

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY. THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



THE GOD OF BATTLES.

“Teach us to see that Thy hand hath done it; that Thou wast in the midst of the camp to deliver and to give up our enemies before us.”—*Archbishop Thomson's Thanksgiving Prayer.*

[No. 65.]



RELIGION AND PROGRESS.

THE Archbishop of York is peculiarly qualified to speak on religion and progress. His form of thanksgiving to the God of Battles for our "victory" in Egypt marks him as a man of extraordinary intellect and character, such as common people may admire without hoping to emulate; while his position, in Archbishop Tait's necessitated absence from the scene, makes him the active head of the English Church. Let us listen to the great man.

Archbishop Thomson recently addressed "a working-men's meeting" in the Drill Hall, Sheffield. It was densely crowded by six or seven thousand people, and this fact was cited by the Archbishop as a proof that the working classes of England had not yet lost interest in the Christian faith. But we should very much like to know how it was ascertained that all, or even the major portion, of the vast audience were working-men. It is easy enough to give any meeting a name. We often hear of a Conservative Working-men's banquet, with tickets at something like a guinea each, a duke at the top of the table and a row of lords down each side. And our experience leads us to believe that nearly all religious meetings of "working-men" are attended chiefly by the lower middle classes who go regularly to church or chapel every Sunday of their lives.

Even, however, if the whole six or seven thousand were working-men, the fact would prove little; for Sheffield contains a population of three hundred thousand, and it was not difficult for the clergy who thronged the platform to get up a big "ticket" meeting, at which a popular Archbishop was the principal speaker, and the eloquence was all to be had for nothing.

The Archbishop's lecture, or sermon, or whatever it was, contained nothing new, nor was any old idea presented in a new light. It was simply a summary of the vulgar declamations against the "carnal mind" with which we are all so familiar. Progress, said his Grace, was of two kinds, intellectual and moral. Of the former sort we had plenty, but of the latter not so much. He repudiated the notion that moral progress would naturally keep pace with intellectual progress, and he denied that righteousness could ever prevail without "some sanction from above." This was the sum and substance of his discourse, and we have no doubt that our readers have heard the same thing, in various forms of language, some hundreds of times.

Like the rest of his tribe, Archbishop Thomson went abroad for all his frightful warnings, and especially to France. He severely condemned the French "pride in progress," which led to the Revolution. His Grace has certainly a most original conception of history. Ordinary historians tell us that the Revolution was caused by hunger, bad government, and the rigidity of old institutions that could not accommodate themselves to new ideas. But whatever were the causes, look at the results. Compare the state of France before the Revolution with its condition now. The despotic monarchy is gone; the luxurious and privileged aristocracy has disappeared; and the incredibly wealthy and tyrannous Church is reduced to humbleness and poverty. But the starving masses have become the most prosperous on the face of the earth; the ignorant multitudes are well educated; the platform and the press are free; a career is open to every citizen; science, art, and literature have made immense strides; and although Paris, like every great capital, may still, as Mr. Arnold says, lack morality, there is no such flagrant vileness within her walls as the corruptions of the *ancien régime*; no such impudent affronting of the decencies of life as made the *parc aux cerfs* for ever infamous, and his Christian Majesty, Louis the Fifteenth, a worthy compeer of Tiberius; no such shameless wickedness as made the orgies of the Duke of Orleans and the Abbé Dubois match the worst saturnalia of Nero.

His Grace felt obliged to advert also to the Paris Commune, about which his information seems to be equal to his knowledge of the Revolution. He has the ignorance or audacity to declare that the Commune "destroyed a city and ravaged the land;" when, as a matter of fact, the struggle was absolutely confined to Paris, and the few buildings injured were in the line of fire. This worthy prelate thinks destruction of buildings a crime on the part of Communalists, but a virtue on the part of a Christian

power; and while denouncing the partial wreck of Paris, he blesses the wholesale ruin of Alexandria.

His Grace ventures also to call the leading men of the Commune "drunken dissolute villains." The beaten party is always wicked, and perhaps Dr. Thomson will remember that Jesus Christ himself was accused of consorting with publicans and sinners. Drunken dissolute villains do not risk their lives for an idea. The men of the Commune may have been mistaken, but their motives were lofty; and Millière, falling dead on the Church steps before the Versailles bullets, with the cry of *Vive l'Humanité* on his lips, was as noble a hero as any crucified Galilean who questioned why his God had forsaken him.

That intellectual and moral progress naturally go together, the Archbishop calls "an absurd and insane doctrine," and he couples with these epithets the honored names of Buckle and Spencer. Now it will be well to have a clear understanding on this point. Are intellectual causes dominant or subordinate? So intensely religious a man as Lamennais even unhesitatingly answers that they are dominant. He affirms, in his *Du Passé et de l'Avenir du Peuple*, that "intellectual development has produced all other developments!" and he adds the following words:—

"It is represented that evil, as it appears in history, springs entirely from the passions. This is quite false. The passions disturb the existing order, whatever it may be, but they do not constitute it. They have not that power. It is the necessary result of the received ideas and beliefs. Thus the passions show themselves the same in all epochs, and yet, in different epochs, the established order changes, and sometimes fundamentally."

The truth is that the great moral conceptions are securely established, and the only possible improvement in them must come from the increased fineness and subtlety of our mental powers.

Civilization and progress are, according to Archbishop Thomson, nothing but "cobwebs and terms." He besought the working men of Sheffield not to go for information to a big book written in some garret in London. His Grace, who lives in a palace at other people's expense, has a very natural dislike of any man of genius who may live in a garret at his own. What has the place in which a book is written to do with its value? "Don Quixote" and the "Pilgrim's Progress" were written in gaol; and for all Archbishop Thomson knows to the contrary every gospel and epistle of the New Testament may have been written in an attic or a cellar.

The Archbishop seems to hate the very idea of Progress. What has it done, he asks, to abolish drunkenness and gambling? To which we reply by asking what Christianity has done. Those vices are unmistakably here, and on the face of it any objection they may furnish against Progress must equally apply to Christianity. Nay more; for Christianity has had an unlimited opportunity to reform the world, while Progress has been hindered at every turn by the insolent usurpation of its rival.

Dr. Thomson admits that he cannot find a text in the Bible against gambling, and assuredly he cannot find one in favor of teetotalism. On the contrary he will find plenty of texts which recommend the "wine that cheereth the heart of God and man;" and he knows that his master, Jesus Christ, once played the part of an amateur publican at a marriage feast, and turned a large quantity of water into wine in order to keep the spree going when it had once begun.

We repeat that all the Archbishop's objections to Progress, based on the moral defects of men, apply with tenfold force against Religion, which has practically had the whole field to itself. And we assert that he is grievously mistaken if he imagines that supernatural beliefs can ennoble knaves or give wisdom to fools. When he talks about "Christ's blood shed to purchase our souls," and specifies the first message of his creed as "Come and be forgiven," he is appealing to our basest motives, and turning the temple into a huckster's shop. Let him and all his tribe listen to these words of Ruskin's:—

"Your honesty is *not* to be based either on religion or policy. Both your religion and policy must be based on *it*. Your honesty must be based, as the sun is, in vacant heaven; poised, as the lights in the firmament, which have rule over the day and over the night. If you ask why you are to be honest—you are, in the question itself, dishonored. "Because you are a man," is the only answer; and therefore, I said in a former letter that to make your children *capable of honesty*

is the beginning of education. Make them men first and religious men afterwards, and all will be sound; but a knave's religion is always the rottenest thing about him.—*Time and Tide*, p. 37."

These are the words of a real spiritual teacher. Archbishop Thomson will never get within a million miles of their meaning; nor will anybody be deceived by the unctuous "Oh that" with which he concludes his discourse, like a mental rolling of the whites of his eyes.

As we approach the end of his address, we begin to understand his Grace's hatred of progress. He complains that "intellectual progress never makes a man conceive eternal hopes, never makes a man conceive that he has an eternal friend in heaven, even the Son of God." Quite true. Intellectual progress tends to bound our desires within the scope of their realisation, and to dissipate the fictions of theology. It is therefore inimical to all professional soul-savers, who chatter about another world with no understanding of this; and especially to the lofty teachers of religion who luxuriate in palaces, and fling jibes and sneers at the humble soldiers of progress who face hunger, thirst and death. These rich disciples of the poor Nazarene are horrified when the scorn is retorted on them and their creed; and Archbishop Thomson expresses his "disgust" at our ridiculing his Bible and endeavoring to bring his "convictions" into "contempt." It is, he says, "an offence against the first principles of mutual sympathy and consideration." Yet this angry complainant describes other people's convictions as "absurd and insane." All the sympathy and consideration is to be on one side! The less said about either the better. There can be no treaty or truce in a war of principles, and the soldiers of progress will neither take quarter nor give it. Christianity must defend itself. It may try to kill us with the poisoned arrows of persecution; but what defence can it make against the rifle-shot of common-sense, or how stand against the shattering artillery of science? Every such battle is decided in its commencement, for every religion begins to succumb the very moment it is attacked.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUNDAY OBSERVANCE.

BISHOP MAGEE had the temerity recently to observe that it is as right for the working man to read in his public library on a Sunday as for himself to read in his private library. For this mild statement of an obvious truism he has been taken to task by the Lord's Day Rest Observance Society. With that half-heartedness of concession which usually makes the most liberal theologians appear the most inconsistent, his lordship qualified his truism with flummery about not allowing reading to interfere with religious exercises. This did not satisfy the Sabbatarian party. They cannot brook that there should be any Sunday attractions in rivalry with the pulpit and the "pub." The alternative must be gin or gospel, beer or Bible. That in public gardens, museums, libraries, and picture galleries, working men should, on the one day they have to spare, enter into communion with nature, with the treasures of art, and with the thoughts of great men, excites their indignation. The only "holy communion" they recognise is swallowing their Savior in the shape of bread and wine. This would be appropriate enough on the day of our lord and ruler the sun who gives of his energy to ripen grain and grape, did they know the real meaning of the rite, instead of attributing it to a young Jew, whom they fable was insane enough to sit at a table and, breaking bread, say "Take eat, this is my body."

At the present day no man of culture believes in the divine institution of the Sabbath because "in six days Jahveh made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed" (Exodus xxxi., 17). Not in six or in six million days did Jahveh do anything of the kind. It is those who depict their God as needing refreshment, who accuse us of blasphemy and would prevent the mass of toilers putting their one day of leisure to its best possible use.

We believe in the human institution of a day of rest. In the form of a seventh-day cessation from labor, it was known to the Babylonians and Egyptians long ere Moses is said to have lived, and thousands of years before the laws were written which the Jews have attributed to him. The Lord's Day Rest Association cry out that their opponents

want to bring in Sunday labor. This is a lie and they know it. To prevent Sabbath desecration this very Society urged the keeping open of South Kensington and other museums, on Saturday afternoons and evenings from two until ten; eight additional hours to the same attendants, when only half that time was asked for them to be opened on Sundays, with relays of men to give all attendants a holiday.

Not by one jot would we add to the labor of the overworked many. We would give them more leisure and more opportunities of profiting by it; not confining them to the fetid atmosphere of church and public-house. Sabbatarians often refer to the failure of the French Revolutionists to reform the Calendar. Certainly it was a mistake to make only one day in ten a day of rest. We fancy the scheme might have worked better had it given six days rest in the month instead of three.

We do not find the clergy and Lord's day resters speaking out for early closing on other days than their "sacred" one. The thousands of girls and other shop-assistants who have to stand twelve hours for six days every week need not look to them for support. Their anxiety for the workers is a pretence. They oppose Sunday freedom as they have opposed education, civil marriages, and every form of dissent. They would like to keep their fingers in every man's pie and want no counter attractions to their one day's ministration and mummery. But their ghastly gospel of self-salvation and the damnation of other people is doomed. Secular literature is displacing their holy Bible for Sunday reading. Excursions and home amusements are taking the place of Church going. Vainly they get up attractive "special services;" vainly substitute singing for preaching, stained-glass windows for bare walls, or emulate the Salvationists with trumpets and tamborines. Their fiddles and fal-the-rals only show how hard pushed they are to hold their place. A cry has burst in upon them. The kingdom of man is at hand.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

MR. JOHN BROWN, the brawny Scotch gillie who stands so high in his sovereign's favor that he even snubs noblemen, has recently been trying to assert his power over the School Board of Crathie and Braemar. His chief lieutenant in the game was the parish minister. For five months there was such a dead-lock that the School Board ceased. But at last the court party was beaten. Big John now curses, and a certain elderly lady is said to be dissolving in tears.

THE Bishop of Lincoln, in his charge at Nottingham, deplored the unchristian attitude of the Continent. In France no fewer than 2500 places in the country were without a parish priest, and the number of candidates for the priesthood was greatly on the decline and their quality much deteriorated in consequence of the poverty of the endowments. From Italy they had a similar report. The wealthy father in God deplored that the Irish Church has been "despoiled of her revenues," and he evidently feared the approach of a similar fate for the Church of England. The bias of Scotland was toward Republicanism, and dissent was dominant in Wales. In 1880 the numbers confirmed in Nottingham and suburbs, with a population of 168,000 souls amounted to only 651 persons; in 1881 they declined to 528 persons. In both cases the far greater proportion were females. This is a confirmation stronger than proofs of holy writ of the decay of faith.

KNOWING TALMAGE says he knows he is saved. It is to be hoped that the New Jerusalem will be provided with a ring and some sawdust or he will feel terrible out of place.

THE Rev. R. Baldock, rector of Kingsworth, has peculiar notions of Divine Providence. He considers that since horses are not provided with shoes in their natural state it is superfluous to have them shod. This "fad" brought him before the Ashford Petty Sessions on a charge of cruelty to his pony. Of course the rev. gentleman does not himself follow the footsteps of the wandering apostles of Galilee by going barefooted, as the Lord, we suppose, originally made him. The Rev. R. Baldock, however, considers the matter of his pony a trifle.

CHRISTIANS should remember there are no such things as trifles. The eating of a little forbidden fruit led to the assassination of a Deity!

It seemed a trifling affair for children to call an old prophet "baldhead," but it brought out two she-bears to tear forty-

collected essays and articles entitled "Arrows of Free-thought." It will be ready in a fortnight.

THE Rev. Canon Shuttleworth speaking at Camberwell, recently said; "You can hardly induce Atheists to go and listen to a sermon by a Christian minister." In the course of his address, the Rev. Canon expressed his disgust at the foul aspersions put forward by some Christians concerning Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, which he said he knew to be entirely without foundation. He strongly condemned the unjust manner in which Mr. Bradlaugh had been treated with regard to his parliamentary election.

MISS SOPHIA DOBSON COLLET, whose "Phases of Atheism" will be favorably remembered by old Freethinkers, is engaged upon a full biography of Ram Mohun Roy, the Hindu reformer and founder of the Brahmo Somāj.

THE *Hulme Gazette* earnestly advocates putting the Bible out of Board Schools as a means of stopping the incessant squabbings between those who disagree as to what the teachings of the infallible book really are.

DR. E. B. AVELING has consented to stand as a candidate for Westminster in the approaching London School Board election. His Address is already before the ratepayers. It is ably and temperately drawn, and advocates free, secular and compulsory education. The Freethinkers of Westminster should work hard for Dr. Aveling's return. We trust that their efforts will materially contribute to a grand success. Dr. Aveling would certainly make as useful a member of the Board as any candidate we know of, and it is high time that men of his stamp were more numerous in our public bodies.

MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD, in his essay on Joubert, quoted that fine writer's depreciatory estimate of Voltaire, and added that it was "undoubtedly the true one." It appears, however, that Mr. Arnold holds a different view now, if we may judge from the following passage of his Liverpool Address in the *Nineteenth Century*:—"We all of us admire Luther. Conduct is three-fourths of life, and a man who works for conduct, therefore, works for more than a man who works for intelligence. But, having premised this, we may say that the Luther of the eighteenth century and of the cultivated classes was Voltaire. As Luther had an antipathy to what was immoral, so Voltaire had an antipathy to what was absurd. Both had faults—great faults. But both of them made war upon the object of their antipathy with such masterly power, with so much conviction, so much energy, so much genius, that they carried their world with them—Luther his Protestant world, and Voltaire his French world, and the cultivated classes throughout the Continent of Europe generally."

In a paper on "Progressive Judaism" in the *Contemporary Review* for November, Miss F. P. Cobbe calls attention to the spread of Rationalism among German and American Jews. Reformed Judaism abandons the hope of a Messiah and regards the re-settlement of the Jews in Palestine as a retrogression towards tribalism. It rejects the Talmud and the theory of the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament, and puts aside many of the Pentateuchal laws. There is no doubt that modern criticism will break up orthodox Judaism as well as orthodox Christianity, but the Jews will only become Rationalists by ceasing to be Jews.

THE Council of the National Sunday League are endeavoring to obtain a building for the "Sunday Evenings for the People." A tea and social party of members and friends of the League will be held, on November 12th, in the Newmeyer Hall, Hart Street, W.C. Tickets can be obtained from H. Savereaux, 15 Bloomsbury Street.

In the full report of the American interview with Mr. Herbert Spencer, which appears in Tuesdays *Standard*, he distinctly stated that he always has defended Republican institutions. But he says they "can only be maintained by citizens each of whom is instant to oppose every illegitimate act, every usurpation of supremacy, every official excess of power, however trivial it may seem." "The Republican form of government is the highest but because of this it requires the highest type of human nature, a type nowhere at present existing."

MESSRS. TRUBNER AND Co. announce "The Pedigree of the Devil," by F. T. Hall, F.R.A.S. If the genealogy of the bogey, who is so serviceable to parsons, is as confusing and discreditable as that of his rival recorded in Matthew and Luke, we cannot imagine how the world will benefit by its publication.

A "CAPTAIN" of the "Army," noted for his erudition and enthusiasm, recently said: "If you look to the hens they never so much as take a drink of water without raising their bills in token of gratitude. Oh, that we were all hens!" To which there was a unanimous response of "Amen."

BLASPHEMY—PRIESTLY AND BEASTLY.

[Concluded from p. 339.]

IV. THE awful sanctity surrounding the mystery of the incarnation has, alas! not prevented the prurient curiosity of pious Christians from prying into a subject which God, in the marvellous dispensation of his Providence, has hidden from the wise and prudent (such as physiologists and medical scientists) and revealed unto babes (such as ignorant fishermen and hysterical women of both sexes). Our trembling pen proposes to quote three instances of Christian impiety on this head, in order that Freethinkers may know how weak are their efforts of blasphemy in comparison with those of pious Christians.

(a) Voltaire relates ("L'homme aux quarante écus") that the Reverend Father Sanchez, in his work "De Matrimonio," book ii., chap. xxi., examines the appalling question, which we dare only quote in the original Latin: "Utrum virgo Maria semen emiserit in copulatione cum Spiritu Sancto." We forbear to pollute the pages of the *Freethinker* with a translation of this sentence, which is gravely written and unblushingly discussed by a Jesuit Father who, by virtue of his vows as a Priest, ought to have been a complete stranger to the delicate matter he discussed.

To the reader, untutored in Latin, we can only impart the information that the quotation refers to the awful event alluded to in Luke i., 35.*

(b) We are informed by Dupin ("Histoire de l'Eglise," vol. iii., sect. 8), that in the eleventh century a dispute arose between a monk named Ratramore and certain other monks as to the manner in which Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. These monks maintained that *J. C.* was not born of his mother's womb in the ordinary manner.† "Ratramore regarded this as a dangerous opinion because, as he argued, it would thence follow that Jesus Christ was not truly born of the Virgin." Accordingly he wrote a treatise, wherein he attacked those who believed that Christ did not come into existence in the ordinary way, but in some other manner. Another monk, however, named Corbie, being impressed with the opinion that Ratramore had put forth in his treatise certain things "prejudicial to the perpetual virginity of the Virgin Mary," and that he had maintained that the *B. V. M.* had ushered Christ into being in the same manner that other women bring their children into the world, wrote a work on the parturition of the Virgin Mary! A cleanly controversy, to be sure!

(c) The following excerpt will be fatal against the impious and priestly (shall we say, beastly?) opponents of Ratramore:—

"Although the majority of women go 280 days, many reach only 275 days; our Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded in the New Testament, was carried in the womb of his mother for a space of 275 days only." ("Advice to a Wife," by Dr. Pye Henry Chevasse, 2nd edit., sect. 560, p. 185). Unfortunately, the Gospels are reticent on this point.

We have simply to add, by way of comment, that if Christians may indulge in this talk, what may not Atheists do? Are we to be gagged for uttering blasphemies mild in comparison with those blurted out by the "unco guid?" Or, is Christian blasphemy to be pardoned because it is prurient?

V. Dr. J. Hookyaas ("Bible for Young People," vol. v., p. 71) makes an important statement which lays at the very root of the Upas tree of Christian superstition. He says: "The story that the Holy Ghost was the Father of Jesus must have arisen among the Greeks and not among the first believers, who were Jews, for the Hebrew word for *spirit* is of the feminine gender. The Ebionites therefore called the Holy Spirit the Mother and not the Father of Jesus." Is that the reason why, even to this day, we do not regard the Holy Ghost as God the Father? If not, why not? Why rob the Holy Ghost of the name of Father, if he, indeed, produced the divine prodigy which we honor in the person of Jesus Christ? Or is the mystery to be explained by the fact that Christ, having dispensed with an earthly father, compensated that loss by having two mothers, one

* Since the above was written, the interesting letter of "Verax" has appeared in this journal (No. 62). The citations therein made are so apropos to this question, that the reader is referred to the same.

† "Qu'il n'était pas sorti des entrailles de la vierge par la voie ordinaire."

human and one divine? If not, why not? Is anything too improbable for faith to believe, or too impossible for God to achieve? Let Christians not rashly spurn this suggestion with an air of sceptical sanctity, but ponder it in a spirit of prayer and godlike humility.

If the Ebionites were right the Holy Ghost must be a wonderful old woman. Possibly we may account for the superior wisdom of the Church by the sex and antiquity of its divine guide.

V1. Both Jews and Christians have spoken very uncomplimentary things about Jesus. (A) Chateaubriand* quotes the Mishna to the effect that the Virgin Mary used to sit in the market-place selling vegetables. The Rabbi Elieser discovered that Christ was of impure birth. The original is too gross for translation: "Unde apparuit puerum istum esse non modo spurium, sed et menstruate filium." In the Talmud the *B. V. M.* is described as a hairdresser, who espoused to Jochanan, is seduced by Pandera. A son is born, who "steals the name of God," writes it on a skin, opens his thigh without pain, and hides the theft in the incision.

Christians must not deride these stories either as absurd or blasphemous, for the Bible abounds with fables equally foolish. The talking serpent, Balaam's ass, Jonah's whale, and other zoological monstrosities are quite as ridiculous as anything in the Talmud. Nor let the Christian denounce these things as false, for they are quite as true as those which are vouched by the testimony of Holy Writ. For our part we are quite prepared to believe one set of lies as well as another.

(B) But the unkindest cut of all is that administered to Christ by his own followers with reference to his personal comeliness. If Atheists dared to call Jesus Christ an ugly, bare, illshapen, leprous specimen of humanity, they would be charged as foul vilifiers of the meek and lowly one. But such is in truth the very language employed by pious Christians whose names are loved and honored by the universal church. "His [Christ's] beauty, says Clement of Alexandria, was in his soul and in his actions, but in his appearance he was *base*. Justin Martyr describes him as being without beauty, without glory, without honor. His body, says Origen, was small and *illshapen* and ignoble. His body, says Tertullian, had no human handsomeness, much less any celestial splendor. The heathen Celsus, as we learn from Origen, even argued from his traditional meanness and *ugliness* of aspect as a ground for rejecting his divine origin." (Canon Farrar, "Life of Christ," chap. x.) The same authority tells us there was a widespread fancy that Christ who healed so many leprosy, was himself a *leper*.

Is it not a sin against the Holy Ghost thus to revile the physiognomy and person of his only son and heir? Just fancy worshipping a repulsive looking Christ! It is sad that God's own particular friends should trumpet the disagreeable truth in the ears of the profane. We expect better things from Christians!

The above facts clearly demonstrate the unparalleled impiety of the pious, the abominable blasphemy of anti-blasphemers. They expose the humbug and cant of the worthies who extol themselves as the friends of God and denounce as his enemies all those who blaspheme him in milder forms. We claim that they have no right to this monopoly. Further, that if they blaspheme in their way, they ought not to object when we blaspheme in ours. Finally, they ought to blush at their impertinence in demanding from us a tribute of adoration to a God whose dignity they degrade and whose character they defame with systematic blasphemy.

Having loaded their Deity with ridicule and contempt in the scurvy style we have here indicated, how dare they impute impiety to those who turn up their noses at a God who neither commands the respect nor escapes the vituperation of his friends and followers?

W. HEAFORD.

A WITTY New York society woman was standing before Zola's greatly admired picture of Lot and his daughters. "Oh!" remarked a friend, dolorously, "what do you suppose Lot thought when he beheld his poor wife turned to a pillar of salt?" "I suppose," replied our wit with admirable gravity, "he thought how he could get himself a fresh one."

* Etudes Hist., pp. 401—2.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY.—Christianity, like every other religion, has its mythology—a mythology so intertwined with the veritable facts of its early history, so braided and welded with its first beginnings, that history and myth are not always distinguishable the one from the other. Every historic religion, that has won for itself a conspicuous place in the world's history, has evolved from a core of fact a nimbus of legendary matter which criticism cannot always separate, and which the popular faith does not seek to separate from the solid parts of the system.—*Rev. F. H. Hedge* "Christianity and Modern Thought," p. 159; Boston; 1873.

THE BLOOD!—How low and rudimentary humanity still is, even among people we regard as highly civilised, is demonstrated by the reception still widely accorded to the grosser interpretations of the doctrine of atonement by blood. The term *Carnivorous* is in no way too strong to express the character thus ascribed to the Deity himself.—*Edward Maitland* "The Keys of the Creeds," p. 47; 1875.

THE BIBLE.—When a great number of documents in different styles and of different periods are presented to a reader as one book, nothing is more natural than that he should miss the clue to such a book, and find it difficult to distinguish what is episodical or accidental in it from what belongs to its main subject. Thus some readers of the Bible fix upon its revelations of a future state, and overlook the striking silence about a future state which most of the Biblical books preserve; others fix upon its miracles, though it is easy to quote from the New Testament passages in which the evidence of miracles is spoken of slightly.—*Prof. J. R. Seeley*, "Natural Religion," p. 175; 1882.

PROFANE JOKES.

"I HAVE no fear of the future," said a sad-looking man; "I suffer so terribly from rheumatism, that all I want is to be somewhere where it's warm."

FACT.—A child of four being told we were all made of dust observed a large amount flying about in whirlwind confusion. "Hallo!" he cried, "there's somebody being made. I wonder if it's a boy or a girl?"

AGED and infirm Old Man (to country parson, who has been reading the Bible to him)—"Lor' now, sir, and how many wives does it say Solomon had?" Parson—"Seven hundred, William." O. M.—"And how many concubines?" Parson—"Three hundred." O. M.—"Lauk a mussy, sir, but what a blessed privilege them early Christians did enjoy."

HARD QUESTIONS SOLVED.—A parson, thinking to banter an honest Quaker, asked him where his religion was before George Fox's time. "Where thine was," says the Quaker, "before Harry Tudor's time. And now thou hast been so free with me," added the Quaker, "pr'ythee let me ask thee a question. Where was Jacob going when he was turned of ten years of age? canst thou tell that?" "No," said the parson, "nor you neither, I believe." "Yes, I can," replied the Quaker; "he was going for eleven, was not he?"

THWAITES' LIVER PILLS

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