

ENLARGED TO TWELVE PAGES.

The Freethinker

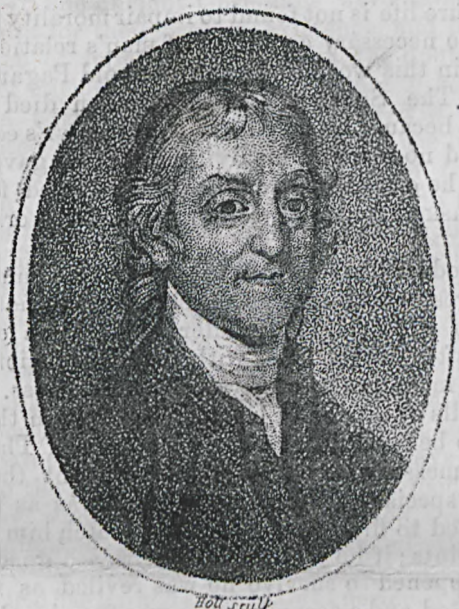
Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY was born at Fieldhead, near Leeds, on March 13, 1733. Brought up very religiously, he took a deep interest in theological subjects, and learned Chaldee and Syriac, and a smattering of Arabic, as well as Latin and Greek and several modern languages. He became sceptical as to the fall and eternal torment after reading Locke, and finally gravitated to Unitarianism, where he remained until his death. While preaching at Needham Market, Suffolk, he compiled a multitude of Scripture texts against the Atonement, and portions of his manuscript were published by Dr. Lardner. After marrying, he turned his attention to science, and, after meeting Franklin, he published a History of Electric Discovery. This procured him an introduction to the Royal Society and the degree of Doctor of Laws from the Edinburgh University. For some years after 1767 he was minister of Mill-hill Chapel, Leeds, where he carried on his researches in air that finally led to the discovery of oxygen gas, which marks an epoch in chemical history. Becoming librarian to the Earl of Lansdowne, a merely nominal post with a good salary, he was free to pursue his studies: and after the publication of several works on Education, Oratory and Criticism, he completed his *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, in which the materiality of the soul was maintained with great force and ingenuity. This aroused the animosity of "sound divines," and the cry of "Atheist" was vociferated. He was obliged to part from the Earl and repair to Birmingham, where he published many other works which were regarded as "infidel" productions. In 1791 his house was wrecked by a Church and State mob, his apparatus and manuscripts being all destroyed. Leaving

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Birmingham, where his life was no longer safe, he went to London, and thence to America, where he received a cordial welcome. He died on February 6, 1804, surrounded by his family. Priestley's theological writings are now of little utility, but his defence of Philosophical Necessity is still valuable, and his scientific discoveries entitle him to great distinction. His character was simple and benevolent; he had a love of truth and free enquiry; and he kept alive, in his own fashion, the traditions of mental liberty at no small cost to his comfort and reputation.

"PALL MALL" PIETY.

GOOD-FRIDAY was a glorious day. Nature did not sympathise with her murdered God, but clothed herself in robes of rejoicing. Her smile was a benediction, and her Spring breath the finest incense. Such splendid weather stirred the pious sap in our contemporary, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and prompted one of those gushing articles, full of sentimentalism and bad logic, for which it is famous. After a sweet exordium on weather in general, it goes on to praise the Thames above Richmond, and, having completely lost its head in a passion of "poetical" description, it informs us that "the river shone *resplendent* in all the *splendor* of sunlight and all the glory of life." Though the sentence is mixed, we understand the resplendent splendor or the splendid resplendence, but what is the glory of life? Why, a high-sounding phrase for our dearly beloved Cockneys, who disported themselves in yachts and boats, or lunched and made love under the trees. "Who," asks our contemporary, "can estimate the gain to overstrained brain and jaded nerves from such a day?" Who, indeed? And where is the arithmetic for the calculation? But, on the other hand, who shall estimate the Devil's gain from such a carnal way of spending Good Friday? And who shall estimate the logic of Christian scribes who gush in this manner over such a commemoration of the Crucifixion? According to the Gospels, there was darkness over all the earth at the Passion; although, by the way, it escaped the notice of everybody but the evangelists. But things have changed since then, and Christians who profess to believe in the Crucifixion celebrate Good Friday with picnics, and consider themselves defrauded if the sun does not illuminate their festivities.

The Northumberland Street preacher goes on to deal with the influence of sunshine on religion, and talks as much nonsense, and makes as many mistakes, as we ever remember seeing in so small a compass. The preacher's haziness is manifest in the following sentence:—"On the whole, we incline to the belief that sunshine, like the rest of the good gifts of God, tends to make for progress." What cautious piety, and what pious caution! God's beneficence is a Northumberland Street dogma; yet the preacher does not assert that sunshine makes for progress, it

only "tends" in that direction. Nor does he quite believe this, he only "inclines" to the belief; and even then he puts in the saving reservation of "on the whole."

"Despair," says the preacher, "is the child of the fog." Nonsense, sir, nonsense! Statistics show that more suicides occur in July than in November, and more in sunny France than in cloudy England. Such rash generalisations only show the effect of Christian sentimentalism on decent brains.

Next, we are told that sunshine is necessary to religion, and that it is difficult to believe in God's goodness in dull weather. Christianity, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism were "all born in lands where top-coats and umbrellas are not necessities of every day." Yet in the next sentence it is remarked that "Pessimism is out of court on such a day as yesterday." What a preposterous jumble! Out of the three religions cited only one is optimistic, and that is Mohammedanism. Buddhism is sheer pessimism, regarding existence as a curse, and deliverance from it the supreme blessing. Christianity also is pessimistic with regard to this life. The vanity of earthly things is its constant refrain. All its beatitudes are for the next world, where Optimism will flourish in a narrow Heaven, while Pessimism will be demonstrated in a roomy Hell.

"Pessimism," says the preacher, "is in its essence Atheism." On the contrary, it has nothing to do with Atheism. Whether life is a blessing or a curse, or a tolerable or intolerable mixture of both, is a question which is quite separate from all speculations as to the origin or government of the Universe. Some religionists are Optimists, and some are Pessimists, and some are neither; and precisely the same may be said of unbelievers. James Thomson was a Pessimist, George Eliot was a Meliorist, and George Meredith is as lusty an Optimist, though on different grounds, as Robert Browning himself.

It is a signal illustration of the truth that religion at bottom consists in looking for something, that our contemporary winds up with the anti-climax of "Let us hope there will be some more sunlight on Monday." Well, there was, and we hope the *Pall Mall Gazette* is satisfied that the Almighty has redeemed his character. A God who doesn't stand well with Northumberland Street is in a bad way. We therefore conclude with the hope that the Lord will heed Mr. Stead's warning that men find it difficult to believe in his goodness while skies are grey. Should he do so he will have Mr. Stead's warm approval, and Freethinkers, like other folk, will have fine weather; and fine weather might even enable them to bear the effusions of Mr. Stead's piety with tolerable equanimity. We suspect it was a balmy summer's day when Uncle Toby let the buzzing fly out of the window, and remarked, "Surely the world is wide enough for me and thee."
G. W. FOOTE.

THE WHALE'S COMPLAINT.

Brother mammals that float on the breaker,
Don't swallow, whatever you do,
A thing in drab shorts called a Quaker;
But if you *must* swallow, first chew.
'Tis a dish to my sorrow I've tried,
And felt I would gladly change places
With a pig with the Devil inside
At Suez or Gadara races,
With his throat cut at every stroke,
As mad as March hare or cheap batter,
While the Devil cries "Lord, what a joke!
Hurrah boys for Brighton regatta!"
With a will overboard, like a sprat,
They flung the sour meddling old groaner,
To catch any poor whale so flat
As to bolt a hook baited with Jonah. F. A. W.

IMMORTALITY AND IMMORALITY.

It is often said that morality is grounded on the belief in immortality. This is the view of Paley in his *Moral Philosophy*, and of the leading school of Christian writers. Do away with the belief in a hereafter of rewards and punishments, say these gentry, and there is nothing left to restrain men from the worst excesses. As a matter of experience, however, it is found that the belief in immortality is utterly inefficacious in restraining men from crime. There is always the doctrine of salvation through faith and repentance. "Jesus pays for all." Or it may be reliance is placed on some fetish, as with the late Mr. Pigott and his scapular; or upon some special acts of devotion, as with the brigands who always dedicate to the Virgin and their patron saints a decent portion of the "swag." On the other hand absence of belief in a future life is not found to impair morality founded upon the necessary condition of man's relation to his fellows in this world. Even of the old Pagans Lecky says, "The Spartan and the Roman died for his country because he loved it. The martyr's ecstasy of hope had no place in his dying hour; he gave up all he had, he closed his eyes, as he believed for ever, and he asked for no reward either in this world or the next."

No moderns have so intense a belief in immortality as savages, whose dreams assure them of another life, and who will even lend under expectation of being repaid after death. Yet with them the belief is often a direct incentive to cruelty and callousness. Herodotus tells of a tribe of Getans or Goths on the Danube who believed themselves immortal. They used to send messengers to heaven to acquaint their God of their special needs. The process was as follows: They used to fling a man aloft and catch him on their spear points; if he died quickly it was a good omen; if he happened to survive he was reviled as rejected by the God and a second victim was found to despatch as his substitute. In "*The History of a Slave*," by H. H. Johnston, now appearing in the *Graphic*, there is a striking description of the murder of the head wife at the grave of the father of the person who tells the story, and this represents what still obtains where the faith in immortality is vivid. The custom was widespread, indeed almost universal, of killing slaves, wives and attendants whenever any chief or king died, in order that they might attend him in the next world. Leading a horse in the funeral procession of a soldier is a survival of an earlier custom which required the horse to be killed and buried with his master, which was done as late as 1781 at Treves.

The Hindoo custom of *sati*, in which a widow was burnt on the funeral pile of her husband, was another offshoot of the belief in immortality. Terrible pictures of this barbarous custom are often drawn at missionary meetings, when the auditors are not usually told that the sacrifice was a *voluntary* one, unsanctioned by the Vedas, or that it arose from the strong belief of the widow that she would pass through the fire and rejoin her dead husband in another world.

Murray, in his *Travels in Asia*, tells of a region in Thibet, where, as a religious practice, a sacred boy sallied forth equipped with sword and arrows to kill at pleasure whomever he met. No one resisted him for it was believed that to be thus slain would be a signal blessing for them in another world.

Such instances as these show how callous men are rendered by a belief which dwarfs into insignificance all the affairs of this life. Such a faith is essentially immoral since, were it not that human necessities will assert themselves, its tendency is to minimise this world and its duties. The hatred and strife which have everywhere followed the preaching of religion derive all their force from the belief that this world is but the entrance court to a larger sphere, and that right belief in this is necessary in order to secure

bliss hereafter. The idea of unending punishment is too horrible for oneself, and is therefore reserved for opponents. Those deemed worthy by God of eternal torment can never be other than objects of hatred and contempt to his followers. "No faith with the infidels" was the necessary corollary of this belief, and was held by all Christians in the palmy days of the Church. It led to the Crusades, the persecutions of Jews, witches, and heretics. It hardened men's hearts against their own kindred, and drove sensitive natures to insanity and despair. The exhortation to "save your soul and flee from the wrath to come" has been the great incentive to faith. Hell and purgatory have been the trump-cards of the priests, and dexterously have they used them to their own advantage and the spoliation of their dupes.

Gibbon, in his ironic vein, says in the celebrated fifteenth chapter of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*—"The ancient Christians were animated by a contempt for their present existence, and by a just confidence of immortality of which the doubtful but imperfect faith of modern ages cannot give us any adequate notion." How true this is will be best appreciated by those who have studied the lives and writings of the fathers and martyrs of the early Christian Church. They were animated by a fanatical contempt for life. Some retired to deserts and lived literally like beasts, others dwelling among Pagans, wantonly insulted their worship, spat on their images, defiled their libations, and, in the hope of attaining the crown of martyrdom, showed by every means in their power their abhorrence and contempt of the Pagan religion. Believing in the speedy coming of the Lord from heaven, they became indifferent to earthly laws. Saint Ignatius, for instance, says in his epistle to the Romans, "Suffer me to be food to wild beasts by whom I shall attain to God," and this spirit animated most of the saints of the early Church.

The world has gained some little experience since the early days of Christianity. Christ has been expected again and again, but always failed to put in any appearance. Geology and astronomy have expanded man's notions of the universe and somewhat diminished his conceit. Science rebukes the arrogance of the race and the egotism of the individual. It is not quite so easy as it was to suppose that the maker of the universe came to die for so puny a creature as man, or that the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven to one little satellite of a tenth-rate sun. The world is discovering too that morality is separate from religion, that it arose independently, and can exist apart from it. It is finding that the belief in another life only fosters another worldliness which means a selfish subordination of the duties of the present life. Occasionally some wiseacre provincial magistrate may cast doubt upon the evidence of a witness because he has the honesty to acknowledge himself an unbeliever in future rewards and punishments, but even that is no longer permitted by law. The great world no longer concerns itself with these things, and would rather have the word of a man whose credit is good at his bank than any affidavit of a belief in eternal heaven and eternal hell.

J. M. WHEELER.

AT morning service "General" Booth, speaking of the causes which brought people to their meetings, said some who came to scoff remained to pray. Reporters, of course, came on business. They were very hard to catch (Groans.) He had seen a reporter with a tear in his eye.—("No," and cries of "Glory be to God")—and he believed he once saw a reporter put a shilling in a collection box. (Expressions of incredulity from various parts of the hall.) There was hope, therefore, for the reporters—"Hallelujah," and "Lord have mercy upon them!" that was, if they got caught before they came to be editors. Then they were gone. (Loud laughter.) "General" Booth then spoke on the true religion of humanity, and in a characteristic prayer, said: "Oh, Lord, if 20,000 people go to see a football kicked about, grant that as many hundred thousands may come and see the runderland people kicking the devil about."

SANCTIFIED SUMMING.

IN Talmage's recent effusion of pulpit science and holy high falutin, wherein he curvettes round the text, "In which are some things hard to be understood," he says of "this grand old book, "you may employ on its mysteries the rule of multiplication or subtraction." I cannot guess what the Doctor of Division means, but he suggests a short study in sacred *addition*.

Let us prayerfully turn to Ezra i, 7-11. "Cyrus, the king, brought forth the *vessels* of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of *his* gods. . . . by the hand of Mithredath, the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the Prince of Judah, and this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand." *All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. (?)*

Let us see.

30 chargers of gold	-	-	30
1000 chargers of silver	-	-	1000
29 knives=	-	-	29 vessels.
30 basons of gold	-	-	30
Silver basons of a second sort			410
Other vessels	-	-	1000
			2,499

All the *vessels* of gold and silver (I repeat) were 5,400, but the secular addition of the items is 2,499 including the bowie knives, so the discrepancy is 2,901 vessels due to the "treasurer," unless he likes to accept Sheffield blades, or the sword of the spirit.

W. C. SAVILLE.

FREETHOUGHT IN SPAIN.

THE *Daily News* Madrid correspondent writes:—"Though the Catholic Church has such a hold upon the immense majority of Spaniards, two facts must not be overlooked or ignored at the present time. The first is the existence of a growing disposition towards scepticism and almost open hostility to religion among the working classes of great towns, among the artisans of manufacturing districts, especially in Catalonia and in the southern provinces. The other is the development of a strong inclination for philosophical and scientific tenets absolutely opposed to the dogmas of the Roman Church, in the more educated and enlightened strata of the middle-class and of a fraction of the governing classes, men belonging, of course, to the Liberal and Republican schools. This current of thought and intellectual aspiration is to be met with in the Bar, in literary circles, in the higher schools and Universities, in journalism, and in the youth, not only of the University towns, but also among the new generation of the *bourgeoisie* that is engaged in commercial and industrial pursuits. They are as yet a minority in Catholic Spain; but their influence is spreading so much that it excites the ire and bitter opposition of the governing class and of the Church, whose reactionary pressure is still felt in the domain of public education and in every sphere of scientific and intellectual activity. I have observed in Spain a phenomenon often noticed in France, in Italy, in Belgium, and in other Catholic countries, namely, that those Spaniards who sever their early allegiance to the Catholic Church in the middle and in the upper classes, never go over to Protestantism, seldom even to any concrete religious form of dissent, and they hardly ever stop short of indifference, scepticism, or Freethinking, or some of the English, German, and French philosophical schools."

CARELESS GODS.

If such a Heaven there be,
 If earth and air and sea,
 If all around, beneath us, and above,
 Thrill with the eternal pulse of Love;
 If universal life,
 With Godhead, and with Gods be rife,
 Why mock they man's persistent prayer,
 Why groan and fret we thus for ever and in vain,
 Why find our woes no echo there,
 And our tremendous pain
 Awaken but indifference and disdain?

WILLIAM FORSTER (*Australian Poet*).

ACID DROPS.

The only ostentatiously Christian evening paper in London, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, made some curious observations on the Blasphemy Debate in our National Palaver—a place where you may find a few men of sense and half the leading fools of the kingdom. "To express your own religious or irreligious opinions with the utmost possible freedom is one thing," says our contemporary, "but to put forward your views offensively, so as to outrage and pain other people, is another thing." Perhaps so. We don't care, for the moment, to argue the point. But the little sermon comes with a rare grace from the writer of *The Maiden Tribute*. When Saul is among the prophets the least cynical may lift their eyebrows.

Another remark by the *P.M.G.* is upon our "matter and illustrations," which, it appears, "do more harm to Free-thought than to religion." The observation comes from a Christian, and that fact decides its worth. When Christians tell us earnestly that the course we pursue injures our own cause we can only smile. What makes them so zealous for our success? Do they really want us to advocate Free-thought in a convincing manner? Are they quite so simple as to expect us to believe it? Dr. Field gave the same sort of fatherly advice to Colonel Ingersoll, who replied with this question—"If the commander of one army should send word to the general of the other that his men were firing too high, do you think the general would be misled? Can you conceive of his changing his orders by reason of the message?"

That fine old Tory fossil, the *Newcastle Daily Journal*, delivers itself with port-wine vehemence on the defeated Blasphemy Bill, which it affects to regard as designed to "put the seal of legal approval on every blasphemous and insulting libel that can be uttered from the gutter by the wretched victims of vice, or delivered from a platform by secularist, anarchic, or atheistic lecturers." Our irate contemporary clamors for more repression, and even calls on the police to seize blasphemous publications; forgetting, or not knowing, that the police cannot seize anything of the kind until it has been condemned by a jury. Even then, they could only seize the particular libel; so that, if one number of the *Freethinker* were found blasphemous, they could not touch the next until it also had been prosecuted and condemned.

The Newcastle champion of the faith calls on the authorities to put the law in force against swearing in the streets. Well, if they do so, they will have plenty of work in that city, despite its new bishopric and its recent missions. Still, if the Newcastle police are overworked, they might swear in the editor of the *Daily Journal* as a special constable. Were his physical strength equal to his keen scent for blasphemy, he would decimate the population in a week, though he might lose his scalp on the Saturday night.

Regardless of the fact that Mr. Foote has quite recently delivered some very "blasphemous" lectures in the same hall, the *Daily Journal* exclaims that "many years ago the Deity was allowed in our Lecture Room, Nelson Street, to be openly taunted, defied and scorned by the blatant Martin's and Southwell's of that time of infidel propaganda." Our contemporary's grammar shows it to be in haste, like David when he said that all men were liars. Fancy the Deity being "allowed"! This was the most unkindest cut of all. Poor Deity.

The *English Churchman* is not satisfied with the rejection of Mr. Bradlaugh's Bill for the abolition of prosecutions for blasphemy. It says "the majority ought to have been larger," and laments that "a false Liberalism has taken possession of men's minds." Our forefathers, it says, "understood the distinction between prosecution for religion and prosecution for irreligion. They regarded the divine authority of the Bible as the basis of the English Constitution and the safeguard of civil and religious liberty. They held that the man who was not content with the Protestant Constitution of the land did not deserve its protection, and that offences against God were crimes as injurious to the true welfare of the State as offences against the Crown."

The *English Churchman* would probably like to see blasphemy punished, as of old, with death, or transportation at the very least. For our part, all we desire is that offences against God shall be proceeded against by the party offended, and not by his self-constituted ministers.

"In Paris," says the London *Echo*, "not a few Free-thinkers make Good Friday an occasion for ostentatiously insulting the religious convictions of their orthodox fellow citizens." Well, what is it they do? What is the act which on the part of Freethinkers, is an "insult" to Christians? Simply this—they eat meat.

Recently, in writing on the Sunday Closing Bill, we called it a clerical dodge, and our view is confirmed by the report of the last meeting of the Central Association. Church of England parsons and Nonconformist ministers hobnobbed for business reasons, and the chair was taken by the Hon. Conrad A. Dillon, who, judging from his name, has in all probability a remarkable knowledge of the Sunday requirements of the people. This gentleman expressed a hope that tobacco shops will be closed on Sunday as well as public-houses, and he was lustily applauded by the sky-pilots. The conclusion is obvious. These pious protectionists want the day all to themselves.

What wrigglers the Christians are! Some time ago we stated that, in a printed list issued by the Trade Unions and signed by Mr. Henry Boadhurst, M.P., a large number of Christian papers were stigmatised as the patrons of "sweating" printing houses or "sweaters" themselves, while all the Freethought journals were marked as paying the full Union rate of wages. This fact was mentioned by one of our readers to an orthodox friend, who replied: "Oh, any respectable workman would sooner work for lower wages on a religious paper." This man doesn't understand the "respectable workman" who likes good wages and takes them wherever he can get them; and he overlooks the fact that the religious journals pay lower wages than "respectable" political and social organs.

Here is another pretty fact. The London School Board referred a contract for printing back to the Committee of Ways and Means because it was credibly reported that the firm in question paid starvation wages to girls employed in folding Bibles!

According to a paragraph in the *Queensland Figaro*, a Freethought lecturer at Melbourne, Mr. J. Peppercorn, was seized with a fatal attack of apoplexy after a discourse in Victoria Hall. This furnishes the *Q.F.* with a theme for orthodox fustian. It forgets that ministers have died in pulpits, and that, if a man is inclined to apoplexy, exhaustion and excitement are very favorable conditions for bringing on an attack. Somehow Christians have a wonderful eye for miracles.

The *Figaro* seems to think the occurrence will be a lesson to Messrs. Joseph Symes and Wallace Nelson. So it will be—in Christian stupidity.

Here are two deaths in chapel. On Sunday night Mr. Page, of 2, Alma Road, was taken ill during the service at the Bible Christian Chapel, Sheerness. He was assisted into the porch, but died before medical aid arrived. He was advanced in years, and had hurried to the chapel on account of being late. Death was due to heart disease. An inquest was held at Manchester, on Monday, on the body of Adam Howarth, aged sixty-two, a house decorator. The deceased attended Tooley Street Chapel, Rochdale Road, on Sunday evening, to conduct service. He appeared quite well when he began, but as he was giving out the text of his address he became giddy, and had to be assisted to the vestry. There he became unconscious, and died. A verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned. Possibly there were awful judgments for not attending church.

Yet another death in Church. The *Edinburgh Evening News* of Monday reports: A joiner named Peter Banks, 39 years of age, residing at 3 Ferrier Street, Leith, while sitting in his pew in North Leith United Presbyterian Church, yesterday, waiting until the morning service should

commence, suddenly fell back in his seat. He was taken into the session house, and was seen by Drs. Garland and Wood, who pronounced life to be extinct, attributing, it is stated, death to heart disease. Banks had entered the church with his wife shortly before, apparently quite well.

The Rev. P. Wilson-Paterson, of Edinburgh, advises the working men not to patronise the Botanic Garden on Sunday. If they do they will—well, not fry eternally, but have to work seven days themselves. The sky-pilot, of course, wants all the trade to come to his own shop, but even Sabatarians now have to pretend to appeal to considerations of secular utility. About 10,000 disregarded his advice on Easter Sunday.

They try to keep the Sabbath in Finland in the good old scriptural style. According to the St. Petersburg correspondent of the *Daily News*, the tribunal of Helsingfors sentenced a man who had stolen a silken pocket-handkerchief on a week day to a fine of 48 Finnish marks, *i.e.*, four times the value of the stolen object; whilst another man who on a Sunday had taken 15 marks from an ex-soldier, was sentenced to death.

There was a distress sale in Preston the other day, and a big family Bible with brass rims and clasps was knocked down at threepence. The auctioneer said it was shabby, but the purchaser thought it worth threepence for stropping razors.

Monroe Losater, of Ballinger County, recently became a religious lunatic claiming to have received from God the command to preach, but first to offer his fourteen months' old child as a sacrifice. He made his wife strangle the infant, claiming that the Almighty had promised to raise the child on the third day. Losater and his wife have been sent to gaol. When he was arrested he had been carrying the dead infant in his arms for two days. How beneficial Bible-reading must have been to a man like this!

A woman who went out to Burmah as a missionary converted a native as soon as she arrived, and then married him. When the next batch of female missionaries arrived the male natives took to the woods—again illustrating the axiom that self-preservation is the first law of nature.

John Shave, 21, of Great Cornard, Suffolk, committed suicide by drowning himself in the Stour. A pencilled letter to his sweetheart contained "the Lord knows it," and "God bless you." Another fact for Talmage.

The London Wesleyans have found their Mission movement expensive. During the past year it entailed a cost of £7,000, and it is said the overdraft is £3,500. Still, they have got on a good scent to hunt up the cash. Cleveland Hall has not been used by Secularists for some fifteen years or more, but they propose to take it as "a famous Secularistic hall," and £1,000 has already been subscribed for that pious purpose.

"Blasphemous" as we are, the Religious Tract Society has sent us volumes for review. One of the latest is a collection of "Short Biographies of the People," and includes Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Wycliffe, Knox, Erasmus, &c. Each number contains a portrait, and sixteen pages of well-written, well-printed letterpress. Naturally we turned first to the Calvin number, where we find the writer is ashamed of the fate of Servetus, though he does his best to exculpate Calvin by attributing to his enemy an abnormal share of what the Americans call "cussedness." This is hardly ingenuous, and it robs repentance of all grace. Calvin should be defended or abandoned with respect to Servetus. There is no middle course consistent with honesty.

Bishop Wordsworth has been preaching before the professors and graduates at St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh. His sermon was a paean of triumph, which, in this age of "infidelity," is about as sensible as the antic of a pursued ostrich. "Christianity," he said, "was entitled to sit calmly on her throne; and seeing that no weapon forged against her had prospered, she might rightly decline to descend into the arena in self-defence upon every fresh challenge

from foes unworthy of the attention they claimed." The world, however, will not be deceived by this bastard dignity. Those "foes" were not "unworthy of attention" when Christianity could torture and kill them. They were not even "unworthy of attention" while she could imprison them. But now she is scanted of that luxury, and cannot habitually reply with persecution, she puts on an air of injured innocence, like any "not guilty" thief in the dock, and protests that all who oppose her are beneath her notice. That game, however, does not save the thief, and it will not save Christianity.

Among the names "unworthy of attention," as we see from the report, are those of Herbert Spencer and Professor Huxley, both of whom are famous throughout the civilised world. Yet Bishop Wordsworth ventures to prophesy that in another generation they will be "consigned to oblivion." Well, it is easy to *consign* them to oblivion, but will they be delivered there? When a French minor poet read aloud his *Ode to Posterity*, Voltaire doubted whether it would reach its destination, and we may say the same of Bishop Wordsworth's "consignment."

Besides, the Bishop should remember that prophecy is a risky business. Jesus Christ himself tried it, and signally failed. He predicted his second coming within a generation, and sixty generations have come and gone since his luckless vaticination. Surely, when the Master blundered so egregiously, his disciples might learn a little humility.

Mr. S. J. Abbott, the hon. sec. of the Calvinistic Protestant Union, writes to the *Brighton Times* in reply to Mr. C. E. Ford's strictures on Calvin's persecution of Servetus. Mr. Abbott says no Calvinists of the present day would think of justifying Calvin in this matter, yet he does his best in this direction by arguing that "it would be more fair to attribute the act rather to the spirit of the age in which he lived than to Calvin himself." Yet there were men, such as Castellio and Socinus, even in that age who spoke in favor of toleration, though they were found only among the freethinking. Mr. Abbott cites several passages to show that Calvin was a good man and sincere, but he cannot get rid of Calvin's declaration, "I will not allow him to escape with his life." Calvin was sincere—a sincere persecutor, one of the most hateful of men. He regarded Servetus as an enemy of God, but God's enemy happened also to be a person who opposed himself to him. He said he had endeavored to change the kind of death he was to die, but he never thought for a moment that Servetus was not deserving of death.

A Freethinker in Moron (Spain) has been sent to prison for a week and fined heavily for not taking off his hat as the priest passed through the street bearing the Holy Ghost in a piece of wafer. This is a common-day occurrence in Catholic countries.

A correspondent of the *Church Times*, writing from Calcutta, says: "Close to our hotel, in Wellington Square, we discovered the head-quarters of the Salvation Army. As we were passing one evening we heard the usual tune being sung inside, and, on entering, found three men in the uniform of the Army standing up singing in loud, harsh voices, in the presence of about half-a-dozen astonished natives. Outside we were accosted by a man selling the *War Cry*. The uniform they have adopted is certainly picturesque, although Englishmen look rather awkward in the native dress. They wear a light brown turban and a red flowing robe, legs and feet bare. The army adopts the same tactics as in England, marching through the street singing, and thus attracting a crowd, followed by which they return to their barracks and preach. From all I heard I should imagine they are making but little progress here, though they boast of great successes in the *War Cry*." Music and red robes are the main elements of such success as the Army receives in India. The red robe is the garb of hermits, who are looked upon as particularly sacred by pious Hindus.

The "Parochial Missions to the Jews Fund" has been urgently appealing for Church collections, "especially on Palm Sunday and Good Friday." In the good old days, Palm Sunday and Good Friday were celebrated by the Christians going to the Jews' quarter and kicking and

cuffing them. Now they have the more arduous task of converting them.

The *Daily News* Madrid correspondent reports that an extraordinary occurrence has taken place in one of the principal churches of Madrid, in the parish of Santa Cruz. A priest had nearly finished his mass, and was in the act of pronouncing the sacramental words, "*Ite missa est*," when a young man, aged 21, and a beautiful girl of 20, suddenly approached the altar-railing with three middle-aged men, and the young couple cried aloud, "We wish to be husband and wife. Here are our three witnesses." Now it seems that under the canonical laws still regulating marriages in Spain, Roman Catholics can thus claim to be considered married by surprise if they are skilful enough to do so just after the priest has uttered the Benediction at the close of mass. Formerly this stratagem was, as in the present case, resorted to by young people whose parents opposed their union. When this occurred in the Church of Santa Cruz a scene of confusion ensued. The priest retired to the sacristy and sent for the police, who conducted the offenders and witnesses into the presence of the municipal judge. He declared the marriage valid, much to the delight of the young couple, and to the intense disgust of the parents of both sides, who had resisted the union.

Spurgeon sent 800 copies of his sermon, "The Believing Thief," for distribution at the butchers' Exeter Hall meeting, just to let them know that short weight and long profits can all be atoned for at the last day.

"The Greatest Literary Work" was the title of a recent article in the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*. It is one of the wildest farragoes of nonsense we ever read. The writer informs us that there is "more wisdom in Solomon's Proverbs than in all the books that have since been penned." Now the Proverbs were not written by Solomon, and their superiority to all—mark the word, *all*—subsequent works is one of those daring absurdities which are best answered by a peal of laughter.

"The Song of Solomon," says this writer, "far excels the delicate grace of Anacreon, Ovid, and Horace." But how on earth are the readers of the *Weekly Mercury* to judge? They don't know the Greek of Anacreon, or the Latin of Ovid and Horace, any more than they know the Hebrew of the Canticles. In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king, and this writer is bold because he knows he will not be challenged.

Now a word as to the "delicate grace" of the Song of Solomon, which by the way, is *not* Solomon's. Some parts of the original are downright bawdy, and our English version is a very thin veil to people of insight. There is plenty of passion, but little grace, and an entire absence of delicacy. Delicacy in love belongs to a higher civilization. You will not find it in the Bible, but in Shakespeare, Goethe, Shelley, and other modern poets, who are mostly Pagans.

As a great deal of money is spent on advertising the Deep Sea Mission, and begging for subscriptions, we infer that a good deal of money flows into the exchequer. The object of the Mission is twofold; first, to carry tobacco and medicine to the fishing fleet; and second, to dose the fishermen with the gospel in the shape of tracts and other pious reading. There is an organ devoted to the latter branch of the business, and from a recent number, containing some jottings by G. Simons, the superintendent evangelist, we find that there is a dreadful flutter in the dovecote. One of our readers distributes the *Freethinker* and other publications among his fellow fishermen. "Some of them," says Mr. Simons, "came into my possession. Anything more blasphemous I have never seen, especially one that is illustrated, where our Saviour is represented," &c. &c. Still, shocking as these things are, Mr. Simons thinks they will "rather damage than help" Freethought; yet, later on, in a moment of sincerity, he implores the Lord to "intervene and stay the dissemination of such vile literature."

Mr. Simons has another moment of sincerity. He says our arguments are "bad," and implies that he could easily refute them. Yet he declares that his "weapons of war-

fare shall not be discussion or argument." Quite right, Mr. Simons. You know your position too well to risk a battle. But, on the other hand, you also know the value of slander, which is one of the time-honored weapons of your faith. You therefore assert that the "infidel" who circulates Freethought literature in the fishing fleet "insists on his children going to Sunday-school," and you point the statement with a big note of exclamation. Yet it is utterly false. He does not "insist," he merely consents because he cannot help himself. When a man is away from his home for months together the mangeling falls into other hands.

The Lord has been very naughty again. In Elche (Spain) they expected a splendid crop of almonds and figs. All of a sudden a frost came, and every tree perished. Now, can't that old rascal of a God find any better amusement than injuring human beings? If he is puzzled how to spend his time, why does he not arrange a six-day gas-you-please in heaven between Uncle Moses and Father Noah? It would certainly be more entertaining than destroying crops.—*Las Dominicales*.

John the Baptist Freund, with his message of the speedy coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, turned up again at St. Paul's Cathedral on Easter Sunday. For over a dozen years this modern prophet has sung out "Woe!" He has repeatedly been imprisoned and sent to asylums, but his message is too strong for him and the word of the Lord must be spoken. If Freund had lived a few thousand years ago he would have been far on the road for beatification.

A Chinaman, who, after several years' residence in this country, returned to China, has been telling his countrymen that the Americans worship a mysterious being who is called All-Mi-T-Dol-Lar.

Are the Germans "Christians?" asked a young Arab of an English Freethinker. "Usually on Sundays" was the reply, "but on week-days they are mostly Jews."

"God never sends mouths without sending food" is an old but stupid saying. If the supply is all right the distribution is very defective, and some 80,000 persons are still starving in China.

A plague of locusts has desolated Algiers, and the labors of the peasants for years have been destroyed in a day. These insects march so many million to the square mile, and the Lord considers the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Churchism must be pretty rampant at Hungerford. It appears that a curate in that town affirms that "Dissent" is a mortal sin, "equal to stealing and adultery." Another ecclesiastical idiot in the same town is reported to have assured his hearers recently that "none were lawfully married outside the pale of the Holy Catholic Church," and then offered to re-marry all who had been legally united but *not lawfully married*.

Under the heading "Both were Killed by Ministers," *The Evening Star*, of Philadelphia, gives the following: "Navasota, Tex., April 9.—Rev. J. M. Lawson killed a negro on Sunday named Louis McLeod, who had stolen several articles from him. At Yarbrough Station Rev. Hall Miller was conducting a Sunday school the same day, and, while praying, a man named Puchard, intoxicated, entered the school and disturbed the meeting. Rev. Mr. Miller left for home and returned with his gun, and put the contents of buck and turkey shot into the left side of Puchard's head. The dead man was possessed of great bodily strength, and was very brutal and aggressive in his manner."

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Emmaus has been performing the ceremony of washing the feet of a number of boys at the Pro-Cathedral, Kensington. Probably their toes were all carefully cleaned beforehand. Jesus emphatically enjoined his followers to "wash one another's feet" (John xiii., 14), yet his injunction is so seldom attended to that when it is done it is chronicled in the papers

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, April 28, Secular Hall, 61 New Church Road, Camberwell, at 7, "Blasphemy: a Reply to the Bigots in the House of Commons."

May 5, Manchester; 12, Milton Hall; 19, Milton Hall; 26, Camberwell.

June 8, N. S. S. Conference; 23, Hall of Science, London; 30, Hall of Science, London.

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.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

It being contrary to post office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will in future receive the number when their subscription expires in a colored wrapper.

H. COLLINS.—You are positively amusing. You try to exclude the *Freethinker* from an institute, the majority of whose members have proved again and again that they like it. Then, after this act of bigotry, you send us a long rigmarole in defence of your conduct, and are full of indignation because we do not waste our space by printing it *in extenso*. We cannot insult our readers by inflicting upon them your stupid defence of a stupid action. But, on the other hand, we are always ready to find space for any well-written article controverting our views. Quite recently we printed two long letters from the Rev. J. W. Black.

INCOG.—Your suspicion is well founded. The forbidden fruit hides a phallic significance.

C. GRAHAM.—(1) We shall recur to the subject presently, but it is only fair to wait until Mr. Bradlaugh has explained his position. (2) We fancy Butcher Varley is still in England, but we cannot say positively. His publisher is Snow, of Paternoster Row, London, E.C. (3) We have not dropped our Sketches.

J. KING.—The report of the Rossiter-Foote debate was only a summary, and of course not from the editor's pen. There is a good deal of difference as to the use of the subjunctive. Still, we like to be correct, and we fancy we are pretty successful if you only spy two debateable "slips" in twelve pages. De Quincey said he would undertake, if bad grammar were a capital offence, to find hanging matter twice in every page of the very best writers.

P. C.—Cuttings are always welcome.

E. BOWLES.—Pleased to hear from you. See "Acid Drops."

AYRSHIRE.—We are not able at present to pay for any further contributions.

F. LESTER.—Of course there are many shop-windows in London where Mr. Waddy's children might see plenty of queer pictures and photographs. You are quite right in saying that the Puritans might see to what does exist before troubling their poor heads as to what may or may not be seen when the Blasphemy Laws are repealed.

W. SWAIN.—Thanks. We seldom visit Wales. See paragraph.

CASA BIANCA.—See "Acid Drops."

UNCRIPPLED.—Certainly we regard Evolution as an established theory, and the "first generation of human beings" as contradicting it. You might as well say that a youth becomes a man on his twenty-first birthday, because he is legally so, as speak of a first generation of the true *genus homo*.

ANTI-TRINITARIAN.—We have some good friends among the Unitarians. Good hearts and logical heads don't always go together. You ask for a definition of Unitarianism. The best we know came from Darwin's grandfather—"A feather bed to catch a falling Christian."

H. GOGAY.—Thanks for cutting. The story is somewhat far-fetched.

S. W. TURNER.—You cannot obtain a verbatim report of Mr. Foote's Sunday evening lecture. He may write a pamphlet on the subject.

D.—Lightfoot, one of the highest authorities on Jewish matters, states distinctly that the baptism of proselytes was a Jewish custom many generations before the Christian era. See his works, Pitman's edition, 1824, vol. iii., p. 38; iv. 245, 427, and 411. Dr. Emil Schürer, the author of an able *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, also states the same fact, vol. ii., pp. 321—324.

R. S. SEAGO writes, "I am very much pleased with the *Freethinker* now its size is increased, and trust that a good illustration now

and then on the front page will be the means of extending its circulation and usefulness"

RECEIVED.—Freidenker—La Raison—Bulletin des Sommaires—Boston Investigator—Lucifer—Brighton Times—Bury Times—Newcastle Daily Journal—Edinburgh Evening News—Menschenthum—Freireligiöses Sonntags-Blatt—Truthseeker.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

DESPITE the holiday and the holiday weather, a very good audience met at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Blasphemy: a Reply to the Bigots in the House of Commons." There was immense applause at the finish when he remarked that this question should be fought out on principle, and that we should either win a victory for Freethought or fall beneath its standard. This evening (April 28) Mr. Foote will repeat the lecture at Camberwell.

WE hope to have a good "blasphemous" sketch ready for our next number. We are varying the illustrations, so as to provide for diverse tastes, without sacrificing a shred of principle.

THIS year's Conference of the National Secular Society will be one of the most important ever held. Every Branch should strive to be represented. We appeal in time, so that the poorest may begin making provision.

FOUR South London papers gave reports of the Secular Federation Dinner, which is thus brought to the notice of some seventy or eighty thousand readers. The local press does not boycott our movement like the majestic organs about Fleet Street. They are better acquainted with the facts, and know our strength.

MR. R. O. SMITH, honorary treasurer of the London Secular Federation, 142 Old St., E.C., acknowledges the following fresh subscriptions:—H. Irving £1; D. Colville £1; H. Braekstad 2s.; C. Williams 2s.; G. Burton 5s.; J. Varty 5s.; Mr. Cheesewight 2s.; Mr. Calvert 1s.; Mr. Sanders 5s.; Mr. Magny 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Pearce 10s.; R. Green 2s. 6d.; Mr. Hemming 2s. Further subscriptions, especially from London friends, are earnestly requested. The Federation requires £50 to enable it to pay its way, and to face the summer's outdoor work. Surely the amount will be forthcoming.

WE have received the half-yearly report of the Nottingham Branch. It shows progress, financially and otherwise. A petition with 355 signatures was sent up against the Blasphemy Laws. A Conference is to be held during the summer, at which the Midland Branches will be invited to discuss their common interests.

THE most famous preacher in Chicago, the Rev. W. H. Thomas, has stirred the city by the following utterance: "I question whether or not it is possible for man and the human intellect ever to stand without the possibility of a doubt with reference to God. I never saw an argument tending to prove the existence of God that did not need another argument to uphold the first. Reason tries to show God and fails. It is the heart that perceives God, but doubt will ever remain on the part of the understanding."

SEVERAL Chicago ministers have been interviewed on the subject by the *News*, and nearly all admit there is a good deal of truth in Mr. Thomas's sermon. Dr. Barrow remarks, with some sarcasm, that "Dr. Thomas must have felt pretty well when he wrote this discourse, since his wife says that when he is suffering from dyspepsia he usually preaches on hell."

WE are happy to see that the American Secularists are alive to the Catholic danger. They are trying to rouse the Protestants while there is time to save the country. There is a strong attempt, which the Secularists are resisting, to work "God" into the Constitution; and a still more sinister attempt to subvert the free school system, and get the law to subvention the denominations, in which case the

Catholic Church would carry off the lion's share of the spoil.

GOLDWIN SMITH is warning the Canadians of their danger from this insidious enemy. He exposes the plans of the Jesuits, and points out that the Church in French Canada, amidst all the poverty of the people, owns eighty millions (dollars) of property, and has a revenue of eight millions. One of its artifices is to lend Catholics money, on mortgage, to buy land of Protestants.

THE New York *Truthseeker*, one of our most welcome exchanges, devotes over a column of small type to Part I. of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, to which it accords praise as a "long-wanted" work, written by a "scholarly English Freethinker."

MAX NORDAU, the author of *Conventional Lies of our Civilisation*, has been travelling all over Europe, and has published his adventures and opinions in a book entitled *From Kremlin to Alambra*. Nothing seems to have stirred his bile more than the English Sunday. He really ought to have gone to Scotland.

A PORTRAIT of Marie Deraismes, a French Freethinker and advocate of woman's rights, appears in the *Womens' Penny Paper*. It states that this lady when at school carried off all the prizes for religion, but omits to mention one of the chief features in her career, namely, that she was invited by a Masonic lodge to become one of their members and was duly installed.

THE new volume of Trübner's "English and Foreign Philosophical Library" is entitled *Moral Order and Progress*, and is by Samuel Alexander.

WE hear that Mr. G. J. Holyoake is editing a new venture, the *Universal Republic*, which is what the Americans call "a large order." His publishers have not favored us with a copy, so we cannot say anything of its contents, but we wish it success all the same.

WE are delighted in taking up our Belgian contemporary *La Raison* to find it full of signs of progress. The question of inducing the working classes to become active Freethinks is seriously taken up in Belgium, and our contemporary boasts that that country is the most Freethinking in the world. At Lodestart, where there has been held a Congress of Freethinkers attended by Dr. Cesar de Paepe, Emile Feron and other eminent Freethinkers, it is stated that during the past year no less than 95 per cent. of the burials have been of a purely civil character, without any religious ceremony whatever.

WE notice too that the société "La Libre Pensée," of Antwerp, has been celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary. More than three hundred guests sat down to a banquet, presided over by M. Victor Arnould. Among the speakers were M. Navez the president of the society, and M. Devries, of *De Dageraad*, Amsterdam.

La Raison inserts a communication from Captain Thomson to the General Council of the International Federation of Freethinkers, calling attention to the prosecutions in Sweden and mentioning the efforts made in England on their behalf.

ACCORDING to A. L. Francis, a writer in the *North American Review*, the progress of Freethought is not confined to the Christian nations. In the cities of Japan the name of a Buddhist zealot has become as odious as "Jesuit." The private creed of educated Turks, too, is said to be "a vague Theism, strongly tinged with Agnosticism." In the book-stores of Constantinople, scepticism in its most pronounced types forms the staple of conversation. The Padisha himself (like Mohammed the Second and the Caliph Al Motadi) is well known to be a rationalist; and a correspondent of the *Pesther Lloyd* describes a soiree at the residence of a Syrian pacha who entertained his guests with anecdotes a la Mary Montagu, quizzing the ulemas and the superstitions of the orthodox peasantry. Meshoan, literally an epileptic, a person gaining influence by pretended fits of religious ecstasy—is a sort of freemasonry term which an investigator found to apply to

no less a personage than the Prophet himself, and which metropolitan Moslems often use with a chuckling irreverence that would delight the soul of Colonel Ingersoll. "If Mufti Meshoan had revealed the secret of breech-loading six shooters, instead of his ordinance of six daily prayers," remarked the impious Syrian, "we could still smoke our pipes on the ramparts of Buda, and probably on the Alcazar of Toledo."

OUR veteran contemporary, the *Boston Investigator*, now in the fifty-eighth year of its useful career, continues its reports of the stirring lectures of Mr. L. K. Washburn, who is evidently doing excellent work.

THE *Edinburgh Evening News* has a capital article on the Clergy and Sabbatarianism. It finds that they denounce the opening of the Botanic Gardens, but are dumb dogs over the overwork of the tramway men. It says "If they espouse the cause of the tramway servants they will offend the shareholders and directors, and the result will be an exodus of wealthy members from the churches." The article winds up, oh, horror! with the poetical confession of faith beginning "Money, oh money, thy praises I sing," which has been reprinted as a "Freethinker Tract."

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in his window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that may remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our permanent placards, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
- (7) Do one of the above, or all of them if you can.

CHRIST AND MIRACLES, By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

It is claimed by the Episcopal church that Christ was in fact God; and it is further claimed that the New Testament is an inspired account of what that being and his disciples did and said. Is there any obligation resting on any human being to believe this account? Is it within the power of man to determine the influence that testimony shall have upon his mind?

If one denies the existence of devils, does he, for that reason, cease to believe in Jesus Christ? Is it not possible to imagine that a great and tender soul living in Palestine nearly twenty centuries ago was misunderstood? Is it not within the realm of the possible that his words have been inaccurately reported? Is it not within the range of the probable that legend and rumor and ignorance and zeal have deformed his life and belittled his character!

If the man Christ lived and taught and suffered, if he was, in reality, great and noble, who is his friend—the one who attributes to him feats of jugglery, or he who maintains that these stories were invented by zealous ignorance and believed by enthusiastic credulity.

If he claimed to have wrought miracles, he must have been either dishonest or insane; consequently, he who denies miracles does what little he can to rescue the reputation of a great and splendid man.

The Agnostic accepts the good he did, the truth he said, and rejects only that which, according to his judgment, is consistent with truth and goodness.

The principal of King's College evidently believes in the necessity of belief. He puts conviction or creed or credulity in place of character. According to his idea, it is impossible to win the approbation of God by intelligent investigation and by the expression of honest conclusions. He imagines that the infinite is delighted with credulity, with belief without evidence, faith without question.

Man has but little reason, at best; but this little should be used. No matter how small the taper is, how feeble the ray of light it casts, it is better than darkness, and no man should be rewarded for extinguishing the light he has.

We know now, if we know anything, that man in this, the nineteenth century, is better capable of judging as to the happening of any event than he ever was before. We know that the standard is higher to-day—we know that the intellectual light is greater—we know that the human mind is better equipped to deal with all questions of human interest than at any other time within the known history of the human race.

It will not do to say that "our Lord and his apostles must at least be regarded as honest men." Let this be admitted, and what does it prove? Honesty is not enough. Intelligence and honesty must go hand in hand. We may admit now that "our Lord and his apostles" were perfectly honest men; yet it does not follow that we have a truthful account of what they said and of what they did. It is not pretended that "our Lord" wrote anything, and it is not known that one of the apostles ever wrote a word. Consequently, the most that we can say is that somebody has written something about "our Lord and his apostles." Whether that somebody knew or did not know is unknown to us. As to whether what is written is true or false, we must judge by that which is written.

First of all, is it probable? is it within the experience of mankind? We should judge of the gospels as we judge of other histories, of other biographies. We know that many biographies written by perfectly honest men are not correct. We know, if we know anything, that honest men can be mistaken, and it is not necessary to believe everything that a man writes because we believe he was honest. Dishonest men may write the truth.

At last the standard or criterion is for each man to judge according to what he believes to be human experience. We are satisfied that nothing more wonderful has happened than is now happening. We believe that the present is as wonderful as the past, and just as miraculous as the future. If we are to believe in the truth of the Old Testament, the word evidence loses its meaning; there ceases to be any standard of probability, and the mind simply accepts or denies without reason.

We are told that certain miracles were performed for the purpose of attesting the mission and character of Christ. How can these miracles be verified? The miracles of the Middle Ages rest upon substantially the same evidence. The same may be said of the wonders of all countries and of all ages. How is it a virtue to deny the miracles of Mohammed and to believe those attributed to Christ?

You may say of St. Augustine that what he said was true or false. We know that much of it was false, and yet we are not justified in saying that he was dishonest. Thousands of errors have been propagated by honest men. As a rule, mistakes get their wings from honest people. The testimony of a witness to the happening of the impossible gets no weight from the honesty of the witness. The fact that falsehoods are in the New Testament does not tend to prove that the writers were knowingly untruthful. No man can be honest enough to substantiate, to the satisfaction of reasonable men, the happening of a miracle.

For this reason it makes not the slightest difference whether the writers of the New Testament were honest or not. Their character is not involved. Whenever a man rises above his contemporaries, whenever he excites the wonder of his fellows, his biographers always endeavor to bridge over the chasm between the people and this man, and for that purpose attribute to him the qualities which in the eyes of the multitude are desirable.

Miracles are demanded by savages, and, consequently, the savage biographer attributes miracles to his hero. What would we think now of a man who, in writing the life of Charles Darwin, should attribute to him supernatural powers? What would we say of an admirer of Humboldt who should claim that the great German could cast out devils? We would feel that Darwin and Humboldt had been belittled; that the biographies were written for children, and by men who had not outgrown the nursery.

If the reputation of "our Lord" is to be preserved—if he is to stand with the great and splendid of the earth—if he is to continue a constellation in the intellectual heavens, all claim to the miraculous, to the supernatural, must be abandoned.—*North American Review.*

(To be concluded.)

A T H E I S M.

Here breezes breathe o'er meads of green and gold;
Here tender buds their scented leaves unfold;
And azure skies, from clouds for ever free,
Benignly smile o'er sunlit land and sea.
Here golden grain and laden branches bend,
And bird and bee their mellow voices blend,
And murmuring streams their music softly sing,
And plashing wavelets on the sand their whispering waters fling.

Thine, thine, this pleasant land!

Thine, thine, the sunlit strand!

O Atheism! dear as life! unstained by God's foul hand.

O murmurous clime! O realm of calm repose!
Where fadeless love in beauty ever blows!
No doubt, no fear intrudes with bitter sting,
No vengeful God may here his shadow fling,
No demon grim nor spectre foul may dwell,
No selfish greed of heaven, no dread of hell.
Here life is Peace ineffable and deep,
And death is but eternal rest, an everlasting sleep.

Fair region! Reason's own!

Would that thy worth were known!

For scorn of thee, sweet Atheism, soon would the world atone.

Sure, peace I never knew, nor perfect rest,
Till o'er the flinty crags and icy crest,
With bloodstained feet and fainting heart, I passed,
From cold and mist to warmth and light at last!
Though there, with menace stern and warning hand,
Forbidding man to tread this winsome land,
The Angel of the Lord bestrode the way;
He dealt one keen and final pang, but failed my steps to stay.

With thankful heart I stand

Here in thy gracious land,

O Atheism! dear as life! unstained by God's foul hand!

EX-RITUALIST.

According to the *South London Press* the Rev. G. W. Herbert, vicar of St. Peter's, has discharged one of his curates and soundly rated the other for taking the Radical side during the recent Kennington election. We suppose this is another illustration of the beautiful sermon on the mount.

A foreigner must be in danger of a severe jumble if he consults the sporting intelligence of the Universities. We recently read under the mysterious heading "Oxford Torpids" that "St. John's bumped Magdalen at the start and Magdalen bumped Jesus at the finish."

THE PROSECUTIONS IN SWEDEN.

WE have received from our good friend, Captain Otto Thomson, letters and papers which enable us to give a further account of the progress of the blasphemy trials in Sweden.

On the 8th of March the adjourned trial of Mr. Victor Lennstrand took place, the charge being that his lecture "Why I attack Christianity" contained blasphemous expressions against God. The judge acted in a most arbitrary manner. As an instance of how a judge may conduct himself in a Swedish court, we give the following extract from the verbatim report:—Lennstrand had asked to be allowed, according to law, to cross-examine the witnesses. "You have done it," shouted the judge. "No," he replied. "You don't think so, but I think so," said the judge. "I request that it may be entered in the protocol of the court that I have not been permitted to put questions to the witnesses. I am supposed to have such a right, as they in their evidence have touched on several points." "You have heard all about it," bullied the judge. "No I have not," repeated the accused, "I request, according to the law of the country, to be permitted to question the witnesses. Here is the paragraph, (proceeding to read it)." The judge, enraged, shouted "Silence, or it may cost you dearly (strikes the table violently while stamping on the floor with his feet)! Silence!"

Later on the judge asked Mr. Lennstrand if he had anything to say. He replied "I had much to say, but as I am denied the right of questioning the witnesses, I will not enter further into any defence." "But I say you have," interrupted the judge. "Well then, I ask according to chap. 17—" "I have already replied to that," again interrupted the judge. "But I am not permitted," "That is a lie," shouted the judge. After some wrangling, during which the judge treated Mr. Lennstrand in a most brutal manner, the judge ordered to be entered on the court protocol "*Lennstrand has nothing to say.*" Judgment was postponed to the 5th of April, when he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

In the interim Mr. Lennstrand has been actively lecturing and as actively prosecuted by the authorities. On the 1st of April he lectured before a large assembly in Stockholm on "What have the authorities won by their prosecutions?" A large body of police was present, and others were concealed in the neighboring barracks. The lecture passed off however without any disturbance. Two detectives took down the whole of the lecture in shorthand. On the 2nd of April he was acquitted by a second jury from the charge of having published a translation of Joseph Symes' pamphlet, "Who is to be damned if Christianity is true?" On the 14th he was charged before the court at Lindköping, and on the 6th before the court at Norrköping. The hearing of these charges has been postponed to the 25th and 27th of this month.

On the 7th of April he was to lecture in Eskilstuna, but the police prohibited the lecture. Lennstrand boldly announced from the steps of the building that he would arrange for a private meeting later in the day. Shortly after Mr. Lennstrand and his friends were admitted to the private garden of a courageous lady, Mrs. Matilda Freese, in the outskirts of the town. The police tried to prohibit the meeting, but Mr. Lennstrand announced to the crowd that all who entered their names as members of the Utilitarian Society would be admitted. The result was that 190 new members were enrolled. The chief of police insisted on being admitted, but Mr. Lennstrand told him it would be at his own peril if he tried to effect an entrance by force, as it was a private meeting where he had no business. Mr. Lennstrand afterwards lectured on "Free Assembly."

On the 9th of April Mr. Lennstrand was arraigned at the court of Stockholm to answer a new charge of blasphemy. The authorities at Eskilstuna are not much blamed by our Swedish friends. It appears that these prosecutions have been instigated by clerical pressure, and Swedish Freethinkers believe they will aid the progress of their movement. Evidently they have still a hard battle to fight, and we can assure them of the earnest sympathy of the Freethought party in England.

OBITUARY.—We have to record the death of Edwin Moody, bootmaker, of 108, Harrow Road, London, a veteran Freethinker, and a member of the Paddington Green Radical Club.

A SECULAR FUNERAL.

MR. WILLIAM TREVILION will be sadly missed by a wide circle of friends. He was a true Freethinker, an active supporter of the Sunday League, and a sympathiser with every progressive movement. Before his death, at the too early age of forty-six, he suffered intensely, but his end was perfectly calm. His funeral took place on Thursday, April 18, at Finchley Cemetery. The chief mourners were his father, his brothers and sisters, and his two daughters. There was a large attendance of Freethinkers from the Hall of Science, and a deputation from the Sunday League, besides a numerous body of personal friends. Mr. G. W. Foote officiated at the grave-side, and spoke the following words:—

"We are assembled at this grave to show our respect for the dead and our sympathy with the living. Our brother's body lies at our feet, and is already being resolved by Nature's subtle alchemy into the infinite universe. But all that he ever thought or said or did lives on, a part of the very atmosphere of our own lives. We cannot, therefore, say he is utterly dead; and the statement would be false while he lives in the memory of one loving heart.

"Here, while consigning his mortal part to Mother Earth, we may solemnly, and without hypocrisy, pay him a last tribute of esteem. He was a good son, a good husband, a good father, a loyal friend, a just citizen, an honorable member of the human family. He had the sense to think for himself, and the courage to act on his convictions. He was true to himself and consequently true to others. He was one of those who brighten the world by their presence. Being human, he was not faultless; yet, sharing the frailties to which the purest flesh is heir, he so lived that many called him 'friend' and no man 'enemy.'

"We are not pouring flatteries into the dull, cold ear of death. He cannot reward us, he cannot hear us. We are speaking the sentiments of our hearts, and doing to the dead that final justice which we might wish done to ourselves.

"That those who loved him, whose he was, and who were his, should mourn his loss is natural. The beloved face is gone from the home, the flame-light of the sacred hearth plays upon it no more, and often the bereaved ones will yearn

for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.

Yet love is its own exceeding great reward. There is a certain sweetness in the very bitterness of such a sorrow, and we are constrained to admit in the depths of grief that

'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

"We must guard against our sorrow becoming selfish. We should not indulge 'the luxury of woe,' or spend our days in unprofitable mourning for the unreturning dead. Not we alone taste of sorrow. Death is the common lot of all who live, and the fatal shears slit the thin-spun thread of our existence, whether we dwell in hovels or in palaces. While we stand here some are being born and some are dying. It is foolish to cry 'Never was sorrow like unto my sorrow,' and cherish grief so as to unnerve ourselves for the work of life. The very dead, could they do so, would reprove us; would tell us that all must taste the saltness of tears; would bid us behold worse miseries than our own, and alleviate them; would remind us that life is for the living, and solemnly warn us that love for the departed is best shown by loving deeds to those that remain.

"Our brother is dead, but he does not suffer. Pain and sorrow are to him as if they had never been. He does not ask our pity or our grief. Nature gave him birth, and her bosom is now the pillow of his dreamless sleep. Death was to him without terror. He knew and scorned the wild conjectures of ignorance, and the calculated teachings of imposture. And as he met death calmly, let us leave him with like confidence. We do not dogmatise on death. We know nothing. No voice breaks the silence of the tomb. But we have cast aside the evil fears of future agony. We do not believe that the universe is governed by an almighty gaoler, who imprisons and tortures his children. We leave our dead to his repose, and through the soft stillness we hear only a whisper of 'Peace.'

Mr. Foote then read the well-known conclusion of Bryant's *Thanatopsis*, and when the coffin was lowered into the grave he repeated the last lines of Shirley's great lyric—

All heads must come
To the cold tomb;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

JESUS CHRIST INTERVIEWED.

(By our own Reporter.)

HAVING heard on good authority that Jesus had temporarily taken lodgings in Jerusalem Court, St. John's Square, we at once sent our reporter to discover his exact whereabouts. After some difficulty he was found to reside in a small room on the fifth floor of a very old house in that locality. No doubt he lived as near the sky as possible in case of any emergency, or he might want to leave for his heavenly mansion without settling the rent for his earthly abode.

Our reporter having been shown his room, knocked at the door, and in answer to a rather sepulchral "Come in, please," timidly entered. A strange-looking individual met his gaze. He had long curly hair, expressive eyes, but his nasal organ was of the usual Jewish type. Altogether he fully answered to the description privately given to our reporter, and after noticing that he still had holes in the palms of his hands, the *Freethinker* man was fully satisfied that he stood in the presence of Jesus Christ. He had just finished writing a letter, which our reporter afterwards learnt was an account of his day's work, which a few minutes later he despatched to heaven by a holy carrier pigeon.

Jesus Christ seemed highly pleased at receiving a visit from our reporter, and offered him the only chair in the room, and seated himself on the rickety old table on which he had just been writing, and agreed to answer any reasonable question put to him.

"I should like to ask why you have come down to earth this time in so quiet and unostentatious a manner?" queried the *Freethinker* man.

"Well you see," answered Jesus Christ, "people are becoming more enlightened, and if I was to go forth in the streets and declare I was the Savior of the World I should be immediately run in as a lunatic. I have come on earth to watch more closely the doings of the religious folks, for I begin to think the majority of them are merely hypocrites; and I find that nearly all the worst crimes that occur are committed by those people who are religious to the backbone."

"Could you not still watch all their goings on from your throne in heaven?"

"No, my dear fellow. I am, like my heavenly Father, getting rather aged, and my sight is not near so good as it once was. It was compulsory or I should not have landed on this earth again until the Day of Judgment. I had enough of it last time I can assure you. Therefore I now go about in all manner of disguises, although I mostly dress as a Salvationist to throw off suspicion, and to particularly watch their performances. I am soon off to one of their all-night meetings, for I have not been able to closely watch their antics from heaven as they turn the gas out in their halls on these occasions. Very bad accounts of these all-night meetings have come under our notice. Of course I always wear gloves when I go out or else people might begin to wonder if they saw the holes in my hands. And I may tell you that I now wear a wig, for you must know that I am nearly two thousand years old, and I am getting rather bald."

"May I ask if it is true that God is your father?" asked our reporter; "you doubtless are aware that many sceptics disbelieve that statement."

"Now I told you I don't mind answering anything within reason, but it is no good asking me what I know about as much as yourself. If you like to ask anything else I am willing to tell you."

"Excuse me asking, but why did you turn the money-changers out of the Temple and overturn their tables?"

"Well, to tell you the honest truth, our exchequer was rather low, and we thought it would be an excellent plan to replenish it. I was dead against doing anything of the sort, but I was compelled to or else my disciples would have forsaken me, as we were terribly hard up."

"Is it true that you cursed a fig tree because it had no fruit out of season, and it withered away?"

"That's all moonshine, my young friend; the truth is this, we were rather famished, and had been marching a whole day to where we knew this fig tree was situated, and when we came to it we found it had withered. It was enough to make a saint curse, and I may add that it was time for figs."

"Was the wine which you made at the marriage feast fermented or unfermented?"

"I really can't tell you, my friend, but I know this much, that some of the guests got extremely merry after they had a good swig at it. I am not at all ashamed of having performed this miracle, there is no harm in drinking in moderation; you can excuse people drinking a little extra at a wedding."

"You promised to come again to this world in pomp and glory. When will that time be?"

"I must not tell you the exact date, or else some of the good Christians will be swindling people by selling their goods and chattels and the leases of their houses. But I may just as well inform you that we have altered our redemption programme. I am going to have a son born in this world to give the people another chance. He is to be born in London, and I am going to persuade pa to let it be in Belgravia. I mean to patronise an aristocratic family. I cannot allow my son to be born in a stable, for it is not particularly savory there."

"Will the child be born of a virgin?" said the *Freethinker* man.

"Certainly; don't you think such a thing possible in Belgravia? And besides people will bow and scrape to a young aristocrat, and give credence to everything he tells them. He will be an excellent preacher, and be able to perform no end of miracles—the first of which will be to feed about ten thousand of the unemployed in Trafalgar Square, and thus make a name for himself. He will be supported by all the clergy, and it is expected that he will unite all religions under one banner, and thus cause less religious strife. This will be the final effort to redeem the world. My son will be crucified between two thieves like I was, and will rise again from the dead even after he has been publicly cremated, and all who will not believe in him then will assuredly be damned, especially every reviler and SCOFFER."

REVIEWS.

Present Day Tracts, Vol. X. Religious Tract Society.—This series is, from the orthodox standpoint, one of the best which is being issued from the Christian press. The writers are generally eminent in their particular fields, and usually write with civility if not always with candor. In the present volume there are essays on St. Paul's Four Epistles by Dr. Godet, Moral Difficulties of the Old Testament by Dr. Conder, Unity of Faith by Dr. Stoughton, The Family by Dr. Blaikie, Socialism and Christianity by Dr. Kaufmann, and the Old Testament Scriptures by R. B. Girdlestone. We intend to deal with one or two of them separately.

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Essays and Addresses. By Bernard Bosanquet, M.A. Swan Sonnenschein & Co.—A valuable collection of essays and addresses. The volume is marked by conscientious thought on every page. Mr. Bosanquet has an inclination towards Socialism; but, on the other hand, he dreads "the cutting off individual initiative outside certain duties specified by rule." Some of the religious and philosophic articles are extremely interesting, especially that on "How to Read the New Testament." But the author should not rely on Westcott for the dates of the Gospels, though fortunately this does not invalidate his general positions.

Ecce Deus! or, a New God. By F. J. Gould, London: Watts and Co. (1d).—Mr. Gould writes ably and vigorously, and refutes the customary arguments of theology. But he must pardon us for smiling at his own picture of a brand-new Goulesque god, who is as much a fanciful idol as any Chinese joss.

Miracles. (1d.) by the same writer is a more satisfactory performance, and we trust it will have a good circulation.

PROFANE JOKES.

Bright boy (to, visiting pastor): "Now try it on me. Ma says you can put anyone to sleep in five minutes."

A Scotch clergyman, preparing a piper for a tract which he was about to read to him, asked: "My friend, do you know the chief end of man?" The piper innocently answered: "Na; I dinna mind the chune. Can ye no whistle it?"

Preacher (at waifs' mission):—"Yes, my dear children, you little know of the blessed influences which now surround you. My son is here with me to-day, and I will ask him for a leaf from his own experience. Stand up, my son, and speak so all the children can hear you. How were you led to the Sabbath-school?"—Preacher's son (fervently): "By the ear."

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