

# PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

# THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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NOVEMBER 26, 1882.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

“COMIC BIBLE” SKETCHES.—XLVII.



THE PRODIGAL SON.

“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.”—LUKE xv., 16.

## PLAYING WITH ATHEISM.

MR. TENNYSON published, twelve months ago, a poem entitled “Despair,” in which an elderly couple, who have lost faith in God, incontinently try to drown themselves. The wife’s hash is satisfactorily settled, but the husband, who got up the little expedition to the seaside, is fished out apparently by a Calvinistic preacher, to whom he relates his woes, and promises that he will try the cold water cure again on the first opportunity. The poem was so silly, and such a travesty of unbelief, that I was tempted to write a pamphlet on it. “Atheism and Suicide” contains all I wish to say on the subject, and I shall not go over the ground again. There was also a most laughable parody of “Despair” published in the *Fortnightly Review* and attributed to Mr. Swinburne. It was a very clever “skit,” and it certainly ought to be published with the original, so that the reader might see the Poet Laureate’s real drift, which is not otherwise too clear.

Mr. Tennyson triumphantly proved, to his own satisfaction if to no one’s else, that Atheism leads straight to suicide, or that if it doesn’t it ought to. Yet, strange to say, the Atheists of England have gone on living exactly as if he had not proved that they ought to be dead. It is both astonishing and heart-rending that they should so obstinately refuse to be logical. Why on earth don’t they do their duty and put an end to themselves? There’s plenty of water in the world; or, if they object to

die cold and wet, poison is cheap enough, and razors can be bought at any cutler’s for a shilling.

As the wretched creatures decline to drown themselves, or cut their throats, or even vanish in a gentlemanly way, Mr. Tennyson is naturally wild; and in order to ease his mind he tries to show that if they don’t commit suicide, which is their first logical duty, they go about seducing girls, ruining homes, and delivering tedious sermons to their victims. His method of doing this is somewhat peculiar. The proper way would be to get the Dean of Saint Paul’s, or Mr. Spurgeon, or Dr. Parker to let him have the use of one of their gospel-shops for a couple of hours. But Mr. Tennyson is very erratic in his old age; so he writes a play, and Mrs. Bernard Beere brings it out at the Globe.

Unfortunately, however, for the religion and morals of this backsliding nation, Mr. Tennyson has about as much idea of dramatic writing as a cow has of the science of musketry. The result is that a crowded first-night audience damns his play and blights “The Promise of May.” The plot is absurd, the situations are impossible, the hero is an intolerable bore, and the sentiments he is made to express are recognised by everybody as entirely foreign to any existing school of thought. The ill-constructed thing would probably have passed at once into the growing list of Mr. Tennyson’s failures, if the Marquis of Queensberry had not been more zealous than wise, and given it a magnificent advertisement.

There is no need to give many details of Mr. Tennyson’s



play. Suffice it to say that the hero seduces a young lady, who goes off to drown herself because he will not marry her. Six years afterwards he makes love to her sister, gets engaged, and is only foiled at last by the sudden re-appearance of his old victim, who drops dead on the spot. There are a few minor incidents of a tragic character that spring from the hero's misdeeds. For the rest, the wicked young squire walks all through the play, and all over the stage, justifying his conduct on the principles of "materialism."

Without intending any pun I say that Mr. Tennyson is simply *playing* with Atheism. What does he practically know about it? He is reputed to lead a recluse life, and his knowledge of men was never very great. He is conversant with nature but not with mankind. If he knew more of the world he would be aware that selfishness is distributed with much impartiality among people of all kinds of belief; and that, as a matter of fact, Freethinkers are on the average a little less criminal than Christians, and perhaps a little more just in their dealings.

Nearly all the newspapers, including the religious ones, have condemned Mr. Tennyson's play in *motif* as well as plot. But he finds one apologist in the *Christian World*, a paper which advocates an indefinite Christianity to please all sects, and has lately taken to atoning for its doctrinal vagueness by a special and systematic defamation of Freethought.

The *Christian World* urges that Mr. Tennyson has as much right to expose Atheism on the stage as Mr. Gilbert has to ridicule Æstheticism. In one sense he has, for this is (barring blasphemy) a free country, and you are at liberty to play the fool to as many fools as choose to look on. But in another sense he has not; and the pious scribe who maintains the contrary shows by the very analogy he draws his own ignorance of dramatic laws. Mr. Gilbert ridicules a taste, a fashion, a caprice. Call it what you will, it is primarily a *feeling*, not a *thought*. And here lies the essential distinction which Mr. Tennyson has disregarded. The drama deals properly with life, not with ideas. Its function is "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature." It may convey a great moral lesson, but this must be done indirectly; and any quantity of ideas (not on doctrines but on life) may be thrown into it. But it must be based on universal nature, and deal with the passions and sentiments that exist in the hearts of all. Sardou, a masterly playwright, failed in his "Daniel Rochat" through neglecting this law for a purpose similar to Mr. Tennyson's. Shakespeare's sovereign instinct kept him from any such quagmire.

The *Christian World* urges that if Mr. Tennyson holds that Atheism tends to "produce exquisitely atrocious forms of sin" he has a right to say so. Granted. But surely an intrigue with a young woman is rather inadequate. Mr. Tennyson is not strong enough. His "Vision of Sin" merely illustrates the common-place vice of thousands of young men in our Christian cities; and his "Promise of May" illustrates the same thing if it illustrates anything at all. Seduction of girls and brutality to women are common in this country where Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land. And, indeed, the first of these is only regarded as a crime when the seducer is poor or otherwise obnoxious. Let a gay young baronet run riot, and all his peccadilloes will be overlooked if he remains orthodox and finally settles down. But let a Shelley get compromised, and how the world howls! As Hunt wrote of the Harriet Westbrook affair:—

"Had he now behaved himself pardonably in the eyes of the orthodox, he would have gone to London with the resolution of sowing his wild oats, and becoming a decent member of society; that is to say, he would have seduced a few maid-servants, or at least haunted the lobbies; and then bestowed the remnant of his constitution upon some young lady of his own rank in life, and settled into a proper church-and-king man, perhaps a member of the Suppression of Vice."

That's the proper style. What a sweet hypocritical world we have the good fortune to live in!

What is vice? Foolish self-indulgence regardless of others. What is sin? Criminal self-indulgence at the deliberate expense of others. Sin is always callous and often cruel, while vice though always weak is often good-natured and seldom intentionally wicked. Mr. Tennyson has not the strong intellect needed to create a great conception of sin. He can embody commonplace vice in a guided youth who is haled into the place of revel by his

wanton locks; but not that colossal sin which, in Ruskin's words, could "concentrate the labor of a million of lives into the sensation of an hour."

Atheism and "organised selfishness," according to the *Christian World*, are one and the same thing. But even that is not enough. It describes certain monsters who think no more of killing a man or a woman than of blowing out a candle, and adds that they "characterise an age of abounding unbelief." This is certainly cool, considering the millions of lives sacrificed by Christian cruelty. Even if all the assassinations of Europe, from the exasperated Russian Nihilist, to the dissatisfied French Socialist, are attributed to Freethought—which is a wild absurdity; what are they compared with the French *dragonnades*, the Bartholomew massacres, the extermination of the Albigenses, the burnings at Smithfield, the ferocities of Catholic Spain in the Netherlands, and the protracted murders of the Inquisition, which were all deliberately done by Christians in the service of their God? These pious scribes should pull that huge beam out of their own eye before they denounce the mote in ours.

To recur to Mr. Tennyson. I repeat that he only plays with Atheism. He understands neither its meaning nor its aims, and he is utterly ignorant of its influence. And as for his drama, in which he misrepresents it, one may safely affirm that if it had not been accompanied by the prestige of a great name, no manager would ever have thought of producing it on the stage. My solemn conviction is that the Poet Laureate's friends ought to take him in hand, and see if they cannot put him under some wholesome restraint. What with Jingo war songs and preaching plays, he is becoming an odd figure in his old age. He courts the jibes addressed to Elisha, without possessing the prophet's remedy against his critics.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### DEATH-BED HORRORS.

THAT all opponents of Christianity either die blaspheming and afflicted with horrible diseases, or else recant their errors, is a fact about as well authenticated as any miracle in the Bible.

Judas Iscariot paid the penalty of being foredetermined to betray Jesus Christ, by repenting, returning the money to the priests, and then hanging himself, as we read in Matthew xxvii. He likewise, as we gather from Acts i., bought a field with the money and, falling headlong therein, burst asunder. He, moreover, according to Papias, who is as early an authority as either of the foregoing, had his body swollen to such an extent that he could not pass where a chariot could pass easily: he was crushed by a chariot and so died. According to popular belief poor oft-killed Judas is still expiating his sin of being chosen to bring about the Christians' salvation.

There was Herod Agrippa too, who killed James the brother of John. For this offence and because he was grandson of the monster who was so terrified at an obscure prophecy in a book he did not believe in, that he butchered all the male children of the inland town of "Bethlehem and all the coasts thereof;" Agrippa died eaten up by worms. By the way, Josephus says Agrippa, looking up, saw an owl over head, but Eusebius the Church historian, who transcribed the passage from Josephus, substituted that he saw an angel, in order to make him agree with the account in Acts xii., which says Herod was smitten by an angel of God. Dr. Lardner says he knows not what apology can be made for this, nor do we, unless that one winged fowl is as good as another.

The wide circulation of the awful stories concerning Paine and Voltaire being taken as sufficient evidence of their authenticity, the following strictly veracious anecdotes of death-bed horrors should equally commend themselves to the belief of the pious reader.

The first case we will call to mind is of that the well-known Tobias I. Flyer, a collier of Lumberhead Green, near Wigan, Lancashire, who being on his death-bed on the night of the 31st of March, 1847, was visited by the Rev. Jabez Heavystern, vicar of All Saints, Wigan, and exhorted to repent, that he might become even as the angels were. "What," exclaimed the dying man, "shall I have wings; will you be an angel and have wings too?" And on being soothed with the holy assurance that this was so, exclaimed, "Then by

God, parson, I'll fly you for a pot." This was a lamentable instance of the ruling passion strong in death. Another is more recent. C. O. B. (the name in full can be given upon receipt of stamps) had long been an attendant at the Hall of Science and a very regular subscriber to all infidel literature. Being very ill, his wife brought in the white choker. All he said was, "I say parson, what's to-day?" On being told it was Wednesday, "Hooray!" he cried "the *Freethinker* comes out to-morrow."

Still more shocking is the well authenticated case of the wretch who on his death bed absolutely prohibited any of his freethinking friends to come near, but said they might send as many ministers of the Gospel as they pleased—his malady was contagious.

J. B. L., a notorious blasphemer, was lying sick of a fever, and being exhorted by a ghostly comforter to prepare to wear the diadem, he replied he didn't want to die-a-dem bit. This deplorably bad pun so alarmed the sky-pilot and the doctor that they both fled, and J. B. L. recovered.

Another horrible case is that of the poor old blacksmith, who on being asked if he believed all the Bible replied that he did not know as he could not read. The parson wishing to try his faith read to him the veracious chronicle concerning the prophet Jonah's trip to Nineveh. "Do you believe that?" said the parson. "Umph! I suppose I must." The parson then went on to read how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out uninjured from the fiery furnace. "Do you mean to tell me they were not even singed?" asked the blacksmith. "Not a hair." "And the furnace was as hot as my forge!" "A thousand times hotter." "Well I'm blowed if I believe that fish story now."

We have all recently read the account authenticated by the Rev. A. Jessopp, in this month's *Nineteenth Century*, of the old farmer who, being told he must resign himself to providence, said, "Drat that old Providence; first he spailt my taters, then my tunnips, and now he's took my missus; but I reckon there's one abev as'll put the stopper on him if a go too fur." This sublime faith was more definite than in the equally authentic case of another old farmer, who being catechised in the doctrines of Christianity upon his death bed, said, "What wi' faith in the Trinity, substitutionary sacrifice, justification by grace, and one thing and t'other, I'm clean be-muddled, be-foozled, and bet." With which saying he turned his face to the wall and passed away from a theology which was too much for him.

These well-known cases may not be of an exemplary kind, but in all seriousness when we read of what Carlyle well calls "those their idle tales of dying horrors," we cannot help calling to mind such stories, or fail to commend the *Freethinker*, who upon being informed by a suave minister that he had come to exhort him to die in peace, replied, "Well I exhort you to go and let me die in peace."

J. M. WHEELER.

## ACID DROPS.

ONE of our readers got into trouble down at Leamington. He left a copy of the *Freethinker* on the Free Library table. They set a watch on him and caught him red-handed. Then a committee meeting was held, and a resolution was passed warning him not to desecrate their holy table again. It was also resolved that the Act should be examined to see if they could punish the criminal. We expect to hear that the town is in a state of siege, and that a detachment of dragoons is guarding the Library against infidel incendiaries.

A QUONDAM lieutenant in the Salvation Army attempted to commit suicide at Batley a few days ago. He had been low spirited for some time, and neither the tambourines nor the big drum could cheer him up. We recommend him to read the *Freethinker*.

THE Salvationists here should take a leaf out of the book of their American brethren. There's a revivalist named Mayor, out in Texas, who asks God to strike dead anybody who disturbs his meeting, and God does it. This is a lot better than going to the magistrate.

A MAN wrote to Ward Beecher:—"Dear sir,—You made an ass of yourself yesterday." Beecher replied:—"Dear sir,—The Lord saved you the trouble of making an ass of yourself by making you an ass at the beginning, and "His work stands sure." Smart—but rather rough on the Lord. Why does he amuse himself with making asses? Is it to provide himself with a little fun to relieve the awful tedium of Heaven."

COL. M. E. BILLINGS, of Waverly, Iowa, has compiled a list of recent "Crimes of Preachers." It reports the names and cases of 202 criminal sky-pilots in the United States, from May 1881 to May 1882. Within the 109 days, from July 10th to October 28th, 1882, 123 crimes have been charged against ministers of the Gospel, and of these 67 have been of a sexual character, including 13 adulteries, 12 indecent assaults, 4 elopements, 13 seductions, 1 rape, 1 incest, and 1 indecent exposure; within that short period 2 Lambs of God have been arrested for murder. The list for the last three months includes 15 Methodists, 9 Presbyterians, 7 Episcopalians, 5 Baptists, 5 Catholics, 3 Campbellites, 2 Lutherians, and 2 Congregationalists. No Unitarian, Universalist, or Freethinking preacher appears in these lists.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* says: "William Booth never fails in one thing, and that is in looking after money; people however, persist in saying that he fails to account for the use of it."

HERE is Booth's latest from the *Official Gazette*: "More money urgently wanted for rapid advances. Many of our friends have articles they could well dispose with, such as ornaments, secular books, and a host of other things they delighted in before they got a full salvation. Will they kindly look them up, sell them and hand in the proceeds to head-quarters, London, for present necessities."

ARRANGEMENTS have been made by the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, to illuminate their cathedral with the electric light during the winter months. So it is quietly reported in the newspapers. But what a revolution it implies! Cathedral's illuminated by science! How long can the anachronism last? Those sacred edifices were built to admit only a dim religious light, to nurture in gloom the mystery of religion. The electric light will spoil all this, and it is easy to predict the end. Science will be adopted by the clergy until it at last finds itself strong enough to turn out its patrons.

LORD FOLKESTONE has discovered Mr. Gladstone's greatest fault. He is "given to altering his mind." So is everybody that has a mind. Lord Folkestone's ignorance in this respect is quite intelligible.

FROM Canada comes another instance of the depraving influence of the Christian superstition. A young woman in that country committed suicide, while in a state of religious excitement, by standing over a fire until she was horribly and fatally burnt. Her last words were "I am going to Jesus," and the telegraphic account states that she was "religiously inclined" and "weary of life." This is only one of the many instances in which the pernicious superstition which embitters life, at last leads to its termination.

ONE of our Peterboro' readers says that he attended one of Booth's meetings in the Drill Hall, and stayed to ask him a question about his story of Voltaire's death-bed. Before Booth would hear a word he demanded that the inquirer should go "down on his knees and pray." 'Tis he refused to do, saying that a civil question called for a civil answer. But Booth would have knee-drill first, and so our reader left, while the vulgar showman shouted after him something about "The fool hath said in his heart," etc.

MR. D. T. DORRELL writes to the *Weekly Dispatch* from Holloway Prison, that he is doing three months' gaol for being unable to pay his poor rates, after having failed in business and been sold up by his landlord. He and his father have been ratepayers since 1852. It is really atrocious that such things can happen. Christian laws and Christian magistrates need a good deal of reforming. Suppose the Lord Mayor failed and couldn't pay his poor rates, would they send him to the stone jug? Oh dear no. The prison is only for the poor.

*Vanity Fair* says: "The hymnology of the poets of the Salvation Army puts the efforts of Pusey and Palmer in the shade. The newest thing in the shape of reforms is as follows: 'If you cannot get in at the golden gate, get over the garden wall.'"

THE Windsor toadies gave the Duke of Connaught an enthusiastic reception. As he drove off from the station the band played "See the Conquering Hero Comes." Considering that this royal sprig did not really take part in any engagement, and that he was never in any danger, this compliment is rather rich. By and by, Sir Garnet will be forgotten altogether, and we shall hear the Duke of Connaught publicly thanked for "the admirable way in which he conducted the expedition to Egypt."

THE students of Aberdeen University created a disgraceful riot last week. They broke up the meeting in the Music Hall, where Dr. Bain, the new Lord Rector, was about to deliver his inaugural address. After smashing all the furniture they paraded the streets and insulted the passers by. These riotous

young men are the sons of good Christians, and many of them are designed for the ministry. It is a curious thing that in Edinburgh the medical students are the most frequent culprits, but whenever there is an exceptionally disgraceful riot it is sure to be the work of the divinity students. Their friends explain this by saying that the study of John Calvin makes them wild.

M. DUCLEUC, the French Premier, is going to present a Bill ratifying the treaties concluded by M. De Brazza with the natives on the Congo River. This is a fine instance of the exploitation of "savages" by Christian nations. A free and independent explorer goes out somewhere, gives away a few pounds of beads, and gets the native chief to make a mark on a piece of rag. This is said to be a treaty, and the free and independent explorer makes it say what he likes. By and by traders come, claiming certain privileges on the strength of the marked rag, with gun-boats to back them. Quarrels ensue, and the gun-boats nearly depopulate the district. When three-fourths of the natives are dead, the report reaches Europe that all is quiet. This is called civilising the heathen, and it certainly is a very pretty process, but not for the heathen.

DR. BUTLER, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, has issued a manifesto threatening with excommunication all those in his diocese who send their children to the model schools in preference to those schools in which their religion is taught. The bishop should be taught that the days of ecclesiastical boycotting is over.

JAMES HUTCHINSON, in his recently published lives of James and Phillip Van Arteveld, gives the following account of the priests in the 14th century: The greatest and most pernicious influence wielded by the clergy took its rise in the superstitious terrors of the sick and dying. The hope of eternal beatitude was cheap at the sacrifice of lands or other property, which must, in any case, be abandoned. The sale of indulgences was another fruitful source of income. Individuals, too, were sometimes overwhelmed by a sentence of excommunication for quite venial offences, such as fishing in a pond belonging to an abbey, or procrastination in handing over a legacy bequeathed for so-called pious purposes.

THE pleasures of earth and the joys of heaven were alike withheld from the poor wretch who languished under the ban of the Church. He could not marry, for no priest would perform the ceremony. If he became a father, his babe could not be admitted into the Christian fold, so long as he remained contumacious. If he himself, or any member of his household, near and dear to him, were lying on a sick bed in hourly expectation of death, the consolations of religion were withheld, and the last moments of life were rendered inexpressibly awful by the belief that the gates of heaven were closed against the impenitent enemy of the Church. Many a will, too, was framed under the terrifying exhortations of the attendant priest, and the widow and her children were left to struggle with poverty, while the Church appropriated the savings of their late bread-winner and protector.

THE Baptist parsons of New York have been discussing the subject of modern miracles, especially the faith cures. Dr. Samson read a paper in which he stated the case of a woman under treatment by a physician of that city. The woman believed she could be cured by the application of Lourdes water. The doctor told her he would apply Croton, and if that did not help her he would try Lourdes. He applied Lourdes, but she, supposing it to be Croton, refused to be cured. He then tried Croton, and the woman believing it to be Lourdes, was healed. The general opinion of the doctors of divinity was that the faith cures were delusions.

BISHOP DOUGLAS, in his well-known "Criterion of Miracles," dealing with the cures wrought by Mr. Greatorex, and at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, for which there is far better evidence than for any of the Christian marvels, gives abundant proof that many diseases are temporarily alleviated by mental excitement and confident expectation. Southey also, in his "Life of Wesley," calls attention to a number of faith-cures which were almost as numerous at that time as conversions are among the Salvationists now. Southey says of these cures: "Imposture in all degrees, from the first natural exaggeration to downright fraud, kept pace with enthusiasm." Neither Bishop Douglas nor Bob Southey seems to have had any inkling that the same causes may have given rise to the stories of Christian miracles.

THE *War Cry* puts the following into displayed type:—"At six o'clock last Sunday morning, forty soldiers marched out into the rain to wake up the town, several of them had set up all night for fear of being too late. Follow their example." We expect shortly to see the General advertise Salvation ointment for the cure of rheumatism.

So much for the General's care of his soldier's physical frames. Still more pernicious is the advice given in regard to the minds of children. In his instructions he especially counsels that they "should be trained up in the expectation of the great final judgment when the wicked will be punished in hell." Then they may be expected to become fit dupes for the Salvationists and superstitionists who live by preying.

THE approach of the School Board elections is making the clergy and denominationists cry out that religious instruction must be retained and the blessed truths of the Bible taught. It is of so much more importance that children should learn that a first woman was made of a man's rib than to know how many ribs they have of their own. The history and geography of the Holy Land is of course of greater importance than that of our own country, so these gentlemen complain that insufficient time and attention are devoted to Biblical studies.

A PROOF of this occurs in the following specimen of an actual answer at a written examination in one of the Board Schools which has been recently published: "What do you know of the patriarch Abraham?" "He was the father of Lot and ad tew wives—wun was called Hishmale and the t'other Haygur. He kept wun at home and he turned the t'other into the desert, where she became a pillow of salt in the daytime and a pillow of fire at nite."

Two almost deserted churches in the city of Manchester are to be sold. We wonder what will become of them. Probably they will be pulled down to make room for commercial houses. But how about the consecrated stones? Will they be numbered and preserved like the relics of Temple Bar, or flung aside with all the profane rubbish? The Bishop of Manchester ought to say what will be done.

TRULY, as the *Christian World* remarks, the clerical conscience is a curious phenomenon, particularly in its rabid state. The Rev. R. W. Enraght, who, on account of his Romish practices has been deprived of his living by the Bishop of Lincoln, refuses to recognise the legality of the Bishop's letter declaring the living vacant. Yet although the proposition to build a new independent Church for him has been made in several quarters, he "could not conscientiously minister without the Bishop's licence." These gentlemen want to do the work of the Church of Rome while taking the pay of the English Church.

THE Council of the Prayer-book Revising Society have issued an address urging the imperative necessity of making such revision as shall stop the proceedings of the Sacerdotalists who, "if not stopped in their course, will be the means of bringing about the downfall of the Church of England."

INFIDELS may deny the efficacy of the holy sacraments, but they will not venture to deny that the simple fact of consecrating an ordinary head with a mitre may greatly change the mental eyesight. Dr. Temple, for instance, who, when plain Dr. Temple, trod in *Essays and Reviews* dangerously on the verge of infidelity; now he is Bishop of Exeter lectures against the same as an introduction to a course upon the well-worn subject of Christian evidences. Christians who pretend to rationality, however, will hardly care for his statement of the case. He says "Christian faith does not rest on any historical truth, on any scientific investigation, on any accuracy of criticism or scholarship." Exactly so. This is what we have always said, only we add that Christian faith is in blank opposition to all these.

AMERICA has produced a new book of Revelation, though whether it will rival the book of Mormon, not to mention the older ones, remains to be seen. It is entitled "Oahspe," and its prophet is Dr. J. B. Newborough, of New York. Consisting of more than 900 pages of printed matter, it claims to give the history of all religions for 24,000 years. So that after all it must be very condensed. The writer explains that it occupied him over a twelvemonth, and that he did not know from one day to another what he was penning on paper. He must have been inspired by the Holy Ghost, for he tells us his mind had no connection whatever with what he was writing.

THE following from the *Exchange and Mart* speaks for itself:—

GRAND old Bible, very valuable, 400 years old, short Latin type, printed in Venice 1481, splendid condition, in original binding. Price £20, or will exchange for a billiard table.

A FACT FROM THE WEST RIDING.—A Sunday-school class being asked what three enemies the Christian had to contend with replied, "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." "Stop, stop," cried the teacher, "it's the world, the flesh, and the devil."

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures to-day (Sunday, November 26th), at the Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville, London.—Morning, at 11.30, "Moses in Egypt;" Evening, at 7, "God and His Friends."

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

December 3rd, Huddersfield; 10th, Bradford; 12th, Waltham; 17th, Grimsby; 24th, Milton Hall, London; 31st, Sheffield.

January 7th (1883), Claremont Hall, London; 14th, Manchester; 21st, Hall of Science, London; 28th, Claremont Hall, London.

February 4th, Leeds.

March 18th and 25th, Hall of Science, London.

## CORRESPONDENTS.

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

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—Albert Bath, J. A. Haines; C. B. B.; W. D. Carle, J. S. B., Escudrinador, E. S. P.

T. W. C., Chelmsford.—Your conundrum has already appeared.

J. FIELDS.—William Rounseville Alger, the author of "A Critical History of the Doctrine of Future Life," was born in Freetown, Mass., in 1823. He was a Universalist, and his work is certainly the ablest from that standpoint.

R. HILL.—Every Freethinker should make it his duty to obtain as many signatures as possible to the petition for the repeal of the blasphemous laws.

K. VON MARCHMANN LICHTABELLE cites Dr. von Dollinger's "Die Pabstfabeln des Mittelalters" as affirming the whole story of Pope Joan to be a fable.

TAPHOS.—We were unaware of the death of the party in question. The paragraph came from a correspondent.

CHLORIDE DE NITROGEN.—We are pleased to see writers of promise and talent like yourself taking up the cudgels on behalf of Freethought. We regret we cannot find room for your long letter in our little paper, which is generally over-crowded. Cannot you contrive to attack the enemy in its own quarters?

H. HAVILAND.—The story of the pigeon-flyer who got salvation and went home and "bit fifty-three pigeons' heads off, one after the other," appeared in the *War Cry* for August 24th. It was first reported by Major Cadman, "the boss hatchet-thrower."

B. INGHAM.—Our readers cannot assist us better than by keeping a sharp eye on their local papers, and sending us copies when they contain any reports of sermons or religious meetings, or any correspondence on Freethought.

J. C. MARRIOTT writes that it was Richard the *Second* who used the title of "Defender of the Faith."

H. HOPKINS.—Thanks.

ACHATES.—See our leading article.

S. LAKEMAN.—It is pleasant to find the ladies taking such an interest in public matters. We are sorry you and your husband are not in Westminster to plump for Dr. Aveling. As it is you had better plump for the most advanced candidate in your own division.

J. H. BARKER.—They all lie about Voltaire. Their business is lying, and a few walkers more or less make little difference.

J. S. MIDDLETON.—Getting new agents to sell the *Freethinker*, and especially to exhibit a contents-sheet, is the very best way to promote its circulation.

W. DORRILL.—The paper has not reached us. Let the Rev. Mr. Hobson fire away; he only advertises us. We send some more contents-sheets to annoy his clerical eyes.

EXEL.—Cuttings and jokes are always welcome. All communications should reach us by Tuesday morning.

THE Huddersfield subscription acknowledged last week as U. Shiddard should have been U. Studdard.

E. DAWSON.—Don't overdo it. You see they have a right to object.

E. J. BAXTER.—You quite mistook the meaning of the writer in the *Dispatch*. He was "writing sarcastic." Your letter is very interesting and may be of service to us.

R. CARTWRIGHT.—Thanks for petition sheet. Your verses are rather out of date.

T. T. asks whether it was the manhood or the godhood of Jesus that suffered on the cross. We do not pretend to solve theological conundrums.

J. W. HAMILTON.—We are not fond of breaking heads. Our present policy is best. Tyler, Churchill, and all the crew, have their little day, but the *Freethinker* will flourish when they are

Dead and forgotten  
Buried and rotten.

T. INGLIS.—The story has already appeared in the *Freethinker* in a slightly different form. Apply for your certificate to Mr. R. Forder, 35 Alderney Road, E.

J. R. K.—There is no Freethought lecture hall near your residence, but the West-end will be worked before long. We are glad to know that you consider Mr. Symes's true Gospel of the H. G. "splendid fun." Thanks for your good wishes. We have no doubt that *Progress* will be, as you hope, a thorough success.

INQUIRER.—In our next.

MR. FOOTE will be happy to send prospectuses of *Progress* to any reader who can distribute them to advantage.

J. H. ROGERS.—You will find the Dead Sea question treated in Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*, No. 12, "Lot's Wife."

OBADIAH.—We shall come back to Jonah again some day, for there's plenty of fun still left in the story. The artist who supplied the illustration last week is preparing others for the *Freethinker*.

ADVERTISEMENTS for the

## CHRISTMAS NUMBER

MUST BE SENT IN BY THE END OF THIS MONTH.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE'S "Arrows of Freethought" is now ready. It is the first book turned out from our new publishing office, and we think it will be pronounced highly creditable as to paper, printing and general get-up. Our readers will require no criticism of the contents, as they are well acquainted with Mr. Foote's style. Suffice it to say that "Arrows of Freethought" contains some of the warmest things ever published in England against the Christian religion.

In reviewing the English edition of Paul Heyse's longer works, the *Athenæum* refers to "the fact that religious professions are no guarantee for morality, and that Freethinkers are frequently the sternest moralists."

MISS DAVENPORT HILL, one of the most conscientious workers on the late London School Board, used to take her knitting to the meetings, and this fact seems to have offended some of the male electors, who thought it "unbusiness-like." But the quiet lady retorted in a way which shows that she can talk to some purpose when she pleases. "Two objections," she said, "have been taken to me, one to my habit of knitting during the Board meetings; the other because I am speechless. This is the first time I have heard a woman found fault with for using her fingers and holding her tongue." She had them there.

WE wish we could announce Dr. Aveling's return for Westminster. But we go to press before the poll takes place, and prophecy is a risky business. We can only pray for his success. There's a chance of our being heard, as we never pray in chorus.

THE Blasphemy Petition Sheets are coming in gradually. We ask our readers to obtain blank sheets at once and get them filled with signatures. They can be had from the *Freethinker* office.

MR. BRADLAUGH has issued a whip to his supporters, requesting them to write at once to their local M.P. and to Mr. Gladstone, in support of his right to be heard at the Bar of the House. We trust that our readers will take the hint and deluge Parliament with letters on the subject.

THE *Daily News* made the following caustic remarks on the Marquis of Queensberry's plucky but ill-timed protest against Mr. Tennyson's polemical play: "Lord Queensberry was perfectly right if he argued that advanced and radical views do not always make a man too dear to farmers' daughters. We have already said as much ourselves; and we can understand his indignation at seeing his own ideas put into the mouth of a cowardly cur. Supposing Mr. Tennyson had introduced a Catholic profligate, arguing that he might love farmers' daughters and sneak away because he could obtain absolution afterwards, we feel certain that English Catholics would in some way have remonstrated. Well, Freethinkers have their feelings like other people, only Lord Queensberry should not, perhaps, disturb the amusement of an orthodox audience because his feelings are hurt. He may revenge himself by writing a drama, and could scarcely write a worse one than "The Promise of May."

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* was afraid that the Marquis's example might be catching, and that "a band of Mr. Bradlaugh's followers" might go to the gallery every night to hiss and hoot. There is no fear of that. Freethinkers are far too canny to waste their cash on Tennyson's dramatic abortions.

THE *Truthseeker*, the New York Freethought journal, which has so long been ably conducted by Mr. D. M. Bennett, and during his absence by Mr. Macdonald, will commence the new year with a new departure. It will be reduced in price and have several new features—among others, a serial freethought story entitled "Reminiscences of a Preacher," by William McDonnell, author of "Exeter Hall." We trust the change will bring grist to the mill of the enterprising publisher.

WE shall advertise the full contents of our "Christmas Number" next week. It is the most surprising threepennyworth ever published. Orders should be sent in early to secure a prompt supply.

A PUBLIC conference on the Extraordinary Tithe question has been held. Mr. Bath, of Sevenoaks, hit the nail on the head when he said the best way to get rid of tithes was by refusing to pay and submitting to distraint. It was this method alone which called public attention to the farmers' grievances and made several clergymen submit to a reduction from the amount. This, however, will not settle the matter, and another year they might exact all.

MR. BATH quoted a passage from a pamphlet issued by the Christian Knowledge Society—it ought to be called the Christian Lying Society—in which it was stated that a clergyman who received £500 a-year from tithes, paid £120 in rates and taxes. He found, however, that the amount really paid was only £20 12s. 6d., and that the author omitted to state that the rectory was rent free and in many instances possessed glebe land.

### THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY GHOST, OR THE TRUE HISTORY OF JESUS, THE SON OF MARY AND ———?

[Concluded from p. 366.]

AND in those days when work was disagreeable and alms were hard to get, Jesus and his disciples went a fishing; but Jesus himself remained upon the shore. And, behold, as they rowed and toiled the fish would not enter into their net, and the disciples knew not what to do, being sore perplexed. Then Jesus, who was skilled in magic, waved his hands over the sea, and the spirit of God descended upon the fishes like a mighty rushing wind; and the disciples caught three thousand of them in the twinkling of an eye. And when they drew the net to land the fishes fell down before him and worshipped him, saying, "Verily, thou art the Son of God."\*

Then Jesus began to say unto the twelve, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Give up your houses and lands, your wives and families for my sake. For if any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv., 26). Then Peter said, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee. What shall we get in return? Something good, I trust." Jesus answered and said, "Verily, I say unto you, you shall receive houses, and brethren, and sisters, and fathers, and mothers, and wives, and children, and lands, even a hundredfold more than you have given up." And they say unto him, "Master, how can these things be? To give us a hundred wives, or children, or brothers, or sisters, or lands may be easy; but how wilt thou give us a hundred fathers or mothers? Expound to us this mystery." And he answered and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, it shall come to pass. With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Be not faithless, but believing." But they understood not his saying, because the Lord had hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes, lest at any time they should understand and leave Jesus as an impostor (Luke xviii., 25-30).

And seeing the multitudes, Jesus said to his disciples, "Give them something to eat." And they say to him, "Master, how can we feed so great a multitude here in the desert? We have not brought provisions enough for twenty; and how can we feed sixty thousand?" And Jesus said, "Make them sit down in rows of fifty each," and they did so. And he took five small loaves and a dozen red herrings, and began to pronounce over them a magic spell. Then he broke in pieces the bread and the fish, and sent his disciples round with them on plates to the multitudes. And, behold, as he brake, so the bread grew, and red herrings in multitudes, ready cured, came flying through the air and falling in showers at his feet. And they did all eat and were filled; and out of a rock close by did he cause to spring hot boiling coffee ready sugared and milked, which flowed in a river to and fro between the rows of people. And every one drank his

\* One version reads, "Verily, thou art a son of a gun." But this is most probably spurious; for guns were unknown in those days.

fill. And they gathered up the fragments of bread and of the fishes that were left one thousand tons in weight; and the river of coffee flows on unto this day; "that is it which compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia."

And after these things Jesus said unto his disciples, "I would I could procure an ass, for then would I take a ride." And they say unto him, "Lo, there is one yonder in the field." And he commanded them to go and take it. But the owner interfered to prevent them; but when they promised to return it, he consented. And they set Jesus on the donkey, and walked on each side of him, going to Jerusalem. And when the boys and idlers saw this they procured penny whistles and kettle-drums, and did shout "Hurrah!" and throw up their caps. And they sang, "See the conquering hero comes!" And "Johnny comes marching home!"

Then the Pharisees said to him, "Sir, why do you not rebuke this rabble, and bid them behave like decent people?" But he answered and said unto them, "Ye fools, and blind! How shall ye escape the damnation of hell? If these should hold their peace, the stones would begin to shout. And which would you rather have, shouting boys, or the stones of the street clamoring?" And they could not answer him.

Then did Jesus go to the temple, and there he abused and insulted the buyers and sellers. He made a scourge of small cords, and drove out the ox-dealers, and pigeon-factors, and the money-changers, and overturned their stalls. And he forbade any one to carry a vessel through the temple. But when the police came up Jesus retired by the back door, and went into a desert place, both he and his disciples.

And after these things Jesus became changed, and he wore a golden belt; and his head became white as wool, and his eyes like flames of fire or electric lights, and his face like the noonday sun. His feet were like brass glowing in a furnace; and from his very mouth there projected a sharp two-edged sword; and his voice was like the roaring of the sea. He put on this disguise to frighten his enemies; and even his disciples fell before him as dead men, for fear of his sword and of his burning face (Rev. i., 12-17).

And in this disguise Jesus did swagger and boast more than all heroes and warriors that were before him; and he began to say unto his disciples, "Suppose ye that I came to send peace upon earth? Not I. I came to send a sword. I will break the nations in pieces like a potter's vessel is shivered by an iron rod." Then did he call himself in irony the Lamb of God; after which his rage knew no bounds. For he caught up a volcanic mountain and hurled it into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood; and a third of all fishes and ships were destroyed. Then he smote the sun, moon, and stars, and darkened one third of them. And he opened the door of the bottomless pit, and let out the fiery locusts which were shut up there; and they destroyed one third of mankind.

Then he mounted a white horse which came from heaven, and called himself King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; and he led his armies to war, all riding upon white horses, and there was an exceedingly great slaughter, so that the blood rose even unto the horse-bridles for the space of 200 miles! Then did he invite the beasts and birds of prey to come and feast themselves upon the flesh of the millions who had fallen in battle, for he refused them decent burial because of his hatred of them.

It came to pass after these things that Judas, one of his disciples, betrayed him into the hands of his enemies. He did it on this wise. Finding his master asleep, he took away his magic wand, and cut off his hair wherein resided his great power. Then he became powerless and like another man. Then did Judas conduct his enemies to him, and they caught him, and bound him, and led him away captive, and they carried him to Egypt and there crucified him (Rev. xi., 8).

Then one of his followers, Mary by name, whose character was not the best, and out of whom Jesus had cast seven Devils, pretended to have seen him after his death. But even his disciples treated the tale as a ghost story. They, however, believed that, like Hercules, and Adonis, and Osiris, he had been raised to heaven; and some there are who believe it even unto this day.

He that testifieth these things saith true. And if he had written all that Jesus said and did, the world itself would be too small to hold the books that would be written. He

THAT BELIEVETH SHALL BE TAKEN INTO THE HEAVENLY ASYLUM, EVEN THE NEW JERUSALEM; he that believeth not shall be condemned to wander with the wise ones of the earth, and be at large and at liberty all the days of his life. Amen!"

JOS. SYMES.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### MR. SYMES AND HIS CRITIC.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I never read a more odious, disgusting, and disgraceful article than the mendacious effusion, signed "J. Symes," in the current number of the *Freethinker* (November 12th). If Mr. Symes would only ask himself—can this sort of writing do any good? I think he would refrain from thus appealing to the lowest and most anti-social passions of mankind: for the lesson taught is to look with contempt on Christian fellow-men. It is very unscientific for Christians are such by natural law; they are not responsible for their training.

G. A. GASKELL, Hon. Sec. Bradford Branch N. S. S.  
6 Chester Street, Bradford, November 10th, 1882.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—I have read Mr. Gaskell's letter. He seems to have lost his temper. "Can this sort of writing DO ANY GOOD?" "Odious," "disgusting," "disgraceful," may pass; but "mendacious!" Does Mr. Gaskell pen that word deliberately? Does he know that in doing so he charges me with lying? If so, I call on him to prove his charge, or to withdraw and apologise. I plead, not guilty! While he is at it, let him also show how I appeal to the "lowest" and "most anti-social passions," etc. I was under the impression that I was appealing to reason and good sense; and that I was trying to do my Christian countrymen good by curing the bad disease of superstition that so terribly afflicts them. Until Christians generally repudiate the Tylers, Newdegates, and those who stole Mrs. Besant's child from her—until they show us some measure of fair-play, their superstitions will get no quarter from me. Freethinkers who defend them are paliating their crimes.

JOS. SYMES.

### "FREETHINKER" DEFENCE FUND.

*Carlisle*: Freethinkers (per H. N. F.) 5s. 6d.; J. S. Middleton, 1s.; L. J. N., 1s.; Five *Glasgow* Freethinkers, 5s. *Hartlepool* (per W. Laurie): Stringer, 6d.; Papple, 9d.; Wilkins, 9d.; Swales, 9d.; Laurie, 6d.; a Friend, 6d.; Renwick, 3d.; Jones, 6d.; Small, 6d.; Warrant, 3d.; J. Boston, 6d.; F. Bouroughs, 3d.; S. Lakeman, 6d.; — Roberts, 2s.; J. C. D., 1s.; Obadiah, 2s.; N. Were, £1.

*Appropos* of our cartoon, "Lucianus" tells a "namygoat," about the originality of which we have our doubts. It runs thus:—The prodigal ran away from home. He spent his patrimony in billiard saloons and backing horses, and got down to his last paper collar. Then he arose and returned to his father out at elbows, and bankrupt in the matter of clean linen. The day after his return he met a neighbor who cheerily inquired: "Well, and did your father kill the fatted calf?" There was an eager hunted expression in his eye as he solemnly replied, "No; but he dam' near killed the prodigal."

### A RESURRECTION SCORE.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago a multitude of people in America put on their ascension robes, took a tearful leave of their friends, and made ready to fly up into heaven at the first blast of the trumpet. But the angel did not blow it. Miller's resurrection day was a failure. The Millerites were disgusted. I did not suspect that there were Millers in Asia Minor, but a gentleman tells me that they had it all set for the world to come to an end in Smyrna one day about three years ago. There was much buzzing and preparation for a long time previously, and it culminated in a wild excitement at the appointed time. A vast number of the populace ascended the citadel hill early in the morning, to get out of the way of the general destruction, and many of the infatuated closed up their shops and retired from all earthly business. But the strange part of it was that about three in the afternoon, while this gentleman and his friends were at dinner in the hotel, a terrific storm of rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, broke forth and continued with dire fury for two or three hours. It was a thing unprecedented in Smyrna at that time of the year, and scared some of the most sceptical. The streets ran rivers, and the hotel floor was flooded with water. The dinner had to be suspended. When the storm finished and left everybody drenched through and through, and melancholy and half-drowned, the ascensionists came down from the mountain as dry as so many charity-sermons! They had been

looking down upon the fearful storm going on below, and really believed that their proposed destruction of the world was proving a grand success.—*Mark Twain's*, "New Pilgrim's Progress."

## REVIEWS.

*Fifty Years of Freethought*, by W. HITCHMAN, M.D., LL.D. Price One Penny. 84 Fleet Street.

This pamphlet is prefaced with the now memorable words of Darwin: "Science and Christ have nothing to do with each other. I do not believe that any 'Revelation' has ever been made. With regard to a future life, every one must draw his own conclusions from vague and contradictory probabilities." Dr. Hitchman, now an aged Freethinker, gives a retrospect of the progress which has been made in getting rid of the curse of theology, particularly in Germany. We regret that we have no space for quotation from this interesting lecture, but heartily recommend it as well worth reading.

*Fictitious Gods and Blasphemy or Bible Horrors*, two more penny pamphlets by Mr. A. B. Moss, who evidently finds there is a public for terse indictments of the Bible and Theology.

## PROFANE JOKES.

TEACHER: Now you must know that all I am telling you about, happened one thousand, eight hundred and eighty-two years ago. *Polly*: Lor', Miss! how the time do slip away.

HE was engaging a footman. He said, "I suppose you will have no objection to attend family worship?" "Certainly not," said James, "but I hope you will consider it in the wages."

"Go to the ant," said Solomon of old. "Come to your uncle," says Solomon of to-day, "vich he'll lend you a fair price and take the greatetht of care of it, ma dear."

"I HAVE heard nearly every sermon Spurgeon has preached in London, and I am a Christian still," remarked a sanctimonious-looking deacon, and then he wondered what the people laughed for.

"Now boys," said a Sunday schoolmaster, who was trying to impress the doctrine of repentance on the class, "What was the best thing Judas could do before hanging himself?" "Change his mind," replied the very worst boy in the class.

DURING the Richard Weaver fever in Edinburgh, some boys had got into one of the kirks with the crowd, where Richard was to hold forth at the termination of the meeting. All those that had found Christ were invited to remain behind. One of the apostles that lends a hand to those who are struggling with Christ seeing a poor little boy crying bitterly and moving from seat to seat, going quietly up to him said, "Dear little boy, have you found Christ?" The boy, with a tear in his eye, looking up and blubbers out, "Ha, ha, I wish I could find my bannit."

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A prominent feature of the Magazine will be a Biography (with Portrait) each month of some historic Freethinker or valiant soldier of progress. Spinoza will probably begin the series; and among those who follow will be the supreme martyr, Giordano Bruno, whose portrait will for the first time be made accessible to English readers.

Under the head of "Gossip" there will appear notes, by various hands, on Science, Art, Literature, Politics, Religion, and Social Life.

Without being directly political, "PROGRESS" will usually contain an article on public affairs, written from no party standpoint, but with a view to the permanent interests of humanity, which can only be served by a fuller development of freedom, justice, and truth.

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The first number of "PROGRESS" will be dated January 1st, 1883, and published before the Christmas holidays. A complete list of contents will be advertised in due course.

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N.B.—By the desire of many purchasers we have some Electro'd, which will be sent on receipt of Twenty-four Stamps.

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A MINUTE DESCRIPTION OF HELL, written for children by a Parson; every detail; must have been there. With Seventy Mixed Secular Tracts, post-free Sevenpence. William Reynolds, Camplin House, New Cross, S.E.

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whatever will this opportunity be offered again after this month for ten times the price that is asked now. Every Believer in the Holy Scriptures should immediately put themselves in possession of this wonderful curiosity.

For opinions of the press see the weekly religious papers, which are pronouncing it as a curiosity and an everlasting memento of our Blessed Redeemer.