

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

PARSONS ON "SMUT."

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES.

SIR,—You have lately been manifesting a great interest in music halls. Your soul is deeply moved by thinking of the wickedness that goes on in such places. Ladies of light fame, and lighter heels, kick their skirts about with shocking abandon, and display busts which Tartuffe would have veiled with outspread digits. Songs are sung of questionable and unquestionable taste. Emphasis is laid upon innocent words to give them a spicy suggestion. Sometimes an *encore* verse caps the mischief, and excites to the highest degree the prurience of audiences who were suckled on the Bible and bred in Sunday-schools. All this is very bad. I am as sorry for it as you are. But I mistrust the action of the law in such matters. It seems to me that, except in cases of downright obscenity, it is best to let our popular amusements follow the bent of public taste. By elevating the latter, through education and the spread of sound principles, we shall inevitably elevate the former. But if we reverse the process we shall only court failure. History shows us that morality and taste cannot be forced. Ever since the days of Constantine your Church has favored laws against fornication, with what result is shown by the huge armies of prostitutes in every Christian country. Repression has signally failed in *this* instance, and the presumption is that it will fail in *every* instance.

Take the case of literature, and pardon me for supposing you are acquainted with its purple developments. If I err, I fall into a very natural mistake; for excessively virtuous people are usually familiar with the perils of the flesh. Do you imagine that Petronius Arbiter *created* or *reflected* the vices of the court of Nero? Did Brantôme, Crebillon, and the Restoration dramatists, create or reflect the vices of the Valois, of the society of Louis the Fifteenth, and of the high life of London under Charles the Second? Would the manners of those periods have been improved by a raid upon books and theatres? Are not all our outward activities the expression of our inward life? If such considerations do not touch you, let me ask whether penal law or public education has led to the diminution of crime. Is it not a fact that hanging men by batches had less effect upon crime than the cheapening of the printing press and the establishment of Board Schools?

This is the philosophy of history and human nature. Religion is not philosophy, however, and I am at no loss to understand the unanimity with which the sects have combined to harry the London music halls. They cannot agree about rites and doctrines; they eye each other with hatred or disdain; but they combine in presence of a common enemy, and every kind of public amusement is an enemy of the Church. Can you imagine Jesus Christ in a theatre or the Apostles in a music hall? The Church fought the theatre for centuries, and only gave in when the struggle was hopeless. Even now the drama has little support from church-goers. Music halls reach a lower taste, but their object is the same as that of the

theatres. They interest and amuse people who ought to be thinking about the life to come. Anything is a menace to Christianity which diverts men and women from the great business of future salvation. Apart altogether, therefore, from the interests of "morality," which has some very fussy and dubious friends, there is a secret professional interest in the Church's attempts to regulate the people's recreations. What else could bring Cardinal Manning, the Bishop of London, Rabbi Adler and yourself upon the same platform? Such rivals seldom agree, and when they do agree their unanimity is wonderful.

I do not understand how you kept your countenances at the great meeting in St. James's Hall. The Bishop of London, who took the chair, denounced entertainments that were "not consistent with Christian purity." He introduced a Devonshire working man who had taken his daughter into a London music hall, and been obliged to come out in quarter of an hour, feeling very much ashamed. You spoke in the same strain yourself, and demanded that nothing should be said or done in such places "which could bring a blush to the cheek of an innocent girl." Such a censorship would be impracticable, and who is to find the typical "innocent girl"? If this "impossible she" is to regulate our literature, our drama, and all our entertainments, we shall have a mere school-girl life of bread-and-butter and sentiment. But, in any case, why not set your own house in order? Why not begin with the Bible?

Suppose the Devonshire working man were to read the Bible with his daughter. How long would it be before he had to close the volume? Is there nothing in the Bible to "bring a blush to the cheek of an innocent girl"? The most wanton word she could hear in a music hall is decent in comparison with some of the words she might read in your "blessed book." And you do not wait for the "innocent girl" to be big enough to go to a place of evening amusement; you thrust your inspired filth into her hands, as a gift from God, when she has just learned to read. You press it upon her, force it into her mind, and tell her it is all divine; and then you get into a fever of apprehension lest she should hear a *double entente*. Why, sir, the farce is screaming. What a bombshell it would have been in your pious camp if some one had risen to propose that as the clergy had now taken up the question of indecency, it was to be hoped they would not drop it until the Holy Scripture was made suitable reading for an "innocent girl"! Then the fat would have been in the fire; then the Tartuffes would have lifted up their hands and eyes in holy horror; then the pious meeting would have yelled in chorus, like all the menagerie of the Apocalypse; but then, also, a word of truth and honesty would have sounded in the ears of falsehood and hypocrisy.

Your Bible speaks in the plainest terms of rape, fornication, adultery, bestiality, castration, sodomy and incest. Is this what you consider fit for an "innocent girl"? It tells of a drunken old man falling down and exposing his person, and of two sisters who made their father drunk and committed incest with him. Is this reading for your "innocent

girl"? It relates the adventures of a woman who played the part of a prostitute on the high-road to her own father-in-law; of another woman who crept into a barn at night with her own kinsman; and of another woman who was ravished all night and afterwards cut up into twelve pieces. Is this reading for your "innocent girl"? It describes the dowry of two hundred foreskins which David gave for Michal, and of his dancing shamelessly before the ark. It tells the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, of Onan and Tamar, of Jehovah displaying his—well, his "glory"—of Samson and the harlot, and the unspeakable filthiness of two women in Ezekiel, which, if it were translated literally, would compel fathers to keep the Bible under lock and key. Is this reading for your "innocent girl"? It contains a voluptuous song, namely the Canticles, which has inflamed many a youthful imagination. Is this reading for your "innocent girl"? It employs gross and filthy language quite unnecessarily. The writers revel in superfluous dirt. The most disgusting images are cultivated in this literary garden. The language is as downright as a bargeman's. Had the nuns of *Vert-Vert* read some of the Bible "plums" to their parrot, he need not have travelled down the river to pick up his shocking language.

One part of your own speech struck me as singularly appropriate. You protested, with how much good faith I will not discuss, that you were not attacking music halls as such; in fact you gave a secular concert every week to a number of poor persons, doing all the comedy yourself in order that it might be well done. The audience laughed at this, and I also laugh, though for a different reason. You did, indeed, play the part of a first-rate comedian at that meeting, and you were well supported by the rest of the troupe. You and they preach from, hold up as divine, and force upon little children, one of the smuttiest books in the world, outside the limits of avowedly pornographic literature; yet you organise a demonstration against suggestive songs and gestures at evening entertainments for grown-up people. The comedy is magnificent. I admire what Cobbett would have called your "powers of face," and regret that the regular stage has lost such a consummate performer.

Yours decently,
G. W. FOOTE.

VOLTAIRE AND GIBBON.

The one was fire and fickleness, a child,
Most mutable in wishes, but in mind,
A wit as various—gay, grave, sage, or wild—
Historian, bard, philosopher, combined;
He multiplied himself among mankind,
The Proteus of their talents; but his own
Breathed most in ridicule—which, as the wind,
Blew where it listed, laying all things prone—
Now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne.

The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And hiving wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer;
The lord of irony—that master-spell,
Which stung his foes to wrath, which grew from fear,
And doomed him to the zealot's ready hell,
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.—Byron.

The spirit of Ignatius Donnelly, who undertook to prove by a most subtle cryptogram that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, seems to have inspired the Trinitarian Bible Society, which is to issue a new edition of the Hebrew Old Testament, and prove that the name of Jehovah is not omitted from the Book of Esther, but is to be found there in an acrostic form. It would appear that Jehovah anticipated Bacon in this little trick, and that Solomon was right in saying there is no new thing under the sun.

SACRED SEVEN.

It was natural that in the early ages of human intelligence man should attach a superstitious reverence to numbers. The mystery attached to the number seven has been variously accounted for. Some have explained it by the figures of the square and triangle, others by the stars of the Great Bear nightly seen overhead. My own opinion is that the superstition arose in connection with the moon as a measurer of time. Its period of twenty-eight days could be twice divided until the week of seven days was reached, and then further division was impossible. Hence we everywhere find the superstition linked to the days of the week and the seven planets supposed to preside over these days.

The Egyptians worshipped the seven planets, and Herodotus tells of their seven castes. So with the Babylonians. From them was derived the Jewish week. The moon periods were sacred as measuring time and also in connection with female periodicity. Man discovered the month before the year. Hence the moon was widely worshipped. The worship of the queen of heaven in Palestine is alluded to in Jer. vii, 18, xlv. 17. The superstition of the new moon bringing luck has descended to our own time. When the year was reckoned by thirteen moons of twenty-eight days, thirteen was the lucky number, but when this was changed for the twelve months of solar time, thirteen became one too many. The Parsee Bundahish, according to Gerald Massey, exhibits seven races of men (1) the earth men, (2) water men, (3) breast-eared men, (4) breast-eyed men, (5) one-legged men, (6) bat-winged men, (7) men with tails.

Section 7 of the Kabbalistic Sepher Yezirah* says, "The seven planets in the world are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon. Seven days in the year are the seven days of the week; seven gates in man, male and female, are two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and the mouth." Again section 15 says, "By the seven double consonants were also designed seven worlds, seven heavens, seven lands, seven seas, seven rivers, seven deserts, seven days a week, seven weeks from Passover to Pentecost, there is a cycle of seven years, the seventh is the release year, and after seven release years is jubilee. Hence, God loves the number seven under the whole heaven."

The Bible, it has been remarked, begins in Genesis with a seven, and ends in the Apocalypse with a series of sevens. God himself took a rest on the seventh day and was refreshed, or, as the Hebrew reads, took breath. The Passover and other festivals lasted seven days; Jacob bowed seven times; Solomon's temple was seven years in building; the tabernacle had seven lamps, a candlestick with seven arms, etc. In a variety of passages it seems, like 40, to have been a sort of round number—as people sometimes say a dozen for an indeterminate quantity (see Job 9; Is. iv., 1, xi., 15, xxx., 26; Jer. xv., 9; Matt. xii., 45). The week induced reckoning by sevens, and led to such enactments as that the Jews on the seventh day of the seventh month should feast seven days and remain seven days in tents.

Cranky John of Patmos had the mystic number on the brain. Dr. Milligan has explained the 666 number of the beast, as a fall below the sacred seven. Johnny gives us seven candlesticks (i., 1), seven churches (iii., 1), seven seals (v., 1), trumpets (viii., 2), thunders (x., 34), vials (xvi., 1), and seven angels with seven plagues (xvi.) The beast has seven heads, horns and crowns (xii., 3; xiii., 1; xvii., 7). The Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes (v., 1.) There are seven spirits before the throne of God (Rev. i., 4, etc.) like the seven Dhyanis Chohans emanating from Parabrahm in Hindu Theosophy.

* ספר יצירה tr. by Dr. I. Kalisch, pp. 27 and 31, New York, 1877.

So Christians have kept up legends of seven wise men, seven wonders of the world, seven champions of Christendom, seven deadly sins, etc. Of course there is no better reason why there should be seven than the old idea of mystery and completion attached to the number.

Modern Theosophists, too, go in largely for the number seven. There are seven planets, seven rounds on each planet and seven races. Every ego is composed of seven principles—Atma, Buddhi, Manas, Kamarupa, Prana, Linga Shariri, and Rupa. It may seem strange that a lady of Madame Blavatsky's undoubted powers of imagination should still run in the old rut. But the well-worn superstitions work the easiest, although to every instructed person this one carries the mind back to the days when men knew only of seven planets and measured their time by the moon. 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 contents-sheets, 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.

UNFOUNDED RUMORS.

THERE is no truth in the report that the Archbishop of Canterbury has taken vows of poverty and celibacy as an encouragement to the weaker brethren. Mrs. Benson would not hear of such a thing.

The statement that the Bishop of Lincoln's favorite hymn is "A day's march nearer Rome" is unauthenticated, and must be accepted with reserve.

We can safely contradict the unauthorized report that Archdeacon Farrar has dismissed his coachman and other servants and gone to live and labor among the poor of White-chapel.

The report that the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews is going to issue a balance sheet, in which will be given the names and addresses of all converts, is premature.

It is not true that the Rev. Mr. Diggle has requested the Archbishop of Canterbury to put up prayers for the health of Mr. Conybeare.

The rumor that Mr. Baxter, editor of the *Christian Herald* and author of the *Great Crisis from 1890 to 1901*, has been engaged as prophet by the *Sporting Times*, is understood to be the base and malignant invention of a rival.

The statement that Mr. Engstrom has supplied the out-door lecturers of the C. E. S. with a manual of good manners is understood to be a base fabrication.

MOCK BUDDHISM.—We must frankly confess that, on hearing of the claim of this new-fangled Theosophical sect to represent the lofty, however defective and inconsequent, teaching of Sakyamuni, we were irresistibly reminded of the poet's comment on the alleged Egyptian pedigree of our modern gipsy fortune-tellers:

Lo, Mizraim's kingcraft, of its glory reft,
Is shrunk to petty deeds of midnight theft;
Lo, Egypt's wisdom only lives to pry
Through the dark arts of paltry palmistry.

To turn from the stately, if somewhat Stoic, grandeur of the old historic Buddhism to the pitiful pranks of the prophets and prophetesses of occult Theosophy, is to pass at a bound from the sublime to the ridiculous.—*Saturday Review*.

THE MINISTER HEARS A LOUDER CALL.

"Beloved flock," the parson said, then paused and wiped his eyes,

"As pastor and as people we must sever tender ties;
I've a call to go to Blanktown to be their chosen pastor;
A call so loud to disobey, I fear, would grieve the Master."

Replied the spokesman of the flock: "Though loud the call may be

We'll call you louder to remain; an X for every V
Those Blanktown people offer you we'll give to keep you here.
We trust you'll hear a voice divine, our call's so loud and clear."

With sobbing voice the parson said: "My duty's clearer now;
I'll stay with you, beloved ones; to heaven's will I bow.

So let us sing 'Blest be the tie,' and sing it clear and strong:
To leave you when you call so loud would be exceeding wrong!"

Then in his study sat he down, a letter to indite
Unto the church at Blanktown. Thus did the parson write:
"I've wrestled o'er your call with prayer; the Lord bids me to stay,

And, consecrated to his work, I dare not disobey."

SOMETHING LIKE A MESSIAH.

THE Jewish nation has been and is still blamed for rejecting Jesus of Nazareth as a Messiah. They have been called a stubborn people, who would always maltreat its benefactors and best friends. False, thrice false! The Jews were, as they are still, wide awake, and knew well how to distinguish a chimera from a reality. While they remained indifferent to idealistic dreamers as Jesus and Theudas may have been, they arose as one man when the person appeared who had all the qualifications of a Messiah. They placed at Bar Kochba's disposal an army of not less than half a million of well equipped soldiers. They heeded strictly his orders. There was not the least discord in their ranks; and during five years more than two millions of Jews sacrificed their lives for him and his cause. Does such devotion indicate blindness or stubbornness? Alas! Bar Kochba was not successful: his cause did not triumph. The hero was therefore degraded to a rebel, and the last glorious struggle of our nation was stigmatised as a rebellion.—*Rabbi Solomon Schindler*. "Messianic Expectations," p. 70.

THE COUNCIL OF NICE.

WHEN we investigate the constitution of the Council of Nice, convoked by the Emperor Constantine—himself not a Christian at the time, and a man of dissolute character—charged with the high function of providing Christendom with its Bible, we find that it was composed of 318 violent partisans, of whom Sabinus, the Bishop of Heraclea, affirms that, "excepting Constantine himself and Eusebius Pamphilus, they were a set of illiterate creatures that understood nothing;" but then he was of the opposite faction. They began by quarrelling among themselves, and libelling each other to the Emperor; but we learn from Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History* that the Emperor burnt all their libels, and exhorted them to peace and amity; while Pappus tells us in his *Synodicon* to the Council, that the means employed for discovering what books should be selected as canonical, was promiscuously to put all the books referred to the Council for deliberation, under the Communion-table in a church, when they besought the Lord that the inspired writings might get on the table, while the spurious ones remained underneath, "and that it happened accordingly." *Laurence Oliphant*, "Scientific Religion," p. 105—106.

"Bad luck to St. Patrick," remarked Ted, in the incipient stages of the d. t. "What's the matter?" asked his friend "Phy the devil," returned Ted, jumping back in alarm, "didn't St. Patrick droive the snakes out of Amerikey whin he wuz about it?"

Little Sadie is the daughter of a theatrical manager, and although only five years old, knows a great many points about the profession. "Mamma," said she, after a long period of thoughtful silence, "do all the little girls that die go to heaven?" "Yes, I suppose they do." "Have they been going to heaven for all these thousands of years?" "Certainly." Another long silence followed. "Mamma." "Well?" "Aren't you afraid they will put the 'standing room only' sign out pretty soon?"

ACID DROPS.

The Rev. Dr. Ross, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, has printed a sermon on "The Alleged Gains of Humanity from Unbelief." No fault can be found with the tone of Dr. Ross's pamphlet, but its logic is surprising. With respect to witchcraft, for instance, he says that the punishment of this fanciful crime is "common to primitive jurisprudence in all communities." But why did Jehovah fall into this "primitive" blunder? Surely a God should rectify people's mistakes instead of confirming them. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" is intelligible from the lips of a *human* lawgiver, but not from the lips of a *divine* lawgiver, in whose case it involves inexplicable ignorance or frightful brutality.

With regard to slavery, Dr. Ross evades the historic argument, which is the only one that can be argued satisfactorily, and takes refuge in the statement that all emancipation is in harmony with the spirit of Christ. He cannot help seeing, however, that Christ did not condemn slavery in express terms; so he falls back on the assertion that slavery did not exist in Palestine in the day of Christ. Now we should very much like to know Dr. Ross's authority for this assertion. We do not dispute it—for the moment; we simply ask for a little proof.

Dr. Ross denies that Freethinkers are "prohibited by the laws of England from erecting charitable institutions," which Mr. Bradlaugh never affirmed. They are prohibited from holding any property, and that stifles their activities. Cannot Dr. Ross see that a party in this position has all its work to keep alive? Cannot he see, too, that it would be next to impossible to keep a Freethought charity from falling into Christian hands? How could the trustees be appointed so as to prevent this? Any clause framed for this object would be deliberately or tacitly set aside. Over in America, the Christians have got hold of the Girard College, although the founder forbade a clergyman to set foot in the place.

On the subject of persecution Dr. Ross does not seem to us quite ingenuous. He quotes a few texts from the New Testament, but forgets to mention the opposite texts. Jesus told his disciples to shake off the dust of their feet against those who did not receive them; an oriental proceeding which is some degrees worse than spitting in the face. He also remarked that those who *believed* (not those who were *good*) should be saved, and that those who *disbelieved* should be damned. Dr. Ross has read and thought very little on the subject if he does not know that the doctrine of salvation by faith has always, and logically, led to the persecution of unbelievers. We advise him to read, or if he has read to read again, Lecky's *History of Rationalism* and George Eliot's article upon it in the *Fortnightly Review*.

Talmage knows all about heaven and hell, of which places he gives detailed descriptions, as though he had visited them; but he did not know that an over-heated flue was endangering his Tabernacle, and the result was the burning down of the building, the damage being estimated at £30,000. Seeing how familiar Talmage is with the Almighty, it is really wonderful that the Lord did not give him the straight tip. But perhaps the place was fully insured, and the Lord didn't mind the loss falling on the Insurance Company.

Should the calamity involve the temporary cessation of Talmage's tongue, a great many noodles will miss his weekly sermons in their religious papers. But the world as a whole will not suffer greatly. The silence of Talmage will not eclipse the gaiety of nations.

F. A. in his recently published "Reminiscences of a Literary and Clerical Life," gives the following story:—"I was travelling on the Underground one evening, and I found that I was in the midst of a detachment of the Salvation Army. I was much troubled in mind whether I had taken the right train, whether I had not mistaken Notting-hill for Notting-hill Gate; there being, for many people, some confusion between these two stations." "Pray, sir," I said to my next neighbour, "can you kindly tell me whether this train goes to Notting-hill or Notting-hill

Gate?" "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" he replied. "We are all going to heaven." There was a general confirmatory murmur, "Hallelujah, hallelujah! we are going to heaven. Are you going there too?" "I am glad to hear that you are going to heaven," I reply: "but are you going there by way of Notting-hill or Notting-hill Gate?"

F. A., by the way, says he proposed to a friendly publisher to write a book for him, the title of which would consist of one sublime word. "And that word?" he asked. "Immortality," I answered. "My dear sir," said the publisher, drily, "it is a subject in which the public do not take the slightest interest." Upon another occasion he wrote in a religious periodical some papers on the greatest of the Hebrew prophets. When a couple of them had appeared, they were stopped as being too dry. "Don't you think," said one of the editors, "that you might turn it into a story, and call it 'Maher-shalal-hash-baz, a Romance of the Days of Isaiah'? That would suit the public better."

What dreadful skunks the fat Bishops must be to let their poor brethren suffer so severely from the tithe agitation. One clergyman in the diocese of Bangor writes that his furniture has all been seized for debt, including the very beds, and his wife and four children have been driven from home. Yet, in face of these facts, the Bishop of St. Asaph is presented with a richly jewelled pastoral staff!

Bishop Strossmayer, who derives a princely revenue from some 40,000 acres of forest land in Slavonia has, according to the Austrian Government, been personally enriching himself for the past forty years by devastating and selling the splendid oak timber. The estate has been sequestered and taken into Government hands. Again the pious journals declare this is persecution, on account of Bishop Strossmayer's Slavonic sympathies. But if so, the persecution comes from a Catholic government.

The climax of the intensely bitter factional fight between the French and German Catholics of Polk County, Minn., was reached on midnight, the 21st ult., when adherents of Rev. Father Marciel, the rebellious priest who was recently unfrocked and excommunicated by Archbishop Ireland, applied the torch to St. Joseph's Church, Red Lake Falls, which, with the contents, including a new organ, was entirely destroyed. That the fire was of incendiary origin, and the firebugs members of the misguided flock led by Father Marciel, there is no doubt, although each faction charges the other with the responsibility for the affair. When he was driven from the Church by Archbishop Ireland, Father Marciel threatened to burn the structure unless he was reinstated. A secret meeting of his adherents was held prior to the discovery of the fire, and those who were first on the scene and broke into the church to save the vestments and silver candelabra, found a can of kerosene beneath the altar, which had been sprinkled with the fluid.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Canon Girdlestone is reported as delivering an address on "The Age and Truthworthiness of the Holy Scriptures" before the South Eastern Clerical and Lay Church Alliance at the Brassey Institute, Hastings. He said he took it for granted that in our Lord's time the Old Testament was substantially the same as it is now. If so he takes for granted an unsubstantiated statement. Almost every quotation of the Old Testament in the New is verbally different, and in some cases passages are quoted which cannot now be found.

Then Canon Girdlestone contends that the books all depend on one another, and thus takes us back at once to Moses, who "must have used some pre-Mosaic material." Now we want to know why the prophets did not refer to the Books of Moses, but to a state of society which evidently knew nothing of Mosaic law. We want evidence of Moses and his pre-Mosaic materials, and we challenge Canon Girdlestone to give us any that will bring us within six hundred years after the date assigned for the death of that lawgiver.

The Booth family, with a big contingent of Salvationists, made a descent on Whitechurch on Monday, and held an indignation meeting, but do not appear to have made any impression on the chief constable, or the magistrate. So

far as they claim a right to assemble in a quiet and orderly manner in what is called the Square, but which is simply the meeting-place of four cross roads, we are entirely with them, as long as they do not habitually block the way for the other inhabitants. But when they claim a right to beat a big drum by the hour, outside the windows of people who have human and not asinine ears, we are entirely against them. We observe that the West Ham Branch of the N.S.S. has passed a resolution of sympathy with the Salvationists, and the resolution shows a creditable love of fair play, but we hope it does not include unlimited big drum.

☐ The following verse was sung at a recent meeting in London, at which a number of missionaries figured on the platform prior to emigrating for the sake of the heathen:

Speed thy servants, Savior, speed them!
Thou art Lord of winds and waves;
They were bound, but thou hast freed them;
Now they go to free the slaves:
Be thou with them,
'Tis thine arm alone that saves.

There is a fine touch of humbug about this. Jesus is Lord of winds and waves, but the ship in which his missionaries embark is insured all the same. They dare not trust their Savior to the extent of twopence. Then, again, they are going abroad to "free the slaves." Well, if they have any skill in that line they should stay at home and "free the slaves" of England, such as East-end tailors, overworked shop-girls, and tram conductors who never have a chance of talking to their own children.

This missionary game has a motive of self-interest very near the bottom of it. It eases the glutted labor market, and is a kind of emigration scheme to keep down the clerical population and keep up clerical salaries.

Mr. Conybeare has some cause for indignation with Mr. Balfour, but this is no good reason for his using words out of their proper meaning. At his meeting at Camborne he thought proper to speak of "Mr. Balfour's atheistical policy." Now Mr. Balfour made it clear at last year's Church Congress that he was a good Christian. Evidently Mr. Conybeare uses the word "atheistical" as a term of opprobrium. This, we suggest, is beneath the dignity of a politician who goes in for justice to all parties.

A big joke has been perpetrated in Hull, and a Christian minister is boasting of having converted the biggest infidel in the town—to wit, Mr. Billany, who is laughing at the poor deluded man of God.

The *Daily Chronicle* of Oct. 15, writing on "Superstition in the Nineteenth Century," after pointing to the case of Elizabeth Landon, who burnt her son's tongue with a hot poker as a cure, and the late Mr. Maybrick, who placed himself under the care of a lady who ruled planets and cast horoscopes, says: "Faith-healing is one of the commonest forms of superstition at the present day." It gives a number of instances, but does not point out how all these superstitions derive countenance and sanction from the Bible stories.

The *Medium* places on its first page a letter to President Carnot from an American crank, signing himself Napoleon Wolfe, 166 Smith Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, in which he states that potent spirits will "return Napoleon Bounaparte to France."—He is probably unaware that the remains were removed from St. Helena to Paris fifty years ago—The spirits will then materialise the dead Emperor in the presence of 10,000 of his countrymen and he will make them a speech in their own language. Can the force of credulity further go?

Mr. Gladstone hears with "lively satisfaction" of the proposed Lay Brotherhoods. Will he ever have the "lively satisfaction" of hearing of their success?

Bishop Temple is in no hurry to join the Anti-Sweating League. He prefers to wait for report of the Lords' Committee, which may be expected some time before the Day of Judgment. Meanwhile he remarks that he does not understand "the legitimate fruits" of any man's labor. Very likely

not. We should fancy it took a long time for a £10,000 a year man to understand that.

Some of the French priests and curates who make themselves conspicuous in trying to bring about the downfall of the Republic will regret it. They have not succeeded in their political aims, and the *Tablet* has to mourn that nine priests have lost their stipends for undue interference with the elections. In the eyes of the Catholics this stoppage of the national pay to enemies who have overtly tried to overturn the government is persecution.

The Rev. H. R. Haweis, who has been proposing the use of dogs for draught purposes, has received a fearful "wiping" from "An Owner of Mastiffs" in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Here is the concluding paragraph:—"Mr. Haweis, I observe, is fond of the word 'twaddle.' If this is the same Mr. Haweis (a 'Reverend,' if I mistake not) who poses as a kind of Admirable Crichton, laying down the law with Pontifical dogmatism upon music, morals, house decoration, and the true history of the Shah's little boy, his affection for the word is perhaps explicable. 'Pray, are there no donkeys on Hampstead Heath?' he asks. Indeed there are—and elsewhere. More pernicious by far than the 'twaddle' of well-intentioned ignorance is that nauseous form of twaddling cant which, under the guise of manly, breezy common-sense, is ever on the pounce for a cheap advertisement."

The orthodox Jews don't like the idea of the Lord Mayor taking the State coach and riding on Saturday, Nov. 9. They don't mind the Gentile sheriffs riding, and are rather disappointed that Barnum's menagerie will not accompany the procession, but they insist that Mr. Isaacs, though a little bit gouty, shall show his faith by his works, and walk from the Guildhall to the Law Courts.

The Anglo-Israel mania appears to be spreading in Canada. Among recent converts are a Methodist minister, who traces his descent from Melchisedek, and the editor of the Toronto *Saturday Night*, who believes that a remnant of the twelve tribes went to America in pre-historic times.

The report that the Roman Catholic schools in Liverpool were going to be made over to the School Board with a Concordat providing Catholic instruction and inspection is a pure invention. But there is little doubt the Roman Catholics and other sectarians would very much like an arrangement of this kind, by which they could obtain their own instruction at the ratepayers' expense.

The Congregational Union has had a discussion on land tenure, and it is curious that while the lay speakers seemed all in favor of a large measure of reform, the clericals, as represented by the Rev. Mr. Anstey, appealed to the "sense of justice" to resist the great taxation of ground values.

While the clergy denounce gambling, they coolly encourage it for the Lord's service. We are constantly meeting with advertisements of such pious raffles. One is now lying before us, announcing a Grand Art Union Prize Drawing in aid of the fund for the completion of St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford. The affair is under the patronage of the Lord Bishop of Ardagh, and the tickets are sixpence each. Among the Art Union prizes are several horses and a piece of Blarney tweed.

The Rev. Dr. Cuyler has been preaching on Balaam's Ass. He believes the story of that talking moke. Wide as the donkey opens his mouth, Dr. Cuyler opens *his* still wider, for he swallows the blessed lot, prophet, jackass, and all. He points out that Peter believed the story, and adds "What Peter believed I can believe." What idiocy, to be sure! Suppose you carry this out logically, in this way:—John Wesley believed in witchcraft, and what John Wesley believed I can believe. Martin Luther believed women had children by the Devil, and what Martin Luther believed I can believe.

Dr. Cuyler says "it is no remarkable thing for donkeys to talk." Hear, hear! The Lord opened the mouth of Baalam's ass, and the Lord has opened the mouth of many an ass since.

John D. Clarke, a Wesleyan minister, was found struggling in the water at the South Dock, Sunderland. A police constable rescued him, and found he was drunk. He had been fined in August and September for drunkenness, and this being the third time, he was sent to prison for fourteen days' hard labor. He is now working, at any rate, for *once* in his life.

Henry Sellers committed suicide at Margate, but he was *not* an Atheist, as, according to Talmage, he ought to have been. The poor man went out in a boat, and was seized with a fit of religious mania, to the horror of the boatman whom he attacked with a table knife, calling out "I am the third son of the Lord." Not caring to have his throat cut, even by the third son of the Lord, the gallant salt wrestled with the maniac and snatched away the knife. Sellers then took a dagger from his pocket, thrust it down his throat, and jumped overboard. The boatman rescued him, and he was taken ashore, but he died from his injuries. Of course the coroner's jury returned the usual verdict of "unsound mind," without a word about the religion which addled the poor fellow's brains.

The Rev. Dr. Brown contributes an article to the October number of the *Expositor* entitled "The Neronic date of the Apocalypse Untenable." The Neronic date, as is generally known is supported by Renan and most of the rationalistic critics who find in the famous "number of the beast" of cranky John, the name of Neron Kaiser. This is curiously the only instance in which rational criticism has tended to place a New Testament-book earlier than placed by the orthodox. Dr. Brown pleads for the later date, that under Domitian, for which there is the early authority of Irenæus. But is it not quite possible that the Apocalypse was originally a Jewish book written at the time of Nero, but afterwards interpolated by the Christians at the time of Domitian? This is the view of some Dutch critics, and we think there is much plausibility in its favor.

Dr. Coues, of Chicago, a leading light of the American Theosophists, states that Madame Blavatsky has been expelled from the Theosophical Society. Madame B. replies that the story comes from one who was himself expelled two months ago, and that she cannot be expelled, not even by Col. Olcott, "as in such a case Madame Blavatsky might, with as much right, return the compliment, and expel him." As Dr. Coues keeps up a Theosophical Society, and challenges the authority of Madame Blavatsky, and Mr. Harte, the acting editor of *The Theosophist* in India, seems disposed to do the same, it seems to be a case for the Adepts and Mahatmas, to make known to the world who are the genuine Theosophists, and where their headquarters are situated. Those mysterious individuals may have good reasons for giving up Madame B. and putting Dr. Coues in her place.

Madame Blavatsky having thrown doubt on Mr. Stuart Cumberland's thought-reading, that gentleman issues in his *Mirror* a challenge to the Russian magician to produce any occult phenomena which he will not explain and parallel under a forfeit of £1,000.

The *American Encyclopædia* calls itself a "Supplement to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*," and is supposed to be an embodiment of American knowledge. Yet the article on Atheism, by Prof. R. E. Thompson, beside being full of stupidities, has at least one absolute misstatement. It says that the *System of Nature* was put forward in the name of J. B. de Mirabaud, "a devout Christian priest." Now Mirabaud was a married man with daughters. He certainly studied at the Congregation of the Oratory, but he never took holy orders. His genuine works—*Sentiments des philosophes sur la nature de l'âme*, Sentiments of philosophers on the nature of the soul; *Le Monde, son origine et son antiquité*, The World, its origin and antiquity; and *Reflexions sur l'Évangile*, Reflections on the Gospel—remain to prove that this "devout Christian priest" was a thorough Freethinker. But any lie is good enough to hurl at an Atheist like d'Holbach.

The clergy are so anxious to obtain lay assistance that Dean Perowne raised at the Church Congress the question of the admissibility of non-episcopal orders. A writer in

the *Times* goes farther and asserts the validity to lay administration of the sacrament. He puts a case. Three pious officers after the ball at Brussels before Waterloo, when the news of the fight came, took bread and wine and administered to each other the sacrament. This he asserts was a valid sacrament, but the High Church party look on the contention as a shocking and damnable heresy cutting at the very root of sacerdotalism.

The Bishop of Sodor and Man has been having his say on Science and Theology. According to the bishop, the difficulties which overhang the first chapter of Genesis arise from the poverty of language. We should have thought that a very good argument for the Deists, who maintain that God would never use so poor and easily twisted an instrument. The bishop talked a good deal about the beauties of creation. He isn't condemned to live in the East-end of London for the greater part of his life.

The Rev. Alfred Rowland, of Crouch-end, says that fasting is too much ignored, and that abstinence from food is the very thing to give a tone to one's religious character. According to this theory, the very poor, who are always fasting a good deal, ought to be the most religious part of the community. But are they? We doubt it. Look at the people who go to church and chapel on Sundays, and see if any marks of fasting are discernible on their smug faces.

We wonder if the Rev. Alfred Rowland indulges in the religious luxury of fasting himself. How long does he abstain at one time, and what does he eat at each end of the performance? Is he like the priest, who fasted on Friday by refraining from meat, and consuming boiled cod, fried soles, and pickled salmon?

Abstinence is supposed to be a regular part of Catholic discipline, but we saw very few marks of it on the faces of the priests we met in the streets of Paris. A more ugly, animal set of fellows it would be difficult to conceive. Religion must have a strong hold on the people when such creatures do not kill it in a single generation. They seemed to avoid *men*. Unless a priest was with another priest, he was in company with women, who were generally dowdy and as ill-looking as himself.

Jehovah has moved the heart of E. G. Price, who hails from 87 Sturgeon Road, Walworth, and is probably in the gospel business. This gentleman (Price, not Jehovah) is creditably anxious to keep his fellow-creatures from going to hell. He has therefore issued a circular, informing them of the true conditions of salvation. They must be baptised, not by the sprinkling of a little holy water on their faces, but by total immersion in the sacred fluid. "There is no remission of sins," he says, "and no salvation outside this message." It seems a most compendious gospel—"Come and be dipped"—and if hell can be avoided on these terms, it is the cheapest salvation we ever heard of. Besides, it has this merit, that several pious people, being dipped in the salvation tank, have a wash all over for once in their lives.

The North London Presbytery is revising its Articles. They are several centuries behind date, and it is to be hoped the revision will bring them up at least to the death of Queen Anne.

The *Spectator* says there is such an air of *vraisemblance* about the story of the raising of Lazarus that its reading induces a strong conviction that it rests on the testimony of an eye-witness. At this rate Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* must be literally true. If the raising of the dead is to be believed because the story-teller knows his business of making the narrative look life-like, why should the *Spectator* refuse to credit the wonders of the *Arabian Nights*, which to our minds are related with vastly more artistic ability than those in the gospels?

The point which particularly struck the *Spectator* as life-like in the Lazarus yarn is Martha's saying, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." Now this seems to us to be quite as plausibly an afterhand invention as the spontaneous utterance of a sorrowing sister.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, October 20, Hall of Science, Old Street, E.C., at 7, "New views of Hell."

Oct. 27, Milton Hall, London.

Nov. 3, Birmingham; 10, Camberwell; 17, Hall of Science, London; 24, Huddersfield.

Dec. 1, Camberwell; 8, Nottingham; 15, Portsmouth; 22, Milton Hall, London; 29, Hall of Science, London.

Jan. 5 and 12, 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.

CONKY.—Your argument that the Divine prohibition of flat-nosed people from the service of the sanctuary (Lev. xxi., 18) led to the prolongation of the Jewish nasal organ is ingenious if fanciful.

E. VINE.—Certainly Freethought is immensely on the increase. But this fact should not cause our friends to relax their efforts. There is still much to be done before established and endowed superstitions can be subdued.

J. TULLIN.—Remittances for the copies left with Mr. Brown received.

H. CALASCA.—Always glad to receive such cuttings.

D. H. EDWARDS.—Your verse has merit, but is scarcely up to the mark for publication. Glad to hear you endeavor to promote our circulation. We want all the help in that way that our friends can give.

OXONIAN.—It seems to be admitted that the elephant has been the subject of many romantic tales, greatly exaggerating his real abilities. Still, the animal is undoubtedly more sagacious than his appearance would lead us to believe. The ape is higher in the scale—that is, a nearer approach to man. Thanks for cuttings.

G. STANDRING has received, in a somewhat circuitous way, a post-card from "C. H." on a matter connected with the London Secular Federation. The post-card bears neither name nor address. Will "C. H." be good enough to write to G. Standring, 7 and 9 Finsbury Street, London, E.C.

M. BALL.—Contents-sheet shall be sent. Please to hear you find the *Freethinker* so useful as a propagandist organ. Mr. Forder lends Freethought works at a moderate charge.

W. H. BROWN.—It may be true, but it is not very witty.

ATHEIST.—The contradiction is more literal than substantial. The curse of Noah was upon Canaan, but as Ham was living he was virtually cursed in his child. Mr. Foote will be visiting Manchester in February.

SENEX.—The quotation was from Fitzgerald's splendid rendering of Omar Khayyam. We had not seen the original title of Montegazza's book, which you say is *Il Secolo Tartufo*. We should be glad to see the volume.

J. W. MEIN.—Thanks for the copy of Dr. Ross's discourse.

W. J. MARSH.—Booth is not likely to reply to such a letter.

SHEFFIELD.—The *Freethinker* can be obtained of Mr. Fellows, 47 Wellington Street, or on Sundays at the Hall of Science in Rockingham Street.

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.—Shields Daily Gazette—Portsmouth Evening News—Manx Sun—Chat—Hastings and St. Leonards Observer—Open Court—Truthseeker—Fair Play—Secular Thought—Liberator—Newcastle Daily Leader—Christian World—Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags-Blatt—Inquirer—Freethought.—

SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was a good audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on the Devil. This evening (Oct. 20) Mr. Foote lectures there again, his subject being "New Views of Hell," which should attract a large gathering.

MR. FORDER lectured in Finsbury Park on Sunday afternoon to a large, orderly, and attentive audience. There was not a sign of disturbance from beginning to end. Mr. Foote moved among the audience to see for himself, and,

in response to a call, spoke a few words from the platform at the end of the lecture. Mr. Forder discoursed on the Jews in Egypt, and well earned the hearty vote of thanks he received.

WE publish in another column an appeal on behalf of the North Eastern Secular Federation. This body is doing excellent work on slender resources, and we hope the appeal will be generously responded to by Freethinkers in Northumberland and Durham. Mr. Brown acknowledges £2 from Mr. Richardson, of Jarrow, and 14s. 3d. collection at South Shields.

THE Sunday Lecture Society is resuming its work at St. George's Hall, London. Dr. Wallace opens the course this afternoon (Oct. 20) at 4. Mr. J. M. Robertson is in the list of lecturers.

TWO fresh numbers of *Bible Heroes* will be published next week, dealing with Peter and Paul. This issue will complete the second series, which will be bound up like the first. The whole work will also be bound in cloth.

WE are glad to see that Mr. E. M. Macdonald, the editor of the New York *Truthseeker*, has fully recovered from his bad attack of typhoid fever. He thanks us for our kind notices during his illness, and asks us to send him an article for the *Truthseeker Annual*, which he evidently wants to have spiced up with a little British "blasphemy." We shall try to oblige.

Nature, for October 10, contains a capital criticism of the work of Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace on *Darwinism*. While praising the work as a whole, Dr. Lankester applies to Dr. Wallace's spiritualism his own statement in regard to certain American evolutionists. "In place of the well-established and admitted laws to which Mr. Darwin appeals, they have introduced theoretical conceptions which have not yet been tested by experiments or facts, as well as metaphysical conceptions which are incapable of proof."

THE October number of the *Freethinker's Magazine* of Buffalo, New York, is largely devoted to the late Horace Seaver. Tributes to his worth from Col. Ingersoll, James Parton, T. B. Wakeman, Susan Wixon, Parker Pillsbury, Harry Hoover, and R. B. Westbrook occupy the first part of its pages. The Myth of the Great Deluge, by James M. McCann, is also continued. Mr. H. L. Green spares no pains to make his magazine worthy of the cause, and it will be a reflection on our American cousins if it is inadequately supported.

IN the village of Court Saint Etienne, Brabant, a Belgian has erected a monument to all religions. The Romans first put the idea of a Pantheon into form, although the fellowship of all faiths was recognised by the Greeks in many ways, and even by the Egyptians and Hindoos. This Belgian monument is forty feet high, of two stories and a cupola. The four facades in French, Greek, Sanskrit, and Egyptian characters give the famous old saying, "The one has many names." On the outside of the columns are carved the monogram of Jesus, the name Allah in Arabic, that of Odin in Scandinavian, or Runic; the Greek invocation at Delphi, "Thou art;" the sacred monosyllables of Hebrews, Brahmins, Chaldeans, and Chinese; and as symbols are to be seen the hammer of Thor, the thunderbolt of Jove, the sacred flame of the Parsees, and the Buddhist wheel of the law. Someone says it is rather a tomb than a monument.

WE see that Mr. W. W. Collins has put out two new pamphlets both dealing with the Church of Rome, which, we presume is found to be the real enemy at Sydney as elsewhere.

THE *Truthseeker* commences chapter the first of what seems likely to prove an exhaustive treatment of the question "Was Abraham Lincoln a Christian?" by John E. Remsburg.

THE *Open Court* of Chicago has frequently some able philosophical articles. The number before us contains a contribution by Mr. C. Staniland Wake, author of *The Evolution of Morality*.

MR. THOS. J. PRICE, writing in the Melbourne *Liberator*, quotes largely from Messrs. Foote and Wheeler's *Crimes of Christianity*, which he calls "a book that everyone should make himself a present of."

MR. SYMES has been having a discussion on Christianity with a minister of the name of Brown. The man of God seems to have been done brown before the debate was over. We notice, too, that at one of Mr. Symes's meetings the sum of £20 was realised for the London dock laborers.

CREEDLESS CHRISTIANS.

WITHIN the present generation there has arisen a new kind of Christian, the Christian who believes in Christianity in general, but in no single characteristic item of Christianity in particular. He has given up as a bad job the defence of the Old Testament stories. He has abandoned the miracles of the New Testament, and has relinquished, one by one, the beliefs in the inspiration of the Bible, the doctrine of eternal torments, and the dogmas of the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the Atonement. Yet he thinks he is a very good Christian all the same. At any rate, as good as they make them this season.

I know a Christian of this sort. He is not a bad kind of a fellow, but he is afraid of a word. He doesn't like to be called an *infidel*, so he protests he is a Christian; that is, on the whole he considers Christianity about the best of the religions. There was a time when he stuck to the Apostles' Creed as the irreducible minimum of his belief, but when he was seriously questioned as to whether he really believed that Christ was born of a virgin and descended into hell, he found that he had doubts upon these points, and he now calls himself a creedless Christian.

A creedless Christian—that to my mind is a nondescript. What should we think of a politician without any particular views on politics, or who would never state exactly what he did accept and what reject? What would have been thought a century ago of a creedless Christian, who made his Christianity a sort of Noah's ark into which every form of faith or no faith might enter? The broad Churchmen, and so-called liberal Christians, who pride themselves upon being but little exposed to infidel attacks, only owe their immunity to having eliminated or shredded down all the characteristic features of Christianity until nothing is left save a mere religious sentiment, common to all religions, and which has no more claim to be called Christian than it has to be called Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Platonism, or any other ism.

I instance my friend's case because, although he considers himself a very advanced man, he is really typical. The very process which has gone on in his mind has been slowly filtering through society. We used to hear a good deal about Christianity being part and parcel of the law of the land. By Christianity was meant the historic belief in the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and eternal rewards and punishments in another life. Now by the highest legal authority the law no longer recognises these doctrines. The Jew has every privilege of a citizen, save that of being churchwarden. Religious privilege rests only on the narrow ledge of Theism, and how long it will rest there if the process of elimination goes on it would beat a prophet to tell. Bishop Blougram saw that once to question the miracles of Saint Januarius was like the letting out of waters. Once permit the play of reason and it will not be satisfied till it has demolished all phantoms—

To such a process I discern no end,
Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife: I cut and cut again?
First cut at Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fickle's clever cut at God himself.

Superstition is all of a piece. Begin to pare it down, and your task is unfinished till you have removed it altogether.

LUCIANUS.

NORTH EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.

THE close of Mr. Foote's highly successful tour in the North, under the auspices of the N.E.S.F., will I think be an opportune time to bring once more, the claims for support of the above organisation before your readers and the party generally.

Less than twelve months ago, our party in Northumberland and Durham were in a thoroughly disorganised state. Some of the Branches of the N.S.S. merely existed in name from their isolated condition, small membership, and lack of funds. They were unable to do any active work, some of them not having been able to engage a lecturer for years past.

The work of the strongest Branches was of an intermittent character, and some Branches had gone out of existence altogether, and yet this populous district teems with Free-thinkers. From time to time, efforts had been made to remedy this state of affairs, notably the attempt of the Cramlington Branch under the leadership of Mr. Martin Weatherburn to form the Northern Federation of Free-thinkers, which unfortunately proved a failure.

The success of the London Secular Federation, however, suggested the idea, that although the first attempt had been a failure, it might still be possible to work a similar organisation on the Tyneside and surrounding district. On March 30th a conference was held in Newcastle, at which Mr. Foote attended, and it was unanimously decided to form such a Federation.

No time was lost in getting to work, and on May 5th the delegates again met in Newcastle, when the constitution was adopted, the officers elected, an appeal sent out to the society for support, and preparations for an active propaganda made. A Branch of the N. S. S., which now numbers upwards of fifty members, was formed at Oxhill. Arrangements were made for Mr. A. B. Moss, who was coming North on his holidays, to tour the district. A united excursion was organised to be held in the City of Durham, which drew the largest gathering of Freethinkers ever held in the North.

By arrangement with the Executive of the N. S. S., Mrs. Sowden was engaged for an eight days tour, and another highly successful eight days tour has just been concluded by Mr. G. W. Foote. Altogether thirty-two lectures have been delivered in various parts of Northumberland and Durham under the auspices of the N. E. S. F.

The appeal for support, though fairly well responded to, has not come up to our expectations, and if our work is to be maintained and effective, Freethinkers must rally to our aid. We can look with pride to our work during the short time we have been in existence. Every member of the Council, together with the officers, are willing to use their whole energies to make the movement a success; and, pointing to our work in the past as a criterion of what we will do in the future, we confidently appeal to Northern and to Freethinkers generally for the pecuniary support without which no movement can be carried to a successful issue. Donations can be sent either to my address, 86 Durham Street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne, or to Mr. James Tullen, 137 Burt Terrace, Gateshead.

JOSEPH BROWN (Hon. Sec. of N.E.S.F.)

SEEKING 'LIGION.

"One day while living at Beaufort, S. C.," said a gentleman the other day, "the young colored nurse in my family came in with a terribly lugubrious face. Around her head was wound a white cloth, which extended fully two feet above. 'What on earth is the matter, Tilly?' said my wife. 'Oh, I's a seekin'.' 'What are you seeking?' 'I's seekin' 'ligion.' 'Do you have to wear that when you are seeking religion?' 'Oh, yes, miss. I has to wear dat to mortify de flesh.' That afternoon she came to her mistress and said: 'I cyarn't tek keer de chil'n dis afternoon. I'se got to go to de woods an' wrassle wid de sperut.' She wrassled for four days, and finally came in with a beaming countenance and with the cloth taken from her head. She had found Jesus and had been baptised. 'Tilly,' I said, 'do you have to go through that performance every time you get religion?' 'Yes, Marse Thompson.' 'How many times have you been baptised in the course of your life?' 'Bou 'leb'n times.'"

A MIXED CREED.

CHRISTIANITY claims to be a Revelation of God's will, brought down by God himself from Heaven to Palestine eighteen hundred and eighty-nine years ago, and to be the only means by which the souls of men can be saved from the everlasting punishment to which they are all otherwise doomed, in consequence of Adam and Eve having eaten tabooed apples in the Garden of Eden, immediately after the creation of the Universe, four thousand and four years previously.

The essential feature of Christianity is that a third part of the invisible and unchangeable God, having, in the course of four thousand and four years, become comparatively pitiful, and wishing to uncurse the human portion of his Eden-blighted creatures, caused himself to be incarnated and killed at Jerusalem, as a final sacrifice, in order to appease the unabated wrath of his unincarnated remainder.

The Almighty Integer impelled the Romans to slay his infinite fraction at the instigation of his chosen people, the Jews, to whom alone of all his children he had ever revealed himself; that is, He forced his unjustly-blighted creatures to commit a crime in order that they might be pardoned for a crime that they had not committed.

God thus partially committed temporary suicide in order to be able, consistently, to forgive his children for being the progeny of their progenitors; consistently, because it had hitherto been his practice to insist upon some sort of a bloody sacrifice as a preliminary to the remission of sin; but being no longer entirely the sanguinary Jehovah, and evidently thinking that killing a part of himself for a short time would be more becoming than killing the whole of his children for a long time, he begat himself as his own son, and was born, apparently in the usual manner, the reputed son of a Jewish carpenter, in Palestine, where he went about in poverty, associating mainly with the ignorant and the outcast, preaching and working miracles, until the orthodox and law-abiding section of his temporarily-adopted countrymen arose, in obedience to his own Mosaic command, and had him arrested, tried, condemned and executed as a blasphemer.

His associates placed his crucified body in a tomb, while he himself went down to Hell for a few hours, whence he returned, re-entered his body, emerged from the tomb, called on some friends, left the country, and went back to Heaven, aged 33.

Thus, we are told, was accomplished the great work of human redemption which enables the Omnipotent to forgive every sinner who manages to believe in it, and, afterward, takes a bath; failing which, the original curse still holds good.

It may be mentioned as a curious fact, that Christendom, notwithstanding its historical hatred of the Jews, is really delighted that those unconscious deicides believed their countryman to be an impostor; for, of course, had they thought that he was the Creator in disguise, they would never have attempted to prosecute him and render

"Earth profound, yet blessed with deicide."

God, however, in order to maintain his *incognito*, and thus prevent the frustration of his suicidal intentions, had doubtless blinded their judgment and blunted their intellect; for it is rather singular that those people should have believed in the genuineness of a private display of the Divine back, amidst the mists of a foreign mountain top, whilst a public manifestation of a larger surface of the same Deity in their own land should have resulted in their indignantly "going for it."

While God evidently intended his Jehovistic revelation to be a comparative success, it is certain that he meant his Messianic manifestation to be a complete failure; otherwise his incarnated third would have had to return unsacrificed to his unappeased two-thirds!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

AFTER THE EXHIBITION.

(Exodus xxxiii, 23).
ANCIENT BALLAD.

Old Moses bade the Lord good-bye
And sauntered back to camp;
A puzzled look was in his eye,
And ev'ry now and then he'd sigh
And shake his head and stamp;
While thus he mused, "Mein Gott! Mein Gott!
I must not tell! I'd rather not!"

Up came the sacerdotal band,
Their hats were cocked askew;
They found it awful hard to stand
And walk erect across the sand,
They hiccupped slightly, too.
"Now come," said they, "and drain a pot,"
But Moses said "I'd rather not."

They blithely shook his fist, and swore,
And some, his back they smote;
They hooked their arms in his and bore
Their comrade to the parlor door,
Behind the "Joseph's Coat."
Then called for pipes and brandy hot,
Though Moses said "I'd rather not."

"Now tell us what you've heard and seen."
"I've seen the Lord," said Mo.

"Come, that won't do, we're not so green,
For were it so, you'd long have been
Perspiring down below;
To see him is to go to Pot,
Explain!" Said Mo., "I'd rather not."

"Pray tell us if he combs his hair,
And if his beard he trims;"
"And tell us if he's dark or fair."
"Describe the togs the Lord doth wear
To hide his trunk and limbs."
Then Moses blushed and squirmed a lot,
And faintly said, "I'd rather not."

"Well, tell us what's about his size—
Tremendous, I should think."
"Describe his nose, and chin, and eyes,"
"Does he exhibit joy?—surprise?"
"Do say if he can wink,"
But Moses swigged another tot,
And merely said, "I'd rather not."

"You've very reticent, I think,"
Said Aaron, looking glum.
"Tis but a dodge to get a drink
And cheat us of our hard-earned chink."
Observed another chum,
Old Moses, wroth, denied the plot,
But still replied, "I'd rather not."

"I have it" cried a thoughtful Jew
"You can't find words to tell,
So take this pen, this paper, too,
And draw for us a graphic view—
We know you can, full well,"
Then Moses rose and fled the spot,
"Good God!" said he, "I'd rather not."

EX-RITUALIST.

BOOTH'S SELF-DENIAL.

A correspondent writes me with regard to General Booth's appeal for a week of self-denial that he thinks self-denial should begin at home, and the next time the General goes to Plymouth he should travel third instead of first-class and give the difference to the self-denial fund.

My correspondent says that he saw the General take the first-class ticket himself. I give his remarks for what they may be worth, as I cannot personally vouch for their accuracy. I can, however, give personal testimony to one item of self-denial practised in the General's family. The other night I saw a private Salvation brougham and a Salvation horse outside a Salvation hall, waiting for a Booth. There was no denying the virtue of self-denial to the horse. A more miserable old wreck I never saw, and it was so thin that you could almost see through it. The crowd which had gathered round were jocular in their remarks, and one young lady suggested that perhaps the horse didn't have much to eat, but took it out in prayer. It certainly looked as if it was used to going down on its knees.

The Salvation Army is established on sound commercial principles. An officer tells me that every corps has not only to be self-supporting, but must contribute its share to the expenses of head-quarters. If a corps does not pay in a certain locality, that locality is abandoned to the Devil. If this is so, the system means, Make money by fighting the Devil, or don't fight him; in other words, "Go for the gate-money."—DAGONET in *Referee*.

WILSON DIDN'T SELL THE "FREETHINKER."
WILLSON DID.

Having noticed in the correspondent's column of a back number of your doom-defying journal an intimation to the effect that the *Freethinker* might be obtained from "Mr. Wilson, Harrow Road," I (being a sojourner in a pious western suburb) determined on Sunday last to start in quest of Mr. W. and a penn'orth of his blasphemy. Harrow Road is a big place, and the search was likely to be a prolonged one; but an appetite for dinner and the possible prize of a comic Bible sketch were worth going for. When near the Lock Hospital I spied a little shop dedicated to the joint sale of newspapers and tobacco, on the fascia of which was inscribed the mystic word "Wilson." My heart beat fast as I entered the sanctum; and, advancing towards the counter, I queried, "*Freethinker*?" A "No" so truly awful and so distinctively Christian was the response where I had expected sympathy that for the moment I was petrified. However, a repetition of the terrible negative brought me to my senses. This time I fancied there was a tinge of sadness and remorse in the Wilsonian monosyllable; and it dawned on me that evil days had perhaps followed the dabbling in heterodoxy, while I by my action was opening an old sore haply healed in some measure by time. Under this impression, with a compassionate smile I silently quitted the abode of sorrow, and continued my stroll up the great western highway. After proceeding for some distance in the direction of Kensal Green—all hope of a "*Free*," abandoned—I came upon another newsagent's, a very likely-looking one for my purpose, the proprietor of which hung out the patronymic "Willson." The additional "l" was, I thought, ominous of *Freethinker*; and my assured request for a copy was answered by a cheery "Yes, sir." Mr. Willson's address is 620 Harrow Road, and he only needed the addition of your paper to his list to justify his rather proud description of his business—"The Universal Literature Supply."

PERSONNE.

J E S U S.

Some of his invectives (*as reported to us*) outdo Tacitus and Suetonius in malignity, and seem to convict themselves of falsehood and bitter slander. Believing, as Christians believe, the Hebrew doctrine of religion to be vastly superior to that of Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor, what Christian (if the words were uttered from an unknown source) would accept as truth the assertion that, in proselyting a heathen, the Pharisees made him a *child of hell* (Gehenna)? Tacitus had no vocabulary spiteful enough for this. Is it certain that Jesus had any close acquaintance with the mythologies which every proselyte unlearned? In special cases converts are not morally improved by their change; but, to a vast majority, the effort of private judgment in religion, and the sacrifices made for conscience sake, entrain a visible improvement—much more so when made from the Paganism of that day into its Hebraism. In the same breath he calls the Pharisees collectively *children of hell*, and reproaches them for zeal in proselyting. (How Christians can read this without shuddering is a marvel!) Again, he bitterly insults them (if we accept the narrative) for building tombs of the martyred prophets, and deploring the outrages of their ancestors against them. Yet what better could they do than grieve for the past and honor these martyrs?—*Prof. F. W. Newman, in "Christianity in its Cradle."*

WHEN people no longer believe in substitutionary atonement, there will be no more vicarious sacrifices of the poor to maintain the rich. When people no longer believe in a divinely chosen priesthood, there will be no more contented slavery in this world with a view to Abraham's bosom in the next. When there is no longer an overruling Providence, there will be no longer an overruling class in the community. When the people thoroughly understand that there is no kind of a God who can right their wrongs for them, or when they get tired of waiting for him to do this much-needed work, they will stop praying and take the matter into their own hands, and then the work will be done and it will be done well, because it is true that if you want a thing well done you must do it yourself.—*Ex-Rev. H. O. Pentecost.*

THE LORD IN A RAGE.

When our Heavenly Father gets mad he is mighty apt to kill some children, knock a church over, or sweep a christian district with a flood or a cyclone. Any minister will tell you that God rules the elements and uses them as his messengers of wrath. Here is an instance of his wrath which proves clearly that our heavenly Father doesn't approve of Sunday schools:

"Columbia City, Ind., September 15.—This afternoon while Sunday school services were being held in a Lutheran church, five miles south of here, the edifice was struck by lightning. The roof was badly torn up and two children, Agnes Hockemeier and Mary Freyer, were instantly killed and a number of other children severely stunned."

Nor does God approve of evangelising in tents, as the following shows:

"Hartford City, Ind., Sept. 15.—A large tent tabernacle in which Elder B. F. Aspy, evangelist of the Christian Church, has been holding meetings was blown down. The audience had just begun to gather in when the accident occurred. The crash of the centre-poles and fall of the heavy canvas created a panic. No one was seriously hurt."

If so wicked a paper as the *Ironclad Age*, but one which has carefully studied God and his ways, and knows that they are not "man's ways," might venture a suggestion, it would be that all public worship be abandoned, and that prayer and praise be conducted in secret and in closets. Somewhere our "savior," who was God himself, in his holy book, speaks about praying in secret and being rewarded openly. The only untried way to worship God is in secret. We are willing to give every minister who will quit his pulpit and preach his sermons and pray his prayers in a dark closet at his own home the *Ironclad Age* one year; and we will bet him our Holy Bible Stories against 45 cents in postage stamps that this is the most acceptable and useful method of worship.—*Ironclad Age.*

SCHEME FOR CATCHING "JACK THE RIPPER."

I SUGGEST to Mr. Munro a simple and effective scheme for catching that human devil popularly known as "Jack the Ripper"? I presume Mr. Munro is a Christian and the scheme which I propose is that he should call upon Jehovah to take the guidance of human affairs as years ago. Of course Freethinkers believe this gentleman to be a defunct deity, but here is a golden opportunity to demonstrate to all the world that he is beyond the shadow of a doubt a veritable living god. Some few years ago when Jehovah's bloodhounds were let loose upon Jericho, one of them stole some money and a top coat which so exasperated Jehovah that he sent a messenger all the way from Heaven to inform Joshua of the crime. Joshua at once set about searching for the criminal. Putting the names of the twelve tribes together he cast lots, trusting Jehovah to direct the lottery, which he did, and a certain tribe was taken. Taking the heads of these families he cast lots again and a certain family was taken. Taking the different members of this family he repeated the operation, and lo! out came the name of Achan—Simplicity in itself. The scheme which I would respectfully suggest to Mr. Munro is this—Let him ask all the ministers of all the denominations to inform Jehovah that on a certain day Mr. Munro intends adopting the same plan with regard to "Jack the Ripper" and would Jehovah be good enough to direct the lottery. Then let Mr. Munro take the names of all the parliamentary divisions of London, put them into his hat and shuffle them up. Putting in his hand and taking out one of the slips he would at once see in what division Jack the Ripper lived. Then let him take the names of all the streets in that particular division, throw them into the hat, and repeat the operation, and there he would at once have the street. Then let him take the numbers of all the houses in that street, and again repeat the operation with the hat, and out would come the very identical house. Then let him take a staff of men and arrest everyone in that particular house, take their names, and once more cast lots, and there they would have "Jack the Ripper" standing before them! What could be more simple or more effective? Why, the whole thing could be done in one evening! And yet I venture to say there is not a single Christian in the whole of London, from the Archbishop of Canterbury down to the smallest tambourine player, who would have sufficient faith to put his God to the test.

J. IRELAND.

THE TRADES AND PROFESSIONS ON THE BIBLE.
Photographer.—It is like a picture just taken—let daylight upon it and it is marred.
Printer.—It resembles a forme—you must not be rough with it or it becomes pye.
Dressmaker.—It requires a lot of padding and draping to make presentable.
Naturalist.—Microscopic examination reveals chaos where order appears to the hasty glance.
Steel Founder.—No amount of labor will make it true.
Physician.—Weak from birth, its delicate constitution has been ruined by attempts to strengthen.
Laundress.—Very dirty; impossible to whiten.
Butcher.—Too full of blood.
Mathematician.—Insolvable by any known rule.
Ploughman.—Too deep and not straight.
Cook.—A very thick hash—wants straining.
Blacksmith.—Takes a lot of hammering to get it into shape.
Gold Smelter.—Not much pure metal left when the dross is gone.
Painter.—You can't put too much varnish on it.
Shoemaker.—Been through too many hands, each with a different style.
Weaver.—Looks well at a distance, but examine it and see the broken threads.
Traveller.—Worse than Bradshaw—100 to 1 you go wrong.
Logician.—Can prove anything from it.
Priest.—Only the Church can expound it.
Lawyer.—It does not prove its case.
Judge.—There has been perjury somewhere.
Barrister.—Most trying defence, dear boy; witnesses continually contradict each other.
Chemist.—Exhibit in small doses, with taste disguised by strong flavoring.
Banker.—The backers of this bill won't do.
Nurse.—Much too strong for children.
Parson.—To be read with faith and reverence.
Baptist, Catholic, Baxterite, Presbyterian, etc.—Authorises our doctrine and no other.

A. GUEST.

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