

THE FREETHINKER.

REGISTERED FOR]

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"COMIC BIBLE" SKETCHES.—XXVI.



JACOB CHEATING HIS FATHER.

"And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; . . . And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."—Genesis xxvii., 19—22.

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."—Malachi i., 1—3.

MR. GLADSTONE'S DUTY.

THE Tory papers say that Mr. Gladstone's duty is to resign. We do not think so. His duty is to let neither personal grief nor popular clamor affect the wise policy of conciliation. A capable statesman keeps his eye steadily on the goal, and a strong statesman is not blown to and fro by every breath of passion. The mad howlings of the London press will die away in time, and the English people will grow calmer. It will probably be recognised, a few weeks hence, that the brutal murder of Lord Cavendish and Mr. Burke has defeated the purpose of the desperadoes who planned and executed it. Ireland will have rallied to the cause of law and order, the Home Rulers will be compelled to assist the Government in its remedial legislation, and the "sister isle" will gradually settle down to the enjoyment of such reforms as are now possible. People will then thank Mr. Gladstone for his courageous steadfastness, and be proud, no less than glad, that in the wild welter of public emotion one man at least remained firm like a rock against which the waves break vainly and spend themselves in foam.

Instead of proving the wisdom of Mr. Forster's policy, this vile slaughter of innocent men is its greatest condemnation. Under his system of coercion secret societies have developed, capable of carrying out a planned assassination of Government officials in broad daylight before the very

eyes of the Lord Lieutenant. Military arrangements do not touch these criminals, who work in secret and strike without speaking. They are not the persons who get imprisoned in Kilmainham. Such establishments are only crowded with those who act openly, and who might be tried by the ordinary law. Mr. Forster simply incarcerated the responsible officers of the Land League whose whereabouts was known, and who could be arrested at any time; never laid by the heels a single one of the "village ruffians" he wanted to shut up in jail, those who shot landlords and murdered bailiffs went scot-free, and the Moonlighters prowled about with almost perfect impunity. Perhaps Mr. Forster was not to blame for this. It is probably due to the Dublin Castle system. But it certainly shows that the Coercion Act is absolutely powerless against political or agrarian crime.

Many people cry out that Ireland should at once be put under martial law; in other words, they demand a stronger dose of the wrong remedy. Martial law provides a sure and speedy trial for offenders when they are once caught, but the whole difficulty lies in catching them. The Coercion Act, it must never be forgotten, was in full force when Lord Cavendish and Mr. Burke were murdered within two hundred yards of the Viceregal Lodge, and the assassins easily made their escape, despite all the armed constabulary. Where is the use of more coercion when what we have has so signally failed? Where is the use of persevering with a remedy which does not in the least touch the grievance we wish to redress?

Let the Government be armed with ample powers against secret societies, but let the constitutional rights of the Irish people be respected. Above all, let not the guilt of a few villains be charged against a whole people. We do not in these columns, frequently meddle with politics; but in a crisis like this our duty is clear. Freethinkers should oppose themselves to the momentary madness. They must show regard for the permanent interests of humanity. They must resist any attempt to gag, oppress, and imprison a nation. We believe that if Mr. Gladstone stands firm the crisis will soon be over, and his government will be stronger than ever. It will then have plenty of opportunity, not only to revise and supplement its past legislation for Ireland, but also to do something for the people of Great Britain. Radical reforms are urgently needed here as well as in Ireland, and we hope our grand old Premier will live to carry them.

Mr. Gladstone, however, must in turn endeavor to maintain the principle of religious liberty, which the Tories violated when his hands were perhaps too full to fight them successfully. From the outset, these professed champions of religion were striving for political ends. If they had been in power themselves, the Bradlaugh question would probably have never arisen. But the question is now a burning one. The rights of constituencies are trampled under foot at Westminster; Mr. Bradlaugh is excluded from his seat while acknowledged as a member, and Northampton is disfranchised without the authority of law. This state of things cannot be tolerated. Radicals throughout the country are determined to put an end to the scandal. They will make it a test question at the next elections, and every Liberal seat will be endangered unless the candidate promises to vote the right way. Mr. Gladstone should see to this. He should reflect on the many great meetings throughout the country held in Mr. Bradlaugh's behalf, and on the magnificent and imposing demonstrations last Wednesday in London. Let him demand that Liberal members shall maintain the principle of religious liberty, either by resisting the attempt to make the parliamentary oath a theological test, or by carrying an Affirmation Bill. Let him tell them that disobedience may mean dissolution,

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and let them feel sharply on their hind-quarters the flick of the Liberal whip. We have no doubt of the result. Mr. Bradlaugh's seat would soon be secured, a grave breach in the ranks would be repaired, and the whole force of a unanimous party would back up the one great statesman who is capable of leading it.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH ON MAN AND THE GOSPEL.

CHRISTIANITY—and by Christianity we mean the ecclesiastical system which pretends to save men by its supernaturally revealed dogmas—is to us well described in the words of Tacitus the Roman historian, “a pernicious superstition.” We believe its pretensions to be false and its promises delusive. Its save your soul alive-oh creed is to us as contemptible as the history of its warring sects and its myriad persecutions is detestable. Were we alone in our opinion we should deem it our duty to expose it, and even to use ridicule as the shaft best suited to pierce its pachydermatous nature. But when our opponents offer us arguments we will not meet them with invective, nor repay their courtesy with contempt. Great Bishops or Little Bethelites shall have more than the fair play which they accord.

This year's volume of *Good Words* contains some papers on “Man and the Gospel” by the Bishop of Peterborough, which, as such papers go, are more than ordinary thoughtful and fair. If heard spoken with the eloquence of Bishop Magee, they would doubtless be impressive. We have no hesitation in saying that the Bishop puts the case for Christianity very much better than the Bible does; for, in point of fact, he imports a philosophy into the Bible of a superior character to any he could fairly bring out of it.

He sets out by saying that the test of any religion is its teachings concerning the nature of God and the nature of man. “And we have a right to ask every religious teacher for these theories before we hear him speak of the relations and duties arising out of them; and by the truth or falsehood of these theories all the rest that he has to say must be judged, so far, at least, as this, that if he tells us anything concerning God or concerning man, which is demonstrably false, which our reason and our conscience rejects, we must reject him.” Now, concerning the nature of God we know nothing. If a religionist tells us God is a spirit, or an animal, or a force, or any conceivable or inconceivable existence whatever, we are not moved to contradiction. If, however, we are told that he made the world in six days, that he had a favorite nation which he ordered to slaughter other nations, that he worked miracles they would not believe, and that he will torture eternally the most of his creatures after they are dead, neither our reason nor conscience desire to know further of such a being. The only test for us, then, is, as the Bishop admits, the teaching of religion concerning our own nature. To an appeal on this side no serious person will be indisposed to listen.

The Bishop's argument, though elaborated and illustrated in fine language over many pages, can be fairly condensed into a single paragraph. Man is distinct from all other animals in this. He is the most unhappy creature in creation. He yields for all his greatness a tax of misery from which the others are exempt. He is often unhappy directly in proportion to the degree and extent to which he obeys his own nature. He suffers from satiety and remorse. How does it come to pass, that when man obeys the strongest impulses and instincts of his nature he is not, like other animals, therefore, happy, but, therefore, miserable? The Bible accounts for this. It tells us that the God who made man gave him a spiritual nature with a free and self-determining will. It tells us that exercising this strange and mysterious spiritual power he has wandered from his Father's home, and can only find rest by returning to God.

Such is the argument, concisely stated, as far as possible, in the Bishop's own words. Its mere statement shows an attempt to go a little deeper than the usual superficial “internal evidences of Christianity.” But there is very much in it open to question. In the first place the Bible does not tell us that God made man “with a free and self-determining will.” On the contrary, it teaches that he is but as clay in the potter's hand, and that the Lord hath made all things for himself—yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Even if it taught free-will, this would only be clearing up one difficulty—that of man's misery, by another, that of man's

being gifted with a “mysterious spiritual power” which occasions it. But did the Bible give an explanation of the problem the Bishop raises—which it does not, but the Bishop for it—it would not follow that the facts are not susceptible of another interpretation. And another explanation is to be found in the facts of evolution, as expounded by the great teacher we have recently lost. It is not true that when man obeys his strongest impulse he is, therefore, miserable. He must obey his strongest impulse. He is miserable when the obedience reacts upon other instincts, exactly as a dog is miserable and feels remorse if his instinct for hunting has counteracted his instinct of obedience to his master.

Because our appetites, rather than our reason, are the lowest and deepest rooted, Bishop Magee writes as if they must ever be the *strongest*, which is like saying there has been no advance from the brute to the savage, from the savage to the civilised man. And here is the distinction between the explanation of Christianity and that of Evolution. Christianity says man was made a little lower than the angels and fell much lower still. Evolution says he has risen from ape-like progenitors, and may rise much higher yet. Man is the most unhappy, because he is the most complex of beings, with a finer nervous structure, capable of deeper suffering because capable of keener joy. He inherits complex latent capacities, that can go in many directions; yet can only develop some by repressing others. His social and his self-regarding instincts are often at war. He has a higher and a lower, just because he has been a brute and is now a man. To those who have overcome the brute nature it is unhappiness to live like a brute. If the civilised man gives way to his brute instincts his conscience rebels, because in the past of his race the line of elevation has usually been the line of well-being. If he commits crime he is miserable, because his conscience owes allegiance, not to God, but to the community which has made and moulded it in the past. His strongest impulse, even while the brute is not yet “worked out,” is to acquit himself a man. To the savage the same actions bring no remorse. A breach of chastity, a lie to a foe, or even a murder outside the tribe to which he owes allegiance, is rather a thing to be proud of. Conscience, in short, is the growth of earth, and not the gift of heaven, though none the less valuable on that account.

Here, at any rate, it seems to us, is another explanation of the phenomena relied upon by the Bishop of Peterborough. We do not say that it is perfectly satisfactory, but at least it demands no acceptance of legends of the miraculous, no belief in incredible creeds, and its adherents threaten no punishment for its rejection.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE ALLEGED RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

CONCLUSION.

THE learned prebendary's attempt to exhibit the value of Paul's evidence from “historical recollection” by an appeal to the French *coup d'état* is the most complete failure of the tract. He maintains that it is simply impossible that we could “become the prey of legendary stories respecting it,” and insinuates that it was equally so in Paul's time. But he forgets many things. The *coup d'état* in France was proclaimed publicly and accepted as a fact throughout the civilised world, and was well known and recognised by all the people living at the time and in the place where it occurred. The resurrection story lacks each of these essentials. Again, the French historians of the period give ample details of the event. The historians of the times of Christ say not a word of his resurrection. Tacitus, when writing on the very subject of Christianity, never mentions his alleged resurrection. What should we think if Parisians denied the occurrence of the *coup d'état*? What if their historians never hint at it? What if the most civilised part of the world knew nothing of it? Should we not reject the story, especially if it had a miraculous tinge with it? Why, then, should we accept the resurrection story, which lacks many of the essentials of even a purely historic event?

Besides all this, Mr. Row's argument from the “historical recollections” of Paul, if good at all, tells dead against him. For if Paul were really to carry back his “historical recollections” he would arrive at just the very period when he himself was an *unbeliever in the whole story*. This suits us admirably, but will it suit our reverend friend, or his argu-

ment? Does it not subvert the very fact he is trying to establish?¹

But Mr. Row's chief fallacy is the assumption that the resurrection story, having given renewed life to the Church, must have had a basis in fact. He thinks no other explanation meets the case. We do. We rather fancy the story would have made but very little impression upon the world if Paul had not been behind it. In short, had Paul not lived, we think Christianity would have died. Moreover, the past history of the origin of certain religious sects furnishes us with more than one instance of renewed life based confessedly upon religious fanaticism or fraud, or a little of both combined. Thus the followers of Joanna Southcott, upon her decease, still clung to the belief that she was not in reality dead. And even when refuted by the unanswerable logic of a post-mortem, they still believed she would, in some way or other, reappear to them. And in the case of Mother Ann, the founder of the Shakers, though her death was a surprise, her followers were soon ready with a reason for not relinquishing her teachings and their hopes. They boldly asserted, in the teeth of all evidence to the contrary, that she was not dead, and, in fact, could not die; that she had only withdrawn from the common sight, but was still visible to the eye of grave and faith. Now in each case the lie, though patent, was the real cause of renewed life and perpetuation of the sect. They both offer instructive examples of the tenacity with which mankind will cling to error, despite the plainest proof to the contrary, and present, we think, a significant parallel, in more than one point, to the original propagation of the story of Christ's resurrection. If such fraud could find acceptance in the eighteenth century, how much more readily would it have passed current in the first!

Mr. Row puts it that we have only three possible solutions: 1st. That the resurrection was a fact; 2nd. That it was a fiction; or, 3rd. That it was a fraud. We deny the alleged fact, and maintain that it was more likely to have resulted from a mixture of fiction and fraud. Christians impute fraud and fiction in all creeds but their own. We must insist that we have no right to make their creed an exception. If it be urged that we have no right to accuse apparently honest men of fraud, we reply that we have many authenticated instances of the power of fraud and fiction in religious matters, but not one authenticated case of a dead man coming to life. The balance of probabilities against the truth of the resurrection story is too strong to be overcome by the proof offered in its support. It must, therefore be rejected as unproved, if not absolutely unproveable.

We, however, cannot conclude without thanking Mr. Row for the able and very courteous manner in which he has reasoned with us. Kindness and fair argument are not thrown away even on unbelievers. He has failed, in our opinion, to prove his case. But this is rather owing to its inherent difficulties than to any weakness peculiar to himself. Both he and his friends must try to realize to themselves the important fact that the resurrection story is not "attested by a sufficient number of men of such unquestioned good sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind as to have a great deal to lose in case of being detected in any falsehood." Nor was it "performed in such a public manner, and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable."² Add to these grave difficulties the following: That the truth of the story was, as we have said, denied from the moment of its promulgation in the exact locality in which it is said to have occurred, and by the very people who ought to have been best assured of its truth. That we are asked to believe in this story on evidence altogether different from that supplied to the first believers. That the disciples themselves refused to believe without ocular demonstration, which was supplied to them, but is denied to us. That Paul had a special miracle worked to make him believe, which is not vouchsafed to us who need it the more. That if the evidence

¹ Before finally dismissing the subject of Paul's evidence, we wish to acknowledge an error in our first paper. We there stated that Mr. Row had concealed the fact that Paul had founded the churches of Corinth and Galatia. We have since discovered that he does incidentally refer to the fact. We therefore, beg, with many apologies to Mr. Row, to withdraw that statement. The argument, however, remains unaffected.

² "Hume on Miracles," p. 10, Wheeler's edition.

was not sufficient to command assent in those times, it must be proportionately less in our own time.

Under these circumstances, we think we are fully justified in saying that Mr. Row's attempt to demonstrate the truth of the resurrection of Jesus is a thorough failure from beginning to end. In saying this we have no wish to hurt his feelings, but we feel that any other verdict on our part would be untrue. We wish heartily we could have given a more satisfactory one, but we could not. He has, we think, attempted the impossible, and has consequently failed, and that miserably. J. E. GARNER.

ACID DROPS.

THE Bigots of to-day are the rankest cowards. They will not proceed against any Secular leaders for "blasphemy," although our lectures and articles are full of it; but they are ready to harass any less-known Freethinker who may be more safely dealt with. Down at Tunbridge Wells, Mr. Seymour, the secretary of the local branch of the N. S. S., has recently been singled out as a victim. He was cited before the Justices of the Peace, on Monday last, to answer the charge of having issued a blasphemous placard, libelling the Christian religion and the holy Scriptures. The "great unpaid" committed him to the Assizes, which will take place about July, bail for a hundred pounds being required in the interim. No doubt the bigots fancy they will score an easy success. But they may find themselves mistaken. The Freethought party will stand by Mr. Seymour to the end, and the case will be fought through every stage. We are not going to let pious humbugs seize and imprison our members without a struggle, and we are prepared to protect the humblest Freethinker in the exercise of his personal rights. Secular Societies are not to be molested with impunity for advertising their proceedings in an orderly way, while the Salvation mob is allowed to parade the streets and kick up a disgraceful row like hell let loose.

MR. FOOTE lectured at Tunbridge Wells a few days after Mr. Seymour received his summons. The papers would not advertise, the police had frightened all the bill-stickers, and it was given out that all who came to the Hall would be spotted. One or two local personages came to report the proceedings. Mr. Foote crammed his lecture with blasphemy, and challenged the authorities to prosecute him. But they haven't the courage. These bigots are a set of blustering bullies who are afraid of a fair fight; they like instead to get hold of some unprotected victim and kick him to death.

THE Tunbridge Wells branch of the Church of England Working Men's Society met on Monday evening, and passed the following resolution: "That this Branch of the Church of England Working Men's Society hereby condemns the Secular Society recently established in this town, together with the prints and bills of a blasphemous character posted by the Secularists on the doors of their hall, and in other parts of the town, and heartily invites the co-operation of all classes and denominations who are willing to join in the suppression of the Secular meetings and the posting of such prints and bills in this town."

WE wonder how many *working men* were present at this meeting. Probably it wouldn't ruin a pauper to pay them a shilling a head.

LYING Joe Cook calls Thomas Carlyle "a good Old Testament Christian." We were unaware of there being any Christians mentioned in the Old Testament. The scornful repudiator of "Hebrew Old Clothes" would not have thought it any compliment to be placed with such a precious set as Abraham and Jacob.

DR. JESSOPP contributes to the *Nineteenth Century* an interesting paper on a Norfolk parish, entitled "The Arcady of our Grandfathers." He tells of an old parishoner who said, "Some of them talks of being conwaried. I was never given over to drink enough for that." From what he had seen of the Ranters, he understood "conwarision" to be a kind of possession following on or akin to *delirium tremens*. Had he seen the attempts of Salvationists to work up excitement and "get the blood and fire" he would have found much confirmation of his theory.

EVERY day we notice indications that Christians are waking up to the fact that they are surrounded by an atmosphere of modern thought, amid which their god-given faith looks as fantastic and out of place as would the saints and prophets of old could they arise and take a walk down Fleet Street. The *Methodist*, in an article on "Christian Evidences and Present Day Needs," says, "It is utterly impossible for Protestants to steep themselves in an atmosphere of unquestioning religiousness which shall make them and their families totally impervious to the influences exerted by literature and society day by day. And it would be childish to deny that these influences are in great part foreign to the Christian spirit, and in many cases

noisily and bitterly opposed to Christian truth." The *Methodist* suggests that all ministers should get up lectures on Christian evidences. Very good! The sooner they break through their policy of sinister silence the sooner will the end come.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* inquires, Can one man accept of Christ for another? Why not? God only wants Blood and Faith. If the substitutionary punishment of Jesus Christ, thanks to Judas Iscariot, wipes away the sins of Bill Sykes, why shouldn't the faith of Vincent de Paul suffice for David Hume? For our part, we decidedly object to any innocent person suffering for our sins, and sincerely hope that no Christian friend will accept Christ on our behalf.

THIS miserable doctrine of crawling to eternal happiness behind the coat-tails of another, is an outcome of Semitic arrogance. When the Jews got to believe that their Yahweh was not only the biggest fighter, but cock over all other gods, their boldest prophets offered salvation to other nations upon their taking hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew.

DR. MONAHAN, officiating at the Chapel Royal, Dublin, last Sunday, "improved the occasion" of the blind and brutal assassinations which have struck so many who should be cool and collected with passion and panic, by reading from a recent number of *Catholic Progress* that "The woes of Ireland are all due to one single cause, the existence of Protestantism in Ireland. Would that every Protestant meeting-house were swept from the land! Then would Ireland recover herself and outrages would be unknown, for there would be no admixture of misbelievers with her champions." Could *Catholic Progress* have its way, we might expect to see as much law and order and as few assassinations as in Catholic Spain.

WE recalled to mind the words of Professor Clifford about the ecclesiastical system which is only powerful over men's lives in countries where the population consists chiefly of habitual thieves and liars, who are willing opportunely to become assassins for a small sum.

THE Bishop of London has fixed a day of intercession "for the conversion of the heathen abroad, and of our untaught and erring myriads at home." The Church is mainly responsible for the people's ignorance. It fought tooth and nail against their education. Now it turns round and asks God to pity them. How kind! The Bishop really deserves another ten thousand a year.

MR. ASHWORTH BRIGGS has been preaching at Northampton on "Is Life worth Living?" Some of his remarks on the salutariness of work we thoroughly concur with, but others as to the Bible are rather curious. He said, for instance, that "the unsealed lips of the dead Lazarus shall reply" to the question. Now sceptics have always asked why Lazarus said nothing about his experiences in the world from which Jesus brought him back. The Bible is silent on the subject, but Mr. Ashworth Briggs evidently has some information. Will he be good enough to tell us what Lazarus said after his resurrection, and how he picked up the news?

THERE has been a hot discussion in the French Chamber on the Burials question. Bishop Freppel twitted the Freethinkers with regarding man as a two-legged animal, and laughed at their wanting any respect paid to the corpse of such bipeds. M. Clovis Hugues retorted that the Church was always trying to get the said corpses in order to bury them, and that it treated all heretics, not as bipeds, but as animals with four paws, and wanted them to be buried like dogs.

EARL PERCY remarked in the House of Commons that "Board Schools had seriously deteriorated the religious condition of the country." So much the worse for religion. Earl Percy presided at the famous Exeter Hall meeting against Mr. Bradlaugh, and told three flat lies in as many minutes. No wonder he prefers piety to education.

ADMIRAL MAXSE has published, in the form of a circular, both in French and English, a letter sent to the editor of the *Spectator*, challenging the truth of Mr. W. S. Lilly's assertion as to abominable impurities practised by boys in French Government Schools, "not only with the connivance, but with the direct encouragement of the *Libre-penseurs*, who constitute the professors of those establishments," and offering by means of friends in Paris to obtain the fullest investigation into Mr. Lilly's charges. This letter the Broad Church insertors of Catholic calumnies upon French Freethinkers refused to publish.

ADMIRAL MAXSE now rightly saddles the responsibility of the calumny upon the *Spectator*, and calls the attention of the French press thereto. He says in his letter to that paper: "It is not surprising—indeed, the only way of accounting for your conduct is contained in the fact, that you have acted thus in the cause of 'religion,' for this is the term which from time immemorial has been used to justify conduct which is unjustifiable on moral grounds. I have long observed that when unscrupulous conduct is meditated—some act that will not bear ordinary human defence, based upon purely conscientious considerations

—the name of God or 'religion' is generally invoked, and that it acts like a spell to the conscience of even high-minded men, while it disarms the censure of a credulous public."

WHAT would the religious press of this country say did a French Freethought journal insert a letter asserting, on the authority of an unnamed correspondent, that English clergymen in their church schools "encouraged and connived at the abominable impurities practised by boys," and refused to publish a remonstrance, and a challenge to inquire into the truth of the charge?

AT the meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society Mr. A. H. Baynes said there were at present half a million of Christian converts in India, and within twenty years that half a million will grow into a million, and within 130 years into 138,000,000. The Baptist missionaries are counting their chickens before they are hatched. The fact is, Christianity has been propagated in India over 300 years, and it has made next to no impression on the educated Hindus. It does succeed, however, with the aboriginal devil-worshippers, who already believe in bloody sacrifices, witchcraft, and similar Biblical superstitions. When it has absorbed these it will come to a full stop.

RELIGIONS never keep up their progress in an arithmetical ratio. Christianity made a good start at Pentecost, but did not keep it up, or the world might have long since been converted and the Jews been back to Jerusalem. The Mormons, however, got a larger following in the lifetime of Joseph Smith than all the Christians in the first century. Our being the dominant race in India, with wealth and thousands of missionaries, and the famines of that unhappy country, fully account for such success as Christianity has obtained among the lowest castes and tribes, who are not Hindus at all.

THE flood of waste paper with which this poor world is deluged is appalling. The Religious Tract Society, at their annual meeting, boast of having issued seventy-three millions of publications during the past year. What good does it do, save as serve for firelight and other domestic purposes? The Rev. Chas. Marson, speaking at their meeting, complained "You cannot go into a drawing-room without seeing some periodical with hints and inuendoes, and sometimes direct attacks against Christianity." We presume the rev. gentleman refers to such magazines as the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Fortnightly*, and *Westminster Reviews*. Does he think the paper pellets of the Religious Tract Society of any use as against these big guns?

THE British and Foreign Bible Society boast of having distributed three million Bibles during the past year. Foreign provision merchants, truckmakers, and others must have benefited considerably by this scattering of the word, not to mention paper-makers, printers, binders, and salaried officials at home.

THE English Presbyterian Synod had an overture to consider the revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The motion was shelved for a year. So in the meantime the unelect must be considered born to eternal damnation, all the same as formerly.

MR. BRIGHT has written a condoling letter to Mrs. Booth. He refers to the Salvation Army's "good work," and says that their assailants would no doubt have "mobbed the apostles." Perhaps so; but that doesn't say much for eighteen centuries of Christianity.

By the way, those Apostles were not such a very amiable lot, and many true believers have evidently thought so in imitating them. As Byron sings,

"Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded
That all the Apostles would have done as they did."

CENTRAL LONDON BRANCH OF THE N. S. S.—Last Sunday night we held our quarterly meeting at the conclusion of Mr. Symes's lecture at the Hall of Science. There was a very large attendance of members, and the utmost cordiality and good feeling prevailed throughout the proceedings. The report showed a splendid programme of work, the branch having now no less than six out-door lecturing stations in full work, each with a properly appointed staff, and having large and attentive audiences. Mr. Jas. Ramsey, who has been appointed as secretary for this special work, read a lengthy report of the affairs of each station, which was much applauded. With the exception of one member of the committee, who could not in future attend the meetings, the whole of the officers were re-elected, and received the congratulatory applause of the members. The balance-sheet showed our finances to be in a satisfactory condition, but as we are now beginning our summer work we shall need all the funds our friends can supply us with. Mr. Symes presided and, being a great favorite with our members, received a very hearty vote of thanks. The branch will move at the Conference, "That we make a collection at all meetings on Hospital Sunday for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund."—W. J. RAMSEY, hon. sec.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures three times to-day (Sunday, May 14th) in St. James's Hall, Plymouth. Morning, at 11, "God in a Box;" afternoon, at 3, "Bradlaugh and Liberty;" evening, at 7, "Darwin and the Bible."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

May 21st, Leigh; 28th, N. S. S. Conference.
 June 4th, Glasgow; 11th, morning Midland Arches, evening Claremont Hall, London; 18th, morning Clerkenwell Green, evening Claremont Hall; 25th, morning, Gibraltar Walk, afternoon, Victoria Park, London.
 July 2nd, Manchester; 9th and 16th, Claremont Hall, London; 23rd Rochdale; 30th, Liverpool.
 August 6th, Burnley; 20th, West Hartlepool; 27th, Stockton-on-Tees.
 October 15th, Halifax.

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LAON, who for above ten years has written in the *National Reformer*, *Secularist*, *Liberal* and *Freethinker*, writes disclaiming credit for papers appearing over that signature in the columns of a Free-thought contemporary.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—We hope you and other seceders from the churches will join a local branch of the N. S. S. Unity is strength. Our publisher has forwarded his catalogue.

INQUIRER.—There is an English translation, by T. Taylor, of such fragments of the Emperor Julian's book against the Christians as are preserved in Bishop Cyril's refutation. It has been reprinted and edited by Willis Nevins, a Catholic, and published by Williams and Norgate. There is a French translation by the Marquis d'Argens, Berlin, 1764 and '69, which is also found in the complete editions of Voltaire's works, with a preliminary dissertation by the great French Freethinker.

PROGRESS.—Emerson's essay on "Self-Reliance" is found in the two volume edition of his works published by George Bell and Sons. The Freethought publishing Company can supply you with his "Letters and Social Aims" for One Shilling.

J. BRD.—Many numbers of the *Freethinker* are out of print, and we have no complete sets made up.

H. JONES.—Sharpe's books are all valuable and trustworthy. *Mind* is published monthly at 2s. 6d.

J. IRELAND.—It is a funny explanation of cats that God designed them as cheap companions for the poor and lonely. When the Lord was designing things he might as well have guarded against people becoming poor and lonely at all. As to cats being "so gentle and inoffensive," we can only say that they fight like devils round our house and often disturb our slumbers with their howls, which we always fancy must be something like the singing of the beasts in the Apocalypse.

X. Y.—(1.) The public expenditure of France is not £300,000,000, but £109,000,000. This sum includes colonial charges, cost of great public works, and the interest on the heavy war indemnity. You must also bear in mind that the population of France exceeds ours. (2.) Mr. Bradlaugh never lectured in Spain, and never bolted from the country. (3.) Mr. Bradlaugh's brother is not a clergyman, but a travelling preacher. He has no brains, can't write a decent letter, and merely trades on the name.

W. NORRISH.—The drawing will appear in due course. Thanks.

DESCENDANT OF JUDAH.—Your letter is unfortunately too long. We know that Christians have bitterly persecuted the Jews and partly made them what they are. But that does not alter existing facts, and the Russian peasant cannot be expected to find much consolation in an historical theory. Like you, we believe in education and Freethought, but the question of race will remain until the Jews amalgamate with their neighbours or form a separate state. We do not believe in the patriotism of the Jews in England. Blood is stronger than principle. They are devoted first of all to their own caste, as we saw during the Eastern crisis, when they judged the duty of England according to their own preferences and hatreds.

H. CHALKLEY.—The *Freethinker* can be sent post free for 6s. 6d. a year. Messrs. Dawson and Sons have a very nice conscience if they supply the *N. R.* and draw the line at this journal. Lending the *Freethinker* about is one of the best means of promoting its sale. We shall be glad to hear of a Branch being formed in your district.

C. B. B.—Thanks for the cuttings. Mr. Foote will be glad to see you.

M. M. WILLIAMSON.—The secretary of the Irish Secular Club, 145, Great Brunswick Street, Dublin, will be glad to hear from Irish Freethinkers.

C. YOUNG has done good work by printing an exposure of the Rotherham pious fraud concerning which some correspondence appeared in the *Freethinker* of December 11th, 1881.

BOTH SIDES.—Our notice of Renan's speech was taken from the French papers. There was a good report in *Le Petit Journal*. The English papers for the most part have only reported the speech of M. Pasteur.

ALIQUANDO.—The quotation alluded to occurs in the volume entitled "Society and Solitude."

B. J. F. C.—We are simply overwhelmed with verse.

H. H. S.—Our little journal is crowded with such papers. Some have been standing in type for months. We will return your MS. if you desire.

R. S.—Of course Christianity could not have been established by the State until its doctrines had become established in the minds of a considerable section.

W. S.—The credulities of Spiritualism naturally follow in the train of the superstition of Christianity. The account you send is an instance of this.

CHAS. YELD.—We are interested to hear of your conversion. See Thomas Scott's English "Life of Jesus," E. P. Meredith's "Prophet of Nazareth," Edward Clodd's "Jesus of Nazareth," Miss Evans's translation of Strauss, and Renan's "Vie de Jesus." All these have merit.

J. THORNE calls the attention of Bradford Freethinkers to a special meeting, to be held at Chaffers' Temperance Hotel, Cheapside, next Wednesday at 8.

SUGAR PLUMS.

WE are very glad to see that the Portsmouth Freethinkers are beginning to stir themselves. Last Saturday and Sunday, Mr. Foote delivered two lectures there to large and intelligent audiences who were very enthusiastic. Unfortunately the theatre, which was originally engaged, got burnt down, and a hall had to be hurriedly procured for Saturday night and Sunday morning, the premises being occupied for the remainder of the day by the Salvation Army. The local society, however, intends to secure a regular meeting-place for itself, and if possible a hall for special Sunday lectures. There are great difficulties in the way. Portsmouth is full of Toryism and bigotry, and halls are systematically refused for Freethought purposes. But difficulties are made to be conquered, and the society has only to persevere to succeed.

PORTSMOUTH is represented by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, who played the wolf when Mr. Bradlaugh first went to take his seat. The parliamentary borough has a population of 150,000; yet there is no free library and no morning newspaper, and the natives are only just building a town-hall. When the Wolff comes down to address "his friends and constituents" there is a packed ticket meeting; none but members of the Conservative Association are knowingly admitted, and every intruding Liberal, when discovered, is unceremoniously chucked out. Freethinkers have a big task before them if they wish to civilise the town.

PROFESSOR COSSAR EWART was on Friday week inducted to the Chair of Natural History in Edinburgh University. In his opening address he described Darwin as the Newton of biology, and declared that man was no exception to the great law of evolution. His remarks were greeted with hisses and cheers. We suppose the hisses came from the divinity students, who are proverbially the biggest fools and greatest blackguards in the University.

MR. J. T. RAMSEY informs us that the open-air work in London goes on finely. New ground has been broken at Holloway, opposite the "Manor House," and large and attentive audiences have assembled, despite the efforts of the Christian Evidence Society to howl the lecturers down. A new station is to be opened at Canning Town on May 21st, when Mr. Norrish will enlighten the public as to "God's Favorites."

MR. THOMAS KNOWLES writes that a branch of the N. S. S. has been started at Pendleton, Manchester. A large lecture-hall is sought to be obtained, and we trust that all Freethinkers in the district will join and help the work. Mr. Knowles' address is 16, Harding Street.

AT the parish church, Stawley, Somerset, on May 31st, the congregation numbered two, and their united ages did not amount to thirty. This case is nearly as bad as that of the parson who sent for a man to keep the clerk company while he read "dearly beloved brethren."

WE have received a capitally executed life-sized lithograph of Colonel Ingersoll from Mr. J. S. Maxwell, of 108, Renfield Street, Glasgow. The portrait is excellent and well worthy of a frame. Its price, one shilling, should bring it within the reach of a large circle of the admirers of the gallant Freethought orator and wit.

EDWARD CLODD, continuing his papers, in *Knowledge*, upon "The Antiquity of Man in Western Europe," says: "Since the time when the men of the Acheulian period lived in France, the Somme has cut down its valley one hundred feet—a result which requires an enormous antiquity for the flint implements found in the undisturbed gravels. The bottom of that valley has yielded stone weapons and other remains, further illustrating the vast lapse of time between the Auctient and Newer Stone Ages—vast, even after making full allowance for a more rapid action of rain and flood in the Quarternary period than now."

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.—SERMON XXX.

GOD?

PROCEEDING to cull choice bits and incidents from God's autobiography, I may mention that after the fright he got at the bold attempt of men to scale heaven by means of the Tower of Babel, he began to select favorites, who, like most of that class, were nuisances. I may say in passing, though, that there is a grand truth to be discerned in that Tower of Babel story, and quite prophetic withal. The Tower of Babel, my beloved readers, is not, was not, what you vainly suppose. The Bible, be it known to you, does not mean what it says. Its every sentence is an allegory; else where were the use of commentators and parsons? The Tower of Babel is the Bible itself, which was written to guide men to heaven. The bold bad attempt displeased God, and he has confounded the language of all Christians over this particular book. When they speak on other topics they pretty well agree; whenever they speak of the Bible there rises the most perfect hubbub of bewildering cries ever heard; not only do no two Bible expounders understand each other, there never yet was one of them who understood himself when speaking of theology.

God's first great favorite was Abraham, who was denominated his "friend." This man took his half-sister to wife—God did not object. Abraham told lies about her in Egypt and in Gerar to save his own carcass, though he had an almighty God to travel with and defend him. However, the Holy Patriarch, who is the father of the faithful, "the pattern of believers," made his fortune out of the transaction, and that was all he seems to have cared for. His wife's virtue was nothing to him—or to his God. Abraham showed in more ways than one that he had very little faith in God. God had promised him a son by Sarah; he made up his mind to have one by Hagar—and afterwards kicked her out of doors. God said nothing. Favorites may usually do as they like. In this case, as in many others, the favorite got the upper hand, it seems, of his patron—else he and his patron must have been both tarred with the same brush. That is it. A man and his God are generally alike, the latter is but the other's *alter ego*, or Mrs. Gamp's Mrs. Harris.

Isaac was God's friend after his father died. Of this ancient saint little is known, though he too repudiated his wife at Gerar. That is nearly all we know of his character. His two sons, Esau and Jacob, were very much unlike. Esau was a good, decent, honorable fellow. Jacob was a rogue, a liar, a polygamist, and an adulterer. Yet God hated Esau and loved Jacob! Just so. The angels are also of the same sentiments, for, as Jesus says, they value a scoundrel like the prodigal son ninety-nine times as much as they do one like his decent and respectable brother! God is always on the side of the scoundrels.

Jacob had a family who were most of them chips of the old block. The one who did most mischief was Joseph. He was his father's favorite and told tales about his brothers. His dad dressed him up in flaming colors, and gave him a patchwork coat, more gaudy than the Yankee flag. They say he resisted Mrs. Potiphar, who most likely was ugly! That is pretty well all the good we know of him. When he became the vizier of Pharaoh, he sold out the corn he had stored up until he had got all the money in Egypt into the king's coffers; then he bartered corn for all the cattle the people had; then he bartered more for their lands; and, last of all, he bought up the people themselves as slaves of the king! And this was done, too, with corn that they themselves had grown during the years of plenty! Rascality never went further. Our Tories have never gone so far as Joseph did; yet the Lord was with him, as he is usually with tyrants and oppressors.

After those days God took all the Israelites into favor, to the number of about 3,000,000, if the Bible can be trusted. But he never had any peace of mind thereafter. He soon lost patience with them, and they could not put up with him. The preliminaries were more or less pleasant; but the *marriage* (shall I call it?) was hardly over when "these high contracting parties" fell out. Henceforth there was little else but quarrelling and fighting, intermingled with tears of repentance on their part and doting promises on his. To-day he gave them fresh quails—and he choked some of them in eating them; to-morrow he gave them water from a rock, or food they didn't care for from heaven, and he poured out promises the grand Turk couldn't beat. Then his bile rose,

and he slaughtered them by a pestilence, by an earthquake, or any other weapon that came to hand. In Canaan it was no better. They sold him and he sold them. Then he sent them into Babylon, etc., for seventy years, where both they and he learnt all, or nearly all, the civilisation and good manners—not much at best—that fell to their lot for many centuries. But that subject I must not further pursue.

Moses was another companion of God's, and he, too, shows us by reflection the character of his master. He murdered an Egyptian, and afterwards murdered 3,000 Israelites because they worshipped a golden calf—the most valuable God they ever did worship, probably. From that time till now they have paid their most ardent devotions to the same metal no matter what shape it bears; and this religion of theirs seems likely to last when most others have gone the way of all the earth. Moses also wrote the most bloodthirsty orders ever penned, and he said his God told him to do so. Read Deuteronomy xx, and other parts of the Pentateuch. But God was specially delighted with this old barbarian, spoke to him face to face, and even gave him once a sight of his—tail.

After Moses, Joshua was his favorite or vizier. He was just like his predecessor, very, very pious, and equally bloody; a tremendous saint, and an inexpressible villain. God stopped the Sun and Moon once while this favorite slaughtered innocent people; and on another occasion flung down great stones out of heaven upon his enemies when they were fleeing. An honest and a civilised God would have granted them quarter; but goodness from the Bible God! Yes, when Shylock becomes generous and noble, or Newdegate discovers that all his life he has been an ass! By the way, I have often thought that Shakspeare was exposing God in Shylock. The characters are both one, though under different names, only Shylock is not so bad by many shades. God *will have his* pound of flesh, though he incarnate and crucify his only son to get it! Shylock only practised upon an alien. Whatever Shakspeare intended, Shylock is the best take-off of Jehovah anywhere to be found—except in the Bible. In that precious book almost every page reveals his barbarism, his brutality, and his want of almost every good and noble trait.

Is it not disgusting that men of to-day, surrounded by civilisation, and enjoying all that culture and good taste can bestow, should still scatter copies of the Bible abroad in the world, and still speak of God with bated breath, and still call honest people blasphemers for speaking the truth about their idol? I am told that people are shocked at my Atheistic Sermons, their blasphemy is so terrible. Well, well! It is disgust which compels me to pen them. I do it from a sense of duty. I am fighting against the most disgusting book in the world. Don't expect me to speak gently of it. I owe a duty to mankind, and I will perform it. Godism must be destroyed. It is the root of all superstition, the tree that bears untold evils. Henceforth man must believe in man; and gods must be neglected and ignored. You cannot civilise *them*. Like popes and priests, they are mere fossils of brutal ages, fit only for museums, having no further use, except that of showing how low mankind formerly was in being's scale, when priests and gods had it all their own way, and ran riot in every direction. And of all the gods, the Jewish is or was the very worst—except the Christian.

JOS. SYMES.

GODISM'S RETREAT.

(Concluded from p. 123.)

THOUGH the gods, in their transit from one country to another, have gone through many modifications and drifted, under the modelling hands of priests, into many forms, and have been from time to time robbed of much of their original hideousness of character, yet through the whole line the fundamental elements are plainly distinguishable so that we can clearly see in the face of Jehovah the tyrannical lineaments of Jove. In Jesus we can follow the clear outline of Bacchus. Everything that is base and mean in the eyes of man shone as a virtue in his supposed maker; tyranny, hatred, revenge, sensuality, lying cheating, theft, murder, were not only approved by the gods in their priests, but were practised by the gods themselves, and it is somewhat amusing to the philosopher to observe with what keenness the Christian supernaturalist can discern these qualities in the god of the pagan, while the same hideous

characteristics in his own god, who is in truth the same old bogie under a new name, are made to take the hue and form of virtues.

To the modern pietist Jove appears as a horrible god of blood and war, while Jehovah, who is simply Jove in a slightly altered spelling, is a "good god" who always fought on the side of his chosen people, the Jews.

Even in the golden days of these Hebrew barbarians, godism was obliged to retreat at times, and though narrow the footing gained at such times by the party of progress, yet what *could* be gained was never relinquished, but served as points from which the enemy of humanity was driven still further back. True, in the ceaseless conflict that has raged between the forces of Reason and the ogre godism, many brave lives have been blotted out, yet over the graves of these loving memory will always linger, and their monuments are as landmarks on the road that winds to the Eden of Liberty. When to-morrow dawns on the earth, someone will stand on the sunny heights and look away to the fields where the fight was fiercest, and murmur the names of the warriors dead on the field.

Godism ran over her records and then said, "This earth has been in existence six thousand years."

"False!" said the Atheist Geology, "I have bored down through the earth's crust, and I have found a fossil forest that waved its mighty arms and shook its leafy head in the wind thousands of ages prior to that."

"Ah!" said Godism.

"I have picked up, five hundred feet under an accumulation of stone and soil, the form of the reptile that crawled through this mighty forest; I have brought up to the light of the sun, out of the earth's dark womb, ten thousand forms that flitted in the sun myriads of ages since; I hold in my hand a plant, a flower that could not have lain imbedded down there unless it had once glowed and smiled in the light of the sun."

"Ah!" said Godism.

"Come into my museum," said Geology, "and look around. That fish on the face of stone swam through the waters of a forest glade when yon stony *calamitis* looked from the margin of the pool and dipped to meet its shadow."

"Um!" said Godism.

"That fern," said Geology, "was once the tiny home that sheltered this small insect from the sun's fierce rays millions of years before your tyrant said 'Let there be light.' I found them one hundred and sixty fathoms from the surface where we stand; how came they there?"

"Can't say!" muttered Godism; "fancy our Great Creator must have put them down through the cracks in the earth."

"Why?" asked Geology.

"That's a poser," said Godism. "However, I'll look at the book again, and let you know by-and-bye."

Into its cloisters went the junus-headed Godism and told its story of this new Atheist to its horde of shameless priests. "We must get rid of this fellow, Geology," said they. "We must not argue with him; we must hang him, smother him, burn him, drown him or something. We *must* kill him or he'll kill us eventually."

So they excommunicated Geology; they cursed him and his in their temples, but he only laughed as he went into the quarries and mines again and brought new specimens to confront them. The fight was fierce and long, but Geology was more than triumphant; for when Godism saw that the new iconoclast was winning firm adherents, a retreat was ordered, and the apology was this:—

"I see how it is," said Godism, "the Bible does not mean that the earth was made in six days, but our Great Creator made it 'in the beginning,' and that may be a long while before he put it into order, you know. Then these days might be vast periods of time covering millions of years: do you see?"

"But how about the evening and the morning?" asked Geology. "If each of these days were, say, one million years long, that would be rather a long day to get the darkness picked out from among the light; I would think it rather slow work for an almighty god. If 'the evening and the morning' were the first day, don't you think a million years between the two would be rather long?"

"Well, it *would* be rather long," assented Godism, "but you know a thousand years with God are but as one day; that's the way to look at it."

"Yes!" said Geology, "with your eyes shut. Suppose your God worked hard for six days making the world; sup-

pose each of those days a million years long, then, when he rested on the seventh day, he took another million years or so to get his wind. If so, then he hasn't rested and refreshed his weary bones yet, according to Moses."

"Blasphemy! blasphemy!" yelled Godism. "It's no use arguing with *you*; you'll let all our friends know this; you must be cru-hed." Then on went the war again. Truth ever advancing; Godism beating an ignominious retreat.

It would be superfluous to recount more of the concessions that orthodox godism has made. In medical science superstition has had a keen and unbending foe; prayers, fastings, relics, and a hundred "holy" charms were resorted to formerly, by which diseases were supposed to be cured. Medicine dispelled the-e fancies, and the pious themselves learnt to put their confidence in the physician rather than in gods. Witches were believed in. The belief was explicitly taught by the Bible. Education opened the minds of the people, and Godism left this fortress and fled from the laughter of the enlightened.

The human body was the tenement of legions of devils, according to the teachings of the Jew-God Jehovah. Education laughed the fallacy out of the minds of men, and to-day the dogma lives in the New Testament, an absurdity denied by the Christians themselves. The circumambient air has lost its host of good and evil spirits. Hell has lost its horde of assisting imps; its sulphur has vanished, its lake of pitch is gone. Heaven itself has lost its golden streets and become only a condition after death. God is fast losing his personality and becoming only a *power*, a veritable nothing. The "Sacred Scriptures" have been cut down times out of count; hacked and hewn to pieces. So much of the old indecent book as yet remains would scarce be recognised by the priests who made it, and even what is taught is only half believed. The calendar of saints is shortened or called in question. The feasts and *holy days* are going by neglected, or are being turned to another purpose. The churches are bare and unfrequented; the parson passes through the busy street and misses the servile bow. The old creed has already dwindled to a vulgar mountebankery in the thoroughfares. Once the people went to church to tempt the favor of the god. Now the god must curry favor through his priests and buy the people to his sacred fanes. Pen, press, and platform are combined to fight against the dying bogie, for—

"Through the rolling years a light has come:

Godism is dying, Jupiter has fled;
Jove, Mars, Pan, Bacchus, crowds of gods are dead.
Jehovah, Buddha, Jesus near their doom;
So sweeps the purging wave from sea to sea,
Till gods are gone and men shall all be free."

JOHN ROWELL WALLER.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

OF THE EARTH EARTHY.—Let men learn what benefits men, above all things to contract their wishes, to calm their passions, and, more especially, to dispel their fears. Now, these are to be dispelled, not by collecting clouds, but by piercing and scattering them. In the dark we may imagine depths and heights immeasurable, which if a torch be carried right before us we find it easy to leap across. Much of what we call sublime is only the residue of infancy, and the worst of it.—*Walter Savage Landor*, "Imaginary Conversations," Lucian and Timotheus, vol. ii., p. 23.

THE HEBREW TERM FOR GOD.—Whatever may be said, the plural form Elohim itself, the interpretation of which as *pluralis majestatis* belongs to the stage of pure monotheism, decidedly indicates that a plural conception was inherent in this word. Such expressions, created by polytheistic imagination, were retained at the monotheistic stages. Like the myth, they lost their original signification, and were used by zealous monotheists without any idea of the polytheism which had created them, and had been expressed by them.—*Ignaz Goldziher*, *Ph.D.*, "Mythology among the Hebrews," p. 270.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.—It is, from beginning to end, artificial; professing to be written at one time and by an author whose name and personality are given; in reality written at another time, and by an author whose name and personality are concealed. Daniel was written about the year B.C. 168, a little before the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the allusions to that monarch are, of course made under the veil of prophecy, in a style designed to be intelligible without being direct.—*John Russell*, *Viscount Amberley*, "An Analysis of Religious Beliefs," vol. ii., p. 298.

THE PARSEES.—Being strictly monotheists, they have not split up the Godhead into three males influenced by a female who is the spouse of one and mother of a second; nor have asserted that the one great Creator is compounded of a father, a son, and a pigeon, with a woman for an intercessor, with her celestial consort. Nor do the Parsees build vast temples for the Almighty to dwell in, neither do they reduce any portion of the Omnipotent to the necessity of residing in a bit of bread shut up for many a long day in a box.—*Dr. Thos. Inman*, "Ancient Faiths and Modern," p. 244, New York, 1876.

PROFANE JOKES.

A WELL-BENEFICED Cornish rector was holding forth at the dinner-table upon the surprising profits of his living, much to the weariness of everyone present, when, happening to stretch over the table hands remarkable for their dirt, Foote struck in with "Well, Doctor, I, for one, am not at all surprised at your profits, for I see you keep the glebe in your own hands."

A SACRILEGIOUS infidel has been lecturing in San Francisco on the subject of "Daniel in the Lions' den, and how they would have eaten him if he had ever been there."

"OH, dear, I wish I were dead!" said a neglected maiden. She had heard that matches are made in heaven, and forgot about Lucifer being concerned in them.

A BLACK-COUNTRY parson, wishing to vividly illustrate the wonderful (?) love of God, said to his hearers, "You all know how nice pork and cabbage is—well, the love of God is nicer than that!! (Fact.)"

A minister was questioning his Sunday School concerning the story of Eutachus—the young man who, listening to the preaching of the Apostle Paul, fell asleep, and, falling down, was taken up dead. "What," he said, do we learn from this very solemn event?" when the reply from a little girl came pat and prompt, "Please, sir, ministers should learn not to preach too long sermons."

MR. SYMES'S ENGAGEMENTS.

May 14, Middleton's Hall, Birmingham; 20 and 22, Middlesboro'; 21, Stockton-on-Tees; 28, N. S. S. Conference. June 4, Liverpool; 11, Baskerville Hall, Birmingham; 25, Claremont Hall, London; July 1, Heckmondwike.—All applications to be sent to Mr. JOSEPH SYMES, 142, Hagley Road, Birmingham.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S FREETHOUGHT OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

SPEAKERS FOR SUNDAY, MAY 14TH, 1882.

GIBRALTAR WALK, 11.15.—Mr. F. HASLAM, "Bible v. Science."—Chairman, Mr. Mortimer.
HOLLOWAY, 11.15.—Mr. W. NORRISH, "God's Favorites."—Chairman, Mr. Barlow.
MILE END, 11.15.—Mr. W. J. RAMSEY.—Chairman, Mr. J. Reeve.
STREATHAM COMMON, 11.15.—Mr. T. THURLOW, "Did God say so?"—Chairman, Mr. T. Gollop.

Owing to the Demonstration in Hyde Park, there will be no meeting in Victoria Park on this date.

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