

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sentenced to Twelve Months' Imprisonment for Blasphemy.

Interim Editor, EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc., Fellow of University College, London.

William James Ramsey, as Proprietor, sentenced to Nine Months' Imprisonment; and Henry Arthur Kemp, as Printer and Publisher, sentenced to Three Months' Imprisonment.

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JULY 1, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

GEORGE WILLIAM FOOTE.

MR. FOOTE, whose counterfeit and certainly unflattering presentment is given to our readers this week, is still a young man, but it is many years since he first threw his well-filled and well-trained mind into the Freethought service. An early love of literature had brought him into contact with the writings of such men as Mill, Carlyle, Ruskin and Darwin, and while still in his teens, a thorough-going spirit of inquiry resulted in his complete emancipation from the superstitions in which he had been nurtured. Restless in propaganda, in 1869 he was concerned in starting the Secular Sunday School of which he became superintendent. In the same year he formed a Young Men's Secular Association, with the object of organising the young men of the Secular party in London and training them for debate. He afterwards conducted classes in logic with the same purpose. He contributed to the *National Reformer* from as early as 1870, and many of his early papers such as the one entitled "Joys and Sorrows" and those upon "The Poetry of William Blake," bear witness to his poetic insight, as well as to his critical ability and purity of style.

Orthodox Christians who take it for granted that opposition to their creed must proceed from some bad qualities of head or of heart, probably look upon Mr. Foote as a very vulgar person, justly incarcerated for coarse and offensive attacks on the religion of the land. Nothing could be further from the mark. Justice North, who made it evident how inferior in all the qualities of a gentleman a judge could be to the person he convicted, was constrained to speak respectfully of his intellectual abilities, and Lord Coleridge spoke in the most admiring manner of his striking and able defence in the Court of Queen's Bench. Mr. Foote has the culture which is incompatible with vulgarity; but he has also the earnestness which is above hypocrisy. In the volume entitled "Arrows of Freethought," some of Mr. Foote's most trenchant onslaughts upon Christianity have been reprinted.

The reader will find smart wit, satire, vigorous home-thrusts, ridicule, and relentless logic, but he will fail to find coarseness or scurrility there, or indeed in any line of our paper, for editing which he is now herded with criminals. Strange as it may seem to the Christian, Mr. Foote has something of the fastidiousness which goes with the poetic and artistic temperament. His love of art is intense but particular. In painting he prefers Titian, Agelico, Turner. In music, Beethoven, Wagner, Chopin. In poetry, Shakspeare, Byron, Shelley; and among moderns, Browning. George Meredith is his favorite novelist. In the course of his itinerant apostleship of Freethought he has very frequently lectured on the poets of progress and the prose teachers of our time. The very first public discussion on the merits of Darwin *versus* Moses was, I believe, that held for two nights in Glasgow between Messrs. G. W. Foote and H. A. Long. Mr. Foote has also defended Freethought in set debates with Dr. Sexton, the Revs. Harrison, Woffendale, and others. On the platform his bearing is easy and impressive. His speech is deliberate but unhesitating—well-chosen words and sound arguments, seasoned with mother wit, wide reading, and upon occasion, impassioned eloquence.

In 1876 Mr. Foote started the *Secularist*, a publication in which many thoughtful and high-toned articles appeared. In 1879 he became editor of the *Liberal*, a Radical and Freethought magazine. The principal contributions, both political and anti-theological, were from his pen. Some papers on Gambetta, a favorite of whom he always speaks with enthusiasm, are certainly among the best that have ever appeared on that statesman. Looking on the clerical party as the obstructives and *obscuranti* of Europe and believing that our hopes centre round the French Republic, Mr. Foote has for many years taken the keenest interest in watching every turn of the ever-shifting game of French politics.

Thinking the time had come for a thorough clearing of the ground from the wreck and lumber of the past; and deeming that its best work was to be done by attacking superstition, he started the *Freethinker* with the avowed

purpose of being aggressive and destroying hypocrisy by openly speaking out what so many think secretly. The pictures were chosen deliberately with the purpose of exciting thought and confidence in dealing with so-called sacred matters. Many who would never otherwise think of questioning their presumed infallible fetish, the Bible, will pause upon seeing a picture of Jonah inside a whale, or any other literal representation of Bible miracles. The success of this journal was soon a thorn in the side of the bigots.

From time to time Mr. Foote has put forth various pamphlets. The series of biographies entitled "Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought" were, I believe, entirely written by him and are written with care and deliberation. Most readers of the *Freethinker* will be acquainted with the series of "Bible Romances," in which Mr. Foote has joined the resources of a clear, vigorous style, to sparkling wit and critical scholarship, making the re-reading of the Hebrew narratives most enjoyable for any who have an appreciation of fun and a sense of the ridiculous.

Mr. Foote is now enduring the severest penalty for the expression of opinion which has been given within this century. What influence prison life may have upon his once superb physical health I know not, though there is too much reason to fear, from the effect of confinement and hard treatment upon Mr. Kemp, that it must be extremely detrimental to one of such constantly active habits. But I know him well enough to be sure that suffering will neither alter his convictions nor daunt his spirit.

J. M. WHEELER.

MEMORIAL.

"To the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

"The Humble Memorial of the undersigned Showeth

"That George William Foote and William James Ramsey were on Monday, March 5th, found guilty of blasphemy at common law and sentenced to imprisonment, respectively, G. W. Foote, 12 months; and W. J. Ramsey, 9 months.

"Your memorialists respectfully submit that such an enforcement of laws against Blasphemy is out of accord with the spirit of the age, and humbly pray the mercy of the Crown in remission of the sentences imposed."

Friends will do good work by copying this out and obtaining as many signatures as possible to each copy. The Memorial and the signatures should be sent to the Home Secretary as speedily as possible. It is particularly requested that no other form may be used than the one given above.

OUR SAILORS AND FREETHOUGHT.

THANK man! there are many Freethinkers in our army and in our navy. And for a man to be a declared Freethinker in either of the services needs more courage than to charge an enemy's line or to go aloft in a gale. For he who has given up religion is charging an army of powerful and unscrupulous foes, some of whose names are Intolerance, Prejudice, Bigotry. He has to aid humanity in weathering the storm of false ideas and ignoble teaching with which the vessel that carries man and his fortunes is assailed.

It is impossible for anyone who is not connected with the army or navy to know the difficulties that surround the path of any soldier or sailor who begins to think for himself. But while we as civilians may not be able to understand all the official hamperings and persecutions to which our military and naval brothers in thought are subject, we can all understand the harm that is done by the diffusion amongst our soldiers and sailors of the moral poison contained in the Bible and in religious tracts. With this last class of literature the men of the two services are overwhelmed. Special tracts are written for them, and periodicals of a religious nature are published for their improvement and instruction.

One of these periodicals has reached our hands. It is called *A Monthly Letter* (addressed to the Officers, Seamen, Marines, and Marine Artillery of the Royal Navy at Home and Abroad). Its cover carries in addition to the title a crown and sceptre resting on a Bible. The crown and sceptre will remind the sailors of their political—the Bible of their intellectual, slavery. The number for May appears

to have been written by a well-meaning if uncultured lady, Miss Agnes E. Weston. It is called "The Pearl-Seeker." Upon its cover is printed a list of places where Sailors' Rests are to be found in various countries. Unhappily these otherwise excellent institutions are in apparently every case lessened in value, and perhaps made actually noxious, by the fact that Bible classes and religious services are held in them. To provide places for our sea-faring men in other lands that may seem a little home-like is good human work. But to force upon their inmates religious teaching is not human.

A Sailor's Sacred Solo and Chorus precedes the sermon-letter. Its literary merit may be gathered from the fact that "Jesus" is made to rhyme with "singes." From "The Pearl-Seeker" one paragraph must be quoted:—

"We have I suppose, all heard of the clever but drinking English diver, who went out to the pearl fishery; he was once walking about at the bottom of the sea in his india-rubber dress; as he stepped here and there, cutting off the pearl oysters, he picked up one with a piece of paper firmly clenched in its shell; the paper was printed, and the printing was English. Curious to see, he carefully opened the oyster and took out the paper, when the words, 'Prepare to meet thy God' confronted him. Such a message delivered by a pearl oyster at the bottom of the sea was more than he could stand. Hastily pulling the communication he was drawn up. That message haunted him by day and by night, until at last he came to Christ as the only savior who could fit him to meet god."

It will be remembered that Miss Weston, with wise forethought, addresses her letter, amongst other persons, to the marines.

And this sort of stuff with the customary, "Is Christ really reigning in your heart?" "The public-house, the theatre (*sic*). "If you are lost you are a soul suicide." "You must part with your notions, your prejudices, your theology, your reputation." All this is the mental food offered to our sailors in this nineteenth century!

It is not likely that our words will reach this infatuated lady, as to whose good intentions we have not the shadow of a doubt. If they could, we would ask her to pause in sad work, to reflect, not so much upon the evil she is doing as upon the opportunity for good she is casting away. Month after month she has the opportunity of speaking to thousands of men. And she uses it by telling them childish stories to illustrate and enforce a faith that would be childish, were it not for the terrible damage it has wrought in the world. She might tell them of the wonders of science, the beauty of art, the glories of literature and of human lives.

Where Miss Weston and her colleagues the earls, bishops, and admirals fail in their duty, let all Freethinkers strive to succeed. We have not at our disposal the wealth and the organisation of the Sailors' Rest Association. But we can effect something. There are many Freethinkers in the navy. Let these do all that is in their power to counteract the evil results that must follow from the circulation of this harmful literature by distributing as widely as possible Freethought publications. Let them reason quietly with their companions who are under the fatal influence of the unhappy creed of Christianity. Friends outside the navy can work. Every one of us almost knows a sailor personally. Let us keep the friends or relatives we may have in the navy well supplied with the *Freethinker* and with secular works. If a copy of this present issue were sent by every one of its readers to a man he knows on board ship, we hope, we believe that great good would result. Above all, let the friends in the navy and outside it show Miss Weston, the earls, the bishops, and the admirals that honest, pure, sober, manly lives can be lived by those who have no belief in Christ as any other than a good man, and are not likely to be brought to a belief in the fabulous god of the Bible even if they met an oyster promenading the lower deck with a piece of paper bearing a text upon it firmly clenched in his shell.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

THOUGHT-READING is creating a stir just now. It is curious to notice the mixture of credulity and incredulity with which such things as those said to be performed by Mr. Bishop are received. Some say they are impossible, others miraculous. If thought-reading is a fact, it is no more miraculous than impossible; and, indeed, it would go far to explain some phenomena which have been accounted supernatural by the ignorant. The existence of such a faculty is a proper subject of scientific investigation, but we doubt if the method of Mr. Bishop is a scientific one.

AN ABOMINABLE ROMAN CATHOLIC BOOK.

THE truest and most real religion is the Roman Catholic. We know that this is to the average Protestant a very irritating remark. It is none the less true. The English Church and all the dissenting sects are but bastard imitations of the veritable religion. They are poor compromises between religion and Freethought. They are faint-hearted steps in the direction of liberty. Only two courses are open to the really honest man; either the entire submission to authority, or the perfectly free use of his reason. The former course is taken by the Roman Catholic, the latter by the Freethinker. But the Protestant, rejecting the perfectly logical position of the Roman Catholic, and, as we think, the equally logical position of the Freethinker, tries to reconcile a partial submission to authority and a partial use of the reason. He is between the proverbial two stools and necessarily comes to the ground, which is not, however, that of a reasonable belief.

When we attack religion, we never lose sight of the fact that its most unmistakable embodiment is in the Roman Catholic Church. That is the deadliest foe of thought to-day as it ever has been, and the struggle that is probably yet to come will be between the two real antagonists, Roman Catholicism and Atheism. The other sects can look on, can even take part in the fight, but they will only be auxiliary forces to one or the other of the two main combatants.

The consciousness of these facts must be our excuse for referring to a book that the world owes to the Roman Catholic Church. It is the "Pearls of Saint François de Sales," or the most beautiful thoughts of his beloved upon the love of god. This infamous book, written as we see by a canonised saint of the Church, contains certain verses to be said or sung by the penitents of St. Marie. These verses are so vile that not only dare we not translate them, we dare not print them even in the French tongue in which they are written. The Song of Solomon is a chaste and prudish production by the side of this volume, intended for the use of young girls. We cannot even hint at the horrible ideas that the work of this holy saint would introduce, even into minds that had run through the whole gamut of evil thoughts, and we shudder as we remember that it was intended for those whose minds were not sullied.

"Vive Jésus quand il m'appelle
Ma sœur, ma colombe, ma belle,"

are two lines that are printable by themselves, though, were the context given, it would not be possible to publish them.

Let us remember that this terrible book is of Roman Catholic origin. It is written by a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. It is for the use of Roman Catholic religionists. It has to do with the Roman Catholic creed and Roman Catholic worship. Let us remember that these same creed and worship are those of millions of human beings, and let us resolve to wage an unrelenting war with this frightful curse of humanity, that not content with stifling the reason of men and women, has done so much to undermine the purity of thought of our youth.

FIGHT ON! FIGHT ON! FOR LIBERTY.

FIGHT on! fight on! for liberty,
All you who love Freethought;
Think of the battle in our cause,
Our friends in gaol have fought.
Be steadfast, true, and fearless;
Fight not with sword, but brains;
Each blow we strike with tongue and pen
A mighty conquest gains.

Fight on! fight on! for liberty,
Let nothing you dismay;
Heed not the bigots' taunts and sneers;
Be fearless in the fray.
Though Might may triumph for a time,
The Right, you may depend,
(Although the struggle may be long)
Will conquer in the end.

S. J. BELLCHAMBERS.

It was a good job for Peter that he was a man of little faith, when he attempted to walk on the surface of the water, says our irreverent young man. If he had only possessed a little more faith—say just enough to tie a millstone round his neck before he started—he would have sunk to a certainty.

ACID DROPS.

SIR JOHN BENNETT has had his watch stolen while the Archbishop of Canterbury was saying a prayer. This is as it should be. When such a Radical as Sir John Bennett is at a prayer he really deserves to be the prey of the preyer upon society. We do not mean the Archbishop preyer, but the other fellow. Sir John has recovered his watch and we congratulate him. But he will find it difficult to recover his place in the good opinion of men after his listening to that prayer—so absorbed that a thief could absorb his chronometer. "Keep up the farce, Sir John, Sir John."

THE following letter and circular have been forwarded to us by a Lancashire county magistrate. They are excellent as showing the state of fear in which the Christians are.

"Christian Evidence Society, Manchester District,
Waterford Vicarage, Manchester, Jan. 31, 1883.

"DEAR SIR,—If you approve will you kindly permit me to ask a subscription for the above society? It seems to me very important; and funds are urgently needed if the work is to go on.—I am, respectfully yours,

"A. J. HARRISON."

The following is a copy of the circular:—

"INFIDELITY."

"There are now three weekly newspapers wholly devoted to the spread of infidelity, chiefly among working men. There are also nine regular lecturers constantly engaged in the same work; together with a large number of occasional lecturers. These newspapers and lecturers have readers and hearers not only in the great towns, but in almost all the villages of Lancashire. The object of the Christian Evidence Society is, in every legitimate way, to meet and counteract the efforts of sceptics; by literature, lectures, sermons, classes for study of Christian evidence, and personal visits to those who are being misled. If you approve of the object and method indicated, the committee will be glad to receive your subscription.

"A. J. HARRISON, hon. sec."

The President of this Society is the Lord Bishop of Manchester, who made the basest charges against the Freethinkers of his district, and when called upon to give evidence in proof, refused to enter into controversy.

DISGRACE—we mean his grace, the Archbishop of York—says people are not to subscribe to the idea that science and religion are antagonistic. As a clergyman, he naturally objects to any subscriptions save for religious ends. And after all the idea does not need any subscriptions. It receives donations from every scientific discovery.

It is a pity that so many good works are handicapped in their appeals to the public by the appendage to them of the name of some titled nonentity. It becomes less easy to sympathise with some very excellent movement when the appeal on its behalf is made by such a man as the Duke of Westminster. The Metropolitan Drinking and Cattle Trough Association is a case in point. Considering the number of thirsty dogs, horses and cattle, in London streets, the idea is most admirable, and almost the only objectionable thing in connexion with the association is that a lithographed begging letter from "Westminster" irritates everybody with a sense of right.

THERE is one other thing that is unfortunate. The indispensable text of scripture is forthcoming. That it should be "Thirsty and ye gave me drink" is obvious if not blasphemous. Christ is clearly going to the dogs.

THE *Liberté*, which gives a long report of Miss Booth's Salvation Army speeches, describes the display as a complete fiasco, and likens her and her lady aides-de-camp to Louise Michel operating on another line.

Is Saul also among the prophets? Is the *Family Herald* turned seer? This unique periodical informs its audience of servant-maids that "after a brief period of effort, during which the religious party will make a great endeavor to save the wreck of our ecclesiastical institutions, we shall forget—for a while, at least—that religion was ever a real factor in our prosperity. Laws which were based on the Mosaic code and usages of public and social life which sprang from the same source will be repealed or abandoned. England trembles on the abyss of pure secularism, and she will certainly descend to its lowest depth. It is impossible to save her. Henceforth religion must be understood to be wholly and simply an affair of the heart. Perhaps it would have been well for us if it had never been regarded in any other light." In correction of the sapient one we state the truism that religion never has been a factor in our prosperity, except one of what the mathematicians call negative factors; that secularism is no abyss but a delectable mountain towards which

height England slowly climbs; that religion never has been an affair of the head, but always one of the emotions.

If the *War Cry* may be credited, the lord is certainly moving in a mysterious way his wonders to perform among the Salvationists. Under the heading of "A Glory Trance—another Transfigured Soul," Captain Crocker, of Bristol, reports a young woman at Weston-Super-Mare, as having a luminous face. He says: "As soon as we left her in the hands of god she fixed her eyes upon an object that no one else in the room could see but herself. Her face began to shine with such brightness as no painter could by any means copy, let him be ever so skilful. A halo of glory shone about her face." As the name and address of this interesting party are not given, we suspect it will hardly be worth while for Barnum or any other enterprising showman to treat for the curiosity.

SOME further particulars indicate sufficiently that "the glory trance" is simply the Salvationist name for ecstatic mania, such as, thanks to these revivalists, has frequently to receive attention in lunatic asylums. Captain Crocker reports that the ecstatic sang, and that "the composition both of music and words was different from any I have ever heard before on earth." He gives the words she uttered in her swoon: "The lamb! the lamb! the lamb! the bleeding lamb!" The scene lasted about five hours, when she awoke without strength so much as to lift her head: "After a long rest she told us that she had been to heaven on a sea of glass, with tens of thousands of angels, who were singing and playing golden harps. The one song that they sang was—"The lamb! the lamb! the lamb! the bleeding lamb!" It would appear from this supplementary revelation, that the inhabitants of the celestial region are, probably, retired butchers afflicted by remorse, and this bears out the impression derived from the earlier revelations.

VARIOUS other "miracles" are reported in the Salvationist camp. At Ryhope, a young woman, three years bed-ridden, has by faith began to walk. At Guisboro, a man whose ankles were so bad that he got about with difficulty, now walks twelve miles to sell *War Crys*. In none of these cases are the names and addresses given.

CHRISTIANITY flourishes in Spain. A correspondent in that country sends us the following translation of an excommunication directed against the editor, publishers, and readers of a Freethought paper in Seville, by the Synod of that district:—

"In the name of the omnipotent god, of the father, of the son, of the holy canons, of the holy Virgin Mary, mother of god, and of all the celestial virtues; of the angels and archangels, of the thrones and the denominations, seraphim and cherubim, of the holy patriarchs and prophets, of all the apostles and evangelists, of the holy innocents, who only were declared worthy of singing the new psalm in the presence of the eternal, of the holy martyrs and holy confessors, of the holy Virgins, and also of all the saints and elected of the lord. We excommunicate and anathematise this heretic (or this impious), and we sequester him of the holy church of god, so that condemned to the eternal penalty, he may fall into the abyss like Dathan and Abiram, and like all those who dared to say unto the lord, 'Get away from us for we don't want to know your way.' And as the fire is extinguished in water, so may his soul be extinguished in the eternity of the centuries, unless he should reform and admit his fault. Amen. Cursed be he of god the father, creator of men; cursed be he of god the son, who suffered for men; cursed be he of the holy ghost, who descended upon him in the baptism; cursed may he be by the holy cross on which Jesus suffered, triumphant for our salvation; may he be cursed by the mother of god, most holy Mary, always virgin; cursed may he be by St. Michael, guardian of the sacred souls; cursed may he be also by all the angels and archangels, the princes and potentates, with all the militia of the celestial army; may he be cursed by the numerous patriarchs and prophets; cursed may he be by St. John the precursor, who spilt the water of baptism over Jesus; may the malediction of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, and all the apostles, and of the rest of the disciples of Jesus Christ, and of the four evangelists, whose preaching converted the whole world, fall upon him; cursed may he be by the wonderful multitude of martyrs and professors who pleased god by their good works; cursed may he be by the chorus of sacred virgins, who depreciated the riches of this world for their love to Jesus Christ; cursed may he be by all the saints who, from the beginning of the world until the end of the centuries, have pleased and will please god. In conclusion, cursed may he be by the earth and all the holy things it contains; cursed be he wherever he may go, whether he be at his house, in the field, in the road, in a path, in the bush, in the water, or in the church; cursed be he living, dying, eating, drinking, quenching hunger, or quenching the thirst; when he may fast, when he may induce sleep, when he may sleep, when he may walk, when he may be standing, when he may sit down, when he may lie down,

when he may work, when he may rest, *mingendo, cacando et flebotomando*. Cursed be all the strength of his body; cursed be he inside, outside, his hair, his brains; cursed be he in the head, in the temples, in the forehead, in the ears, in the eye-brows, in the eyes, in the cheeks, in the jaws, in the nose, in the incisors, in the molars, in the lips, in the throat, in the shoulders, in the arms, in the hands, in the fingers, in the chest, in the heart, in all the internal parts of the body, in the kidneys, in the groin, in the femur (*sic original*), in *genitalibus*, in the thighs, in the knees, in the legs, in the feet, in all the articulations, and in the nails; cursed be he in the juncture of all the parts of his members; may not a point of the body, from the top of the head to the soles of the feet remain sane; cursed may he be by Jesus Christ, son of live god, with all the power of his majesty, and may there rise against him heaven, with all the virtues which it contains, so as to deliver him to the eternal punishment, if he does not repent and confess his fault. Amen. May it happen to him! may it happen to him! Amen."

Our army swore terribly in Flanders, but it was nothing to this.

But the best of all this terrible curse
Is, nobody seems a penny the worse.

Judge North is a more effective defender of Christianity than all the holy ones enumerated in the excommunication.

It has been decided by a court in Cincinnati that to use the word "damn" is not profane swearing. This should be very consoling to all pious theologians.

AMONG publications of the day we notice "Christianity and Commonsense" (Chapman and Hall). The antithesis is as marked as the alliteration.

A LITTLE pamphlet entitled "Some Information as to the Social Condition of Edinburgh," printed for private circulation only, gives, on the authority of a home missionary, a terrible picture of the state of morals in that godly city. We venture only to refer to the nature of the dwellings visited. One tenement, we are told, six stories high, has on each storey twelve to fourteen families; allow four to a family, and we have 300 people on one stair. "The whole building is without proper sanitary arrangement, many of the 'houses' are separated only by a wooden partition so thin, that all loud speaking in one room is heard in the next." In the closes and low lodging-houses the matter is worse. We read of twenty sleeping in one small room of six beds in a dormitory about twelve feet square. Meanwhile the Presbyterian Church and her highly-paid ministers are much agitated as to whether they may worship god with instrumental music.

THE heart-rending calamity at Sunderland has of course evoked a crowd of pious imbecilities, from the wreath sent by the Queen, with the words "Suffer little children to come unto me," to the writer in the *Sunderland Herald*, who suggests a day of humiliation and prayer. The *Leeds Mercury*, speaking of the sufferers, declares "Providence was kinder to them than man had been. It could not avert the consequences of the shameful carelessness which had involved them in this awful dilemma, but it terminated their struggles quickly." This picture of an impotent providence making the best of a bad job by "terminating struggling children quickly," would surely be blasphemous if it had any meaning, and well illustrates what a mess writers make of natural matters when they introduce supernaturalism.

THE *Church Times* mildly hints that infidelity was at the bottom of the Sunderland disaster. It was a fearful warning against cupidity, and nothing but Christianity can overcome desire. Such is the logic of the religious journals.

WHEN above twenty years ago the late Bishop Colenso published the first part of his examination of the Pentateuch, he was greeted with almost universal clamor. Now all the high-class journals speak of him as having simply told what everybody knew, namely that writings ascribed to Moses were not written by him and are not historically reliable.

THE world moves, but the clerical journals would not fulfil their function if they moved with it. The *Church Review* thus commences its reference to the greatest of England's missionary bishops, "The Colenso case is at last settled." It proceeds to declare that "all true Christians must lament the fact that he has died outside the pale of god's church and without her absolution."

It is rumored that Lord Randolph, in dread anticipation of Mr. Bradlaugh's onslaught on perpetual pensions, has made an offer of Elijah's mantle to Mr. Attenborough, the well-known pawnbroker to the nobility.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

A Mass Meeting will be held in St. James's Hall, Piccadilly, on Wednesday, July 11th, to protest against the imprisonment of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey.

DR. AVELING'S LECTURE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture in the Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, on Sunday, July 2:—3, "The Pedigree of Man;" 7.30, "Why I am Not a Christian."

CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Manager, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.C. Literary communications to the Editor of the *Freethinker*, 13 Newman Street, Oxford Street, London, W.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, directly from the office, post-free to any part of Europe, America, Canada, and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

RECEIVED.—W. Robertson, W. J., J. H. Baglen, E. J. Bontell, Wm. De Carle, E. A. P., E. E. G., Edgar T. Benton, C. B. B., Pontypool, A. Iszatt, T. Cape, George Noyce, G. T. Harrup, E. B.

F. WOODBRIDGE.—Your questions require answers of too great length for our columns. The gentleman to whom you refer as apparently not an Atheist at heart is the one who attacked both Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh.

W. J.—We do not know what has become of Mr. Devil. Is it any good applying at Truro?

CHARLES WILLIAMS.—Kindly send all orders direct to the publisher.

J. BELL (New Errington) reports sending memorial to Home Secretary with forty-five signatures. Friends should not relax their exertions in this direction.

W. PROUT.—Memorial with nineteen signatures received.

W. T. L. reports a capital defence of the policy of Moses in slaying the married Midianitish women (Numbers xxxi., 17) as given by an American lecturer for the Christian Evidence Society at the Midland Railway Arches. The women would have corrupted the morals of the Hebrew soldiers!

J. LEAMINGS.—We hope many readers will, like you, induce your friends to memorialise and attend the meeting on July 11th.

H. JONES.—Compare 2 Samuel xxiv., 1, with 1 Chronicles xxi., 1. In the one case it is Jahveh who moves David to number Israel, in the other, Satan. There probably was not much to choose between them.

TICKETS can be obtained for some of the seats at the St. James's Hall meeting at the office of this paper. A few are on sale at 2s. 6d. each, for friends who wish to avoid the crush that is sure to take place.

AGENTS wanted in town and country to sell this paper and other Freethought literature.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THIS week we publish one of Col. Ingersoll's stirring orations, entitled "Do I Blaspheme?" There will be sixteen large pages for one penny, together with a portrait of the popular Freethought orator and wit. Giving such good value we look forward to a large sale. The pamphlet will be found to suit excellently for propagandist purposes.

COL. ROBERT INGERSOLL has taken a cottage at Long Branch for the summer, and says it is as good a heaven as he wants. Having taken part in the star route trial he ought to be orthodox on the subject.

THE annual meeting of the members of the Provincial Assembly of Presbyterian and Unitarian ministers and congregations of Lancashire and Cheshire was held on the 21st inst., at Altrincham. On the motion of Mr. F. Taylor (Bolton), seconded by the Rev. R. L. Carpenter (Bridport), a petition to Parliament was adopted praying for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. The Rev. James Black moved that a memorial should be addressed to the Home Secretary praying that the persons recently committed for blasphemy might be released from prison. He appealed to that assembly to be true to itself, and urged it not to follow in the steps of some other bodies, who avoided carrying out their principles impartially at times when the application might be a little uncomfortable to themselves. This was seconded by the Rev. T. Carter (Rochdale), and was carried, three persons voting against it.

THE Archbishop of York shall have a paragraph in the *Freethinker* all to himself. He is speaking to a Church Insti-

tute: "They did not suppose that science, which was the subject of the most ardent study throughout this country and Europe at this time would, because of their ban of proscription, arrest its march." Why, cert'nly.

THE Liberation Society has issued a statement of objections to the Bishop of London's Bill for amending the Union of Benefices Act, now before the House of Commons. Its object is described to be to take away the veto now possessed by the parishes; so that they may be deprived of their churches, clergy, and endowments without their consent. Of the nine Commissioners to be appointed, five will be chosen by bishops or clergymen, and a sixth by churchwardens, half of whom are clerical nominees, and the parishioners are to have no direct voice in the appointment of Commissioners. The proposal that all the Commissioners shall be members of the Church of England is described as "audacious," the creation of a new ecclesiastical disqualification for the exercise of a civil right, and a new and insidious attempt to sectarianise the National Church. Strong objection is taken to the appropriation of all the proceeds of this valuable property to Church of England purposes, such as the building of churches and parsonages, and the creation of new clerical endowments, while no provision is made for the intellectual and physical wants of the people, and the funds will go to swell the already enormous resources of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The grasping character of the measure is, it is stated, shown by the fact that, though it takes away the churches and endowments, it leaves the inhabitants of the parishes burdened with payments for the support of the City clergy, and proposes the erection of new churches, without liquidating the debts for church building, for which some of the London parishes are still taxed. The statement closes thus: "The Bill, in fact, inflicts the maximum of injustice in order to effect a minimum of good, and will confer benefits on the members of one religious body which might be, and ought to be, conferred on all. Prepared by an ecclesiastic, it is conceived in the interests of ecclesiastics; the interests of the laity being ostentatiously disregarded."

J. F. RAYNOR, of Southampton, has replied in very forcible style to certain misrepresentations of Canon Wilberforce. All our friends should take up the cudgels when our faith is assailed. If they have not the wealth and "position" of these clerical slanderers, their cause is a noble one.

A NEW work in two volumes by Gerald Massey, dealing with primitive culture and the origin of myths, will be published next month by Williams and Norgate. It will be entitled "The Natural Genesis."

MR. OWEN BALMFORTH's efforts on behalf of education and advanced thought are known outside Yorkshire; and we have much pleasure in noticing his election as a member of the Huddersfield School Board.

BIGOTRY, in the person of the Rev. P. J. Pearce, did its little worst to oppose Mr. Balforth's election. This reverend gentleman, who seems to be about as much of a gentleman as he is reverend, confessed he knew nothing of Mr. Balforth, only that "he was a Secularist who undoubtedly wished to further the interests of a man like Bradlaugh, and to extend Socialistic and Secularist views." Rather than sit with a Secularist he thought of retiring from the Board. During his charitable harangue, Mr. Pearce heard a knocking from the floor below, whereupon he remarked that the Devil was trying to bother him as he always tried to bother anyone who was doing Christian work. The authorities have decided that no one is compelled by the thirty-nine articles to keep a devil, still, if one happens to have so convenient a scapegoat about the premises, it is as well to put him to some use.

CHILDREN'S SUMMER EXCURSION.—On Sunday evening the committee of the Central London Branch N. S. S., in conjunction with the late committee of the Children's Party, met in the Minor Hall of the Hall of Science, Mr. R. O. Smith in the chair. A sub-committee was appointed to make the necessary arrangements, so as to enable us to give full particulars next week. Meanwhile we ask our friends to send a good supply of funds, so that we may be able to take a large number of little ones for a day in the country. Subscriptions may be sent to myself at 24 Morpeth Road, Victoria Park, E. P.O.O.'s payable at Bishop's Road Post Office, Victoria Park. All subscriptions will be duly acknowledged.—J. G. DRUMVILLE, *hon. sec.*

THE Ball's Pond friends are indefatigable. On Sunday next, at 11.30, they hold an open-air meeting, at which Mr. Haslam speaks on "The Conflict between Religion and Science." In the afternoon, Dr. Edward Aveling lectures at 3 on "The Pedigree of Man." At 5 the general half-yearly meeting is held and tea discussed. At 7 music. At 7.30 Dr. Aveling lectures again on "Why I am not a Christian." Mr. Thomas Shore, jun., the secretary of the Ball's Pond Secular Hall Society, has challenged "Dr." Wainwright to discussion. The

"Dr." is afraid. His declining the combat and his criticisms on Secularism will be dealt with by Dr. Aveling on Sunday evening next.

THE Victoria Philosophical Institute is the scientific Mrs. Partington. It tries to brush back the advancing tide of scientific knowledge. The object of the society is "the investigation of philosophical and scientific questions, especially any alleged by its enemies to militate against the truth of Revelation." The society is answerable for the English of this quotation. The "its enemies" is delightful. From this quotation it will be seen that the Victoria Institute starts with a preconceived idea, that Revelation is infallible, and that everything opposed to it must be opposed. No man or body of men starting upon these premisses has the right to use the adjectives "philosophical" or "scientific." The qualifications of the institute to deal with the difficult questions of philosophy or of science are at once in evidence when we state that the chair was taken at its annual meeting by that eminent philosopher and scientist the Earl of Shaftesbury, that not one philosopher or scientist spoke at that meeting, that papers have been read to the institute by a number of men, of whom one only, Professor Stokes of Cambridge, can by any stress of courtesy be called by these high-sounding names.

SUBSTITUTES FOR RELIGION.

FREQUENTLY does it happen that the Freethinker, as is natural, is greeted with the demand, uttered in various keys, "What would you put in the place of religion, supposing that you could destroy it? What have you as a substitute if we give up our religion?" The demand, I say, is natural, though more specious than solid. No doubt people who suppose religion to be more extensive than it really is, as an element in their lives, feel almost aghast at the bare thought of relinquishing so integral a part of their existence. The consequent gap or void in their existence would be so great, so deep, that they shrink from it with a shudder, and resolve at all costs to cling to their religion. From my own former experience, I cannot doubt that that is the feeling of many honest and earnest believers, a class of persons I sincerely pity for the suffering inflicted upon them by the present sceptical age. It is no pleasant sensation for a man who has spent the best of life in elaborating or confirming his creed—when he witnesses the dissolution of that creed, and the evaporation of all his most cherished hopes! The wreck is simply appalling; and I do not wonder that most men should do their uttermost to prevent what must appear to them the greatest of possible catastrophes. I can only respect and pity honest people of that description, for in times of revolution and change, when old landmarks are sunk beneath the rising tide of progress—when ancient and time-honored ideas and prejudices are dissolving and passing away, they know not whither to turn for consolation, nor where to find a solid and dry resting-place for their feet. There never was a day more fraught with change than the present, though, fortunately we are now far on through its morning hours, and people who suffer in the way described are not, probably, so numerous as formerly. Still, there are many yet remaining who suffer enough from changing creeds to justify the demand, "What substitutes have you for religion?" To this demand I will try to return an answer.

And, in the first place, I ask, "Do those who put the question really understand what it is they require? For example, suppose it be the Christian religion that is in question, are substitutes required for the whole of that religion, or for only parts of it?"

1. The Christian religion presents its votaries with a Devil. Surely no one, to-day, will demand any sort of compensation for the loss of belief in such a fearful fiction as that! Every person who grows out of that fell belief, must, to judge from my own feelings, experience unspeakable relief. And it were as reasonable to ask for a substitute for some disease the doctor destroys as for one in the room of the Devil.

2. Hell-fire, a genuine doctrine of the New Testament and later Christianity, is worse still. In fact, language is absolutely powerless to express one's sense of horror at so ghastly a dogma as eternal punishment in a never-ending fire. One may feel quite secure as to one's personal safety; but what of others?—unbelievers, scoffers, indifferent persons? They, if Christianity be true, will all be damned eternally. Is there in existence a man who keenly enjoys the anticipation of seeing his neighbors damned because

their creed differs from his own, or because they have no creed at all? If so, he will demand a substitute for this unspeakable belief; but I deem it only fair that so wonderful a specimen of the human race should apply to the writer in person before having satisfaction accorded him.

3. There are persons who still believe in a furious god, who is angry with the wicked every day, and who will torture the helpless victims of his wrath for ever, the torture being limited only by their powers of endurance and his malicious ingenuity and power to inflict. Do you need a substitute for a belief so heart-rending, so debasing, so utterly savage? Surely not.

4. Let us see if a substitute is required for original sin. Let the appeal be made to a mother, and let the mother's heart, not her creed, prompt the answer. Would she prefer to believe her child to be totally corrupt and unholy? Is the belief so consoling to her, that she cannot part with it without an equivalent of pleasure in some other belief? These questions need no reply.

5. Let the Christian survey briefly the present state of Christianity—its two poles of dirt and misery, of gold and glitter—its rich temples, devoted to a hollow sham termed religious worship, its wretched hovels, embracing in their fever-grasp the poor and the unfortunate sons of toil—its rich and hypocritical priesthood, living in open violation of the commands of the New Testament. Are substitutes required for these? If so, they are not far to seek; they suggest themselves to the most casual observer. If the Christian prefers to turn aside from the practical Christianity of to-day, to what he would designate the real Christianity of the Bible, I am content. Let us ask, then, what compensation or what substitutes do you demand for the loss or relinquishment of this book?

I. Is the Bible of as much importance and value as interested parties so persistently represent? For its silly fables, told as truth, you surely do not want any substitute your own knowledge cannot supply. The Bible contains statements totally opposed to established science; opposed to history; opposed to reason; opposed to morality—it bids you hate all those you are bound by nature and social laws to love and cherish; it bids you expose and murder the heretic of your own family, and sacrifice human beings to the deity. No civilised man can demand substitutes for these. II. If we expose the characters of the saints and exemplars of the Old and New Testaments, if it be demonstrated that there is no character in the whole Bible which it would be safe or honest to copy, will you demand substitutes for those—substitutes, that is, for characters whose influence can only debase those under the spell of it? In no other case, would people ask, probably, for substitutes for a book and representations of character that could only render the admirers worse. It is because of the false lights in which the Bible is set by the churches that people are so deceived respecting its real value.

Let us devote a few sentences to this matter. The best way, perhaps, to test the value of a book or institution, is to ask ourselves what we should miss or lose if that book or institution were destroyed, or had never existed. To select the Bible and Christianity, for example, what would the world miss or lose were they both erased from existence? We should still have left all the sunshine and other weather that fall to our lot now; all the agriculture, trade, commerce, art, science, fine arts; all our literature (except the religious). No truth would be lost, beyond a few scraps of history, no useful art, scarcely a fruitful or beautiful idea. In social life there would be more charity, and we should miss most of the world of cant; persecution would cease, and imposture would dwindle down to extremely narrow dimensions. In law we should miss scarcely one good statute, while many barbarous ones would disappear. What then should we lose if Christianity and the Bible were no more? It seems to me that it would be a welcome relief for most, while those whose "craft" it is to teach this religion would be reduced to—the necessity of seeking honest and useful employment; a few sincere mortals would for a time feel just like smokers who resolve to cure the habit which enslaves them—unspeakably miserable; and the hypocrites and bigots would gnash their teeth in futile rage over the loss of their keenest weapons of persecution. That seems to me to be a pretty full summary of the losses the world would sustain if the Bible and Christianity were suddenly destroyed. The real loss is so trifling that it is not worth estimating; and even the sentimental loss would soon be found to amount to exceedingly little. JOS. SYMES

ESSAYS AFTER BACON.

III.—ON TRUTH.

WHAT is truth? Who shall say but that it is a naked and open daylight, that doth show the masques and mummeries of the world, and the pretences and dissimulations of the seeming religious, twice as clearly and brightly as the candlelight, of what it is custom and usage to regard as verity? The perception of the true, indeed, is not so strong as it should be in those who affect a religious and godly life; and why? Is it not—as one who toucheth pitch becometh defiled—because a too close familiarity with the lies of the so-called book of god increaseth a disregard for the niceties of veracity in speech, in thought, and every concern of life? It is true there is much difficulty and labor in the finding out of truth; and it is much easier to believe (in profession) what may be a lie than to search diligently for that which is true. But a Freethinker may not consistently profess a belief in those matters to which there is a doubt attaching; and he will not subscribe to a lie, though that lie be the creed of all his neighbors: the rather will he seek to ascertain if any truth remain therein; and, failing to find that truth, will he proclaim the lie to be a lie, though the declaration give offence to many seeming good and worthy religious men. Dissimulation, we may here see, is but a faint kind of policy or wisdom, for, as it needeth a strong wit and a strong heart to know when to tell the truth, and to tell it, it is the weaker sort of thinkers and the more fearful of the opinions of their fellows who become the greatest dissemblers and the most orthodox. And in this is apparent nought but the force of custom, and men regulating their words and deeds by and according to their infused opinions. What a contrast to such are the works of those—how few, alas!—who have kept, and do keep, their minds open and prepared to receive continual amendment and new truths, whether in science, in religious affairs, or in public polity!

H. J. BECKWITH.

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MR. CATTELL sends us also a controversy as to the authorship of Shakespeare's plays that raged between himself and Mr. H. G. Atkinson. The only drawback to this pamphlet is that it is impossible for any one who has read both Shakespeare and Bacon to take the least interest in an argument in which one of the two disputants actually contends for the identity of two men, every line of whose writings stands out not only distinct one from the other, but in both cases as distinct from all other men.

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C. HERBERT, *Treasurer*, 60 Goswell Road, London, E.C., to whom all remittances should be sent. Collecting sheets will be sent to any Freethinker on application to 28 Stonecutter Street.

MOSES—caught, COMPARISON; bowled, REASON.....0.

ON the first day "god created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i., 1), and you'll be damned if you don't believe it. Yet on the second day god made the firmament (Gen. i., 7) and called the firmament heaven (Gen. i., 8); and you'd have to believe that too, or else—! On the first day "god divided the light from the darkness" (Gen. i., 4) "and called the light day and the darkness night"—thus dividing the night from the day. You'll be damned if you don't believe this was done on the first day. Yet on the fourth day god said "Let there be lights. . . . to divide the day from the night" (Gen. i., 14) "and to divide the light from the darkness" (Gen. i., 18). It is blasphemy to disbelieve either of these statements. "And god created every . . . living creature that moveth" (Gen. i., 21) on the fifth day, yet on the sixth day "god made the beast of the earth after his kind and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth on the earth after his kind" (Gen. i., 25). Both these accounts are inspired and must both be correct! "And god created great whales . . . which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind" (Gen. i., 21). Yet though the waters brought forth these peculiar fowl, "out of the ground god formed . . . every fowl of the air" (Gen. ii., 19). And you've got to support both records or be damned. "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (Gen. iii., 20). Now, she was not Adam's mother. Was she? But Adam lived, didn't he?

EDGAR T. BENTON.

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RANTER: "Once my brethren I was a swearing, cursing, blaspheming infidel like you, but one day I was up a ladder and I thought to myself, if I was to fall down what should I do?" UNBELIEVER: "Why you'd break yer neck of course." —(fact).

I WONDER whether you ever heard the story Mr. Potter tells, of a college companion of his who blundered dreadfully in his examination for ordination. As a last resource, he was asked if he could repeat any one text from the Old or New Testament. He readily quoted: "And Moses said when he was in the whale's belly, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."—"Life of Harriet Martineau."

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