

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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JANUARY 28, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"COMIC BIBLE" SKETCHES.—LV.



A MEAT (?) OFFERING.

"And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meat offering; as the Lord commanded Moses."—EXODUS xl., 29.

CLERICAL WAILINGS.

Nor a week goes by without some professional soul-saver lifting up his voice against this journal. Sometimes it is a whine, sometimes a howl, and sometimes a roar. But in every case there is the same wail over our mere existence. Anybody who listened to these Jeremiahs for five minutes would suppose that Christianity or the *Freethinker* will have to be put down. Well, they are perhaps right, and we have no objection to the matter being decided in a fair and sensible way. But that is what the clericals wish to prevent. They desire to see the *Freethinker* put down by the law, that is by force. Some of them would go farther if they could. They would roast the editor and his staff, boil the compositors, and fry the printer's devil; and then export them in tins to allay the cannibal appetite of the heathen who might otherwise dine off fresh missionary. It is a most curious thing that ever since Cain knocked out Abel's brains in a religious quarrel, most of the people who worship the same deity as they did have shown a

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strong inclination to settle their disputes in the primitive way; proving

"their doctrine orthodox
By apostolic blows and knocks."

This is a base and paltry method. Why not trust to reason and discussion. For our part, we cry "shame" on the Christians who are afraid of argument, and anxious to settle all criticism with the policeman's truncheon. We deny their right to use such a weapon. There is only one material weapon we are ready to allow them, and that Nature has provided them with. Let them imitate Samson and stick to the jawbone of an ass.

The *Northampton Chronicle* publishes the bray of one of these creatures. It appears that the Rev. Mr. Oates recently presided at a lecture on "The Pleasures of Literature" in Doddridge Chapel School-room; and he improved the occasion by uttering his wail over this horrible specimen of current blasphemy. Unfortunately "there was only a small attendance," perhaps because it was known who would take the chair; and Mr. Oates's gratuitous advertisement was not so valuable as it might have been. He did his best in the circumstances, however, and he is reported to have delivered himself thus:—

"Rev. Mr. Oates dwelt upon the different kinds of literature now published, and alluding to the *Freethinker*, said a more foul, filthy, and loathsome paper had never been issued. The mind that originated the articles, and the hand that delineated the cartoons in that paper, must be under the direct inspiration of the genius of evil. It was scarcely necessary for him to warn young men and women against literature of that description. Such literature was immoral and injurious in its nature, yet it was being largely circulated and being read by the young."

We sincerely hope that Mr. Oates's concluding statement is true, and if it is we can understand his anger. He and his brethren in the preaching and collection business naturally dread the influence of Freethought on the young. It draws them from the clutches of these harpies and prevents their being made life-long victims to folly and fraud. The vast army of black-coated loafers know very well that their game is played out when they can no longer manipulate young minds at their pleasure. Oh yes, they have an obvious interest in warning "the young" against Freethought.

Mr. Oates says that we are under the direct inspiration of the Devil. Well, there is no harm in that. We have read the Bible very carefully, and our deliberate opinion is that the Devil is the finest gentleman in it. He never lied or even stooped to deception; never robbed; never carried on a *liaison* with a betrothed young woman; never played the fool; never cursed like a madman; never made the innocent suffer for the guilty; never destroyed thousands of people by fiery serpents, famine, pestilence and earthquake; never drowned all the world's inhabitants at one fell swoop; never killed seventy thousand Jews because their king took a census; never hardened a ruler's heart in order to plague his people with dreadful calamities; never kept an army of favorite butchers who delighted in murder and outrage; never ordered the wholesale extermination of women and children; never handed over thousands of young virgins to the lust of a brutal soldiery, or accepted thirty-two of them as his own share of the spoil. No, all these things were done by his malignant rival. Mr. Oates is, we presume, under the inspiration of God; and accord-

ing to his view, we are under the inspiration of the Devil. Very good; we are satisfied if he is, and we don't envy his fortune.

Our articles and cartoons are dreadful thorns in the side of these clericals, who hate ridicule and every form of wit. They and their creed are dull and lugubrious, and often morose; exactly like the God they worship. As we are on the Devil's side, we have naturally something of his spightfulness and good humor.

We can quite understand, also, how "loathsome" we are to the clerical mind. We add insult to injury, by attacking them and laughing at them too. But when they call the *Freethinker* "foul and filthy" we must beg to differ. No filth ever appears in our pages except what is derived from the Bible. Finding fault with us is like blaming a reporter for the revelations of a criminal court. We use decent language even when exposing indecency, and sober language even when exposing horrors. Mr. Oates can easily find something "more foul, filthy and loathsome" than the *Freethinker* by turning to the book he lives on. The Bible contains such obscenity that editions are now carefully expurgated for the use of children; and if Mr. Oates is anything of a Hebrew scholar, he knows that there are many passages in the original which our English translators never dared to render faithfully. Even as the Word of God now stands, there are obscene stories and dirty expressions in it, which we defy Mr. Oates to read out to his congregation, unless he is prepared to be kicked from the pulpit to the doorsteps.

These clerical wailings are on the whole a great joke. We laugh at them. And when the wailers turn upon us with the rage of their kind, we simply stand firm and defy them.

G. W. FOOTE.

BIBLE EXAGGERATIONS.

"And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men."—2 CHRON. xiii., 16-17.

WHATEVER else might fairly be expected from a divine revelation, the least exacting should demand that it shall be accurate in its statements. In nothing is human fallibility more conspicuous than in egotism and over statement. The man who exaggerates his personal prowess, and the number of enemies he has conquered, betrays his own weakness, as well as subjects himself to the imputation of being a liar and a braggart; and this certainly none the less if he does it under pretence of divine inspiration.

The text which we have prefixed to this article is one of many instances that the people of Judah were not exempt from that bombastic character which specially distinguishes all savage races, and from which the most civilised are not entirely exempt. We think it was Dr. Russell who made the statement that during the course of the Crimean war, there were more Russians reported in the French and English papers as killed and wounded than the entire strength of the Russian army. But no journal went the length of slaughtering five hundred thousand chosen men in one battle. The most sanguinary conflicts of history; all the records of the great kingdoms of Egypt, Babylonia and Persia never approached the number slain in this battle between two rival tribes, both inhabiting a country less in extent than the principality of Wales, and which it has been computed could not then give subsistence to more than 30,000 people. Waterloo, Gettysburg and Sadowa were nothing to this great battle. No wonder we are told (v. 21) "Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons and sixteen daughters."

But this tremendous slaughter is of a piece with all the other Jewish references to their own chosen selves. In a spirit of boastful hyperbole they continually vaunt the doings of their ancestors. They were the favorites of the Creator, who always delivered their enemies into their hands. Jahveh had promised Abraham that his seed should be as the sands of the sea-shore; which they never were. The seventy who went down into Egypt miraculously turned into six hundred thousand fighting men, and therefore a population of at least two millions, in five generations, and all these with their flocks and herds were miraculously fed while journeying for forty years through a desert that might have been traversed in as many days. Forty was a favorite number

with the Jews. Some have conjectured that this was originally as high as they could count, and so it stood for any large number. The rain was on the earth forty days. Moses and Elijah fasted forty days, and Jesus and Dr. Tanner had to follow suit. The time came, however, when the Jews counted by hundreds and thousands, and they were very liberal with them. Every one knows the revolting story of how the Lord delivered six hundred and seventy five thousand Midianitish sheep, and thirty two thousand virgins into their hands and what they did with them (Numbers xxxi.) When the Assyrians were visited by an angel of the Lord, one hundred and eighty five thousand were slain in one night. "And when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (Isaiah xxxvii., 36). In 2 Chron. xxviii., 6, we read that "Pekah the son of Remaliah, slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, all valiant men; because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers." Moreover, the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand. No less than fifty thousand and seventy of the little village of Bethshemish were slain for looking into Jahveh's travelling trunk (1 Sam. vi., 19). David, who is said to have been himself worth ten thousand men (2 Sam. xviii, 3), when moved by Jahveh or by Satan to number Israel (compare 2 Sam. xxiv., with 1 Chron. xxi., 1) had as swordsmen in Israel "a thousand thousand and a hundred thousand men" according to Chronicles, or the quite equally inspired and almost equally incredible number of "eight hundred thousand," according to the less unvarnished scribe of 2 Samuel. Jahveh, according to both the chroniclers, was not satisfied with slaying less than seventy thousand for the king's offence in wisely taking a census of his fighting men. We better realise the farce of these numbers when we remember that the Philistines also inhabiting the same little barren strip of territory are stated to have had thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen and people, as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude (1 Sam. xiii., 5).

The difference between the accounts of the various books is a caution to those who believe the writers were inspired in their figures. Thus 2 Chron. ix., 25, gives Solomon four thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, but 1 Kings iv., 26, makes it forty thousand. On the other hand, 1 Kings v., 11, makes Solomon give Hiram only twenty measures of oil, but according to 2 Chron. ii., 10, it was twenty thousand baths of oil. But the discrepancies in regard to numbers alone are endless.

It was doubtless the same spirit of vaunting which made the Jews declare the patriarchs to have lived to such extraordinary ages, and that their mighty men performed such deeds of prowess. Gideon, with three hundred men, defeats an army of Midianites, "like grasshoppers for multitude." Samson catches exactly three hundred foxes and ties firebrands to their tails. He slays a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. Shangar, as illustrated in our last number, slew six hundred with an ox-goat. These inspired chroniclers were evidently not followers of the conscientious trapper who boasted of having killed one hundred and ninety-nine bears, and when asked why he did not say two hundred, declared "he wouldn't tell a lie for a single ba'r."

The cheek of these Jews approached sublimity. Their tribal god was above all the other gods of Egypt, Assyria, India or China, and when Jahveh crew on his little Palestinian dunghill, all the gods of the earth were supposed to keep silence. The inspired references to the sterile country of Palestine, as the land of promise flowing with milk and honey, is also probably to be ascribed to the vanity of the Jews, as well as to their misfortunes which made them weep for Zion when they sat down by Babylonian waters. Things which are lost are often thought of the utmost value, which, if recovered, would quickly decline in estimation. Modern Jews are too shrewd to desire a return to the parson, pilgrim, and vermin-plagued city known as "Jerusalem the golden." They are not quite so sure of the prophecy that "ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is Jew, saying, We will go with you," or that all the nations of this earth shall be judged in the valley of Jehosaphat. Such manifest exaggerations, as those I have instanced, would be ascribed to national vanity, if they occurred in other histories or other sacred books. They are received as unquestionable truths because found in the Bible, simply because that curious collection of legendary documents is

put into our hands in childhood as God's holy word, and because it usually remains through life far more often talked of than read, and more read than examined.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.

[SECOND SERIES.]

VII.

MEN AND WOMEN OF FAITH.

THOSE believers whose lives I recounted in my last paper may be precious in the sight of God and his angels, but they were of no use to mankind. The world can spare any quantity of them—if the race is not extinct. One day laborer, even the meanest, is of more value to mankind than an army of saints, if they are no better than the Bible specimens.

10. *By faith Moses*—was hidden three months. Then faith and fear are one; for it was fear of seeing him murdered that led his parents to hide him. *Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*, you say? Preferred to be *evil entreated with the people of God*, you tell me? Gave up the *pleasures of sin*, did he? Counted the *reproach of Christ* to be *greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*, you think? Who told you all this, good sir? These things are not mentioned in the Old Testament. You must have quoted some other life of Moses, you unknown author of this epistle to the Hebrews. Or did you invent all this about the self-denial of Moses? The truth is, if the Pentateuch is to be depended on, Moses left Egypt because he had committed a murder, and feared the police would discover the deed and its perpetrator. It is far more likely that Pharaoh's daughter repudiated him, than that he repudiated her. Very likely she found him so great a scape-grace that she could bear with him no longer.

When you tell us that Moses chose rather to suffer with the Israelites than to enjoy himself with the Egyptians, you do not flatter his taste, nor do you tell the truth. But when you say he preferred the reproach of Christ to the riches of Egypt, what do you mean? Moses knew no more of Christ than Christ did of the Pope of Rome or the Archbishop of Canterbury. Moses knew just as much of Christ as I know of the king of Panganora, who may, for aught I know, come to the throne in the year A.D. 3700. It is a pity, sir, that you had not some respect for common decency when you wrote; that would have kept you from this gross attempt at imposition. When you say Moses *looked unto the recompense of reward*, we can believe you. All God's servants do. They give up nothing without expecting at least one hundredfold in return—and that is the highest known Christian goodness. But when you say he forsook Egypt *not fearing the wrath of the king*, you flatly contradict the Holy Ghost (Exodus ii., 15).

11. *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land*. The story in Exodus says they did it by sight, or implies as much. However, perhaps we are to understand that the passage of the Red Sea was not a real, but a *believed* event. If they *really* did it, faith was unnecessary. If they merely believed they did, we are not bound to believe it. It was, by the by, a grand mistake of the storyteller to have recorded so trifling a miracle! If he had only written that the Israelites in one night walked right across the Indian Ocean, from Ceylon to Aden, or thereabouts—not upon the ocean-bottom, but all along upon the surface of the sea, with all their goods, furniture, animals, and other property, sitting down to rest now and again upon a kindly wave that rose for the purpose—he would have commanded universal belief. But who can swallow such a miserable trifle as the story of crossing a sea only ten miles or so broad at that particular part, and all along on the bottom, too, when there was no necessity whatever for displacing the water?

12. *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down*. Here again the writer contradicts the Book of Joshua. It was not faith that brought down those famous walls, it was the blowing of ramshorns. The fact seems to have been as follows: Those walls were evidently of a musical turn; and the priests blew their horns so atrociously out of tune, made such horrible discord, indeed, that the walls trembled violently from day to day. But when on the seventh day the priests circled round them seven times, and wound up by that most infernal blast, the walls could stand no more, and down they tumbled. Any fortress in the world would

do the same if subjected to similar treatment. Let the Salvation Army try one.

Stay! I may have misinterpreted mine author. He says, *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down*. To be sure! I see it now. They were believing walls, and merely fell down on their knees to worship, and the Israelites took advantage of the posture to destroy the city. The reader will see that this must be the sense, for in each case we have the same formula—*by faith* so and so did such and such; and the walls take their turn along with the rest. Those were days when mountains skipped and hills danced, and why should not walls believe and bow in worship?

13. *By faith Rahab*—hid the spies, sent them away in safety, told a lie, betrayed a whole city full into the hands of the bloodthirsty and merciless Hebrews. Judas was damned for betraying *one*, and that one an Almighty God in disguise; Rahab betrayed a whole city full of people, two-thirds, no doubt, women and children. They were all slaughtered except her own kin. And by this she was justified (James ii., 25). Yes, yes, Christianity enthrones and consecrates the worst of crimes, when not committed against herself.

JOSEPH SYMES.

(To be continued.)

NATURE'S LESSON.

List to the music—the frolic and rustle,
The mimic dash and roar—
List, as the streamlet with ardor and bustle
Splashes from shore to shore!
Whirling and purling
And modestly curling
Thro' meadow and woodland and moor;
Then turn to the ditch—that foul noisome puddle
That stagnates by it's side—
Hemmed in with it's filth, it's muck and it's muddle
Stopless! for ever tied!
The Nightshade round the Nettle twin'd—
Death and darkness here combin'd
O'er its face triumphant ride!
* * * * *
Flow on, bright stream! Flow on!
E'er increasing—Never ceasing;
Nature's Lesson to mankind—
"Liberty leaves all behind!"

EDGAR T. BENTON.

ACID DROPS.

If any illustration is needed of the ennobling influence of Christianity refer to the speech of Marshal von Manteuffel, governor of Alsace-Lorraine, as reported in the *Times*:—"Gentleman," said he, "I am a soldier, and war is the soldier's element; and well I should like again to experience the elevated feeling of commanding in a pitched battle, knowing that the balls of the enemy are every instant summoning men before the judgment seat of God, and knowing that on the order one gives depend the issue of the fight and the destinies of the Fatherland. This feeling is divinely great." Truly this is a glorious creed that inspires men to blot out of existence their brothers in the hey-day of life; and extends its congratulations to those men, fathers, husbands, and sons who are shot straight up to the judgment seat of God by the balls of the enemy. These are "elevated feelings" in all conscience.

HEAR further what this bloodthirsty vice-gerent of the most Christian Emperor proposes: "That a school should be established in the conquered provinces for 'enfants de troupes,' that is, a school, wherein the education is mainly of a military character; where children are taught how to manipulate firearms and swords, and versed in the evolutions of war. Remarkable association is this with a so-called Christian faith founded on a string of puerile fables and an illogical, unscientific cosmogony; which would have a child's first prattle to be of mutual strife, and its only implements those typical of mutual destruction.

THE convict who, a few days ago escaped from the Portsmouth prison has been recaptured. He was apprehended walking along a road *disguised as a clergyman*. The moral is obvious but not complimentary, "If you don't wish to be taken for a rascal never assume the appearance of a clergyman."

LAST week the Salvationists had a special Holiness meeting at the Grecian with the object of raising more cash. The

general informed his soldiers that although they got little pay from the Army they would have a large pension after death, when, instead of being pelted in the streets, they would walk about in glory in the streets of the New Jerusalem.

WE hear from one behind the scenes that the Salvationists are threatened with a collapse at the Grecian. Their receipts scarcely enable them to meet the current expenses for ground rent and gas. The people are getting tired of the entertainment, and the number of buttons dropped in the collection box are alarmingly on the increase.

THE author of "The Evolution of Christianity," says if Jesus could have foreseen the doings of the Salvation Army he would have exhorted his hearers: Take heed that ye confess not your sins before men, to be heard by them: otherwise ye have no forgiveness from your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou wouldst confess thy transgressions do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the Synagogues and streets, that they may have glory of men; but enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door confess thy faults to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father what seeth in secret will grant thee forgiveness.

THE Prophet of Nazareth however was too convinced of his own speedy second coming and the immediate destruction of the world to make any provisions against the thousand and one vagaries of those who have disturbed and distracted the world in his name.

Down at Stockport the performing female known as "Captain" Guffick recently baptised "a hinfant," whose father is described as a "salvation soldier," who "formerly entertained the views of an infidel." The man's name is Moss. Do any of our readers in the Stockport district know this obscure person?

THE *Church Review* calls the Church Association "The Church Persecution Company (limited)." How these Christians love one another.

BEECHER rejects all the old creeds and calls them "tombstones of dead beliefs." He however retains belief in some sort of a Trinity because that may be defended by some kind of metaphysical *locus pocus*, while he rejects the doctrine of eternal punishment which has far more authority in the New Testament than that of the three persons and one God.

THE *Church Times* last week spoke of the Archbishop of York's "total incapacity even to imagine how a gentleman would think or act upon any occasion." The *Rock* this week is only a little less direct in putting the Bishop of London into the same category. In a paper directed against Bishop Jackson it says: "A man who cannot behave himself as a gentleman is voted to be unfit to hold a commission in the army or navy. In the clerical profession this is not so. Evasion and subterfuge are in the ascendant in matters of doctrine and ritual."

As our religious contemporary points out a minister may be dishonestly insolvent, and a confirmed drunkard, but so long as he manages to go to church sober the law cannot touch him. Once a priest always a priest. He remains *in perpetuo* however big a blackguard he may be.

THE Bishop of Gloucester, in his charge, almost frantically appeals to the clergy to respect the authority of the Bishops. This is little likely to meet any response, for the Bishop of London snubs the Evangelicals at the very moment when the Bishop of Manchester is snubbing the Ritualists. Meantime the new Archbishop snubs the Nonconformists. Surely now is the time of the Liberation Society.

THAT old Bible and pistol story seems to have a new boom this fall, and it is with the utmost reluctance that we aim a blow at the venerable tradition by the following cold statement of facts. It seems that a young Deadwood City miner named Hogdon was in the habit of frequently reading from a hymn-book, the gift of his mother, which he almost invariably carried in the breast-pocket of his coat. One day last week, while said garment was hanging on a bush at a little distance, a party, familiar to the reader as the typical bold, bad man, came by, appropriated the coat, and impudently put it on at once. As it contained all the exemplary youth's money, as well as the hymn-book in question, a fight was inevitable, and both men opened fire without loss of time. The bullet that should have killed the thief lodged in the hymn-book, and enabled the desperado to walk off with a sacrilegious grin on his wicked countenance. The good young man was killed as dead as Guiteau. Now what are the writers of Sunday-school books going to do about this entire new deal?—*San Francisco Argonaut*.

WE wonder who reads the *Canonbury and Highbury Advertiser*. It is a funny paper consisting of puffing advertisements and

theological twaddle puffing the local ministers. We find evidence in its pages of the need of the new Secular Hall at Stoke Newington, if only to moderate or divert the religious bigotry manifest in the sermons reported in this paper.

Now the jury have placed on record their condemnation of Dr. Whitmarsh in regard to the distressing Hounslow suicide, it may be as well to remind the public that the doctor has been a great man among the Salvationists and other revivers of religion.

THE Bishop of Lincoln says, referring to the great funeral of M. Gambetta, Christians must view with solemn awe a spectacle in which tens of thousands of people in an important city of Europe gathered together in a funeral cortège, and yet from first to last there was no reference to a future existence, no recognition of a judgment to come, no belief in a resurrection of the body. Unless the interests of religion were attended to the cities and towns of England might become as Paris was. What a dreadful consummation to be sure.

ANOTHER of Booth's protégé's down at Spennymore has been sentenced to three months for theft. Still he says they never do it; once washed, for ever clean.

ANY person sanguine enough to credit the prosecutor of this paper with good faith, is advised to carefully read the report of the meeting of the Brush Electric Light Corporation (Limited) in the papers for January 24th.

WOULD Sir Henry Tyler kindly tell the world how much piety he has put into his directorship of the Anglo-American Brush Electric Light Corporation? A great many shareholders cry out that they have been *done*. Our opinion is, and it is not hastily formed, that Sir Henry Tyler would have made a good twelfth apostle, and that when Judas retired from too much gushing he might have filled the vacancy without much affecting the character of the troupe.

REVIEWS.

The Lay of the Boyle Stone.—The author describes this as "an erratic poem," which it most truly is. The volume bears no author's or publisher's name, and no price. The following lines will give a fair idea of its contents:—

"Just let a scoundrel breathe a late repentance,
'Twill cause more joy than ninety-nine just persons.
The white-washed rogue thus finds more grace in heaven
Than hundred men who no offence have given:
A life of crime, closed with a brief regret,
Transforms the villain to an angel's pet!
Oh! should I ever enter life anew,
God keep me out of such a blackguard crew;
For, if allowed to choose between two evils,
I'd rather consort with plain honest Devils.
I've had enough of saintly people here,
But when all saints they will be worse to bear.
Trust not this doctrine—keep on virtue's path;
The wage of sin is suffering and death;
And nothing can revoke the dreadful sentence,—
All vain are prayers, penance, and repentance.
'The soul that sinneth it will surely die.'
When hireling priests say 'No,' they only lie;
For all the grief and all the tears that's shed
Will never make nor mend a broken head."

Satan's Guile and Satan's Wiles. By E. LLOYD JONES. S. W. Partridge and Co.

THE title of this book led us to expect some amusement from this book, and we were not altogether disappointed, though the humor of Mr. Jones is of that flabby description characteristic of orthodox writers when they write seriously. We give the readers a specimen. It is Mr. Jones's new solution of the number of the beast: "Six hundred and sixty and six: the first six might represent six hundred days, as fortelling the short season when 'the Dragon, the old Serpent, which is the Devil and Satan,' shall be loosed for a little time after the thousand years is (*sic*) ended; and the sixty might indicate sixty hundred years, this makes six thousand years, at the end of which we are supposed to be living now; and the latter six might picture six hundred divisions of time over, perhaps in years, months, weeks, year days, or hours, beyond the six thousand years, it being a time that is not to be revealed to any one" (pp. 19, 20). Old Dr. Robert South, who, for an orthodox divine, had his head screwed remarkably firm, said the study of the Revelation of St. John either found a man cracked or left him so. This is certainly true of Mr. Jones, who is not the Lloyd Jones so well known to the co-operative world.

DEFENCE FUND.—John Atkinson (per W. H. Morrish), 10s.; J. B., 1s.; Jas. Dimond (Stonehouse), 2s. 6d.; Well-Wisher (Cardiff), 5s.; from W. Jones, for Vol. 1 of *Freethinker* (sent by James S. Uglow), 5s.; from X. Y. Z., for Vols. 1 and 2 of *Freethinker* (sent by T. Wilson), 10s.; J. Crabtree, 11d.; Leytonstone, (3rd donation), 1s.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures twice to-day (Sunday, January 28th) at Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville, London, N.—Morning, at 11.30, "Poor Job;" evening, at 7 (by special request), "Gambetta: Republican and Freethinker."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

February 4th, Leeds; 11th, York; 18th, Plymouth; 25th, Liverpool.

March 4th, Manchester; 11th, Edinburgh; 18th and 25th, Hall of Science, London.

April 1st, Milton Hall, London; 3rd, Walworth; 8th, Claremont Hall, London; 29th, Oldham.

May 6th and 13th, Claremont Hall, London.

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RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—C. B. B., Anon, Jas. Marshall, Jas. Cowrie, *Barrow Herald*, A. B.

OSMAN.—Under consideration, conception good but drawing primitive.

THOS. RUTTER.—We cannot answer your question.

RALPH LOMAS.—We should describe Huxley and Spencer as Agnostics though they do not style themselves by any of the designations you mention.

HENRY A. HOPKINS who was a member of the Rev. C. J. Whitmore's chapel, Wilson Street, Drury Lane, suggests that gentleman (?) should give a tract upon those who have left his church to become Secularists. Thanks for cheering words and good work.

B. DAWSON.—Thanks for paper. Commendations of *Progress* reach us from all quarters.

E. A. LUCAS.—Cuttings are always welcome.

J. BELL.—Blasphemy petition-sheet sent. You will find the law in "Blasphemy No Crime."

W. H. MORRISH.—Received with thanks. Send on the manuscript.

BEN.—Thanks for the petitions. Freethinkers should get as many sheets as possible filled in for presentation as soon as Parliament opens.

MR. FOOTE begs that no one will send him orders for literature; the publisher attends to all such things.

J. B.—We are always glad to hear from people on the road to Free-thought, and especially to learn that the *Freethinker* has led them there. It shocks the orthodox at first, but we defy anybody but a Christian Evidence lecturer to continue reading it and remain a believer. That is why the parsons and preachers hate it so. By the way, the origin of the earth is not a religious question. Read Lockyer's "Astronomy," Darwin's "Origin of Species" and "Descent of Man," and Mill's "Essays on Religion." Tyler's "Anthropology" is also a capital book.

J. PARRY.—We are happy to say that the success of *Progress* exceeds our expectations, and they are usually not too modest. Dr. Ave-ling's article in the February number may partially meet your wants; we hope to publish a popular series on Evolution before long. "Brown's Story" will be reprinted with some additions, as soon as we get a little breathing time.

H. ELLIS.—No doubt some Tragic Bible Sketches would do good service. We may try a few by-and-by, but we are half afraid of killing the *Police News*.

INCOG.—Ask the new Archbishop. Benson is always on the watch.

SUBSCRIBER.—There was an excellent article by Mr. Myers in *Scribner* about a year ago. For the rest, as George Elliot's works are so easily accessible, why not read them at first-hand, that's always the best way.

H. BARTHOLOPE.—Judge Hanson's "Jesus of History," Scott's English "Life of Jesus," and Hennell's "Inquiry into the Origin of Christianity," are all good books and exceedingly fair. E. P. Meredith's "Prophet of Nazareth" deals mainly with the prophecies of Jesus. Its main thesis, that the end of the world was to come immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, we consider indisputable.

T. W. P.—Your analysis of the Lord's Prayer is sensible, but scarcely up to our literary standard.

S. B.—There are fully a third more Catholics in the world than Protestants. We will give the exact figures next week.

MR. E. M. SMITH will give 2s. for Nos. 2, 4, 5, 14 and 17, Vol. II. of the *Freethinker*.

S. C. FOX.—Our publisher will be glad to send the *Freethinker* direct when there is any difficulty in procuring it through an agent. The delay you refer to arises through the wholesale agent, and not through our office. We are pleased to read your opinion of *Progress*.

A. FREETHINKER.—You will have to prove your father's death before you can do anything in the matter.

SUGAR PLUMS.

WE are glad to hear that the Kingston Branch of the N. S. S. is waking up again. The Lyceum has been taken for Sunday meetings, and Mr. Church leads off with the first lecture this (Sunday) evening. Two or three individuals are undertaking all the work and responsibility, and we call on all Freethinkers in the district to rally round them. Whoever holds back helps the other side.

THE second (February) number of *Progress* is now ready, and, as the advertisement shows, it contains an attractive list of contents. The Gambetta portrait is by far the most striking and characteristic yet published in England. We are happy to say that the January number is practically sold out, and we have prepared for a still larger sale of number two.

THE Hall of Science Children's Party is this year to be split in two on account of the numbers; the first will be for children from 5 to 10, and a second for children from 10 to 16. Of course if it must be split it must, but why split it in this way? We fancy it would be better to have the ages mixed on both evenings; taking all names up to the letter L one evening, and all the rest on the other. Children getting on for sixteen, especially when they are of the female persuasion, are apt to look a trifle too old for downright good nonsense. Mix them. That is our advice.

So much for criticism. The rest is more pleasant. Ladies and gentlemen, as the bishop said, "shell out." Money is wanted, and you had better send it in cheerfully. Whoever is excommunicated by the little ones should sneak out of the world immediately, and they will most religiously excommunicate you if you don't supply them with plenty of fun just once in the long year. Of course dancing, singing and shouting, are excellent fun; but they are not enough; there's apples, oranges, cake (tons of it, bless you), tea, milk, lemonade, and such things wanted; not to mention a present for everyone from the Christmas Tree. The Committee sit at the receipt of customs at the Hall of Science on Sunday evening, and subscriptions can also be sent to Mr. Ramsey, or paid to Mr. Anderson at the Club.

A PAPER on "Magic and Prayer," by Mr. Symes, in the February number of *Progress*, will be very interesting to all students of the development of religion. Our talented contributor contends that Prayer is but a division or species of Magic, whereby, in the older faiths, the supernatural powers were prevailed upon, or rather compelled, to do the behests of men. Mr. Symes gives many instances from the Bible showing the identity of its superstitions with those found in savage faiths. Among other things he notices the sacred tetragrammaton or concealed name of Jahveh.

JAHVEH is doubtless the correct pronunciation of the name whereby the Jews supposed Jesus to have wrought his miracles, and which they were forbidden to pronounce. To this day they substitute the word Adonai or Lord. The translators of our Bible have stupidly enough usually translated the word "Lord," but in a few passages have put Jehovah. Thus the passage in Psalms cx., 1, should read: Jahveh said to Adonai, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Exod. iii., 14, should not be "I am that I am," but simply "I am Jahveh."

THE *Madras Thinker* says of our Christmas Number: "Every Hindu Freethinker must furnish himself with this number." As a matter of fact, all our publications go to every quarter of the known world.

KRAO, the native of Burmah, now exhibiting at the Westminster Aquarium as "the missing link," would seem to be rather a human *lusus natura* showing atavism, than a direct descendant of intermediate forms. Her low forehead is covered with long black hair to the eyebrows. The whole body is overgrown with a less dense covering of soft black hair about a quarter of an inch long, but nowhere close enough to conceal the skin which is of a dark olive-brown color. The nose is very short, with exceedingly broad nostrils merging to full pouched cheeks, into which she is in the habit of stuffing food after the manner of monkeys. As with anthropoid apes her feet are prehensile and her hands so flexible that they bend back quite over the joints. Altogether Krao is a very interesting and suggestive creature to those who believe we are made in the image of God.

THE National Sunday League Annual Soirée, Concert and Ball will take place at Cannon Street Hotel on the 29th instant. The arrangements will be the same as last year. Two ball rooms and two concerts. H. Sibold's City of London Band has been engaged. The grand hall is now lighted by the electric light, thus insuring perfect coolness and comfort.

The following ladies and gentlemen, among others, have kindly consented to take part in the concerts—Madame Alice Barth, Miss Coyte Turner, and Madame Frances Brooke; Mr. Fred Wood, Mr. A. Mori, and Mr. Franklin Clive.

THE RELIGION OF MUGGLETON.

ECCENTRICITY in religion is sometimes useful by bringing into stronger light the inherent weaknesses which a slight exaggeration develops into palpable absurdity. Yet, however absurd, eccentricity is sure to find a following. The idea of separateness from the rest of mankind flatters, if it does not awaken, a feeling of superiority; and the hope of special favor, as the reward of special credulity, is a substantial crutch to any weak-kneed believer. The history of the Third Commission, or, to use its better known title, Muggletonianism, is a case in point. Dismissed by most writers and encyclopedias with a few contemptuous words, it still flourishes in a mild pottering sort of way, happy in its own solution of the world's mysteries, and occasionally venturing upon publication. It originated about the middle of the seventeenth century with John Reeve and one Lodowicke Muggleton, a tailor,—among the more important of their converts being John Saddington, "that famous believer," and Thomas Tomkinson, gentleman. Reeve and Muggleton claimed to be the two witnesses referred to in the book of Revelation; and, even at the present day, there are not a few who profess in the words of their creed (Art. xlv.): "I do believe that God spake to John Reeve to the hearing of the ear, and that God chose John Reeve to be his last messenger to this unbelieving world, and that God gave him Lodowicke Muggleton to be his mouth to declare the mind of God to us in this our age." The articles of which this recognition of a new Moses and Aaron in one, were drawn up by the aforesaid John Saddington in 1675, and have since been reprinted in 1830 and in 1880, by representatives of the body. In 1676 Thomas Tomkinson, moved in his turn to be the mouth of his "honored friend" Muggleton, who was the mouth of Reeve, wrote an astonishing work for circulation amongst the elect, entitled "Truth's Triumph, or a Witness to the two Witnesses," etc. This was welcomed by his friends, and copied by them as containing "apples of gold," and after having been transcribed and altered by its author in 1690, was finally published in 1823. Another work by the same author, the MS. of which had been found amongst his papers on his decease, had received an earlier publication in 1729 under the title of "A System of Religion." Tomkinson was a poet of extraordinary power—witness the following verses which he had set up in his house "in legible and capital letters by the painter," that all might read:—

"I, who at first did make all things alone,
Am vainly asked my number, being one;
Three did not the work, it was only I
That in these three made this great Zizogio;
I know no three persons, I am the God-man alone
In one single substance clothed with flesh and bone."

His faith is noteworthy, for he quotes an ancient prophecy, which he claims to be one of Enoch's, though found in St. George's Chapel, Venice, and which refers to Reeve and Muggleton as "two bright stars" who shall arise in the latter days to overthrow Antichrist and "diminish his waters." The Holy Ghost, as speaking through him, is not without a certain crude humor, and one sometimes meets with passages which one would scarcely regard as "the sign and language of an elect vessel;"—"One Burgatus confessed that when the Devil gave him his hand, it felt cold. This is brave university learning, a tale of jack-pudding; these cold devils might do well to get into hell fire to warm them!" Again, we meet with a vigorous description of the reek of hell and the state of the damned, which Dante and Rabelais combined would find it hard to excel or set forth more picturesquely: "This stink must needs be great, for it is the poison of asps, disgorged, for there are several vents for it to issue out; for it shall fry out of their mouths in hideous cries, and shall stream out at the nose, eyes, ears, and at the fundament, fire, smoke and horrible stinks." To accentuate these torments the Law "will walk in their souls to eternity—" and "blow the fire." It is interesting also to know that the saints in heaven are all 5ft. 6in. high, this being the stature of the perfect man,—probably his own. Strangely enough he accuses Dr. Henry More of Atheism, a charge which, if it ever reached that worthy mystic's ears, must have somewhat astonished him.

The recently reprinted creed consists of forty-eight articles, and is accompanied by the ancient believers' protest against Canaanitish Devils, prophane Esaus, scoffing Ishmaels, and railing Rabshakehs. God is evidently no vague immensity, since he has a definite though remote locality "above the stars," is an inflated man, and is the happy possessor of "substance." Out of the dust above the stars this being creates the angels, but "God did withhold the spiritual food from one of these glorious angels," and "for want of that spiritual food which kept his nature in obedience to his Creator" he rebelled. God, indignant at this unlooked for effect of temporary starvation, flung him down into this world and—fearful climax of Almighty wrath!—"called him a devil, a serpent," etc. After an expression of belief in the eternity of matter, we have the remarkable information that the sun, moon, and stars, having once been created still continue "to supply the world with all manner of weather, *without troubling the Creator in the least!*" The Trees of Life, and of the Knowledge of Good and Evil were not wooden trees but God himself and the Serpent angel: so also the apple was not a real apple but figurative of an illicit connection between Eve and the outcast angel. Hence Article xviii., says: "I do believe that Eve brought forth her first-born son the son of the Devil, and very Devil himself;" and Article xx. states that "Cain was not the son of Adam though he was the son of Eve." The curious part of this is, that from this time there ceased to be any other Devil than man and woman; since the first Devil was transmuted through Eve into Cain. In this way there arose two distinct generations of men and women, the descendants of Seth the son of Adam, the son of God, and the descendants of Cain, who was the Devil incarnate. These two generations intermarried (Genesis vi., 2), and thus the seed of the Devil and that of God conjoined in individuals, character being determined by the force and predominancy of each in conception. Any one who despises the ancient believer is a fragment of the original Devil. Space would fail to tell how God left Moses and Elias in charge of the universe during his temporary absence, giving them for that purpose the attributes of Deity. Enough has been said to show how easy it is to graft a more highly flavored absurdity on the orthodox stock. That from which we take the step to the ridiculous is very seldom the sublime. M.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE END OF THE WORLD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Being only a poor sceptic, and not having the grace of God, it seems to me that according to the following verses the end of the world ought to have come about 1800 years ago. If any of your readers hold the same opinion, let me advise them to read 100 commentaries on these quotations, and pray seven times a day that they may be enabled to believe what they know to be false (viz., that these verses are true), and perhaps, by the help of the Holy Spirit, their faith may be restored. I will take successively the opinions of Christ, Paul, James, Peter, and John on the time of the end of the world.

1. *Christ* (Matt. xvi., 27, 28): "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." Matt. xxiv., 29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days (i.e., destruction of Jerusalem) shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven," etc. V. 34: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." Corresponding passages occur in the other gospels.

2. *Paul* (1 Thess. iv., 15, 16): "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds," etc. Heb. i., 1, 2: "God . . . hath, in these last days, spoken unto us." Heb. x., 25: "Exhorting one another as ye see the day approaching." V. 37: "Yet a little while, and he that will come, will come, and will not tarry." Phil. iv., 5: "The Lord is at hand."

3. *James* v., 8: "Stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

4. *Peter* (1 Peter iv., 7): "The end of all things is at hand." 2 Peter 11, 12: "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall

be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

5. *John* (Rev. i., 3): "Blessed is he that readeth, etc. for the time is at hand." Rev. xxii., 20: "He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus."

I think most of your readers will agree with me, that if there is a single explicit and unequivocal prophecy in the whole of the Bible, it is that the end of the world was coming "immediately after" the destruction of Jerusalem. No wonder Peter and Paul apologised, because it did not come so soon as was expected. Paul, we see in 2 Thess. ii., gave definite reasons why the Lord was not "revealed in his time;" while Peter only makes vague excuses, as "a thousand years is with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years."

Yours, etc.,
VERITAS.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.—It is remarkable that a legendary account of the gospel's origin should have come into existence soon after the production itself, suggesting to us the idea of the slow acceptance which the gospel met with. Doubts entertained respecting its apostolical source had to be removed. Hence arose a traditional genesis, which was repeated by the representatives of the Catholic Church and commonly believed. That the story of the Johannine origin is unhistorical, at least in part, is admitted by traditionalists themselves, for it bears on its face the marks of fiction; and we are not careful to claim for it a credibility which it disowns. Any attempt to bring out of it even a nucleus of real history must be conjectural.—*Dr. Samuel Davidson*, "Introduction to the New Testament," vol. ii, p. 365, 1882.

THE GRAVE OF NOAH.—The proof that this is the genuine spot where Noah was buried can only be doubted by uncommonly incredulous people. The evidence is pretty straight. Shem, the Son of Noah, was present at the burial, and showed the place to his descendants, who transmitted the knowledge to their descendants, and the lineal descendants of these introduced themselves to us to-day. It was pleasant to make the acquaintance of members of so respectable a family. It was a thing to be proud of. It was the next thing to being acquainted with Noah himself. Noah's memorable voyage will always possess a living interest for me henceforward.—*Mark Twain*, "New Pilgrim's Progress."

HELL-FIRE.—It was only in a cruel age that the doctrine of hell-fire could have acquired that hold upon men's minds which it had acquired in the Middle Ages. In recent times the doctrine has almost become universally discredited throughout the more enlightened portions of Christendom. Even those who maintain a belief in some kind of endless punishment, no longer insist literally upon the lake of brimstone and fire that is never quenched. Now the doctrine of hell-fire has become thus universally discredited, not because it has been scientifically disproved, for science has neither data nor methods whereby to disprove such a doctrine; nor because it has been exegetically shown to be unsupported by Scripture, for the ingenuity of orthodox exegesis has always been equal to the task of making Scripture mean whatever is required; it has been discredited simply because people have become milder in their manners and less used to enduring and inflicting physical pain. The doctrine shocks people's feelings, and so they refuse to believe it, no matter how the logic of the case may stand.—*Prof. John Fiske*, *North American Review*, January, 1881, p. 9.

DECAY OF SUPERNATURALISM.—The universal idea of the interposition of a personal agency in the most common concerns of every-day life, and the most ordinary natural processes inherited by the European, has become gradually discarded. As science by successive efforts explains the sequence and changes in natural phenomena, so mysterious to ignorance, the idea of personal agency becomes gradually eliminated, and driven further beyond the region of direct observation and experience. And, as it escapes ordinary attention, the idea of a supernaturalism gradually fades from the recollection and ceases materially to influence conduct.—*Westminster Review*, p. 150; July, 1881.

OBITUARY NOTICE.—I regret to record the death of Michael Duggan, who died on January 19th of consumption, at the early age of thirty-four years. The deceased was a consistent and hard-working Freethinker and advanced Radical—a constant attendant at our open-air propaganda meetings on Clerkenwell Green. He died a firm believer in Secularism, and directed in writing that his funeral should be entirely without religious ceremony. The funeral will take place on Sunday next, January 28th, at the New Manor Park Cemetery, Ilford, when the Secular Burial Service will be read over the grave by a well known Secular lecturer.—A. HILLDITCH.

PROFANE JOKES.

It was written "Good-for-nervousness is a characteristic of celery;" but the intelligent compositor rendered it "Good for nothingness is a characteristic of the clergy."

WHEN the flood was squirming up and making strong headway, one chap tried very hard to get a lift along with Noah. Politeness was the order of the day. Hat off, "Good morning, Mr. Noah, good morning. Slushy morning, Mr. Noah. Won't you treat me to a ride inside to-day?" "You be blown!" was the ungracious reply of the patriarch. "Shem! shut that 'ere winder."

A MINISTER, who was soliciting alms for a bazaar, met a man and asked him for a donation, urging his claim by saying that he would have it returned to him fourfold. The man handed over half-a-crown. The same two happened to meet later on in the day, the contributor being what is commonly called "three sheets in the wind." He was not quite certain it was the "beggar" he met in the morning. To make sure he stammered: "Are you the man to whom I gave half-a-crown?" The parson replied he was. "Well," said the other, "you just tell your governor he owes me ten shillings."

Two Northumbrian pit-men, out for a sail off Tynemouth, were overtaken by a squall and in danger of capsizing. After a short consultation it was decided that "Geordie" should offer up a prayer for help. He begun thus: "O Lord God, hinney, if thoo wilt ony help us oot o' this mess, Ah hev a greet fat pig at hyem and aal gie it to thoo." When his mate ejaculated, "O, Geordie, what a d—n lee." Geordie replies, *sotto voce*, "Haud your tongue, man, ahm ony stuffen um."

"DEARLY" BELOVED IN LUCK.—A local preacher had been preaching in the afternoon at a village not far from Newcastle, and, having accompanied one of the chapel members to his house, was of course introduced to his wife, who appeared very glad to see him, and warmly pressed him—for a full quarter of an hour—to stay to tea. He at last consented. While all this pressing was going on, the husband was quietly standing by, preparing to wash his hands and face. The good lady then went to get the tea ready, and it was not long before the tea and her temper were brewing; for, hearing, as she thought, her dearly beloved washing, she made for the little window which communicated between the kitchen and the pantry where she was, and, taking advantage of his position, more quickly than one could say "Jack Robinson," she administered two or three hard raps on his bald pate, accompanied with the exclamation, "Aa'll laarn ye te bring them hungry preachers here to tea ivery time they come to preach?" As soon as the unfortunate individual could get the soap-suds out of his eyes he began to think what it all meant, but could come to no other conclusion than that the old lady had made a sad mistake, which she also soon found out, for, on returning to the parlor there she saw her husband patiently awaiting his turn to wash!

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PROSPECTUS.

This Society is formed for the purpose of developing a Social Club, Institute, and Secular Society, to afford conveniences for Freethought and other progressive Lectures and Entertainments and generally facilitate the progress of Secular and Radical work by mental improvement and amusement.

On Sunday, November 26th, 1882, Messrs Thomas and George Shore called a meeting at 33, Newington Green Road, to which they submitted a scheme for purchasing certain premises to be sold at the Mart on December 14th, 1882. This scheme meeting the approval of the meeting a committee was appointed, who by very energetic action have succeeded in securing the FREEHOLD land and premises situate at 36, Newington Green Road, occupying an exceedingly prominent position in the main road, with front and side entrances, the whole containing an area of 4430 superficial feet. With but slight alteration part of these premises is immediately available as a Public Hall, and the remainder ready for use as a Club and Institute, a large garden being available for extension of premises when required. The purchase of these premises was completed and possession taken on January 12th, 1883, and the directors hope in the course of a very short time to be ready to commence business both in the Lecturing and Club departments. The title deeds have been made out in the name of the Society, the committee having taken the necessary steps to get the Rules and

Certificate of Registration signed according to Act of Parliament in time to allow the name of the Society being put to the deeds.

Apart from the absolute need which now exists for meeting places not subject to the will of any opponents, careful estimates have been made upon which the directors anticipate that a dividend of at least 5 per cent. will be left after payment of working expenses.

This is believed to be one of the most important forward steps taken in our work, as it is the first Freehold property held by and absolutely vested in the Freethought party, and it is hoped that it will commend itself to the hearty support of all concerned in our movement.

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The most hearty support given to this project by Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh, (who have both endorsed the initial stages and have taken a large number of shares) encourages the directors to the belief that the required support will be assured.

Dr. E. B. Aveling, Mr. G. W. Foote, and other leaders of our party have also signified their approval and given promises of further support.

PROSPECTUS ON APPLICATION TO THE SECRETARY.

A New Monthly

Magazine.

“PROGRESS.”

Edited by

G. W. Foote.

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