

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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OCTOBER 28, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.



“PUBLICAN” BOOTH:

THE BOSS, THE BIRD, THE BOOSE AND THE BOOK.

“My revenue is the silly cheat.”—SHAKSPERE.

A VISIT TO G. W. FOOTE IN PRISON.

ON a recent Saturday I made another of my pilgrimages to Holloway Gaol. As on each day that I have journeyed thither, the brightness of the free day outside was almost painful when passing into the precincts of the prison. I remembered how that brightness must appear to our friends still held within those granite walls. As usual the prison authorities were as kindly and as courteous as the rigid nature of their duties permitted, and we had the full half hour allotted by prison regulations for our interview.

That interview took place in the same cage as before, and there is so much of necessary bolting and barring in this place, that when our talk was over, when his face had vanished from the other end of the narrow alley, and the sound of his retreating warder-accompanied steps had died away, killed by the sonorous closing of an iron-bound door, I waited in my department of the visiting cell, mechanically expecting some one to come and release me. Only after the lapse of a few moments did I wake up with a half start, and making for the door of outlet, find that it was unlocked.

His health keeps up fairly well. Still, there are occasional weakness and lassitude that need all his indomitable energy for the casting-off. He is sure that he has lost weight: the more sure because when he was last weighed the official would not tell him the result. At times, also, from the terrible monotony and restraint of the life, his head suffers a little.

No further relaxation of the gaol discipline has been extended, and he lays great stress, and wants us also to lay great stress, upon the fact that nothing of this slight relaxation, the use of books, and the two hours of exercise instead of one, is due to Sir William Harcourt.

With his work he is progressing, laying up an ever-increasing stock of knowledge. And knowledge is equivalent to a weapon with which to fight Christianity.

The mention of Harcourt brought the light of battle again into his eye. "It is my firm intention," he said, "to oppose him whenever he puts up for anywhere."

I was able to bear to him many a friendly message, for all of which he was very grateful. Of these not the least interesting was that from the veteran poet Gerald Massey, whose letter appeared in our last issue. Nothing seemed to do our brave friend more good than these words of comfort from one who, though fighting not altogether as we, is yet fighting the common foe.

When he was told of the liberation of the Strome Ferry head-breakers and thieves, and of the cool impudence of his fellow blasphemer, Mr. Matthew Arnold, in begging for his six months' salary for doing nothing, he only smiled quietly. Neither the action of our virtuous Home Secretary nor of the blasphemous School Inspector moved him to any surprise.

His inquiries after all his friends were eager, as of old. And his anxiety is very noticeable as to the many nameless, and in some cases unknown friends that are his the country through. He seems to wish to know as much of them, were it possible, as of those more closely related to him, and his messages of affection and encouragement are to all of you, not alone to us whom he calls by name.

We spoke much of the paper and of the magazine. As to the paper he has no doubt. But the former anxiety as to the fate of *Progress* was very observable. Everyone who would serve our imprisoned friend should work on behalf of the monthly sixpenny as well as on behalf of the penny weekly.

Of the coming out of W. J. Ramsey he spoke voluntarily with a beautiful unselfishness. I had to lead him to talk of his own emergence from the Christian clutches. That he has calculated as falling on February 25, 1884. When it takes place, he is most anxious that no fuss should be made. He cannot, and he would not, bid friends stay away on the day when he is freed. But if the moment of his liberation coincides with the presence outside Holloway Gaol of any concourse of friends, and if the exercise of their perfectly legitimate discretion by the prison authorities does not baulk our longing to greet him, the greeting must be a calm and dignified one, as his behavior has throughout been calm and dignified.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

SEVEN hundred voluntary schools have already slipped out of the grasp of the Church. Is not that hopeful news?

JUMPING COMMENTS UPON THE BIBLE.

[Continued from p. 330.]

Now the lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. xii., 1-3).

Having delivered Abram from the fell designs of Nimrod and the Devil, we may now resume his history in the Bible. The pious reader will not fail to note (1) the unsocial nature of the lord's religion, which begins by sending Abram from home, (2) the low and vulgar promises held out to his ambition, (3) the vengeful spirit of the lord who threatens to curse the man that curses his favorite. This is a very appropriate start for the Jewish-Christian religion—the lord seems never yet to have won a single follower except by means of bribery or intimidation. He never will; and now those old weapons are almost out of date.

This story of Abram's leaving home is a good specimen of Bible history. In chapter xi., 31, we are told it was Terah who left his native place, Ur of the Chaldees, taking Abram and Lot with him; and they went forth to go to Canaan. There is nothing here about leaving "his father's house;" that house went with him. But the text quoted above from chapter xii. says god told Abram to go out from his kindred and his father's house. Where Ur was, or Haran of Charran cannot be ascertained—somewhere near New Jerusalem, perhaps.

And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran (Gen. xii., 4). Is it possible the lord would send a poor old fellow of that age on a long journey into an unknown land? And did he talk to an old fogey of that age about leaving his father's house, etc.? If his poor old father was still living, Abram should at least have stayed and buried him before setting out. And if Terah was dead when god told this youth to quit, as the last verse of chapter xi. says, what sense was there in god talking to him about "his father's house?"

And there was a famine in the land (Gen. xii., 10). Ah! if the lord had only told the saint how to prevent famines, and the saint had imparted the secret to the world, then he would have made him a blessing to mankind; as it is, the world does not owe anything good to Abram yet, and I fear it never will.

Abram's example is instructive. In consequence of the famine he went to Egypt. His wife, only ten years younger than himself, is so fair that he fears the Egyptians will kill him for her sake; so he bids her tell a lie and pass as his sister. This was a most ungodly saint, for he had no faith in the lord to protect him in Egypt. What wonder if so many saints to-day follow the example of this ancient infidel, the father of the faithful, and trust in anything rather than Jehovah? The Egyptians must have had a plague, we suppose, just previous to this visit, in which nearly all the women had been swept off. It is impossible otherwise to account for Pharaoh's selecting so old a woman for his harem. Is this a story that Sarah herself told, when she returned from Egypt, to some of her gossips, over a cup of tea with a little reviving spirit in it? Anyhow, why *did* the holy ghost pen or dictate so stupid and indecent a tale?

And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. (Genesis xiii., 2). He does not appear to have had anything when he went to Egypt; he returned a very rich man. Sarah is said to have been beautiful; and Abram, friend of the most high god, enriched himself in the most unmanly and immoral fashion to be conceived. Why had not the holy ghost the decency to throw a veil over this part of the saint's life? Yea, why did he ever mention such a man at all?

Abram's treatment of Lot is described by an Israelite so as to redound to the glory of the former; had one of Lot's descendants written Genesis xiii., no doubt Abram would have been exhibited as the more selfish man.

I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. (xiii., 16). This is a good specimen of Bible promises, preposterously impossible of fulfilment. The dust caught up by one gust of wind in what the Scotch call a "stoury day" contains more particles than all the people

that have ever lived, most likely. Abram's descendants, if he has any at all, are not even among the most numerous of mankind. Both Abram and his god are mere names, no doubt of beings that never existed, except as Jupiter and Juno existed.

And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high god. (Gen. xiv., 18). Here is a delightful source of theological speculation! Who was Melchizedek? The Jews said he was Shem, son of Noah. Some of the fathers said he was an angel; some heretics (that is, unfashionable Christians) held that he was a Power, a Virtue, or Influence of god; others regarded him as being the holy ghost. Some Christians thought he was the son of god; and some Jews their Messiah. The Epistle to the Hebrews (v. and vii.) clears up the whole difficulty in a style which leaves nothing to be desired: Melchizedek, according to this, was not Shem, not an angel, not the holy ghost, not the son of god, not the Messiah; he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life"! Here all difficulties vanish in an outburst of faith; and I have no doubt the sceptical commentators who attempt to explain things beyond this will be damned for their pains. For my part, I cannot prove that he had parents; they are not necessary for gods and high priests. Those beings have the power to create themselves, and their ancestors also, when they care to indulge in such luxuries.

MORAL AND PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.—(1) How wonderfully kind was our heavenly father thus to invent this lying story for the sake of his servants the priests, who always take tithes when they cannot get more! (2) How marvellous are the ways of god, to inspire one of the priests themselves to write this story in his blessed book! (3) Note the marvellous success that has followed this divine fraud. Had it originated with a mere man it must have failed; but it has robbed the dupes of the Bible of untold millions; and this grand success is a standing miracle calculated to show to all, except undeceivable sceptics, that the Bible is the word of god. There are only two or three fatal points in the story, which we must note:—

1. Salem is an unknown place, and divines don't know where to locate it. I may tell them from my own knowledge that it is in the very middle of Utopia, and within a few miles of the Garden of Paradise, on the one side, and New Jerusalem on the other. To the north is the mountain, from the top of which the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Other interesting topographical points might be mentioned; but these are amply sufficient to lead any explorers to the very spot where Melchizedek still reigns and deals in bread and wine.

2. The god for whom Melchizedek was priest creates some difficulty. It was Eliun, an old Phœnician god, who knew nothing more of Jehovah than Jehovah did of him. They are both with Melchizedek to this day, though he does not recognise the difference between them.

3. Abram swore by Eliun (v., 22) along with Jehovah; showing that he, too, was a polytheist, though Christians absurdly claim him as a monotheist and a champion of that cause.

I should note, further, that in the third century there arose a sect of Melchizedekians, who held that he was the holy ghost, and thus superior to Jesus Christ; for, said they, Melchizedek was the intercessor and mediator for angels, Jesus being only such for man. The priesthood of the latter, they add, was a mere copy of the former. The latter point, I must say, is purely scriptural. See the passages in Hebrews above referred to. The Cocceians (disciples of Cocceius, a Dutchman of the 17th century) and the Hutchinsonians generally still believe that Jesus and Melchizedek were one and the same. So do I. Jack-o'-the-Lantern, Will-o'-the-Wisp, Apollo, Baldur, and Prester John are only other names of the same individual. He is rarely seen now; and the reason is that the churches have neither faith nor grace enough to induce him to visit them. He has retired in disgust, carrying his lantern and his bread and wine with him; and will never return until the churches renounce the world, and parsons live upon charity begged from door to door.

Problem.—What will be the date of his reappearance?

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

A DEGRADING RELIGION.

CHRISTIANITY is a degrading religion. Only mental slaves or moral cowards can accept it. A believer must begin by abandoning his reason, and end by shifting the burden of moral responsibility from his own to other shoulders.

Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, in stating his noble eightfold path to happiness, put first the acceptance of "right views." But, in order that a man should know what views are right, he must have freedom to think. Gautama saw this, and therefore urged his followers to inquire diligently after truth.

The founder of Christianity was not so wise. He cared not how stupid or thoughtless men were so long as they believed in him. In fact, he declared that he was "the way, the truth, and the life;" and that no man could be saved from the wrath of a merciful god but by accepting him. "Believe and be saved; disbelieve and be damned," was the foundation-stone of all his teachings.

In point of fact it came to this, that so arrogant and dogmatic was this peregrinating preacher that he led many to suppose that he was god almighty; and Christians to-day are driven into the position either of regarding Jesus as the very god, or of repudiating him altogether as an impostor. Some say that Jesus must have been a supernatural being, or he would not have made such bold pretensions. There was no hesitancy about him. He spoke as though he knew everything. But nearly all religious enthusiasts do that.

Dr. Parker, Mr. Spurgeon, Dr. Talmage, and Mr. Booth are all little god a'mighties to their respective followers. Sydney Smith once satirically remarked: "I wish I could be as cock sure of anything as Tom Macaulay is of everything." And Christians to-day take the strong declarations of Jesus as being sufficient guarantee of their truth, because they are foolish enough to imagine that his boldness would have been tempered with a little discretion if he had not been certain of their truth. But when Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," he laid the foundation-stone of a religion that is degrading to humanity.

It is the first duty of every man to think for himself and examine the credentials of whatever system he is asked to accept. To be threatened or intimidated into the acceptance of a religion is a crime—humiliating alike to all concerned. Every man must do his own thinking and express his own thoughts. The priest is not a better thinker than the layman, and religion is a subject that can be as well understood by the common folk as any other, if intelligibly stated. Why, then, should the layman allow the clergy to think for him? Why should he allow his mind to rust or decay to please the priest? Again, why should Jesus state the whole truth which persons must not disbelieve, in an obscure corner of the earth, to a number of ignorant and fanatical followers, and leave mankind without a written statement of them, except that which was supplied by persons who never saw, or heard him, or even lived until years after he was dust? And it must be understood that Jesus did not ask us to believe self-evident propositions. He did not come with doctrines as unmistakably true as the problems of Euclid. If he had we could not help believing them. But would a logical-minded man like Euclid say: "I have written these books; they contain truths which no man must dare dispute; for I declare that he who denies the truth of even one single proposition should be doomed for ever and ever?" No; there was no need for any such stupid declaration. The truth does not need to be bolstered up in this way. It will stand by itself. It will bear looking at fairly. But error shrinks from the test of examination. With the slippery dexterity of an eel it wriggles and writhes in agony as the sharp knife of criticism cuts it in pieces.

Christianity, then, is a degrading religion because it fears examination and commands its adherents to believe on the peril of their immortal souls. Perhaps, however, the most degrading feature of the Christian faith is that by which the believer suffers himself to be made a child of god by allowing an innocent person to die in his place and blot out his sins. It is degrading in the highest degree to a man of moral courage to allow another to suffer in his stead. No man with the smallest self-respect could permit it. And yet we are told that god sent his only-begotten son to die to blot out the iniquities of mankind. It would be a libel on the character of any respectable father to say that he sent his innocent son to gaol to suffer for a guilty one.

James Mill truly said that the moral difficulties of the Christian religion were greater than the intellectual ones. Suppose to-day that some villainous murderer were sentenced to death, and when the day for the execution arrived, some innocent person—like Sidney Carton in Dicken's admirable story of the "Tale of Two Cities"—stepped forward and said: "This man is guilty of murder, and should die; but he has friends who love him and desire him to live; I am innocent, but friendless. If I die none will miss me. It will be a far nobler thing for me to die than for this poor wretch. Besides, I shall be but imitating my lord and savior, Jesus Christ. The death of the innocent will atone for the sins of the guilty."

Do you think that the British public would allow the innocent thus to suffer for the guilty? Of course not. They would revolt at the idea. But suppose the innocent one did die, would that blot out the sins of the guilty? Would the death of the innocent restore the murdered man to his family? But if it were true I would not accept Jesus on such terms. I should be degrading myself. I would neither allow an innocent man nor an innocent god to die in my place. I am prepared to suffer for my own faults. I want no deputy. I am prepared to be paid back in my own coin; and if my life is vicious, I know I cannot escape the consequences in this life whether there is another or not, whether there is a god or not. I know that every deed I perform in the world is written indelibly in the book of nature; and whether I like it or not, cannot be blotted out. I know that virtue shineth like a star in the world; that vice poisons the stream of life; and I have made up my mind that the love of truth and the practice of virtue will make the best religion for the salvation of mankind.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

ACID DROPS.

HAPPY BILL, *alias* William Groves, was billed to sing and preach the gospel at the Railway Mission Hall, Wandsworth Road, recently. At the London and South-Western Railway Works 1100 men are employed; and the bills were distributed freely among these. Thirty-five minutes late, H. B. (it sounds like a drawing-pencil) turned up, first himself and then his eyes at the small audience. It was small in two senses. There were not thirty people, and about twenty of these were boys and girls.

THE Original Land Law is expounded by the *Bedfordshire Mercury* in the following manner:—

(1) NOTE BY A LAND-LEAGUER.

When Adam, by his maker formed,
Was into Eden sent,
He gave him freehold of the land,
And did not charge him rent.

(2) REPLY BY THE BISHOP OF OSSORY.

True! but ejection soon was served
For breach of contract laid;
And compensation was not given
For the "disturbance" made.

THE inevitable results of the demoralising teaching of the Salvation Army came out in the case of two of its members convicted of torturing a pony at Honiton. The names of the reprobates are Fairless and Denner. Their conduct is quite in keeping with a religion that is founded upon the brutalities of the Old Testament and the sacrifice of the New.

A STORE, not a hundred miles from St. Paul's, has the following articles on sale:—Bibles, brooms, and brimstone. Gospels, grease, and grindstones. Hymns, hams, and homilies. Prayers, paste, and pewter-pots. Rosaries, rasps, and rocking-horses. Saints, soaps, and sermons. Testaments, trumps, and treacle.

MESSRS. MOODY AND SANKEY opened a ten days' mission at Cork last Tuesday week. An immense crowd assembled in front of the Assembly Rooms, where the mission was being conducted, and hissed everybody who entered. When the doors closed and the proceedings commenced the crowd took to jeering with a view to disturbing the proceedings. They were several times charged and dispersed by the police, but again returned and persisted in their expression of dissatisfaction.

At the Central Criminal Court, James Thompson Muir, stated to be curate in charge of a parish at Battersea, surrendered to take his trial for assaulting two little girls. The jury, after an hour's deliberation, found the defendant guilty

of improper conduct in public, and acquitted him upon the charge of assault. Sentence, six months' imprisonment. Another good man "after god's own heart" gone wrong.

A CLERK in holy orders, who gave the name of John Jones, aged 50, and an address at The Myrtles, Malvern, was charged at Hammer-smith with being drunk and disorderly. The prisoner said he gave the name of John Jones as he did not wish his right name to appear in the papers. Mr. Paget said he was shocked to hear such a doctrine from a gentleman in the prisoner's profession of life, as it was far more serious to give false names. It was a disgraceful case. He fined him 40s. or fourteen days. The prisoner asked the magistrate to make the fine less, but he refused.

AN East Dulwich friend sends the following lines on beer and bible:—

Of people that on earth do dwell,
A Christian should disparage least
A publican who tries to sell
The article which Christ so well
Did brew at Cana's marriage feast.
'Tis said, when Christ began to brew,
The water saw its god and blushed.
No doubt it thought—and so should you—
It was a funny thing to do
For guests with drink already flushed.
The Christian faith well pinned should be
To "beer and bible," like a skewer;
For on the shores of Galilee
The founder of their faith, J. C.,
Was rather famous as a brewer.

At a meeting of the Edinburgh Gospel Temperance Union a deficiency in the finances was partly explained by the fact that £100 had been paid to Mr. Francis Murphy, the lecturer, for four weeks' work, besides which his hotel bill of £52 had been paid. One of the members of the Union said Mr. Murphy would hardly go anywhere without a cab. It *does* pay!

ADVERTISEMENT in the *Saturday Review*, October 22, 1883—

RADLEY COLLEGE.—All Saint's Day.—Annual foot-ball match, 3 p.m.; evening prayer, 5.30; dinner, 6.30; theatricals, 8. Old Radleians intending to be present are particularly requested to communicate at once with the Senior Prefect.

Who shall now say that religion does not blend with everything of our every-day and All Saints' Day life? Football, dinner, theatricals, and sandwiched in among these, evening prayer.

At the recent meeting of the Baptist Union at Leicester, the chairman, Mr. A. M'Arthur, in referring to foreign missions, said that he could not agree with those who advocated introducing education, and endeavoring to civilise the heathen before converting them; and added, "we should Christianise first, then civilise and trade." We are very glad to hear this testimony to the non-civilising effects of Christianity—especially the bible and gunpowder sort supplied to men contemptuously called "the heathen"—but it emanates from an unexpected quarter. Mr. M'Arthur's disinterestedness is apparent when he advocates trading after Christianising. He would find it far more profitable to trade with a "heathen" than with a "convert" who had been well drilled into the bible system of exchange and robbery.

THE Bishop of Manchester is not wanting in self-confidence. Addressing an audience at Newbold, he complacently informed his listeners that a man who pursued any honorable calling could be as truly Christian as even a bishop. He forgets that a bishop is pursuing a dishonorable calling.

MORE Jew-baiting by the true Christians of Russia. The fatal symbol, the cross, gave rise to the brutality, as it has done this 1800 years.

THE Testimonial Fund for Messrs. Foote and Ramsey claims the earnest attention of Freethinkers and friends of freedom generally. All contributions should be forwarded to Mrs. A. Besant, 19 Avenue Road, London, N.W.; they are acknowledged in the *National Reformer*.

LAST Sunday the North-West London Branch of the N. S. S., which meets at Milton Hall, Kentish Town, celebrated its first anniversary by a tea, *soiree*, and lecture by their president, Dr. Edward B. Aveling. One of the most successful gatherings ever held in connexion with the movement resulted. About 120 sat down to tea. Then came songs and recitations, including one by Dr. Aveling, "Holy Cross Day." The lecture, on "The Value of this Earthly Life," was delivered to a crowded and enthusiastic audience.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture for the National Sunday League at the Portland Hall, Langham Place, on Sunday, October 28, at 7 p.m. Subject:—Shakespeare's "Much Ado about Nothing."

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.—John James Standring, G. Brookes, C. M. Jones, J. Barnes, T. Masterten, W. P., Blitz, F. E., C. B., A. Andrews, Emile Prichart, Silo, W. Harris, A. Burns, J. Moss, Hatton, H. L. C., A Reader of *Freethinker*, J. Noon.

CAMBRIDGE.—Unfortunately, we know of no bookseller in your town that sells the *Freethinker*.

CORRECTION.—In the article on "A Secular Sunday-School" in last week's number, the writer omitted to note a change of address. Mrs. Sowden's residence is 93 Castle Street, Battersea Park Road.

D. EARLY sends us a picture-tract in which the Protestants cast a slur on the Roman Catholics. It is only another proof of the way these Christians love one another.

J. HIPWELL.—We have not seen the work to which you refer.

C. W. AUSTIN.—Will use shortly.

G. JONES.—It is very comic to find the clergy claiming Adam as a product of Evolution.

WILLIAM JOHN.—Buy Dr. Edward Aveling's "Religious Views of Charles Darwin." Price 1d.

C. H. PRING.—A little too strong even for us.

WELDE.—1. "Green's History," McMillan, 7s. 6d. 2. "English Grammar," Bivington's, 3s.; "Conflict between Science and Religion," Kegan Paul, 5s.; "Lectures and Essays," McMillan, 10s.

SEVINTONIAN.—We don't see our way clear to carry out your suggestion.

AFUS.—Too long.

MR. CARLISLE, of 61 Eastboro Street, Scarborough, wants to know whether there is a Freethought society in Peoria, America, and if Colonel Ingersoll does not reside there? Can any of our readers enlighten him?

ANONYMOUS.—Your "Negro Sermon" appeared in this paper some months since.

G. LESLIE MACKENZIE.—We have used your verse in "Acid Drops."

Q.—Jokes are always welcome.

URMSTON, Flixton, and Davyhulme.—Will Freethinkers of the above neighborhoods communicate with George H. Bamber, 15 Corne Grove, Urmston?

F. VENABLES.—It would not be a bad idea to have a Freethought reading-room in the City.

T. CAPEL.—We have no room for Guide Notices, but are always willing to notify anything special.

WANTED, Nos. 1 and 2, Vol. I., of the *Freethinker*. Sixpence each will be given. Address, A. J. V., 28 Stonecutter Street.

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

It is particularly requested that all orders for literature should be sent to Mr. R. 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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

The November number of *Progress* is now ready. It opens with an interesting article on "Land Nationalisation," by J. L. Joynes. This is followed by one on "Ecclesiastical Intolerance," by J. H., a new writer for this magazine. There are numerous other articles. A complete list is given on our last page. Every reader of the *Freethinker* should get a copy of this magazine, and thereby increase its circulation.

On Tuesday, October 30, Lieut.-Col. R. D. Osborne lectures at South Place, at 8 p.m., on "The Power of Political Phrases."

At St. James's Hall, on the same evening, Mr. Michael Davitt, supported by Miss Helen Taylor, the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, Mr. J. L. Joynes and others, speaks on "The Land for the People."

The Free Libraries Act has been adopted by the vestry of Battersea. Another thorn in the side of the clergy!

ARCHDEACON DENISON opposing education is a sugar plum for us. He shows the clergy in their true color—black.

MR. HUBBARD, M.P., was the only speaker at the Church Congress to whom the audience denied an extension of time. This was the only trace of wisdom shown by the Conference.

ON Monday, October 29, Mr. C. Bradlaugh will give a lecture in the Claremont Hall, Penton Street, in aid of the funds of the Finsbury Branch of the N. S. S. Subject—"The Resurrection." Time—8 o'clock.

ARTHUR B. MOSS has challenged Mr. Whitmore to a spoken debate on the pamphlet issued by the latter. Mr. Whitmore has funk'd again.

FREETHINKERS in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe desirous of forming a branch of the National Secular Society are earnestly requested to meet at Southwark Park Tavern, Southwark Park Road, on Sunday, Nov. 4, at 7.30.

DR. C. J. VAUGHAN, in his inaugural sermon delivered at the Temple Church, remarked: "Men have said to me, in the prospect of this ministry, 'Assume nothing—prove your points—recollect your audience.' Honestly, earnestly, do I say this to you: If that was what you wanted, I am not the man. If you believe not the gospel, I cannot hope to prove it to you."

A YOUNG Freethinker has been and is working quietly in the good cause at Manchester, like "T. K." in London. From Wesleyanism to Radical lectures, to reading the *National Reformer*, reading the *Freethinker* secretly, then openly, and now distributing it and everywhere and everywhen speaking on the side of Freethought. Good speed to the young Freethinker and his many followers!

In the Congress of Freethinkers that met at Paris, independently of the Amsterdam Congress, seven resolutions were passed. These protested against all agreements between church and state; against the recent devices on behalf of the mortmain; voted the equality of the two sexes, and the superior right of society over the child as compared with that of the parent; declared the determination to have no priest at birth, marriage or death, and that the only hope of the future is in the alliance of Freethought with Socialism. The seventh resolution was to the effect that the next congress should be held at Paris in 1884.

THE *Thinker* of Madras is an excellent little paper and most daringly outspoken. We only judge from the half of it we can read, but we feel sure that the other moiety, printed in a type that would bring on *d. t.* in a veteran drinker, contains as much good matter as the part in English.

AN interesting letter, containing orders for Freethought literature, reaches us from Bombay. We quote its last words: "I am a Zend scholar and have studied the sacred scriptures of the Parsis by the aid of comparative philology. The religion of Zoroaster is only a modification of the Vedic religion, or as some are inclined to believe it is a reformed form of an older religion, the common origin of Avesta and Veda, both full of mythic tales and absurd ceremonies and rituals. The claim of its being divinely-inspired is given up by the Parsis of European education and culture, but they believe it to be better than all other religions. So far as I am concerned, I believe all religions so-called, bad and injurious, and five years of Freethought reading have made me a complete atheist."

THEOLOGICAL FAILURES.

THE London Congregational Union has lately been conducting an inquiry into the condition of the abject poor in London. Chance placed in our hands a copy of the pamphlet issued by this body, containing the results of its investigations. We confess to having read it with no small amount of curiosity, for we were anxious to discover how the presumably learned and intelligent gentlemen who compose the Union, proposed to relieve the poverty, remove the wretchedness, and purify the morality of the abject poor.

We were considerably startled to read that "whilst we have been building our churches and solacing ourselves with our religion and dreaming that the millennium was coming, the poor have been growing poorer, the wretched more miserable, and the immoral more corrupt; the gulf has been daily widening which separates the lowest classes of the community from our churches and chapels, and from all decency and civilisation."

For one brief moment we imagined that an era of common sense was about to dawn on the parsons and preachers, and that they were about to cease building churches, seek other solace than that of religion, and wake from dreams of a Christian millennium to nineteenth-century realities.

We were soon undeceived. Rapidly scanning the harrowing details given of poverty, wretchedness and vice, we came to what the Union proposed to do, and found that its sovereign specific for the abject misery of the poor, is to build more chapels and preach more gospel. With hopeless imbecility it proposes to supply the want of fresh air, pure water and better housing, by gospel halls and lugubrious tracts. It seeks to combat poverty and prostitution by prayers and preaching. It would satisfy physical hunger with spiritual food, and respond to the wails of the wretched with songs of heavenly joys.

With an inconsistency whose grossness is equalled only by its cruelty, the Union admits that Christianity is a failure and then, as a remedy for an appalling condition of affairs, seeks to apply more Christianity.

If the Union is really in earnest in this work, let it once for all cast aside its religion and go to the work on purely secular principles. It has proved to its own satisfaction that poverty, misery and vice have grown to alarming proportions in "Christian England;" now let it find the real causes of these things and apply intelligent remedies. Instead of seeking to lay up treasures in heaven, it might with advantage strive after a better distribution of wealth on earth. The funds it is devoting to gospel halls it might more sensibly employ in buying up these disease-breeding tenements and building in their place those earthly mansions which the abject poor would appreciate much better than those promised in heaven.

A far nobler task than teaching parents to bring their children to Jesus would be that of teaching them not to produce children if they have not the means of supporting them.

But we imagine it is vain to appeal to the reason and common sense of these blind leaders of the blind. Let them pursue their petty ways, and still continue to reply to appeals for bread with gifts of stone. Be ours the task to go to the very roots of the question, to drag out the ultimate causes of poverty, vice and degradation, and to compel those in whom the power rests to apply the only remedies which can possibly be of avail.

CHARON.

TYRANNY IN ITALY.

CONSIDERABLE excitement has been caused in this country by the recent arrest of a youth of seventeen, named François, who has for some time been the object of much persecution on the part of the police, taking, as is believed, their orders from persons "in high places."

The facts are briefly these. Young François is the son of a deceased officer in the ex-papal army, and, as his name indicates, of French extraction. His mother is, as becomes the wife of a papal soldier, an outrageous bigot, but he himself is a Republican and a Freethinker, and member of the Roman Mazzinian Society, which takes its name from the lamented patriot, Maurizio Quadrò.

The reactionary police authorities of the capital, who have long made this unlucky youth an object of persecution on account of his precocious abilities, earnestness and courage, eagerly watched for an opportunity to arrest him as a dangerous or idle character; but without success—François being known as a hard-working, honest artisan. So despairing of success by attacking their enemy in front, they had recourse to a flank movement, and persuaded his poor infatuated mother that if not speedily checked in his evil courses, he would end by being sent the galleys!

The prophesy may seem absurd to English readers, but in these days, when both court and government are working with all their might in the cause of religious and political reaction, it might very easily be verified, and that at no distant date. Be that as it may, the poor woman applied to government to have her son arrested and sent to the reformatory for dissolute young men at Turin. Her request has, I need hardly say, been promptly acceded to, and the poor youth may be kept in prison, amongst the most abandoned wretches, till he is twenty-one years of age. What constitutes him a "dissolute" character is simply the fact of his being an open propagandist of Secular theories and member of a Republican society. He is no burden to his family, for besides enjoying a small annuity left him by his father, he earns a capital subsistence as a printer. Three masters, under whom he has served, have sent in testimonials as to his morality and industry, and he was studying with the last of these with a view to perfecting himself in his business, for which he appears to have displayed a singularly pre-

cocious aptitude. Yet in spite of this and of the agitation fomented by the Liberal press (the Conservative journals have done their worst to deceive the public as to the real state of the case), no sign of relenting has as yet been manifested by the Roman authorities or by the ministry, whose obedient, humble servants they are.

This is only one out of hundreds of papal acts of which Italian Radicals have been the victims; and it is sad that so few English should know, or care to know, the true state of this "regenerate" Italy.

Thanks in a great measure to our bigoted queen, the expelled Jesuits have been recalled, pensioned, and permitted to establish a well-organised propaganda in Rome, Florence and elsewhere, whilst the servile submission of our court and government to Austria, to say nothing of their open hostility to Republican France, disgusts all but Conservatives and courtiers, who in this country are even more unscrupulous than their brethren in England.

To the many English who will witness the highly-organised display of enthusiasm for the "great king" Victor Emanuel, shortly to take place in Rome, these latter observations may seem strange, but the few who have been behind the scenes must know them to be true.

R. H. DYAS.

HUMAN NATURE.

HUMAN nature! To those whose theory of the universe is constructed upon lines concurrent with those of a primitive myth-teaching, filtered through the mental consciousness of an arrogantly exclusive race, these words convey only the impression of all that is low and unlovely. For the impacts of circumstance they make no allowance, proclaiming that man's inherent delinquency alone has favored his viler tendencies, until his higher self is so enthralled that only the interposition of a deity can achieve his liberation. Against such blasphemy it behoves us to particularly bestir ourselves. We who have wrought our own freedom, riving asunder the chain of superstition, can well answer this stupendous lie of theology, nor does it seem to me that it should be a more than ordinarily arduous task to convince even a Christian of its falsity. Orators and philosophers have tacitly proved the innate nobility of man by the readiness with which they have evoked responsive emotions in their auditory. What, think you, would have been the effect of Demosthenes' lofty orations were his hearers so vile as prelates love to picture humanity when unaided by their god, and even prelate powers of tergiversation could hardly enroll the old Athenians as worshippers of Yahveh, or under his patronage? Not once; not twice; not many times—but always, universally, without exception, have poets, orators, philosophers, won love and undying fame through this, that their thought was in consonance with the aspiration of man, and their teachings tended towards its realisation. But then, were the natural purity of man conceded, and his prevalent vices accepted as contingencies dependent upon his surroundings, even as the prevalent diseases of his frame, "Othello's occupation" would be gone indeed so far as the soul-traders, with their paraphernalia of bibles, creeds and saviors are concerned. While men believe in, and babble of, "original sin," "election," and other sweet things of the ecclesiastical stock-in-trade, so long is there a logical completeness in the claims of priestly soul-aid and "vicarious atonement;" but when thought is elevated, even comparatively, from this degraded level, it can be readily seen that science, and science only, can teach man to adequately cope with his surroundings, and correlate his forces with the laws of nature.

How essentially sublime is the human heart when unpolluted by the brutalities of Yahvism, may be gathered from the pages of Plato, Demosthenes, or Æschylus, Cato, Cicero, or Seneca. How superior is the enfranchised mind of modern man to the Christianised and prelate-praised variety, can be gauged when the reader compares Spencer, Mill, Paine or Conway with the leading luminaries of the Church. That these men, and such as these, should, both in ancient and modern times, have possessed and exercised such transcendent faculties, presenting such pre-eminent patterns for our imitation, can in no way be reconciled with any theory which predicates the indispensability of "Christian Faith."

Strenuously seeking to emulate their grace and grandeur, it remains for us to transmit to our successors records worthy of our exemplars.

IL PASSERO.

REV. S. CHARLESWORTH AND PUBLICAN BOOTH.

THE following is a translation of a letter addressed by the Rev. Samuel Charlesworth to the President of the Swiss Federal Council :—

"I have the honor to address you on the subject of my young daughter, Maude Charlesworth, who has been so unhappily engaged in the ridiculous movement organised by the English and entitled the Salvation Army. In my position as an English clergyman, and for the last thirty years in the ministry, and as an English gentleman, I wish that the authorities of Switzerland should know how much I reject and condemn all that these hallucinated ones (*hallucines*) do on the Continent in the name, but to the great dishonor, of religion. One of the fundamental principles of their dangerous system is that they must at all cost excite notoriety.

"The Army is not a sect nor a religious corporation recognised in England. It belongs to the lowest popular elements, and groups itself around a man who calls himself 'General' Booth—a man of low extraction, of no education, whose father was a joiner, and who himself was first employed in a pawnbroker's, and later a butcher, before devoting himself to the more lucrative profession of an evangelist.

"I have written with an aching heart, because a young girl, formerly the most loving, most obedient and submissive child, has been attracted by this heartless and Jesuitical system, and taken away from the church and country of her youth, as well as from all the connexions attaching her to it."

REVIEWS.

Delusions of Theology. By A. B. Moss. [Progressive Publishing Company].—In his usual clear, readable, memorable fashion, Mr. Moss deals with and exposes the evils that theology has wrought and is still working.

MR. MORRISH, of Narrow Wine Street, Bristol, issues a pamphlet by John Tamlyn on *The Dream Heaven of our Fathers*, and a very interesting one, on *The Antiquity of Man*, that should be in every Freethinker's hands.

ST. MARK XVII. RECENTLY DISCOVERED AND TRANSLATED BY PHONO.

1, *The words of Christ believed: 3, one taketh up a serpent, 5, another eats a deadly herb, 10, another lays hands on the sick, 15, Christ's ambassadors heed them not.*

Now in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, it came to pass that the words which the lord had spoken concerning the signs that should follow his saints came to be believed ;

2 Notwithstanding that they whom the lord had greatly prospered, and had set in high places as his ambassadors, mocking said, It is an allegory, and, The time is now past.

3 And it was so that one arose who said, Behold, now, the lord saith they that believe shall take up serpents and shall not be hurt ; behold ye, now, therefore the power of the lord.

4 And when he had thus spoken, he took up unto him a serpent which is called Cobra, very deadly.

5 And the reptile did twine itself around him, and did seem as though it would kill him. Howbeit, after a while it suffered him to put it gently from him, and he remained unhurt.

6 Then did the lord's ambassadors and they who had seen the wonder say, He is a showman.

7 And behold, another came, calling upon the lord his god to deliver him, and saying, I will make the deadly nightshade my food, yet shall I not be cut off.

8 And he did so, and died.

9 And they who sat upon the body said he was mad.

10 Then did arise a third, saying, Verily, verily, the lord saith his people shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

11 And there being at that time several of his own household lying sick of a dangerous malady, he did unto them as the lord had commanded, pouring on oil.

12 And they also died.

13 And the people being angry, charged him before the magistrate with the death of his offspring ; but he, answering to the charge, said, I am peculiar.

14 Notwithstanding which, the magistrate replied, Thou art committed for manslaughter.

15 And the ambassadors of the lord heeded none of these things, but went forth everywhere, preaching and saying, Let god be true and every man a liar ; pay ye into the treasury of the lord. Amen.

PROFANE JOKES.

THE first round dance originated with Adam when he sat down on a hornet.

It is not true that the whale which brought Jonah to shore was presented with a medal from the Royal Humane Society then existing.

"CAN you tell what the sermon was about?" asked a mother of her boy. "Yes," he replied; "it was about an hour too long."

A RUSTIC COMMENT UPON THE SABBATH:—"It be indeed a blessed day. I works 'ard enough all the week, and when I comes to church o' Sunday, I sets me down, and tucks my legs up, and thinks o' nothing."

SCENE—Bookseller's, Kilmarnock.

Customer: "I want a Bible, Mr. —."

Bookseller: "Oh, aye! she wants a Bible. Here's ane; guid print, well bound, 1s. 6d."

Customer: "It's for a wee skule laddie ye ken, he'll just rip it. Have ye naething cheaper?"

Bookseller: "Aye, aye! she wants a Bible cheaper than 1s. 6d. Aye, aye! um, aye! here's a soiled ane for 1s."

Customer: "Ha'e ye naething at 6d."

Bookseller: "Guid god almighty come doon and sell yer ain works! I can dae nothing wi' th' wimmin!"

PLAYING AT CHURCH.—Emily: "Now Kate, you read the long prayer, and I'll go to sleep like papa does."

OUR irreverent young man wants to know if the Evangelisation Society ought not to spell its name Evangel lies-ation.

HE saw stuck up somewhere the other day—"Nursing Sisters of St. John the Divine." He says he wants to join that association. He prefers the sisters to John.

THE composer of the Prodigal Son was not Jesus. He only wrote the libretto. No, and it wasn't the fatted calf, though that doubtless had a soothing influence on the young man when his voice was husky. It was Sir Doctor Professor Arthur Sullivan, who is no relation to the American fighting-man.

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