

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

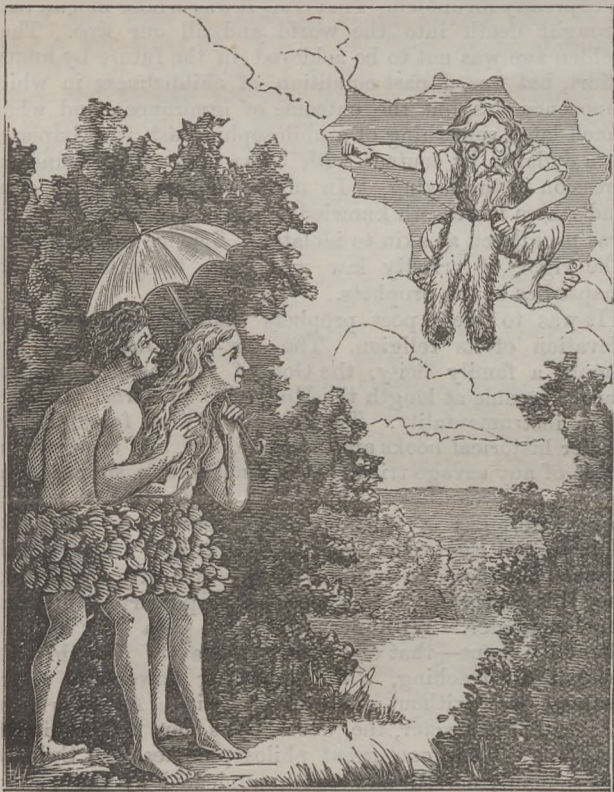
EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

“COMIC BIBLE” SKETCHES.—XXXVII.



THE FIRST TAILOR.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins.—GENESIS iii., 21.

THE GOSPEL OF FREETHOUGHT.

[Concluded from p. 258.]

Doubt is the beginning of wisdom. It means caution, independence, honesty and veracity. Faith means negligence, serfdom, insincerity and deception. The man who never doubts never thinks. He is like a straw in the wind or a waif on the sea. He is one of the helpless, docile, unquestioning millions, who keep the world in a state of stagnation, and serve as a fulcrum for the lever of despotism. The stupidity of the people, says Whitman, is always inviting the insolence of power.

Buckle has well said that scepticism is “the necessary antecedent of all progress.” Without it we should still be groping in the night of the Dark Ages. The very foundations of modern science and philosophy were laid on ground which was wrested from the Church, and every stone was cemented with the blood of martyrs. As the edifice arose the sharpshooters of faith attacked the builders at every point, and they still continue their old practice, although their missiles can hardly reach the towering heights where their enemies are now at work.

[No. 55.]

Astronomy was opposed by the Church because it unsettled old notions of the earth being the centre of the universe, and the sun, moon, and stars mere lights stuck in the solid firmament, and worked to and fro like sliding panels. Did not the Bible say that General Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and how could this have happened unless it moved round the earth? And was not the earth certainly flat, as millions of flats believed it to be? The Catholic Inquisition forced Galileo to recant, and Protestant Luther called Copernicus “an old fool.”

Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of God. It was put in the same class with sorcery and witchcraft, and punished in the same way. The early chemists were regarded as agents of the Devil, and their successors are still regarded as “uncanny” in the more ignorant parts of Christendom. Roger Bacon was persecuted by his brother monks; his testing fire was thought to have come from the pit, and the explosion of his gunpowder was the Devil vanishing in smoke and smell. Even at the end of last century, the clergy-led mob of Birmingham who wrecked Priestley’s house and destroyed his apparatus, no doubt felt that there was a close connexion between chemistry and infidelity.

Physiology and Medicine were opposed on similar grounds. We were all fearfully and wonderfully made, and the less the mystery was looked into the better. Disease was sent by God for his own wise ends, and to resist it was as bad as blasphemy. Every discovery and every reform was decried as impious. Men now living can remember how the champions of faith denounced the use of anaesthetics in painful labor as an interference with God’s curse on the daughters of Eve.

Geology was opposed because it discredited Moses, as though that famous old Jew had watched the deposit of every stratum of the earth’s crust. It was even said that fossils had been put underground by God to puzzle the wiseacres, and that the Devil had carried shells to the hill-tops for the purpose of deluding men to infidelity and perdition. Geologists were anathematised from the pulpits and railed at by tub-thumpers. They were obliged to feel their way and go slowly. Sir Charles Lyell had to keep back his strongest conclusions for at least a quarter of a century, and could not say all he thought until his head was whitened by old age and he looked into the face of Death.

Biology was opposed tooth and nail as the worst of all infidelity. It exposed Genesis and put Moses out of court. It destroyed all special creation, showed man’s kinship with other forms of life, reduced Adam and Eve to myths, and exploded the doctrine of the Fall. Darwin was for years treated as Antichrist, and Huxley as the great bast. All that is being changed, thanks to the sceptical spirit. Darwin’s corpse is buried in Westminster Abbey, but his ideas are undermining all the churches and crumbling them into dust.

The gospel of Freethought brands persecution as the worst crime against humanity. It stifles the spirit of progress and strangles its pioneers. It eliminates the brave, the adventurous and the aspiring, and leaves only the timid, the sluggish and the grovelling. It removes the lofty and spares the low. It levels all the hills of thought and makes an intellectual flatness. It drenches all the



paths of freedom with blood and tears, and makes earth the vestibule of hell.

Persecution is the right arm of priestcraft. The black militia of theology are the sworn foes of Freethought. They represent it as the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness in this world or the next. When they speak of the Holy Ghost they mean themselves. Freethought is a crime against *them*. It strips off the mystery that invests their craft, and shows them as they really are, a horde of bandits who levy black mail on honest industry, and preach a despot in heaven in order to maintain their own tyranny on earth.

The gospel of Freethought would destroy all priesthoods. Every man should be his own priest. If a professional soul-doctor gives you wrong advice and leads you to ruin, he will not be damned for you. He will see you so first. We must take all responsibility, and we should also take the power. Instead of putting our thinking out, as we put our washing, let us do it at home. No man can do another's thinking for him. What is thought in the originator is only acquiescence in the man who takes it at secondhand.

If we do our own thinking in religion we shall do it in everything else. We reject authority and act for ourselves. Spiritual and temporal power are brought under the same rule. They must justify themselves or go. The Freethinker is thus a politician and a social reformer. What a Christian *may* be he *must* be. Freethinkers are naturally Radicals. They are almost to a man on the side of justice, freedom and progress. The Tories know this, and hence they seek to suppress us by the violence of unjust law. They see that we are a growing danger to every kind of privilege, a menace to all the idle classes who live in luxury on the sweat and labor of others—the devouring drones who live on the working bees.

The gospel of Freethought teaches us to distinguish between the knowable and the unknowable. We cannot fathom the infinite "mystery of the universe" with our finite plummet, nor see aught behind the veil of death. Here is our appointed province :

"This world which is the world
Of all of us, and where in the end
We find our happiness or not at all."

Let us make the best of this world and take our chance of any other. If there is a heaven, we dare say it will hold all honest men. If it will not, those who go elsewhere will at least be in good company.

Our salvation is here and now. It is certain and not contingent. We need not die before we realise it. Ours is a gospel, and the only gospel, for this side of the grave. The promises of theology cannot be made good till after death ; ours are all redeemable in this life.

We ask men to acknowledge realities and dismiss fictions. When you have sifted all the learned sermons ever preached, you will find very little good grain. Theology deals with dreams and phantasies, and gives no guidance to practical men. The whole truth of life may be summed up in a few words. Happiness is the only good, suffering the only evil, and selfishness the only sin. And the whole duty of man may be expressed in one sentence, slightly altered from Voltaire—Learn what is true in order to do what is right. If a man can tell you anything about these matters, listen to him ; if not, turn a deaf ear, and let him preach to the wind.

The only noble things in this world are great hearts and great brains. There is no virtue in a starveling piety which turns all beauty into ugliness and shrivels up every natural affection. Let the heart beat high with courage and enterprise, and throb with warm passion. Let the brain be an active engine of thought, imagination and will. The gospel of sorrow has had its day, and the time has come for the gospel of gladness. Let us live out our lives to the full, radiating joy on all in our own circle, and diffusing happiness through the grander circle of humanity, until at last we retire from the banquet of life, as others have done before us, and sink in eternal repose.

G. W. FOOTE.

HISTORICAL RELIGION.—It is impossible for any scholar to have read, and studied, and reflected, without forming a strong impression of the entire uncertainty of history in general, and of the history of Christianity in particular.—*Arthur Hugh Clough*, "Remains," vol. i., p. 421 ; 1869.

OUR DEBT TO THE JEWS.

CHRISTIANITY, as Christian evidence writers unceasingly tell us, is an historical religion. It originated in certain events happening in a certain place at a certain time, and although the events, the place, and the time may not be so certain as evidencemongers would have us believe, one thing is certain, Christianity in its origin was an offshoot of Judaism. The despised and detested Jews gave their God to the Christians. It is true they put him to death in accordance with their God-given law (Deut. xiii.), but they were thus the unwitting means of procuring the world's salvation. To the lost sheep of the house, to whom alone Jesus declared himself to be sent, the Christian world owes the principal elements of its religion, it owes its God Jahveh and his son Jesus, and most of the dogmas taught in their names. But it would be difficult to state what else it owes. Art, science, philosophy, culture of all kinds, come from other quarters. The old Jews cherished a sublime indifference to human knowledge and inquiry of every kind. In their legend of the Fall, Paradise is depicted as a region of blissful ignorance, a garden wherein the fruit of the tree of knowledge is expressly forbidden. That fruit it was whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe. Their golden age was not to be achieved in the future by human effort, but was a past condition of childishness in which innocence was but the outcome of ignorance : and when, much later, something of a philosophic cast was imported into Judaism by contact with other nations, it found expression in the saying, "In much wisdom is much grief, and whose increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Art was prohibited as akin to idolatry. Science was unknown. The rigor of priestly law was only tempered by the rhapsodies of the prophets.

It was to these poet prophets that Judaism owed the elevation of its religion. The Jew-God Jahveh, at first simply a family deity, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, became at length the Holy One of Israel, through their instrumentality. The notions of God found in the earlier historical books are as coarse, low, and unworthy, as those of any savage tribe. It is a mistake to suppose that the world owes the conception of one God to the Jews. Long before any of the Jew books were in existence, the Chinese, the Egyptians, and the Hindus had independently reached the idea of a supreme deity. But with the Semitic race this conception took a more anthropomorphic and personal character. With Jesus the God idea took its most attractive shape—that of a father in heaven. But this, like most of his teaching, while appealing powerfully to the feelings, was without intellectual basis. As regards its intellectual character, the world owes next to nothing to the Jews. Their one great philosophic teacher, Spinoza, was solemnly cursed and excommunicated by the Jewish synagogue. To have the intellectual vigor to put aside the inspiration of the Jewish legends and traditions, was to be cut off from the race. Yet it is on the writings of this uncritical and intellectually untrustworthy nation that the fabric of modern religion has been reared, and around them has grown a Bibliolatry which more than anything else has stood as a barrier in the path of progress. This is but another way of saying that modern religion is unintellectual, and unable to meet the demands of rational criticism. The strength of Hebraism lay in a certain intensity of feeling, dominant until questioned by the intellect. To it questions of logic and the cross-examination of evidence were unknown. But modern civilisation demands greater use of the intellectual powers, and in proportion as the intelligence is brought into play, will the Jewish religion, and the Christianity which is founded upon it, be questioned and discarded.

J. M. WHEELER.

HOW TO SHUN PERSECUTION.

THERE are several ways of shunning persecution, which may be enumerated for the benefit of all who care to resort to them.

1. You can shun persecution by being an idiot to-day, though the Church has killed many such as witches, or as wizards, in former times.

2. By swallowing a whole creed without making a wry face, and never going out of the company of those who have done the same. Any creed will do, and one is just as

good as another for this purpose; but if you intend to travel, take a theological emetic before starting; that will relieve you of your former creed, and prepare you for gulping another. When you get amongst strangers inquire carefully as to what creed is the strongest and the most fashionable there. Take without hesitation, as Paul bids, "whatsoever is set before thee, asking no question for conscience sake." That is, throw conscience to the dogs, and devour any theological concoction or hash that happens to be the fashionable dish. Never mind the taste, never mind the ingredients, don't inquire for the cook (he may be the Devil, or even an archbishop): eat it as if you never met with anything half so good; but never mention it afterwards. Thus do the world around, and you may spend your life alternately in the midst of all religions, and never suffer a moment's persecution or suspicion. In a word, when in Rome, do as Rome does.

3. In England you have a wide choice. There are something like 150 religious sects to choose from; and a man must be hard to please if none of them will suit him. Though you must be careful not to embrace them all at once. They, like the Jewish-Christian God, are awfully jealous, and none of them can endure a rival. See to it that you are fairly off with an old flame before allowing yourself to be fascinated by a new. You may take your choice, and though you may possibly suffer a twinge or two of persecution when the sects have no special business on hand, just now you are absolutely safe, for the churches, with Hero Tyler to lead them, have too much to do trying to put us down to trouble themselves much about internal heresy. When they have settled with us no doubt they will organise a heresy-hunt at home amongst themselves, for they cannot do without blood—either celestial lamb or terrestrial heretic must bleed for them. Your best plan is to persecute us in the meantime, if you are not sure of your Christian neighbors; that will gain you credit for piety and zeal, and by the time Freethinkers are all disposed of you will be "safe in the arms of Jesus."

4. You need not be very scrupulous if you are orthodox. A good creed, and plenty of faith or pretence to it, will atone for any sin or crime you may please to commit—your neighbors will never persecute a man whose opinions are right, that is, according to the Catechism. God never damns respectable scoundrels, and why should society, how can society, which always takes its cue from God, persecute a man "after his own heart?" (Pardon, my reader. I am a bit mixed here. I really forget whether God takes his cue from society, or society from him. That, I think, on second thoughts, is an unsettled point in theology. Wont our bishops clear it up for us?) "Only believe and you shall be saved," no matter what you do. You may swindle, forge, murder, slander your neighbors (if they are of different creeds from your own); you may break all laws. "human and divine," as the pulpits phrase it—you may be even an Abraham, a Jacob, a Judah, a Joshua, a David, a Solomon—society never persecutes people of those sorts. Run the length of your tether! you have heaven's own *carte blanche*. You may be sent to prison; but even there shall the servant of the Lord, the chaplain, find and comfort you! You may go to the gallows—society, that is, may find it convenient to compel you to emigrate, but they will give you a first-class Pullman ticket right through to Paradise. And when you get there Peter will never refuse you an entrance, even a "more abundant" one, into glory. Never stop, my friend, to strip off the gaol dress; go, "just as you are," the rope still round your neck! The angels will turn out *en masse*, Salvation Army fashion, to welcome you, for they think just ninety-nine times as much of a returning scamp, like you, sir, as they do of a decent fellow. You, therefore, are safe both in this world and the next.

Poverty and heresy are the only things true Christians hate. These they never forgive. Avoid these, my dear reader, and you will never suffer persecution. Avoid these, and nothing else can unfit you for heaven. There was a time, it is true, when only the poor could get into the kingdom of heaven. But that is long ago; only the rich now are welcome, and no others can enter except recommended by a rich neighbor or patron.

Dost thou wish to avoid persecution? Shun honesty as a plague, and never tell a truth unless it is a truth that is just then in fashion. Use all the cunning you can muster; never contradict those in power; never cross the leaders of fashion; get round the blind side of some bishop;

take holy orders, subscribe a creed (belief is not necessary), cultivate the acquaintance and study the weaknesses of a good patron; or go into business and get rich; then you can go into Parliament, and figure there as an enemy of free-thought and heresy. But in a state of things such as the present, where religion is nine-tenths unblushing pretence, and hypocrisy and hollow *finesse* are in power, to be honest and independent is to be scouted as a nuisance, to be branded with the worst of epithets, and be subjected to every atrocity a brutal religion can inflict upon you.

Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. If the Lord be God, follow him, as the hypocrites do. If you prefer the consciousness of honesty and freedom, be men and women, and let the hypocrites do their worst! JOS. SYMES.

THE LATEST DECALOGUE.

Thou shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency:
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse
Thine enemy is none the worse:
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:
Honor thy parents; that is, all
From whom advancement may befall:
Thou shalt not kill; but needs't not strive
Officiously to keep alive:
Do not adultery commit;
Advantage really comes of it:
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat:
Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly:
Thou shalt not covet; but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

(Poems and Prose Remains.)

ACID DROPS.

A JOKE by Professor Huxley is going the rounds just now. He was asked by a young friend of a philosophical turn, what was the best authority to consult on the views held by "orthodox metaphysicians." His answer was, "Read McCosh." Rather a cruel hit at "the saintly Principal of Princeton, U.S.," as an American admirer of the Rev. Dr. McCosh, that wordy and worthy Scotsman, styles him.

If any cynic wants an opportunity of a quiet smile at the cupidity and credulity of mankind, he should read the "Requests for Prayer" which appear every week in the *Christian*. The following, taken from the last number, are by no means extraordinary instances:—"An invalid, ordered away from home, asks the Lord's help to make the way clear and give him a home there." He does't say where.—"That the Lord will be pleased to grant some remunerative post where I may be enabled to glorify his name."—"That God may bless an effort to relieve a distressed family."—"Urgent prayer is asked by a mother for her husband and other members of her family living without God."

THE *Christian Globe* is evidently trying to lead its readers to Atheism. It says: "A physician whose remedies took one hundred years to operate would not get a large practice anywhere on this planet, and that is all that nature has to offer her disciples. The darkness over the face of nature is not the darkness of a cloudy day, it is not even the darkness of a starry night—it is the darkness of death and despair, of night without a star. Nature is the infidel's Bible, and a terrible Bible it is. There is not a chapter in it all which you could entitle 'Mercy.'" What then must be the author of this Bible?

THESE gentlemen who follow Butler in palliating the cruelty of the Bible God by references to the cruelties of nature, overshoot the mark a little, and, instead of defending the artificial revelation of their book, cast doubt on the revelation of nature. What should we think of a human author who made a machine which could not be understood except by a book written to explain it. If, upon examining the book, we found that instead of clearing up the difficulties of the machine it had additional ones of its own, it would be none the more acceptable because some ingenious divine undertook to show that on account of both book and machine being full of perplexities, they must both be by the same author.

THE *Methodist* has an article on "Christian Evidences for the Times." It admits that Paley and Butler are played out. We will give its own words. After some eulogy it says, "But they do not meet, nor indeed were they intended to meet, the positions of modern unbelief." The present age wants a direct and practical argument. This may be found, thinks the *Methodist* in the character of Christ. That to its mind is the most effective weapon in the whole armory of Christian defence.

THE *Methodist* does not say whether it alludes to the character of Christ as depicted by John, or to the very different person portrayed by the other evangelists. The writer does not say whether he alludes to the mild character inculcating love for enemies, or the fierce character denouncing opponents, asking enemies to be slain, and condemning unbelievers to everlasting torments. Nor does he show what is practical and direct in the character of Christ or how one who went about preaching against the things of this world can be an example to a practical age, or an unmarried wanderer an example to husbands and citizens. It would be more to the point if Christians could show us a single follower who really acts as an imitator of his divine example.

At a little village in South Wales, last Sunday, the wine ran short at communion. The man, who "got left," was an eleventh-cousin of the Pote's: and it wasn't thought good enough to have a fresh start for him, so he was simply told to poll earlier next time. "I don't care so much about the liquor," said he, sadly, on his way home, "but I think my soul is of as much account as anybody's." And he wants to know whether he ought to proceed for damages against the clerk, or the churchwardens, or the parson, or the nobleman in whose gift the living is, for the negligence by which he was prevented from carrying out his religious duty.—*Sporting Times*.

"A DISSATISFIED MEMBER" of the Salvation Army has written to the *Leamington Times* to state that a Miss Harvey had bequeathed £3700 to General Booth to build a hall for the Army there, and that to his own knowledge the money has been paid over to Mr. Booth, who still compels his captain to make collections every night in the week and at all the services on Sunday for money to carry on the work, without taking any steps whatever towards purchasing a hall. General Booth is evidently doing a tidy business. He goes in for having cash down as well as a *post obit* in the sweet by-and-bye.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* falls foul of the General because in his little book he calls the Bible a dead book placed instead of the living active positive agency of God. It says: "Direct revelation is sure to lead to the wildest fanaticism, if not to the support of such infamous deeds as that committed by the notorious Guiteau. Did he not claim a direct revelation authorising him to assassinate President Garfield?" And, we ask, was not Abraham commanded to sacrifice Isaac, Moses to slaughter the Canaanites, and Samuel to hew King Agag to pieces, all by direct revelation?

So numerous are the methods of priestly extortion that some of our readers may be unaware that in certain districts the black-coated sky-pilots, who always wish to have a finger in every man's pie, levy what are called extraordinary tithes. In Kent, for instance, these tithes are placed on all hops, fruit, and market-garden produce. Such a tax is of course a great drawback on growers in their contest with foreign and other competition.

PUBLIC attention has recently been called to the extraordinary tithes by a meeting held at Crockenhill, Kent, to protest against this imposition. The occasion was the sale, under duress, of a cow, to satisfy the claim of the Rev. A. Welch (or Welcher), vicar of St. Mary's Cray, for £4 ls. 8d. The cow was purchased for £16 by Mr. A. Bath, of Halstead, Sevenoaks, who has himself made a practical protest against this clerical extortion, and who, at the meeting held after the sale, moved a resolution denouncing the continuance of this tax, seeing that the clergy no longer maintain the churches and provide for the poor, for which purposes the extraordinary tithes were originally instituted. One of the speakers hit the nail on the head when he said that the remedy needed for their grievances was the disestablishment and disendowment of the State Church. This will come all in good time, and men like the Rev. A. Welch are hastening the day.

PERSECUTE Freethinkers, and you may be made a churchwarden, or even direct public companies and sit in Parliament, but persecute Christians, and it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you. The *Christian Herald* this week reports "The End of Three Persecutors." Mr. Harris, of Luton, speaking at his Village Mission Conference lately, said: "With the gipsy brothers Smith, we were holding a meeting near a public-house; the landlord and his wife had employed a man to blow a bugle to drown our voices, but the singing was too much for them. In three months that man died, in six months the wife, and before the year's end the landlord—all suddenly—Christless, and without hope."

THE *Christian Herald* has omitted a few details from this veracious account, which we are enabled to supply. Within three hours the bugle was choked with its own blasphemy. In six hours it was seized with convulsive spasms, and before the day was out it burst asunder in an attempt to tootle "Hold the Fort"—all suddenly, Christless, and without hope.

OUR readers will be aware that the editor of the *Christian Herald* is that theological mountebank, the Rev. M. Baxter, who wrote a book to prove that Louis Napoleon was the destined monarch of the world. In the current number of his journal, August 23rd, he now says, "We hold most positively from Scripture prophecy that a *Napoleon Bonaparte* (probably Prince Jerome Napoleon) will soon arise, as Daniel's little Horn, or Monarch, ruling over Syria, and making a seven year's covenant with the Jews (probably about 1886), seven years before the end of this dispensation (Daniel vii. 24; ix. 27). There may, however, be another Napoleon (possibly Prince Victor Napoleon), soon rise to be ruler of France—soon, quite independently of the Syrian Napoleon, who is eventually to become the Antichrist." So if one Napoleon won't fit in with prophecy, it may serve for another. You may take your choice if you only pay your money. Pass round the plate!

WHAT a disturbing influence is religion! The recent trouble at Mouzeaux-les-Mines is now found to have resulted from the managers of the works thrusting their Catholicism on the workmen, and putting up crosses and Virgins all over the Company's property, to the intense disgust of the honest miners who kicked up a shindy.

A CHRISTIAN contemporary has a heading of "Bible Puzzles." The subject is inexhaustible.

You must always suit your style to your audience. In England hell is described as hot; out in Africa the natives must be told it is full of ice. In America monarchy is out of fashion, and so Dr. Malford calls his new book "The Republic of God."

MANY persons have the mistaken impression that Northampton is a very hot-bed of infidelity. Cardinal Manning is evidently one of these. He has opened a new Catholic Church there and become wonderfully tolerant towards Protestants in view of the common danger from the common enemy. He thanked God that England was still a Christian country, though that could not be said of France. He was ready to admit as Christians all who accept the Apostles' creed, which embodies the belief in the Holy Catholic Church. He left the world a little in doubt as to whether those subscribing to this creed, but not members of his Church, would be saved by their faith, or if, as the Church has hitherto defined it, one needs to be "invincibly ignorant" in order to be saved outside the Church.

MR. MOODY has been requested to go out to India and aid in converting that heathen country. To substitute the Athanasian Creed for the ancient Hindu manuals of logic will, it is thought, greatly advance civilisation. The native priests are dreadfully alarmed at the prospect, and are seeking for new occupations. No priests in the world can stand against the Yankees. We would, however, give them a grain of comfort. We have little faith in Moody's going to India. The country is now too poor. There are many gold mines to be worked nearer home.

Two more Salvationists sent to gaol for thieving last week. One of them, at Hanley, was arrested while marching in procession. General Booth's grabbing propensities seem pretty common in the Army.

Six hundred pilgrims have gone off to Lourdes for the benefit of their health, and plenty of miracles will soon be recorded. When the farce is over the priestly leaders will repair to some fashionable watering-place for the benefit of their health.

TALMAGE says that Byron's mother "blasted him for time and eternity." This looks remarkably like a violation of the commandment "Swear not at all." Perhaps Talmage would say he only swears at some.

WHEN Talmage says that Byron was a bad man he is simply lying. The great poet did more generous deeds than all the Talmages that ever lived, and he gave his life for a grand cause, which no Talmage would ever dream of doing. The mountebank of the Brooklyn Jabbernaacle throwing mud at Byron is like a dirty little boy squirting at the sun.

WE picked up a report of one of Dr. Sexton's sermons with the intention of criticising it, but we fell asleep over the second paragraph, and we have tried to read it three times with the same result. We give it up.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the Citizen Club, Charles Street, West Hartlepool, on Saturday night, August 26th, at 8 o'clock: "Hell Fire and Salvation by Faith." On Sunday (the 27th), at 11, "Christianity Played Out;" at 3, "The Gospel of Freethought;" at 7, "Blasphemy and Blasphemers."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

September 3rd, morning, Midland Arches; evening, Claremont Hall, London; 5th, Walworth; 10th, Hall of Science, London; 17th, Hall of Science, London; 24th, Nottingham.

October 1st, Claremont Hall, London; 5th, Hall of Science, London; 8th, Leeds; 12th, Hall of Science; 15th, Halifax; 19th, Hall of Science; 22nd, Manchester; 26th, Hall of Science; 29th, Portsmouth.

November 5th, Heckmondwike; 12, Liverpool; 19th, Hall of Science, London; 26th, Claremont Hall, London.

December 3rd, Huddersfield; 17th, Grimsby.

CORRESPONDENTS.

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RECEIVED WITH THANKS:—L. T. Smith, J. B., Wittwon.

A. & G. BATH.—Your invitation came too late. We wish you all success in your crusade.

B. WRIGHT.—Too funny for us. Try the *Shield of Faith*.

L. J. SMITH.—The report of Colonel Ingersoll's losses in silver-mining speculations has gone the round of American papers.

CHAS. H. CHEENE.—We were pleased to read the account of your encounter with the parson, but are too pressed with matter to give it publication.

F. J. TAYLOR, "altho' not a Christian," generously offers "to defend the Christian faith," and modestly proposes to conduct the defence through the columns of the *Freethinker*, which may be expected to greatly increase the circulation of our paper. This proffer is the more remarkable as F. J. T. says, "My object is not to convince, but merely to disclose what tens of thousands keep concealed—viz., Biblical Truth" and this he proposes to do "in a quiet respectable manner, without being annoyed with the shouts and uproar of either party's admirers." It is painful to think that so valiant and, doubtless, so worthy a champion of a cause he does not believe in, must rest satisfied with our complying with his request to "let our God-denying readers know that there is at least one inhabitant of the earth still left who will contend with their views."

R. NICHOLS thinks that had the late Earl of Beaconsfield been alive, Mr. Bradlaugh would long ere this have had his seat in Parliament. Of all kinds of prophecy, retrospective might-have-beens are the most gratuitous.

W. YEO WELLINGTON.—The enclosed bill is very ancient and well known.

A. FREETHINKER.—It is impossible that any two people can have the same view of Jesus. His biography is so badly done that he takes all sorts of colors, like a chameleon.

FREETHINKER.—It came safely to hand, and we thank you. See our cartoon next week.

J. SHILCOCK.—We hope your wish will be realised that we shall achieve a "triumphant success."

R. GASTON asks us to announce that "R. Foster, husband of the late Mrs. Foster, long associated with the Hall of Science and the Freethought party, will take a benefit at the Haggerston Workmen's Club on August 29th, to defray the expenses connected with the long illness and funeral of his wife." Mr. Foote has promised to attend.

T. D. JAMES.—All business communications as to the supply of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to our publisher. We regret that we cannot find room for the verse. Our space is too limited.

J. W. will give a shilling each for Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5 of *Freethinker*, Vol. II.

L. E. PRIESTLEY.—Thanks for the cuttings and your good wishes. Mr. Forder is not the agent for our Defence Fund. Application for collecting-sheets should be made to us direct. We dare say you will find an opportunity some day of conversing with Mr. Foote, but if you flatter him to his face as you do in your letter, he will have to wear a mask to hide his blushes.

G. BARNES.—The Hartlepool Freethinkers are "real bricks."

R. BRUCE.—Cuttings are always welcome. Please send all orders for literature to our publisher. Our *Freethinker* Tracts have had an enormous sale.

J. HENSON.—We never meant to discontinue our Comic Sketches if it was at all possible to get them printed.

E. HATFIELD.—Mr. Foote cannot undertake to send literature; that is the publisher's work.

We shall publish Next Week a Full-page Cartoon, entitled "Going to Glory" Our readers should give orders to their Newsagents as early as possible to secure a supply. We expect a great demand as the Cartoon is novel and striking.

OUR INDICTMENT.

WE regret that, owing to lack of space, we are obliged to defer our notice of the Indictment until next week. Those who have kept a file of the *Freethinker* will be able to follow all our notes, and we shall make the case as plain as we can to those who have not.

SUGAR PLUMS.

KARL BLIND will contribute a paper on "The Radical and Revolutionary Parties in Europe" to the September number of the *Contemporary Review*.

THAT excessively low, not to say grovelling, Church paper, the *Rock*, finds itself in a strait betwixt High Church on the one hand and Broad Church on the other. It complains that as you enter a church you know not whether you are going to listen to infidelity in disguise or to witness the mass in masquerade.

THE London Cabdrivers are up and stirring. We have received a prospectus of the Hyde Park Cab Company, Limited, according to which £10,000 are to be raised "to acquire and let on hire good cabs and horses at a reasonable rate, and to improve the moral and social condition of cabdrivers and cab-yard employes." The Company's offices are at 15 Poland Street, W. The shares are £2 each, and one thousand have been specially reserved for cabdrivers.

RICHARD COBDEN said that the English people had been robbed and bamboozled by their aristocracy for centuries. With a view to proving this, Mr. G. Standing will begin in the September number of the *Republican*, "The People's History of the English Aristocracy," from the days of William the Conqueror down to swaggering Salisbury.

A WAG of a Freethinker who died down West the other day desired that two white-chokered gentlemen might be fetched to his bedside, in order that he might die like Jesus Christ—between two thieves.

A WELL-KNOWN North London Freethinker is in a consumptive state, and may not live long. His family are Catholics, and although he has worked hard to keep them, they will not let him rest in his weakness. He had to threaten to call in a policeman a few days ago to turn out an impudent priest who was brought in to pray for him. Fortunately he has made two members of the Finsbury Branch his executors, and they will see that he is not buried and lied over by the Church if he dies.

THE Convention of American Freethinkers, to be held in Watkin's Glen, Seneca Lake, promises to be a great success. Most of the leaders of Freethought in America have engaged to be present.

THE Rev. Augustus Blauvelt, who some time ago was suspended from the Dutch Reformed Church for heresy, has just published a volume, entitled "The Present Religious Crisis," wherein he boldly attacks every form of Supernaturalism and the ecclesiastical authority founded thereon.

THE CHILDREN'S EXCURSION.

"WHAT was Sunday made for?" asked a clergyman, catechising an infant class. "To go on an excursion, sir," responded a young hopeful. This was evidently the opinion of the infant Freethinkers, who, to the number of nearly 250, assembled in the Hall of Science last Sunday morning, en route for the Robin Hood at Loughton, Epping Forest.

In addition to the vans for the children there were six large brakes, whereon the words "National Secular Society" were conspicuously displayed, for the adults, and fully as many private traps accompanied the excursion. An accomplished bicyclist gave his services in communication between van and rear. The procession was of considerable length and, being headed by a brake containing a brass band and the committee,

excited a great deal of attention and comment in the crowded quarters of London through which it passed. Such a cavalcade was by no means an every-day sight on week days, and altogether a novelty on Sunday.

An amusing incident occurred on passing Dalston Lane. A preacher was located here with one solitary little boy (who looked as though he would like to join the excursion) for his audience. With violent gesticulations he held aloft his Bible and brandished his umbrella, denouncing Sunday excursionists as taking the road to hell. Doubtless he thought it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those who think that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

The weather, which, together with the vehicular arrangements, was specially contracted for by Mr. Hilditch, was all that could be desired, so that the Sadducees of the company marvelled exceedingly, saying, "What manner of man is this that even the winds and weather obey him?"

The drive through the Forest was charming. Arrived at the Robin Hood, the children partook of a hearty meal of Watling's best pies, with scones, lemonade, rasperryade, &c., *ad lib.* Donkey-riding, dances, and other sports followed. Tea was also provided, and after many games and some rambling through the forest, all drove home, merry as marriage bells, and thoroughly delighted with the days' excursion.

One little annoyance occurred on reaching Clapton. An officious mounted policeman, N 60, objected to the band playing the stirring strains of the Marseillaise. This occasioned some stoppage, and remonstrance at an interference which is never offered to the hubbub of the Salvationists. Upon starting afresh the band showed their determination by playing again triumphantly, and the whole party, on arriving at the Hall of Science, were received by a large gathering of friends with cheers and colored fires.

The children's excursion not only gave a days unalloyed pleasure to the youngsters, many of whom but rarely get a trip into the country, but it formed a most effective demonstration against Sabbatarianism and an advertisement of the Freethought movement. Such outings must be repeated, and year by year they will grow into a great Children's Sunday Festival.

The treasurer acknowledges further subscriptions: E. Holt, 5s. Per A. Langley, 6s. 1d.; — H. Twyman, 1s.; M. D., 3s.; W. H., 2s. 6d.; T. Goodall, 2s.

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A WEALTHY clergyman in Brooklyn recently gave a dinner, with Scriptural bill of fare, pretty waiter girls in Greek and Roman costumes, butler in Joseph's coat of many colors, a "mish-mish," Hebrew for hash, of rice and apricots, and sherbet of attar of roses, orange juice and spices. If he had only had Herodias come in and dance, and John the Baptist's head brought in on a salver, the affair would have been "quite recherchy."

CHRISTIAN CAROLS.

[*His father.*]

Oh! he was a pious carpenter, his "nomen" it was Joe,
And he used to work in Palestine a goodish time ago,
And he had a son who soon began to travel round the coast,
A boy too good for sawing wood and full of Holy Ghost.

[*His precocity.*]

Now Jess, or little Jesus—you can call him which you choose,
Used to treat the learned doctors to his juvenile abuse,
From a cheeky little beggar he became a sturdy knave,
And he swore it was his mission all Humanity to save.

[*He getteth a girl.*]

So he found a pal in Mary, who is called the Magdalene,
And a pretty pair no doubt they were, so holy and serene;
But Jess, although a clever cuss, was very poor I find,
For though they say he raised the dead, he couldn't raise the wind.

[*His artfulness.*]

One day the Devil grabbed him and he placed him on a hill,
And Satan tried to tempt him there to start a "private still,"
Or something that would place him in the clutches of the law,
But J. was one too many, as the Devil quickly saw.

[*He becometh profane.*]

Another time, when weary and in hunger, he espied
A fig-tree in the distance, and towards it quickly hied,
But the figs were out of season, it was barren as could be;
So gentle Jesus muttered something naughty with a D.

[*He performeth legerdemain.*]

Oh! he thought it mere "diversion" turning water into wine,
And the mystic words he uttered tore the devils out of swine;
But Beelzebub contrived a way his charity to baulk,
For as the devils left the swine their owner lost his pork.

[*He experienceth ingratitude.*]

Another time they found him he was waltzing on the sea,
A most astounding, marvellous performance you'll agree;
But the very Jews, alas! who saw the way he did behave,
Were the ones who stigmatised him as a scoundrel and a knave.

[*He falleth a victim to the unrighteous.*]

Till at length they all determined in a most unrighteous way,
That Jesus was a blasphemer, and so would have to pay.
So they secretly concocted quite an artful little plan
By which they might their victim unsuspectingly trepan.

[*He payeth the universal debt.*]

It succeeded; and they led him unto Pilate, when they swore
He was guilty of rebellion, arson, bigamy, and more.
Then the Romans crucified him on the mount with other two,
So the Hebrews got their vengeance and the "Devil got his Jew."

THE CHRISTIAN DEVIL.—The notion of an Arch-enemy of God and man, a fallen angel, to whom power was permitted at certain times for an all-wise purpose by the Great Ruler of the universe, was as foreign to the heathendom of our ancestors as his name was outlandish and strange to their tongue. This notion Christianity brought with it from the East; and though it is a plant which has struck deep roots, grown distorted and awry, and borne a bitter crop of superstition, it required all the authority of the Church to prepare the soil for its reception.—*Sir G. Dasent*, "Popular Tales from the Norse," Introduction, p. xeviii.

THE JESUS OF JOHN.—It will be thought cruel and violent when we determinedly reject the whole of this extensive enrichment of the life of Jesus by the Johannine account. This enrichment is no history but the destruction of history. These journeys, these deeds and miracles, these addresses, these murderous attacks, are unhistorical.—*Dr. Carl Theodor Keim*, "Jesus of Nazara," translated by A. Ransom, vol. v., p. 76; 1881.

THE RESURRECTION.—But looking at it historically, as an outward event, the resurrection of Jesus had not the very slightest foundation. Rarely has an incredible fact been worse attested, or one so ill-attested been more incredible in itself. In my "Life of Jesus" I have devoted a full investigation to this subject, which I will not repeat here. But the result I consider it my duty as well as my right to express here without any reserve. Taken historically—*i.e.*, comparing the immense effect of this belief with its absolute baselessness, the story of the resurrection of Jesus can only be called a world-wide deception.—*David Friedrich Strauss*, "The Old Faith and the New," sect. 26, pp. 82-3; 1873.

CORRESPONDENCE.

BOOTH AT THE GRECIAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Permit me to take this opportunity of giving you a short description of the doings of the Salvation Army at what they were pleased to describe as the taking of the "Eagle" on Saturday morning last, all of which I can vouch to be perfectly true, being myself an eye witness.

At about twenty minutes to six a.m. I marched off from Finsbury Square with the Army (save the mark!) *en route* for the "Eagle." Although "respectably dressed," and with look demure, I saw there was little or no chance of getting inside, owing to two or three stalwart members of the Army being at the gates, and roughly thrusting back all those who did not belong to the faithful. Thanks to the kindness of a friend whose stables were at the back, I obtained admittance "over the garden wall." I then perched myself on the nearest vacant seat, anxiously awaiting events. The first proposition made by some fierce-looking, dirty-face man from the late orchestra, was that the Army should fire three volleys, which they did at the top of their voices, "Amen. Amen. Amen." I must say the harmony was delightful. They next sang some words to which I could not catch (no hymn books being about) to a well-known song tune, accompanied by a tolerably good brass band, spoilt by the religious fervor of the Hallelujah lasses with their tambourines and one or two stray fiddles, concertinas, and banjos. After each verse had been given out by "General" Booth's son, an "officer" struck up a lively strain on a silver cornet, amidst cries of "Hallelujah!" and "Amen!" Enjoying this much as a new style of thing, I suddenly felt a pull at my sleeve. I instantly clutched my watch-chain, having once been robbed, and remembering the movements of the craft. However, in this I was mistaken. Upon turning round I perceived rather a good-looking woman, who asked me if I was one of Christ's, and whether I was sure I was saved. I firmly but most respectfully denied acquaintance with the afore-mentioned party, and merely requested not to be interrupted, as I had come only as a spectator, upon which she beckoned to four or five raw-boned, country-looking fellows, who, with hearty good will, showered on me volley after volley of the most fearful anathemas. But alas! they fell on hardened ears. At last I shifted from that spot, and watched the movements of some poor ignorant girl on her knees, wriggling like a worm that had been trod upon. I really thought she *was* ill—a profane man next to me said she had labor pains—that was not so, for in another moment she was skipping up and down, playing with vigor a tambourine and shouting "Hallelujah!" Then came the experience business; those who had been evil should relate some past adventures before they were saved, the men to have five minutes and the women ten. The latter were very wicked—space would now allow me to repeat the stories—suffice it to say I was surprised to find myself in such *very* questionable society.

Then the collection! A real £5 note handed up, amidst volley firing and "Amen." Then a cheque, which was soon discovered to be one that had been presented and passed through the bank, and was, as I afterwards learnt, a portion of the contents of a gentleman's pocket which had been picked in the crowd. Not getting enough in this way the "commander of the army" descended from his place on the orchestra, and taking the big drum, put it in the middle of the dancing platform, and challenged the "elect" to fire away with halfpence, silver, or what not, which they did in right good earnest. This game lasted for nearly half an hour, during which time the band played and the Army sang, "Fire Away, Fire Away." Then the proceedings broke up. It would take me volumes to describe everything I saw that morning at the Grecian. I can only say I was never more disgusted in the whole course of my life. May I ask you what is this? Is it religion? is it madness? is it blasphemy? or is it hypocrisy? I can only heartily endorse the words of the Pharisee, and say, "Thank God I am not as other men are." Yours, &c.,

J. C. MARRIOTT.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR A REVISED VERSION.

NERVOUS is the man who taketh his first marriage vow, but at his thousandth he waxes cooler.—*Ecclesiastes*.

Behold I send my most valiant men to the front, wherefore let Beersheeba's husband have a show.—*David*.

And Moses knew that the land which had been promised to Abraham's children was a goodly land, and if the thing came off he could place a million talents of Egyptian money at seventy-five per cent.—*Exodus*.

And when Jonah had satisfied himself that the whale contained many vessels of oil, he tarried till he was opposite to Jaffa, and crawled straightway into the throat of the leviathan and choked him. Then he lifted up his voice and cried aloud, "Enough—let thy servant get out, and take advantage of the market." And it was so.—*Jonah*.

And she clutched his garment, but Joseph said, "Let go, I pray thee." And he cried mightily to heaven with one eye,

and watched old Potiphar out of sight with the other. And he sat him down, still winking, and did write the account himself lest the ungodly who come after should mock.—*Exodus*.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

THE SPEAKING ASS.—Supposing the 22nd chapter of the fourth book of Moses were really written by Moses, or by Balaam himself; supposing even that we had been present when he had just dismounted from his ass, and told the story in all its freshness of the ass having spoken to him in human words, and had been well known to us as an honest man; all this would do no good, but we should tell him downright that he is trifling, that he must have dreamt it, even if we did not lose our opinion of his honesty and accuse him of absolute falsehood. In our minds we should balance the two probabilities, considering which was the greater, that a witness apparently the most credible should nevertheless have deceived us, or that an event should have happened contradicting all previous experience.—*D. F. Strauss*, "A New Life of Jesus," vol. i., p. 199; 1865.

THE true and honest method to pursue is directly the opposite of that which the Churches have striven to enforce; it is not to inculcate incredulity, to stifle doubt, to foster prejudice, in order that the beliefs, which are many, continue to be. That method we know to be false. It is to seek truth and pursue it, at whatever cost, whether it brings us sorrow or joy, peace or tribulation. Doubt, be it never so disquieting, must go before inquiry, and inquiry before the discovery of new truth. Scepticism is guilt in the eyes only of those who fear truth, since it is the essential prerequisite of it. It is impossible to foresee what fate the future has in store for the race of man on earth; one would fain hope a more peaceful and happy career than that which he has had in the past, since to look back through his history from the beginning unto now is to look back through succeeding chapters of wars, treachery, tortures, cruelties and atrocities of all sorts and degrees by which "man's inhumanity to man" has "made countless thousands mourn;" a spectacle of horrors so appalling that, could we compass it in imagination, it might well warrant the belief, if matters ended now, of a malevolent, not a benevolent, scheme of creation.—*Dr. H. Maudsley*, Sunday Lecture on "Common Sources of Error in Seeing and Believing."

PROFANE JOKES.

ONE of the Blue Ribbon Army was preaching the benefit of always drinking water, when a Yankee came forward and stated: "I have examined the whole of your Gospel and find that though Jesus turned eighteen firkins of water into wine for guests well drunk, there was only one party in the Gospel who ever asked for water and really wanted it, and he was in hell."

CLERGYMAN (to lady): "Wilt thou take this noble mansion, carriages, jewels, self-wheeling bath-chair, flannels, pillows, and all appliances for the gout, to be thy wedded husband?" "I will." Clergyman (to gentleman): "Wilt thou take this bale of cotton, Muscovite chignon, Grecian bend, and high-heeled shoes to be thy wedded wife?" "I will."

A BLACK PUDDING.—A country woman, who was very anxious to hear a certain clergyman preach, at some distance from her place of residence, put a black pudding into her bosom, to serve as a refreshment. The clergyman happening to preach on our darling sins, used the expression so often, "Pull them out of your bosom," that the woman, in a pet, pulled out the pudding and threw it at him, saying, "There, tak' it; what need for making a' this noise about a bit of black puddin'?"

THE QUAKER AND THE CURATE.—After the ceremony of marriage, the curate demanded five shillings as his due. "How dost thou prove from Scripture," said the Quaker, "that thou oughtest to have from me such a share of earthly mammon?" "Why," replied the curate, "I take it for granted that the person you have just been married to is a woman of good character; and Solomon, in his Proverbs, observes that a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband." The Quaker paid the money.

CHILD: "Mother, what does God have for dinner?" Mother: "Oh, my dear, God don't have any dinner." Child (with a recollection of some of his own experience): "Don't he have any dinner? Well, then, I hope they give him an egg with his tea."

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