

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

SERIOUS BIBLE SKETCHES.—I.



A BACK VIEW.

FROM A DUTCH BIBLE OF 1669.

And the Lord said, . . . I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, . . . and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.—EXODUS xxxiii., 21—3.

As the bigots object to our Comic Bible Sketches we shall publish a few Serious Bible Sketches, copied accurately from old Bibles of the ages of faith, to show what the Christians have done themselves in the way of familiar interpretation. We hope the bigots will like the change.

CRUCIFY HIM.

He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.—MATTHEW xxv., 65—66.

Crucify him, crucify him.—LUKE xxiii., 21.

THE cry of blasphemy has been raised against nearly everybody who has dared to differ from the priests. These black gentry, and their friends the privileged classes, think themselves the sole possessors of wisdom and goodness. All who question their dogmas are rogues or fools, and all who ridicule their pretensions are villains fit only for the gallows or the gaol. Ten thousand years ago the priests thought the people knew enough, and now they think the people know too much. Their mind is the measure of all things, and nobody's knowledge must exceed theirs. They

utter the final word on every subject. All ideas must be strained through their sieve, and nature's giants must be squeezed and cramped into a small suit of theological clothes, adapted to the babes and sucklings of thought. By this means great minds are made timid and the general mind is made slavish. The few who see through the priestly juggle, and recognise it as a mixture of fraud and impudence, are terrified into silence; the masses are kept victims of blind credulity; and each generation goes on repeating the shibboleths of the previous one, with just as much sense as is shown by a crowd of parrots. Ignorance is the mother of devotion, and devotion means the power and profit of priests.

More than eighteen centuries ago the priests of Jerusalem shrieked "blasphemy!" against Jesus Christ. The cry served its purpose, and the young preacher was soon crucified. But the Jewish priests for once made a mistake. Their victim became the God of hundreds of millions who hated the very sight of a Jew, who outlawed and persecuted the race for centuries, enjoyed hunting them better than boars and foxes, and allowed their front teeth to be drawn by needy kings who had an eye on their money-bags.

Jesus Christ was murdered at the instigation of priests as a blasphemer. One would think that the religion which is professedly founded on his life and teaching, and bears his name, would banish the word as an opprobrium. Yet, strange to say, that very creed has howled "blasphemy" at every sceptic, and practically echoed the old cry of Crucify him, Crucify him. The dungeon, the rack, the thumbscrew, and the stake, have been awarded to the daring heretics who were guilty of the same crime as the founder of Christianity, who "blasphemed" in their day as Jesus Christ had blasphemed in his. In the name of Christ the blasphemer, myriads of other blasphemers have been robbed, tortured and killed.

But the power of the priests is broken, although not yet destroyed. They cannot put to death any longer, for humanity denies them that luxury. But they have musty old laws at their command, the spiritual gyves and manacles of a bygone age; and they are ready to fasten these fetters on any object of their hatred whom it is safe to molest. They dare not touch the Darwins, the Mills, and the Huxleys. Oh no. The theological cat will even purr when they stroke her the wrong way. But let a common sceptic approach and she will spit and scratch and bite like mad.

It is the "lower orders" that must be preserved from blasphemy, just as it is the "lower orders" that must be preserved from immorality. Meddling with the religion or the morals of the upper classes would be resented as an insult. They may buy as much expensive heresy or lechery as they please. But the poor man is watched. He is tracked by the parson and the police. He must act and think by rule. All the nice restrictions are for his benefit—that is, for his subjection. Who ever heard of a prosecution for blasphemy or obscenity against the Honorable Augustus Fitznoodle, or his bookseller who supplies him with Renan and Zola? No one. These prosecutions are always kept for the editors, publishers, and vendors of cheap newspapers. It is the everlasting old game; straining at the poor man's gnat, and swallowing the rich man's camel. If you say that the evidences of the supernatural character of Jesus Christ are unsatisfactory, and that his divinity is scarcely credible, and elaborate your position in

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a twelve-shilling book, your scepticism will be tolerated. But if you say that the evidences are contemptible, that his character and teaching were sometimes wicked and absurd, that his being born without a father is all a sham, and that he was no more God than any man who keeps a shop in the next street, and prove your statements in a penny paper, your scepticism is held to be a crime, and you may be sent to gaol like a common thief. Blasphemy is simply scepticism expressed in plain language and sold at the people's price.

What is the reason of this distinction? It is very obvious. The common people must be kept as the spoil of priestcraft and privilege, for it is their labor which supports all the idle and luxurious classes. To set them thinking is to shake the basis of the social pyramid, and to make it extremely uncomfortable for all the "upper" sections, who want a good, solid, steady platform of hard-working ignorance and stupidity to stand on. If Jesus Christ had set up as a Rabbi, and held learned debates with the big-wigs of theology, without talking to the masses, the priests would have let him alone. He would probably have died in the full odor of sanctity, and Caiaphas might have written his epitaph.

But it may be objected that the priests are not prosecuting the *Freethinker*. True; yet they have created the atmosphere in which the prosecution thrives; they have preached against the paper and asked that it should be put down; they utter no word of protest against Tyler's crusade; and it is a priest-made law on which he relies to crush the Freethought he cannot answer.

We are charged with blasphemy, and so was Jesus Christ. What a grim joke it will be if the *Freethinker* is found guilty and punished for the same crime as the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount! Truly adversity makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows.

Yet whatever happens we will not quail. We will not vapor about legions of angels, but trust in the living legions of Freethought. We will not yield to the weakness of an agony and bloody sweat, nor pray that the cup may pass from us, nor cry out that we are forsaken; for our sources of strength are all within us and cannot be taken away. We have a sense of truth, a conviction of right, and a spirit of courage caught from the gallant men who fought before. Let the bigots do their worst. Judas Tyler has begun the infamy, Caiaphas Fraser and other high priests are ready to help, and a Pontius Pilate may be found to give an unjust sentence. Let them do their worst; they will not break our spirit nor extinguish our cause. Let the Christian mob clamor as loudly as they can, Crucify him, crucify him! They will not daunt us. We look with prophetic eyes over all the tumult, and see in the distance the radiant form of Liberty, bearing in her left hand the olive branch and in her right the sword, the holy victress, destined by treaty or conquest to bring the whole world under her sway. And across all the din we hear her great rich voice, banishing despair, inspiring hope, and infusing a joyous ardor in every nerve.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE HYPOCRISY OF THE AGE.

If any defence of the *Freethinker* were needed, other than the fact that it appeals to the public by whom it may be accepted or rejected, it would be found in the prevailing hypocrisy of the age. As a matter of fact, despite appearances to the contrary, our age is no longer distinctively Christian, and would not be recognised as such by those ages entitled to that name. Could a believer of the ages of faith, say of the fourteenth century, revisit this planet, he would find that the entire tone of thought which he recognised as religious had absolutely passed away. We have before us the spectacle of a society clinging to a faith in which it has ceased to believe. With a large proportion of the educated the supernatural character of Christianity has lost its hold upon the intellect. Its doctrines no longer influence the life. Yet because Christianity is thought to be bound up in some mysterious way with the order of society and good morals, so that one cannot be thrown aside without injury to the other, it receive a lip service while the heart and the mind are far away. No one thinks of regulating his daily life and business by it. Christianity, in truth, has little more than a Sunday existence in the world, and even on Sunday, infidelity may be and is

preached from the pulpit, only it must be veiled in the conventional phraseology. On the subject of religion, the age is honeycombed with hypocrisy; unable to believe in reality, it plays at pretending to believe; and like a spoilt child, out of whose doll the sawdust is palpably bursting, it loses temper with those who point out the state of the case, and refuse to believe that the fetish is alive.

A *bona fide* Christian, one who really believes that God was actually born of a virgin in Palestine, and that he died to save us after we are dead from eternal damnation for sins committed before we were born, is as rare as the phoenix. Cross-examine a Christian of ordinary intelligence upon any article of Christian dogma, and it is fifty to one that he is driven to avow his unconscious unbelief. Is he asked concerning an eternal hell? he will make it clear that he has never realised that as a possibility, at any rate for himself. He will probably express a hope that all will be saved, though he will certainly not deny that "narrow is the way to eternal life and few there be that find it." There may be a hell, but its temperature has probably been much exaggerated. Is he asked concerning the existence of a personal devil? He will soon show that he has got beyond the belief in the horned, hooped and tailed gentleman who frightened his forefathers, even though he prays according to the revised version, "Deliver us from the evil one;" for he may continue to pray though he no longer expects prayers to be answered. Satan is shelved, but no hints will be listened to that the departure of the devil heralds the retirement of his celestial antagonist. The average Christian is one because he has been brought up, not to believe in Christian dogmas, but to believe that he believes them, and because Christianity has the holy sanction of respectability, the stamp divine of Mrs. Grundy set upon it. Modern Christianity, prides itself upon being unsectarian, which means that it has eliminated all historical basis and distinctive doctrines till little is left but a few moral sentiments common to Buddhism, Taoism, and Stoicism. It asks not so much for faith in and realisation of its supernatural stories as for an outward assent to them. Nobody must say what everybody thinks. Not to know that this planet is but an infinitesimal speck in space is gross ignorance, but to suggest that this is incompatible with God having come down to earth in human form is worse, for it is gross infidelity. Everyone may admit that the earth only arrived at its present condition after myriads of ages, but the Jewish compilers of the books ascribed to Moses must have the credit of knowing all about it. Even the doctrine of evolution may be allowed, but one must not suppose that it does not fit in with the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. You may argue that the Gospels were not known until the second century, but you must not thence infer that their statements about the miracles are untrustworthy. You may pool pool the belief in Catholic or Spiritist miracles as a sign of credulity, but the stories of the gospels must not be considered as evidence either of fiction or of superstition.

Now the *Freethinker* puts what educated men really think upon these matters into plain and popular language. It exposes the sham of modern Christianity. It says supernaturalism is either true or false. There is or is not an over-ruling Providence. The Bible is or is not the word of God. Either God was or was not born of a virgin. We are or are not foreordained to heaven or hell. Our eternal salvation did or did not depend on the betrayal by Judas of Jesus. He died or did not die to appease the wrath of the Father. To say, as I say, and the average Christians say, that these questions are unessential is to say that they are untrue, and to say this expressly in forcible and direct language comes as a blast of north wind to those living in a fetid atmosphere of insincerity. The present prosecution has political animus at the bottom, but the sentiment upon which it relies is not an objection against the *Freethinker* because by leading minds away from Christianity it leads souls to eternal damnation. This is not the concern of those who dislike the *Freethinker*. The head and front of its offending is that it speaks out plainly what there is a tacit conspiracy to conceal. It is really quite too utterly awfully shocking. Jesus most assuredly sent devils into pigs, but the performance can scarcely be represented without blasphemy. It is a part of inspired revelation that the Lord on one occasion showed his back parts to Moses, but it would be grossly indecent to portray the scene. The *Freethinker* has not, as yet, taken up those subjects for illustration, but if it did it would have as good

a defence as any caricatures. Those who fight with error and superstition cannot be expected to make war with kid gloves. Luther was coarse and rude. But without the rudeness of rough reformers who have gone before us, we might to-day, instead of repeating meaningless creeds, be slaughtering our children on the altars of the gods of the past.

J. M. WHEELER.

CHRISTIAN BLASPHEMY.

ONCE again has the ridiculous cry of blasphemy been raised against the advocates of Freethought, and once more are the fanatics seeking by brute force to put down opinions, against which the feeble arguments of Christian apologists are, and ever will be, futile. The bigots are reviving against Freethinkers the crime and folly of a barbarous and, one had thought, a bygone past, in starting the prosecution now pending against this journal. Against the injustice and impudence of this the latest ebullition of pious bullyism it behoves all Freethinkers to unite, so that the cowardly foe, who shuns the arena of fair discussion, and attempts to gag the voice of Freethought, may suffer the defeat which his disgraceful conduct deserves.

We are charged with the cry of—Blasphemy. But the men who prefer that charge, and not we, are the true blasphemers. We are incapable of blaspheming a God in whom we have not the faintest scintillation of belief. The Christian Deity is as dead to us as Jupiter or Osiris to the Christians, and only folly or ignorance can inspire the bigots to denounce us for an impossible crime. We venture to say that those, like ourselves, who laugh to scorn the ridiculous doctrines of orthodoxy, are truer friends to the Deity (if there exist such an one) than those who impiously ascribe to him the fiendish character portrayed in the pages of "Holy Writ." We say, again, that the real blasphemers are those narrow-minded bigots who seek to degrade humanity by forcing it on its knees in servile adoration of an inhuman God; who form no conception of the Deity but what is either intellectually absurd or morally untrue; and who ascribe to the creature of their imagination a series of abominations such as would excite their intensest hatred if fathered on any other god than their own. Let the fanatics purge their minds of impious opinions concerning their Deity; let them cease from adoring an object unworthy of their praise and beneath their contempt. If they will have a God, let them make unto themselves a glorious image of moral truth and intellectual worth, a being who loveth virtue and hateth iniquity—and then shall the great bugbear of blasphemy be unknown; for Freethinkers have no ridicule to pour on the lofty ideas of good and earnest men, even when those ideas are devoid, as often is the case, of a sound intellectual basis.

If bigots were wise they would beware of meddling with Freethought in the manner of Sir Henry Tyler. The alleged blasphemies in the *Freethinker* merely consist either in the recapitulation of disagreeable facts or religious opinions concerning God, taught in the Bible or swallowed by the voracious piety of orthodoxy. The speeches for the defence will doubtless make that truth clear and patent to the public. The fussy interference of the prosecution on behalf of a God whom no amount either of platform or forensic palaver can whitewash into the semblance of innocence and purity, will consequently prove more disastrous than otherwise to the somewhat dilapidated character of the Jewish Deity.

The prosecution now pending, stripped of all legal humbug, and conventional quibbling, means nothing more nor less than that brute force is the only recognised Christian remedy against "blasphemy." The fanatics, worsted in debate and smarting under the sting of defeat, hope thereby to shut the mouth and to stop the pen of Freethought. The hope, flattering though it be, is fallacious. Time and experience will soon undeceive the bigots now so blatant with the cry of blasphemy. They will soon discover to their cost that the Freethought party can avenge itself by renewed and more glorious victories than those gained in the struggles of the past, of the outrages heaped upon it by its cowardly foe.

One word and we conclude. The men who would now hale the champions of Freethought to prison are the men who slander our characters; who impute to us the vilest

crimes; who practise the nefarious art of false innuendo; who enact the most infamous laws against us, burdening us with disabilities, and subject us to divers pains and penalties for our unbelief; who rob us without scruple of our political rights; and who generally contrive, with the proverbial malignity of the true believer, to "damage us as much as possible in pocket, person and reputation. Instead of defending their principles and attacking ours, the policy of a large number of Christian advocates consists in libelling the characters of the men and women who fight the battle of Freethought. We do not seek to imitate their disgraceful tactics. The cause we love has no need to be supported by such contemptible means. The only extent to which we indulge in personality is this:— We denounce with righteous indignation the character of the God of Christianity as that character is presented to us by his worshippers. We show that out of his own mouth God condemns himself in the eyes of all honest-minded men and women. For this we are stigmatised as wicked, blasphemous! But the wickedness, if any, is on the part of the creed. It is our duty to condemn, and the guilt of blasphemy rests on the heads of those who pin their faith to a religion which entertains such libellous opinions concerning the character of the Deity. For our part, we wash our hands of all responsibility in the matter.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

ACID DROPS.

TALMAGE'S publishers over here have caught his trick of puffery. They have reprinted his long-winded reply to Ingersoll and called it "Bradlaughism Demolished." Of course there isn't a word about Mr. Bradlaugh in the pamphlet, but the title serves to gull the public.

In the advertisement Ingersoll is described as the "champion blasphemer of America." Why doesn't Talmage reply to Pagan Bob as Tyler replies to us, and get up a prosecution with a view to closing the great orator's mouth with twelve months' gaol? Perhaps he is afraid to try. There is too much powerful infidelity out in the States to make the game safe.

THE *Christian World* has an immense circulation, and at this time of the year it is full of charitable appeals. We took the trouble to add up all the contributions acknowledged in its last number, and found that they amounted to the grand sum of £2 17s. Such is Christian charity!

JUST now thousands of respectable Christians sing—

"Come let us join our friends above,"

and immediately rush off to the seaside for the benefit of their carnal health and the prolongation of their miserable lives. If the Lord listened to half they say they would soon give over talking to him.

MISS COBBE has been writing on "The Riddle of Death." Not a bad title! There is no mystery of death from a scientific point of view, but looked at theologically it is a riddle indeed; and the riddle is never read simply because it has no answer. We might say that an obvious riddle of death is its cutting short the career of robust thinkers like the late Professor Clifford and allowing garrulous old ladies like Miss Cobbe to go on gushing for ever and ever.

DR. BEGG expects to get 200,000 signatures of Free Churchmen against the introduction of organs in the Scotch kirks. The valiant doctor objects to any music in advance of King David, and probably deems the sweet strains of the bagpipe the most grateful to the divine ears.

SANKEY is going home; not to heaven, oh dear no; he doesn't want to go there till he is obliged; but to America; and Moody is going to take a turn on the Continent. In September the Siamese twins will rejoin and evangelise in South Wales, where the people are already so pious that they wish there were seven Sundays in the week.

BISHOP RYLE, of Liverpool, congratulates the Rev. Mr. Garrett on his election to the Presidency of the Wesleyan Conference. Church and Dissent are drawing together, knowing that they need all their strength to face the common foe.

A STRONG complaint was made at the Wesleyan Conference that some of the godly backslided so far as to go to theatre. Awful thought! Fancy a Christian listening to the balderdash of Shakespeare when he might hear a magnificent sermon for nothing! Could there be a more shocking illustration of the natural depravity of the human heart?

If Tyler's prosecution succeeds, other fine old statutes will doubtless be revived. Under some of these any actor might be arrested and sent to gaol as a rogue and a vagabond. What a fine chance for all the unsuccessful preachers in London! They might shut up all the theatres and have the field all to themselves. Of course the Church and Stage Guild might object, but their opposition would soon be overcome. We may yet see Irving picking oakum, and the Archbishop of Canterbury joining General Booth in a breakdown on the Lyceum stage, with the programme of the performance printed on the back of facsimiles of that well-advertised fiver.

It is astonishing how these Christians can snap their fingers at justice and decency. While our case is *sub judice* scores of them write as though we were proved guilty. If we are acquitted we could bring an action against every one of them for defamatory libel. Some of them go on lying as if to the manner born. Coleridge J. Kennard, for instance, who dates from 39 Upper Grosvenor Street, writes in the *Wiltshire County Mirror* that the *Freethinker* is a blasphemous and wicked print. Well, that is a matter of opinion. But he goes on to say that Mr. Bradlaugh is committed for trial as its "acknowledged proprietor," which is a very cool and impudent lie after Mr. Bradlaugh's emphatic declarations, which we endorse, that he never had any interest in the paper. Mr. Kennard recommends the nation to pray to God for help in its present trouble; we advise him to pray that he may henceforth speak the truth, and shun the company of those whose portion is in the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire.

WHAT constitutes blasphemy is a very curious question. Lord Shaftesbury, who should be an authority, says that the name of the Salvation Army is blasphemous, and that to avoid blasphemy they should call themselves "General Booth's Army." Mrs. Booth, on the other hand, declares that this name has been given by the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, so that in challenging it Lord Shaftesbury is in danger of blaspheming the Holy Ghost.

THE Hindoo author of "Christ and Buddha Contrasted," describes Christian doctrines as being highly ludicrous and blasphemous.

The Rev. W. Hoales, of Winchester, in his "Memories of Mr. Chubb," published in 1747, after asserting without the slightest evidence that this Deist was addicted to abominable vices, declared that he would have his corpse, and that of every similar sceptic, instead of being decently buried, "dragged by a halter round the neck to a gibbet, where the hangman, after having cut out the heart, plucked out the tongue by the roots, and chopped off the right hand, should burn the whole in a fire made with the works he wrote; and his ashes being thrown into the air, with execration and contempt, would make all those who bow the knee at the name of Jesus, lift up their hand with joy and great gladness."

In "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Salvation Army, prepared for the Training Homes (by order of the General)," the question is asked, "What is an officer's duty with regard to money?" One duty is commanded as follows: "Be careful to get all the money you can; specially by having the collections carefully made. Have plenty of collectors. Get properly-made boxes. Accustom your people to collect with cards and boxes at their own homes or among their friends and neighbors." Among other items of information, we read that "None are allowed to do any courting during the first twelve months," and "no marriage can take place without the consent of headquarters." General Booth may be a nice old man, but we wonder what kind of an unction from the holy one it is which enables him to decide whether couples should be coupled better than the parties themselves or their parents.

It was stated in the *Daily News* that three major-generals of the guards actually paid four thousand pounds each for the high post which has been given to the Duke of Connaught. This is the sort of thing that goes on in the "higher circles," yet these very people claim the right to look after the morals of the people. In no other country in the world would it be possible for high military commands to be bought and sold, or for a young man to be entrusted with the lives of thousands of soldiers, and the honor of his country, just because he happened to be a queen's son. Guelphs, like other people, should serve before they command. But the good young man may after all be harmless. When the Queen's yacht ran down the "Mistletoe" off the Isle of Wight, Prince Leinengren threw all the blame on Captain Walsh, who actually navigated the vessel. Let us hope that the Duke of Connaught will have a real soldier to do his work for him.

In the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for August, the Rev. F. J. Masters, writes on Buddhism in China, attempting to palliate the slow progress of Christianity in the Flowery Land by showing that the propagation of Buddhism in that country was equally slow. He says that "Christianity suffered a disadvantage in China on account of the inaccessibility of those places which were the scenes of our Lord's life and ministry."

As though the devotion which sent the Buddhist pilgrims from Peking over the mountains of Thibet to visit the scenes of the Buddha's life in India, would not have sufficed to impel them to Jerusalem. He admits that before Christianity was known Buddhism had taught boundless charity and universal brotherhood, and cites the following from the Buddhist Sutras: "When reviled, revile not again; when smitten be not angry; return evil with ungrudging love, when threatened with death, bear no malice." What need of a God coming to reveal these doctrines if a man had taught them long before?

Light, the organ of the cultured Spiritists is a *funny* paper. Last week it asserted that the modern world with a little patience would as easily see ghosts walking down Pall Mall as transmit a message by telegraph to India. This week it puts forward a most original theory, well worthy the deepest meditation of Spiritist philosophers, and which throws Mr. Shandy's views of the homunculus completely into the shade. It is no other—gentle reader hold on to your hair—than that babies choose deliberately their own fathers and mothers. Of course, this is our indelicate way of stating it. But we will cite the writer's own words. He says: "We hold that birth into material relations is in no sense an accident but a deliberate act of volition on the part of a conscious entity seeking expression and fully aware of its wants." The writer argues that the spirit being without end must also be without beginning, and being conscious deliberately assumes unconsciousness in the form of an embryo.

You cannot pick up any Christian paper and read its advertisements without finding ample evidence of the credulity of its readers. Patent nostrums, in pills and bottles, for all the ills that flesh is heir to, are as thick as flies on a rotten carcass; all the quacks in England show up in splendid form, with boasts of miraculous cures for ailing Christians, who are not at all anxious to go home to their Father. We remember hearing a commercial traveller once say in the train, that he had met a patent-pill man at his hotel, and the quack, who was a very genial fellow, had said that he found the best papers to advertise in were the religious journals with a good family circulation, their readers being more credulous and prone to pills than other people.

THE Recorder of the City of London, in charging the Grand Jury, referred to the alleged blasphemous libels in the *Freethinker*, and said "it was impossible for any Christian man to read them without feeling that they came within that description, and they ought to return a true bill." Sir Thomas Chambers seems to think that every juryman must be a Christian, whereas he may be a Jew, a Mohammedan, a Parsee, or even an Atheist. Out of every twelve men, six may be Christians, but the rest are pretty sure to be sceptical or indifferent, unless all the twelve are specially *picked*. That sort of thing has been known to happen, and it may happen again. At any rate the Recorder's words imply that our enemies are to be our judges, which is a fine comment on the maxim that every Englishman is to be tried by his peers.

PATRICK PACIFICUS WADE, a Roman Catholic priest, said to belong to Darlington, has been charged at the Liverpool Police Court with having committed a criminal assault on Charlotte Henderson, five years of age. It was also stated that on the night of the alleged offence the prisoner slept at a house of ill fame in Clifford Street.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* says that a popularisation of the story of our Lord Jesus from a supernatural point of view is greatly needed. Humanly speaking, the salvation of millions depends upon it. Renan's "Life of Jesus" and Professor Seeley's "Ecce Homo" disinterred the humanity of our Lord, but his divinity has yet to be disinterred. Poor Jesus seems according to this to have been lost from sight for a long while, and to be waiting his chance of the nineteenth century popularising his story from a supernatural point of view. Humanly speaking, this means that the gospels are played out and giving way to "The Prince of the House of David."

WHAT chance has a poor man of justice in this country? On Saturday morning, July 29th, we roamed the Law Courts with Mr. Bradlaugh to get the writ of certiorari. His intimate knowledge of procedure was our salvation; without it we should have had to stand in the dock of the Old Bailey. Any firm of solicitors would have charged about thirty pounds for the morning's work, and as it was it cost a good deal in stamps and other items. A poor, friendless man would simply have to give in and lie down.

How the crowd of legal gentlemen in the lobby did scowl at Mr. Bradlaugh for rushing in and leaving them all in the rear! We heard one mutter, "He carries everything with cheek," and another "He leaves everybody behind him." But the most amusing case was that of a waiting applicant who gazed at the stalwart member for Northampton with mingled admiration and disgust, and broke out with "He'll never pay a penny, he won't." We presume he referred to Newdegate's five hundred pounds.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Mr. FOOTE will lecture three times to-day (Sunday, August 6), at the Skating Rink, Hammerton Street, Burnley: Morning, at 11, "Great Christ is Dead!" afternoon, at 2.45, "Comic Aspects of the Bible;" evening, at 6.30, "Blasphemy, Priestcraft, and Persecution."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

August 13th, Rochdale; 20th, West Hartlepool; 21st to 25th, Durham District; 27th, Stockton-on-Tees.

September 3rd, Claremont Hall, London; 10th, Hall of Science, London; 17th, Hall of Science, London; 24th, Nottingham.

October 1st, Claremont Hall, London; 8th, Leeds; 15th, Halifax; 22nd, Manchester.

November 19th, Hall of Science, London; 26th, Claremont Hall, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Publisher, 15, Harp Alley, Farringdon Street, E.C.

LITERARY communications to the Editor, Mr. G. W. FOOTE, No. 9, South Crescent, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

ACKNOWLEDGED WITH THANKS:—A. E. Bradham, H. L. B., A. J. Cock, Arthur F. Stone.

B. S. H.—We do not pretend to give legal information, but it is a matter of common knowledge that a husband is responsible for his wife's debts, however contracted. He can of course demand proof of the goods having been delivered.

J. H. BUNTON.—Postal order to hand. We expected a little more activity from the Leicester friends.

W. MORTIMER.—Thanks for your good wishes and solid help. We feel with you that, whatever happens to individuals, the prosecution will advance our cause.

A. MOSS.—We thank you for all you are doing in the crisis. Mr. Foote is happily in the best of health.

G. BARNES.—Your third weekly remittance from the West Hartlepool friends duly to hand. If you cannot get the *Freethinker* through your newsagent, order direct from our office.

S. R. B.—The indictment is not in our hands yet, but we expect a copy daily. It is several yards long. We shall, in due course, print the passages singled out for attack.

C. SCHULZ.—The sketch is not at all bad, and we may use it by and bye. Your theory about Judas is rather far-fetched.

MR. C. CALLAGHAN, Secretary of the Oldham Branch of the N. S. S., desires us to state that a Committee has been appointed to collect subscriptions to our Defence Fund. Persons wishing to subscribe will find the Committee in attendance at the Hall of Science, Horsedgate Street, between 7 and 9 every Wednesday and Friday evening.

T. KNOWLES.—All communications as to contents-sheets and such matters should be sent to our publisher. We thank you for your valued assistance.

S. PHILLIPS.—We are quite ready to cross-examine any member of the Trinity in the witness-box, but who is to serve the subpoena? The Post-office authorities were once in a similar fix. They had to return a letter directed to "Our Father which art in Heaven," as insufficiently addressed.

P. HAMILTON.—Talmage is a mountebank, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. We thoroughly exploded "the noble Altamont" in the *Freethinker* for June 25th. No doubt Mr. Truelove has the book you want in stock.

W. GARTON writes that he has ordered six copies of the *Freethinker* from his newsagent instead of one, and that if all our readers did the same it would be a good answer to Tyler and the bigots.

OUR CAMPAIGN.

Now that all proceedings against the *Freethinker* are removed by certiorari to the Court of Queen's Bench, and time is thus gained for our defence, we are beginning to look round the field with a view to a counter attack. We already think seriously of prosecuting one or two of the big London publishers for blasphemy. Many of their publications are indictable, and it seems fair to apply the law all round. We do not see why we should be singled out as the only victim when scores of others are equally guilty; and if one prosecution leads to many, it will not only reduce the thing to an absurdity, but give the whole press a very strong motive to call for the abrogation of the blasphemy laws.

Meanwhile we are minded to do something for Sir Henry Tyler. We propose to present him with an illuminated address on parchment, suitable for framing, expressing the gratitude of the Secular party for his unwearied efforts to

promote the circulation of Freethought literature. The necessary expenses will be defrayed by a twopenny subscription. Next week we shall open a Tyler Testimonial Fund. Nobody is to subscribe more or less than twopence. We may add that the Northampton colors will be conspicuous on the address.

Our Defence Fund is growing apace. We thank the many friends who are making good use of the collecting sheets, and we trust that enough money will be acknowledged in our columns to meet all the expenses of the trial, which will amount to some hundreds of pounds.

SUGAR PLUMS.

M. RENAN's volume on the Ecclesiastes, which the Pope has placed on the *Index*, has a characteristic passage on the Voltarian spirit. "As for Scepticism," he says, "as a settled state of mind, one is never converted out of it; one rather hardens into it even by the very efforts which we make to work ourselves clear of it."

THE "sweet girl graduates" of Girton College are anything but Conservative. They have decided, in their Debating Society, by a majority of 27 to 14, that the House of Lords ought to be abolished.

MR. BRADLAUGH has received a practically unanimous vote of confidence from his constituents. The Tory dodge has not succeeded at Northampton. The Northampton shoemakers stick to their member like wax, and he says there's nothing like leather.

"A SOCIAL REFORMER" writes a capital letter to the *Weekly Dispatch* on our prosecution. We thank the writer, and the editor for inserting his letter. It is sure to be of great use to us in the fight, as the journal in which it appears enjoys a deservedly wide circulation.

THE writer of "Waifs and Strays" in the *Weekly Dispatch* tells a good story. One of the Hallelujah lasses at a Salvation meeting bent down over a young man whose attitude betokened penitence. "Are you saved, my brother?" she inquired. "Why," was the hurried reply, "I'm a reporter."

THE Lord's Day Observance Society has sent out a printed circular to all the London clubs, beseeching them to oppose any attempt to introduce card-playing on Sunday. One secretary has answered thus:—"Sir,—In reply to your circular respecting Sunday card-playing, I am desired by the committee of our club to say that they consider it impertinent on your part to interfere with other people's method of spending their time 'lawfully,' as it would be impertinent on their part to interfere with yours. Personally, I think God is quite able to defend himself.—Yours, &c."

LITTLE Freethinkers and big Freethinkers are invited to join the Children's Party on August 20th. We have arranged with the Archbishop of Canterbury for fine weather the whole day, and of course feel comfortable on that head. A good supply of emetics will be laid in for over-gorged youngsters whose appetites are bigger than their stomachs, and every child will at the close of the day's outing be furnished with a dose of castor oil. Subject to these wise precautions, everything is expected to go off in grand style. The juveniles will eat, drink, and be merry, while the adults will enjoy the privilege of ministering to their pleasure. We hope it will be a red-letter day all round.

CANON WILBERFORCE's letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury illustrates the connexion between beer and Bible in a way that must be very awkward for the Primate. The Church, as a whole, being the largest landowner in the kingdom, is naturally the largest owner of public-houses. This is bad enough, but Mr. Wilberforce avers that public-houses are more, in proportion, numerous on Church lands than elsewhere. The Bishop of London, riding between his two town houses, would, it is said, pass 100 taverns which are the property of his Church. One of the largest public-houses in London, which sells £10,000 worth of drink every year, is part of the Bishop's endowment. Here and there in London you may see a church flanked on either side by a ginshop—all three of course being church property. The publican appears to take instinctively to the vacant land in the neighborhood of a church.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

THE *Hulme Gazette* takes the Bishop of Manchester very severely to task for his latest diatribe against Atheism. "If Atheists," it says, "are corruptors of morals, how is it that they do not figure in our criminal courts? You do not find them organising foot races, horse races, nor any system of gambling; but you do find Christians engaged in these pursuits." It then refers to our prosecution in remarkably plain

language:—"The Bishop, after speaking against Atheists, referred to the prosecution against Mr. Foote, editor of the *Freethinker*, for blasphemy. The Bishop would do well to define what he means by blasphemy, and why anyone should be prosecuted for it. The Bishop knows very well that the creed he preaches was held to be blasphemous, and was punished with death. He knows that the leader of another Christian creed—Calvin—by mean trickery, got Servetus put to death, and gloried in the deed, because he held different Christian views to himself. He also knows that the Wesleyans were accounted blasphemous. He knows that Christians, in the earlier ages of Christianity, were put to death as being blasphemers, and Christ was put to death because of blasphemy."

LORD SHERBROOKE has a good article on Parliamentary Oaths in the *Nineteenth Century*. He says that "the whole system of oaths is equally immoral and degrading," and that "the duty of a citizen to tell the truth in a court of justice will be best enforced by treating it as an obligation which every citizen is bound to perform without any contract, oath, or promise, but subject to severe punishment if he violates or evades it."

THE *Westminster Review* contains a pronounced paper on "The Decay of Faith," to which we shall call further attention in an early number. It considers every form of supernaturalism as exploded by modern science.

THE Council of the National Sunday League announce a Special Band Performance in Regent's Park on Bank Holiday, Monday, August 7th. The band will play from 4 till 7.30 p.m. Friends are requested to aid the League by making this performance known. Seat tickets and programmes will be sent by the Secretary (Mr. Henry Saveriaux, 15 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.) on receipt of donation.

THE *Daily News* has opened its columns to correspondence on our prosecution. Mr. G. J. Holyoake began it with a characteristic trimming letter, full of his usual mistakes as to the law, some of which were corrected by Mr. Bradlaugh on the following day. We shall deal with Mr. Holyoake's letter at length next week.

PERSECUTION FOR BLASPHEMY.

I WRITE persecution instead of prosecution, and do it for the express purpose of indicating the nature of the case now pending against our young, vigorous, and growing paper, the *Freethinker*. Sir H. Tyler has begun to prosecute—that is, to persecute, this paper. But on the face of it the prosecution is unjust. It includes Mr. Foote and Mr. Ramsey, but omits me; whereas their case is mine: if they are guilty of blasphemy, so am I; if they are innocent, so am I. An honest prosecution would treat all the active and responsible parties alike; the present prosecution is a sham, an imposture, the work of a coward and a hypocrite. This appears plainly enough in all its phases, but especially in trying to incriminate Mr. Bradlaugh, who has no sort of responsibility for the paper, and omitting me, a regular contributor.

To be sure, we do not expect persecutors to be honest, enlightened, or rational. To be a persecutor, you must be selfish, cruel as a tigress robbed of her cubs, unreasoning as a mad-dog, a sincere believer in impossible absurdities, or a hypocritical scoundrel who can employ any agency to strike a foe or to relieve himself of his long-accumulating and pent-up malice. I presume Sir H. Tyler has for long been in a volcanic state, poor wretch! he has made several attempts to relieve himself, but without avail. He now tries what law will do—law that every man is ashamed of, which only the basest of wretches can set in motion. What do persecutors expect? Do they hope to stop progress? Do they hope to kill all pioneers? Has the past no lesson for them? Of course not. They are the stupidest of mankind, ay! of animated nature, except when they are cunning hypocrites. What good thing did persecution ever accomplish? None, except to expose its own pretence and array the world at length against its wretched principles. Moses, the Israelites, and the Lord murdered a poor fellow for blasphemy (Leviticus xxiv., 10—20). All enlightened men have everywhere condemned the murderers, whether they have sympathy with the blasphemer or not. But, just as rebellion is a duty where tyrants refuse liberty, so is blasphemy a sacred duty where such religions and gods as the Bible exhibits are in power.

Moses, Jehovah and Co., murdered another poor fellow for beaking the Sabbath (Numbers xv., 32—36). He

broke the day and they brutally broke his head; and killed him. Well, to-day, the Lord and Moses and their unlucky day are despised, and the parsons themselves break the Sabbath as freely as they break bread, and call those straight-laced who do not do the same. In the cases above mentioned the very worst of beings were the persecutors, while their victims were innocent.

The Bible is the fount of persecution, and both the sincere fanatic (fit only for an asylum) and the hypocrite use it to justify their most atrocious deeds. I see that some of the newspapers, acting according to their wont, blame Sir H. Tyler, though they try to defend his religion and the Bible! But remove his religion, and the very ground on which he stands disappears. Acts of Parliament authorise his cowardly deed; but what authorised the Acts of Parliament? The Bible. Destroy the influence of that book, and you make persecution impossible. As long as fanatics and hypocrites can shelter themselves under Jehovah's commands, the supply of such vermin will be endless and their mischief immense. Destroy the popular superstition respecting the Bible, expose its barbarian god to universal contempt—then persecution will cease. It is this task we have set ourselves to perform; and Tyler and Co. are doing their best to help us forward in it.

The prosecution in this case is not yet terminated. It remains to be seen how it will go. The wonder is that any judge or jury to-day can be got seriously to try such cases. I wonder, by-the-way, if one could get up a prosecution for witchcraft? I should like to try. Perhaps Tyler will try when he has finished this. Unfortunately for their credit, the world in its advancement has a habit of associating judges and juries who convict in cases of this sort with the prosecutors themselves. Who, as a jurymen, would like his name to descend to posterity along with those of persecuting and bloodthirsty Moses and Joshua; Samuel and Elijah; Peter the assassin of Ananias and his wife; Nero and Domitian; Cyril the murderer of Hypatia; the Crusaders against the Albigenses and Waldenses; the execrable villains who burnt Jews and Protestants in most countries of Europe; the hypocrites who burnt Bruno and Servetus, and shortened the days of Galileo? One can only hope that men are now too enlightened to be made catspaws of by a hypocrite like Tyler, and that the jury will refuse to be caught in the trap he has laid for them.

That I am not maligning him by calling him hypocrite is plain from the following facts:—He professes to be a Christian, and is manifestly not such—except in the sense of being as bitter a persecutor as he possibly can be, as was Jesus—

1. Jesus forbade swearing, as distinctly as he ever forbade adultery or murder. Tyler swears.

2. Jesus says, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv., 33). Tyler is too selfish to forsake anything for Jesus.

3. Jesus commanded to love one's enemies. Tyler hates men and women who have done him no conceivable harm; and he hates them only because they are infinitely better than himself.

On these three prime counts, therefore, I charge him with downright hypocrisy, double hypocrisy in fact; for he deliberately violates the commands of Jesus while offensively professing to be his follower, and he institutes this prosecution in defence and for the sake of a religion which he himself openly and daily violates, a religion which his whole life tends directly to bring into contempt. I feel some sort of respect for the fanatic, even while admitting that he should be placed under some gentle restraint; but for a hypocrite full of petty spite one can feel nothing short of unbounded loathing.

But suppose this prosecution succeeds. It will be for Christianity like catching a Tartar. In this game we can say to our opponents, "Heads we win, tails you lose!" Time is with us and for us, it is against them. We do not intend to be put down by anything short of brute force; they can stop our pens and tongues too by killing us—not otherwise. For my part, I'll make them prosecute the Bible, their own blessed book, next, if they don't mind what they do. If this case goes against the defendants, I'll select the vilest parts of the Bible, and scatter them broadcast over the country, and then they will be compelled to prosecute their own book, for it will create a moral pestilence in the land. Do they intend to drive us to

extremes? They little know what we can do, and dare, if they provoke us. Let them do their worst.

If the *Freethinker* needed any justification, this prosecution supplies it. Too much ridicule cannot be thrown upon the God that has such servants as Tyler and Co. Malice must be laughed to death. Hypocrisy must be grinned out of existence.

J. SYMES.

"FREETHINKER" DEFENCE FUND.

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1s.; J. Barns, 1s.; J. Worster, 2s. 6d.; G. Calvert, £1; T. Hundly, 6d.

[A long list of subscriptions unavoidably stands over till next week.]

CHILDREN'S EXCURSION.

WE have now made the final arrangements for our outing. We shall leave the Hall of Science for the "Robin Hood," Loughton, in omnibus vans, at 9.30 on Sunday, August 20th, and return from Loughton at 6. Parents wishing for tickets, are requested to write at once to the Secretary, Children's Excursion, J. G. Dumville, 24 Morpeth Road, Victoria Park, South Hackney, enclosing stamped envelope for reply. Special sub-committees have been appointed to look after the refreshments and amusements. We shall endeavor to provide a band, and every thing that lies in our power will be done to make the treat a thorough success. We shall be glad to hear from any friends who could assist us in providing amusements or otherwise adding to the day's pleasure. Further subscriptions received: W. R. Mitchell, 1s.; Mrs. Mitchell, 1s.; H. Rayner, 1s.; C. P. Caplin, 1s.; H. Harmby, 6d.; P. West, 3d.; F. Southard, 3d.; F. Taylor, 3d.; F. Rayner, 1s.; J. Oldfield, 1s.; F. Peters, 6d.; T. Peters, 6d.; L. Lawson, 6d.; F. Mortimer, 1s.; J. Hackett, 6d.; T. Scarles, 6d.; D. Titchner, 6d.; E. Childs, 6d.; North London, 10s.; Mrs. Rose (per Miss Bradlaugh) 10s.; R. Turpin, 5s. —W. J. RAMSEY.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

VARIETY OF OPINION.—Each man, so far as he is a reasoning being, must find his intellectual anchorage in the harbor, not for which he sails, but towards which he drifts, as it seems to me, guided by the winds and tides of constitution, temperament, education, external circumstances, and the like. It would be a disastrous fate for the intellectual and spiritual commerce of mankind, if all the shipping had to start from the same port and could find shelter only in the same harbor. —*Rev. J. Owen*, "Evenings with the Sceptics," p. 17; 1881.

THE LAST DAY.—The theologians manage like a charlatan I have seen about the Pont Neuf on the Quai de l'École. He showed to the people, towards evening, a turkey and several bottles of balsam. "Gentlemen," said he, "I am going to cut off my turkey's head, and I will bring it back to life the moment afterwards in your presence. But it is necessary beforehand that you should buy my bottles." He always found some persons simple enough to purchase them. "I am going to cut off my turkey's head," continued the charlatan; "but as it is late, and this operation is worthy of the full daylight, it will take place to-morrow." Two members of the Academy of Sciences had the curiosity and constancy to return to see how the charlatan would extricate himself from the business. The farce lasted for eight days in succession; but the farce of waiting for the end of the world has lasted throughout Christendom for more than eight entire ages.—*Voltaire*, "Dialogues et Entretiens Philosophiques," Dialogue xxiii., translated by J.M.W.

PERSECUTION.—Let the priests of any religion have power, and let men speak for themselves in opposition to their doctrines, in this case persecution is sure to follow.—*Henry Lord Brougham and Vaux*, Speech in the House of Commons, May 10th, 1825, on Roman Catholic Relief Bill.

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION.—At the end of the sixteenth century the simple proposition that men for holding or declaring heterodox opinions in religion should not be burned alive or otherwise put to death, was itself little else than a sort of heterodoxy; and though many privately must have been persuaded of its truth, the Protestant Churches were as far from acknowledging it as that of Rome.—*Henry Hallam*, *P.R.A.S.*, "Introduction to the Literature of Europe," vol. i, p. 559; 1854.

PROFANE JOKES.

"WILL you take this woman to be your wedded wife?" "Yes," said the bridegroom; "what the devil d'you think I came here for?"

"How could Noah tell the depth of the water above the highest mountain while he was in the ark?" asked a workman of his Irish shopmate. "Why, couldn't he throw out a plum-line?" "Ah, but he wasn't allowed to open the window or the door." "But, bedad, couldn't he make a hole in the bottom of th' ark, and let it through?"

No wonder there is a sect called *Pig-culiar* People. *Pork-creatures*—Ham is supposed to be cursed and there's lots of devils in the swine.

At a Scripture examination the teacher happened to know what questions would be put to the boys in their respective

order. The question for the first boy was, "Who made you?" His teacher told him to say "God." The question to be put to the second boy was, "Who was the first man?" His answer was to be, "Adam." While the teacher was absent for a while, the first boy came over very ill and had to go home. The inspector soon after came up to the class, and, congratulating the lads on their appearance, said to the then first boy, "Who made you?" He quickly answered, "Adam." "No, no; God made you." "That's a lie, sir; the boy God made has gone home sick."

JOE MILLER records the story of a clergyman who, reading to his congregation a chapter of Genesis, found the last sentence in the page to be, "And the Lord gave unto Adam a wife, and she was." and, on turning over two leaves together, he continued in an audible voice, "pitched within and without." He had unhappily got into the description of Noah's ark.

A POPULAR clergyman in Philadelphia delivered a lecture on "Fools." The tickets to it read, "Lecture on fools—admit one." There was a very large attendance.

AMONG the passengers of a third-class carriage of an excursion train was a pious old lady, who most indignantly refused to partake of a glass of wine from a bottle which was being handed round by her fellow passengers, and she immediately commenced distributing pious temperance tracts. About half-an-hour after this the train entered a tunnel. Suddenly a piercing scream proceeded from the old lady, and, there being no light in the carriage, the utmost consternation ensued. Presently the train emerged into daylight, when it was discovered that the pious old lady, who "couldn't drink," had taken advantage of the darkness, and had a good "sip" from a bottle of methylated spirits, which she had brought with her in mistake for her bottle of gin.

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