holy Ghost and of power" will work in that quarter. It seems doubtful, however, if the Holy Ghost cares much for the East-End. He leaves that to Jahveh the Ripper.

MRS. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM sends in to the *Pall Mall Gazette* her list of the twelve greatest women. It includes the Virgin Mary and Mrs. Besant. What a queer collection!

MRS. GRAHAM doesn't say in what respect the Virgin Mary was great. She was the mother of Jesus, who is said to have been a good boy, but as he was God Almighty and couldn't go wrong if he tried, the law of heredity scarcely applies. On the other hand, if a great woman means the mother of a great man, the list will have to be extended indefinitely.

IT is possible, of course, that Mrs. Graham has some private sources of information as to the Virgin Mary. She has perhaps received a spirit message. Still, before implicitly relying on such sources, it would be well to hear what Joseph has to say.

WE beg Mrs. Graham's pardon. After all Mary was a great woman. See Luke ii., 5.

THE Rev. Hibbert Newton, vicar of St. Matthews, Southward, vigorously denounces the Oaths Bill which is on the point of becoming law. He even suggests that if we don't take oaths it will involve the Lord in flat perjury since he declares, "I have sworn that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." It seems that awful woes are in store for England for permitting God to be disregarded.

THE *Star* exposes a nice little pious fraud which is perpetrated in some parts for the benefit of the Church. It appears that the churchwardens enter into a conspiracy with the rate-collectors and get their rates printed at the public expense, on the same notice which is sent out for the authorised parochial vote. The voluntary rate is included at the end, the whole summed up, and the total put down with the accompanying intimation that it must be paid in so many days. No doubt many fall into the pious trap and contribute to the church rate under the impression that it is obligatory.

IF we may believe "Anglo-Celt," who writes in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Ireland is a perfect paradise for priests. He reckons up their sources of income from weekly contributions, Sundays and saints days, Christmas and Easter dues, offerings at funerals and baptisms, fees and offerings at "stations," income from "burial," or, as he would rather call them, "purgatory" societies, and legacies left for the saying of masses for the dead, and altogether calculates that the average parish priest makes over £1,500 a year, while his larder and cellar are often stocked gratuitously; and if a farmer, his corn is cut, his hay saved, and his turf drawn home without cost to himself. No wonder the Irish are poverty-stricken if the priests can lead them thus by the nose-ring of superstition.

"FELLOW-SINNERS," said a preacher, "if you were told that by going to the top of those stairs yonder (pointing to a rickety pair at one end of the church), you might secure your eternal salvation, I really believe hardly any of you would try it. But let any man proclaim that there were a hundred sovereigns up there for you, and I'll be bound there would be 'such a getting upstairs as you never did see.'"

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, Dec. 16, Secular Hall, Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, Manchester; at 11 a.m., "Faith, Fear, and Fraud"; at 3 p.m., "Mr. Balfour's Praise of Christianity"; at 7.30 p.m., "How God was Born."

Dec. 23, Camberwell.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. B. 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.

D. PROVAN.—Cuttings are always welcome.

C. K. LAPORTE.—Received with thanks.

W.—There is nothing surprising in your friend's detecting a resemblance to Earl Beaconsfield in our last week's sketch. Our artist meant Jehovah, but Jehovah and Beaconsfield were both Jews.

W. T. LEEKEY.—Your indignation is natural, but after all it is best to let the Christian Evidence libellers—to use Bismarck's phrase—stew in their own juice. Mr. Foote is indifferent to their slanders. (2) Those stories of distressed Freethinkers, abandoned by their co-believers and assisted by "key-ind Christians," are apocryphal as the Infidel Death-bed stories with which the parsons try to frighten doubters into their gospel-shops.

PLATT, newsagent, Aldenharn Street, St. Pancras Road, supplies the *Freethinker* and exhibits it in his shop window.

R. O. SMITH, treasurer L.S.F., desires to acknowledge 1s. from F. Fielding for the School Board Election Fund.

CASTREL.—The passage from St. Chrysostom is quoted in Gerald Massey's *Natural Genesis*, vol.

THISTLE.—Thanks for the paper. See "Acid Drops." Shall be glad to see you when you come to town.

TOM PHULERIE.—See St. John's Nightmare in our Christmas Number.

DR. VOELKEB (Magdeburg).—Received with thanks. We congratulate you upon your three acquittals from the persecuting charges of "blasphemy." You will notice a translation of the indicted article in our Christmas Number.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Brighton Times—Carrier Dove—Church Reformer—Menschentum—Secular Thought—Trathseeker—Liberator—Fair Play—Freethought—Leeds Times—Freidenker—Echo—Lucifer—Liberty—Women's Suffrage Journal.

SUGAR PLUMS.

COLONEL INGERSOLL'S criticism of *Robert Elsmere* is so important that we have reprinted it as a penny pamphlet. We shall send out a great many press copies, and our readers would do well to give a copy to any friend who has read Mrs. Ward's famous novel.

MR. FOOTE lectures to-day (Dec. 16) at Manchester. The subjects are attractive, and there are sure to be good audiences if our Manchester friends give publicity to Mr. Foote's visit. The evening lecture on "How God Was Born," is very appropriate to the season, and both Catholics and Protestants may learn something by hearing it.

OUR Christmas Number contains a large quantity of illustrations. There are over forty sketches, big and little. It forms an excellent Christmas treat for "the saints"—that is, Freethinkers; and it might be used with great advantage as a lesson book for children who are unfortunately dosed at school with Bible nonsense.

THE report of the Organisation Committee, appointed at the South Shields Conference, has been sent out to the N.S.S. Branches. Members who desire a copy of this important document should apply to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C. The Branches should discuss the report as quickly as possible at a special meeting, and their criticisms should be forwarded to the Secretary without delay. The Organisation Committee will discuss these criticisms before presenting a final report.

THE annual children's party at the London Hall of Science is being prepared for, and Mr. W. Cookney, hon. sec., 1a Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C., will be glad to receive subscriptions, which will be acknowledged in the Freethought journals. A meeting of the committee will be held in the minor hall this evening (December 16) after the lecture.

MR. H. S. SALT'S *Life of James Thomson* will be published soon after Christmas by Messrs. Reeves and Turner. The volume will be partly biographical and partly critical. It will include a few poems hitherto unpublished, a good many letters, and some interesting fresh matter relating to the poet's youth. Mr. Salt's task has been a pure labor of love, and as he brings to it exceptional qualities of sympathy and courage, as well as insight and sincerity, we trust he will win the gratitude of every admirer of one of the most striking geniuses of our century. We may at least predict that Mr. Salt's volume will be eagerly expected by many readers of this journal.

DR. A. R. WALLACE has in the press a new volume entitled *Darwinism*. It aims at establishing the theory of Natural Selection on a firmer basis, and discusses some of the later theories of Evolution. No doubt the work will be intensely interesting.

THE December *Radical* contains a brisk account of some visits to City churches by G. Standing. There is also a spirited poem by J. M. Harvey.

THE *Lady's Pictorial* of Dec 8 gives a good portrait of Mrs. Besant, and one not so good of Mrs. Ashton Dilke, the two new lady members of the London School Board.

A MODERN IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

WE think it was Goethe who remarked that out of all the dramatic literature of the world there were found less than fifty good dramatic situations. The mass of novels he also declared were merely variations of a few simple themes. Be this as it may, anyone who will turn to Dr. E. C. Brewer's *Dictionary of Miracles* will notice that the relators of supernatural wonders have shown remarkable poverty of invention. A large number of miraculous stories are constructed upon a few simple themes, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, and turning water into wine. Almost all the miracles ascribed to Jesus are variations upon older legends. Moses brought water from the rock and so Jesus turns water into wine, as the sun-god does continually. Elijah restores the widow's son at Zarephath, so Jesus is said to have raised the widow's son at Nain. Elisha feeds a hundred with twenty loaves and Jesus outdoes him by feeding five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes. Elijah ascends into heaven and Jesus levitates after him. Nearly all the miracles ascribed to the Catholic saints are but repetitions of similar stories.

Although virgin-born saviors were common in ancient mythologies, such incidents in modern times are extremely rare considering how often children are born whose male parentage cannot be clearly assigned. Occasionally, however, we hear hints of a repetition of the miracle. In 1814 thousands expected that Joanna Southcott, then at the ripe age of sixty-five, would outdo the Virgin Mary and be immaculately delivered of a son from the Most High. The most elaborate preparations were made for the coming Shiloh, which turned out to be the dropsy. It is only a year or two since a volume was published to prove that "the woman clothed with the sun" spoken of in Revelation, whose portrait is to be seen in our Christmas Number, was here among us.

A recent case before the Masters in Lunacy and a special jury shows another curious instance of the survival of an old superstition. According to the petition of his sons, Major Samuel Richard John Owen showed strong symptoms of insanity, in having fitted up at his house at Ventnor, called Mount Zion, a certain chamber described as "the holy of holies," in which a married woman—to wit, Mrs. Morey—gave birth to a female child which the said Major Owen believed was miraculously and immaculately conceived. We are further told that he expressed great disappointment at the sex of the child, as he thought it would have represented the second person in the Trinity. Eight days prior to the birth it was supposed that a prince was born in the upper chamber, and that it was taken up to heaven by the Major to his deceased wife. The Major thought he was in constant communication with the angels, that Mrs. Frank Morey was an angel, and had told his son that on receiving a mandate to that effect, he would sacrifice him in the same way as Abraham did Isaac.

Though Major Owen's faith appeared to emulate that of Abraham it did not reach to the sublime height of that of Joseph. For, be it noticed, the lady in question was the wife of another person, Mr. Morey, who was perfectly satisfied with the assurance of the doctor and the nurse that there was nothing whatever abnormal about the birth, and who was equally assured that the child was his own. The result of the trial, after a good deal of evidence, was that while twelve of the jury thought Major Owen was of sound mind and capable of managing his affairs, eleven considered otherwise. We confess to some sympathy with the majority, for we have a strong aversion to the incarceration of any man in a lunatic asylum, whatever his fads may be, so long as he is capable of managing his own affairs without danger to others, and this it appears Major Owen is capable of doing. But we cannot help wondering

if it did not occur to the jury that if to believe in modern miracles is a proof of lunacy it may cast doubts on the sanity of those who believe in ancient ones. If Major Owen is insane for believing in the immaculate conception of Mrs. Morey, what shall be said of the whole Christian world which believes or pretends to believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ?

J. M. WHEELER.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

V.—CURING DISEASES.

LEPROSY was one of the diseases which Christ occasionally cured. As in the Old Testament God the Father revealed many methods for detecting leprosy but none for curing it, so God the Son healed a few isolated cases in flatterers or personal applicants but never revealed the far more important means of practically exterminating the disease by cleanliness and proper diet. Man had to find this out for himself. In Europe the disease scarcely exists, whilst in British India there are said to be over 200,000 lepers at the present day. God ignores these lepers generation after generation, although he was so merciful that he healed some dozen lepers whom he happened to come across personally while masquerading as a young carpenter in a small district of a province of the Turkish Empire. He gave his disciples power to heal leprosy, but he gives no such power to Father Damien, who has so self-sacrificingly devoted his life to lepers, and has taken the disease himself, as he knew he would, while living on the island from which neither he nor they would ever be allowed to return. The self-seeking apostles who sought thrones and would destroy towns by fire, and who in time of danger forsook Jesus and fled, were more worthy of such power than a man who deliberately sacrifices himself to alleviate the wretched fate to which God has doomed so many unfortunate beings.

Did Jesus help only a few lepers because he was so merciful in a few isolated cases and so merciless or indifferent in the enormous majority of instances? Or did he restore lepers to health as a sign and proof of his wonderful mission? If this was the reason why he picked out a few lepers for an exceptional display of his beneficent power, why did he order one of these favored lepers to "tell no man," and "strictly charge" another to "say nothing to any man"? Why was such an absurd command given, seeing that it was so useless and so difficult to observe? Was it given in express anticipation of the natural result that one at least of the lepers began to publish it abroad the more? Why, too, if Jesus really meant to keep the matter secret—as if this were possible—did he tell these lepers to show themselves to "the priest" and offer to "them" the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony? The effect of the public report in one case, when the man "blazed it abroad," was that "Jesus could no more openly enter the city" (Mark i., 45). Why not? Because he would be mobbed by lepers and cripples? If so, there was just the opportunity for which a benevolent being would be longing, the opportunity to heal them all by touching them or working on their faith. But Jesus was always strangely erratic either in power or in will when miracles were concerned.

Once in his life Christ healed ten lepers simultaneously. If the number had not been ten it would have been twelve or seven or three or forty—for there is always a run on these numbers in fairy tales and gospel stories. As he passed through a Samaritan village he was "met" by ten men "which stood afar off"—which is certainly the best method of meeting when objectionable people are concerned. He told them to show themselves to the priest; and as they went they were cleansed, though what evidence there is for this the account does not say. It only mentions that one "stranger" or heretic Samaritan turned back to thank Jesus, who noticed the ingratitude of the others and assured the heretic that his faith had made him whole.

Jesus healed many of diseases according to the Gospel legends. He rebuked a great fever which had been playing tricks with Peter's mother-in-law, and the intelligent fever, cut to the heart by this reprimand from its Lord and Master, immediately left the lady, so that she at once arose and ministered unto Jesus and the apostles. It is Luke (iv., 39), the physician, who records this scientific method

of treating fevers by rebuking them till they are ashamed of themselves.

Jesus healed a centurion's servant of palsy while still at a distance, but the two accounts differ. It was a mistake to have had four separate gospels. Luke says that the elders of the Jews were sent by the centurion and they came to Jesus when he entered Capernaum, and he "went with them" (vii., 3-6). But Matthew says that it was the centurion himself who came to Jesus when he entered Capernaum (viii., 5), and Jesus did not go with the centurion or anybody else, but merely cured the servant there and then by word of mouth.

Jesus involuntarily healed a woman who had "suffered many things of many physicians." She came near enough in the throng to touch the hem of his garment and immediately the bleeding from which she suffered was stopped. Jesus asked who had touched him, and in answer to the expostulations of Peter and others, he said "Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." It is Luke, the physician (viii., 46), whose inspiration and knowledge lead him to record this doctrine of medical power going forth from a man like electricity from a battery, or the shock from an electric eel. Jesus was a sort of supernatural torpedo or walking galvanic battery, from whom a beneficent kind of electric shock flowed to any person fortunate enough to touch the hem of his garment—his garment evidently being made of some material which, unlike wool or silk or fur, was a good conductor of the subtler forces of the universe. So well known and expected was this kind of emanation that people "began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole" (Mark vi., 56).

Where is the sense in healing such patients as happen to touch one's coat tails? Such an indiscriminate method of healing good and bad alike, on no principle but that of luck, is unworthy of a divine being.

Matthew also tells us that people brought to Jesus "all that were diseased," and that "as many as touched" the hem of his garment "were made perfectly whole" (Matt. xiv., 35, 36). Yet at other times Jesus was less particular, for he "healed all that were sick" (Matt. viii., 16; ix., 35), and when his fame went throughout all Syria, and the people "brought unto him all sick people," he healed them (Matt. iv., 24) without apparently rejecting any because they could not get near enough to touch him. The strange thing is that there seem to have been just as many sick and afflicted people for Christ and the apostles to experiment upon after he had healed them all, as there were before. Another strange thing is that at one place the omnipotent Jesus "could there do no mighty work" save healing a few sick people (Mark vi., 5). Why was omnipotence thus limited?

The universality of Christ's healing power is put forward by the evangelists. He healed "every sickness and every disease." But one of the evangelists credits the pool of Bethesda with exactly the same power. Whoever first stepped in was cured of "whatsoever disease he had" (John v., 4). Devils and workers of iniquity are also credited with the power of working miracles and showing forth signs and wonders to strike the popular imagination (Rev. xvi., 14; Matt. vii. 22, 23). Numerous Christian sects still claim the power of working miracles promised by Christ. Is it not likely that *all* these various claims are equally unfounded?

W. P. BALL.

THERE was a pretty rumpus at the last monthly meeting of the Free Presbytery of Fordown. The Rev. J. Robertson, of Stonehaven, of whose preaching we give a sample in another column, was hauled over the coals for his singular method of advertising his sermons. Some of his titles were as follows:—"God has to Put Off his Garment," "A Damned Fool," "A Rotten Egg," "The Funeral of an Ass," and "Sodom, Capernaum, and Stonehaven." It was also complained that Mr. Robertson had characterised the Holy Trinity as "the blessed firm." He had also called Jacob "a sneak," and spoken disrespectfully of St. Paul. The upshot of the business, so far as we can judge from the jargon of Presbyteries, was the temporary suspension of Mr. Robertson, who will probably spend his leisure in getting up tit-bits for his next free fling.

FURTHER DISPATCHES FROM OUR EXTRAORDINARY
AERIAL COMMISSIONER.

"IANTHE," December.

BEFORE leaving "Egeria," I heard this eighteen-months-old Jesus dispute with some Doctors of Divinity in their Temple, and utterly refute them—proving to demonstration that two and one were not three, and that one and two were one. The learned Doctors had despair and suicide plainly expressed in their faces, and no doubt by this time are now being sat upon by the coroner. It was a sight to see the proud defiant toddle of this infantile Christ—his head aloft—his eye in a fine frenzy rolling, not deigning to notice mundane things, but passing disdainfully the city youth at peptop, and the city maiden resting from her skipping to take a coy look at his plump but proud form.

I steered W.N.W., arriving at "Ianthe" safely, and was surprised on landing to see an old and solitary man standing pensively on the sea shore—his face bearing traces of great suffering and fatigue—but on accosting him I was pleased to find he was one of the sons of God, who, with some of his brothers, was cast for the performance of the second coming of Jesus Christ on planets where the incarnation, etc., had been gone through. His sad look was occasioned by the wearing labor of constant travel and the disappointment he had met with on "Ianthe," where on arrival he was met by the natives who seemed rather barbaric, but had, he thought, some dim idea of the Eucharist—at once giving this ancient son of God a pressing invitation. The aged Christ told me how pleased he felt, and at once accepted the invite of these uncouth men—wondering, however, where the bread and wine were, and not noticing any gastronomic preparations. At length he asked, "Where is the supper, my friends?" The reply from these children of nature was: "You are to be the supper." Here the grey-headed Jesus wept—remarking that some of the more hungry punched him in tender parts to test his solidity, mentioning their partiality for "long pig," as they flippantly styled baked evangelist.

"So," said the old man, "I only escaped by satisfying their hunger by five small loaves and fishes, at the same time turning a tubful of water into alcohol, and there," pointing inland, "they'll lay, all this day, in a fearful state of whiskey, Oh!"

When questioned about his enjoyment of life, he replied, "It is not a happy one, especially when mistakes occur."

"Surely," said I, "Jehovah's above that sort of thing."

"Oh, no," answered he, "only last year an immaculate conception and incarnation occurred, and when the birth took place, holy Moses! if the infant deity wasn't a girl."

"What a fiasco," replied I.

"You're right—the wise men of the East had to trot back, the heavenly choir had their programme upset, and in fact there was the very devil to pay."

I told him how sorry I was to hear of these blunders, for if they continued the occupations of the numerous Christs would sink into desuetude.

"Many thanks," replied this antiquated Jesus, "but my time is limited, so farewell. I must again become a voritable 'Wandering Jew.'"

With that he left, and I prepared to do the same, being in hopes of getting into a proper current for reaching the earth again.

BRIMSTONE AND SYRUP GOSPEL.

THE following occurs in a printed sermon just issued by the Rev. John Robertson, of Stonehaven:—"God is very far from being what the new pulpit craze of 'universal fatherhood' would make out, a more smilingly soft, feebly benevolent, never-mindingly charitable 'kind old man.'" This impotent flexible flabbiness of a conception out upon! The menu in the church feast of fastidious fashionableness is the 'French pastry' of 'sweetness and light' *ad libitum*, and the babyish sugar-candy of 'modern thought' is now held to every preacher's lips to suck and be satisfied with. 'Give us, O preacher, your gently-trickling "soothing syrup!" We like it and love it, and do remember our delicate nerves.' 'Soothing syrup?' No! ten thousand times no! In God's prescription I see written 'brimstone' as well as 'syrup,' and woe be to the pulpit that plays false in the making up. Without the brimstone the daintiest scented phial of rose-water theology is labelled by the Holy Spirit 'rank poison.' To take it internally is to order your soul's coffin! Beware of the concoction. God is NOT 'that popular india-rubber affair man can spit on and live.' No! He is the God of judgment, he is the God of wrath, he is the God of damnation, and all this because he is the God of eternal salvation. 'Fire!' 'Fire!' the midnight cry in the streets of time. 'Fire! Fire!' because fire there is. It is God's word, not mine, 'unquenchable fire.' Oh, sinner, the old-fashioned devil is not yet dead! The old-fashioned hell is not yet burned out. Christless soul, God has an eternal hell, and you can stand up on the reeling earth and fling back the lightning flash of that last "great day!"—*Glasgow Mail*.

A CLERICAL writer gives the following instance among others of the fact that the Prayer-book is not properly understood by the great mass of the people:—"My dear Mrs. —," said a Yorkshire vicar to an obstinate parishioner's wife, "your husband is really killing himself with those quack pills. It's a case of suicide—a downright sin." "Yes, sir," replied the tearful partner, "I know it, and many's the time I've prayed against it in the Church service." "In the Church service?" said the vicar, a little doubtfully; "you mean when we pray for the sick?" "Oh no, sir," was the reply, "I mean when we always say in the Litany—'isn't it?'—'From all false doctoring, good Lord deliver us.'"

RIVALRY TO J. C.

EDINBURGH has been lately visited by some formidable rivals to Jesus in his conjuring tricks, and they have successfully performed before large audiences far more wonderful "miracles" than their messianic prototype was able to do in the presence of the ignorant and illiterate fishermen of Galilee. Monsieur Jacques has finished a thirty-days' fast, during which he was carefully watched by a committee of medical men, who testify that during all that time nothing passed his lips but water and a few pinches of a secret compound discovered by himself. True, Christ's record exceeds this by ten days, but when we consider that the "Father of Lies" (who has not yet thought fit to give us his version of the story) was the only person present to see that J. C. went through the performance properly, and that miraculous tales have peculiarly elastic properties and improve with age, we are driven to conclude that he of the immaculate conception was probably inferior in fasting power to the Frenchman. If the angels who afterwards came and ministered to the Nazarene were hovering around during the temptation, we should be justified in refusing to credit the account until we get a certificate from them that they did not supply him with refreshments until the end of the forty days.

The next aspirant to divine honors is Mr. Hartley from America (better known by his Indian name, "Sequah"), who holds forth in the Waverley Market every evening to audiences numbering sometimes over 10,000, before whom he will extract teeth painlessly at the rate of five or six a minute and cure the lame, the halt and the withered in from five to twenty minutes, by treating them with his famous "Indian Oil" and "Prairie Flower." If any sky-pilot could discover Christ's recipe for his ancient spittle-and-mud plaster to cure blindness, possibly all the modern imitations of that renowned but dirty medicine would be looked on as "small pertaters"; but so long as Christ sits at "the right hand of God" without sending a copy of the prescription, he must be content in this competition to be considered an impostor, while the award of merit is voted to Sequah.

The next candidate is Hermann the mesmerist, who mightily amuses the good folks of Leith by compelling those who are subject to his occult influence to eat tallow candles in the belief that they are sticks of toffy, a trick that Jesus could not have done to save his life, and more extraordinary by far than his poor attempts at feeding a multitude on ordinary loaves and fishes. Then Baldwin lately exposed the Ascension dodge which so dumbfounded the deluded dunderheads of Palestine, who thought that only a God could perform it.

Now here is a splendid chance for some clever and unscrupulous rascal to make a mint of money and earn immortal fame by representing that he is Christ come the second time, and claiming to prove his identity by performing the above wonders. Thousands would gladly follow him, and would even, at his command, sell all they have and give to the poor (*i.e.*, to him), for Carlyle's statement that the people of this country are "mostly fools" still holds good.

PROFANE JOKES.

In theological belief the oyster is a Hardshell Baptist, but he is not bigoted. He can frequently be found at dinners and church festivals held by other denominations.

A young Archdeacon married an elderly wife, but his friends were anxious not to show that they noticed her age. They asked the happy pair out to dinner. "When they arrive," they said to the footman, "you must announce the Archdeacon as the Venerable." "Right, Madame," said the footman; "leave that to me." It was only after he had shouted out, "Archdeacon Smith and the Venerable Mrs. Smith," that they fully realised what it was to have a clever servant.

THE PROFANE COMP.—Most persons have heard of the edition of the Bible which drops the letter "c" at 1 Cor. xv., 51, and reads, "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall be hanged." Another makes Christ tell the parable of the *vinegar*, while more than one edition has left out the *not* in the Seventh Commandment. A provincial printer recently made a well-known firm advertise "God Liver Oil." A Boston paper reports Joe Cook as asking, "Was Paul a dude?" Joe probably said "dupe." Some years ago the Rev. H. W. Crosskey, of Birmingham, gave a geological lecture at Edinburgh on "The Method of Creation." The usually accurate *Scotsman* called it "The Method of Cremation." A pious weekly announced the delivery of a sermon on "The Relation of Ministers to their Pharisees." It should doubtless have been "parishes." Another religious paper set up that "the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his horse" instead of "his house." The Bishop of Carlisle, in a lecture at Exeter Hall, warned his hearers against "that special invention of the Devil—a double lie in the shape of half a truth." It was reported as "a double eye in the shape of half a tooth." The phrase, however, was printed in inverted commas, and no doubt many of the readers took it as a quotation exhibiting the bishop's extensive reading in diabolology, and fraught with recondite and mysterious meaning. In our own office the comps. have a penchant for "keeping up" the Devil with "caps." One of the most curious instances of the feats of the clicker occurred in an early edition of *Men of the Time*, when some lines belonging to the notice of Robert Owen were transferred to his next alphabetical neighbor, "Oxford, Bishop of." One learned that the Right Rev. Samuel Wilberforce was "a complete sceptic as regards religious revelation, but nevertheless a believer in spiritualism." No wonder the Bible verse, as it was once printed, said, "Put not thy trust in printers." Even bookbinders are sometimes profane. We have seen an old book *The Vanity of the Creature*, 1684—too thin to be lettered across the back with the last word in full, so the bookbinder made it "Vanity of the Creator."

Price Threepence.

THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER

OF

THE "FREETHINKER," 1888.

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ILLUSTRATIONS.—St. John's Menagerie (11 sketches). The Star in the East (6 sketches). Christmas at Nazareth, A.D. 1. J. C.'s Temptation. The Unfortunate Prince (8 sketches). Moses the Stone-mason. Catch Me if You Can. The Story of Man (6 sketches). Bible Jokes (4 sketches). Jehovah's Armory. A Flying God. His Tender Mercies.

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