

# THE FREETHINKER.

REGISTERED FOR]

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

[TRANSMISSION ABROAD.

VOL. II.—No. 2.]

JANUARY 8, 1882.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## “COMIC BIBLE” SKETCHES.—VIII.



THE ORIGINAL TELEPHONE.

“And God spake unto Noah.”—Genesis ix., 8.

## WAS JESUS INSANE?

THE third volume of the International Library of Science and Freethought, issued by the Freethought Publishing Company, consists of two essays translated from the French of M. Jules Soury; the first on “Jesus and the Gospels,” the second on “The Religion of Israel.” Mrs. Besant is the translator of the latter essay, and she has done her work admirably. There are a few blemishes which it were almost hypercriticism to point out, but her English is throughout vigorous, lucid, and idiomatic. This is high praise, for the task of translating this recondite study in comparative theology must have been exceptionally onerous. The translator of the first essay modestly signs himself “J. S.” His work also is well done, and his numerous notes in illustration of the text are exceedingly valuable. Altogether the volume is well worthy of a place on the Freethinker’s bookshelf.

We shall probably devote a separate article to “The Religion of Israel,” but in the present notice we intend to confine ourselves to the question which M. Soury opens up in the previous essay; namely, Was Jesus Insane?

Let not the reader start; there is nothing in this question that need cause alarm. The religion next in historical importance after Buddhism and Christianity, originated in the visions of an epileptic. Muhammed undoubtedly suffered from the same disease which afflicted the great Napoleon; and nearly all the modern founders of Christian sects have been more or less demented. Even Swedenborg passed through a mental crisis before he became a prophet;

and in our own century we have witnessed many cases of religious enthusiasm evoked by lunatics, such as Joanna Southcote, Thom of Canterbury, and more recently the Italian prophet Lazzaretti, who gave himself out to be the Messiah, and was shot at the head of his disorderly followers. May we not also say that Edward Irving’s splendid brain was certainly diseased when he gave way to the silly new “gift of tongues?” Carlyle’s vivid description of Irving’s physical and mental condition, in the “Reminiscences,” leaves little doubt on that head.

M. Soury contends that Jesus was the victim of chronic congestion of the brain, which developed inflammatory symptoms before his death, and that the gibbet saved him from actual madness. This malady “subjectively considered, is always attended in the initial stage with great increase of the moral consciousness, extraordinary activity of the imagination, often leading to hallucinations, and later on with absurdly exaggerated, frequently delirious ideas of power and greatness.” Absorption of the personality of the patient into that of someone he has admired or envied, or who has impressed his imagination, is also a very common symptom of the disease. M. Soury cites an instance from “La Psychologie Morbide” of Moreau de Tours, of a patient in the Bicetre Asylum who when the cerebral congestion came on would suddenly change from timidity to pomposness and go strutting about as the Pope, until the application of the cupping-glasses to the nape of his neck drew off the redundant blood, and left him simple big John as he was before. Surgical science was not very far advanced among the Hebrews in the days of Jesus, or the Prophet of Nazareth, when the Messianic fit was on him, might have been restored to his senses by skilful bleeding, and sent home in a humble and penitent state of mind to help Joseph make chairs and tables.

In maintaining his position, M. Soury appeals very largely to the second Gospel, from which he holds that the first was probably developed. The fourth Gospel, which gives a more urbane and mystical character to Jesus, is universally admitted to be of little historical value; and even Renan, who clung so tenaciously to “the divine dreamer” of that skilful romance, now abandons its defence, and concedes the historical priority of the gloomy and austere figure of “Mark.” M. Soury’s dissertation on the four Gospels is scholarly and careful, and does credit to the new French school of Biblical and oriental study, which is competing severely with the older German school for the laurels of triumph.

Now let us come to M. Soury’s evidence of the insanity of Jesus. First, he urges that there was probably madness in the prophet’s family. His brother James is described by the early Jew-Christian chronicler, Hegesippus, as “a saint from his birth. He was never known to drink wine nor fermented beverages, and he ate no flesh. He never permitted his hair to be cut. On no occasion did he ever use the bath. He wore no linen. From kneeling so often, and for so long a time, his knees had become horny like those of a camel.” This is a graphic picture of a religious fanatic; and as the historical Jesus was crazed somewhat after the same fashion, the probability is that their disorder was congenital.

We may here observe that aversion to clean water was a very common trait in the character of early Christian saints. Lecky refers to one of these gentry who had made a vow, and kept it, never to wash himself, and was awfully alarmed one day when he had to cross a stream without the help of a boat. He could have sung with the drunkard, “Water and me don’t agree.” Fortunately the Lord came to his assistance, and in answer to prayer miraculously conveyed him to the other side, thus saving his piety from being washed away with his dirt.



Secondly, the relatives of Jesus thought him mad. When his mother and brothers came from Nazareth to Capernaum to look after him, and he refused to leave the crowd he was haranguing and join them, they plainly said, "He has gone out of his mind." M. Soury opines that if Mary had induced Jesus to return home with his family, they would in all probability have chained him up in a cellar or outhouse, and kept him there until his death.

Thirdly, the fellow-countrymen of Jesus looked upon him with derision and disgust. They were astonished and annoyed at the airs assumed by this young carpenter, whom they had known from his infancy, and in whom they appear to have detected no real signs of greatness. When he returned to Nazareth after his first preaching journey, as we judge from the fourth chapter of Luke, they seem to have invited him to repeat there the wonders he was rumored to have done abroad. He evaded their request by denouncing their scepticism, and complaining that "no prophet is accepted in his own country." Whereupon they "thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong," and he narrowly escaped with his life. M. Soury supposes that "perhaps on that occasion he had begun to put forward pretensions to being the Messiah, or had permitted advances in that direction."

Now, to our mind, this circumstance is extremely detrimental to the reputation of Jesus. It speaks ill for any man that those who know him best should entertain the worst opinion of him. Muhammed is not open to this charge. His earliest converts were made from his own family and friends. The people of Nazareth had known Jesus for more than thirty years; and if nothing worse, it is at least strange, that he could not compel their belief either in his wisdom or in his miraculous power. Some moral or mental suspicion must necessarily attach to a prophet or a preacher who is obliged to go among absolute strangers to obtain a hearing and some measure of respect.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

#### THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.—SERMON XVIII. THE GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES.

2. *There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom* (Matt. xvi., 28. New version).

HERE, beloved brethren, we are presented with a text which requires the aid of hermeneutics; and without any blessing or guidance from the Holy Ghost, no doubt we shall, if we repudiate prayer and stick to reason, understand.

1. Who is the son of man? The Christians say, Why, the Son of God, to be sure. That is the way with commentators and parsons—they explain Scripture by plunging it deeper into darkness. If Jesus was the son of any God and knew it, why did he not say so? Out of respect for his mother, shall we hope? However, the son of man was Jesus himself, if orthodoxy and the gospels can be trusted; and to that opinion I do not just now demur. Why he called himself by such a meaningless title I cannot tell. Oh, yes, I forgot. An aristocratic, or kingly, or priestly title owes nine-tenths of its value to its want of point, of sense, or meaning. And this was a royal or semi-royal title; and as such had been used by Daniel and by the author of the Book of Enoch. So we let it pass.

2. This son of man, this Jesus, this poor, ambitious, and whimsical peasant, was "coming in his kingdom." It is not worth disputing whether it ought to be "in" or "into" his kingdom, seeing he never did either. The point is that he was to be a king, was to possess or hold a kingdom.

3. This was to be during the life-time of some, though probably not all, who stood near him at that very time.

These are, undoubtedly, the three points contained in this great and precious promise. Have they all been fulfilled? Has any one of the three? Most certainly not. And here Christians and I join issue. Had the Scripture been fulfilled, Jesus would have been king of the Jews. As such he was born (Matt. ii., 2), to that throne he aspired so confidently as almost to feel it under him (Matt. xix., 28), and as the counterfeit of that he was cruelly mocked and crucified by his enemies (Matt. xxvii., 29, 37). It is true, the gospel of John (xix., 36) says that Jesus told Pilate his kingdom was not of this world; but that flatly contradicts what the

other gospels say (Matt. xxvii., 11, Mark xv., 2, Luke xxiii., 3). In each of these texts his reply to Pilate's question is that he is king of the Jews. Besides, if Jesus did not claim to be king of the Jews, if he really did mean some spiritual kingdom, he connived at his own condemnation, and thus almost committed by not making it clear once for all that he had no design to erect a temporal kingdom. Why did he deal in equivoques, and shuffle and play with danger till it was too late? No doubt he expected, Micawber-like, that something would turn up, that a miracle would rescue him from his awful position and transfer him from the cross to a throne. Woe to Pilate and the rest then! It is only the assumption that he had expected deliverance that can explain his sayings on the cross. "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," cried a fellow sufferer. "Alas!" said Jesus, "I can do nought for thee. I am dying; but you and I shall be in paradise, beyond the reach of kings and kingdoms before the day is done." Here I give a paraphrase exactly expressing what Jesus said. His reply was not the language of promise or hope, but of despair, a dying confession of utter mistake, of vanished dreams and of terrible reality. His other cry, his last groan, is so plainly the language of despair in its uttermost blackness, that it has always required the most perfect brazen-facedness of theology to represent it otherwise. Listen! men of honest hearts, what means this heart-rending cry—"My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii., 46). If that is not disappointment and despair, no cry ever implied it. And when Jesus died his kingly dreams were already past; he himself had lost hope. With the ebbing away of his life ebbed away also all his kingly hopes; and had Christianity been anything better than a brainless superstition, a bewildering imposture, it must have given up the ghost—what little there was of it, at the time Jesus expired.

To be sure, the orthodox boast of a resurrection from the dead—a story rigidly and contemptuously scouted by the Jews from that time till now; a story with not even the shadow of any evidence to support it, and only fit for a nursery tale. Christians also say that Jesus became a spiritual king after his death. That his name has been worshipped, I admit—so has Jupiter's, so has Confucius's, so had Buddha's. And the kingship, the personal rule of the one, is as real as that of any other of them. When and where has Jesus reigned spiritually? Nowhere. His own followers never would let him reign. They use his name to delude the vulgar, and do all the reigning themselves, wherever their religion rules at all. Would Pope or priest or Christian king make way for Jesus, were he to demand it? They would soon string him up again.

But what becomes of this promise? He was to be king before some of his hearers died. Was he? He is not a king yet; do they still live? Where? The fact is, they died in the same age wherein Jesus died, and nothing authentic or true has been heard of any of them since.

A Savior who could not or would not keep his own promises, may be one after the own heart of pious swindlers and slanderer's, but no honest man, unbiassed by barbarous education, or untrammelled by social vices, can put any more trust in Jesus than in any other convicted impostor. Mahomet, Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young did become powerful leaders of men; Jesus never did. His boast ended in mere wind; his promises were no better than those of the Turk or a Tory politician at election time; and he now appears in the light of an unscrupulous candidate for popular power, whose best promises only tend to show how weak and idiotic was the man whom even Unitarians hold up as a model—they dare not copy.

J. SYMES.

SHAME upon a craven spirit!  
Is it manly, just, or brave,  
If a truth have shone within thee,  
To conceal the light it gave?  
Even though the foolish scorn it  
Speak out freely, be no slave!  
Speak the thought if thou believest,  
Let it jostle whom it may;  
Every seed that grows to-morrow  
Lies beneath a clod to-day.

"SUPPLY."—Parish Clerk (at vestry meeting on the question of organ-blower's salary, the Rector in the chair): "You see, sir, it isn't as if there was only the hymns, but there's the comin' in, and the goin' out, and the 'sponses, and the prayers, and they psalms take a won'erful deal o' wind!"

## FAMILY PRAYERS.

(Continued from p. 2.)

THIS was a designed and premeditated incongruity; but at times the ridiculous aspect of the proceeding comes out strongly, as it were by accident. Once on a time, I was at a place where private theatricals were a-preparing. The time-honored "Box and Cox" was in course of study. It will be remembered that after the first outburst of indignation on the part of the printer and hatter doomed for a time to occupy the same room, an attempt at reconciliation is made on the part of Box. The attempt takes the form of proffering Cox a portion of the roll of bread purchased for the Boxian breakfast. This offered, after a solemn pause, with the words "Take a bit of roll, sir," always commands a good laugh. In rehearsal, at which all the junior members of the household were onlookers, the laughter over this incident had been very hearty; and, in fact, the two representatives of "Box and Cox" were not able to keep their own countenances at the ridiculous situation. From our rehearsal we were summoned to prayers. The head of the house, who had been in his study all the evening, knew nothing of the roll episode. Unfortunately, the chapter he selected for the devotional exercises of that evening was the second of Ezekiel. Now this chapter turns largely upon the adventures of a roll. It is true that the roll is of paper. But when the reader gravely begun, "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel," a unanimous glancing took place, and demure faces grew suddenly mirthful. One or two, unskilled in the keeping up of appearances necessary to religion, tittered promptly. Others older and more skilled in dissimulation held on to the second verse. The second verse runs: "So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll." I think the demonstrative pronoun "that" upset most of us. Those who had kept their countenances before tittered now. The titters laughed a fearful laugh. The reader looked up astonished and beheld a row of faces so preternaturally solemn that he ought to have suspected something wrong. But in the ignorance that is bliss, he drove on to the next verse and gravely intoned, "And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." Box looked at Cox. Cox looked at Box. Both of them looked at Mrs. Bouncer. Everybody looked at everybody else. A universal, undisguised guffaw went up, and some miscreant whispered, "Take a bit of roll!"

Once on a time the present writer introduced all unintentionally an incongruous element of the grotesque in the matutinal family devotions of a house whereat he was staying. When almost everybody was seated, Bible in hand, he sauntered in rather behind time, and seizing the first available chair by its top back rail, sauntered off with it to his own proper corner. Now it so happened that the divine who was to "lead" the devotions had marked that particular chair for his own, and with uplifted coat-tails poised in quite sacred manner over his hands, one of which bore the ponderous Bible, was just then solemnly backing and lowering himself into the region where the chair had been a moment before. The chair wasn't there! Bump went one thing! Bang went another! The first was the person—I mean the parson. The second was the Bible. He had fallen. It had flown. He was on the ground and the sacred legs were high in air, as appealing to heaven and wholly disclaiming any connexion with earth. It was in a remote corner of the room. There was a smothered ejaculation. I don't think it was from the Bible, though it might have been from the nature of it.

But whilst contingencies such as these are only ludicrous, at times and in places very painful inconsistencies occur. People who have been quarrelling with that bitterness only to be encountered within the limits of the family suddenly rush simultaneously to that which they are pleased to call the throne of grace. Whilst at its foot you may generally gather they are preparing nasty things to say one to the other, as the quarrel always runs higher afterwards, and there is an air of preparation about the sarcasms. One gross injustice in this connexion is that the officiating one, who is generally mixed up in the strife, has not a fair chance. He is praying aloud whilst the others are preparing

for the fray. Mothers come down from their daughters' bedrooms, where there has been bitter, terrible language on both sides, to read the prayers for the day to a row of servants, who whisper to each other "that the young ladies are away, because there has been such a row."

Some small households, that are unhappy enough to be Christian, are occasionally free from the horror of this diurnal mockery. There is nobody courageous or hypocritical enough to undertake the main duty. I remember an old lady who, though of most pronounced Christian proclivities, never had family prayers, because the only other member of the family was a mad brother, who threw things whenever the ceremony began. Sometimes he threw slippers. Sometimes he threw remarks. These latter were the worse: for, impressed with the nature of the occasion, and catching, so to speak, the spirit of it, he was wont to use language whose only connexion with the matter in hand was that it was almost as disgraceful as some of that in the Bible. The old lady, having a nice little annuity and the reversion of her brother's, was much sought after by parsons. Some weeks of every year of her life were spent under the roof of the most successful angler in black cloth. Once upon a time I was staying in the house at the same time as Miss Tombound. Whenever the ominous hour approached and the necessary air of settled gloom was gathering on all faces, this dear old dame, who was nothing if not garrulous, would go off into ecstasies at the admirable idea. All the time the miserable domestics were filing in she kept up a running fire of "How delightful! So charming! Beautiful! A united Christian family! Wish I could get this at home." After prayers were over she was always found fast asleep. A small boy had ultimately to be told off to kneel next her and prod her at intervals, because she was not content with sleeping—she snored.

Sleepiness is a frequent attendant at family prayers. Children who have been awakened too early, young men who have been hard at honest, intellectual work all day, or cricketing, or riding, are overcome by the somniferous influence of a chapter of the Bible, and a prosy prayer, conjoined with their own entire lack of interest in the meaningless proceedings. One has often to be awakened by a kick from a friendly brother when one's devotions seemed more than usually protracted. In fact, there has to be a sort of tacit agreement to surreptitiously kick up any sleepy one who is left kneeling when the rest of the family has risen to its feet.

EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc.

(To be continued.)

## ACID DROPS.

IN one of those gushing and amorphous articles to which the *Christian World* periodically treats its readers, there occurs the following sentence:—"The light of Christianity has absorbed the light of Nature, but not destroyed it." True, for the light of Nature is imperishable. Creeds may obscure it for a while, but not for ever. They pass like the clouds, mere creatures of time, while the great light shines eternally behind them all.

THE same article states that Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Parseeism, Platonism, all centre around the great problems of the being of God and his relation to the world. Considering that Buddhism is Atheistic, and that Confucius deliberately advised men not to trouble themselves about God or immortality, this is rather a bold statement. Any nonsense seems to be good enough to be dished up for Christians.

ANOTHER article in the same journal says that Christianity is "the recognised basis of the Government of every civilised and progressive state in the world." Another piece of nonsense. It is untrue even in Germany; it is notoriously untrue in France, where almost every member of the Cabinet is a Freethinker. And it is untrue in England. When the Christian oath was abolished in Parliament, and Jews were admitted as legislators, Christianity ceased to be the "basis of Government." Now, as Mr. Gladstone said, we "cling to a narrow Theistic ledge," and that will soon have to be relinquished. The editor of the *Christian World*, who is fully aware of all this, should restrain his hired gushers within the limits of a decent respect for truth.

THE depth of religious imbecility is reached in a story which is gravely published in a Christian journal as an instance of answer to prayer. A lady having lost her beautiful pet canary, prayed the Lord to restore it to her, and eighteen days after it came back. Many a pious lady loses her favorite cat for a few days, the animal being, as the vulgar say, "on the tiles." When pussy comes back, rather thin and very hungry, Christian editors would have the owner go on her knees and thank God. The man who publishes this story actually blames the opium shopkeepers for selling stuff that softens the brain.

How awfully clever missionaries' wives are! A son of one of the chiefs of Burdwan got possession of a tract which he could not read. He travelled to Rangoon, a distance of two hundred and fifty miles, where a missionary's wife taught him his alphabet, and in *less than forty-eight hours* he was able to read the tract right through. Samson and Jonah are mere trifles after this.

SPURGEON has just cracked his best joke. He says that Christians meet with nothing but persecution in this world.

HAVE we not all read how, several centuries ago, Freethinkers burnt Christians to death, and tortured them with the rack and the thumbscrew? And do we not remember how the solitary Christian who got elected as a member of Parliament, not long since, went up to the House of Commons to take his seat and was chucked out by fourteen big policemen? And don't we know that the arbitrary majority were all Freethinkers, and that the Speaker, Charles Bradlaugh, occupied outside the House of Commons the office of president of a tyrannous society for the crushing of stray Christians like fleas? Poor Christians! How they do suffer! But the Lord will reward them a hundredfold.

THE *Christian Globe*, after stating that a public discussion has taken place between Mr. Bradlaugh and the Rev. Dr. McCann, adds that "the result is not given." Evidently the editor thinks a debate is something like a prize fight. Does he want to know if the friends came to pick up the mangled remains, or what?

THE Rev. George Sanger, vicar of Carlton-in-Cleveland, has been arrested and charged with setting fire to his own church. Perhaps the reverend gentleman is innocent after all, but if he is guilty we should like to know his motive. Was it sceptical or pious? Has he been reading the *Freethinker* and become enraged against his own creed, or did he simply want to get up a big fire in order to obtain a good idea of hell? We pause for a reply.

WE regret to say that the Archbishop of York has written to Mr. Sanger to inform him that if he is acquitted on the present charge, he will at once be brought before the Archbishop's court on another charge of flagrant immorality in connexion with two young women in the parish.

A GIRL at Lynn, Iowa, went to a picnic with her lover instead of going to a prayer meeting, as her father had ordered. The parent tied her to a post on her return, and gave her such a whipping that she died next day. No doubt the father will quote Scripture to justify himself. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and, "yea, though he slay me, yet will I bless him," would just suit.

MR. WHITELY, M.P. for Liverpool, a few days ago, took part in a pious tea-fight, and made a long speech to the other old ladies present on "Religious Education and Atheism." Those who have ever visited a missionary meeting will be able to remember nearly everything Mr. Whitely said. But there were two points which he made out of his own head, as the nigger said of his wooden doll. First, he cited, as an instance of Republican tyranny, the recent decree of the French Government forbidding public schoolmasters to ring the church-bell for the parish priest, and recommending all the municipalities and communes to make good any little income the schoolmasters might thus lose. There is no tyranny in this at all, for the Republic has a right to insist on maintaining the dignity of those who educate the young; and Mr. Whitely only made it look a grievance by using the word *private* instead of public, and so deluding his ignorant audience. Secondly, he dreaded the coming attempt to admit an Atheist in the House of

Commons; and he warned his countrymen that such an outrage against the majesty of God would surely provoke his "judgment." As for Mr. Bradlaugh, he sincerely pitied him; and then by way of showing his pity he went on to say that Mr. Bradlaugh's "works polluted the youthful mind," while his efforts were directed against "those domestic blessings we enjoy." Poor old Whitely! We don't think he means wrong; he's only a soft-headed old gentleman, who would make an excellent churchwarden, but who has unfortunately become a member of Parliament and an easy dupe of the young bloods of Toryism.

THE Catholic Bishop of Chicoutimi has hit on a nice little plan to obtain money for building his Cathedral. He has issued a circular to the faithful, in which he promises that everyone who pays down twenty-five cents shall have a mass said for his soul once a week for twenty years. These advantages are extended to the dead as well as the living. Anyone who has lost a friend or relative can invest twenty-five cents for the defunct. We should say that there is plenty of nice picking on this bone.

A SAN FRANCISCO paper reports an incident which makes a very good pendant to Dr. Aveling's article on Family Prayers: "Major D. Dornbach, a painter, was arrested today at the instigation of his wife, who states that last evening, while he was under the influence of liquor, he compelled her and her three little children to kneel and pray, while he stood over them with a cocked revolver, threatening to blow out their brains if they did not pray as he directed. As he stood over them she seized the pistol and ran into the street, where she fired it off."

A CURIOUS slip has occurred in a catalogue issued by a well-known bookseller. A work on block-printing is catalogued, which is said to contain "sixty-nine engravings either from wood or metal, twelve of which bear inscriptions representing scenes of Christian mythology, figures of patriarchs, saints, devils, and other dignitaries of the Church."

THE Rev. H. La Pla, of Southernhay, says that "you cannot manufacture a preacher." We don't want to. Nature produces them wholesale like common weeds.

THE Rev. Dr. Hole has taken out and presented to Cetywayo the concertina he longed for. The interview seems to have been very edifying. Cetywayo inclines to become a Christian. He is full of admiration for the beautiful creed of the people who have robbed him of his crown and now keep him in jail. If their religion isn't the true one, he wonders which is.

WE regret to learn that O. B. Frothingham, the advanced Unitarian preacher of America, is now afflicted with religious qualms and shows a strong tendency to backslide. Mr. Frothingham is an eloquent man, but his intellect was always vague, and we don't think he ever knew his own position.

THE Montreal and Toronto Freethinkers threaten to get up an agitation on the subject of oaths and evidence; they mean, if possible, to have the law considerably amended. We wish them success.

A BISHOP CHARGED WITH MURDER.—An ecclesiastical scandal of a painful kind is creating a "sensation" in Armenia. A bishop is about to be tried on a charge of wilful murder. The alleged murderer is the Bishop of Bashkale, and the preliminary inquiry, according to an Armenian journal (which, however, does not give details of the crime) was conducted before the local *medjliss*; and the minutes of the case, showing strong *prima facie* evidence against the bishop, were forwarded to the Sublime Porte, the result being that the Armenian Patriarchate has been requested to divest the accused of his sacerdotal character in order that he may be brought up for trial. It is only due to bishops to admit that whatever may be their shortcomings they are rarely, in this country at least, charged with the commission of crimes of violence. An "offence against the person" by a bishop is indeed an unknown incident. But some few years ago what appeared to be a bishop was seen being carried through the streets by the police, strapped on a stretcher. This turned out to be not really a bishop, but a pickpocket in episcopal garments, who, on being detected, refused to walk to the station.—*St. James's Gazette*.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE will lecture three times to-day (Sunday, January 8th) in Barry's Hall, Sackville Street, Westgate, Bradford. Morning at 11, "Poverty, Priestcraft, and Privilege;" afternoon at 3, "Great Christ is Dead!" evening at 6.30, "Infidel Death Beds." Tuesday the 10th, at the Freethought Institute, York Street, Walworth Road, London, 8.30, on "Was Jesus Insane?" Thursday the 12th, at the Hall of Science, 8, on "Wordsworth and Coleridge."

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

January 12th, 19th, 26th, and 29th Hall of Science, London; 8th, Bradford; 10th, Walworth; 15th, Rochdale; 22nd, Halifax.

February 12th, Grimsby; 19th, Manchester; 26th, Liverpool.

March 5th, Claremont Hall, London; 12th, Edinburgh; 19th, Glasgow.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

- ALL business communications to be addressed to Mr. W. J. RAMSEY, 28, Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.
- LITERARY communications to the Editor, Mr. G. W. FOOTE, No. 9, South Crescent, Bedford Square, London, W.C.
- J. WILKS.—We are very pleased to learn that the *Freethinker* sells so well in Bradford. Contents-sheet shall be sent weekly.
- J. COET.—Scarcely up to the mark for publication.
- EULE.—We cannot reprint Number One of the *Freethinker*. Two copies have been sent us by a Leicester friend for sale to the highest bidder, the proceeds to go to the Benevolent Fund. Eighteenpence has been offered for one. What are you ready to offer for the other? Thanks for your congratulations and good wishes.
- F. SIMS.—Talmage did not mention Mr. D. M. Bennett in his sermon. We said that he alluded to him. All the circumstances he relates occurred in the case of Mr. Bennett, and so far as we are aware in no other.
- W. MORRISH.—We reciprocate your good wishes, and are pleased to know that you are "very fond of the *Freethinker*."
- S. D.—If would-be poets continue to afflict us we shall be obliged to join the Irish agitation and get arrested in order to escape them.
- F. S.—We thank you.
- R. SIMMONS.—We do not meddle with politics in the *Freethinker*, having no room to spare; but the editor's private opinion is that our Royal Family should be presented to the next little East-European State which sets up as a kingdom, and that the whole Peerage should be sent on a voyage round the world on board an ironclad under the actual command of the Duke of Edinburgh.
- MR. G. T. FORSTER reports that the *Freethinker* "goes very well" in the Darlington district.
- M. LARKIN.—You cannot do Mr. Bradlaugh or the cause a better service at present than by procuring signatures to the Petition for his admission to Parliament. Obtain sheets from Mr. R. Forder, 35, Alderney Road, London, E., or from 28, Stonecutter Street, and get them filled as quickly as possible. Vapouring is no good; we must all work, and work hard.
- J. MILLAR.—The newsagent who will supply the *National Reformer*, but not the *Freethinker*, must have an exquisitely delicate conscience. He should be engaged by the State to draw up an exact definition of blasphemy. We thank you for throwing him over and taking your custom elsewhere; that is how all such people should be treated. A contents-sheet shall be sent. Our Christmas Number seems universally approved and sells well.
- A. F.—Received. Thanks for your good wishes.
- C. STEVENS (Montreal).—Thanks for the cuttings. We shall always be pleased to hear from you. It affords us great pleasure to know that the *Freethinker* is so well appreciated in Canada.
- W. SPIVEX.—We meant the advertisement to be gratis, and in the circumstances we cannot think of charging it. Please accept our thanks for sending a copy of the *Freethinker* every week to some Christian. It is rather piquant that two out of the five purchasers you refer to should be Sunday School teachers. Mr. Foote is in excellent health.
- J. ASHWORTH.—Your letter shall appear.
- L. HILL.—Thanks for drawing our attention to the subject, which we will try to deal with.
- H. SHARPLES.—The circulars must have miscarried. We send you a fresh packet.
- A. BONNER.—Received with thanks.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

WE have received from Montreal a spirited reply by "A Working Man" to Father Graham's lecture on "Modern Infidelity." The writer hits the Bradlaugh nail straight on the head. He says that "Bradlaugh in England is fighting the fight of right against might; he is opposed ostensibly on the ground that he is an unbeliever, but really because he is

the uncompromising foe of the many frauds by which the British people are robbed of their money to support titled idlers in luxury."

It is sad to know that the law of Canada is behind ours. Out there "infidels" are not allowed to give evidence in courts of law. Happily, however, public opinion is progressing in the Dominion, and Mr. Justice Osler has publicly expressed his regret that the law of Canada is not yet assimilated to the law of England.

INFIDELITY is said to be making rapid progress in Japan. Says a missionary: "Infidelity is vigorous and aggressive, clothed in the garb of the highest culture. Professor Morse, for some time a leading mind in the Imperial University at Tokio, was a pronounced sceptic, exhibiting almost the zeal of a ranter against the Christian religion, and the prevailing sentiment at this seat of learning is anything but favorable to evangelical faith. Infidel literature, including 'Paine's Age of Reason,' is being translated and industriously placed before the public."

## F E L O D E S E.

England in the Nineteenth Century.—Vide Daily Papers.

WHAT do I know of deceased lying here?  
Feeble he was, sir, but willing to work;  
Fourpence a day—it may sound kind o' queer—  
That was his wage, sir, from daylight till dark.

Workhouse? well, no, sir; he oft would complain  
That master and matron had used him so ill;  
Never, he said, would he go in again—  
Never, leastways, would he go with his will.

Yes, sir, he slept in an outhouse o' nights,  
Hard on an old man, and feebler he grew;  
Aye! and his eyes used to kindle w' lights,  
Strange in the face of the man that we knew.

Last time I saw him—the last time in life—  
Gave him a supper, he needed it so,  
Children came round him—he spoke of his wife,  
Seemed to forget she was dead long ago.

Where did I find him?—why, hung to a beam,  
There in the outhouse, a kind o' a shed;  
Scarce could I think it was aught but a dream,  
Quickly I took him down, and—he was dead.

Gentlemen now  
Do you agree?  
Verdict allow—  
Felo de se.

Now unconfined, fling him on the cart,  
This the law demands,  
Night, dark night, must fitting aid impart  
To your hands.

Bring the rope, and tie to neck and feet,  
Drag the grey-haired man,  
Fling him in, and to your brother mete  
Church's ban.

Yet a little further ye can go,  
Lay him south and north;  
East and west for you, that men may know  
Christian worth.

Foolish people! this man never knew  
Of your church's deeds;  
Death, his friend, comes in, and laughs at you  
And your creeds. L. J. NICOLSON.

[The above verses are a transcription of the actual facts as reported.]

## INFIDELITY AND ATHEISM OF THE BIBLE.

(Concluded from p. 6.)

THE Theist deserves the reproach of the "ungodly" unbeliever in the Wisdom of Solomon: "He professeth to have the knowledge of God" (ii., 13). He stupidly attaches his faith to the unknown and the unknowable, and parades his own ignorance in the arrogance with which he attempts to solve the great problem of existence. At the most, the whole question of the being of a God is admittedly a mystery. For "Great is the mystery of Godliness," says Paul. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. xi., 33). "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery" (1 Cor. ii., 7)—as though wisdom and mystery go hand in hand! The whole affair is

mysterious, and for a very good reason, viz., there is not an ounce of clear solid truth in connexion with it. True it is what Paul declares: "The world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. i., 21), for the healthy mind, untainted by priestcraft and superstition, will ever reject the preposterous notion of a God. Reason demands facts, not mysteries, realities and not idle dreams. After making the above candid confession, it is not surprising that Paul should add thereto the statement that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. iii., 19), for common sense and reason are notoriously the most miraculous exorcisers of the demon of Godism. Having thus achieved the apotheosis of stupidity, Paul wisely confesses: "We are fools for Christ's sake" (1 Cor. iv., 10). The reason is plain. "Mysterious" doctrines, being repugnant to "wisdom," can only be accepted by "fools"—or knaves.

4. We will conclude by a general reference to a few miscellaneous Biblical facts which have either the brand of infidelity stamped upon them, or are of a latent sceptical tendency when properly digested by the reflective mind of Free-thought. (I.) The Devil makes God a manifest liar (*vide* Gen. iii.). (II.) Jacob bargains with Jehovah that if Jehovah properly bribes him, "then shall the Lord be my God" (Gen. xxviii., 21), as though there were plenty more gods to be had on the same terms. (III.) Jehovah himself admits the existence of other gods, though he speaks of them in uncomplimentary terms; yet a worse God than the Jew one never breathed. (IV.) The Devil is represented as the great spoiler of the works of God, and the ruler of the great mass of mankind both in earth and in hell, whilst God is everywhere and at all times soundly thrashed by his adversary. (V.) God is always associated with the greatest rogues and vagabonds, and his character may be safely surmised accordingly. His chosen people were a thieving horde of slaughtering freebooters, and his friends, favorites and prophets were all of shady character. Moreover, the personal transactions of Jehovah himself are always depicted in the gloomiest colors, as though the Devil or an Atheist inspired the picture. In every case he is exhibited as fool or rogue, and ofttimes as uniting both qualities together. (VI.) Notwithstanding the evidence of a crowd of miracles happening for many centuries in their very midst, the Jews were never tired of rebelling against the authority of Jehovah. But the story of their infidelity is inconsistent with human nature. Nay, more, it is so incredible that its authors must either have been liars or infidels; for it is impossible that a nation so specially favored of God as the Jews were, could have forsaken him, persecuted his prophets, slain his Son and Heir, and ungratefully wiped out the memory of his miracles and favors from their hearts. Their history is a perpetual oscillation between a chronic state of scepticism and spasmodic fits of ephemeral faith. The mouth of infidelity now-a-days would be for ever dumb if the supernatural God of Christianity would give to the world the same proofs of his vitality that he vouchsafed to the Jews. Greater than all God's miracles was the miracle of Israel's infidelity to God. The greatest miracle to-day is, that Christian simpletons, without a particle of proof, should believe that which the Jews, who had bushels of evidence, rejected or denied.

In conclusion, we submit that, in a superstitious age, no sceptic or Atheist could have better contrived to undermine all belief in a deity, or more cunningly to satirise the very conception and character of God than the several sacred writers who have unconsciously pilloried and ridiculed the Lord in the manner above described. On these grounds we claim that the biblical portraiture of deity is logically provocative of scepticism and destructive of belief. The whole story sounds more like sarcasm than sanctity. A grim irony seems to pervade every reference to the celestial being. The writers constantly appear to be poking fun at the Lord. Perhaps it was so after all, for it is difficult to imagine that these men, if of sound mind, could have seriously subscribed their faith to the stupid pranks they related of the Bible God. And, perhaps, the Holy Ghost, who inspired this book, was a God-despising Atheist—who knows?—only that the priests have been too stupid or too astute to appreciate the fact. Who but an Atheist could be guilty of inspiring such a blasphemous, sceptical, atheistic book as the Bible?

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

CLERGYMAN: "Who made your body, my dear?" "Please, sir, Sarah Wilson made my body, but I made the skirt myself."

#### IN THE DAWN OF TO-MORROW.

In the dawn of to-morrow, when the darkness shall have lifted,  
And the night of darkening systems shall have fled,  
All life's grim and grisly forms into blind oblivion drifted,  
With their hideous nightmare dogmas shall be dead;  
When the sun shall smile away all humanity's snapt fetters;  
When investigation shall not be a crime;  
Men of "now" whose debts are paid shall leave other men their debtors,  
And the brain shall be the bulwark of the time.

In the dawn of to-morrow, happy they who see the shimmer  
Of the Truth's fair sun upon the distant hills;  
There'll be freedom from oppression, giving smiles to meet its glimmer,  
And humanity shall lose the source of ills;  
There'll be never more the hatred, and the slander and the lying,  
For the guerdon of a lazy evermore;  
There'll be sympathy and skill by the bedside of the dying;  
There'll be creedless songs to waft them from the shore.

In the dawn of to-morrow I shall rest half-recollected,  
Cold and silent in the womb of mother earth;  
What of that? a little while and this, my frame, will be collected  
By the flowers to give another beauty birth;  
My decay another's beauty, this is my sufficient heaven,  
Duty done, to bow my head and calmly die,  
And the earth in my decay hath newer, fairer beauty given  
For the dawning of to-morrow by-and-bye.

In the dawn of to-morrow, ghosts and ghouls of superstition  
Shall be gone, and science all-in-all shall reign;  
Unobstructed she shall march in the progress of her mission,  
While her votaries tune their lyres to freedom's strain;  
When the sun shall smile away all humanity's snapt fetters,  
When investigation shall not be a crime,  
Men of "now" whose debts are paid shall leave other men their debtors,  
And the brain shall be the bulwark of the time.

JOHN ROWELL WALLER.

#### MY GRUDGE AGAINST "GOD."

I WAS the child of poor, honest, god-fearing parents. My father died when I was twelve years old, leaving my mother and seven children to the tender mercies of the world and the care of a heavenly father in whose promise to defend the widow and the fatherless he implicitly believed, and whose commandments he had during life striven to observe. Poor dad! I well remember his dying request, which was that mother would sing to him the hymn beginning with the words—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,"

and the effort it cost her to comply with his wish. Just before closing his eyes in the dark sleep of death, having shaken hands with mother and everyone, he tried to console her sad heart with hope-inspiring promises from God's holy word: and with his last breath declared—

"'Tis thine the blood to apply,  
And give us eyes to see,  
Who did for every sinner die,  
Hath surely died for me.

"Inspire the living faith,  
Which whosoe'er receives,  
The witness in himself he hath,  
And consciously believes.

"Then, only then, we feel  
Our interest in his blood,  
And cry with joy unspeakable,  
'Thou art my Lord, my God!'"

At the time of father's decease my two elder brothers were residing in London; and some few weeks after her bereavement mother received a letter from them intimating that it was their intention shortly to go out to Australia and endeavor to make a home to which we might all go. Their going away was a great grief to mother, following as it did so closely her mournful loss. However, my brothers safely landed in Brisbane, and for fifteen long years did mother's prayer nightly ascend to God, entreating that, for his dear son's sake, she might see her boys once more. The recollection of those poor tear-dimmed eyes, as we rose from our knees from making supplication to God for the absent loved ones, and rendering thanks to him for the blessings (sometimes consisting of dry bread and sugarless tea) of the day past, and from seeking his protection through the dark and silent watches of the night, will ever abide deeply imprinted on my memory. Sometimes, indeed, as though a doubt were hovering in her mind while yet she bowed meekly supplicating before the throne of grace, she would ejaculate, "But, O lord, heavenly father!—

"Forbid me to think  
Thou wilt leave us at last  
In trouble to sink."

But he did leave her to sink and to die in dreadful pain, and that, too, under extremely tantalising circumstances. For after

all those weary years of patient waiting and expectation, when her sons had prepared for her a home in the land of their adoption beneath the sunny skies of Queensland, and amidst preparations to join them there and to partake of the rest she so justly merited, the Lord, alas! willed that she should not enter into the land of her hope, nor see again the children of her love and prayers. In answer to her faithfulness and entreaties he permitted her to trip and naim the arm that had won for her little ones, while yet unable to provide for themselves the staff of life, and, suffering her to endure the most excruciating pain for four months, allowed her to die—thus ruthlessly dashing away the cup of joy from her eager lip at the moment of its fulness! When I recall the remembrance of the gladness of her pure, simple heart, as she would contemplate the prospect of a speedy deliverance from unceasing toil, and the near realisation of a long-cherished hope, and God's tender dealings towards my mother in blasting all, can you wonder, gentle reader, that I should bear a grudge against the God who has promised to grant the petitions of his people for the sake of his son Jesus Christ—that I should hate such a deceiver, such a pitiless tyrant—the mercy-less "God"?

FILIUS COGGIS.

## FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

EARLY CHRISTIAN MORALS.—Who is there, who is not rolling in the mire of fornication? And what more? What I am about to state is grave and mournful. The very Church of God, what does it but provoke him to anger? With the exception of a very few, who fly from vice, what is almost every Christian congregation but a sink of vices? For you will find in the church scarcely one who is not either a drunkard, or a glutton, or an adulterer, or a fornicator, or a ravisher, or a robber, or a manslayer, and, what is worse than all, almost all these without limit. I put it now to the consciences of all Christian people, whether it be not so that you will barely find one who is not addicted to some of the vices and crimes I have mentioned; or, rather, who is it that is not guilty of all? Truly, you will more easily find the man who is guilty of all, than one who is guilty of none. . . . Into this shameful dissoluteness of manners is nearly the entire ecclesiastical mass so sunk, that, throughout the Christian community, it has come to be regarded as a species of sanctity if one is a little less vicious than others.—*Bishop Salviati*, (5th, Century). (Miall's "Memoirs of Early Christianity," pp. 366, 367).

SINCERE believers in Christianity will soon cease to interfere with the management of a world where they profess themselves to be pilgrims and strangers. All theological tendencies, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Deist, really serve to prolong and aggravate our social anarchy, because they hinder the diffusion of that social sympathy and breadth of view, without which we can never attain fixity of principle and regularity of life.—*Comte's* "General View of Positivism" (Bridge's translation), p. 294.

FREE DISCUSSION.—We shall be told, perhaps, that we are beating the air—that the press is free, and that all men may and do write what they please. It is not so. Discussion is not free so long as the clergy who take *any side but one* are liable to be prosecuted and deprived of their means of living; it is not free so long as the expression of doubt is considered as a sin by public opinion and a crime by the law. So far are we from free discussion, that the world is not yet agreed that a free discussion is desirable.—*J. A. Froude*, "Short Studies on Great Subjects," Vol. I., p. 158.

## BLASTS FROM THE NORTH.

"And a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind."  
—1 Kings xix., 11.

THREE persons, who went from Middleton-in-Teesdale to Nent Head a few days ago, to give a musical entertainment, have mysteriously disappeared. The *Durham Chronicle* says, "At the Primitive Methodist Chapel, on Sunday, prayers were offered for the safety of the missing party." Oh! the snivelling, canting humbug of Methodism, the most odious form of Christianity. Where will their prayers be if they do not use their energies in search? Will the wretched god of the ranters come down and hunt about for the missing party? Foh! This Methodist blasphemy of reason is positively sickening.

A MAN has just been before the Stockton magistrates for indecently exposing himself in a Roman Catholic Church. The rev. father in charge of the church says this has frequently occurred before. Is this part of the service of the unclean Hebrew god? If not, why does he permit it? Why has his priest permitted it? Out upon the filthy horde of gods and priests!

THE Mayor of Middlesbrough has been doing some Christian twaddle at a Christmas bazaar. He said "a great deal of harm had been done where creeds had been put in the place of the gospel."

Now I am unable to fairly distinguish between the two. To me this is the very cackling of a barn-door fowl. But his worship said *one* good thing; he said "the rising generation were becoming so wonderfully cute that they required a higher standard of teachers than they had had in the past." Bravo But I fear Mr. Archibald hardly *meant* that.

THE whole frantic crew of religionists in Sunderland are in arms against the pantomimes—Wesleyans, Ranters, Salvationists. The latter give a pantomimic performance in the open air nearly every night with a big drum and hoarse cornet accompaniment. Of course the rival trade at the theatre is a powerful thing, and the more the pious rave, the greater seem the crowds that press to the pantomime. I'm going to-night, myself, with Mrs. North Wind. We get sick of the Hallelujah pantomime led up town by the fool with the umbrella.

OUR parsons are officious in their thanks to Jahveh of the Jews because he is sending fine, open weather, and thereby keeping outside working men fully employed. Very fit he should send a fit of fine weather after villainously spoiling last year's crops.

"An honest god is the noblest work of man."

THE NORTH WIND.

## PROFANE JOKES.

THE ANTI-SEMITIC MOVEMENT.—Distinguished visitor (asking the boys a few questions in sacred history): "Can you tell me about the plagues of Egypt? Now what were they?" Small boy (promptly): "Jews, sir!"

WHILE preaching from the text, "He giveth His beloved sleep," a Toledo minister stopped in the middle of his sermon, gazed upon his sleeping auditors, and said: "Brethren, it is hard to realise the wondrous, unbounded love the Lord appears to have for a good portion of this congregation!"

NOT TO BE TRUSTED.—The Rector: "A gentleman I know slightly is coming down from London, farmer Groggins. Do you think you could board and lodge him for a while?" Farmer Groggins: "Oh, yus, sir." The R.: "I believe you will find him to be an immensely studious and a deeply, most deeply, religious young man." F. G.: "In which case, begging your parding, sur, I expex my money in advance."

A PRECATOR WANTED.—In a parish not thirty miles from Elgin, the people were the other week in want of a preceptor; and the minister meeting one of his parishioners, accustomed to much speaking in public, the following colloquy occurred between them:—"John, can you precent!" "Na," replied John; "but, sir, gen ye like tae sing yersel, I'll preach." The parson stood aghast, exclaiming, "O, John, you would not try to preach;" to which John replied, with a leer in his eye, "An' fat wad hinner me, onybody can dee that noo." The parson turned on his heel and said "good day."

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ANOTHER of Mr. Morrish's reprints, adorned with a special new portrait of the great Freethought orator. Good wine needs no bush, and it is too late in the day to praise "Pagan Bob." We extract a good story:—

"The Church once declared that the earth was flat, but the scientists put their arms beneath it and answered, 'No, there is nothing for it to rest on.' By and bye the Church said they did not say the earth was flat—not so awful flat—(laughter)—it was kinder rounded. They tell us that God worked six days—after an eternity of idleness—and then had the impudence to tell us to be industrious. (Laughter). And that reminds me of the story of a clergyman who was travelling through the Humboldt Mountains with an old miner. Said the miner, 'Do you really believe that God made the world in six days?' 'Of course I do.' 'Well, don't you think,' returned the miner, 'that he might have put in one more day to advantage right around here?' (Laughter.)"

The discourse is full of similar good things, and will certainly not lack readers on this side of the Atlantic.

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THESE discourses were delivered before a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association in New South Wales, and printed on private subscription. The author, who is visiting England, has deposited some copies for sale at Stonecutter Street. The *brochure* contains much original thought, and, considering the circumstances in which it was written, it reflects extreme credit on the author, who possesses a mind of considerable force, and whose *soundness* of heart is apparent on every page. His dedication to Colonel Ingersoll is very noble and touching. We heartily commend these "Essays and Addresses" to those who desire a few hours' bracing and suggestive reading; and we are heartily glad to know that men like Mr. Blanchard are carrying on, in their way, at the antipodes, the same emancipating work which Freethinkers are so successfully achieving here.

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