

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

“COMIC BIBLE” SKETCHES.—II.



THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth, And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin.—JOHN xi., 43, 44.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

A MERRY Christmas to you all, dear readers. It is the season of congratulations and good wishes. We make a little oasis in the desert of life and fill it with good cheer. Parted relatives meet again, and old friends get another grip of each other's hands. We toast everybody in a glass of something, if only cold water. We sing our favorite songs to tolerant listeners, who applaud our poor quavering as though it were the harmony of the spheres. Old folk feel young again, and the juveniles revel in fairy-land where all is golden and joyous, and stomachs are of infinite capacity and strength. Music and dancing bring a foretaste of paradise; the glowing hours are chased with flying feet; and cunning love raises heart-beats and flushes under the mistletoe. Let the dull gods shiver in their lofty abodes, and the fiends frizzle in their burning pit! What care we? We shut them out, with all the cares and worries of existence; and for once, instead of scheming, slaving, hoping and fearing, we *live*. The past is dead and gone and the future is a dream, but the rich present is here, our

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one sure prize, which the envious fates cannot snatch from our grasp.

I too, defy Fortune. Let her do her worst afterwards, she shall not annoy me now. She has brought me within measurable distance of gaol; she has hunted me with the hounds of bigotry and malice; she promises to let them flesh their fangs. Yet I turn and laugh at her. She may haunt my door with threatening visage, but I mean to enjoy myself inside. Good bye, old lady! We shall meet anon. Till then adieu!

And you, my Christian friends, do not bore me with your absurdities. This happy festival does not belong to you. It commemorates the birthday of the sun-god, and was kept by the old Pagan world milleniums before your Christ was heard of. Eat, drink, and be merry; for the sun-god bursts through the womb of winter, and gives promise of another fertilising spring, ripening summer, and teeming autumn. Your pale-faced Galilean is a thing of yesterday compared with him. He blessed the worlds infinite eons before the advent of your *parvenu* deity, and he will continue to bless them when your god has perished out of all memory.

A merry Christmas to all! Let joy be unconfined. Let it beam in the poor man's dwelling, let it gleam even in the sick chamber, let it shine on the miserable and the out-cast. But it will not so lighten up the gloomy places, dear reader, unless you help to kindle its flame. So, before you nestle into your delight, think of all the needy and forlorn. Spare them something from your own store, however scanty. You will then enjoy your own pleasures with an easy conscience, and find them doubled by a sense of fellowship with all your kind.

But enough. Philosophising on this occasion is like a death's head at a feast. Whose is that silvery peal of laughter? Ah, cousin, is it you? What a color you have! Don't be angry now; you shouldn't have stood under the mistletoe. And that rich manly voice? Ah, Fred, my dear old fellow, your hand! Lucky dog. She is a treasure. Thank me for not anticipating you. Oh yes, all the rest have arrived except grandfather, so you have narrowly escaped being last. There's his knock. Here you are, granddad—last of all. But never mind, you've the right to be a little slow. And now for—a Merry Christmas!
G. W. FOOTE.

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.

[SECOND SERIES.]

IV.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?—ACTS xxvi., 8.

Oh! the reasons are several.

1. In the first place, if he raises the dead, it must be because he wants them, not dead, but alive. And if he wants them alive, he would keep them so, and not give himself the trouble to kill them first and then restore them to life. Only a goose of a God would do that. Now think of that, my dear Christian enemy, and let your own common-sense say whether my view of the case is not more likely to be correct than yours. Can you conceive of any reason why God *should* kill a man at one time and make him live again at a later date? I cannot. Therefore it is incredible to me that God should raise the dead.



2. I cannot believe that any man is indispensable to an Almighty God. He can do just as well without any man as with him. And, I presume, whatever use he may have for a man, he does not throw him away, that is, does not kill him, until he has fairly done with him. If he does, he must be awfully silly. And if he should, in a moment of forgetfulness (such as no doubt overtakes God as well as man) kill a man before he has "accomplished his purpose" by him, surely there is no need to raise him up to life again. For he can make a new man quite as good. If there are in the sea as good fish as ever were caught, it must be evident that Almighty power is able to supply himself with just the men he needs for any and every purpose he may wish to effect. This, I think, is beyond dispute; and consequently I cannot believe that an Almighty God would set himself to repair an old worn-out tool when he could make a better one on the spot and at no more expense—possibly not so much. No reasonable man would do such a thing. It is necessity, folly, or miserliness that would repair an old, rusty, broken machine, when a new one could be had for the same money. Is your God, my Christian enemy, a poverty-stricken God, a foolish one, or a miser? He must be one of these, if he restores the dead, or, if you cannot agree with me, you may express your own opinion in the matter. Possibly you may fancy God does it just because he will. If so, reflect that he cannot *will* or *wish* to do it without some motive. What conceivable motive, then, can lead him to do it? Can you suggest one? If not, why believe that he does or ever did raise the dead?

3. Perhaps you believe it because you were taught to in early life. But that cannot be a sufficient and rational ground for your faith. If your forefathers had gone on that principle, you must now have been of the very same religion your oldest ancestors were of. For as long as all children believe just what they are taught, and all adults believe what all children believe, change in religion is impossible. And if you believe only or chiefly because you have been told it is your duty to do so, then all other religionists are justified in doing the same; and then it will be impossible to convert the world to Christianity, as your missionaries are trying to do.

4. It may be said that God raises a dead man to life to convince the living that he has commissioned a once dead one to reveal his will. But that is nonsense on the face of it. For it would be just as good a proof, if not better, to keep a man alive for two or three thousand years; and this miracle would be much more easily proved, too. Now if God had kept Jesus alive all through the centuries that have passed since his alleged birth, and had kept him all that time in so public a condition as to render imposition and mistake impossible, there would be no sceptics and unbelievers to-day. As it is, they are the majority and are fast increasing in numbers.

5. Besides, if God wished to reveal his will to any man, he would do it on the spot, by immediate communication, *in just such a way as to insure success*. He would never resort to so clumsy a method as that of restoring a dead man. He would this way save himself an endless bother, and prevent scepticism as well. I wonder he has never thought of that. I can assure him that there is not in existence, nor ever has been, one single man who would disobey him, if he would only take the trouble to *speak* in some rational way and reveal his will in unmistakable terms. And if there should be one that would doubt him and disobey, it must be the fault of the man's maker; if he were rightly made and of the proper materials, he would at once respond to that maker's will, as readily as a good fiddle-string does to the bow.

6. There is a strange and very ancient superstition afloat to the effect that dead people know what the living do not; and therefore are better prepared to enlighten the rest of mankind after they have been once dead than they would otherwise be. But this superstition is very silly. The Bible itself condemns it, for it says "The dead know not anything;" and to be sure, that is the plain truth. Of all man's wisdom, no syllable of it has been furnished by a once dead man. Nor has any resurrected man ever imparted any wisdom to the world. The subject of ghosts and resurrections is absolutely barren. Therefore we do not believe any god would do so senseless a thing as raising the dead.

7. It is contrary to Nature, and *not according to history*, that a dead man should have a new lease of life. There is no one person known to history who makes himself respon-

sible for a resurrection story. The writers of such stories are anonymous, especially is that the case with the gospels. No case of the sort was ever investigated on the spot and declared true by independent and competent persons.

8. It is incredible that God should raise the dead; for who God is we know not. If it were reported that some scientist did it, or some conjuror or witch, like Medea, one might give some sort of credit to it. But God? Bless me! Who is that? Where does he live? Who is his father? What of him, *in any way*? Information much desired.—He is only the figment Christians worship; and men never worship *real* things.

J. SYMES.

A HEAVENLY BRAWL.

Now this was how it all happened. You must understand that Mrs. Spriggs—late Gibbs, late Fibbs, late Miggs, late Scriggs, late Tribbs—soon after burying her sixth husband, the late Mr. Spriggs—suddenly gave up the ghost, and proceeded straightway to heaven. Having reached the celestial abode, Mrs. Spriggs—bless her dear old soul—was ushered straightway up to her dear old heavenly Dad. To the uninitiated it might be as well to state how things are carried on in the celestial reception room. First of all, there is the old Dad, who sits on the throne, and on either side of him, on minor thrones, sit God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, whilst grouped around are his chosen prophets. Now, at each fresh arrival, God the Son announces the fact to God the Dad—(who bye the bye, is getting terribly queer about the eyes, and ears, and is compelled to wear powerful specs, and use an ear-tube) by shouting up the old man's ear-tube till he makes himself black in the face, and, having at last made him comprehend, the old man mumbles back, "Male or female"—to which an answer is given as the case may be. Should the answer be male, the old man at once looks gruff and pretends to fall off into a doze and takes no further notice; but should the answer be female, he at once becomes all life and animation, and adjusts his specs to a nicety and beams down to the fortunate one; but woe be unto her if she be fat and over forty, or grey and grizzled, for the old man at once rises with wrath (his wrath is something tremendous) and commences to swear and blaspheme something terrific until his mouth is covered by the hand of God the Son, who cannot stand much of it. But should she be a sweet virgin, with a lovely face then—Oh! thou lucky one—the old man rises and toddles feebly down the throne steps and fondly embraces her, cringing and fawning over her whilst his virtuous prophets look on with approving and longing eyes, the water dribbling from the corners of their mouths the while in anticipation. Having fawned and caressed to his heart's content, the old man mumbles out how pleased he is to see her and at once orders a new set of wings, harp and crown, complete for her, and the lucky one is free to wander where she will in that beautiful land on high. Now it so happened that when Mrs. Spriggs was announced, the old man had been having forty winks, and was suddenly aroused by hearing the word female, so without stopping to think or put his specs right, he rushed down into the arms of the old lady, who exclaimed "Lawk o' mussy me, sir; whatever is the matter with you?" for the old man had begun to squeeze her portly waist in a rather unbecoming manner, but suddenly remembering that youthful maidens were slim and not stout, he drew back and adjusted his spectacles, and perceiving his mistake—for Mrs. Spriggs was anything but slim and lovely—he at once began to rave and stamp on the floor at poor Mrs. Spriggs (and we poor misguided mortals here below mistook it for a thunderstorm when we heard the tumult), who thought he had an apoplectic fit (something like her second husband, the much lamented Mr. Pipus Scriggs, died with), and at once screamed out for brandy, vinegar, murder, water, police, thieves and fire, with all her might, which made such a confusion and noise that it brought all the cherubs, from miles around, to see what the commotion was about. At last, after a deal of bother, the old gentleman was got to resume his throne, but not before he had stamped several holes through the heavenly floor—through one of which he nearly slipped—besides very nearly driving poor dear old Mrs. Spriggs out of her mind. When she found herself outside of the reception room again she exclaimed, "Good God; who'd ever thought that that was the party that old parson Smith used to rave so much about every Sunday; why, drat his wicked old eyes, he ought ter be ashamed of himself, he ought; squeezing and squodging a respectable married posson as as been the wife to six respectable tradesmen, all of whom had had funerals fit for princes and lords." And, having delivered herself of this angry speech, Mrs. Spriggs flapped her wings (which, by-the-by, were only second-hand ones, the old man having vowed that she should have none other), spread them out, and soared away in search of her six much lamented loved ones.

J. ELLIS.

LAUCHIE: Fat sort o' a minister his she gotten, Geordie?—
Geordie: Weel, he's no' muckle worth; we seldom see him. Sax days o' the week he's invisible, an' on the seventh he's incomprehensible."

ANOTHER CELESTIAL SHINDY.

It was Christmas-day in Heaven! Poor Jahveh, gouty, deaf and generally done-up, sat on his icicled throne vainly trying to comfort himself with deep potations of Larehryma Christi negus, which his Son was constantly brewing for him. The holy dove was perched above the throne shamming sleep. The beasts and elders around were all hoarse with eternally bawling Holy, holy, holy! The only signs of animation were displayed by a few juvenile angels skating about on the slippery sea of glass, and some cherubin who flopped their wings over their ears to keep themselves warm.

"I am sick of this continual psalm smiting, which makes me the jest of all the heretics," muttered Jahveh; "the adversary below has by far the most comfortable quarters this weather."

The divine thought appeared at once to penetrate the juvenile angels, for they immediately organised a deputation to Jahveh, praying that in consideration of its being his Son's birthday they might graciously be permitted to go down to Gehenna and enjoy themselves a little before the fire; unto whom Jahveh swore in his wrath that they might go and be damned if they chose.

"Tell Pete to shut the gates on them, and be deuced particular whom he admits in future. I used to choose my own favorites, but now I get nothing but a parcel of dirty, canting cater-wauling Salvationists. Nothing goes well since you've taken matters in hand, Master Joshua ben Miriam; for I've long had my doubts as to your really being my only begotten Son."

"Oh Pa," expostulated the individual addressed.

"Coo-ee," quoth the dove.

"Shut up! you belated old sky-pigeon, or I'll soon make a tumbler of you," roared Jahveh.

"Peace be still," whispered J. C.; "the old un's in his tantrums again. Some day he'll be going down after a fresh Virgin and get up another incarnation in his old age. And then where shall we be?" The dove hid his beak under his wing and again slumped sleep.

"I think I'll put Solomon in Pete's place. He knew what was what, and would let a few pretty girls in. Pete's just an old fool."

"Of such is the kingdom of heaven," interjected Jesus. "You know, pa, you've chosen the foolish ones of this world and hid the mysteries of your kingdom from the wise and prudent to reveal them unto babes."

"Gammon," said the old one. "Why spout that rot here? Quoting Paul, too; when you know I've sent down to hell, as I showed my servant Swedenborg."

"Oh pa, don't be so irascible! You know this is my birthday—they say the one thousand eight hundred and eighty-second. I've taken the liberty to invite a party to celebrate the event. I've not asked any little godlings or mumbo jumbo deities, but just a few representatives of respectable old families, such as Osiris, Zeus, the widely-worshipped Buddha, and a few others. Nevertheless, not as I will papa, but as thou wilt."

"More gammon," growled the old one. "While you pretend to be subordinate as touching your Sonship, you always take care to be co-equal as touching your Godhead. How I wish I never had anything to do with that hussy Mary!" "Coo-ee" went the pigeon. "Shut-up, or I'll wring your blessed sacred neck for you!" roared the old one, and again the holy pigeon slumped sleep. "Look here, Jesus; what do you mean by asking these deities here? You know they are all older than yourself and have been in their time more influential than I have ever been. Besides, I am a jealous God, and never would have any truck with any of them."

"Oh, pa, haven't I yet learnt you to be at peace with all. You know we have the upper-hand now and can afford to be affable."

"Well, I bargain that you'll let's have plenty of the wine that cheereth both god and man; so just turn all the water of that blessed river of life into something drinkable this cold weather, and have your guests as soon as you like."

The first god to arrive was old Shang-ti, of China, who bowed politely, and took a seat at the bottom of the table. Then followed Messrs. Osiris and Horus, from Egypt; Vishnu, from India; Mithra, from Persia; Zeus, from Greece, accompanied by his sons Phœbus, Dionysius, and Herakles. With great dignity Zeus advanced to Jahveh's throne, and, as Jahveh rose, sat himself down in his place. Odin, of Scandinavia, then strode in with his sword on his thigh. Mr. Allah, of Arabia, also put in his appearance, looking very grim. Lastly, but more vigorous than all, entered Gautama Buddha, simply clad in a beggar's yellow robe, and with a beaming smile in his frank intelligent eyes. He seated himself near the foot of the table and seemed lost in thought, while fully aware of all that was going on around him.

After friendly greetings and convivialities, SHANG-TI, of China, rose and said: "I rise to propose a toast. To-day, it appears, is the anniversary of a young hero who has been raised to our ranks. I am given to understand he was born miraculously, performed miracles, and went through various adventures creditably. He trod on the head of the old serpent, suffered death, and ascended into heaven, where he now takes his seat beside our old friend Jahveh, of Palestine. Compared with the deeds of some of your godships all this may appear very trivial, but I trust none of you

will give way to feelings of rivalry or jealousy of the young interloper, but unite with me in drinking his very good health.

ZEUS here rose and remarked, that he was as willing to drink anybody's health as any god living or dead either, (for he knew certain gods had been put to death); but he liked to know whose health he was drinking. He had a number of sons himself—(hear, hear)—to whom Mr. Shang-ti's toast would apply. There was, for instance, Phœbus Apollo, who was born of a human wench, Latona, about this time of year. He was acknowledged to be the light and savior of the world. Heaven and earth were full of the majesty of his glory, yet he humbled himself to become a shepherd in Thessaly. He was not without form or comeliness, but the handsomest fellow ever seen. He invented art, music, and poetry, slew that great serpent the Python, and did many wonderful works. His son, Æsculapius, healed the sick and even raised the dead. Then there was Hercules, who, even in his cradle, slew two serpents. His labors, on behalf of mankind, made him renowned even unto Cadiz, whose gates he carried away, even as the Jew Samson was alleged to have taken away those at Gaza. Hercules had suffered death, descended into hell, and ascended into Olympus, where he now sat at his right hand among the gods. Much the same might be said of Bacchus, Adonis, and others.

OSIRIS said: The point raised by his comparatively young friend from Greece involved an important question of precedence. Ages ago he had himself been born five days before the end of the Egyptian year. He had invented the plough and wrought miracles, overcome Typhon, and descended into hell, becoming the judge of the dead and the god of the living. His son Horus, too, had been born of a virgin goddess, and become incarnate for the redemption of mankind. He slew the evil serpent and made atonement for the sins of the people. His *protegé*, Serapis, also wrought a host of miracles, and all of them taught the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

MITRA begged to mention that this was his birthday. He was born in a cave at the Winter Solstice, and was worshipped by the Magi. He was the appointed mediator between the good and evil powers, Ahura-Mazda and Ahrimanes.

ODIN also mentioned that his son, Balder, had similar adventures, going to hell, and all the rest of it.

VISHNU declared that again and again, throughout the endless ages of the world, he had become incarnate for its redemption. In fact, he always appeared at those critical times when virtue was declining and vice becoming triumphant. Record was kept of eight or nine of his avatars which were in evolutionary progression from a fish upwards to monkey and man. He was the great preserver, beneficent to all his creatures. As Rama he invented the plough, which Mr. Osiris claimed. As Krishna he had been born of a virgin, escaped the tyrant Kansa, lived among the shepherds much beloved by the shepherdesses, performed many prodiges, and was transfigured into his God-like form before the eyes of his disciple Arjuna. He taught loving kindness to every living creature, and that those who had faith in him, and devotion to become even as he was, would unite and become one with Brahm even as he was one with Brahm.

BUDDHA also ventured to give his testimony. His followers believed that he had come down from the Tuchia heavens, being miraculously conceived by Māyā, on the 25th of December. Angels sang, "Hail Māyā, rejoice and be glad, for this child thou hast borne is holy. This day is Bodhisatta born to give joy and peace to men, to shed light in dark places and give sight to the blind." A holy man came from the Himalayas to foretell his greatness. He had been presented to the temple, disputed with doctors, tempted by Mara, the Evil One, in the wilderness, and, after overcoming him, went about doing good, having not where to lay his head yet preaching the coming of the kingdom of righteousness. He taught salvation by conduct not by creed; the mid-path between asceticism and sensuality. He taught that men were defiled not by outward things but by the lusts of the heart. He said, "Overcome evil with good, hatred by love, the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth." His mission was to save every creature who found refuge in Buddha, the Law and the Communion of Saints. He had been transfigured, and his body shone with matchless radiance. He was called the great physician, and slew the great serpent Naga, and when he died reached Nirvana.

ALLAH, of Arabia, here violently protested that he was the only true god, and that Mahomet was his prophet. Even if he showed respect to Jahveh, as an old Semitic tribal deity, he must repudiate the claims of the pigeon and the son of Mary. Whether his father was Joseph the Jewish carpenter, or Panther the Roman soldier, he was nothing more than Mahomet, a messenger from above.

JAHVEH, who all this while had been drinking deep and boiling over with rage, here burst forth and called his guests a villainous pack of licentious devils. Zeus, he said, was a parricide and whoremonger, Krishna was a sensualist, and none of them any better than devils. Uttering the most frightful imprecations he threatened them all with the damnation of hell, and swore if they didn't receive his claims and those of his son he'd let them know he was a consuming fire."

This speech created great commotion among the gods. All of them except Buddha, who, while attempting to make peace, pre-

served his own perfect calm—shouted and gesticulated violently. They reminded Jahveh how his Jewish favorites had been cheats, adulterers, and murderers, of his own amour with Mary, and how he had offered up his innocent only begotten Son.

"You old blackguard, you," shouted Odin. "You call yourself a god of battles. Why, when you set your people fighting, you used to go about hidden in a box of shittim wood, and then you were taken prisoner by the Philistines. I'll teach you to insult your betters."

He here seized old Jahveh by the forelock and beard, and was about to execute summary judgment upon him when Jesus threw himself upon Odin, shouting out for a legion of angels. Mithra and others then fell upon Jesus. The dove transmogrified himself into the shape of tongues of fire, and darted at each of the gods. Apollo appeared to be giving J. C. his quietus, for he cried, with a loud voice, "Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani."

When I awoke, and behold it was a dream!

LUCIANUS.

A NEW HALL FOR NORTH LONDON.

On Sunday last, the 17th, another meeting was held here in furtherance of the proposed New Hall Company and Branch.

It was reported that a deposit had been paid to secure the proposed premises, and it was the feeling of the whole meeting that a most important step had been taken. A large amount of new support was given by those present and letters read to similar effect, but the undertaking is a very heavy one, and it was urged that every possible effort should be made to induce friends to come forward and subscribe for enough of the fully paid up shares of £1 each to enable the balance of the purchase money to be paid on the date agreed, which is early in January. About £1,200 has to be raised in a very short time, so as to avoid any chance of complication, which might lead to this most important step being lost. Next meeting, Sunday, 31st, at 3.30.

Means will be taken to place the entire matter in detail before the Secular public, but any in a position and willing to assist at once are invited to apply to THOMAS SHORE, jun., to offer *Sec. pro tem*, 33 Newington Green Road, N.

ACID DROPS.

This is supposed to be the jolly season. What with Christmas carols, cant, coughs, colds, chillblains, all-night prayer, plum-puddings, pantomimes, pauperism, dear coals, baby gods, bronchitis, and Boothism, we ought to have a good time. Having sheathed our bayonets after the Egyptian business, we can turn up the whites of our eyes and howl in festive style "Glory to God in the Highest; Peace on earth and good will to men!"

By THE WAY, the correct translation, as scholars are aware, should be "Peace on earth to men of good will." Men of good will are those who share our own convictions in regard to the birth of the baby-god in the manger. "But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them; bring them hither, and slay them before me" (Luke xix., 27)

THE *Christian Commonwealth* writes of Dr. Aveling as "Mr. Bradlaugh's secretary;" but Christian papers are not expected to trouble themselves to ascertain the truth in regard to infidels.

Down at Southampton the denominations are actually quarrelling over the souls of the paupers in the workhouse. The Church of England chaplain complains that others are poaching on his preserves. We dare say the poor devils in the house are pleased to find themselves of such importance. Query.—Wouldn't nine out of ten of them sell all their prospects in heaven for good situations on earth?

THE Catholic Church is trying to keep commercially abreast of the times. At Liverpool it has started a branch of the St. Alphonsus' Purgatorial Society, an association which is worked on the cooperative principle. The members pay a penny per week, and collective masses are said for the souls of their dead relations. A very pretty swindle. Any old woman found earning sixpence by fortune telling is sent to gaol, but these priestly extortioners carry on their confidence tricks with perfect security.

How these Christians love one another! The sexton of Romsey church recently refused to toll the knell for the corpse of a Dissenter. Even in death they are divided. We suspect that Michael has difficulty in keeping the peace up above.

We have come across a copy of the examination paper of

pupil teachers of the first and second year in the Winchester Diocesan Inspection. It is an extremely curious document, and we have serious thoughts of sending it to the British Museum. A few centuries hence it will be as wonderful a piece of antiquity as the then editor of "Notes and Queries" could hope to find.

ONE question is very funny—"Give instances of David's tenderness, piety, and love for his people." David's tenderness was shown to other men's wives. As for the husbands, he burked them. Witness the cases of Nabal and Uriah. His tenderness towards his own wife, who foolishly saved his life on one occasion, was shown in his cursing her for being a modest woman. His piety was shown in dancing indecently before the ark. His love for his people was shown in his getting seventy thousand of them killed by profanely taking a census. If these answers do not suffice we can give more. We should really like to compete in a good Bible examination, and we fancy we should get the first prize, if our paper didn't kill all the examiners.

MR. E. C. EDWARDS continues to enliven the dullness of Tunbridge Wells by his appearances before the "beak." He has been summoned and fined the tenth time for selling sweets on a Sunday, and he won't discontinue his pernicious conduct. He even has the extraordinary impudence to tell the Bench that members of the local Board may actually be seen superintending the construction of a new railway at the very same time that he is charged with dispensing confectionary. This deluded man is very far gone. Nobody but a confirmed lunatic would ever ask Christian magistrates to apply an obnoxious old law impartially to the rich and poor. To do so would shake the foundations of society, and imperil the constitution of the land.

"CONSIDERABLE funds are urgently needed." Such is the prominent line in an advertisement of the Christian Evidence Society, whose reverend secretaries receive over £500 for their distinguished services in quelling infidelity. The poor J. E. S. seems to have received a dreadful blow by the loss of two principal patrons, Earl Harrowby and the Rev. Sir E. R. Jodrell.

By THE WAY, it is not generally known that the name "Christian Evidence Society" was originally founded by the Rev. Robert Taylor, better known as the Devil's chaplain and author of the "Diagnosis" and "Devil's Pulpit." His society, however, was established to inquire into the evidences of Christianity, which is the last thing contemplated by the institution in Buckingham Steeet.

THE Rev. Peter McKenzie, described as "the popular lecturer," has been holding forth at Lockwood to the survivors of a Methodist tea-fight on "General Joshua and his Mighty Conquests." According to the wonderful orator, Joshua's victories were of "more importance to the world than a thousand Tel-el Kebirs." Perhaps so; but Sir Garnet might retort that he won his victory without the aid of Jehovah or the miraculous horns of his priests. There isn't much skill or valor required when the Lord knocks down the enemy's fortifications and frightens them into fits.

PETER MCKENZIE has a noble idea of happiness. He remarks that the Jews were better off than our British workmen, as "they had nothing else to do but gather manna and sing praises." What a glorious laziness, to be sure! Our Bible, however, gives us a different idea. Those Jews were very busily occupied in ravishing and murder, and there, we take it, the British workman has a clear advantage.

THE *Homiletic Magazine* finds a striking proof of the truth of Bible history in a painting which has been discovered at Pompeii, and which is supposed to represent the judgment of Solomon. The *H. M.* is evidently unaware that the Buddhists relate a similar judgment of a king between the rival claims of two women for a child.

POOR Maloney got a severe doing at the Court of Queen's Bench last Saturday. The judges (Hawkins and Williams) were as severe upon him as Mr. Bradlaugh. In trying to show cause that the two added counts to the indictment against the *Freethinker* should be retained, he denied the jurisdiction of the Court despite the indictment laying before it. Justice Hawkins told him plainly that the order surreptitiously obtained from the Recorder did not even give permission to insert these particular counts, and Justice Williams added that there had been on the part of the prosecution, in regard to these counts, a violation of the provisions of the Vexatious Indictment Act, 1867.

The application by Mr. Avory, on behalf of Mr. Rainsey, to demur and plead over, was refused on the ground that the objections were merely technical.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures this evening (Sunday, December 24th), in the Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, London, at 7 o'clock; subject, "An Hour with the Devil."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

December 31st, Sheffield.

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

February 4th, Leeds; 11th, York; 18th, Plymouth.

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

CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Publisher, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.C.

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

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—Edgar J. Benton, J. Saunders, W. Smith, H. Paine, X. Y. Z.

MORGAN PRICE, Bell's Hill, near Hamilton, states that he has never seen such a funny picture as "Moses getting a back view of Jehovah" in our Christmas Number. He says "it was a quarter of a hour before it broke on me, and since then I cannot even think of it without laughing."

ARTHUR WELLS.—The only effect of the recent decision to us, will be that we have fourteen counts to answer instead of sixteen.

W. H. H. (Southampton) says that our Christmas Number is "a treat" (they all use the same word), and that "Arrows of Free-thought" is a useful repertoire of arguments against Christians and Deists. He says also that pressure is being put on the Liberal Association, which refused the use of its hall for Mr. Foote's lecture, and with some prospect of success.

C. T. P. J.—You doubtless have reason to complain of the Salvation idiots being allowed to disturb the peace of your quiet little town, but as you cannot stop their antics you had better leave them severely alone.

W. J. MORRIS.—Thanks for the card. Your figures may be of use some day.

W. H. U.—Cuttings are always welcome. If our Christmas Number "stole your soul away," why didn't you get it bespoke for Tyler. He wants one badly.

W. C. G. (India).—Our publisher will forward the missing number. We are very much pleased to find readers in such remote countries regarding the *Freethinker* as their "weekly treat." The title of Mr. Foote's new magazine is *Progress*. Particulars will be found in the advertisement.

J. H. WHITHAM.—Please send all orders for literature direct to our publisher. We have no doubt that the Blasphemy Petitions are ready for signatures at all Secular meeting places. If not they should be. "Arrows of Free-thought" was intended to be a check to Christian superstition, and it is gratifying to know that it serves its purpose.

R. NICHOLLS.—We dare say Mr. Broadhurst will vote straight next time. He must by this time see that he made a mistake. If he persists in going wrong on the Sunday question, you and your friends in Stoke must haul him over the coals.

W. H. SPIVEY, 44 Back Union Street, Huddersfield, will give one shilling for a clean copy of the *Freethinker*, Vol. I., No. 8.

PERSONNE.—Thanks. We are always pleased to hear from readers who feel, as you do, some gratitude for mental enfranchisement derived from a perusal of our pages.

E. BARKER.—Your cuttings will be used in due course.

J. H.—The case is too disgusting for our pages. Besides, you cannot expect us to publish such horrible statements about people we don't know, from purely private information, especially when the informant objects to take any responsibility. When such things get into the newspapers we sometimes give them a passing notice; not otherwise.

F. MILLAR writes that the Secular cause is progressing very favorably at Peterboro', and that the *Freethinker* is not only increasing in circulation there, but is opening the eyes of young men and alarming their elders. The local *Express* has opened its columns to a spirited correspondence on Christianity and Free-thought.

J. HOCKER.—Our reference to Mr. Home was merely incidental. We have no room for a discussion of Spiritism. You are entitled to believe what you have seen, but that is no evidence to other people.

A. F. S.—Your joke was handed to our sub-editor, who will no doubt use it in time.

MEDCIS asks at what Council women were affirmed to have souls. We have not the information at our fingers ends, but will endeavor to look it up. We hope to bring out a Summer Number, the Christmas one is a great success. Very pleased to hear from you.

BEUCE.—Christmas is an old heathen festival and is made a season of festivity even by Jews. Thanks for scraps.

S. WALTER IRVINE orders Christmas Number, but sends no address.

SUGAR PLUMS.

ANOTHER secession in America. The Rev. W. T. Cheney, of Rome, Georgia, U.S., has publicly announced his disbelief in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The Rev. G. Miln, who recently came out of the Church at Chicago, was a native of London.

THE North London Branch of the National Secular Society is arranging for a Children's Christmas Party in Claremont Hall. Mr. A. Cooper, of 39 Roman Road, Barnsbury, N., will be glad to hear from any Freethinkers in the district who can assist with work or subscriptions. Such a good object is sure to command support.

THE *Jewish World*, alluding to the phrase of Réan that the morality of Jesus was "the current coin of the synagogue," and referring to Hillel, whom Goldwin Smith calls "the precursor of Christianity," declares that the highest ideal the Christian could set himself to realise was that of attaining to the moral standard of the "Talmud Jew."

MR. YORKE, in his able work on "Evolution and Christianity" (just published), gives abundant evidence that there was nothing new in Christian ethics, and that even Hebrew morality had risen to what is called "Christian elevation" before the time of Christ.

THE *Hulme Gazette* continues its manly pleas for complete secular education. In a recent number it said: "Ideas about God, Creation, Fall of Man, the Redemption, the Mosaic Cosmogony, Miracles, Prophecies, Witches, Ghosts, Immortality, Hell, Heaven, Transubstantiation, Baptism, Infallibility, Creeds and Dogmas, are all too much for the minds of men and children, should be left entirely free. All such things are sources of interminable quarrels amongst people who profess to know all about them."

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* says:—"It was the high priest of Nishi-hong-wan-ji who was selected by the reforming Japanese Government of 1868, to proceed to London and to report on the influence of the Christian religion on public morals in England. It was the intention of the Japanese Government that if the report were favorable, Christianity should be introduced throughout the country. But after the high priest—a most enlightened and spiritually minded man, of very liberal views—had spent eighteen months in London, he reported to his Government that Christianity was far more powerless than either Shinto or Buddhism in preventing crime, and particularly drunkenness, and it was therefore resolved to make no change in the public religion of Japan."

DEATH OF MR. D. M. BENNETT.

It is with great regret we have to record the sudden death of Mr. D. M. Bennett, editor of the *New York Truthseeker*, from gastritis, coupled with an affection of the heart. America has many Freethinkers of note, but it can ill inform to lose one so sterling and unswerving as the late Mr. Bennett. To Mrs. Bennett, who faithfully stood by him during many trials, we beg to offer our sincere condolence.

Mr. Bennett was born in the township of Springfield, Ostego Co., New York, December 23rd, 1818. His parents were poor but gave him a decent education. When about fifteen years, he joined the Shaker Society in New Lebanon, N. Y. In 1846, having lost faith in their peculiar creed, he went west to Louisville, Kentucky, where he started a drug-store. The perusal of Paine, Volney, and similar works, completely eradicated the superstitious beliefs in which he had been reared, and he became an uncompromising Freethinker. It was not, however, until 1873, that, having a controversy with some ministers on the subject of prayer, and his letters in answer being refused insertion in a local journal, he resolved to start a paper of his own. The result was the *Truthseeker*, which ever since has taken its place as one of the boldest champions of infidelity in America. It will be in most of our readers' recollections how Mr. Bennett suffered imprisonment for selling a work too bold for orthodoxy, and how his admirers upon his release sent him for a year's voyage round the world, from which he had only recently returned. Among his published works are the records of his travels entitled, "A Truthseeker's Voyage round the World;" two large volumes on "The Gods," Discussions with Humphrey and Mab; "Letters from Albany Penitentiary;" and numerous tracts.

THE "FREETHINKER" DEFENCE FUND.—J. H. Whitham, 1s.; N. Sanford, 6d.; T. M., 1s.; G. Whatcott, 1s.; W. Randall, 10s. J. W. Whetham, 9d.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

[Translated from DIDEROT.]

FROM the portrait shown to me of the Supreme Being, from his angry disposition, from the disparity in number between those he leaves to perish and those whom he deigns to save, the most rigorous spirit would be tempted to wish that he did not exist. We should be tranquil enough in this world if we were well assured that we had nothing to fear in another. The thought that there is no God has never frightened anyone, but rather the thought that there is such a God as the one depicted.

I TELL you that there is no God, that creation is a chimera, that the eternity of the universe is no more extraordinary than the eternity of a spirit; that, because I do not know how motion has produced this universe which it has such power to conserve, it is ridiculous to obviate the difficulty by the supposed existence of a being I am quite as unable to conceive; that, if the shining wonders of nature's order reveal intelligence, the disorders that prevail in the moral world annihilate all providence. I tell you that, if everything is the work of a God, everything should be of the highest excellence; for if everything is not so, it accuses God of impotence or ill-will. It is then for the best that I am no more enlightened as to his existence. That granted, of what use to me are your lights? When it is shown that almost every evil is a source of good; that it was good that a Britannicus, the best of princes, should perish; that a Nero, the wickedest of men, should reign; how can it be proved impossible that the same end could have reached without the same means? To permit vices in order to heighten the glory of virtue, is to pay the price of a most real injury for a very trivial advantage. This, says the Atheist, is my objection; What is your reply?—*That I am a wretch; and that if I had no reason to fear God I should not deny his existence.*

Let us leave such words to vulgar rhetoricians; they outrage truth and good taste, and show very little charity. Because a man is wrong not to believe in God, have we any right to insult him? We resort to invective only when we lack evidence. Between two disputants, it is a hundred to one that he who is in the wrong will lose his temper.

Thou seizest thy thunder instead of answering, says Menippus to Jupiter; are you then in the wrong?

A MAN was one day asked whether there are any real Atheists. Do you believe, replied he, there are any true Christians?

WHAT has never been questioned has never been proved; what has not been examined without prejudice has never been examined. Scepticism is the first step towards truth. It should be general, for it is the touchstone of truth.

WANDERING in an immense forest by night, I have only a little light to guide me. A stranger comes and says "My friend, blow out your torch in order to find your way better." That stranger is the theologian.

If there are a hundred damned for every one saved, the Devil has always the best of it without having his son put to death.

I HEAR everywhere the cry of blasphemy. The Christian is blasphemous in Asia, the Mussulman in Europe, the Papist in London, the Calvinist in Paris, the Jansenist at the top of the rue Saint-Jacques, the Molinist at the bottom of the faubourg of Saint-Medard. Who then is a blasphemer? Everybody or no one.

THE age of revelations, of prodigies, and of extraordinary missions, is past; Christianity has no more need of that scaffolding. A man who undertook to play amongst us the rôle of Jonah, to go through the streets crying, "Yet three days and Paris shall be no more; repent ye Parisians, cover yourself with sackcloth and ashes, or in three days you will perish," would be at once seized and brought before a magistrate, who would certainly send him to the madhouse. He might say, "O people, does God love you less than the Ninevites, and are you less guilty than they?" But no one would condescend to answer, and we should treat him as a visionary without awaiting the term of his prediction.

Elias may come from the other world when he pleases, but men are such that he will have to work some very great miracles before he gets a good reception here.

THE God of the Christians is a father who thinks a lot more of his apples than of his children.

TAKE away from a Christian the fear of hell, and you take away his creed.

To prove the Gospel by a miracle, is to prove an absurdity by something against nature.

ALL the Jews in Jerusalem were, then, apparently converted on seeing the miracles of Christ? Not so. Far from believing in him, they crucified him. It must be confessed that those Jews were strange men; everywhere we have seen peoples led away by a single false miracle, yet Jesus Christ could not move the Jews with a multitude of true ones. The incredulity of the Jews is the miracle to be accounted for, and not the resurrection.

THE religion of Jesus Christ, promulgated by ignorant men, made the first Christians. The same religion, preached by doctors and scholars, to-day makes nothing but sceptics.

IT is the education of childhood which forbids baptism to a Mohammedan; it is the education of childhood which forbids circumcision to a Christian; it is man's adult reason which despises equally baptism and circumcision.

GOD, who put God to death to satisfy God, is an excellent *mot* of Baron Houtan. There is less conviction in a hundred folios, written for or against Christianity, than in the ridicule of that one line.

THE Trinity are either three accidents or three substances. There is no middle course. If they are three accidents, we are Atheists or Deists; if they are three substances we are Pagans.

GOD THE FATHER judges men as deserving his eternal vengeance; God the Son judges them as worthy of his infinite pity; the Holy Ghost remains neutral. How is this Christian verbiage to be reconciled with the unity of the divine will?

No good father would resemble our heavenly father. . . . We say that God should burn the wicked, who can do him no injury, in an everlasting fire; and we hardly allow a father to kill suddenly a son who endangers his life, his honor and his fortune.

PASCAL says: "If our religion is false, you risk nothing in believing it to be true; if it is true, you risk all in believing it to be false." A Mohammedan priest could say the same to Pascal.

If Jesus Christ, who is God, was tempted by the Devil, it is a story worthy of the "Arabian Nights."

If my reason came from above it is the voice of heaven to me, and I must listen to it.

[G. W. F.]

"L O O S E."

The Foote of common sense has spurned away
The Church's silly creed; and does so rife her
That roof and walls begin to show decay,
And so, she calls in to her aid a Tyler.
Poor luckless wight! your task is truly hard.
Do what you will, for misery you are fated:
Your work, like that of Tennyson the bard
Will be, I fear me, most severely *slated*.

HENRY R. WRIGHT.

HAVING AN EYE TO BUSINESS.—A church was being painted inside, the painter was whistling a comic song, and keeping time with his brush. The parson walked in unperceived and said to the painter: "Do you know that you are in the house of God. You should not whistle songs, but hymns." On the parson coming in again during the day the painter was whistling the "Dead March in Saul," the brush moving to time. "Oh, stop that," cried the parson, "and go on with your comic song, or we shall never get the church finished by Sunday, and it's collection day, too."

TOWARDS the close of the usual stump oration, the nigger comedian thus narrated a story connected with the Egyptian war: Two brothers before starting were each presented with a Bible. The good young man took care of his Bible, but the bad young man threw his away. The good young man went into the thick of the fight, and his Bible was there. The bullets sought their billets but the Bible was there—next to his heart—and at the close was found most providentially pierced with a stopped bullet. The bad young man was also engaged, but no Bible was there; he was struck, too, and no Bible was there—but a pack of cards was, which did just as well.—Great applause and laughter.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

THE CLERGY—They have the strongest interest in the depravation of the human intellect. For the demand for their services as agents for the temporal aid of the Deity, altogether depends upon human ignorance and incapacity, and is exactly proportional to it. Why does a man apply for the divine assistance? Because he does not know how to accomplish his ends without it, or how to procure the requisite apparatus for the purpose. If he knew any physical means of attaining it, he would unquestionably prefer them. Every extension therefore of physical methods in the gratification of our wishes, displaces and throws out of employment by so much the labor of the aërial functionaries. No one prays for the removal of a disease by supernatural aid, when he once knows an appropriate surgical remedy. He therefore who lives by the commission which he charges on the disposal of the former, has a manifest interest in checking the advance and introduction of the latter.—*George Grote*, "Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion," p. 108; Truelove, 1875.

HEATHEN NEGLECT OF THE CHRISTIAN WONDERS.—But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by numerous prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of Nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the Sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest part of a year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendor. This season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the preternatural darkness of the Passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets and historians of that memorable age.—*Edward Gibbon*, "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," end of chapter, xv.

PROFANE JOKES.

The old clerk in a certain church once gave out the hymn as usual in a somewhat unusual manner: "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God, a hymn o' me own makin'."

"You can't tell me that I am descended from a monkey," said Brown. "And you wouldn't want to wound his feelings by telling it to the monkey," added Fogg.

An old Scotch woman, wishing to cross the river Forth, hesitated to enter the ferryboat, because a storm was brewing. The boatman asked if she would not trust in providence. "Na, na," said she, "I will na trust in Providence so long as there is a brig at Stirling."

We learn from an exchange that a Welshman's oath is "Y'mw lgnw wggll." This is too awfully awfully awful, and it looks like a fishworm.

THE ORIGIN OF SPEECH.

When first in Eden's bower, they say,
No power of speech had Adam caught,
But whistled like the birds, all day—
'Twas I suppose from want of thought;
But Nature, with resistless laws,
Made Adam soon surpass the birds,
She gave him lovely Eve because
If he'd a *Wife* they must have "words."

THE HIGHEST DIGNITARY.—A school teacher lately asked a boy: "Which is the highest dignity of the church?" After looking up and down, north and east, south and west, the boy replied: "The weather-cock."

"I BELIEVE you are connected with the Church in Elm Street, are you not, Mr. Dickson?" said the customer. "No, sah, not at all." "What! are you not a member of the African Church?" "Not dis year, sah." "Why did you leave their communion. Mr. Dickson, if I may be permitted to ask?" "Well, I'll tell you, sah," said Mr. Dickson, stropping concave razors on the palm of his hand, "it was jes like dis. I jined de church in good fait'; I gave ten dollars towards starting de gospel de fus' yeah, and de church people call me 'Brudder Dickson'; second yeah, my business being not so good, and I gib only five dollars. That year de people call me 'Mr. Dickson.' Dis razor hurt you, sah?" "No, the razor goes tolerably well." "Well, sah, the third yeah I fell berry poor; had sickness in my family; I gib noffin' for preachin' Well, sah, arter dat dey call me 'that ole nigger Dickson,' an' I left 'em!"

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