

ENLARGED TO TWELVE PAGES.

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



## MEEK MOSES.

“And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that . . . he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.—EXODUS II., 11, 12.

1. Moses sees the Fight.
3. Moses smites him.

2. Moses looks round.
4. Moses is off.

“Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.—NUMBERS XII., 3.

## LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—III.

(ON “THE ATONEMENT.”—(Concluded.)  
To the Bishop of Peterborough.

You make a mystery also of conscience, this monitor “which blames us when we transgress, which punishes us for it, too, by a very sore penalty.” Not in all cases, my lord. Remove the fear of discovery, and the dread of punishment, and there is a small residuum of conscience in millions of Christians. I have yet to learn that the clergy themselves are more sensitive than their neighbors. Thousands of Church livings are bought and sold in the market as openly as any other merchandise, yet every clergyman, on taking a benefice, solemnly swears that he has not been a party to any simoniacal contract. Do you mean to assert, my lord, that this perjury causes the hypocrites a single pang?

Nc. 413.

You desire the sceptic to inform you why man blames himself for wrong-doing, and why he does not blame himself for being stunted, sickly, dull, or stupid. You ask how it is he feels no remorse because he cannot write like Shakespeare or paint like Raphael. Does it not occur to you that conscience deals with conduct, and that conduct is determined by motives? One element of conscience, and perhaps the strongest, is susceptibility to public opinion; but public opinion, while it may induce a man to act in one way rather than another, cannot alter the limits of his nature. If stature, health, good looks, and ability were amenable to motives, conscience would have asserted its supremacy over them. We only blame ourselves for what is blame-worthy in others, and we reserve our reproaches for what is alterable. We do not blame a chimney-pot for falling upon us, because it is useless. For the same reason we do not blame a man for being short

or ugly. If our reproaches had any effect, there would soon be a forceful pressure of public opinion on little ill-lodging people.

I have said, my lord, that we only blame ourselves for what is blameworthy in others, and I add that what condemns is in both cases the same. "I" and "me" are very convenient terms, but they sanction a great deal of nonsense in philosophy and theology. It is "I" who am selfish and "I" who am generous. It is "I" who do wrong and "I" who repent. But this "I" is a very complex being, and in reality it is different parts of my nature that act in these various ways. I have personal impulses and social instincts. When I sin against the law of reason and humanity my better feelings condemn the transgression, and my remorse will be proportionate to their strength. Were I to strike my child in a moment of anger (I have never done it, and I hope I never shall), I should have little to fear from public opinion, which still sanctions such outrages; but I should suffer remorse, because my love for my child, and my sense of personal dignity, would utter their emphatic protest when my passion subsided.

Where is the mystery, my lord, and why do you assume that the Materialist is unable to account for the facts? Why should you tell us that God has designed the sting of conscience as a punishment for disobedience? Is it a mark of divine wisdom that the good should feel it most and the bad least? Would a cattle drover prod the swift ox and leave the slow ungoaded?

Recurring to *sin*, my lord, I see you define it as "an offence against a person." I agree with you; but I differ from you when you say the person is God. I cannot sin against God, because I cannot injure him; although he can sin against me, for he can make me happy or miserable. I can only sin against my fellow men. This idea does not seem to have entered your mind. You refer me to God for forgiveness. A cheap philosophy, my lord! What of those I have wronged? Were I a pious bank director, who had feathered his own nest and ruined thousands, I might obtain God's forgiveness, but would it be any reparation to those I had robbed? Would it restore the suicide to his happy home? Would it drown the curses of my victims?

You admit yourself "how unavailing penitence must be to remove the consequences of transgression." But you draw a distinction between forgiveness as an *act* and forgiveness as a *sentiment*. Nevertheless you see that this will not serve your purpose, for the doctrine of the Atonement involves the remission of penalties. You therefore fall back upon "something strange, wonderful, not easy to understand or believe." You assert that Christ procures actual forgiveness for us "in some mysterious way." You say it is effected by a suspension of the laws of nature, which "in some way" withdraws us from "what would otherwise be their inevitable and necessary operation." In other words, my lord, you take refuge in a miracle, where I decline to follow you. You begin by appealing to reason, and end by renouncing it. No wonder you exclaim, a little later, when dealing with an objection, that "this is merely an intellectual difficulty!"

When we plead to God for mercy, you tell us that "our cry is helped, is made more prevailing, by the pleading for us of another, and that other Christ." You say that this is neither immoral nor absurd, for "friendly intercession is a familiar fact of our human experience," and if it is neither unnatural nor unworthy as between man and man "why should it be so as between man and God?" Do you not see that the illustration is a poor compliment to the Deity? You make the Son more merciful than the Father. And as, according to the articles of your Church, it is all settled beforehand, the whole business is a divine comedy. I do not understand how "there

may be a wrath of God that is kindled by the flame of love," but if you choose to picture the Father "nursing his wrath to keep it warm," and the Son cooling him down and coaxing him into a good temper, I have no right to quarrel with you. England is a free country—especially for Christians.

"Our repentance," you say, "could not avail to obtain our pardon were it not for what Christ has done and is doing for us." But what has he done, and what is he doing? He is the "propitiation for our sins." But what does this mean? You say it will "help us little to have recourse to grammar and dictionary." Perhaps so. But would it not help us to have recourse to the language of Peter and Paul? You studiously avoid their utterances, and in my opinion you do so because they teach a doctrine of the Atonement which you desire to conceal. You repudiate their plainest teaching. "Where," you ask, "in the whole New Testament is it alleged that Christ died in order to appease an angry God? Nowhere!" Turn, my lord, to Romans v., 9, and read—"Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," or, according to the Revised Version, from "the wrath of God." Again you say that "this idea of Christ suffering the same, or an equivalent, penalty with that which is due by us, and this suffering being a satisfaction to the justice of God, is wholly indefensible." Now Peter says (1st, iii., 18) "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." Paul says (1st Cor., vi., 20) "For ye are bought with a price." He repeats this sentence in the next chapter. If words have any meaning your "indefensible" doctrine is supported by Scripture. Your own words that "in the sacrifice of Christ's death there was an atoning, a propitiatory efficacy," really concede the whole case you would dispute. You hedge and trim, and talk mysteriously, but you finally settle down on the good old orthodox doctrine; the doctrine of Peter and Paul; the doctrine of your standard authorities, Beveridge and Pearson; the doctrine of your Book of Homilies; the doctrine of the eleventh Article of the Church of England.

Adam fell, and we, his posterity, inherit his sinful nature, which, as your ninth Article declares, "in every person born into this world deserveth God's wrath and damnation." Christ came to be crucified, as your second Article declares, in order "to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men." According to Scripture we must be saved by the name of Jesus or not at all; wherefore your articles (10, 13, 17, and 18) distinctly affirm that only those are saved who are "chosen in Christ," that our best deeds without "the grace of Christ" are displeasing to God, and that the noblest men, outside the Christian pale, whether heathen or unbelievers, are doomed to everlasting hell. Your heart, my lord, or your prudence, revolts against this hideous doctrine. But why did you sign the Thirty-nine Articles? Why do you take £4,500 a year to teach what you cannot believe? Would it not be more manly to teach it plainly or disown it publicly?

You tell me that "in some way Christ's death has removed an obstacle to our forgiveness;" you say you admit "an Atonement" but no "particular theory of the Atonement;" you say "we are wise if we refrain from at all attempting to define;" and finally you appeal to Faith to justify your "strange mysterious, difficult, perplexing dogma." Why should I believe what is strange, mysterious, difficult, and perplexing? You have many good reasons for pretending to—a bishopric, a seat in the House of Lords, social distinction, and £4,500 a year. But what reason have I—a poor, persecuted Freethinker—to believe what I cannot understand; or what, so far as I do understand it, I utterly detest and abhor?

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

## DID JESUS DIE ON THE CROSS?

MR. VOYSEY is one of those who, while they have utterly broken with the old faith, yet endeavor to cling to as much of it as possible, even although the attempt puts them in danger of occupying the ridiculous position of those who sit on two stools at once. This appears even in his retention of the title "Reverend," and still more strongly in a number of his "Theistic Sermons," which appear week by week, and which often contain matter well worth attention.

A sermon (No. 17, vol. xii.) on The Resurrection, preached at the Theistic Church, April 28, and an accompanying tract "Some Remarks on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," illustrates Mr. Voysey's proclivities. He disbelieves the story of the resurrection, yet he credits the re-appearance of Jesus after the crucifixion, for he says:

"I, for one, declare readily that the Apostles not only believed in the resurrection, but could not help doing so; for they had taken for granted—without any proof—that Jesus had really died on the cross. This was never by them for a moment questioned. None of them had witnessed his crucifixion except John, whose presence is only recorded in the fourth Gospel. They took his re-appearance for a real resurrection, and even Jesus himself might well have thought himself dead after so long a swoon."

Of course, if one has a theory a good deal may be found in support of it, and Mr. Voysey contrives by this theory to account for the otherwise unpardonable neglect on the part of Jesus to show himself to Pilate and the rulers of the Jews. He urges that crucifixion was not necessarily fatal. It is recorded of a nun that she had been crucified twenty-six times. Pilate was friendly to Jesus, and "very likely gave secret orders to the soldiers not to break the legs of Jesus, but to rescue him if possible." The story of the piercing of the side is only found in John, and "if it only took place on the right side and not on the left was not necessarily fatal." Mr. Voysey further finds that the tomb must have been large enough to admit "plenty of air, and room to administer restoratives and food to the reviving occupants.

"When the tomb was visited at early morn on the third day, it only contained the burial clothes neatly folded together, which showed that no haste had been needful and that an attendant had brought raiment in which Jesus could be disguised. It was in a garden, and we read that when Mary Magdalene saw him she mistook him for the gardener, no doubt owing to his dress, and she did not recognise him till he spoke.

"Of course as it would have been unsafe to remain in Jerusalem. Jesus says to Mary. 'Tell my disciples that I go before them into Galilee, there shall they see me.' So he fled into Galilee, and never appeared among his disciples except after nightfall, or in places with closed doors and in the greatest possible secrecy.

"During the walk to Emmaus on the evening of the day of his first re-appearance he overtakes two of his disciples who have no suspicion who he is, because he is disguised and only reveals himself to them by some sign with which they are familiar."

In these and other particulars Mr. Voysey finds evidences that Jesus did not die on the cross, and that Pilate had connived at his escape from actual death.

But if Jesus did not die it is surely a fair question to ask what became of him. Did he retire in Galilee and go back to the carpenter's shop, or did he live in solitude for the rest of his days! Was he the same Jesus who, according to Josephus, cried Woe, woe, to Jerusalem, who was whipped till his bones were bare, yet made no supplication for himself, but continued to cry woe, woe, to Jerusalem until killed at the siege by a stone from a catapult?\*

Mr. Voysey may, of course, refer to Irenæus, who

makes out that Jesus lived to be over fifty years of age.† But if Irenæus was right in this particular the gospel history is falsified. Nor is it indeed possible to save it by any attempt to accept only the possible and exclude the miraculous. The supernatural element is so interwoven with the story that to leave it out is like the play of Hamlet with the character of the Prince of Denmark omitted. Any such attempt is to our minds but a waste of ingenuity. Every one of the gospel writers makes out that Jesus died on the cross. To suppose that the fact was that he did not die does not in the least save the credit of the only parties who have any evidence to give in the matter. It seems to us far more sensible to say that the whole stories are so wrapped up in fable, that it is impossible to say what basis of historical fact lay at the bottom of them, if any.

But, argues Mr. Voysey, there is "no other way of accounting for the re-appearance of Christ and the belief of the Apostles that he had risen from the dead." Reminding Mr. Voysey that what we have to do with is not a real appearance but contradictory stories of a re-appearance, it seems to us that there is no necessity of accounting for these. Superstition in all ages has invented such stories. Many others beside Christ were fabled to have risen from the dead, and it is more to the point that a number of the early Christians themselves thought that Christ was only a phantom. It is for the Christians who believe in miracles to adduce the evidence to substantiate them, not for Freethinkers to accept their documents and try to construct some plausible theory of fact out of them.

J. M. WHEELER.

## 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.

## REVIEWS.

*Against Agnosticism.* By "Humanitas." Freethought Publishing Company (2d.). A vigorous defence of Atheism as against Agnosticism. The writer holds that we are entitled to say, "There is no God"; though, by the way, Atheism has never been understood to make that assertion. "Humanitas" thinks for himself, and his writings are always suggestive.

*Our Brother Christ.* By F. J. Gould. Watts and Co. (1d.) Mr. Gould is able, but not always convincing. The present pamphlet is not without merit, but the construction of an ideal Christ out of selected fragments of the gospels is quite unscientific. The materials for a real life of Christ do not exist. Let the truth be admitted, and these fanciful pictures will disappear.

*Olden Times and Modern Chimes.* By G. Minson. Watts and Co. Mr. Minson's verses are not highly poetical, but they are bright and vigorous, and effectually satirise a great deal of the humbug and hypocrisy of the age.

The free railroad-pass abuse has obtained such a hold on the Ohio Legislature that the House Chaplain felt called upon to pray recently: "Oh, Lord, teach the members to remember and to know that there are no free passes to heaven!"

\* *Wars of the Jews*, bk. vi., chap. 5-63. George Solomon considers this the only true historical Jesus. See his book *The Jesus of History and the Jesus of Tradition Identified*.

† *On Heresies*, bk. ii., chap. 22.

## ACID DROPS.

"Blessed be ye poor" is a paying gospel. The Rev. John Hall, a Dublin boy, now pastor of the Fifth-avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, is said to receive a stipend of £5,000 a year, and donations from his admirers run his annual income up to £20,000. According to report he has accumulated £200,000 and lives like a prince. His congregation includes a number of millionaires, and is a sublime illustration of that glorious Sermon on the Mount. Jesus Christ was a poor creature—from a business point of view—in comparison with the bosses of some of his gospel-shops.

Another illustration of the Sermon on the Mount! The Rev. Donald MacCullum's congregation, wishing to make him a present on his leaving Tírree, settled upon a diamond ring. Donald will now be able to preach "Love not the world nor the things of the world," and emphasise it with his scintillating carbon.

According to the *Christian World*, the Rev. James Legge has been telling the Leeds Congregationalists that "the Christian man does not judge simply and solely by evidence" Hear, hear! Perfectly true! Judging by evidence is mere reason and sanity. The Christian man goes in for faith and insanity.

In the same chapel, on the evening of the same day, the Rev. J. B. Meharry proved himself a logician of the Legge school by telling his hearers that "No Christian man ought to accept the theory that he is descended from apes." Never mind the evidence; believe what you ought to believe; and what you ought to believe is what we tell you—we the Lord's anointed. Ah, yes; and some of them are anointed rogues.

We cheerfully admit, O Meharry, that *some* Christians don't seem descended from apes. Some of them seem descended from wolves. They are ravenous for prey, but are too cowardly to fight single, and hunt in packs. Woe to the "infidel" who falls into their red jaws!

Dr. Marcus Dods has published a book on the First Epistle to the Corinthians. We haven't read it—there are so many volumes of theology issued every week! But we observe, from a review in the *Christian World*, that he trots out that silly dilemma which every sceptics smiles at as perfectly harmless. Deny the Resurrection, says Dr. Dods, and you are face to face with the astounding miracle that so many witnesses should all have been deceived. He forgets that the same poor argument could be used against him by the Catholic Church, whose miracles are supported by more witnesses than any miracle in the New Testament. Dr. Dods says "nonsense!" to the Catholic miracles, and on exactly the same ground we say "nonsense!" to the Protestant miracles.

"So many witnesses," says Dr. Dods. It is a good telling phrase, likely to impose on the credulous; but Dr. Dods would be puzzled to discover the first-hand evidence of a single one of them. The argument is solemn humbug from beginning to end.

Here he is again! The latest convert of the Salvation Army in Dundee is "a man who has for fourteen years been an active exponent of Atheism." Who is the gentleman? We have readers in Dundee and shall be glad to hear from one of them about this "conversion." Booth has bagged a few Atheists before, but they didn't stand examination.

Down at St. Ives parish church there has been the annual raffle for Bibles. Boys and girls cast dice for them in the church, and the ceremony closed with a hymn and the benediction. The affair is denounced in several Christian journals. They forget that casting lots is a good old Bible practice. It was actually resorted to, with the approval of the Holy Ghost, when a fresh apostle was elected in the place of Mr. Judas deceased.

Dr. Parker has been preaching on "The Larger Hope." Isn't his salary big enough? Or does it refer to his un-

successful effort to follow Ward Beecher at Plymouth Church? No. The Larger Hope means that we are none of us going to hell after all. The establishment exists—for the present, but the old directories are all wrong. Letters intended for the dead will have to be addressed elsewhere.

Dr. Parker evidently doesn't feel so comfortable in the City Temple since the Calvinistic nature of the Temple trust deeds has been pointed out. He has several times alluded to the possible cessation of his ministry and only wants a good call from some district where the loaves and fishes are plentiful to resign forthwith.

"Patience may be claimed as a specially Christian virtue. It is not found outside." This modest utterance is taken from the *Christian World*. It would do the writer good to reflect that Freethinkers sometimes show a good deal of patience. The Editor of this journal, for instance, had to wait twelve months for a door to open. Which showed the most patience, the Freethinker who waited all that time or the Christians who held the key?

The Christians were very patient when they burnt the writings of Celsus and Porphyry. They were very patient when they murdered Hypatia. They were very patient when they tore down the Pagan temples. They were very patient when they punished heresy with death. They were very patient when they robbed and massacred the Jews. They were very patient when they invented the rack, the wheel, and thumbscrews, and a hundred other instruments of torture. They were very patient when they cut out Vanic's tongue, and burnt him and Giordano Bruno to ashes. They were very patient when they burnt Servetus with green wood to prolong his agony. They were very patient when they slandered Voltaire—in fact, their patience in this line is not yet exhausted. They were very patient with Thomas Paine. They were very patient with Richard Carlile, whom they locked up for nine years. They were very patient with Charles Southwell and George Jacob Holyoake. They were very patient with Mr. Bradlaugh, and very, very patient with the conductors of the *Freethinker*, and very, very, very patient with Mrs. Besant, whom they relieved of the painful duty of bringing up her own child. Oh yes, they are patient, they are! Christian patience is only equalled by Christian charity; the two together are enough to blast the world, and they did until the world objected to being blasted any longer.

"I have known a minister of the gospel," says a correspondent in the *Christian World*, "who could preserve a saintly expression before his congregation, behave like a maniac in his family, probably by way of natural compensation for the enforced sanctity." Moral—don't be deceived by pulpit faces; follow the man of God home, and see what he is like when he works off his old Adam.

Daisy Challis is now under the daisies. She was an infant, and had the misfortune to belong to parents who are Peculiar People. The pious couple prayed to the Lord and the baby died, and there was an unexpected funeral at Bow. They told the coroner, "The Lord looks after his own." That gentleman replied, "The Lord did not prevent your child dying; why should he save you?" "I don't know," said Mrs. Challis, "but he does." Her baby is dead, but still the Lord *does* save. Faith is superior to facts.

The newspapers report a "startling case" of faith-healing at Lewes. Mr. R. Rummery, of that town, recovered health and sight while a prayer meeting was held at his bedside, after a few drops of oil had been poured on his head by way of "anointing." We expect the yarn is just as true as many others that have done duty in former years. Is there any reader of the *Freethinker* in the neighborhood who will take the trouble to sift the matter?

Many Salvationists believe in faith-healing, and some pretend to have effected cures; yet, somehow, the little game doesn't answer in Mrs. Booth's case. She is undergoing scientific treatment for her cancer. Electric operations have afforded her such relief that it is hoped there may be no need for surgery.

This Rummery case turns out to be "rummy." Dr. C. T. Griffiths, writing to the *Standard* from Bath, knocks the bottom out of this "faith healing." "I may add, he says, "that from a personal acquaintance with Mr. Rummery's symptoms, and from all I had observed in his case while an in-patient here, the result which I am pleased to see has come to pass has not led me to share in the amazement which seems to have taken place in the Sussex town. His case was not deemed a serious one on admission, and in three weeks he was discharged 'much better.'" Rummery, therefore, goes to the Royal Mineral Water Hospital, at Bath, gets better, and then goes home to Lewes and puts it all down to "faith."

Cardinal Manning has received into the Catholic Church a batch of seven priests—the Revs. C. W. Townsend, S. T. Sproston, W. H. A. Vallance, A. Clarke, L. Leslie, A. Beauchamp, and A. Lessetter. This is a slight indication of what Ritualism would mean in the event of Disestablishment.

Cardinal Manning boasts that while in 1850 there were only 46 Roman Catholic churches in his diocese, there are now 123. This is progress, no doubt; although it is mostly due to the increase of population and Irish immigration. Popery, however, is a long way off the conquest of London. It is only one sect among many, and while this division lasts Freethinkers are comparatively safe. If the Churches made up their quarrel and formed one organisation, and that organisation opened its big mouth, the Freethinkers would go down its gullet without damping its appetite.

Archbishop Benson gave a garden party on Saturday, June 22, and the grounds of Lambeth Palace were thronged with fashionable visitors. What a commotion there would have been if Jesus had walked in with Mary Magdalene!

Canon Cook is dead, leaving behind a snug berth, with a good salary. He was head *chef* of the "Speaker's Commentary," a pious enterprise in which learning was judiciously subordinated to orthodoxy. It was intended as an antidote to the poison of scientific Biblical criticism, but somehow it didn't stop the mischief.

Poor old Jehovah! The tower of Babel was nothing to the Eiffel tower, yet his godships thunderbolts do not rain down on the proud edifice. He cannot even afflict the people with a diversity of speech for well-nigh every language under heaven is already gabbled in the streets of Paris. "Go to, now," he exclaims, and shakes his senile head. He mumbles curses, and dreams of the old days when he played the devil with his presumptuous subjects.

What next, and next? Madame Blavatsky's magazine *Lucifer*, for June 15th, contains an article entitled "Practical Work for Theosophists," signed "Annie Besant, F.T.S.," the latter initials meaning, we presume, Fellow of the Theosophical Society.

Mrs. Besant says: "The subtle metaphysics of Theosophy will attract but the few; few again are likely to feel the call to climb the rugged paths to those heights on which the Masters sit serene." We sincerely hope Mrs. Besant does not feel the call to go Mahatma hunting as the condition of her chelaship.

The rector of Llandillo is a 'cute Churchman. He offers to give £2,000 to the cause of education in the parish on condition that the School Board is abolished. That is, he offers a bribe of £2,000 to secure the Church the monopoly of education! Judas was a perfect simpleton in comparison with some later apostles.

Fire in the church! Such was the cry recently at Haverstock Hill, London, where the Presbyterian gospel-shop was full of blazes. Science, in the shape of fire engines, had to extinguish the flames which the accumulated prayers of the congregation did not prevent.

Last Sunday morning the Rev. H. R. Haweis preached on "Peace and War" for the Peace Society. The Bible is such a curious mixture that the preacher could easily find a good text for each half of the sermon.

It appears from the American papers, that a large number of the people in the vicinity of Johnstown have lost faith in Providence since the burning, drowning and maiming of so many thousands during the flood. In some cases they have burned their bibles and driven the clergymen from them. And in truth what a pitiful farce it is for any sky-pilot in the presence of such a calamity to talk of God's mercy, and how no sparrow falls to the ground without his watchful care. We wonder the facts of life do not everywhere lead intelligent people to scorn the vain sophistry of the theologians.

"If ever the God whom the world worships as the controller of all events had an opportunity to interfere for a good purpose, that opportunity was presented at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, last week. Thousands of people of that city went about their accustomed ways unconscious that a vast volume of water was about to burst upon and overwhelm them. The deity that watches the sparrow's fall had no eye for those beings whom he had created in his own image. He gave no warning, and twelve thousand lives were the cost of his negligence. Then when the disaster fell he stretched forth no helping hand. Flood and fire, woe and desolation, and no aid from the source from which, the Christians tell us, all good things come. Who knows how many prayers went up from the struggling mass of humanity that drifted away to death upon the Johnstown flood? We cannot tell, but we know those prayers were not answered. And while thousands of his children were being sacrificed, this God, if we accept the Christian picture, sat idly upon a jasper throne somewhere above the clouds, and saints of all the ages stood before him twanging olden harps and singing the praises of his mercy and glorious justice. It seems to us that there is nothing in the universe quite so useless as God, unless it is the impostors who pretend to be his mouthpieces."—*Freethought*.

Twelve hundred people have been burnt to death in China, and ten thousand families are homeless by the burning of a city. Of course the Lord doesn't hear the prayers of those heathens.

The Bishop of Limerick claims to be the grand boycotter of his diocese. The parishioners at Knockea objected to sit in the "grabber's gallery" with Ryan. But the Bishop will not stand this. Not that he objects to boycotting, only he wants it done by holy Mother Church. He has therefore boycotted the whole blessed parish, and shut up the gospel-shop until the faithful learn their lesson. "Boycotting is mine, I will boycott," quoth the Bishop of Limerick.

The *Cumbria Daily Leader* reports a lecture by the Rev. J. E. Manning, M.A., on "What do we know of the Earliest Manuscripts of the New Testament?" The true answer to this question would be "Nothing," as the originals are confessedly lost. Mr. Manning admits the early apostles probably preached, and did not write; but of course he has a deal to say about early versions as enabling us to determine the right reading, etc. But these versions are vastly different, and some authorities prefer one reading and others another. This seems to us a peculiar method for a divine being to make known his revelation to all men. But the Lord's ways are not like men's ways.

The Rev. Richard Glover, vicar of St. Luke's, West Holloway, has been preaching on John xiv. 12. He says that those who believe in Christ do actually perform greater miracles than Christ did. But since he well knows they cannot do as promised in Mark xvi, 18, and take up serpents and drink any deadly thing without hurt, he says the great miracle is conversion. Such miracles as turning water into wine were gross and carnal, but Peter converted three thousand at once—"a far greater miracle than his Master ever effected." This is putting Jesus in a back seat with a vengeance. We suppose Mr. Glover's congregation has got beyond caring for the gross and carnal miracles, though they have yet to learn that there are no more miracles in the moral world than in the physical.

The goodness of God to all his children is always receiving fresh illustrations. Inquiries into the Ganjam famine

show that fully five per cent. of the population are in a state of dangerous emaciation. It is moreover estimated that 20,000 will need relief work for four months if there is a good monsoon, and 40,000—half of whom are children—gratuitous relief. If the monsoon fails fully 100,000 will require relief.

The Rev. W. J. Wainwright, of Aspatria, Cumberland, was found dead in his bed under mysterious circumstances. The rev. gentleman who was a widower and lived in the house with a servant and his children, went to bed at his usual time, and to all appearance in good health and spirits. Two bottles which had contained laudanum were found by his bedside. Is this one more fact for Talmage?

At Nottingham one of the S. A. has been fined ten shillings or seven days' imprisonment for seizing the head of the chief constable's horse, and turning it aside, while the "Army" band passed. He elected to go to prison and will probably appear among the 200 martyrs for conscience sake who are paraded by the General.

The Corpus Christi festival was made the occasion of a fatal riot by the miners at Kladno in Bohemia.

The parishioners of Handforth are complaining of having to pay tithes to the rector of Cheadle, while they have also to support a minister of their own. Some time ago a chapel-of-ease was erected at Handforth to which the Rector nominated a curate, contributing towards his stipend £50 a year. To this the district which pays tithes to the amount of from £110 to £120, added another twenty pounds. But an Order in Council created the chapel-of-ease into a separate church, and the rector discontinued his annual contribution, while nevertheless retaining his tithes and his right to nominate whom he pleased to the new church.

The Rev. Mr. Gillings, of Workington, thinks he is deputy God Almighty of the parish. He dismissed the Sunday school superintendent because he had criticised the high-handed proceedings of Gillings towards the vestry. The teachers of the school proposed to hold a meeting of sympathy with the superintendent, whereupon the man of God wrote that he would *prosecute them for trespass* if they ventured on such a step. This letter arrived too late. The meeting was held, and Gillings is going to place the matter in his solicitor's hands.

A writer in *Life and Work*, vouched for by the editor as being well known in the Church of Scotland, gives "A Personal Experience" of the power of prayer. It appears that he received a telegram informing him his dear son was returning from Australia very ill. He prayed that the son might be spared to return home, and this he did, dying three days after his return. Now, says the father, the ship gained full three days in returning home, and "Had it not been for this phenomenal rate of sailing, twelve days' distance being covered in less than nine, my boy would have died as she was entering London Docks! God used the breath of the wind and the crest of the wave as His unconscious instruments in answering the prayer he had heard." To us it only seems strange that a God who went to all this trouble in order to give the father three days with his son, should not have spared the son altogether.

Much may be said for Hospital Sunday as a device for drawing much-needed contributions to our charitable institutions. It is, however, high time that institutions subscribed to by the whole of the community should show less sectarianism in their arrangements. Anglican sisterhoods have the monopoly of nursing, and quite recently the Rev. H. T. Valentine, chaplain of London Hospital, insisted upon urging patients to confession, despite the remonstrance of the House Committee. If our hospitals are allowed to be instruments for worrying the souls, they will be less efficacious in curing the bodies of patients. Even the *Charity Record* says hospitals are established for medical treatment only; and for the purposes of experiment and to set an example to other institutions, it might be well to see whether the recovery of the patients, left entirely to the doctors, would not be quicker.

A meeting convoked by the temperance party at West Hartlepool in favor of Mr. Stevenson's Sunday Closing Bill

proved a stormy one. An amendment moved by Councillor Wilson, who reminded reverend supporters of the Bill that they only worked on one day, and that the Sabbath, was carried by a large majority.

The church which was the bulwark of slavery is the last to maintain the distinctions upon which slavery was built. Virginia Episcopalians, after a full discussion of the question, refuse to strike out the word "white" in their list of qualifications for church membership.

Faith still abounds in the Roman Catholic Church, and where faith, that is credulity, abounds, miracles are sure to follow. The Virgin Mary has been manifesting herself again in Bohemia to the benefit of the priests, and Father Larkin's faith cures are reported in the *Catholic Times* as the miracles of an age when miracles are supposed to be dead.

The poor old *Tablet* cannot get over the Giordano Bruno celebration. It is evidently disappointed that "the Whiteside saturnalia of impiety" passed over without disorder, of which it expects it will at any rate be the prelude, for it asks "Are Catholics to wait until a rabid mob, officered by the adepts of the secret society, shall burn or sack the Vatican, and have its inmates at their mercy?" Evidently the *Tablet* regrets the good old times when Rome belonged to the Pope and the priests, and all its inmates were at their mercy.

The poor Devil! Anybody may now deny his existence with impunity. Here is Miss Lucia T. Ames, in a child's book entitled *Great Thoughts for Little Thinkers*, calmly telling children there is no such being as the Devil, as though she should say "there are no bogies," and without the slightest hint that Jesus Christ and the writers of the New Testament thought otherwise. If she were to write there is no such being as God, what an outcry there would be. She would have some difficulty even in getting her work published. Yet the one is the logical counterpart of the other.

The Neo-Christian school, who make out Jesus Christ to have been a nineteenth century preacher of the broad and foggy school, and who allegorise all that is said of the Devil and his domain, rarely reflect that the same process can be applied to his antagonist, and that if Satan only represents the principle of evil, God also only represents the opposite.

Alfred Riley, aged 4, son of a Writtle laborer, died unbaptised, and the vicar of the parish refused to allow any burial rites, so it was buried like a dog. The child died from inflammation following upon an attack of measles, and the mother states that no one visited her or offered to render assistance while she had illness in her cottage, and her husband was out of work at the time. She had made arrangements for the child to be christened, but when notice was given to the clergy she was informed that it could not take place on the Sunday selected by the parents, and so it happened the child remained unbaptised. The occurrence has caused a good deal of indignation in the neighborhood.—*Star*.

A man at Springfield, Mass. who does not believe in the efficacy of prayer, offers 1000 dols. to any church congregation who will pray for a given thing and have it come to pass.

Suttee-ism dies hard. The wife of a wealthy Brahmin in Bombay, in order not to survive her husband, committed suicide by taking opium. Englishmen do not generally know that this is a religious practice. *Suttee* means "good wife," and the wife who cast herself on her husband's funeral pyre did so that her soul might accompany his in the spirit-world. These people really believe in a future life, unlike Christians, who mostly make believe. The Japanese have been known to lend money at large interest to be repaid in the "hereafter." What a solid proof of faith! Probably there isn't a Christian alive who believes up to that point.

Never deny that the Bible may be of utility. It is just discovered that many of the Bibles distributed by missionaries in China are used in the manufacture of shoe soles. Well, they benefit the Chinese sole after all.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, June 30, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., at 7.30, "God Help Us!"

July 7, Liverpool; 28, Camberwell.

Aug. 4 and 11, Camberwell.

Sept. 18 and 25, 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.

INQUIRER.—The *vesica* is an oblong figure formed by the intersection of the arcs of two circles, or it may be compared to two pointed arches joined at the centre. It is a very ancient sign of fecundity, and is the special symbol of the Virgin Mary, though it is also used as a symbol of J. C., it is said because like a fish in shape, and the letters which make up the Greek word *ιχθυσ*, are taken to mean Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the savior (see Inman's *Ancient and Modern Pagan and Christian Symbolism*). Augustine says that *ιχθυσ* is the mystical name of Christ, because he descended into the waters of this mortal life. The real reason is that the sun, a little before the Christian era, entered into the constellation of Pisces.

C. A. EIFLEIN.—You have not read the answer with any attention, or you would have seen that the Bhagavat Purana was mentioned.

F. LESTER.—It was noticed in "Acid Drops" last week.

J. BOTT.—We know nothing of Joseph Taylor personally. A year or two ago he offered to contribute to our columns, but the offer was declined. If he has found "found Jesus," as he appears to have done, it is a matter which chiefly concerns those who accepted his cooperation. His conversion does not disturb our serenity. He did not "catch on" with the N. S. S. which is very chary of familiarity with fresh acquaintances. Ours is a movement in which men should be tried before they are trusted.

S. HATTEN.—writes from New York—"I am pleased to hear your circulation is increasing, and also that you have some good sketches in preparation I am renewing my own subscription, and commencing two others for friends. Accept best wishes and congratulations on the great improvement on increasing your paper to twelve pages."

J. E. ROOSE.—Received. Under consideration.

H. SNELL.—It seems hardly worth while to wrangle over Damien's grave.

C. W. T.—There is no religious ceremony at a registrar's office. The ceremony is purely civil—no Bible, no Prayer Book, no humbug; and the fee is only 7s. 6d. We are glad to hear your intended is a *Freethinker*. It will make life smoother for both.

C. HEATON.—Yes our circulation is increasing. The enlargement gives universal satisfaction.

COCKNEY.—Too broad, but otherwise meritorious.

R. PARK.—There does not appear to be much difference between us in substance. Our view is that religion is like witchcraft a thing to be rejected utterly. Keep the name and the thing will remain.

W. SIMONS.—Thanks. See "Acid Drop."

J. FOSTER.—Poor Harrison seems to have been a simple fellow. He did deny having a wife and family, but it appears that he had a notion they would somehow be involved in his scrape. The Law and Liberty League found out the facts, and the present Committee confirms them. There is a wife and family and the Radicals are supporting them. Mr. Forder has subscription sheets at our publishing office.

C. TOMLINSON.—Paine was right in fact. Primitive men knew nothing of decimals. They counted the fingers of their two hands, as boys of ten do now. For ordinary matters twelve is a more useful number than ten, for it can be divided by two, three, four, and six.

REDOWN.—Thanks for the batch of cuttings. Your newsagent, who supplies the *National Reformer* but draws the line at the *Freethinker*, is a person of fine discrimination. Of course this is a thing we have to fight against, and a reason why our friends should do all they can to push our circulation.

G. RAWSON.—We are obliged. The contents-sheet shall be forwarded.

W. COOKNEY, 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C., acknowledges the following for the Hall of Science Children's Summer Excursion:—Dick Edwards, 2s. 6d.; Down, Boulton, and W. D., 2d. each.

J. BROWN, secretary of N.E. Secular Federation, acknowledges the following:—M. Weatherburn, 5s.; Capt Duncan, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Ledger, 6d.

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Western Figaro—Brighton Times—Liberty. Brighton Guardian—Cambria Daily Leader—Truthseeker Fair Play—Der Arme Teufel—Detroit Free Press—Bulletin des Sommaires—Twentieth Century—Secular Thought—Liberator—Thinker—New York Herald—Las Dominicales del libre Pensamiento.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THE threatened "invasion" of Brighton by the London Secular Federation has caused a sensation in that fashionable watering-place. The *Guardian* devotes nearly a column to the awful subject. It thinks the time has arrived for stopping meetings on the Levels now that the "infidels" want a share in the sport. It also hints that infidel lectures in public buildings should be suppressed by prosecutions, and invites the authorities to look at the "abominable blasphemy" in the *Freethinker*.

THE Brighton *Times* announces that the Federation excursionists "will not have things all their own way, as the local Christians intend to raise a vigorous opposition to the promulgation of secularist principles." Vigorous opposition, we presume, is an orthodox phrase for a free fight. Alas! the meek and lowly Christians of Brighton are doomed to disappointment. There will be no shindy, for the Secularists are not coming—at least this year. The Shah is going to Brighton instead.

THE London Secular Federation has resolved to drop the idea of an excursion to Brighton on Sunday, July 21, in consequence of the Company declining to put on a special train. There will now be an excursion in brakes to Epping Forest. Each Branch is to arrange its own party, and the general sub-committee will fix a common meeting-place somewhere in the East-end. Messrs. Smith, Standring and Robertson will also arrange a central contingent to start from the Hall of Science. A moderate-priced tea will be provided at a suitable place for the whole company. Some hundreds are expected.

THERE will be no "bombarding" of Brighton, and it won't do to preach to the trees in Epping Forest; but there will be an *ad fresco* gathering—perhaps after tea—and the occasion will be "consecrated" by a few brief speeches.

MR. R. S. SEAGO reports that the sub-committee have visited the "King's Oak" at High Beech, Epping, and have found it a big handsome building, with accommodation in the large saloon for 500 persons. A good tea will be served at ninepence per head, and dinner can be had from a shilling upwards. Should Jupiter Pluvius be in one of his tantrums the saloon can be used for merrymaking.

NOW our circulation is going up steadily, week by week, we venture to remind Secularists that the *Freethinker* is a good advertising medium. This journal is not like a daily paper, read and cast aside; it is kept for days, sometimes for weeks, and sometimes for years. Every advertisement in it is bound to be noticed, and Secularists who have goods or businesses to advertise often spend money less usefully on other channels of publicity.

*Secular Thought* (Toronto) says: "In our opinion the *Freethinker* is the best general Freethought paper now issued in England. It has the double advantage of being entertaining and instructive."

MR. FOOTE was rather apprehensive that he would be unable to give any open-air lectures this summer. But he is glad to find that his strength and voice are equal to the work. He has booked a good many dates for the London Branches, and hopes to fix one or two more.

THOSE who read our report of the National Secular Society's Conference will, perhaps, remember that a difficulty arose about the delegates to be sent to the International Congress at Paris in September. Mr. J. M. Robertson, Mr. Foote, and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner were nominated. There was a misunderstanding in the voting, and Mr. Bradlaugh's declaration that Messrs. Robertson and Foote were elected was followed by "a scene." Several cried out that Mrs. Bonner's name had not been put, and Mr. Foote had virtually withdrawn, having stated that he did not see his way to lose so much time as seven or eight days. In this emergency Mr. Foote proposed a resolution which allayed the storm, namely, that if either of the two delegates were unable to go Mrs. Bonner should be requested to go instead.

THERE the matter rested until a few days ago, when "A Friend," who prefers not to have his name published, offered £4 towards Mr. Foote's expenses if he could see his way to attend the Conference. What do other "friends" say to the proposal? This is the only way in which Mr. Foote can go. If his expenses are subscribed there will be no burden on the N. S. S. and Mrs. Bonner and Mr. Robertson could go—as Mr. Foote is resolved they shall go—as the two appointed delegates. It would, of course, be easy to arrange for Mr. Foote to go as a supplementary delegate, or with a letter of introduction from the Executive, or even as a "distinguished (ahem!) visitor."

ON Sunday, May 12, the New Hall of Science at Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, Melbourne, was formally opened by Mr. Joseph Symes, and on the Monday the occasion was celebrated by a grand tea and social gathering. Mr. Symes speaks in high terms of the building, and it is evident our Melbourne friends are to be congratulated upon the speed with which they have acquired a building of their own. Their success should stimulate others.

MR. WILLIAM ELLIS, founder of the Birkbeck Schools, who died in 1881, is the subject of a Memoir by Ethel E. Ellis, published by Longmans and Co. He was a friend of Mill and Grote, and was considered a profound and original thinker. He rejected all theological dogmas and refused to "go beyond his evidence."

LORD COLERIDGE has once more shown himself an upright judge. He has granted an order compelling Mr. Bridge, the London magistrate, to show cause why he should not hear and determine a summons against the Duke of Cambridge for assaulting Mr. Simms, an author and journalist—no relation, by the way, to Mr. G. R. Sims of the *Referee*. His lordship said it was of the greatest importance that the public should be satisfied that all subjects are equal before the law.

THE Theophilanthropists, a sect of French Deists, believing in God but rejecting the Bible, in whom Thomas Paine took much interest, are, it appears, by no means extinct. They were suppressed by Napoleon I. when he sought to be in favor with the Catholics, but they have held together in a quiet way and reorganised since 1872. They are now said to number over 50,000, mostly small proprietors in the provinces. They have a weekly journal, and have been holding the centenary of the establishment of their faith, which of course they believe to be the religion of the future.

*Liberty*, the Boston Anarchist organ, ably edited by Berj. R. Tucker, says: "Whether God made the orthodox man in his image or was made by the latter in his image, he is totally unfit to be one of us. Far from free, independent, sovereign, and willing to do good, he is represented throughout the inspired book as a despotic, vain, whimsical, contradictory, impotent, sulky, malicious character, with whom no noble mind can be on speaking terms. No, be it known once for all that no god nor god-like man need apply for fellowship among us."

OUR Spanish co-worker *Las Dominicales del Libre Pensamiento*, in its number for June 15 gives a large-sized picture of Bruno's statue. *Las Dominicales* is in its seventh year, and under the able editorship of Signor Ramon Chies and "Demofilo" keeps Freethought boldly to the front in the peninsula.

## THE CELESTIAL BEDLAM.

If there is a heaven, and it should be my misfortune to get through the gate of St. Peter, one thing I dread most, namely the polyphonic chaos, or rather incessant braying of the innumerable saints belonging to the numerous Christian denominations. As one endowed with extremely sensitive ears, I cannot imagine a more terrible punishment than the vocal and instrumental rhapsodies described by St. John, the lunatic, in his Revelation. The Lamb of God opens the bull, and begins to bleat, which we may take as an equivalent to the ringing up of the curtain in burlesque opera. Four beasts, full of eyes, rest not, day and night, saying—"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,"—to which four and twenty elders respond in chorus: "Thou art worthy, Oh Lord, to receive glory and honor and power" (Rev. iv., 8-11). I wonder old Jahveh does not get tired of this damnable iteration. Next the said beasts and elders begin the celestial din in earnest, by singing a new song (taking the hint from Claribel's "I cannot sing the old songs"), and no less than one hundred millions of angels chime in—enough to blow the roof off (Rev. v., 9-12). To make matters more hideous every creature (*sic.*) (even animals) in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea\* begin to squeak, to which the four beasts say, "Amen." "Enough" would be more *apropos* (Rev. v., 13-14). The noise goes on increasing at every chapter, until it becomes really deafening. A number of the slain for the word of God (*sic.*) cry out with a loud voice (Rev. vi., 9-10). Many of the saved follow suit, shouting "Salvation to our God!" (Rev. vii., 10), to which all the angels round the throne bawl, "Amen!" As a crowning mercy, there will be (*there was* aorist) silence in heaven for about half-an-hour, according to a Dent chronometer no doubt (Rev. viii., 1). After that the angels begin to play trumpets. *Tuba mirum spargen gonum*. The din is varied by the 24 elders returning thanks to God-almighty. The quartet of beasts, at it again, accompanied in chorus by the 24 elders; a new song number two. (Rev. xiv., 3) seven angels sing the song of Moses (for he was a jolly good fellow?) accompanied by harps (Rev. xv., 1-3). A recitative is heard (xvi., ) then another (xviii., 2) followed by a third (v., 4). Now we are treated to a celestial Hallelujah Chorus (xix., 1) to which the quartet of beasts and the 24 elders respond. Then one of the principals shouts: "Praise our god," which is answered by a great multitude; another Hallelujah chorus, (v., 6-7) or rather epithalamium, to the wedding of a lamb minus mint sauce. An angel with a loud voice, standing in the sun (*Sic*) scares all the fowls in the midst of heaven. What fluttering, screeching, chirping, piping, crowing, and cackling, there must have been up aloft (Rev. xix., 17) when the feathered tribe went to supper under the wing of the great God. We may charitably suppose that when the fowls sat down to sup (not to be supped of) the din stopped. I assert without fear of contradiction that the souls who *enjoyed* that dreadful noise must have escaped from the madhouses on earth, and, that if such a performance is to go on *ad infinitum*, the celestial tribes will become madder than drunken hatters. My reward is with me, to give every man according as his noise shall be. (Rev. xxii., 12.) And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." (v. 19.) He will thus be spared the agony of listening to and taking part in the celestial disturbance—a consummation devoutly to be wished by all "sane creatures."

CHAS. KROLL LAPORTE.

UNBELIEF.—Common sense joins with universal experience to proclaim that unbelief in the finality of old customs or established opinions is essential to all advance. When asked what unbelievers have done for the world we may fitly answer they have shown that all improvement arises from unbelief in revelation upon any topic. Where revelation begins, inquiry ends. A man who believed that God had revealed the true system of road making, or ship building, or science, or religion, would never dare to think of improving either. But the sceptic could not be deterred from advance. The theory that the Bible or the Church have final knowledge upon any subject has been the greatest drawback to progress. The forward march of the world follows the vanguard of unbelief.—R. C. Adams, "*Pioneer Path*."

\* Talking fishes.

*Exchange*



## DR. PENTECOST INTERVIEWED.

MR. RITCHIE, Vice-President of the Scottish Secular Union, sends us the following summary of an hour's interview he has had with Dr. Pentecost, of Brooklyn, who is at present holding largely attended revival meetings in Edinburgh. Four persons were present at the interview.

The Doctor opened by remarking, "Mr. — says you want to have a talk with me."

"Yes. I have been at more than one of your meetings. I feel convinced that a man of your education and fair-mindedness must be able to give a better reason for your faith than the average Christian; and as I am not a Christian I should like to hear from your own lips upon what ground your faith rests."

"I can give a perfectly good reason for my faith. What troubles you?"

"Well, the two points that trouble me most are what Christians believe about the fall of man, and about the redemption of man. If God knows everything and fore-ordains everything, he must have known and fore-ordained that man would fall, and —"

"Now, my friend, if you are going into metaphysics this interview had better end at once. I am not going to discuss with you on these lines. But I say frankly that Christians do not find the doctrine of fore-ordination in the Bible—it's not there."

"The vast majority of Christians believe that fore-ordination is taught in the Bible."

"All who believe that are mistaken."

"Does fore-knowledge in the present case not carry with it fore-ordination?"

"I do not think it does. You know that you came here to-day of your own accord, and to that extent at least you were a free agent. If you were free to come or stay away you cannot assert that your coming was fore-ordained."

"Pardon me, Dr, I am not here to defend fore-ordination—that is the task for Christians. It seems to me, however, that if God knew that I would come here to-day, I was bound either to come or do something that God knew I would not do."

"There you go again into metaphysics where I have told you I will not follow. I rest my faith upon my God's word; in it are my witnesses and it is for you to impeach their veracity. You know what their testimony is. Can you shake it?"

"I am of opinion that in the present case you must prove the trustworthiness of the evidence you advance. The onus of proof lies with you."

"There you are far mistaken. Before I became a preacher I studied law, and all law teaches that the opposing party must prove the untrustworthiness of a witness."

"You are quite right so far as concerns a witness giving oral testimony, but where the evidence is documentary, the party producing it must prove its authenticity—the onus then is shifted."

"I sincerely believe the documents to be perfectly authentic, or I would not repose trust in them."

"Sincerity of belief is no proof of Truth. You cannot prove that the gospels as we now have them existed earlier than the end of the second century, and you are well aware that the central miracle of Christianity—the resurrection of Christ—was denied by many of the early Christians."

"The age of our gospels has never been fairly settled, and I am not aware that any of the early Christians—except the Ebionites—denied the resurrection."

"The resurrection was denied stoutly by many sects during the first century, including the Nazarenes, the Ebionites, and the Church at Corinth. It is also a significant fact that while Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all assert that Christ was seen after his resurrection not one of the four says 'I saw him.'"

"I feel that this is merely a waste of time. If you are determined to shut out here that faith which you admit into your consideration of all other questions we need not proceed further. Now, listen. If a person came from the African diamond fields and told you of strange things seen and done there, would you not, through faith, accept the statement? If I leave my Bible on this table, and come back for it when darkness has set in, I have faith that I will find it where I left it, and in point of fact I do so find it though all is dark. If you suffered from a fever and the Doctor told you acconite would cure you as it had cured others, would you not have

faith enough to enable you to try the remedy? Do you throw overboard your reason when you believe that the acconite will cure? No, you call in an additional faculty called faith, because your reason can go no further? These things are done through faith, but Bible teaching you will not accept because you cannot accept it through reason."

"If a person in whom I had confidence told me of wonderful things to be seen at the diamond fields I would very likely believe him; or if I were anxious to prove them I could go to Africa and judge for myself. Can you give me the same opportunity to test that which you ask me to believe? Regarding your second illustration, a moment's thought will show that *your own* sense of right told you where the Bible lay, and *your own* sense of touch guided by *your own* reason enabled you to feel your way to the desired spot—that argument is a little unfortunate. In the case of the acconite you are equally weak. The medicine cures a bodily ailment in yourself and others—an ailment and a cure palpable to all. The spiritual disease is not apparent to all, and you admit that the efficacy of the cure can never be proved here. Thus, you see, sir, these things are all arrived at through reason, but so far as I understand your contention, I can only become a Christian by throwing reason overboard."

"Do you think then that I threw my reason overboard when I became a Christian?"

"I cannot tell; you know best."

"It seems to me, my friend, that you trust reason too much. You feel, I can see plainly, that you have no need of a savior."

"Well, to be quite candid with you, I don't feel in particular need of such a thing at the present moment."

"I see that clearly enough. You know that you are all right for the hereafter, don't you?"

"I do not *know* but I *believe* that if I do my best here and now, I have nothing to fear in any hereafter."

"Oh! you believe in the keeping of a balance sheet with the good deeds on one side and the bad on the other. You feel that if you do more good than bad you are all right."

"Well, roughly speaking, that is what I believe."

"Allow me to tell you, my friend, that you will have a rude awakening some day."

"Perhaps so; but meantime I have the consolation of knowing that I follow the dictates of reason."

"We need discuss no further. You have yet to learn that God has hid these things from the wise and prudent. Good bye, my friend."

I left the room mentally finishing the text—"and hath revealed them unto babes."

## THAT COLLECTION

HE spent a Sunday in Louisville. Doubtless in America, as here, there must be a good many dry weather Christians—people who would go to business or shopping or visiting in weather that they would think altogether too dreadful to go to church in. But that Sabbath morning, in spite of pouring rain, there was a large congregation in the church where they worshipped. In the evening they went to what was called a colored church, that was a church for negroes. He had agreed to preach, but before asking him to do so the pastor who had conducted the devotional exercises intimated that in accordance with announcement previously made the special collection would be taken. When he sat down a deacon, who sat below the pulpit, and with a table before him on which the contributions were to be laid, rose, as he said, to "splain what de collection was fo'." He splain'd that it was on behalf of their minister—a good minister—and therefore he hoped the "contribution" would be "lib'rl." Then he looked toward the choir, who sat on a raised platform at the far end of the church, and said, "Will the choir strike up a lively tune whilst the people make collection." So soon as the choir had fairly begun the people left their seats and advanced to the little table and laid on it their offerings. When the people had all got seated the deacon rose and said they were all anxious to hear their "white brudder," but they could not hear him till they got "more monies." He noticed that some of them had only contributed a nickel (about 2½d). Their minister was a good minister, but he must be a very poor one at the estimate, and then with emphasis he said, "Will the choir strike up a lively tune while the people make collection." They had the lively tune, and once more all the people came and contributed. But still the old man was not satisfied, and rose once more and repeated his appeal, eventually inviting "the choir to come along with their contributions." At last the deacon was satisfied, and drawing the pile toward him into a lot it fell into a drawer in the table, and he announced, as he looked to his minister with smiling face "Bless de Lord, it's a good collection. De white brudder can go on. *Lecture by Rev. G. Gladstone at Glasgow.*

"I want to know, Colonel, if you really believe your grandfather was a moukey?" said another to him. "Whether I do or not, sir, I believe your grandson will be," returned the Colonel.

### WAS WASHINGTON A CHRISTIAN?

In regard to Washington's religious views, Thomas Jefferson wrote in his journal, February, 1800:—

"Dr. Rush told me that he had it from Asa Green, that when the clergy addressed Gen. Washington on his departure from the Government, it was observed in their consultation that he had never, on any occasion, said a word to the public which showed a belief in the Christian religion, and they thought they should pen their address as to force him at length to declare publicly whether he was a Christian or not. They did so. However, he observed the old fox was too cunning for them. He answered every article of their address particularly except that, which he passed over without notice. Rush observes he never did say a word on the subject in any of his public papers, except in his valedictory letters to the Governors of States, when he resigned his commission in the army, wherein he speaks of the 'benign influence of the Christian religion.' I know that Gouverneur Morris, who pretended to be in his secrets, and believed himself to be so, has often told me that Gen. Washington believed no more in that system than he himself did."—(Jefferson's Works, vol. iv., page 512.)

Gouverneur Morris was in the Continental Congress of 1777-80, was one of the Committee that drafted the Federal Constitution, was Minister to France, was a lawyer and an author, and in politics a Federalist.

If there were an Asa Green in Washington's time, he was a man of no prominence, and it is probable the person referred to by Jefferson was the Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, who served as chaplain to the Congress during the eight years that body sat in Philadelphia, was afterward President of Princeton College, and the only clerical member of Congress that signed the Declaration of Independence. His name shines illustriously in the annals of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. He was acquainted with Washington and frequently dined with him.

Dr. Ashbel Green's nephew, the Rev. A. B. Bradford, of Enon Valley (Pa.), who was appointed by Mr. Lincoln Consul to one of the then five open ports of China, says:

"It was during his [Dr. Green's] long residence in Philadelphia that I became intimately acquainted with him as a relative, a student of theology at Princeton, and a member of the same presbytery to which he belonged. . . . Many an hour during my student and clergyman days did I spend with him in his study at No. 150 Pine Street, Philadelphia, listening to his interesting and instructive conversation on Revolutionary times and incidents. I recollect well that during one of those interviews in his study, I inquired of him what were the real opinions Washington entertained on the subject of religion. He promptly answered pretty nearly in the language which Jefferson says Dr. Rush used. He explained more at length the plan laid by the clergy of Philadelphia at the close of Washington's administration as President to get his views of religion for the sake of the good influence they supposed they would have in counteracting the Infidelity of Paine and the rest of the Revolutionary patriots, military and civil. But I well remember the smile on his face and the twinkle of his black eye when he said: 'The old fox was too cunning for us!' He affirmed, in concluding his narrative, that from his long and intimate acquaintance with Washington, he knew to be the case that while he respectfully conformed to the religious customs of society by generally going to church Sundays, Washington had no belief at all in the divine origin of the Bible or of the Jewish or Christian religion. If he had any religion at all, it was that of Deism."

The Rev. A. B. Bradford, still living at the age of 79, is a man of the highest character, and in whose word all who know him have the fullest confidence.

Another statement worth quoting is that of the Rev. Dr. Wilson, a learned and zealous minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church; the man who, during the Presidential campaign of 1840, prayed that the officials of this government might be converted to God, and "if they did not repent of their Infidelity and do works meet for repentance by acknowledging God and His Son, Jesus Christ, in the organic law, He would sweep them out of existence, one and all, Tippecanoe and Tyler, too."

Dr. Wilson, in a sermon reported in the *Albany Daily Advertiser* of October, 1831, said:—

"When the Congress sat in Philadelphia, President Washington attended the Episcopal Church. The rector, Dr.

Abercrombie, has told me that the days when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be administered, Washington's custom was to rise just before the ceremony commenced and walk out of the church. This became a subject of remark in the congregation as setting a bad example. At length the Doctor undertook to speak of it, with a direct allusion to the President. Washington was heard afterwards to remark that this was the first time a clergyman had thus preached to him, and that he would henceforth neither trouble the Doctor nor his congregation on such occasions. And ever after that, upon communion days, he absented himself from the church."

In 1831, in a conversation with Robert Dale Owen, as related by Mr. Owen, Dr. Wilson said:—

"As I conceive that truth is truth, whether it make for or against us, I will not conceal from you any information on this subject, even such as I have not yet given to the public. At the close of our conversation on the subject, Dr. Abercrombie's emphatic expression was, for I well remember the words: 'Sir, Washington was a Deist!' Now, I have diligently perused every line that Washington ever gave to the public, and I do not find one expression in which he pledges himself as a professor of Christianity. I think any man who will candidly do as I have done, will come to the conclusion that he was a Deist, and nothing more. I do not take upon myself, positively, to say that he was, but that is my opinion. Dr. Abercrombie, the associate of Bishop White in the pastoral charge of Christ's Church in Philadelphia, is now alive to corroborate the story of his brother Clergyman." (See discussion between Bachelor and Owen, p. 367.)

The rector of the Church of Alexandria, in 1831, hunted for evidence that Washington was a professing Christian, and after inquiring in "every branch of the family" of all who knew him and attended church with him, was obliged to make the admission. "I find no one who ever communed with him." Nevertheless, there was probably much in Christian worship in which he could honestly join, and his conformity to the religious observances of his day to a considerable extent was natural enough.

(*Boston Investigator.*)

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

(*To be concluded.*)

### TOTTENHAM FREETHINKERS, PLEASE NOTE.

In the humble capacity of reporter—or, as our American friends funnily say, "Faber-pusher"—I recently had occasion to attend a meeting at Bruce Grove, when Mr. Bailey Denton was accepted as the Radical candidate for the Tottenham Division at the next election. Mr. Denton is an earnest young man, and will make a good fight.

"To add M.P. to Bailey Denton

Is what the gent is Daily Denton."

Which is original poetry, although it may not appear to be so at first sight. As it is his first (and probably his last) attempt, please don't shoot the poet.

During the "heckling" a local Freethinker asked the candidate if he was in favor of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. Denton evidently did not know what the question meant, and turned round to hold a hurried conversation with the chairman. Then, advancing to the front of the platform, he asked the querist whether the *Bastardy* Laws were referred to, as he had not heard the words distinctly. No; it was not the *Bastardy* Laws, but the *Blasphemy* Laws. A second consultation took place, and then Mr. Bailey Denton, painfully floundering, said that, as a member of the Church of England, he was "against Blasphemy in every shape and form," and would do nothing to encourage *that*. Here a gleam of light appeared to break in upon him, and after a brief explanation from the inquirer, Mr. Denton said that he would heartily support any measure for placing persons of all forms of religious belief in an equal position before the law. It was not quite clear, however, whether he was prepared to do this for persons having no religious belief. This, therefore, is a matter which Tottenham Freethinkers should take in hand, as Mr. Denton, who advocates the disestablishment of the Church of England, is in Egyptian darkness on the condition of the law as it affects unbelievers. My personal opinion, based on a careful study of Mr. Denton during his address, is that he will meet the just requirements of Freethinkers in a fair and candid spirit; but it is evident that he needs education on the point.

G. STANDRING.

## A R E S O L V E.

I HAVE pondered in the woodland far from all the haunts of man.  
 Thinking of the Sylvan Dryads. Naiads Fauns and mighty Pan,  
 Of the Sirens lovely features, satyrs sporting in the shade;  
 Thought of all the mystic creatures that the human mind has made,  
 Followed the long line of martyrs from the death of Socrates,  
 Till the cursed flames at Smithfield licked their trembling victim's knees;  
 Thought of Christ's mistaken mission: of how dearly man has paid  
 For his foolish superstition, for the gods that he has made.  
 Thought of all the pain and anguish that religious faith has cost—  
 Saw religious wars and thought how many million lives were lost;  
 Saw religion in the present filling tender hearts with pain—  
 Robbing life of all that's pleasant, daily driving men insane;  
 Filling many minds with madness, taking Jesus at his word,  
 When he said, "'Tis not with gladness that I came, but with a sword.  
 I have come to set the daughter's heart against her loving sire;  
 And against her sons and daughters will I raise the mother's ire.  
 And those who will not accept me, will not follow in my way.  
 Quickly thou shalt bring before me these mine enemies and slay."  
 Then I pitied these poor creatures who were bowed beneath the weight  
 Of this cruel superstition, and I mourned for their sad fate.  
 And I pitied those poor mortals who so wildly fear to die,  
 Who beyond the grave's dark portals see a hell for you and I.  
 And I then resolved that ever as long as my life should last,  
 That it should be my endeavor as it has been in the past,  
 With the glorious lamp of reason to guide onward all mankind;  
 To illumine the Stygian darkness of the Christian's narrow mind.

H. D. L.

## KRISHNA AND CHRIST.

OUR attention has frequently been called to the statements made about Krishna in Mrs. Besant's *Roots of Christianity*, and the repetition of those statements appears to be doing injury to the Freethought cause. Indeed, a pamphlet by an East-London missionary (C. Eiflein) is being circulated with a very uncomplimentary letter from Prof. Max Muller. We feel it our duty to warn our readers that the similitudes to the Christian legends are not found in the Bhagvat-Gita as stated on p. 41 of that work. Even Jacolliot, who holds that the Christian legends are founded on those of Khrishna, says the similarities are taken "from the Bhagvat-Gita and Brahminical tradition." We can well understand that in the exigencies of a busy life the words "and Brahminical tradition" have been overlooked, or it may be that "Gita" is a misprint for "Purana," but the statement as it stands should be corrected. Were it simply a question of

authority between Jacolliot and Max Müller, who has challenged his statements, we should leave others to decide as to their relative competence. But it is a question of fact. There are five English versions of the Bhagvat-Gita, and anyone who refers to either of them will see that the statement is incorrect. The Bhagvat-Gita does contain similarities to Christian *teachings*, but no other similarities to the *story* of Christ than that the teacher is represented as divine and that he is transfigured—though the transfigurations are entirely different in character.

A still more important point is the reference to the alleged crucifixion of Krishna, upon which Max Müller says, and the statement is widely circulated by our opponents, "Ask her to produce a Sanskrit work in which such Crucifixion is mentioned. It does not exist." Again we think the references to the authorities given are entirely insufficient on so important a point, and we advise no Freethinker to challenge the statement of Max Müller unless he is prepared with the evidence.

The alleged parallels between Krishna and Christ can only be really important when the dates of the various legends are accurately determined. It is no good saying the story of Christ is taken from that of Krishna unless that of Khrishna can be proved to be the earlier. But Hindu chronology on this point is unsatisfactory. The date of the Bhagvat-Gita is very uncertain. One Hindu translator, Mr. Telang, thinks it long pre-Christian, but on the other hand Christian translators assign it as late as the third century of our era, and Mr. Edwin Arnold appears to agree with this view. The Bhagvat-Purana, in which more similarities to the Christian story appear, though these are mixed up with a crowd of different legends, is by most authorities assigned to a later period, in the tenth or eleventh century of our era. Upon such a work it is evident no argument can be safely built. We advise Freethinkers, until at any rate there is satisfactory evidence as to date, only to refer to the stories about Krishna as illustrating the mythical faculty in other faiths.

## PROFANE JOKES.

"Young ladies, I wish to introduce you to Mr. C., who will in future be your teacher. I would like to have you tell him what your former teacher did, so that he can go right on in the same way." Immediately a demure miss of fourteen years arose and said, "The first thing our teacher always did was to kiss us all round."

Scene: Parish church vestry not one hundred miles from Dunbar; John, the church officer, is discovered lighting the fire. Enter the minister, rubbing his hands. Minister: "A damp cold morning this, John." John, who can hardly believe his ears, remains silent. Minister (evidently thinking John has not heard): "I said it was a damp cold morning." John: "So it is, sir, so it is; but dinna swear; it's Heaven's will."

A teacher giving a blackboard lesson illustrating the narrow gate of heaven, placed before the gate the figure of a man inflated to enormous proportions by pride far beyond the size of the gate. "Now," he says, placing his pointed finger on the figure, "what is to be done: how will that man enter that gate?" An earnest little voice called out—"Try him sideways, mister, try him sideways."

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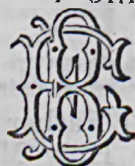
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