

THE FREETHINKER.

REGISTERED FOR]

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

[TRANSMISSION ABROAD.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"COMIC BIBLE" SKETCHES.—XXVII.



FATHER METHUSELAH.

"And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech."—Genesis v., 25.

CHRISTIAN IMPUDENCE.

CHRISTIANS make a great boast of humility, but no people have more "cheek." They strut about the world as God's elect, who know all the truth, and need no further enlightenment. To doubt their creed is a sin, to deny it is blasphemy. They do not feel bound to give any reasons why their faith should be embraced; they just put it before you and say, Take it or be damned. Very naturally they want the law to make everybody believe as they do. Rejection of their creed is not simply an intellectual offence, but a moral crime, which ought to be punished like robbery and murder. It is not only a sin against God, but an insult to them; for, when you say their creed is untrue, you say that they are mistaken, and that is more than they can stand.

There is no impudence greater than the bigot's. He is not satisfied with thinking as he pleases, and worshipping God in his own way; he claims the right of compelling other men to think and worship after his fashion. He might as well ask that all men should eat and drink exactly what he does and at precisely the same hours, that they should go to bed and rise at the moment which suits him, and that they should all cut their clothes according to his pattern. If his vanity expressed itself in such insane demands, it would be laughed at and defied; but when it assumes the aspect of religious bigotry, it is considered very laudable, and passes as zeal in the service of God.

When and where did the Lord give these people a commission to look after his business? Their word will not suffice. Let them produce the document of their agency. God Almighty is surely powerful enough to protect his own

interests. He may, however, sometimes put out a little work, and delegate a little authority. But in every such case we do well to require his written statement in black on white, beyond all suspicion of forgery. When they can produce that, well and good; but until then we shall treat them as rank impostors.

These impudent bigots have usually something to gain by their intolerant zeal. Paupers do not initiate prosecutions for blasphemy, nor do workmen's clubs carry them on. Oh, dear no! Such work is taken in hand by those who flourish on the popular creed, or on institutions so closely allied to it that its bankruptcy involves their ruin. The Freethinker helps to destroy the trade by which they live, and so they kill or imprison him for the love of God and their own profit.

Down at Tunbridge Wells we have a fine sample of Christian impudence. Not only is Mr. Seymour, the secretary of the local Secular Society, being prosecuted for blasphemy, but the very existence of a Freethought organisation is declared to be an insult to every denomination of the Christian church. The Freethinkers might as well turn round, and tell the Christian sects that they are a standing insult to Freethought.

The bigots will not succeed in Mr. Seymour's case. Their impudence will be checked. They wish to put him in prison for using the name of the Holy Ghost without a license. But they have no property in the Holy Ghost, and Freethinkers have as much right to utilise him for an Easter entertainment as Salvationists have to make him howl and dance at their performances. If the Holy Ghost is libelled or defrauded, we submit that he should bring his own action. We should very much like to see him in the witness-box. Like Mr. Bradlaugh, he might conduct his own case. What right have his friends to interfere? Is he an invalid or an imbecile? Has he given them power-of-attorney? Let the truth be honestly faced, and let the prosecution stand in the name of the Holy Ghost v. Seymour.

The impudent Christians of Tunbridge Wells sally out by night and paint over all the notices outside the Secular Hall. They also commit the unpardonable sin, against a greater than the Holy Ghost, namely, King Laughter, by covering the *Freethinker* illustrations which are exposed to the popular gaze. The police will not interfere. On the contrary, they connive at it, and they have intimidated all the printers and billstickers in the place, so that placards have now to be done in London and posted by the committee.

Defacing Freethought bills is becoming a common offence. A Plymouth friend, one day last week, watched a parson reading the title of Mr. Foote's morning lecture—"God in a Box." The reverend gentleman looked thunderous, and suddenly seizing his big umbrella, as it were the sword of the Lord and Gideon, with both hands, inflicted a mortal stab on the unfortunate bill, and completely obliterated the offending line. Then he walked away with the air of a conqueror, evidently sure of a front seat in heaven. Any Freethinker standing by would have been justified in telescoping that parson's hat. These impudent fellows deserve to be disbed in their own sauce.

There was a time when Christian impudence passed unchallenged. Freethinkers had then no power to resent it. But we have the power now. We have thrown off the apologetic attitude. We mean to have our full rights as free men. And while we wish to fight for nothing but principle, we shall not shrink from a more personal encounter. We tell the Christians plainly that we are not afraid of them, and that we do not intend to put up with their impudence or submit to their persecution. The liberty they enjoy, we will enjoy too; and if they are not ready to concede it, we are strong enough to enforce it. Let them beware.

G. W. FOOTE.

[No. 42.]



THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

WE have had over eighteen centuries of Christianity. Eighteen centuries of pious priestly disputations, of holy religious wars, of the good news of the eternal damnation of the mass of mankind, of making hell on earth to merit heaven hereafter. Having allowed this little planet to go on its way in more or less peaceful evolution for myriads of ages with only occasional sanguinary injunctions, or sanitary directions, to a particular, but not particularly nice, tribe; it came into the Godhead to pay this atom in the universe a personal visit through the womb of a Jewish virgin. Entering in so strange a fashion his chosen people knew him not, but put him to death, according to his own direction about new prophets given through his old prophet Moses. And this they did despite the most astonishing evidences of preternatural power. Devils were turned into pigs, water into wine, blind men made to see by spitting in their eyes, and the dead brought to life. He himself concluded not to stay in the grave more than three days, and mounted up publicly through the clouds after eating broiled fish and honeycomb. But all these strange events happened over eighteen centuries ago. Seen through the mists of history they are not quite so clear as they must have been to the Jews; and if God's chosen people were sceptical about them at the time and in the place where they are said to have occurred, it can hardly be wondered that scepticism should occasionally show itself among those not blessed with such ocular demonstration. For these unhappy people the Christian Evidence Society has been established. Its methods, however, are comparatively tame. It had been said by the Christian God that his followers should do even greater works than himself, and that in his name devils should be cast out, serpents handled, and deadly drinks taken without injury. But the Christian Evidence Society attempts no feats of this kind for the conversion of sceptics. They are presided over by an archbishop with £10,000 a year. They get Pious Sam Morley to give them £250 a year, and they send round collecting cards soliciting subscriptions in the most abject fashion from all quarters, by holding up as a bugbear the horrid consequences of ceasing to believe in those blessed truths of the Gospel, and the blessed evidences thereof.

The report presented by this society to the eleventh annual meeting, held in Exeter Hall on Tuesday, the 16th, was one of the most miserable documents we have handled for many a day. The committee themselves describe it as "partly disappointing," and confess that "several good openings have had to be abandoned, on account of want of adequate funds." "The income is less by £330 than it was last year, the expenditure has consequently been less." By the way, the secretaries and clerk take £569 10s. despite this. An appeal was made to several of the great landowners, manufacturers, and merchants of the provinces, to aid in getting up lectures, and we are significantly told that they "would have indirectly benefitted by their workmen coming under the influence of the society's operation. But there was absolutely no response, and the scheme had reluctantly to be abandoned." As a set off to these evil tidings, the Christian heart is gladdened by the information that at Balham "on two occasions our lecturers went to the secular lecturers' ground, and opposed them with such effect that most of those present applauded and thanked them." Hallelujah! The great day of the Lord must surely be nigh at hand when Christian lecturers are received with applause even in a Christian country. The report also states that in some open-air meetings the infidel lecturers have "almost retired from the field." It is needless to say the places are not specified.

A supplementary paper given away with the Report conveys a very different impression from that of infidelity retiring from the field. It is entitled "The Spread of Secularism," which it declares "increases in shamelessness and profanity," gives an account of the work of the Secular societies, and of the three weekly papers "circulated by thousands." They particularise our humble selves as "the most ribald, blasphemous and indecent of the three," and give five extracts from last year's numbers, together with the Bishop of Manchester's kindly advertisement of the *Freethinker* as being "more horribly profane and blasphemous" than anything he ever read or saw.

As a stimulus to the study of the Christian evidences, the committee have offered prizes and certificates for passing in

examinations upon the books they recommend. "They confess that they have not met with the co-operation of the religious instructors of the young, as they expected." We do not wonder at this. We take the secret of the little support which the society receives from the Christian world to be this. Christians know their own faith will not bear the tests of reason, and they shrewdly suspect that appeals to reason will in the long-run prove damaging to faith. No one can look even casually at the Christian evidences without finding out that there are two sides. Many have taken up the works of the evidential writers as believers and put them down as sceptics. Here are some of the questions that are set for prizes. We fancy a perusal and an attempt to fairly answer them will confirm this view:—

"Describe (a) the special character (i.) of the Synoptic Gospels, and (ii.) of the Fourth Gospel, and (b) their relation to each other.

"Explain the absence of early (Christian and non-Christian) records respecting primitive Christianity.

"What hindered the formation of the Canon, and by what authority was it determined?

"Show the general coincidence of Justin Martyr's quotations with our Gospels; specify his allusions to the Infancy; and summarise what he says of the Memoirs of the Apostles."

Did the Christian Evidence Society inculcate the freest spirit of inquiry instead of seeking every means of bolstering up particular effete beliefs, we should have to hail it as a valuable auxiliary in the work of breaking down the Christian superstition. For to this end nothing but enlightenment and discussion upon the Christian evidences are needed.

The Archbishop of York, who presided, repeated his statement at the Church Congress, that religion was not a matter of argument. We should think not, indeed. The *raison d'être* of the Christian Evidence Society (said he) is that aggressive infidelity was assailing them on all sides, and Christianity was bound in self-defence to show that it has something to say for itself. Speaking of Mr. Darwin, he said, not in the choicest language, "no truer searcher after truth ever was;" he was not an aggressor. Science should keep to its own field; and as for the clergy, "the less we have occasion to go into the road of others the better it will be for us." Yea, verily, amen. Let science mind its own business, and let us speak respectfully of its conclusions. Science deals with what it can measure. We deal with the Infinite, with a big I. He endorsed the saying of Pasteur, that we must prostrate ourselves before the notion of the Infinite, and that the man who only deals in clear ideas is a stupid man. He did not, however, explain the relation of this to the Christian evidences. But the explanation is simple: the more muddled and confused a man's ideas are, and the more he is inclined to the attitude of prostration, the more ready he will be to accept those evidences.

The Archbishop's appearance and speech forcibly put us in mind of Browning's character sketch of Bishop Blougram's apology. We felt it hard to avoid the suspicion that Dr. Thomson had sat to the poet for his portrait.

LUCIANUS.

WHAT SHALL I DO TO BE DAMNED?

ANY fool knows how to get to heaven. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"! You have only to have faith in the incredible wonders of the Bible, in order, when you die, to wear the golden crown, and tunc-tum for ever before the throne of God. Nothing is too absurd to believe, or too difficult to accomplish, for the true believer. Faith is the only thing requisite, a small modicum of which will remove mountains of difficulties, by the simple method of piously refusing to face them or attempting to overcome them. By faith the whale swallowed Jonah, and by faith the Christians swallow the whale. Faith is the sum and substance of the Bible (see Heb. xi., 1). It is the evidence, and the only evidence, of things not seen. Facts not being forthcoming, the Christian's only testimony is faith. Now faith is not evidence. At the very most it is a leap in the dark—a mere "spec." It is based on the "shut your eyes and open your mouth and see what God will give you" principle. We say again, any fool can believe. The greater the fallacy, the firmer is the faith of the godly-minded babes and sucklings who love to imbibe the milk and water of Christianity. Belief is exactly suited

to the ignorance, the superstition, and fear of the great mass of mankind, who never—or, at least, “hardly ever”—venture to give a reason for the faith that is in them. Hence it is that so many lambs of God are bleating in the fold of Christ, and meekly submit to be systematically fleeced by their spiritual pastors and masters.

We take it for granted that no decent honest man really, in sober earnestness, desires to enter the kingdom of heaven. So few honest men and such a multitude of rogues have gone to heaven, and the amusement provided there is so dull and dismal, that we question if any man, who has thought the question out, is anxious to inhabit the mansions in the sky. The men whom God specially favored on earth were men of blood and iron, “men of whom the world was not worthy” in the loftiest, noblest, sense of human worth; and these are the men—the blood-stained, crime-tainted monsters of Judea—with whose company we are to be eternally polluted, and who are waiting in heaven to greet the goody-goody servants of God! Would that Christians would pause and ponder before they crave for the “joys” of heaven! What an ignominy it were for the pure in heart to consort for ever with lecherous David, or to hold conversation with the amorous Solomon! How shall the true friends of peace on earth and goodwill towards men herd with the butcher Joshua, or with the thieving murderous warriors—the crusaders in Jehovah’s holy war—who followed the lead of that pious bandit? Then, again, who would care to be for ever caged up in the heavenly menagerie with its four beasts prowling about the throne, its lamb with seven horns and seven eyes, its great red dragon and red horse, and numbers of other specialities such as would gladden the heart of Baruum himself? Only fancy being for ever imprisoned in a sort of celestial zoological gardens! The idea is too fearful to contemplate. The mind turns topsy-turvy with fear and dread at the mere thought of the awful possibility of one of these ram-pagious beasts in Revelations lying down after dinner with the Lamb of God inside him.

In order, therefore, to escape from the clutches of Deity, it becomes essential to man’s eternal happiness to seek an answer to the important question with which this article is headed. Happily, God in his great mercy has provided us with various means whereby we may avoid the penal servitude of heaven, its ceaseless psalm-singing, and the offensive adulation of God, which is the eternal and irksome occupation of the saints. Christ tells us that many are called and few chosen; that the way to salvation is narrow and difficult, and few there be that find it. Man’s chances of salvation, therefore, are, happily, few indeed. Christ was certainly not anxious to save everybody. On one occasion he thanked his lucky stars that God had hidden the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. On another occasion, when he sent the apostles to preach his gospel of salvation, he specially exempted the Gentiles and Samaritans from the benefits of evangelisation. Moreover, the parabolic teachings of Christ were cruelly and cunningly designed so that the people should not understand them, “lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them” (Mark iv., 12). God only purposed to save a chosen few; and the rest he lovingly left out in the cold, with special instructions to the Devil to warm them up. Why God acts in a manner so narrow and illiberal in the dispensation of his mercies no man knoweth. All the information vouchsafed to us is that he chooses to do what he likes with his own, and that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth (Rom. ix., 18). In other words, if you don’t like it, you may “do the other thing.” Nay, so intent is God on man’s damnation, that he has even stooped to the infamy of sending men strong delusions that they should believe a lie and be damned in consequence (2 Thess. ii., 11). Occasionally he puts a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets, in order to compass the downfall of some unlucky mortal who has offended his godship (1 Kings xxii., 23). Under these circumstances, the chance is very small indeed that any really honest, deserving person could, by hook or by crook, slip into heaven; and, certainly, no self-respecting man would care to go to such a frightful place, or to dance eternal attendance before the throne of such a wrong-headed and evil-minded God.

In addition to the foregoing means of damnation, with which God in his mercy has graciously provided us, there are three or four useful wrinkles which the Lord has given

us, whereby we may avoid the risk of salvation. To these we propose to call the pious reader’s thoughtful attention.

1. *Unbelief*.—“He that believeth not shall be damned.” Pay your money, says Christ, and take your choice. I am the door of salvation; for terms of admission read your Bible. The terms are: Abnegation of reason at the behest of faith; the sovereignty of faith in all matters of belief and speculation. Every stupid story related in the Bible must be accepted without question as true—science, reason and common-sense notwithstanding. You must believe what the Bible teaches, though it revolts against human intelligence; must practise its morality, though it land you in folly, if not in crime; and revere its God, though unworthy of any man’s respect, and beneath all consideration except as an object of hatred and abhorrence; and you are to obey this God, though he possesses no right over man and man no duty towards him. Believe in all this, and practise all this, and you shall be saved; otherwise, woe unto you! Now, no Freethinker will so far lose his own self-respect as to accept terms of salvation so dishonoring as these. If hell is to be his reward for walking not by faith but by reason, for loving virtue rather than vice, and for speaking and acting up to his highest attainable conceptions of goodness and right, then—in the spirit of John Stuart Mill—to hell he is content to go.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

(To be concluded.)

ACID DROPS.

THE London press maintains a conspiracy of silence against Mr. Bradlaugh. Last Monday week there was a crowded meeting in the Shofeditch Town Hall; Mr. Broadhurst took the chair, and Mr. Labouchere was among the speakers. None of the London papers gave a line of report. The Trafalgar Square demonstration was quietly ignored, and most of the dailies treated the great meeting in St. James’s Hall and the Sunday demonstration of 60,000 people in Hyde Park in the same way. The *Daily News* gave a small paragraph to the former. The *Echo* did not give a word.

WE have something to say about the *Echo*. It is owned and directed by Mr. Passmore Edwards. That gentleman voted for fresh Coercion in the House of Commons on Thursday, May 11th. The next evening his paper contained a violent article against it. The *Echo* has lost no opportunity of injuring Mr. Bradlaugh by the grossest misrepresentation. Passmore Edwards is like Samuel Morley, a political and religious Pecksniff, and we sincerely hope that he will lose his seat at the next elections.

SAMUEL MORLEY is pretty sure to lose his seat. It is even rumored that his political career will close with the present Parliament. He ought to have a monument of brass and soap.

THE London press is only acting the fool again. It denounced Gladstone and lauded Dizzy before the late Government fell, and it went into ecstasies of astonishment at the unexpected verdict of the country. The same thing will happen again, for the London press is always wrong. Mr. Bradlaugh’s supporters command thousands of votes, and they will certainly use them against the Liberals who have forsaken the principle of religious liberty in its hour of need. These renegades will have a bad time of it unless they repent and make atonement for their sins.

THE more corrupt and rotten an institution is within, the more paint and varnish must be put on the outside. This we take to be the secret spring of Ritualism and Salvationism. Religion is becoming a spectacle, and a not very edifying one. The *Rock* asserts that the idea of having a modification of the methods of the Salvation Army for Evangelical work in connexion with the Church of England is being seriously considered in influential quarters.

CANON WILKINSON presented a very generally signed memorial to the Upper House of Convocation upon this question of Salvationists, and the bishops have taken the matter up. The Archbishop of York says that the Church must open its arms to every good thing—that is, good for the Church, that is, good for the Archbishop of York. Salvationism is a good thing, but Freethought is damnable.

THE Church is evidently anxious that another sect shall not split away from her, like the Methodists above a century ago. She will rather beat the tom-tom, and hoist the flag of “Blood and Fire.”

THE *Church Review* suggests that bands of laymen, women, and children should take not only to the parks but to the streets,

with banners, and march in procession, led by a crucifix or cross, singing simple hymns and stopping at all corners, for one qualified to deliver heart-appealing addresses or a prayer, and then to resume the march and repeat the addresses and prayers. A writer in the *Christian Commonwealth*, however, declares that there is nothing so attractive as a good brass band. While the Evangelicals are contemplating this kind of catering for the religious tastes of the people, a Secularist stands committed for trial for putting out the placards of his society.

We would humbly suggest that if our Evangelical friends wish to outdo the Salvationists they should borrow some of the menagerie of the Apocalypse. A procession headed by the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and followed by some of the wondrous beasts from around the throne, with perhaps Eve's talking serpent, and Balaam's ass bringing up the rear, would surely draw. If they could get a few persons with faith enough to take up serpents and drink deadly things at each street corner, infidelity would soon hide its diminished head.

ALAS, the days of removing mountains with faith the size of a grain of mustard-seed are o'er. In these degenerate days, faith the size of a mountain won't remove a mustard-seed. "It is scarcely too much to say that the primitive faith is dead now. It has been elaborately devalued. It has been robbed of its rightful power." This is not an utterance of the wicked *Freethinker*, but a quotation from last week's *Christian Commonwealth*. When we do agree our unanimity is wonderful.

BY-THE-WAY, will any investigator into the primitive records of Christianity positively assure us what was the primitive faith. Was it Unitarian or Trinitarian? Was it Presbyterian, Episcopal, or Papal? Was it founded on Peter or on Paul? Was it Ebionism or Gnosticism? Was it believing Christ came or did not come in the flesh? That he was born of Joseph or of a Virgin? Did it adhere to or reject the Jewish law? Did it demand faith or works, or grace, or neither? Eighteen hundred years have scarcely sufficed to settle what the primitive faith was. News of its death therefore brings a sense of relief.

THE mere title of Paine's work, "The Age of Reason," is more significant than the contents of all the myriad publications of the Religious Tract Society. The Age of Faith is dead. Faith now means the readiness to accept inconceivable propositions without due evidence. Faith is the watchword of fiction; Reason that of fact. To have faith is to possess the sublime power of seeing things which don't exist. Those who prefer to dwell in the atmosphere of faith should take up quarters in a lunatic asylum.

THE Rev. Canon Clayton, speaking at the May meeting of the Church Association, said: "Infidelity springs not so much from the head as from the heart. It is the evil heart that engenders the unbelief." That's it! It's the perversity of our wicked souls that prevent us seeing that two and one make one. Faith and Charity do not always go together, we notice. We have enough of the latter to believe that Canon Clayton believes that he believes.

THE Canon went on to speak of those misguided members of the Church who had relinquished the comforting doctrine of eternal torment. He says: "In this, as in every other religious question, we must not ask what we think, but what are the statements of God's inspired Word. Now that Word, both in the original Hebrew and the original Greek, uses the very same expressions to denote the duration of the happiness in heaven and the duration of the misery in hell. If, therefore, heaven is for ever, hell must be for ever also." Certainly it would not do to ask what we think about this. Our wicked hearts might tempt us to use theological language which Canon Clayton would think blasphemous.

THE Church Association passed a resolution denouncing "the spread of sacerdotalism and the inaction of the lips." Whereupon the *Church Times* remarks: "The members of the Church Association cannot charge themselves with sparing their lips, and no doubt they would make an equally vigorous use of their teeth if they could."

FOR choice specimens of Christian charity commend us to the *Church Times*; for equally choice specimens of Christian faith, we turn to the *Record*. It asks that a day of national humiliation shall be appointed to remedy the evils in Ireland. It says: "Christian England, not eleven years ago, brought back her Prince to life by her prayers when within the very gates of death." Prayer is the one thing left for Ireland. What a pity Christian England did not pray enough before any outrages took place!

THE *Record* refuses to join in the tribute certain church dignitaries have so fulsomely showered on the grave of the man they formerly reviled. It says blankly that Darwinism leads to rampant Atheism. It asks, how can it be true that God made man out of the dust, and made him in his own image, if, as a matter of fact, man was slowly evolved from countless generations of

inferior animals? We fear that, after all, the *Record* is lacking in faith, although it declares to stand by "the inspired record" rather than take the teachings of all the scientists. Its faith has not reached the sublime pitch of crediting two contradictory accounts at the same time.

THE Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews have had their meeting. They declare their annual income to be £37,055 19s. 2d., and their deficit only £5,459 4s. 7d. They boast of having converted in London—their chief seat of operations—no less than eighteen adult Jews. Those eighteen converts must be shrewd enemies of Christianity. If many more came forward to be converted at this price, the society would be ruined.

AN instance of the value of the oath occurred at Flint on Monday. A publican named Davies was summoned for having his house open for the sale of liquor during prohibited hours on Sunday, March 19th. Two policemen swore they saw two men named Ellis and Williams leave the house. These men declared they were not near the house, and Mr. and Mrs. Davies positively swore the men were not in the house when the police called. The magistrates convicted the publican, fining him £2 and costs, and also fined the men. The police then said they would prosecute the parties for perjury, and the solicitor for the defence said he would enter an appeal at the quarter sessions on the ground that the police had grossly perjured themselves.

READERS will find the following definitions of the Bible given in the current number of the *North American Review*, in an article entitled "What does Revelation Reveal?" The Bible is "not a primer," it is "no easy reading for beginners." It is "a difficult book," but "not a miracle," indeed, "its language was not originated, corrected, or revised by the divine author." "We may assume it to be a natural book," being "at once simple and complex." It is, in fact, "a human history written by men and for men, and to be judged by human standards." "The Bible of the future must be interpreted chiefly as a biography." It is "a mysterious book," "its pretensions unique," being "a frame of which Christ is the picture."

CANON HARFORD has written a new National Anthem, or rather added two new stanzas to the old one. The second verse runs thus:—

"Thy choicest gifts in store,
Still on Victoria pour,
Health, peace, and fame.
Young faces, year by year,
Rising her heart to cheer,
Blessing her name."

That is a very pretty prospect, but as we have to pay for the support of all those "young faces," we may be pardoned for wishing that they may be a little less numerous than the loyal Canon desires.

THE Rev. W. Barker, vicar of Holy Trinity, Forest of Dean, claims that his is a model parish. "As to Romanism," he says, "we have not a single Romanist in the whole 2,500, and I don't think we have a single Bradlaughite. We know Mr. Bradlaugh's name, and rejoice that he is still outside the House of Commons; but as for having any of his disciples round about us, I don't believe his system is even understood there." Probably that is the reason why there are no Freethinkers in the Rev. W. B.'s parish. He incautiously let the cat out of the bag.

MR. BARKER went on to say: We have no opposition. What a paradise for a parson!

THE Rev. Canon Lefroy was very severe on magazine articles "signed by the late Professor Clifford," deriding the verities of the Christian faith. We were not aware that Professor Clifford had risen from the dead, but of course it is easy for a Christian to believe in resurrection.

THE same reverend gentleman went on to say that "the poor struggling artisan paid his penny for the *Secularist*, the *Freethinker*, and the *National Reformer*." Now the first of these papers has not appeared for five years, and the last is published at twopence. These parsons know absolutely nothing of the men or the doctrines they traduce.

EARL CAIRNS has found out the true remedy for Irish disaffection. It is Protestantism. Instead of justice he would give them plenty of Cromwell! Pious Cairns!

THE RETORT COURTEOUS.—A very hungry arrival at the Palace rushed into the dining room the other day, and fell upon the eatables with great determination. "I declare!" said one of those hotel funny dogs, who sat at the same table, "my dear sir, you remind me of the Prodigal Son." "Exactly," said the hungry man, as he speared another cutlet; "I'm forced to eat with the hogs." And the lardy-dah was carried out on a chip.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures three times to-day (Sunday, May 21st) in the Drill Hall, Leigh. Morning at 11, "Bradlaugh and Liberty;" afternoon at 3, "Comic Aspects of the Bible;" evening at 7, "Christianity Played Out."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

May 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; 30th, Liverpool.

August 6th, Burnley; 13th Rochdale; 20th, West Hartlepool; 27th, Stockton-on-Tees.

October 15th, Halifax.

CORRESPONDENCE.

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J. C. D.—Mr. Seymour's case will not be allowed to pass undefended. St. O.—You may rely upon our taking note of such "reconcilers" as W. S. Lilly. Glad to hear from you.

JAMES MEEK.—G. R. Gliddon's "Ancient Egypt" was published both in New York and Philadelphia, 1849. We do not know the present selling price in this country. B. Quaritch, bookseller, Piccadilly, might tell you.

FAIR PLAY sends up a copy of some verses on the Bradlaugh question, which appeared in the *Hastings and St. Leonards Times* of May 6th. UNBELIEVER.—The passage Mr. Symes refers to occurs in Exodus xxxiii., 23. What do you make of it?

P. ROBINSON.—The custom of dating from the Christian era was not established till the sixth century.

J. HOLLAND.—Thanks very much. You cannot serve us better than by your plan of taking copies and leaving them on sale with newsagents. As you say, "they are bound to sell if the newsagents only expose them."

B. LUND.—Your tract on "The Immorality of the Bible" duly received. WALTER BASS.—Declined with thanks.

BOTH SIDES.—Kindly send the page from which your quotation is taken. We always like exact references.

READER.—M. Joseph Ernest Renan was born at Tréguier, February 27th, 1823, and was brought up for the Church. His learning and independence of thought unfitting him for the priesthood he took to private teaching, whence he has arisen to the highest honors France has to bestow on a philosopher and man of letters. His chief work is the history of the beginnings of Christianity, of which his celebrated "Life of Jesus" is only the preamble. It has been followed by "The Apostles," "St. Paul," "Antichrist," "The Gospels," and "The Christian Church." His latest work, on "Marcus Aurelius," may be considered as belonging to this series.

ELIJAH wishes the name of some reader who is willing to dispose of a copy of No. 5 of the *Freethinker*, vol. II.

AVISPA.—The matter is scarcely of sufficient importance for insertion. We thank you all the same.

H. SEYMOUR, Tunbridge Wells, reports the distribution of many handbills, reprinted by us from the *Freethinker*, against the present prosecution for blasphemy, and informs us that the police sent to the Secular Hall for a copy of the *Freethinker*.

L. G. and others. We see no occasion to advertise the print in question.

A. W.—Your warm words are very welcome. We regret that we cannot advise how a freethinking soldier may avoid church attendance.

SEVERAL correspondents remain unanswered this week in consequence of Mr. Foote's absence through indisposition.

KANGAROO.—We are extremely obliged to you for the packet of papers.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE French Cremation Society now consists of 406 members. The receipts for the first year were 7,000 francs. The average cost of cremation has been but three francs.

THE *Bombay Gazette* declares that Christianity will not easily recover from the blow it has received through the visit of the Rev. Joseph Cook.

THE reserved seats for Colonel Ingersoll's lectures at the New York Academy of Music, on "Talmagian Theology" are sold at a premium.

PAGAN BOB declared that the Protestants make the Bible their Pope. The Catholics did better than this, for if they happen to get an idiot he will not live always, and if he is a man he may be capable of growth. But the book cannot change, except as you change it through hypocrisy.

REFERRING to Talmage's great argument, that if people ceased to believe the Bible there would be nothing to swear witnesses on, the Colonel told the following story:—A witness was brought before a country justice to be sworn. "Hold up your right hand," said the justice. "I haven't a right hand," said the witness. "Hold up your left hand, then," said the justice. "I haven't any," said the witness. "Well, then, hold up your foot," said the justice; "no man can be sworn in this court without holding up something."

COLONEL INGERSOLL made a touching reference to the late Mr. Darwin, which was vociferously applauded. Some of our readers may like to read his peroration. "The hand of earth is stretched uselessly toward heaven. From the clouds there comes no help. In vain the shipwrecked cry to God to-night; in vain the imprisoned ask for liberty and light; in vain the martyr prayed; in vain the slave and mother wept. The heavens are deaf and dumb and blind. Frost freezes, fire burns, slander smites, the wrong triumphs, the good suffer, prayer dies upon the lips of faith—no help from heaven for man. If the naked are clothed, man must clothe them; if the hungry are fed, man must feed them; if the ignorant are raised in the scale of education, man must raise them; if the world is to be made better, man must do it. So far as I am concerned, I rely not upon churches, not upon sacred books, not upon out-grown and moss-covered creeds. I rely upon human endeavor—not upon God's; I rely upon the human heart—not upon angels; I rely upon the human brain; I rely upon the efforts of all good men and all good women."

THE Free Presbytery of Edinburgh, have decided not to transmit an overture for an inquiry into the writings of Dr. Robertson Smith and Professor Bruce, although the mover declared them subversive of the very foundations of Christian belief.

A CHILD at Beverley, having been allowed to fall down a well, while its mother was with the Salvation Army, the coroner took occasion to remark that it was perfectly shocking that persons should in the name of religion attempt to justify such neglect of the ordinary duties of humanity.

THE *Boston Investigator* says:—A friend inquires whether the famous poet Longfellow was a Liberal? He probably was. We read in the *Traveller* that he did not attend church, and, as another evidence of his liberality, he signed the recent petition to the legislature in favor of allowing Atheists to testify as witnesses. These facts show that Mr. Longfellow was a Liberal, as all men are, who are intelligent, just, and the advocates of equal rights.

THE Canadian census shows that in 1881 there were in that country of people of no religion and religion unknown (which is a polite way of informing a man you have none), 89,403; in 1871, 22,202; loss to religion in ten years in Canada, 67,200. Now, as these 89,403 people represent a respectable number of voters, politicians hereafter will not be quite so rampant in their denunciation of Freethinkers, or in slobbering over rival creeds, and the fuss and frivolity of manipulated superstitions. That nearly ninety thousand Canadians, in spite of bibles, state and church persecution, social ostracism, and withdrawal of patronage, should have found the courage to avow themselves as having no particular religion, speaks well for Canadian manhood, and it is safe to argue that if 89,403 Canadians dare face the music, there are many who sympathise with them, still, from prudential reasons, conceal their views. Let us hope that this noble army of free men will steadily increase until Canada shall be free as its forests, and flourish like its wild flowers, fragrant even when the storm is fiercest.—Halifax *Mayflower*.

THE New York *Truthseeker* reprints a batch of "Profane Jokes from the London *Freethinker*." This is as it should be. We cull from all quarters and like to pass a good thing on. But we should think the N. Y. T. could get up an original column of its own. We think the best of irreverent humor is that with a Transatlantic flavor.

DR. THORNTON, Bishop of Ballarat, speaking at the meeting of the Christian Evidence Society stated that he found infidelity at home more unblushing, more organised, and more missionary than ever. It was the same over in his populous Australian see. To suggest, as one of the speakers did, that the Christian Evidence Society should send lecturers abroad was rather a joke, since they confess themselves unable to cope with the work they have in hand at home.

LAST Tuesday evening the Rev. W. Sharman, of Plymouth, was presented by the Three Towns Radical Association, with a handsome gold chronometer, as a token of its esteem, and as a substitute for the watch the reverend gentleman lost during his late visit to Northampton. Mr. Sharman is very proud of his present, and at his own request the word "Northampton" was engraved on the outer case. We trust that he will "tell the time" by it for many decades to come, and that the flight of years will never damp his ardour in the Radical cause.

WHY WE ATTACK THE CLERGY.

SOME time back, at the end of a lecture given in Edinburgh, one of my audience, a lady who had been in times past a pupil of mine, after speaking with much kindness of the matter and manner of the hour's talk, expressed her regret "that I had gone out of my way to speak hardly of the clergy." We do not go out of our way in making these attacks. We pursue our way. We find the clerical people obstructing our path. They must be removed. Nay, the first reason that I give in explanation of our hostile position to this profession is this. (1) Its members attack us. As a rule they begin the conflict. No Freethinker, as far as I know, "went for" the Bishop of Manchester until that prelate relieved the monotony of his existence by slandering Freethinkers. By fair means or by foul—the latter for choice—the clergy have assailed us, and, as we are not Christians, we cannot be expected to commit the folly of turning the one cheek after the other has been smitten. Our foes only seem to me to do that when cheek is taken in its metaphorical sense, which, being interpreted, is its slang sense. When some more than usually unblushing piece of impudence on their part has been exposed and smitten, another is always forthcoming. If a Freethinker smite them on the one "cheek," verily they obey their master's command and turn to him another also.

(2) They are useless. As encumbrances that are useless, and perhaps worse than that, our duty is to attack them and to do all in our power in the direction of that ultimate removal which is inevitable. None of us is so foolish as to deny that in the past this class of persons did some work. The names of Lanfranc, Anselm, Langton, are evidence of this fact. The clergy were the only educated class, and therefore from them alone could any reforms of magnitude come. Hence, in that queer, triangular duel between king, nobles, and the Church, that makes so large a part of our early history, the last-named did good service by curbing the arbitrary power of the other two. We had better not stop to inquire into the actuating motives too curiously.

But whilst education was theirs, and theirs alone, what manner of use did they make thereof? The first duty that falls upon the educated man is the communication of his knowledge to others. In this duty the priests failed. Keeping such knowledge as they had to themselves, they held the people in ignorance, and therefore in bondage. Consider the opportunity they lost. Well may they cry every Sunday in the name of their whole body, past and present, "we have left undone the things we ought to have done."

To-day, when, they failing in their duty—nay, they offering opposition—Education is making its slow but faithful way, these men are useless. The eyes so long closed of the peoples are opening gradually to the light that is of earth; and yet these evil counsellors, whose voices are of the past, would have them closed again in dreams.

No, the clergy were and are an appanage of the dark ages. Then they were strongest. And it is because we do not desire that men should revert towards that miserable past—it is because the clergy belong to it and have no relation to the present, save that of hindrance—that we attack them.

(3) They are obstructive. Not only are they useless. They are impediments. When man tries to march onwards, these men eternally oppose. They are Tories to the backbone—if they have one. I am not referring to such men as my friends the Rev. Stewart Headlam and the Rev. Frederick Relton. Men like these make our duty of attack upon the profession to which they belong a difficult one. But the mass of them are as opposed to all thought that is not wholly within their narrow, stifling lines, to all change and advancement, as their ancestors, who, in 1859, shrieked curses at Darwin, or who, in Henry VIII.'s reign, opposed the introduction into the universities of the study of Greek. There is a professional heredity, as well as a family heredity. And it is very striking how "true" this terrible profession has bred. The young curate of to-day is as ignorant of the keen intellectual life that might be his, as bigoted, as virulent as his clerical progenitor in any past century. They are like their god; for in them there is no variableness or the shadow of a turn—in the right direction.

(4) They are unscientific. All with which, as clergymen, they deal is based, not upon knowledge, but upon faith.

They deal not only with the unknown but with the unknowable. Now, as science in all its discoveries and in all its aids to man only deals with the knowable, though it is ever turning the unknown into the known, the clergy are in the essence of their thought unscientific. And that brings me to the last point that I have space to urge.

(5) They are dangerous. The chiefest danger is in their want of scientific principles. All the world is to be scientific in good time. I don't mean that everybody is to live in laboratories and to be incessantly dissecting or making bangs. But the method of science is, I think, destined to become the method of ordinary thought, as surely as it is to-day the method of all who truly think. That method involves two things. The first is, close, accurate observation. The second is, rigid logic. Observe and verify, a thousand times, if need be, your fact or facts. Then reason upon the result of your observation with a rigorous and remorseless reasoning. Only thus can you arrive at true conclusions, and true conclusions as to things are the sole basis of happiness.

The clergy in their teachings give us the results of no accurate observation, of no close reasoning. They offer no evidence as to the facts they glibly state in regard to god, heaven, immortality. They tell us to put on one side reason and to use blind faith, which is never belief. They are, therefore, a class obstructive, and, had they power, likely to be destructive to human happiness. This happiness they have marred in the past. They are willing, they are anxious to hinder its development at the present time. They are a dangerous class, at least as threatening to man's peace and joy as those animal members of the human race to whom we more frequently apply the name that belongs of right (and of wrong) to the clergy. These last and their slavish followers are, in truth, the "dangerous classes." Therefore, as we are free men and would have all men free, we attack the enslavers and oppressors of the human mind.

EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc.

THEN AND NOW.

In former times all Christians on European soil
Did penance sad, till some went mad with toil, and moil, and
"boil."

To reach that blessed gate of Heaven, of which Peter held the
keys—

(In Canterbury you may see the work of their poor knees.)
The *savants* then, in these good days—the learned every one—
Declared the earth was a flat plane, and round it went the sun;
All other planets were hung up, as lamps above this earth,
To light the monks to where the nuns took lessons in "New
Birth!"

But then arose Galileo—learned man of stubborn will—
And he declared, whilst monks were scared, that Phœbus stood
quite still,

Whilst 'round it rolled old Mother Earth, with never-varying
pace;

Then the poor Pope, with his soft soap, cried "G., right-about-
face!"

But G. stood firm, erect, and bold, as stiff and straight as wire,
Till Mr. Pope said, "Mr. G., we'll march you to the fire!"

But G. possessed too much of sense to knuckle down to that—
To be placed on a hot gridiron, and grilled like any sprat;
So he declared the earth moves not, amid the glorying buz
Of famous fools, but, *sotto voce*, rejoined, "I know it does!"

He saved his bacon thus, observe, and was not grilled nor fried
(And many a priest has for much less vainly and weakly lied).
Now DARWIN, who has been interred within our Abbey old,
Was just another Galileo—a learned man and bold.

But priests are altered much since then—they come it not so
strong—

They smirk and smile, in spite of bile, and to the times must
bow:

A sun is rising, bright and clear, to bring the toiler mirth
And glee, to think that he is free—and banish priests from earth!

Eve of the interment of DARWIN,
26th April, 1882.

W. D.

WE very much regret to announce the sudden death of our old opponent, Mr. G. M. Turpin, for many years secretary of the Bible Defence Association. An earnest believer in the doctrines of Christianity, he was yet able to argue with Freethought advocates in a gentlemanly and honorable manner. His mode of advocacy was so different from that of some of the sneaking blackguards who call themselves defenders and propagators of the Gospel, that we desire to place on record our tribute of respect to a Christian advocate who was also a gentleman.

HETERODOX NUTS FOR ORTHODOX TEETH.
No. III.—THE FALL.

1. PAUL teaches us that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. v., 12). Is there any justice in this?
2. Why should we all be born in sin because of another's offence? What had we to do with the commission of a crime some thousands of years before we were born?
3. Would it not be quite as rational and just to condemn Adam for our sins as it is to damn us for his?
4. If the majority of mankind will ultimately be damned to all eternity through Adam's having brought sin into the world, would it not have been far better that he had never been created?
5. Why should the Deity forbid Adam and Eve to acquire a knowledge of good and evil? If He really did not wish them to eat of the tree, why did He place it right in their way?
6. And why did He set a trap for them by making the tree "pleasant to the eyes," "a tree to be desired to make one wise," and adding a wily and subtil serpent to persuade the woman to eat of it?
7. If the Deity knew that the serpent would seduce Eve, and the awful consequences that would result therefrom to all mankind, why did He not completely prevent his access to the garden of Eden? And why did He not kill the Devil, and thus have effectually stopped all possibility of sin entering the world?
8. Was it fair to pit a simple and innocent woman against an artful and subtil serpent? Would it not have been fairer and better to have appointed the cherubim to protect Eve from his wiles, rather than to have appointed them to keep Adam and Eve out of the garden when the mischief was done? Was the garden of Eden more important than the everlasting souls of Adam and Eve and all their descendants?
9. Who was this serpent, where did he come from? Was he really a serpent, or was he a superior being with power to assume the serpent form?
10. If the serpent was a real one, may we ask what serpents talk and eat dust, and how otherwise could a serpent go than upon his belly? And why did God punish the innocent and irresponsible descendants of that serpent?
11. If the serpent was not a real one, but only the Devil who assumed the form, why was a *real* serpent punished? Can we picture the Deity cursing inoffensive serpents for the sin of the Devil?
12. How could sin have entered into the world through Adam and Eve, as Paul teaches, if the Devil had sinned before them? And if the Devil was once a holy angel, and fell without a Devil to tempt him, can we wonder that a frail woman fell when tempted by an almost omnipotent fiend?
13. If Eve were without sin before the Fall, how could she know what a lie was? Why, then, blame her for believing the serpent's statement?
14. What was the death threatened? Was it physical or spiritual death? If spiritual death, what could Eve have known of this before she fell? Was not the threat unintelligible? If it were a physical death, how was it they did not die in the day they ate of the tree?
15. As they did not die, as their eyes were opened, and as they knew good and evil after they had eaten of the tree, did not the serpent (or Devil) tell the truth after all?
16. If the serpent really was the Devil, has he not had a winning fight all through? Did he not succeed in seducing Eve, and in slaying God's best-beloved son who was sent to repair the damage the Devil had wrought in Eden? Are not his followers now more numerous by millions than are those of God's only begotten son?
17. Were not Adam and Eve punished for their act of disobedience? Why, then, was Christ punished too? And why are we punished also?
18. Is it not blasphemy to teach that a just God would involve millions in sin on account of a single act of disobedience on the part of one?
19. What should we think of a human father who, for a single breach of his commands on the part of one son, were to punish the whole of his children throughout their lives? And what should we think of him if he involved in

that punishment his children who were unborn at the time the offence was committed?

20. If we would condemn such a human father as a monster, what shall we call those men who teach that our Divine Father will punish us to all eternity for an offence in which we did not and could not have had any share? Is not such a teaching a disgrace to all who preach and believe it? Is it not the most shocking blasphemy against the Almighty?
J. E. GARNER.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

THE GOSPELS.—It is evident that the gospel we have, to which the name of Matthew is attached, is not the one adverted to by Papias, for he spoke of a writing in Hebrew, while what we have is in Greek; nor does the gospel according to Mark correspond with his description of what Mark wrote; for what we have is an orderly narrative, but what he describes is a miscellaneous collection of anecdotes, taken down from time to time as they fell from the lips of Peter. The existing gospels, with which the names of Matthew and Luke are connected, are therefore certainly not those of which Papias knew. Nor are there means for satisfying ourselves, positively, that the four gospels particularised by Irenæus are the very same that we now have.—*Judge Strange*, "The Bible: is it the Word of God?" p. 28, 1871.

WHY ARE THERE NO SIGNS IN THOSE WHO BELIEVE?—If we must receive as genuine those texts in the Pentateuch or in the Gospels which assert the exercise of miraculous powers, how shall we account for the fact that, while miracles of science—say rather of Nature—miracles of art, of ingenuity, miracles of energy, of courage, of the conquering might of mind over matter, have multiplied and increased indefinitely, ecclesiastical miracles have vanished from the earth?—*Bishop Colenso*, "The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua critically examined," part vi., p. 625, 1871.

EARLY CHRISTIAN FRAUDS.—In reference to the advancement of the various Christian interests, and in like manner also to those developments of doctrine already mentioned, the *spurious literature* which had arisen and continually increased among Jews and Christians, was of great importance. The Christians made use of such expressions and writings as had already been falsely attributed by Jews from partiality to their religion, to honored persons of antiquity, and altered them in parts to suit their own wants, such as the book of Enoch and the fourth book of Ezra. But writings of this kind were also fabricated anew by Christians, who quieted their conscience respecting the forgery with the idea of their good intention, for the purpose of giving greater impressiveness to their doctrines and admonitions by the reputation of respectable names, of animating their suffering brethren to steadfastness, and of gaining over their opponents to Christianity.—*Dr. J. C. L. Gieseler*, Professor of Theology in Gottingen, "Compendium of Ecclesiastical History," sec. 52, Vol. I., pp. 157, 158. Translated by Dr. S. Davidson. T. & T. Clark's Foreign Theological Library.

A PARALLEL TO CHRISTIANITY.—*Babism* in Persia was a phenomenon much more astonishing. A mild and unassuming man, in character and opinion a sort of pious and modest Spinoza, was suddenly, and almost in spite of himself, raised to the rank of a worker of miracles and a divine incarnation, and became the head of a numerous, ardent, and fanatical sect, which came near accomplishing a revolution like that of Mahomet. Thousands of martyrs rushed to death for him with joyful alacrity.—*Ernest Renan*, "The Apostles," c. xix., p. 282. 1869.

PROFANE JOKES.

BIBLIANA.—Who was Samuel? A good boy who was called up by the Lord in the night to hew king Agag to pieces, and carry away the gates of Gaza. He was afterwards raised by the witch of Endor, and slew a thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Verily, verily, all these things came to pass that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, saying, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

WHAT is the difference between the House of Commons and the House of Lords?—Answer: One has ability, the other nobility.

A POWERFUL PREACHER.—"Ah! sir," exclaimed Elder Watson, in the tone of pathetic recollection, "our late minister was the man! He was a poorfu' preacher; for, i' the short time he delivered the word amang us, he knocked three pu'pits to pieces, and dang the guts out o' five Bibles!"

WASN'T it enough to disgust any small boy? He crawled carefully under the canvas of the tent to see the circus, and found when he stood up it was only a nasty Hallelujah meeting.

