

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. 279.



A MISCHIEVOUS GOD.

And he shall spread forth his hands.....and the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.—ISAIAH XXV., 12.

ORIGINAL SIN.

THERE was a very interesting ceremony at Dorking on Monday evening. Mrs. Cubitt, the wife of a member of Parliament, presented to Minnie Matilda Mirrell, aged fifteen, an illuminated address and £5, awarded to her by the Society for the Protection of Life from Fire. A great many noisy occurrences were reported in the papers on Tuesday morning, but few gave so much as a line to this event. Our "public educators," as they pompously and foolishly call themselves, were too much occupied in chronicling burglaries, shooting affrays, common police cases, and the huge farce at the Law Courts, to find an opportunity of recording an act of heroism and its public recognition. Minnie Mirrell, it appears, though only fifteen, is a real heroine. She was a servant in the house of Mr. Inglis, in High Street, which a short time ago was burnt out. When a fire occurs we hardly expect young girls to act as rescuers of human life. Their youth, their inexperience, and their physical weakness, might well excuse them from such a dreadful task. But Minnie Mirrell was not made of common stuff. Instead of thinking of herself she thought only of others. Upstairs, quietly sleeping in their beds, were her master's three little children. She could not bear the thought of their poor throats being choked by the smoke and their tender flesh being roasted by the flames. She rushed through the death-fog and rescued one child; then rushing up again she took the others, one under each arm. Overpowered by the smoke and heat, she dropped one of them on the stairs; but she groped her way back for the child, recovered it, and finally lowered both from the front window to the people in the street.

Such a brave deed, by such a young heroine, deserved to

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be widely known. Surely it would fill a quarter or half a column in the newspapers far more usefully than sensational *canards* about Jack the Ripper, or even the gratuitous details of the Muswell Hill and Finsbury Park outrages. Were the press to give us a little more news of the Minnie Mirrells, and a little less news of the Bill Sikeses, all of us would soon be gratified by the alteration, and feel benefited by exchanging garbage for wholesome food.

For the moment, however, we want to look at this incident in the light of theology. Minnie Mirrell is a humble but a true heroine, and every man with a grain of chivalry in his nature would sooner doff his hat to her than to the proudest queen. Still, according to the fine old Calvinist creed, which Mr. Spurgeon preaches with such unction, she is a daughter of Eve, and no amount of unselfishness and self-sacrifice will save her from the effects of Jehovah's curse on Eve's posterity unless she has correct views on theology, is visited by the grace of God, and included among the elect. Indeed, her noblest virtue is nothing but a splendid rag, if she is not a child of God in the theological sense of the words, and will only make the fire hotter for her when she reaches Hell.

Minnie Mirrell, say all the Churches, is full of original sin, and she must pay the penalty of a fault committed thousands of years before she was born. Unless she gets saved, according to one or another of the patent plans of redemption, nothing will avert her eternal doom. She risked her life to save others from the fire, but God does not mind that, and he will put *her* in the fire if she does not swallow a proper amount of religious medicine.

Perhaps Minnie Mirrell has never been baptised. If so, heroism will not save her from the flames of Hell. She must be sprinkled or dipped, or else damned. And the united prayers of the three children she rescued will not release her from an hour's torture, or procure a drop of water to cool her parching tongue.

Being a daughter of Eve, conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and full of original sin from the soles of her feet to the crown of her head, Minnie Mirrell can do no good of herself. No action is holy, no deed is sublime, unless inspired by the love of God. The love of fellow men, women, and children, is a mere carnal affection. It may procure you the respect and admiration of mankind, but it will be less than dust in the balance at the Day of Judgment.

If Minnie Mirrell is a Protestant, any Catholic priest will tell her she will be damned. If she is a Dissenter, any Church of England clergyman is bound to tell her the same thing. If she belongs to any particular Nonconformist sect, all the other sects will declare that her case is hopeless. Were she a Freethinker, every sect in Christendom would tell her that she might spend her whole life in saving others, and yet be walking straight to Hell all the time.

Cardinal Newman, in one of his Catholic sermons, has a burst of splendid eloquence, but awful immorality, on this subject. He depicts a man in Hell, having just arrived there. His friends and acquaintances on earth are saying what a clever man, what an honest citizen, what a good father! but all the while the man was damned. Another Catholic dignitary, a few years ago, said that every child ever born into the world, except the Blessed Virgin and Jesus Christ, was hated by God and deserved hell from the very moment of its birth.

Could a more ghastly, disgusting, and degrading doctrine be conceived? Religion is always at war with the natural instincts of humanity. It libels God, if he exists, and outrages the mind and heart of man. Let it be swept away, let the earth be purged of its evil presence, and let truth and goodness be recognised as holier than all the creeds.

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIANITY AND PERSECUTION.

WHEN Christians are told of religious wars and the hateful strife and persecution which have disgraced the whole course of their religion, they usually reply that these effects are not to be taken for genuine Christianity, though they have, unfortunately, been too often mixed up with and substituted for it. We will not pause to inquire how it comes that an omnipotent God has not preserved his one divine religion from the corruptions with which, according to Christians, it has been disfigured. We say that, in our opinion, strife and persecution are of the very essence of Christianity. They are the natural, legitimate and inevitable outcome of its doctrines when really believed. The historic effects actually observed in its career could not well be otherwise. "Do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles?" Christianity, so far as it is distinguishable from the other religions of the world, is a dogmatic system claiming to be revealed from God. It claims the exclusive possession of divine truth. It holds that eternal salvation is to be had only within its pale, and that life after death is so all-important that everything else fades into insignificance beside it. It teaches that belief in Christianity is essential to salvation, and that theological error necessarily involves guilt. Hence, to a sincere believer, the arm of the civil authority had it in its power to save men from perdition, and, as George Eliot says, whenever teachers of Christianity have been at the elbow of the civil arm, no matter whether they were Catholic or Protestant, persecution was the result. "Compel them to come in," was a rule that seemed sanctioned by mercy, and the horrible sufferings it led men to inflict seemed small to minds accustomed to contemplate, as a perpetual source of motive, the eternal unmitigated miseries of a hell that was the inevitable destination of a majority of mankind. To those who really believe in eternal hell-fire it is simply childish to lay stress upon any earthly suffering whatever in comparison. The man who tortures another to death to save his or others' souls from hell is, religiously speaking, a benefactor of his species.

The book which Christians hold as the very word of God is full of records of the most sanguinary massacres, said to have been enjoined by the Deity. The duty of suppressing idolatry by force is more strongly inculcated in the Bible than any article of the moral code. Nor is it alone in the Old Testament that persecutors find authority and warrant for the faggot, thumbscrew, dungeon, stake and such-like gentle persuaders which have been their strongest arguments against unbelief in the past, and which would still be used to-day, but for the spirit of scepticism that pervades the modern world. They also find sanction in the revised revelation of Christianity, which, by its doctrine of hell, adds a horror to religion which was unknown to Judaism.

It is not only in the Old Testament that the spirit of intolerance is found. Christ gives as instruction to his disciples, "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matt. x., 14, 15). "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered—cast into a fire and burned" (John xv., 6). "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi., 6). His beloved disciple John declares, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John i., 10).

Listen, too, to the following passages from Paul—"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. . . . what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. vi., 14, 15.) "If any teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . he is proud, knowing nothing. . . . of corrupt minds, from such withdraw thyself" (1 Tim. ii., 3, 5). "As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. i., 9) "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" Gal. v., 12.) "Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. i., 20.) Who can fail to see in such passages as these that the spirit which exhibited itself in the Inquisition lay in germ at the very beginning of Christianity only awaiting

power and opportunity to spring into action? The truth is that persecutors like St. Dominic and Torquemada have been among the sincerest believers. The most determined bigots have been the best Christians.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

MR. GLADSTONE has been breaking the Sabbath during his stay at Naples. He took a trip to Pompeii on Sunday, January 6, on board a steamer which was provided by the municipality. At least this is asserted in a letter to the *Scotsman* from the Tory pen of Mr. H. C. Richards, the gentleman who *didn't* turn Mr. Bradlaugh out of Northampton. We cannot say, however, that we share Mr. Richards' disgust. A visit to Pompeii is well worth making, and the better the day the better the deed. Besides, the air of Naples is enough to make an irreligious bohemian of the most pious Churchmen, and everybody knows the Grand Old Man is on the spree.

GLADSTONE is not going to Rome after all. He finds the Naples air so invigorating that he means to stick to it. We presume, therefore, that he has given up all notion of settling the Papal question. Has the right honorable gentleman learnt, with Carlyle, that reforming the Papacy is like tinkering a rusty old kettle?

CANON SCOTT ROBERTSON shows that a little over £1,250,000 is subscribed every year in this country for foreign missions, that is for missionaries. Nonconformists contribute £100,000 more than Churchmen. Would that the whole sum were spent in bettering the physical and mental condition of the English people, instead of being wasted in converting souls that do not exist to a religion which is not worth believing.

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* is responsible for the statement that a young novice of the Order of Poor Clares, being on the brink of consumption, used to mix ashes with her food, and that Cardinal Manning expressed his approval of the practice!!

"LUST hard by hate," says Milton. Priests have always been fond of torturing women by means of poignant mortifications when unable or unwilling to debauch them.

SOME time ago Dr. Parker had a collection, and he announced with deep pathos that widows and orphans would not be expected to contribute. A few Sundays afterwards there was another collection. "This time," said the preacher, "widows and orphans will not be exempt; for no battle ever made so many widows and orphans as the announcement issued on a previous Sunday."

DR. PARKER is playing very low. He is sermonising working-men in their dinner hour. They are invited to bring their dinners to a sbauty in connection with his Temple, and if they like they can smoke their nose-warmers afterwards. In the reck of victuals and tobacco Dr. Parker talks on—well, on his own business. You may be sure of that, or he wouldn't open his mouth in *such* circumstances. His first subject, according to announcement, is "Mistakes about Preachers." Very likely the London working-men *are* mistaken about London preachers; they don't know half the cunning of those gentry; but most of those who drop in to hear Parker will probably be under no mistake *about him*, at least after his first performance.

DR. PARKER permitted questions, and had plenty of them; mostly in relation to the bishops and the Established Church. If he is in earnest in declaring that preachers do not mind opposition, he should permit questions in the City Temple on Sunday and urge his fellow ministers to go and do likewise.

THE Liverpool Corporation, in completing its new water scheme, had to take down a church and build a substitute elsewhere; and the water could not be turned on, according to law, until the new church was consecrated. There was a serious delay, owing to the senility of the Bishop of St. Asaph, and thus the interests of a big population were sacrificed to an idle ecclesiastical ceremony.

WHAT Freethinkers have been saying for generations is now being echoed by advanced Unitarians. The Rev. C. Hargrove, of Leeds, preaching on the "Truth of Bible History," defends Colenso, calls Jacob "a liar, a scamp, and a scoundrel," and declares that Malachi had no business to say that God loved Jacob. Mr. Hargrove is getting on. His "half-way-house" is rather more than half way on the road to "infidelity."

THE Rev. J. P. Gray, Wesleyan minister of Upton Park, has some very curious notions of evidence. In a letter to one of our readers, who sent him a copy of *Infidel Death-Beds*, he says "I beg to say I very much prefer to accept the statements of Christian eye-witnesses to the death of Paine and Voltaire." We can quite understand that he "very much prefers" what suits his own game, but we challenge him to produce the testimony of

any Christian who saw Voltaire die, or of any Christian who saw Paine on his death-bed and did not affirm that he held his Free-thought opinions to the last. Here is a clear challenge, and if the reverend gentleman has a grain of pluck he will accept it.

MR. GRAY actually relies on a pamphlet written by Reuben May, a city missionary whose financial exploits have been for years denounced in *Truth*, and in language that any honest man would resent by an action for libel. Reuben May stands sponsor for Mr. Gray's "Christian eye-witnesses," but who on earth will stand sponsor for Reuben May?

MR. FOOTE gives first-hand authorities for every statement in *Infidel Death-Beds*. Every scholar would recognise them as such in an instant. Probably Mr. Gray is not a scholar, so he relies on the authority of shady city missionaries who live a century or so after the events they swear to.

Now, reader, just think of this seriously for a minute. If Mr. Gray, who is perhaps an average minister, can believe what he wishes to believe on *such evidence*, and in spite of *such evidence* on the other side—how easy is it to account for the spread of Christianity and the manufacture of the Christian Scriptures nearly two thousand years ago, when the Mr. Grays were a good or a bad deal more illogical or unscrupulous than they are now!

THE School Board of Great Alne, Worcestershire, in advertising for a teacher, says, "Churchman preferred." Dissenters of all kinds help to pay the taxes but the teacher must be selected from one body only.

THE Roman Catholics are very irate over the secularisation of the French hospitals, which is now almost complete. They allege that the sisters of mercy were cheaper, and also more refined than paid nurses. This is denied by the Republicans, who are very satisfied. They allege there is much better discipline now, since paid attendants who neglect their duty can be discharged. In former days Protestants and Freethinkers who had the misfortune to be in the hospital, rarely fared as well as devout Catholics unless they consented to be proselytised and converted.

THE financial secretary of the Salvation Army places the yearly expenditure of that body as between £700,000 and £800,000. Give but the National Secular Society a tithe of that sum, and it will guarantee to rouse as great a sensation without any aid from "Blood and Fire."

MR. H. BOOTH, of the Salvation Army, was fined ten shillings by the magistrates of St. Albans for disturbing the town with a concertina. He appealed, and the judges have sent the case back to the magistrates for them to state as a matter of fact whether they found that a concertina was "a noisy instrument," so as to come within the meaning of the bye-laws.

THE *London Diocesan Magazine* says that every year fresh church provision has to be made for about 50,000 souls. Why then, in the name of common sense, do they not sell off the empty and useless churches in the City before they appeal to the philanthropic public for money, which might better be devoted to hospitals and other charities?

How wondrous are the works of God. Some parts of the world he afflicts with drought, while others he lays under water. China is now suffering from floods which leave thousands starving. In 1877-8, it is computed that from ten to twenty millions of people died from famine, and it is feared that unless measures of relief are taken quickly the calamity will almost be as great. Evidently the Chinese are not among God's "elect."

THE good Baptist Christians of Cradley, near Stourbridge, are dividing into two contending parties. Matters reached a crisis on Sunday when a determined struggle took place at the entrance to the body of the chapel, one party trying to enter and the other attempting to prevent them. Police officers vainly tried to get the contending parties to disperse quietly, but the chapel was not closed until one party had got the other out. The disturbance continued for three-quarters of an hour, and the scene, says the report, "was a most painful one."

THE Rev. E. Y. Hardy has written a book on *The Five Talents of the Woman*. It is a volume of the good old sort, and ladies are told how to act in that station of life to which nearly every parson would call them. Some of the reverend gentleman's observations are perfect gems. Here is a sample. "Shakespeare's mother," he says, "could not have written *Hamlet*, but she—perhaps she alone—could and did produce Shakespeare. The same may be said of Goethe's mother." Yes, and if Dogbery had been a little better educated, and stuck in a pulpit, he might have talked just like the Rev. E. Y. Hardy.

ADMIRAL MAXSE's attack on the English Comtists is refreshingly outspoken. He charges them with sailing under false colors, with using the word "religion" dishonestly, and with concealing the most outrageous of Comte's ideas, although they

venerate those very ideas in their esoteric circles. Will Mr. Harrison reply, or remain silent and let the storm blow over?

THE vicar of Ilkeston laments that his parish has become quite democratic. He sighs for the good old times, when people respected "their betters" and listened to those who were wiser than themselves—to wit, the parson and the squire. For our part, we congratulate Ilkeston, though we could almost drop a tear over its fossil vicar. During the "good old times" Ilkeston was a little hot-bed of religion and conservatism, like the village of Beeston, not very far off. Mr. Robert Porter, the Beeston Atheist, was looked upon as a kind of sorcerer, and when he introduced gas into the village the inhabitants rose in arms against him. They flocked to his house, but he had the sense to be absent; and as they could not kill him, they burnt him in effigy. Those were the "good old times" which the vicar of Ilkeston wishes to revive. Fortunately he will not succeed. The world will go round, and the parsons are obliged to go with it.

SPURGEON takes "carriage exercise" daily. He is very much better off than his Savior, for on the only occasion when J. C. took a ride he had to borrow a donkey.

THERE is a Jewish Young Men's Club in Glasgow, and some of its members are bent on emancipating the Jewish race. Well, we are quite willing to join them in the enterprise, if we can agree as to methods. We propose, first of all, that the Jews should give up the nonsense of the Bible and the rubbish of the Talmud.

ONE Jewish young man at Glasgow reminded his fellow citizens—we beg pardon, fellow chosen people, A. I. Jahveh's own—that "there are four millions of their race in Russia, whose every step is dogged by that curse, that abuse of Christianity, religious hatred and persecution." Abuse of Christianity! Oh no; it is the proper use of Christianity, and nothing but fear would make a Jew speak so mincingly of a faith which has shed the blood of his race like water.

"MR. BRYCE," the *Echo* says, "has done Ararat, with a toil far more arduous than Noah's, for the navigator was comfortably deposited on one of its peaks. The Professor had to climb." True, but Noah had to get down, and he was six hundred years old.

ACCORDING to the newspapers, Robert Edmund Wilson, a Leicester member of the Salvation Army, has made a mistake. He married a second wife before the first had gone to glory, and his forgetfulness has brought him acquainted with the magistrates.

THE jury in the case of *Riding v. Hawkins*, which occupied the attention of the Probate Court for several days last week, decided that the Rev. C. B. Hawkins obtained a codicil to an aged widow's will by fraud. The deceased lady was seventy-five when this Folkstone curate made her acquaintance. He was only twenty-four. He got invited to her house for a fortnight and stayed permanently, writing to the old lady's daughter that she could only visit her mother if she came in the spirit of true love. The codicil which has been invalidated would have given him about £6000.

ALL this enterprising curate's "filial" courtship of old widow Jones is wasted, and instead of the nice little pile he expected from her will the Court awarded him—nothing. For this miserable result he wasted days and nights, and lavished his "filial" caresses on a woman old enough to be his great grandmother. Worse still, as the jury found that *his* codicil to the widow's will was procured by fraud, curate Hawkins may find himself kept for a while by the State, without the privilege of choosing his own lodgings.

THERE are Jews everywhere—even in Limerick. A row occurred in the synagogue of that classic town a few days ago, and—O sacrilege!—the Rabbi was knocked down with a book. He knows now what a heavy volume the Bible is.

THE *Alta California* makes this argument: "Two Chicago clergymen have proved to their own satisfaction that dancing is wrong, because men never dance with men. Yes, and we suppose, by parity of reasoning, that marriage is wrong because men never marry each other."

"It is not safe," warningly to his brethren, says Dr. J. O. Murray in the *Homiletic Review*, "for the minister to quote from the pulpit what his scientific professors taught him ten or twenty years ago in the class room. Some of the so-called scientific statements made by divines in a late general assembly were, as viewed by scientific men, so much hopeless blundering. They only made men of science laugh. But they were uttered with a sublime unconsciousness of their egregious folly." Just so. The average Methodist minister knows as much about the conclusions of modern science as a horse knows about astronomy.

THE newspapers have been inventing again. It is not true that the Carthusian monks are going to sell the plant, good will, and recipes of their wine business for £320,000. They prefer to keep the manufacture of their delicious drink, and its tremendous profits, in their own hands.

THE Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, in opening and blessing a religious house in that city for the reception of students for the Order of the Carmelite Fathers, boasted of the illegality of such an institution, and gloried in the fact that five years' banishment was the penalty of his act. How these Christians blow hot and cold! When we were imprisoned under the infamous old Blasphemy Laws, the Christians said, "Well, you should respect the law and obey it till it is altered."

"THOSE cursed Board Schools," exasperate the Rev. C. J. Naters, assistant organising secretary of the English Church Union. At a lecture in the Town Hall, Newark, referring to Mr. Albert Gray's proposal for the formation of Church Boards, Mr. Naters said: "These would have been something like School Boards, and they knew what had been done by them. *Let them look how the working men had been wronged by these cursed Board Schools.* He could not help saying so, because they had one in the next parish to his where they would not allow the Lord's Prayer to be said, and very few of the children in the school could say the Commandments." The rev. gentleman naturally objects to the idea of parishioners having any control over parish churches, lest Church Boards produce similar lamentable results to those of these cursed Board Schools.

THE wealthy Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge want other people to put their hands into their pockets to endow a new Bishopric at Lucknow, India. We hope they will have no luck.

THE Rev. Duffy Gordon has again been arrested for swindling and has been remanded without bail.

THE controversy in the *Shields Daily Gazette* on "Genesis v. Evolution," has been continued from the orthodox side. Mr. E. Reeves Palmer adopts the view of the late Rev. F. D. Maurice, that the first story of creation "is that of the development of the creation as an actual fact, the second is that of its development as the expression of the thought of God." If so, the thought of God is vastly different from "actual fact." In the expression of the thought of God, *i.e.*, Gen. ii., 7, man was created first of all living creatures, in actual fact, *i.e.*, Gen. i., 26, he was created last. According to Gen. i. 27, man was created, male and female; according to Gen. ii. he was made by himself, and the woman, as a kind of afterthought, out of one of his ribs.

THE Rev. J. Morris argues that "God created great whales" should rather be "long creatures." He says the Hebrew word *tannin* is never applied to whales. This probably because the Jews knew nothing about whales. But *tannin* is applied to the animal that swallowed Jonah, and that, according to Jesus (Matt. xii., 40) was a whale.

THE *Church Times* pleads for "An English Pantheon," on the ground that "Westminster Abbey is a Christian church." It nevertheless holds the ashes of many heretics, such as Grote the Atheist, Darwin the Agnostic, Lyell, Dickens, Ephriam Chambers, Anstey, beside numerous poets and actors, such as Congreve, Booth, Betterton, Garrick and others whose Christianity was of a more or less questionable character.

AN American correspondent of the *Academy* says the Yankees are hunting up every scrap about George Washington, who is the great object of their national worship, and adds that "the whole thing is a notable illustration of the process of evolving a god." This gentleman says he has before him "a passionate love-letter written by Washington to a married lady just after his own engagement to the widow Curtis." But of course it won't do to say anything about this in America. Washington is the god, and anything disrespectful, however true, is blasphemy.

JUST in the same way Christianity has deified its Jesus. He is the author of all good, and all the evil happens in spite of him. To question his perfection is vulgarity. His biography is judiciously purged of all the incidents of daily life which reveal the man, and every incident that is related is surrounded with a haze of sentimentalism.

THE *Church Times* says of the approaching trial of the Bishop of Lincoln for Ritualism, "whatever the issue of the trial, an opprobrium will for ever cling to the promoters for having attempted to revive the strife which for long years has disgraced the annals of the Low Church party." On the other hand, the *English Churchman* declares the High Church party to be in a state of mutiny.

WE understand that the Bishop of Lincoln has entered a "caveat" against the prosecution on the ground of some legal flaw, and that there may yet be considerable delay in bringing the matter to an issue. An appeal will not be to the House of Lords but to the Queen and Privy Council.

At a recent diocesan conference at Watford, a clergyman remarked that the Devil had built a Nonconformist chapel. If this is so the Dissenters have got hold of a capable architect at last.

A WRITER in *Lucifer* makes the extraordinary remark that "to those who will use both eyes, the Devil will appear no longer as the son of God, but as his wife." This is the sort of "blasphemy" for which many mystics have been burnt alive. The writer, however, probably has no shadow of profanity in his meaning. He simply intends to say that evil and good are inextricably mixed and work together, but he cannot quite get rid of the old abstractions, God and Devil.

MADAME BLAVATSKY remarks in *Lucifer* that "conjunction" was the ancient name for prayer. She might have said with equal truth that prayer is a survival of magic. It is a *spell* used to obtain something from a supernatural source. Repeating the name of a God or an invocation to gods or spirits is a common magical formula with all savage religionists. We may see evidence in the Bible where the words of the Lord are commanded to be bound as an amulet "for a sign upon thine hand," and as a frontlet between the eyes (Deut vi., 8). Jesus promised his disciples to cast out devils by the use of his name, and declares that whatever they asked in his name should be done. Talismans, charms, spells, and prayers are all forms arising from the belief in magic.

THE *Baptist Handbook* for 1888 owns to considerably fewer teachers in the Sunday-schools since the year 1885.

THE Archbishop of New York—that is, the Pope's underling who boasts that title—has issued a circular declaring that absolution will in future be denied to persons attending the anti-poverty meetings of the former Father McGlynn, on the ground that those meetings revile the Holy See and disregard its admonitions. We wonder how many people will be frightened by this harmless Roman thunder.

WE suppose Canon Larkin has healed all the sick in Ireland, and that the Life Assurance Companies are singing "Glory Hallelujah." At any rate the miraculous Canon is now larkin' in Glasgow, where crowds of invalids are waiting to hear him say "Take up thy bed and walk." By-and-bye, we suppose, he will come South again, and we trust he will operate on a wooden-legged crossing-sweeper of our acquaintances. The poor fellow does fairly well with his broom, but he would swap it for a fresh leg. Here is a chance for Larkin. Let him set this patient on his two legs and immortalise himself.

THE priests in Ireland do not seem to interpret the Papal rescript as hindering their presiding over suppressed branches of the Land League. We notice in *United Ireland* that the majority of these meetings are held on Sunday and are presided over by the local priests.

SOME clerics at Croydon have been reviving an imitation of the miracle plays. The subject is "The Conversion of England," and it is said great attention has been paid to reproducing the costumes of the time of St. Augustine. The clergy may play at the conversion of England in the sixth century, they will find a greater difficulty in carrying it out in the nineteenth.

WE have been told by Christians that God is all merciful, and answers the prayers of his servants. We would like to know whether the present drought, which is devastating the colonies, is to be taken as some mark of divine displeasure, if so, the cause of the divine displeasure? Whether it would be of any use to pray to God to ask him for the reasons of his conduct, and what is to be done to soften his wrath? We would like to know what God is doing at present? "Is he talking, or is he pursuing, or is he on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked?" (1 Kings, chap. xviii., v. 27). Until we get reliable information on the above point, we must think the reports of God's consideration for human misery are all moonshine. We shall anxiously await further information from God! When God has unbosomed himself, we will publish an extraordinary for the benefit of our subscribers and the public generally. We hold out very little prospects of God's awakening, as he has been sleeping so long, and for so many thousand years. He must be a sort of "Rip Van Winkle."—*Liberator*.

SENATOR BLAIR is trying to introduce the Scotch "Sawbath" in the United States. Sensible Scotchmen would gladly make him a present of the institution.

SOME American Jews want to make their Sabbath coincide with the Christian Sunday. They wish to serve God and Mammon, and as God only requires one day they don't see why he should be particular as to which one he gets.

ROBERT BARKER, a married man living at Baker Street, Kirkstall Road, Leeds, has been taken from the Salvation Army Barracks and put into a strait jacket. He got too strong a dose of religion.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, January 27, Secular Hall, New Church Road, Camberwell, at 7.30, "Our Father Which Art in Heaven."

February 3, London Hall of Science; 10, London Hall of Science; 17, Manchester; 21, Hackney Workmen's Club; 24, Plymouth.

March 3, Milton Hall; 10, Newcastle; 17, Claremont Hall; 24, Camberwell.

April 14, Hall of Science; 21, Hall of Science; 28, Camberwell.

May 11, Milton Hall; 19, Milton Hall; 26, 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. 7½d. Australia, China, and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d.; Three Months, 2s. 8½d.

T. TURNER.—Under consideration.

A. R. ATKEY.—We congratulate you all on Mr. Anderson's splendid victory. Freethinkers should no longer "lie low." They should throw themselves into the fight everywhere and decline to be overawed by the bigots.

FOX.—We believe none of the actions have been heard yet. The principal one, we hear, is coming on in February.

G. NAEWIGER writes, "Your reference brought sixteen Freethinkers to my house to form a Branch of the N.S.S., and others who could not come say they mean to join." Our correspondent also says he has won £3 for a prize essay on Thrift, which he would never have competed for if we had not encouraged his efforts in composition.

D. WOFFENDEN.—Your querist forgets, or does not know, that there is such a thing as mixture of gases. He will find the explanation in any manual. But what has this to do with *Bible Contradictions*?

T. A. DAVIS.—We regret to hear that Mr. Hyatt disappointed the North Lambeth Branch. Certainly it is no excuse to say he was not reminded of the engagement. Every lecturer should book his engagements.

S. RANDELL.—Thanks for the cutting. Please send future orders for literature to Mr. Forder as above.

A. GUEST.—You can obtain the *Freethinker* in Glasgow of Ferguson, Ingram Street, a few doors from the Candleriggs. He will also furnish you with information as to lectures.

J. KEAST.—We trust, with you, that the Bristol Freethinkers will turn out to welcome Mr. Forder to-day (Jan. 27). It is high time the Branch did something in that city.

INCOG. sends Mr. Forder an order for thirteen copies of the *Freethinker*, to be posted to addresses which he furnishes. Some other reader may be inclined to follow this example.

T. LONGLEY.—According to Acts i. 7, you will see that Jesus told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem. Certainly this was *before* the Ascension. How on earth could it be after? See verses 9—12.

Not having the article by us when you wrote, not thinking your letter a catch, and writing hastily in the train, we fell into the blunder of admitting a non-existent mistake. Now we have the article before us we find that the only misprint is the word *Mark* for *Luke* in the first clause of the last sentence in the fifth paragraph.

J. T. HOLMES.—Something ought to be done in the Fulham district. Cannot some one whose eye catches this call a meeting of Freethinkers for the purpose of forming a Branch of the N.S.S.? We regret that you are, or feel, too young for the task yourself.

INVICTA.—Always pleased to receive your cuttings.

W. D. R.—Every competent scholar allows the Josephus passage to be a forgery.

A. DEFTY.—We cannot answer your question. Unless people are declared Freethinkers we have no right to make any public statement about their beliefs.

A LETTER from Mr. J. H. Ellis is unavoidably excluded through press of matter, and will appear next week.

PAPERS RECEIVED—Open Court—Leeds Daily News—Shields Gazette—Secular Thought—Manchester Evening News—Liberator—Menschentum—Ironclad Age—Truthseeker—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Newcastle Evening Chronicle—Bulletin des Sommaires—Freidenker—Den nye Tid—Freethought—Bournemouth Guardian.

SUGAR PLUMS.

A PORTRAIT of the Bruno statue will appear in our next number. It will be highly finished and well worth preserving. Those who wish to have extra copies, for preservation or distribution, should order in advance or they may be disappointed. The portrait will be accompanied by a sketch of Bruno's life, work and character, from the pen of Mr. Foote.

Mr. R. FORDER, Secretary of the National Secular Society, sends us the following list of subscriptions he has received for the Swedish Prisoners' Fund:—Mrs. Besant, 5s.; A. Thomas, 2s. 6d.; G. W. Foote, 5s.; R. O. Smith, 2s.; R. Forder, 2s. 6d.; E. Truelove, £1; J. M. Robertson, 2s. 6d.; J. Hubball, 6d.; E. Bater, 1s.; A. Cooper, 2s. 6d.; J. Magny, 2s.; S. Standing, 2s.; W. Reynolds, 5s.; C. Herbert, 2s.; R. McAllan, 2s.; C. Bradlaugh, 5s.; J. Anderson, 1s.; A. Burrows, 2s. 6d.; B. M. and Mrs. Smith, 10s.; H. Dughan, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Incog, 1s. 6d.; Mrs. Incog, 6d.; Miss Incog, 6d.; J. H. Ellis, 5s.; J. Hurst,

5s.; J. Pattison, 2s. 6d.; H. Wood, 6d.; C. Hunter, 5s.; J. Fitzgerald, 2s.; G. Scarrott, 2s. 6d.; J. Dowing, 10s.; three Nottingham friends, 1s.; "Anonymous" (Glasgow), £2. G. R. (per E. Truelove), £1; R. Gibbon, 1s. 6d. More money will be needed, and we trust this list will "encourage the others."

THE following subscriptions have reached us direct:—Fox, 1s.; A. Rushton, 10s.

CAPTAIN OTTO THOMSON, the Secretary of the Swedish Society, sends us a warm letter of thanks. He hopes the Swedish Freethinkers will show themselves worthy of the sympathy of the English Freethinkers. We are sure they will.

MR. SYMES, writing on the Law of Blasphemy, speaks hopefully of the condition of things in Australia. He says: "The law of blasphemy is dead with us, and no one dare revive it. The march of progress, the development of science, the enlightened spirit of modern times, the free and unfettered right of public discussion, the keen analytical tendency of the day, the acceptance only of doctrines capable of standing the scrutiny and search of investigation, have killed and swept away such anomalies, disgraces and scandals as blasphemy laws." Experience, however, has shown that no law is dead beyond hope of resurrection until it is repealed. If, as we suspect, the English statute of William III. and English common law may be cited in Australia, the sooner it is swept away the better.

At least three pronounced Freethinkers are elected on the London County Council—Mr. Æneas Smith in Chelsea, and Messrs. J. Tims and J. Burns in Battersea.

MR. J. R. ANDERSON, the Treasurer of the Nottingham Branch of the National Secular Society, has been elected one of the two County Councillors for the Beeston, Chilwell, and Attenborough division. There was a severe fight and five candidates in the field. A terrible hue and cry was raised against the Atheist. Bills flew about right and left, warning the voters not to elect an "infidel" to represent "good Christian people." One pious lady, who had recently been fined for "purifying" gin, was especially vehement against the wicked Freethinker. But Mr. Anderson is a great favorite with the working classes, many of whom labored day and night for his success, completely counteracting the efforts of the Primrose Dames. There was tremendous excitement at the declaration of the poll, and Mr. Anderson narrowly escaped being reduced to fragments by his friends. He is now a member of the County Council, and will rub shoulders with the Dukes of Portland and St. Albans, Earl Manvers and Lord Belper. Probably their lordships will shrink from contact with the Radical Atheist, but if they have any manhood in them they will soon learn to respect him; for Mr. Anderson is thoroughly capable, full of energy, and as honest as the day.

WE are glad to hear that the Nottingham Branch worked hard for Mr. Anderson. Those who could not get off in the day went over to Beeston in the evening.

HERE are the figures of the election:—G. Wilkinson (Liberal) 634, J. R. Anderson (Radical and Atheist) 588, G. Fellows (Tory Squire) 501, H. A. Pearson (Liberal Unionist) 404, J. Pollard (ditto) 187.

MR. S. M. PEACOCK, the Secular candidate, is re-elected on the South Shields School Board, this time at the head of the poll. Mr. Peacock polled 5,189 votes; Mr. Lawson, who is next on the list, polling 4,654; so that the Secular candidate was well at the top.

MR. PEACOCK'S success makes the *Shields Daily Gazette* cry out against "the injustice of the cumulative vote," though it does not suggest a better system for electing a number of members at one poll. Had the Churchmen and Dissenters carried all the seats the *Gazette* would have had no fault to find with the cumulative vote.

NOT satisfied with wailing, the *Gazette* declares that if Mr. Peacock had depended on the number of his individual supporters he would not have been elected. He had 270 plumpers, and split votes from 392 other persons; that is 662 persons voted for him, and this number of "individual voters" would only place him fourteenth on the list. He would therefore, argues the *Gazette*, have been No. 1 on the list of rejected candidates, as there are only thirteen members on the Board. But this argument is fallacious. Figures are excellent, but, as Carlyle remarks, you need a head to work them with. The number of persons who give a part of their votes to a particular candidate, under the cumulative system, is no test of the number who would vote for him if they had to vote for him and no one else. Being a very distinctive candidate, Mr. Peacock might have retained most of his 662 votes, but the other candidates could not have retained theirs, for there were not enough voters in the borough to make up the number. The cards, in short, would have to be reshuffled, and the next deal would be very different to all the rest, though Mr. Peacock would probably have kept much the same hand. We advise the *Gazette* to reconsider the matter and try

to see the fallacy in the phrase "individual voters." If it cannot do so it has no head for figures.

MR. GEORGE ALWARD, a staunch Freethinker of Grimsby, was nearly returned as County Councillor for the Clew Division of Lincolnshire. Mr. Meadows, J.P., only beat him by seven votes. The *Grimsby Express* describes Mr. Alward as "one of the most intelligent men in the fishing trade, and a most able debater," and adds that Mr. Alward's time is coming.

ONE of the three working-men members of the new School Board for Newcastle is a member of the National Secular Society. The three ran together, and their joint election expenses came to £5 4s.

NEXT Wednesday, January 30th, Mr. B. Hyatt gives a series of popular recitations, both humorous and sentimental, at the Institute, 61 New Church Road, Camberwell. The programme is a good one, and as the proceeds go towards the fund raised by the Camberwell Branch, N. S. S., for giving a dinner to the aged poor, we trust there will be a large attendance.

THE Fifteenth Annual Children's Party will take place at the Hall of Science on Wednesday, Jan. 30th. Mr. Cookney, 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, acknowledges the following further subscriptions:—Jas. Chapman, 2s. 6d.; — Cornish, 1s.; — Ganaway, 6d. Per Mrs. Billot: W. Trevelyan, 1s.; Mrs. Sleigh, 1s. Per Mrs. Burton: C. Williams, 1s. Per Mrs. Mears: G. Fowler, 5s.; C. Herbert, 2s. 6d.; — Noble, 1s.; — Mumford, 6d. Per Mrs. Green: T. F. Green, 2d.; Jim, 4d.; Mrs. T. Smith, 1s.; — Hazell, 2d.; Mrs. Richardson, 6d.; — Bullnoore, 6d.; — Johnson, 6d. Per Mrs. Forder: — Sewell, 6d.; — Allen, 3d.; — Paulton, 3d.; — Andrews, 6d.; — Charley, 2d.; J. Allen, 6d.; Mrs. T. Smith, 1s.; — Jones, 3d. Per Mrs. Cookney: Mrs. Cook, 6d.; Mr. Cook, 6d.; Mrs. Roberts, 6d.; G. B., 2s.; — Hitzman, 1s.; Mrs. Huggins, 1s.; J. W. R., 6d.; A. Smith, 2s. 6d.; — Swift, 1s.; — Hunt, 6d.

MR. TRUELOVE, the veteran Freethought bookseller and publisher, who has himself suffered more than once for the right of free publication, has purchased the remaining stock of W. J. Linton's *Life of James Watson*, that sturdy upholder of a free press.

JAMES WATSON, though of the same modest, unpretending character as his successor, Mr. Truelove, was one of the real heroes of the Freethought movement. In 1821, when Carlile was imprisoned for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason*, and blasphemy prosecutions showered thick and fast, he was one of the volunteers who came from Leeds to serve in Carlile's shop. In 1823 he too was arrested for selling Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, and was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. He took part in all the agitations for an unstamped press, and in '33 again suffered six months' imprisonment for selling Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian*, and in the following year suffered another term for the same offence. As a publisher he issued the tabooed works of Paine, Volney, d'Holbach, Frances Wright and Owen. He was actively engaged in the Chartist movement, and was one who assisted in preparing the document called the People's Charter. Mr. Linton's work is an important contribution to the history of the Freethought movement, the liberty of the press, and the political enfranchisement of the people.

THE Marlowe Memorial is to be erected at Canterbury, where the Atheist poet was born in 1564. Lord Coleridge, the chairman of the Committee, declines to consider at this time of day whether Marlowe's hostility to Christianity should prevent Englishmen from recognising his genius.

MR. DANIEL GREENLEAF THOMPSON, the new President of the New York Nineteenth Century Club, is about to publish an inquiry into the fundamental principles of social ethics, and a discussion of the trend of social evolution. The title of the work is: "Social Progress," to be issued shortly by Longmans, Green and Co. Mr. Thompson declares his belief that social progress can be attained only through the perfection of social liberty.

THE January number of *de Daggraad*, which for thirty-four years has ably upheld the cause of Freethought in Holland, gives a kindly word of greeting to the *Freethinker*, and makes several extracts from our columns for the benefit of its readers.

THE *Truthseeker* gives a picture entitled "Superstition the same in all places and ages." In the centre it represents the recent murder of a woman by a negress in Kansas on the ground that the woman was a witch. On one side, five witches are being hung by Cotton Mather at Salem in 1692, and on the other a mob Bible believers are drowning a wizard at Hedingham, Essex, in of 1863. Above is the Holy Bible opened at Exodus xxii., 18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." In the editorial columns there is an accompanying article on "Superstition in Crime."

THE *Truthseeker* extracts a number of "Foreign Items from the London *Freethinker*."

CREMATION is progressing in Glasgow. The Cremation Society there has over a hundred members already, and it is likely to grow rapidly, for the Scotch are a frugal people, and Mr. James Chalmers, the Glasgow architect, reckons that cremation can be carried out nicely at a cost of two shillings per head—we beg pardon, two shillings per corpse.

THE *Boston Investigator* opens the new year well. It gives a full report of an eloquent historical lecture on Romanism by L. K. Washburn, who shows up the Mother Church of Christianity in its true colors. In a country where Romanism is so strong and dangerous as in the United States it is difficult to over-rate the value of such lectures.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

XI.—GENERAL REMARKS.

CHRIST'S miracles were the signs and proofs of the mission by which God the Son was to convince and save the world. They were for all time and for all men. Yet they bear all the faults which are seen in the miracles of the "false religions." They are just what would be expected and invented and believed in the age in which they originated. They adorn Christ's career with their meretricious tinsel of magical exploits, just as similar miracles are made to accompany Buddha and Mohammed and the leaders and saints and prophets of religions in general. They display no marked superiority—except in the eyes of devoted believers—and their characteristics are fatal to any special claim put forward on their behalf.

The first thing that strikes one in examining the miracles of Christ as a whole is their want of originality. The signs of a great intellect are lacking. Everything is copied and commonplace. Isaiah poetically adopts the common idea of healing the sick and making the lame to walk and the blind to see. Jesus follows out this idea just as innumerable religious charlatans have done before and since. Elisha raised a widow's son from the dead at Zarephath; Jesus raised a widow's son at Nain. Elisha fed 100 men with 20 loaves; Moses fed multitudes with quails or with manna; Jesus fed multitudes with loaves and fishes. Elisha cured Naaman of his leprosy; Jesus cured a few beggars of their leprosy. A storm on the Great Sea was stilled by throwing Jonah overboard; the storm on a little lake was stilled by Jesus rebuking it. The only miracles which cannot be paralleled in the Old Testament are insignificant or ridiculous. Turning water into wine, and catching multitudes of fishes, are neither particularly original nor specially edifying as moral lessons. Casting out devils, walking on the sea, spitting in blind men's eyes, blasting a fig-tree, and making a fish bring money in its mouth, are tolerably original so far as the Old Testament is concerned, though not at all original so far as the legends and superstitions of the time and district were concerned; and they only serve to show the relative fall in dignity and good sense displayed by the gospels when they departed from the Old Testament models.

Christ's miracles were petty in character, few in number, and limited in scope. There was nothing far-reaching or world-wide about them. They were more circumscribed even than those of the Old Testament. Moses fed millions with quails and manna for forty years; Jesus twice gave a single meal to a few thousands. Moses delivered a nation of slaves and overwhelmed their oppressors in the Red Sea; Jesus caused the drowning of two thousand pigs. Elisha procured water for armies perishing of thirst; Jesus turned some jars of water into wine.

Jesus fed five thousand; why did he not raise five thousand from the grave? One miracle should be as easy as the other to Omnipotence. Yet we read that at times Jesus could do no mighty work except benefitting a few sick people. Why did Christ leave no permanent cure for cholera, or typhus fever, or small-pox? Why did he not discover the printing press, or the steam-engine, or the leading truths of sociology or economics?

Why are his miracles so inferior to those of Moses and Elisha? Moses brought water from the rock, he caused the earth to open and swallow his enemies, he turned rivers into blood, and smote the Egyptians with terrible plagues. Jesus mostly worked "miracles of mercy," it is true, instead of miracles of destructiveness, but they were on a most insignificant scale. Moses delivered a nation by making sea and earth and heaven itself destroy the over-

whelming power of their enemies: Jesus healed a few sick folk, and *promised* a salvation in another world which he could not or would not secure in this. If it be said that Jesus raised two people from the dead, it must equally be noticed that two people were raised from the dead by Elisha's word and by his body. Elijah consumed a hundred men with fire: Christ withered a fig-tree. Elisha struck a whole army with blindness and subsequently gave them their sight again. What are Christ's miracles of healing two or three blind people by spitting or daubing filth in their eyes, in comparison with the wholesale way in which Elisha took away sight or restored it at pleasure? Suppose Jesus had struck all the Jews with blindness for a day or a week, would not this have convinced them of the genuineness of his claims? Suppose he did not allow them their sight except by a daily prayer in his name. Suppose he made this a perpetual and world-wide miracle, so that men lost their sight every day if they omitted the prayer and acknowledgment. Would not this convert a world and prove religion to be a reality? Why are the miracles so small, so temporary, so obscure? Simply because they are not the signs of omnipotence and wisdom, but are the product of human imagination and fond credulity. The mighty works of Moses were credible in the distant past. The continued subjection of the Jews to the Romans and the lowly career and wretched fate of Jesus would not allow the genesis of similar myths concerning him. His miracles had to be such as were imaginable and credible among small-minded and down-trodden people and among actual slaves. His mighty works of vengeance had to be postponed to future years, or to the inexhaustible resources of eternity.

His miracles had to descend to the level of the age which created them. Hence they were often associated with lying and fraud. Jesus had to accept popular delusions as facts, and contrive that events should agree with these monstrous superstitions and confirm them. Thus he cured blindness, and deafness, and dumbness, and epilepsy, and lunacy by pretending to cast out the devils who caused these afflictions. He treated fits as if they were demons, talked to them, and allowed them to reply and to defy him for a while, and his apostles continually. Finally he allowed the fits, as a compromise, to enter a herd of swine and caused them to stampede into the sea.

With all these faults, a still more serious one remains behind. The miracles are *unverified*. There is no proof, no evidence worth calling by the name, that they ever occurred. There is absolutely less evidence for them than there is for the miracles of the Romish Church and the exploits of modern faith-healers and theosophists and spiritualists. The vaunted records of these alleged proofs of Christianity are mere statements uttered by no one knows whom, and compiled by unknown authors of similar standing. Even according to the gospel accounts, they converted far fewer people than the subsequent reports of them did: which indicates that the miracles never occurred at all or that they were greatly inferior to the exaggerated reports of them, which subsequently obtained credence. In proportion as we turn to earlier and non-trustworthy documents by known writers, the references to Christ's miracles diminish in particularity and in force. Paul and James and Peter seem to know little or nothing of a definite nature respecting the miracles of Christ. Although their Epistles were written before the Gospels—or rather, perhaps, *because* they were written before the Gospels—these apostles made but vague and scanty reference to such important matters. It is only the subsequent unknown and irresponsible compilers of the Gospel myths and traditions who afterwards were able to enlighten the ignorance of mankind with an abundant knowledge of miracles, which were apparently unknown to those who must have witnessed them if they occurred.

I think we may conclude that the miracles of Christ never happened. The stories bear the marks of human invention and of human folly and imperfection, rather than the signs of the supreme wisdom and dignity and beneficence and power of an almighty being. They are fast becoming discredited, and are often felt to be a hindrance to Christianity rather than a help. Their incredibility, their occasional absurdity, their irrelevance to true morality and the higher forms of "true" religion, are leading to an abandonment of them as proofs or arguments for Christianity. They require apology and explanation. They are a weakness rather than a support. Many Christians would

willingly throw them overboard along with the Bible hell. But they cannot be got rid of. They remain to testify to the association of religion with belief in magical powers. They often show the degradation and childishness of the primitive Christianity of Christ, and at their best they appeal to doubtful sentiments of wonder and astonishment, they foster false hopes and false ideals, and they corrupt the sources of morality and wisdom and happiness, by subjugating the higher faculties of heart and soul and mind to the control of intrinsically mean ideas and expectations which are no whit superior to those of the believers in the charms of Obi and the magic power of fetishes.

W. P. BALL.

LARKIN(G) IN SCOTLAND.

"There's some are fou o' love divine,
There's some are fou o' brandy,
An' mony jobs that day begin,
May end in——"

"The Holy Fair."—BURNS.

(*vide the Freethinker*, January 6, 1889).

Now in Glasgow he is healin'
Quite a crowd of patients squealin':
When the saintly Larkin' "touches,"—
Cripples throw awa' their crutches,
Kneel t' embrace the canny father.

Many suffering from rheumatics
(Caught in damp and dirty attics)
Found no cure in Islay Whiskey;—
"Only a grip,"—and then they're frisky—
Dance a rattlin' Highland strathspey.

All who're racked by pains internal,
Or possessed with imps infernal,
Find relief—'tis said—instantly,
Bless the healer, and then canter
Off to drink his health in shebeens.

It is strange that God in heaven
To that priest *no* power has given,
To eradicate three evils
Which torment the Scotch like devils:
"Tippling, itch, and houghmagandie."

CHAS. KROLL LAPORTE.

N.B.—The Sunday papers * report that Father Larkin is at present performing miracles at the convent Dalbeith, Glasgow.

REVIEW.

The Last Idler and Other Poems.—By John Bedford Leno, author of *Drury Lane Lyrics*, etc. London, Reeves and Turner, 196 Strand, 1889. Mr. Leno, who has deserved reputation as a labor poet, has in the poem which gives title to the book before us kept to his usual and noble theme, that of labor. He traces in Spenserian stanzas the birth of Labor, and its triumphs over the difficulties which have surrounded man's path as he has won his way upwards from savagery, and then with prophetic eye sings of the conversion of "The Last Idler." Among the minor poems, "The World is Moving" is of a thoroughly secular spirit, and in "The Agnostic's Creed" Mr. Leno expresses satisfaction with life as it is without coveting worlds unknown. On sale by Mr. Forder.

PROFANE JOKES.

Rev. Mr. Wrangler: "My boy, I'm sorry to see you flying your kite on the Sabbath day." The Boy: "Why, it's made of the *Christian Weekly*, an' got a tail of tracts!"

Minister: "And do you like to go to church with your papa and mama, Bobby?" Bobby (inclined to be non-committal): "Well, I guess I like it as well as pa does."

Elderly Member of Church (to young man lingering on outside): "Are you seeking the Lord, my young friend?" Young Man (bashfully): "No, sir, I'm seeking Miss Polly Jones, but I can wait until meeting lets out."

"Ah! that wis a sermon," said an old woman, as she walked slowly down the graveyard, smacking her lips and rolling her eyes in ecstasy. "Yes, it was a good sermon, aunt," said her nephew, "but did you understand it?" "Understand it," said the old lady, holding up her hands with astonishment at the question: "wud I hae the presumption, dae ye think?"

In one of Charles Kean's pictures in *Punch*, some years ago, there was a Scotch butler who had been sent by his English master to hear the service in Westminster Abbey. He was asked "how he liked it?" and replied, "Well, well, sir, it was just beautiful; but eh, mon, yons' an awfu' way o' spending the Sawbath." In fact, the more lovely the music and singing the more scandalised was the Presbyterian hearer.

A little girl, subject to fainting fits, and well versed in all the restoratives resorted to on such occasions, was once present at a christening in church. She watched the ceremony with commendable gravity; but, just as the minister was in the act of sprinkling the infant's brow with the baptismal water, Jessie suddenly disturbed the sanctity of the proceedings by bawling out, excitedly, to the consternation of all around, "Mither, mither, is the baby going to faint?"

* *The Dispatch*, and others.

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