

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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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

DR. WAINWRIGHT AND ATHEISM.

THE Rev. Samuel Wainwright, D.D., is a clergyman of the Church of England. He is a member of the London School Board. He is an antagonist of Roman Catholicism and of atheism. It is difficult to discover to which his antipathy is the stronger—the true religion of Roman Catholicism, of which his Protestantism is a poor and bastard imitation, or the atheism that is the logical outcome of that scientific thought to which Dr. Wainwright has not paid due attention.

As in this article, and its successors, I am about to attack the views held, and the language used, by Dr. Wainwright, I desire to state very clearly at the outset that I attack his views and language only. My correspondence with Dr. Wainwright, and my conversation with him at the London School Board have taught me once again the lesson often learned and never to be forgotten—that antagonists in thought can be as sincere and earnest as we can hope to be. Had I judged Dr. Wainwright only from his public utterances, as read by me in the public press, I should have thought him, I confess, to be a most intolerant, a most bigotted man. After my talk with him, though, I am bound to maintain that this opinion of him is warranted by the nature of the words he has used, I am also bound to credit him with a real belief in all that he says, and with a kindness and courtesy in his words to me that his published speeches had not led me to expect.

The history of our relations hitherto is briefly as follows. On the occasion of a visit on my part to the Ball's Pond Secular Hall I spoke against certain utterances of Dr. Wainwright's. I told him by letter a day or two before the Sunday in question of my intention, and sent a card that would admit himself and any friends, or any representative of his to my lecture. I expressed in my letter my fear that as I was to speak on Sunday his duties as a clergyman would prevent him from being present. To this letter I received the following reply:

"Dear Sir,—You have, of course, conjectured rightly that I shall be prevented from hearing your lecture to-morrow evening. Thanks no less, however, for the courtesy of your card. I hope too, for my own part, that you will not have failed to observe that in my demonstrations of theism, whenever they have involved a reference to atheism, I have studiously endeavored to observe a similar courtesy. It is not the person but the *thing* with which I am at war. As to the persons, there exists for Christian advocates a prescribed canon of procedure which carries with it its own commendation: 'By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of god.'

"Deeply do I deprecate the necessity of controversy. But as long as that necessity exists, I think that he who recognises in this golden rule the standard of its perfect method, need not despair of conciliating—sooner or later—those by whom he is at first misrepresented or misunderstood. My own sympathy with doubters is well and widely known. It is at once too sincere and too profound to admit of any antagonism towards *them*. With scoffers and deniers the case is different. Yet even in this latter case—with an inexpressible shrinking and revolting from the blasphemies they utter—is mingled a pitying sorrowfulness which because it hopes the best things is unwilling to believe the worst. It is consequently not

given to 'personalities;' and even when reviled it 'revileth not again.' It remembers that the apostle who changed the face of Europe was at first 'a blasphemer;' and he whose life was one long dying 'for Christ and his cause,' had yet been a party to the murder of the proto-martyr of the Christian faith.—Again I thank you for your courtesy, and am very truly yours,
S. WAINWRIGHT."

In answer to this I wrote as follows:

"Dear Sir,—Thanks for your courteous letter, the tone of which makes me regret all the more that we cannot meet in public. I read your letter to my audience before dealing with your remarks on Sunday night. I propose writing one or two articles in the *Freethinker* containing the gist of my remarks on your lectures. I shall be happy to forward you copies, but will not trouble you with them unless you express a wish to receive them. I need hardly say that the columns of the *Freethinker* will be open to any reply of yours."

The reply to this communication was given me *virâ voce* at the Board in its ante-room. We had a conversation of some length, and I do not doubt that the various members who were surveying us with curious eyes were in wonder as to which of us was trying to convert the other.

Dr. Wainwright speaks of Jesus Christ as if he really believes all the fables that are told of the son of Mary. When I told him that I intended attacking his lectures in the columns of this paper, and offered to let him see the proofs of my articles ere they went to press, or if he preferred it copies of the *Freethinker*, in which they appeared, he declined both my offers, on the ground of the great pain that would result from the reading of any paper that attacked his lord and master. It is needless for me to add that I offered, and still offer, to Dr. Wainwright the opportunity of replying to my criticisms in these columns.

And now the decks are cleared for action, Dr. Wainwright, and such as may read my articles, know that I am assailing words and ideas rather than the utterers of them.

And first, before I deal in detail with the reports of the lectures given by Dr. Wainwright, let me comment on the extraordinary spectacle that he presents in his onslaught on Roman Catholicism, on the one hand, and atheism on the other. The spectacle is the more curious as the Protestantism of which he is the champion is a feeble attempt to reconcile the antagonistic claims of the two foes. The Roman Catholic religion is intelligible enough, though very hateful to thinking men. Protestantism is not intelligible, and is almost as hateful. It would be quite as hateful did we not know that it is not nearly so dangerous as Roman Catholicism. We smile at the vain pretensions of the bastard form of religion. Truly, it manages now and again to strike heavy blows. It imprisons our friends. It shuts men out of Parliament and women out of colleges. On the whole, however, its fangs are drawn. But the fangs of the Church of Rome are never drawn. Rather they are like the poison teeth of the serpent. Behind each active, deadly tooth through which the duct of the poison gland runs in every venomous snake, lie two or three other fangs waiting to take its place if from any cause it is injured or removed. Thus it is with Rome. But the illegitimate children of Rome are already decrepit hags, nearly toothless,

and only able with feeble gums to gnaw at the men that are nobler than that creed.

That the Protestant religion is fallen very low is shown by the instruments it employs. Justice North and Sir William Harcourt are the executors of its amiable commands. To mention these in the same breath as the Duke of Alva or Torquemada is to raise a smile at the depths to which Christian persecution has fallen.

Yet the very creed whence Protestantism has sprung, the parent of all these humorous creeds, each claiming for itself perfection, is the most bitterly attacked by the ordinary Protestant. When I read of a man like Dr. Wainwright, the representative of a Christian and Protestant church reviling popery, I can not but think of the bad taste that would be shown by a bastard in railing against the mother that gave him birth. Whatever wrong she has done she is still his mother.

Scarcely less strange is the attack on atheism. Atheism only carries out honestly and fully that right of private judgment that the Roman Catholic church denies to men, and that the Protestant churches pretend he has the right to exercise.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

JUMPING COMMENTS UPON THE BIBLE.

(Continued from page 242.)

Every seed bearing herb and fruit-bearing tree . . . to you shall it be for meat (Gen. i., 29).—All herbs and trees bear seed, and therefore all herbs and trees were for human food, according to this. Poor first pair! Look through some "Family Herbal," my reader, and see what those poor things had set before them for food! There is no discrimination exercised by the nurse; but those two full-blown babies, who had never sucked nor had pap given them, are just left to themselves to select their food as best they may from a universal Botanical Garden, teeming to excess with every plant and weed that ever grew! The trees are included in the stock. And no cookery yet invented! How sickly they must have been the first week or two! The marvel is they did not get poisoned before the first sunset.

And god saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good (i., 31).—The man who wrote that had never been chased by lion or tiger, nor bitten by a snake or serpent; white ants had never destroyed his dwelling, nor moths spoilt his wardrobe; fleas and bugs had never teased him, nor mosquitoes driven him mad; thorns and thistles had never pricked and lacerated his flesh, nor miasma laid him down with yellow fever; tropical heat had never roasted him, nor arctic cold frozen his extremities. The world he describes is not the one we live in; he but echoes the dreams of the golden age of poets and mythologists, and tells a tale of the past that never was present. Geology tells the blunt truth about it, and shows that this world has always been the scene of strife, pain, misery and death almost ever since life itself existed in it. If this world is a manufactured article, then he who made it must have been the essence of folly and barbarity. As we never hear anything of him now, I presume he has had what the Scotch call "a cast of grace"—has committed suicide to escape the wretched sight of his own infernal handiwork. Pity he did not commit suicide before creating the world!

Genesis ii.—The first three verses of this chapter belong neither to the first nor the second properly. They were added to the ancient story by some priest who wished to impose the Sabbath upon the people beneath his charge, and who knew that that could not be done without a good round lie. He says:—

The heaven and the earth were finished (ii., 1).—The heavens, of course, never existed, any more than the Greek Olympus or the Scandinavian Valhalla. But the earth never has been finished yet. Geology teaches that the earth is just as much in course of creation now as ever it was. Coral zoophytes, globigerinæ, many plants; all waves, streams, rain-showers, frosts and snows, volcanoes and earthquakes, are engaged in reconstructing and rearranging the strata of the earth. The process never was finished and never can be. The earth, like every other material thing, except probably ether and atoms, is a growth, not a manufactured thing, as theologians falsely teach.

And he rested on the seventh day, etc. (ii., 2).—"Behold I show you a mystery!" An almighty god spent a whole eternity in doing absolutely nothing; five or six thousand

years ago he built the world, at which he worked six days; the putting these few atoms together so exhausted him that he rested the whole of the seventh day!—and has done next to nothing since. To doubt this is blasphemy; to believe it is piety! If you ridicule it the bishops and their creatures will send you into solitary confinement for at least nine months, and allow you nothing to read but this stupidest of books!

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, where they were created, in the day that the lord god made the earth and the heavens (ii., 4).—Here beginneth an entirely new account of the creation by a writer who worshipped Jehovah not the Elohim. It was the Elohim who created all things in six days according to Genesis i. This chapter says Jehovah Elohim did the work in one day—"in the day that the lord god made," etc. Each of the stories is true; divinely so; and though they so flatly contradict each other, and both equally contradict known facts. Never mind. Believe both. Contradictions and lies constitute nine-tenths of the whole stock of revealed truth. What then? It is the fashion to pretend at least to believe it all, and if you find a flaw, "mum" is the word. To mention it might have the effect of damaging the interests of spiritual policemen and tyrants "set over you in the lords" and elsewhere, who rob the poor and the starving to build temples and palaces for their own glory and amusement.

The lord god formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (ii., 7). This, my reader, is very sublime language, praise the lord! Man's body consists, then, of dust of the ground; and his soul is nothing but a mixture of atmospheric air, carbonic acid, and water-vapor, breathed out of the lungs of his maker into his own! A man's first breath would expel most of what the lord breathed into him, and a few subsequent acts of respiration would get rid of it all. He was soon without any soul, except the constant inrush and outrush of the air, etc., to and from his lungs.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, etc. (ii., 17).—As divines long since gave up as hopeless the task of trying to find where the Garden of Eden was, I shall not notice it, except to remark that in the first chapter man had all trees given him without exception; here he is forbidden the tree of knowledge—almost the only one worth eating of; and, by implication, he was forbidden to eat of the tree of life also (iii., 22).

The first man was exceedingly wise, however, without eating of the tree of knowledge, for he gave names to all cattle and fowl and beasts of the field; and he seems to have been no time about it either. A very precocious youth, certainly! The lord could no faster make animals than Adam gave them appropriate names. What language he used is not said. Some contend it was Welsh, and I shall not dispute it.

Adam's wife was made of one of his own ribs; and yet he calls her "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" (ii., 21—23). But she was only bone of his bone. Besides, if he was asleep when that surgical operation was performed upon him, how did he know that his rib had been extracted and used in this way? He preferred Eve to all the animals he had seen and labelled, as any fool might have done; but how did he know that she was like himself, never having seen his own shape in a mirror? Oh! I forgot! God was just like him, and no doubt told Adam so, and thus he knew his own shape from his maker's!

I may say that that bold, bad, blasphemous man, Bishop Ellicott, in a new commentary on the Bible, has the audacity to affirm, in flat contradiction to god's blessed and most holy word, that Eve was not made out of a rib of Adam! He is too respectable to send to Holloway Gaol; but wait till he is dead; then he will go down to Dante's *Inferno*, where so many blaspheming bishops and popes are already "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Amen.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

THE CREDULITY OF CHRISTIANS.

WE have heard a good deal lately about the "credulities" of Atheism from the Christians, and it might not be amiss to consider if the two creeds, the Atheistic creed and the Christian creed, were put upon their trial for credulity which would stand the better chance of winning the day—the former with its perpetual inquiries and unflagging

research, or the latter with its stultified belief in fossilised absurdities.

In the first place what is credulity? "Easiness of belief; readiness of credit," says Johnson. But we must not forget that what a Christian calls "credulity" when speaking of another sect of Christianity or of an Atheist, is metamorphosed into "faith" when speaking of himself and those who believe with him. And faith, on the authority of Paul, is "the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Strange that while the Protestant laughs at the credulity of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation he would be filled with holy wrath did an Atheist smile when the Protestant parson says solemnly at the altar rails, "Take eat, *this is my body*," as he tenders a morsel of bread to the kneeling victim of credulity. But the victim must swallow harder and far more mentally-indigestible stuff if he would save his soul alive. He must believe that the earth is flat; has corners that are the roosting-places of the four winds, and is immovable. Yet the most bigoted Christian parent would demur if his child were taught this geography of faith at a Board school. It is all right from a Sunday-school platform or a church pulpit. Driven into a corner—not of the earth—the Christian tells you the Bible is not intended to teach science, but morals. Then why did god allow the man after his own heart to write such a gross absurdity? Was it to hoax his people or as a test of their faith? Did he look into futurity and see the persecution of one of his creatures who, daring to use the reason he had bestowed for the enlightenment of his fellows, discovered that it was the earth that moved round the sun; and did he foreordain that the aged Galileo should be forced on his knees by the brutal priests and made to recant the truth? It is possible, however, that David introduced his own notion about the earth into his psalm while god was looking after the successful murder of Uriah for him. Christians know that the Bible is the inspired word of god and that he will damn them if they don't believe it. Yet even the foolishness of them would hesitate before asserting that the earth is a flat, stationary mass and that the two winds which are not blowing, sit in their respective corners awaiting their turn.

However, as the Christians have, at the imminent risk of eternal torment, denied the science of the Bible and chosen man's facts instead of god's revelation, let us see what sort of moral guide it is, since they profess to cling to its morals while discarding its science. Poor god! poor Bible! Even this professed adherence is only theoretical and not practical in these degenerate days. In the time of Joshua if a weeping widow prayed for justice on the murderer of her husband, whose slave he was, and the inquiries of the judge elicited the fact that the breath lingered in the bleeding, maimed body for some few hours after the blows were dealt, then, by the law of god was the arm of justice paralysed; the cowardly, brutal murderer was set free and the rights of man over the life and liberty of his fellows established. And this is Bible morality! True this old law would be of non effect upon the judges of to-day, but none the less is it god's law; none the less is it read in our churches and taught to our children; none the less are we, who denounce the book which contains it, and deny the god who inspired it, threatened with Holloway Gaol in this world and hell in the next.

Despite this and similar wise and just laws, the Church still upholds the morality of the Bible. But what is morality? "The greatest possible good to the greatest possible number!" cries the Atheist, with kindling eye and flushing cheek as he toils unweariedly for his fellows. "Morality," says the Christian, "morality is to obey god's law and to believe on the lord Jesus Christ that I may be saved." Which answer is the nobler, that of the man, who with no hope of a future yet gladly spends his brief present in brave, patient endeavor to leave the world better than he found it; to alleviate, however slightly, the misery and the evil in it; or that of the man who, looking forward to an eternity of bliss, yet occupies himself chiefly in care for his own soul—his own salvation? For which end he crushes his reason and stifles his doubts that he may "walk by faith and not by sight," till at last his credulous beliefs have bound him with iron chains to a slavery more pitiful than all other—the slavery of the mind.

Exceedingly contradictory are many of the things his faith enables him to mentally assimilate. While believing that in god "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," he must at the same time, with equal ardor, believe that god

"repented him that he had made man," and that having determined upon the destruction of his chosen people he was turned from his purpose by the adroit flattery of Moses. He must unhesitatingly believe that "god is a spirit," and at the same time that he "walked" in the garden of Eden, "talked" to the serpent, "made coats of skin" for Adam and Eve, "set a mark on" Cain, "wrestled" with Jacob, dined off roast veal and new bread (a frightfully indigestible meal even for a god, as is evidenced by the snappish contradiction of Sarah after dinner), "wrote with his finger" on two tables of stone, and gave various other evidences—notably, the creation of man in his "own likeness," of being as substantial a "spirit" as it is possible to imagine. The true believer must be firmly persuaded that god is the god of truth, and cannot lie; being absolutely perfect, still he must not permit a doubt to cross his mind that this same god said, "I the lord have *deceived* that prophet" (Ezekiel xiv., 9); and also, "I the lord had put a lying spirit in the mouth of all thy prophets" (1 Kings xxii., 22). He must believe that god cannot do wrong, and is incapable of evil thought, word, or deed. Yet Amos indignantly asks, "Shall there be evil in a city and the lord hath not done it?" Micah, under the influences of inspiration, asserts, "Evil came down from the lord." And lest the Christian should be troubled with qualms about the matter, god benevolently comes to the rescue and tells Isaiah, "I make peace and *create evil*." And the people who can murder their reason and believe this conglomeration of conflicting statements, or descend to the degradation of a living lie by professing that they do *not* believe, have the audacity to come forward and accuse us of "credulity." Who is the truly credulous man; he who demands a reason for every assertion made, the basis of demonstrable fact for every theory, the truth, cost what it may; or the man who owns a popular belief, attends a fashionable church and blindly believes the wildest statements, the most extravagant stories, the most terrible misrepresentations that an old unauthenticated book may present for his acceptance. Surely to an impartial judge the creed that calmly refuses to accept whatsoever comes to it unsupported by fact, unbelievable by free, untrammelled reason, is far less credulous than the creed which commands its professors to render up, unquestioningly, their reason and to believe, as "necessary to salvation," that which, did they but assert their reason, they must perforce discard as frivolous, ridiculous, and often wicked.

THORNTON SMITH.

PRISONERS' AID FUND.

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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.

He was rather absent-minded; and on presenting his beloved with a Bible, wrote on the fly-leaf, "From the Author."

ACID DROPS.

THE Home Secretary and his subordinates are growing lazy. They are omitting to acknowledge the receipt of memorials that are still flowing in to Whitehall. One case of non-acknowledgment at least has come to our knowledge.

At Westminster Police Court, the other day, Charlotte Veazie was charged with pretending to tell the fortune of Elizabeth Read. The prosecutrix said the prisoner had told her she had "had five young men." The fortune-teller got twenty-one days' hard labor.

At Jacob's well, A.D. 30, Jesus Christ told a woman that she had had five husbands. The fortune-teller was rewarded with a seat on the right hand of his father in heaven. *O tempora! O mores!*

ONE sometimes meets stray leaves from the Upas tree of Christian intolerance in unexpected places. In looking through a volume of controversial tracts in the British Museum, my attention was arrested by a note written on the margin "Ergo, therefore ought not devils like you to be hanged?" The sweet spirit of love and charit, betrayed in this sentence induced me to read the tract. It was "The Impossibility of knowing what is Christianity," by the Rev. Peter Dean. I found it a temperate, thoughtful treatise by a man whose humanity had risen superior to the harsh crudities of the New Testament, and it was against these words, as quoted by the writer of the tract, that the ireful defender of the faith had inscribed his generous sentiment: "To give one's cheek to the smiter, one's coat to the thief, one's life to the tyrant, is to make evil supreme and good impossible. It is to render the wicked (by successful villany) more wicked, and the penalty for being good too heavy for human goodness to endure." And this rational remark so wrought upon the soul of the aforesaid defender of the faith, that he would rather risk expulsion from the Reading Room for infraction of its rules than allow an opportunity to shew the effect of his Christianity to pass. On the next page his ignorance of dates crops up. "We are told that Jesus taught the fatherhood of god—so did Epictetus," says Mr. Dean. "Long after," sneers our Christian critic, in the margin. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Epictetus was born in Phrygia about A.D. 50, and flourished during the latter half of the first century. Before A.D. 180 there is no trace of the four gospels; A.D. 180 was long after the death of Epictetus, in whose works Professor Brandis says, "There is not a trace to show that he was acquainted with Christianity."

THE god of love, whom the Christians are so anxious for us to love and honor, is not yet satiated with the young lives he has so ruthlessly destroyed of late. Again the papers announce the untimely end of more innocent little victims. A few days since four young children were playing in a field. A heavy storm coming on they sought shelter in a culvert, where, the water rising, the little ones were all drowned; and the dead bodies only were left by this merciful god to the agonised parents. Imagine a god deliberately planning the murder of these children; fore-ordaining that they should play near the culvert; sending a terrific downpour of rain; putting into their minds the idea of seeking shelter in the culvert, and finally watching with fiendish satisfaction their helpless struggles in the cold, pitiless water. To deny that he did plan the death of these children is to question his supervision of this world's affairs—that is blasphemy. To blaspheme is to run the risk of being damned. To question his ability to prevent this catastrophe if he had chosen, is to call in question his omnipotence—that is blasphemy, and the risk is about the same. To refuse to honor and worship this monster is a species of blasphemy, liable to be visited with imprisonment here and damnation hereafter. By way of variety we find that god arranged to have three little girls burned to death on Saturday under the eyes of their father, who vainly risked his life to save the lives of his children. Verily god's ways are not as our ways.

MR. E. FOSTER, of 50 Friargate and Heatley Street, Preston, writes us a long, incoherent and ill-spelt letter about the Sunderland disaster and god's share in it. "Blasphemous," "consummate littleness," "basely insinuate," "height of inconsistency," "idiot," "want of decency," and threats of Holloway Gaol are among Mr. Foster's flowers of speech. Mr. Foster, who maintains that the Sunderland disaster was man's fault, and yet believes in an omnipotent god, calls himself a Freethinker. He threatens to withdraw his support from this paper. We hope he will.

FOR geniality and kindness of spirit we must, as all the world knows, look to the clergy. An instance of the truth of this generalisation follows. Recently, a clergyman and gentleman, described as the Rev. Maxwell Ben O'Liel, attended at the Hammersmith Police-court to support a charge against four small boys for playing cricket in the

Kenway Road, Kensington. As one of the little fellows was so tiny that the police-officers could not see him, even with the aid of a microscope, he slipped through a crack in the floor of the court, and three were left. Mr. Shiel fined the juvenile horrors sixpence each, and two shillings costs. Such courage as that shown by the Rev. Maxwell Ben O'Liel in thus stemming the torrent of wickedness will not be too highly praised.

WE have read that St. Peter had a wife and a mother-in-law and that the latter was subject to attacks of malaria, but until we picked up a New Orleans paper yesterday, we were ignorant of the fact that St. Peter had a sister living in the Crescent city. We notice in an advertisement that she is in charge of a convent school, and signs herself "Sister Saint Peter." Her distinguished brother has been dead some time. He died before the war broke out.—*Texas Siftings.*

SPEAKING of the cholera in Egypt, a correspondent from the country of the Pharaohs, which has always had a rather hard time of it in respect to plagues, says: "The natives continue to offer the strongest opposition to the sanitary precautions recommended, particularly to the burying of dead in lime, which destroys the long lock of hair by which the ignorant Moslems believe they will be raised to heaven."

ON this the London *Sportsman* remarks: "It is doubtless very irritating to have to combat the prejudices of the natives in religious matters; but when we look at home and into the controversies which rage in our cemeteries and churchyards over such trifles as consecrated or unconsecrated ground, we can hardly throw a stone at the Egyptians and call them "ignorant" because they entertain a superstition as to a lock of hair."

MISS ELLEN BAKER, daughter of the African traveller, committed suicide recently. Her sad death would be a subject far too painful for comment, were it not that the cause of her self-destruction is that fatal religion, answerable for most of the evils in this country. The deceased lady, who had been a sister of mercy in a convent in London, had recently returned home on a visit. She had suffered from epileptic fits and religious mania, and on the 14th inst. she attempted suicide by opening the veins of her arms with a penknife. This failing, she possessed herself of a Japanese dagger, and returning to her bedroom, plunged the weapon into her stomach, inflicting a terrible wound. Medical aid was at once called in, but the unfortunate lady repeatedly asked to be allowed to die, and finally succumbed to her injuries.

IT would be difficult to surpass the religious papers in choice invective. The *Church Review*, perhaps having in view the statement that Jesus spoke of Herod as a fox, writes of Mr. Gladstone as "the political oppossum at the head of the Government."

FREETHOUGHT.

Yes—have Freethought, I say; accept
Deeds which are noblest, wheresoe'er
The might that bids the right despair;
Tyrants, stand back! slaves long have slept.
Now has man risen from the dead?
O, waft the joy o'er land and sea,
Demand that men be justly free,
Since chains are not for heart and head.
This day, be all as one, indeed,
Let despots learn we, too, believe
The right to think we do receive,
Devoutly spurning myth and creed.
Nature, herself, doth prophesy
In temples bright, wide, high, and deep;
Brothers, arise! no longer sleep,
Fight for the truth, but never lie!

WILLIAM HITCHMAN.

CHILDREN'S SUMMER EXCURSION.—Parents wishing for tickets are requested to write (enclosing stamped and directed envelope) to the secretary, but it is to be distinctly understood that the children whose parents are members of the National Secular Society will have the preference. Therefore it is necessary to state what branch they belong. The ages of the children are from six to thirteen. Tickets free. Subscriptions (which will be found duly acknowledged in the *National Reformer*) may be sent to secretary at 24 Morpeth Road, Victoria Park, E. P.O.O. made payable at Bishop's Road Post-office, Victoria Park.—J. G. Dumville, hon. sec.

A LITTLE girl, reading in her Bible that Christ "wipes a tear from every eye," proposed to her Sunday-school teacher that they should get up a subscription to supply him with pocket-handkerchiefs.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture on Sunday, August 19, in the Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, Islington, N.

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 WITH THANKS.—J. C. McCleery, J. O. D., John Lumly, Ishmael, C. Kroll Laporte, J. Payne, F. T. Waller, P. C., Sabulonis.

ONE OF THE PEOPLE.—Thanks for your good service in writing to the Home Secretary and to the *Daily Chronicle*. The latter paper has given scarcely any help. The *Daily News* alone has been fair.

SHAKSPERE, Plumstead.—Shakspeare may have been nominally a Christian. We very much doubt if he were a real Christian. Probably Colonel Ingersoll means that a writer so thoroughly worldly as Shakspeare would not be acceptable to a believer in, and worker for another world like Christ.

EDWARD ELLSMORE.—You are correct. Sir William Harcourt's answer to Mr. Freshfield was to the effect that a prosecution of the *Freethinker* would be unwise. The fact is that he dared not initiate such a prosecution, as he is nothing if not cowardly. But the prosecution once safely commenced the Home Secretary joins open-mouthed in the hue and cry. When he thinks there is nothing to fear, he is most brave.

DANIEL DOUGLAS.—We prefer making fun of imaginary gods to making fun of real men. The article is smart none the less.

G. H. MAPLETON.—You can obtain bound volumes of *Progress*, with index and title-page, of the Progressive Publishing Company, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C. Price 3s. 6d.

ALEXANDER EDGAR.—We congratulate your friends on the success of your daring experiment, as Sunday excursionists in Scotland, Scotland is one of the loveliest countries in the world for excursions, and we are glad that you have redeemed its inhabitants from the charge of national idiocy in not utilising their day of rest, which is one of their idiosyncracies.

BEEZLEBUB ABADDON wishes to exchange Scott's Bible, complete in five volumes, for a complete set of the *Freethinker*.

FRIENDS desirous of aiding the circulation of this paper can obtain thirteen copies of back numbers for sixpence. By the new parcel post 3 lb. can be sent for 6d.

CHAMBERLAIN.—Your letter was evidently too temperate and thoughtful for insertion in that abominable paper, the London *Evening News*.

W. J. STANNARD.—We have never seen, as far as we can remember, the words attributed to Darwin by Joseph Cook. That they are attributed to the great thinker by J. C. is strong evidence that Darwin never uttered them.

A PETITION with 182 signatures, praying for a remission of the sentences of G. W. Foote and W. J. Ramsey, has been forwarded to the member for Edinburgh, Mr. Buchannan for presentation, by C. Nicholson.

JOSEPH ROGERS.—Your dramatic sketch, "After Four Years," duly received.

H. GATES.—The lines, "Money, oh money, thy praises I sing," to which you append your name have frequently been reprinted and have already appeared in the *Freethinker*.

It is particularly requested that all orders for literature should be sent to Mr. H. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, to whom all Post-office Orders should be made payable. Considerable delay and annoyance are caused by the disregard of this rule. In remitting stamps halfpenny ones are preferred.

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

In our issue of August 19 will appear a list of agents for the *Freethinker*. All who sell the same will oblige by sending their names and addresses to Mr. Forder.

SUGAR PLUMS.

JOHN ROWELL WALLER tells us that his "Woodland and Shingle" has turned out very successfully, exceeding his most sanguine expectations. Working men in the Freethinking ranks have given him every help. This is good news, and we congratulate both author and readers. Our only fear is that his success as a book-writer may not prevent him from occasionally contributing to our columns.

THE REV. W. SHARMAN, at the close of the service the other night at Treville Street Chapel, Plymouth, said he had received through the secretary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, an invitation to the pulpit of the congregation at Melbourne, Australia. The invitations had many attractions, and in ordinary circumstances would have

been gladly accepted. The rev. gentleman, however, said he felt that the duty imposed on him in the present stage of the struggle for religious freedom and constitutional right was of primary importance, and must be observed.

THE following letter sent to the *Daily Chronicle* was suppressed by that paper:—

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'DAILY CHRONICLE,'

"Sir,—I hope you will allow me, in the interest of fair play, to reply to Sir Wm. Harcourt's answer to Mr. P. A. Taylor, M.P., as reported in your's of to-days date, who said, with reference to the recent Blasphemy Prosecution, that 'the publication was in the most strict sense of the word an obscene libel and a scandalous outrage on public decency.' Sir Wm. Harcourt must know that the general interpretation of the word 'obscene' is filthy, and is in opposition to the 'strict sense' or meaning of the word which is, according to Johnson, immodest, disgusting, offensive; and therefore his sense of fair play should have restrained him from using a word liable to such an interpretation. Having seen and carefully read the incriminated Christmas Number of the *Freethinker*, I can safely assert that there is not a single word or illustration in its pages that can justify the term as generally understood. I can quite understand that it would be offensive and disgusting to many sincere Christians. And is not the comic, political paper, *Judy*, offensive and disgusting to many Liberal politicians, satirising as it does in offensive attitudes the most eminent men of the Liberal party; and in like manner may not *Fun* be to the Conservative politician. But would Sir Wm. Harcourt venture to say that these publications are obscene, though it would be in the 'strict sense' of the word. Numerous passages might be cited from the works of Spencer, Huxley, Arnold, Morley, and many other eminent writers, to show that they have indulged in equally offensive language when speaking of Christianity. Would Sir Wm. Harcourt venture to say that the writings of these men are obscene. But in the 'strict sense' of the word it would be correct to do so. I hope that when next Sir W. Harcourt speaks of a publication issued by men with as pure motives as even he might possess (however he might differ with the contents), he will at least give them credit for what they in their honest convictions attack because they believe it to be injurious to humanity, be that attack in the form of satire or not.—Yours, etc.,
ONE OF THE PEOPLE."

MR. JAMES PARTON'S views on the future religion of Americans, delivered before the Nineteenth Century Club of New York have been in part reproduced in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Mr. Parton says: "To be a good American—that will be the coming man's religion—aye, though he may never have the privilege of treading these shores; to be a good democrat, loving the fraternal equality of men; to be a good aristocrat, lord of ourselves alone, servant to all others; to consume little, bestow much, and waste nothing; to be such an American citizen that if every other were to be the same all would be well in America. The sole object of the true and final religion will be to improve the quality of human life in this world. On a visit to the Theological Seminary, New Cincinnati, then presided over by Dr. Lyman Beecher, I once had occasion to note the course of study. The hundred young men there who were to pass their lives in the valley of the Ohio, were expending their strength in learning the language, geography, history, literature and politics of an insignificant province in Asia named Palestine, when they ought to have been studying German, ventilation, drainage and matters by which they could live in the valley of the Ohio. The coming man will change all that."

A FEW weeks ago there died at Vauréal, near Pontoise, a French Freethinker—Léon Lebrun. He had expressed the wish to be buried without any religious ceremony, and this wish his daughter, a girl of 17, naturally desired to obey. But she had reckoned without the clericals. The pall, bier, and funeral equipage, being the property of the commune, were refused her; the grave-digger refused to do his office. Nor was this all. The mayor declared that the funeral procession must proceed to the cemetery through muddy bye-paths, as the body of a Freethinker "ought not to go by the same route as those of Christians, of Catholics." In spite of all these difficulties and of all intimidation, Madlle. Lebrun carried out her father's last request. But what is to be said of the Christians who subjected her to this persecution? After all there are some things which they do not order better in France.

THE Council of the Guild of St. Matthew are prepared to provide single lectures or short courses of lectures free of charge to any club in an easily accessible part of London. Ample opportunity for questions and discussions to be allowed after each lecture. All communications to be addressed to Mr. Frederick Verinder, hon. sec., 5 Goldsmith Square, Stoke Newington, London, N.

At a Tuscan convent which has recently been secularised, the furniture, etc., was sold by auction. One lot consisted of

"relics" of the martyr-saints, Peter, Anastasius and Clement. Apparently there is just now a very small demand for relics. Those of Peter were knocked down for 3s. 4d.; those of Anastasius for 2s. 6d.; while Clement's only fetched 1s. 8d. Alas poor saints!

THE HEBREW PROPHETS.

ANYONE who has read an account of the mystery men among savages, will have the clue to the original nature and functions of the inspired prophets of Jahveh. These gentlemen occupied a rôle somewhat similar to that of Brian the hermit, the highland seer described by Sir Walter Scott in his "Lady of the Lake." They were a sort of cross between the bard and the fortune-teller. Divination, though forbidden by the law of Moses, was continually resorted to by the superstitious Jews.

The so much disputed about Urim and Thummim probably represented some method of divination. In 1 Kings vi., 16, and Psalms xxviii., 2, the adytum of the temple is called the "oracle." Numerous references are to be found in the Bible to the practice of casting lots, the disposing of which is said to be "of the lord" (see Numbers xxvi., 55, Joshua xiii., 6, 1 Samuel xiv., 41, Proverbs xvi., 33, xviii., 18, and Esther iii., 7).

The ninth chapter of the first book of Samuel gives an instructive glimpse into the nature of the prophets. Saul, sent to recover his father's asses, and, unable to find them, is told by his servant that there is in the city a man of god, and all what he saith cometh surely to pass. Saul, perhaps guessing the lucre-loving propensities of men of god, complains that he has no present to offer. The servant, however, had the fourth part of a shekel of silver (about 8d.) wherewith to cross the seer's palms; and Saul, seeking for asses, is made king over Israel by the prophet Samuel. The custom of making a present to the prophet is also alluded to in 1 Kings xiv., 3. Jereboam, when his son falls sick, sends his wife to Ahijah the prophet with ten loaves and cracknels and a cruse of honey, to inquire his fate. Later on Micah (iii., 11) complains that "the prophets divine for money." See also Nehemiah vi., 12. As with the oracles of ancient Greece and Rome (the inspiration of which was believed by the early Christian fathers, with the proviso that they were inspired not by deities but by devils), the prophets were especially consulted in times of war. Thus, in 1 Kings xxii., Ahab consults 400 prophets about going to battle against Ramoth-Gilead. He is told to go and prosper, for the lord shall deliver it into the king's hand. Micah the prophet, however, explains that he had seen the lord in counsel with all the host of heaven, and the lord sent a lying spirit to the prophets in order to persuade Ahab to go to his destruction. This is quite in accordance with the declaration in Ezekiel xiv., 9, that "if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the lord hath deceived that prophet." David on one occasion (1 Sam. xxiii., 9) "took counsel of god," as this divination was called, by means of the ephod, probably connected with the Urim and Thummim. He sought to know if he would be safe from his enemy, Saul, if he stayed at Keilah. On receiving an unfavorable response David decamped. Inquiring of the lord on another occasion, David got more particular instructions than were usually imparted by oracles. He was told not to go up against the Philistines, but to fetch a compass behind them and come on them over against the mulberry trees (2 Sam. v., 23).

We read, 1 Sam. xxviii., 6, that "when Saul inquired of the lord, the lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." This, presumably, was because (verse 3) "Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land." He therefore had to seek out the witch of Endor to raise the spirit of Samuel.

According to Numbers xii., 6, Jahveh communicated with his prophets by means of visions in a dream. Prophets, diviners, and dreamers of dreams are classed together (Deuteronomy xiii., 1, Jeremiah xxvii., 9, Joel ii., 28, and Zechariah x., 2). No one, however, can read the account of Balaam's falling, and lying prostrate with his eyes open while prophesying (Numbers xxiv.); and of Saul when, after an evil spirit from god had come upon him (1 Sam. xviii., 10), "he stripped off his clothes also and prophesied in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night; wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets" (1 Sam. xix., 24), without calling to

mind the exhibitions of ecstatic mania among semi-savages. The Shamans of Siberia, for instance, work themselves up into a fury, supposing or pretending that in this condition they are inspired by the spirit in whose name they speak, and through whose inspiration they are enabled to answer questions as well as to foretell the future. The root of the Hebrew word for prophet—*Nabi*, said to mean a bubbling up, confirms this view. The vehement gestures and gushing current of speech which accompanied their improvisations suggested a fountain bubbling up. Various methods were resorted to among the ancients to attain the state of ecstasy, when the excited nerves found significance in all around. The Brahmans used the intoxicating Soma. At Delphi the Pythia inhaled an incense until she fell into a state of delirious intoxication; and the sounds she uttered in this state were believed to contain the revelations of Apollo. In David dancing with all his might and scantily clad before the ark of Jahveh, we are forcibly reminded of the dervishes and other religious dancers. From the mention of music in connexion with prophesying, 1 Sam. x., 5, xvi., 23, 2 Kings iii., 5, it has been conjectured the Jewish prophets anticipated the Salvationists in this means of producing or relieving excitement. In the Mysteries of Isis, in Orphic Corybantian Revels, music was employed to work the worshippers into a state of orgiastic frenzy.

The passage about Saul suggests the nudity or scanty costume of the prophets. Isaiah the elder—for the poet who wrote from chap. xl. to lxxvi. must be distinguished from his predecessor—alleges a commandment from Jahveh to walk naked and barefoot for three years (Isaiah xx., 3). Apollon, or whoever wrote the epistle to the Hebrews (xi., 37), speaks of them wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins. A girdle of leather seems to have been the sole costume of Elijah (2 Kings i., 8). Micah (i., 8) says, "I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked." Zechariah speaks of the prophets who "wear a rough garment to deceive."*

The student of comparative religion is reminded of the Hindu sunnyasis and Mussulman fakirs. In the east insanity is confounded with inspiration, and Dr. Maudsley, in his "Responsibility in Mental Disease," has given his opinion that several of the Hebrew prophets were insane. The dread and respect in which they were held is evinced in the legend of the forty-two children who were slain by bears for calling Elisha bald-head. Their arrogance and ferocity were exhibited by Samuel, who made Saul king till he found a more serviceable tool in David, and "hewed Agag in pieces before the lord" (1 Sam. xv., 30); and by Elijah, who destroyed 102 men for obeying the order of their king (2 Kings i., 9—13), and at another time slew 850 for a difference in opinion (1 Kings xviii., 19—40). Elisha was unscrupulous enough to send Hazael to his master saying he should certainly recover, though at the time he knew he would certainly die (2 Kings viii., 10). Judging by such examples we may congratulate ourselves that the race of prophets is extinct.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE DELUSIONS OF THEOLOGY.

MAN is an imaginary invalid; he goes about the earth declaring that he is "a miserable sinner;" that his nature is corrupt, and his thoughts evil, and that he requires theological medicine to purify his soul and make it impervious against the attack of the Devil. The priest hears of the mysterious malady by which man is afflicted, and, relying upon the fear, ignorance and credulity of his fellows, comes forth with the healing syrup of the "divine word."

Mankind have always been delighted by the mysterious. It has only been necessary to tell them that the air is filled with spirits, angels, ghosts, witches, and other inconceivable things, to bring them instantly on their knees.

Closing their eyes, they have opened wide the mouth of credulity and sucked in with evident delight all the monstrous stories that a wicked and ingenious priesthood could invent and an ignorant and slavish people accept.

But the priest invariably found it judicious to administer the theological pill with a good dose of the jam of flattery. He told his dupes that they were the kings of creation;

* Very noteworthy are the denunciations of the prophets by each other. A column might be filled with their little amenities; but we refer the reader to Isaiah ix., 15, xxviii., 7, Jeremiah xiv., 14—16, xx., 6, xxiii., 14—16, 25—28, xxvii., 10—15, xxix., 8—9, Lament. ii., 14, Ezekiel xiii., 2—7, Micah iii., 5—7, Zechariah xiii., 4—5. Is not this last a slap at Amos vii., 14—15?

that it required an infinite and omnipotent deity to construct them, so wonderfully and fearfully were they made. Man's vanity could be satisfied with nothing short of this. It would have "hurt the feelings" of primitive man to have told him that there was a blood relationship between him and the apes.

It did not occur to early man to inquire how it was that every child born into the world is destitute of all idea of a deity—that is, that every little boy and girl born alive is a veritable Atheist—without idea of god. No doubt, if the question had been put, the priest would have replied that "the infant mind was not big enough to grasp the idea of god," and considering that, according to the theologian, god is infinite, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the small mind of the child would be less successful in grasping an idea of the infinite than the massive brain of the theologian. The truth is, man has never had an idea of god and never can have, if by god is meant an infinite being. He can only think of something that is finite and imagine the finite extended indefinitely. What is an idea? It is an image on the mind—the human mind being a mirror upon which nothing is reflected but that which finds its counterpart in nature. When a man is asked to think of a horse he images in the mind's eye an animal that he has seen. Or when he is told to think of a man he sees the reflexion in his mind of a being that he has beheld and knows the characteristics of. But if he were asked to think of an animal that he had never seen, never heard described, or seen a representation of, he could not do it. There would be no image on his mind—no idea. But man can, in imagination, think of an animal or being that has no real existence; but to accomplish this he must take the characteristics of several existing creatures and, by combining them, produce in the mind the idea of one differing in some respects from them all.

But when the theologian talks to his credulous supporters concerning god, he is on safe enough ground. His hearers are not likely to understand what he means, because that is more than he knows himself. But should some inquisitive mortal ask the question—what is god? the theologian is always ready with the most convenient answer in the world for unanswerable questions. "God is a spirit." The inquirer cannot say he is not, because he cannot have the remotest idea of what is meant by the word "spirit." Some theologians contend that spirit is "an unknown substance." The Atheist says the same; but he thinks that it is wise to talk a little less about the unknown and apparently unknowable, and try and understand a little more about the known and knowable.

A short time ago a theologian (the Rev. G. V. Garland, M.A.) wrote an essay to prove that the eternity and indestructibility of matter was not incompatible with the existence of god. Being a Trinitarian this theologian's task was rendered most difficult. So completely was his understanding perverted by theology that he vainly imagined that there could be two eternal existences, each of them infinite in extension. Having shown conclusively enough that matter may change in form, but cannot be diminished or increased in quantity, he proceeded to talk of god. He was soon up to his eyes in mystery. Said he: "By the personal development of the deity the son was begotten of, and the spirit proceeded from the father without severing the unity of the divine essence. By the individual limitation of the operation of the deity, the word made all things, and the spirit quickens them without contracting the potential infinity of the divine essence. By an act of temporal instantaneity the word was made flesh, and the spirit descended upon him, and by another act of temporal impermanence the son died and gave up the spirit without destroying the eternity of the divine essence. Thus that which is impossible in finite existence is possible in the divine essence. One, yet three; infinite, yet limited; eternal, yet temporal; one in essence, but three in personality; infinite, yet in power, but limited in action; eternal in substance, but temporal in substance. Personality, limitation, impermanence, are shown to be not impossible properties to be attached to the unity, infinity and eternity which subsist in the divine essence."

Could anything be clearer? So amazed were the priests who heard this clear and conclusive statement of "how it's done," that they forthwith ordered that the essay should be printed and circulated broadcast. And no doubt one of these days it will find its way to the heathen in foreign lands, who will with one accord pronounce it to be "indeed divine!"

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

(To be continued.)

PROFANE JOKES.

EPITAPH on a tombstone in a Welsh graveyard:—"Here lies John Evans who was accidentally killed by a Colt's revolver. It was one of the old-fashioned kind, brass mounted, hair trigger, and of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"NEVER engage in anything you would not open with prayer," said a very strict orthodox preacher. Whereupon an irreverent individual arose and inquired, "What would you do with a dozen oysters?"

THE other evening the Rev. Mr. Philacter sat down at the tea-table with a very thoughtful air, and attended to the wants of his brood in an abstracted manner. Presently he looked at his wife and said, "The apostle Paul"—"Got an awful lump on the head this afternoon," broke in the pastor's eldest son, "playing base-ball. Bat flew out of the striker's hand and cracked me right above the ear and dropped me. Hurt? Ugh!" and the lad shook his head in dismal, but expressive pantomime, as he tenderly rubbed a lump that looked like a billiard ball with hair on it. The parson gravely waited for the interruption and then resumed, "The apostle Paul"—"Saw Mrs. O'Ghemini at Greenbaun's. She's going to Chicago." The good minister waited patiently, and then in tones just a shade louder than before said, "The apostle Paul"—"Went swimming last night with Harry and Ben, stepped on a clam shell," exclaimed his youngest son, "cut my foot so I can't wear my shoe. Please can't I stay at home to-morrow?" The pastor informed his son that he might stay away from the river, and then resumed his topic. "The apostle Paul says"—"My teacher's an awful liar," shouted the second son. The mother lifted a warning finger and said, "Hush!" while the father remarked gravely, "The apostle Paul says"—"Don't bite off twice as much as you can chew," broke out the eldest son, reproving an assault of his little brother's upon the cake. The pastor's face showed a trifle of annoyance as he said in firm, decided tones, "The apostle Paul says"—"There's a fly in the butter!" shrieked the youngest hope of the family, and a general laugh followed. When silence was restored the eldest daughter said, "Well, but pa I would really like to know what the apostle Paul said." "Pass me the mustard," said the minister absently.

An old lady gazed thoughtfully on a picture of the passage of the Red Sea by the children of Israel, and then exclaimed: "Mercy! what a family that man had."

THE sermon was duller than usual, and it was only here and there that a fully wide-awake member of the congregation could be seen, when a little fellow, whose uneasy twistings had aroused his father from a comfortable nap, piped up in a clearly audible voice—"Pa, what do we have to stay here for?" That simple question injected more animation into the members of the church on that one evening than the pastor had aroused during his entire ministry.

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