

# 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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DECEMBER 2, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## THE RELEASE OF W. J. RAMSEY.

THE second of our three friends is out of the Christian clutches. Six months have elapsed since Henry A. Kemp was set free, and now, after an imprisonment of nine months, William James Ramsey is in our midst again. The rejoicings of Freethinkers the whole world over will be great, though they will be tempered by the thought that one other martyr, George William Foote, is yet suffering at the hands of the cursed creed of Christianity.

Those who were wakeful on Friday night last because of the thought that when morning dawned their friend was again to be free in body as he always has been in mind, were a little troubled at the tremendous noise of the storm that raged almost through the night. So incessant and so strong was the rain that it seemed as if all hope of a gathering of any extent at so early an hour as 8.45 a.m. would have to be abandoned. Even when the daylight came reluctantly, things looked no more promising. But, happily, as the ardent adherents of Freethought were on their way towards Holloway, by degrees the weather cleared, and somehow ere our friend was liberated the sun was shining as brightly as on a day in spring.

Without doubt the rough weather kept hundreds of people away. Yet, in spite of it, there was a goodly crowd outside the prison gates before 8.30, and a quarter of an hour later its numbers were tripled or quadrupled. It was goodly in another sense than that of numbers. I suppose the sight of so many neatly-clad men and women, with honest, working faces, waiting for the release of a prisoner was a unique one. Had Mr. Justice North and our virtuous Home Secretary seen them, they might have felt ashamed, were either of these tyrants—brutalised by their disgraceful creed—capable of such an emotion.

Within the outer gates of the prison two carriages were drawn up by 8.20 a.m. In the former had been Mr. Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, and the two Miss Bradlaughs; in the second Mrs. Ramsey, Mrs. Foote, the Rev. W. Sharman, and Dr. Edward Aveling. These, sitting in the carriages, or walking to and fro, with the exception of Mr. Bradlaugh, early admitted within the prison doors, were joined later by Mr. Symes, whilst the ubiquitous pressmen were generally pervading the place.

Just before 8.45 Mrs. Ramsey was also admitted within the prison, and a few minutes after, the door opening, her husband issued forth, a free man once again. Then the crowd sent up a shout, and many shouts, that must have done his staunch heart good, and the cheers never ceased or slackened until he was beyond the hearing of them. So hearty were they, that the horses of the second carriage, as they approached the prison gates, were frightened, and swerved. But for dexterous driving an accident must have happened. It was but by an inch or two that the wheels missed the pillars of the gate.

Our freed friend was in the second of the two with his wife by his side. Opposite them were Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, and on the box Dr. Edward B. Aveling. Through a line whose walls were a crowd of waving arms and hats, and eager faces all aglow with delight and affection he was borne, and then swiftly through the London streets, just astir with the life from which he has been shut out for three quarters of a year, to Old Street and the Hall

of Science, where there was also a goodly number of people assembled, who saluted William Ramsey most warmly.

Several vehicles followed in the wake of the two carriages, and people in the streets and on the omnibuses, clerk-laden, hurrying citywards, pointed him out one to the other as the man that had been imprisoned because he dared to join in assailing the wicked belief that, unable to meet us in argument, or to bear our laughter and our sneers, thinks in its senile folly to stop the progress of its decay by the imprisonment of brave and honest men.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

## AT THE BREAKFAST.

INSIDE the hall a breakfast had been prepared, to which some sixty or seventy delegates, representing various Working Men's Clubs and branches of the National Secular Society, sat down.

The chair was taken by Mr. Symes, who was supported by Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey, with their little daughter, the Rev. W. Sharman, and Mrs. Foote.

At the conclusion of the meal the chairman said that that was not the time for much speech making. They had met to congratulate their friend, Mr. Ramsey, on his release from prison. He personally did so most heartily, as he was one of the party, and ought to have been sent to prison if anyone was. Of the two he thought he was rather worse than Mr. Ramsey. But they knew that sending the latter to prison was an outrage. (Cheers). The only dark spot on the festivity of the morning was the fact that Mr. Foote was still in prison; but they would give him as hearty a welcome when he came out. (Cheers).

The Rev. W. SHARMAN moved the following resolution:— "That this meeting heartily rejoices to meet Mr. Ramsey at the expiration of his unjust imprisonment, and congratulates him on the moral courage he has displayed during the nine months' suffering for conscience' sake." It was hard sometimes to believe that there really existed such a law in England as that the results of which they saw to-day. He could only say that Mr. Ramsey had their sincere sympathy all through. The existing state of the law was most iniquitous, and he trusted to-day's event would nerve them to work until such a thing become impossible in the future. They must remember that they had still another friend in prison, where he would remain until February 25. Then, however, they hoped to see him either in that hall, or some other place, in good health and with a good heart. (Cheers). In the meantime the only thing they could do was to endeavor to make the name of liberty in England a reality and not a sham. (Cheers).

Mr. TRUELOVE, who the chairman described as also having suffered for conscience' sake, said that four months' imprisonment had shown him the horrors and discomforts of it and seconded the resolution, which was carried by acclamation.

Mr. RAMSEY, who was received with great applause, said he was sure they would not expect him to say much. He had not been accustomed to public speaking of late (laughter); in fact, he had not been much used to speaking at all. Although he had made many imaginary speeches to brick walls, the excitement this morning was rather too much for him. The sufferings he had undergone were such as no one who had not been shut up in a cell could understand. (Cheers). He felt it very much the first month, because, according to prison regulations, he was only out of his cell one hour out of twenty-four, and the visit to chapel was the only amusement. (Laughter). So far as their duties allowed them, every officer in the prison had been kind to him. They seemed to think that the offence for which they were sent to prison was not really one. He succeeded in modifying the views of the chaplain in regard to Freethinkers. He at first was of opinion



that they should be transported for life, but afterwards came to the conclusion that they should merely be confined in a lunatic asylum. (Laughter). The doctor and the governor were very kind, and that meeting might take it as a fact that no persons were ill-used in prison unless they deserved it. There was no personal cruelty in prisons. (Cheers). But the system itself was a bad and cruel one. The effects of his imprisonment was, that whereas before he only despised the Christian's creed, he now hated it heartily, and no fear of future punishment would deter him from doing it henceforth as much damage as he could. (Cheers). He should consider any day which he allowed to let pass without striking a blow at Christianity as a day lost. He would speak at greater length on his prison life on another occasion. When he accidentally saw Mr. Foote that prisoner appeared to be in good health. He himself was, so far as he could judge, in good health and strength, and was ready to go on in the battle against the "accursed creed." He thanked them very heartily. (Cheers).

Mr. G. STANDRING proposed a resolution of sympathy and condolence with Mrs. Foote, which was seconded by Dr. BOND, of Kingston, and carried with acclamation.

An immense audience assembled at the Hall of Science on Sunday and greeted Mr. Ramsey with great applause upon his presiding at the lecture by Mr. Symes.

#### LETTER FROM MR. RAMSEY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEAR AVELING,—I find I must ask the indulgence of the readers of the *Freethinker*. I am not quite so strong as I believed myself to be. I thought that the realisation of the freedom I had been looking forward to so long would have restored me to all my old health, strength, and vigor. Perhaps it is the suddenness of the change; perhaps I am not stoical enough; and the many hundreds of moist eyes I have looked at, and strong hands I have shaken, have found a soft spot in my heart.

Whatever may be the cause, I find myself not in the very best condition. So by the advice of all my friends I am going to take a short rest before resuming the old fight. Will the writers of many congratulatory letters kindly accept this general acknowledgment? I will try, when I am fully restored, to answer all inquiries in detail. Meanwhile our friends may rest assured that I am only temporarily indisposed, and that I shall renew as speedily as possible my labors towards the destruction of the creed which has so long kept me from my family and friends. The one thing needful is the release of my friend, Mr. Foote, with whom I look forward to long years of co-operation in the future as we have worked together in the past.

I wish to thank the readers of the *Freethinker* for their support during our incarceration, and yourself for your conduct of the same in the absence of Mr. Foote.—I am, my dear Dr. Aveling, yours in the cause,

W. J. RAMSEY.

P.S.—I have heard from my friends at the Hackney Club that there is a possibility of Sir Hardinge Giffard contesting Hackney at the next general election. I hope he will. I shall then begin to believe that the lord has delivered him into our hands. Oh, shades of Exeter Hall, won't he have some meetings!

#### CHRISTIANITY v. FREETHOUGHT.

CHRISTIANITY, in order to exist, has to resort to persecution and brutal violence. If not, why does it at the present day continue to hale the Freethinker to gaol, and to deprive him of his civil rights? Why, in the past, did it require a holy inquisition, or any other institution of a kindred type? Does its enemy Freethought use any such means for its own preservation? Is not its worst weapon ridicule? Is it not a legitimate one? Has this weapon ever broken a bone or destroyed a life? If not, then, why should it be looked upon as unutterably evil? Why should it be held, as it were, to be worse than the Christian dungeon, rack, thumb-screw, boot, stake, or flaming tar-barrel. The Freethinker, with this single weapon, is looked upon as a monster. A monster who never murdered a Christian, never gazed placidly on a Christian's writhing body, never listened callously to his own splitting shriek of agony or the groans wrung from him by hellish torture; yet the Freethinker is a monster, a blasphemous one. But the men of the Augustine, Luther and Calvin type who advocated and practised these

things upon the heretic have been esteemed the pinks of piety and godliness, and are looked back upon as the pillars of Christianity, that bloody horror which the infidel so justly abhors. It is useless for the modern apologist of these creatures to assert that they misunderstood the Christianity of scripture. They certainly understood the bible, and were justified by it in all they did. If such was not the case, all I have to say is that it speaks volumes on behalf of the literary ability and lucidity of the people who wrote it. I would ask, assuming it was *then* misunderstood, how it is it is not understood now, and why so many different Christians place each a different interpretation upon it, and in consequence caterwaul with each other in such a loving fashion over it? The bias of modern Christianity is not to be marvelled at. This abominable system of superstition was for ages so drunk with human blood that it called good evil, and evil good, and even yet is so muddled that it cannot discern fair play from foul, nor a legitimate weapon from an illegitimate one. It will not adopt the adage, Live and let live, nor recognise the justice of the principle that one man has as much right as another to promulgate and render dominant his views when he thinks they are the real panacea for human ills. Freethought has always allowed Christianity the fullest liberty of action, and even now seeks not to curtail it. By action I mean, of course, fair play. Where would Christianity soon be if its enemy turned upon it, and used the weapons of brute force. Surely the forbearance is owing to the fact that Freethought possesses a superior morality. Without doubt, Freethinkers, if they wished, could become the most dangerous people upon earth. If they were to snatch from the armory of nature the deadly and cunning weapons of science (and who better versed in science than they), and effectively use the same, the infallible advocates of Christianity would soon be heard shrieking worse than the "damned in hell."

The superstitious fools think because we receive meekly, and endure patiently the many wrongs, cruel slanders, dishonorable actions and mean unceasing persecutions, that we are unable to avenge ourselves, that we are as helpless and powerless as our forefathers of old, who, poor fellows, had to run sneaking about panting with terror, in mortal dread of losing their lives. If the principles and morality of Freethinkers were on a par with those of Christians, the latter would, long ere this, have discovered their error, and that to their bitter cost. Why should we respect their law. To us it is unjust, it denies that we have rights. It allows us not the same freedom of action which it grants to them. This law, which to them "is sweet as summer" is to us "sour and lofty." Seeing this to be the case, should we not be justified if we were to defy it? Have we any occasion to fear it? Could we not smile upon it, and its powerful machinery with the utmost derision, even whilst cathedrals, churches, and chapels were roaring in the flames far louder than Christianity's human victims ever did? Ah! If we were but actuated with the same spirit as moved the good men of old who burnt down and destroyed wholesale the temples of inoffensive pagans, how soon would their (the Christians') temples be humbled to the dust, how soon would their priests and parsons depart hence, and be no more seen! Who or what could stand before those all-powerful, cunning, deadly agents which without risk to ourselves, we could send forth as demons to devastate the land? But, alas! we are not Christians and these things can never be. If our lives could be touched we should doubtless be tempted to strike in order to force obedience to that mosaic law which states, "Thou shalt do no murder"—a law which, it is needless to add, has been broken by Christians innumerable times. Nevertheless, it is alarming to see Christianity at the present day playing with the most dangerous tools. It is to be hoped that she will speedily recover from her insanity, and by acting wisely, not tempt some, who more headstrong and revengeful than their fellows when their hearts are burning with the sense of many wrongs might "cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war."

Violence cannot and never will be sanctioned by the leaders of Freethought. The latter whilst they suffer can solace themselves with the thought that the sect which uses force and injustice proves its own weakness and falsity, and hastens its own decay.

But yet let Christianity beware; let it run to and fro exclaiming, "Save me from my friends" (the latter being mad men of the Tyler type). Let it wrest from such any



cowardly weapon it has forged; and, finally, let it cleanse itself from the gore of the past. And if it still persists in indulging in blood, let it be content to use that required for justification, for the heretic most positively refuses to keep up a supply from his own veins any longer. Selah!

In the meantime let Freethinkers shout encouragingly to each other the words of the great Freethought poet—

“Once more, dear friends, into the breach once more.”

and making their voices heard in the streets and the lanes, preach loudly and unceasingly the gospel of Freethought, which alone is able to kill superstition and misery and render humanity contented and happy.

CHLORIDE DE NITROGEN.

### TO CHRIST.

Across the centuries, oh lamb of god!

We look to thee,  
And watch thine agonised and wretched death  
Upon the tree;  
What hast thou done for frail humanity  
By all that strife?  
The poor result of struggle and of death—  
A wasted life!

All thy high-sounding titles—Christ, Messiah,  
The Savior, God,  
Mean nothing—thou didst never wield o'er man  
A chastening rod!  
Peace hast thou brought us here? No peace have we,  
But fearful slaughter.  
For in thy name foul men have ever shed  
Our blood like water.

And wert thou god? Oh, weak omnipotence,  
To die such death!  
Infinity conditioned, mighty god  
Drawing men's breath!  
Mad wert thou then? Fanatic certainly  
If son of man;  
If man and god—then weak and poor as they  
Atonement plan.

Great truly thou wert not, nor couldst thou be  
With such a heart—  
So faint and weak, and lacking in the main  
The nobler part.  
Did I believe that thou hadst power to save  
Mankind from “hell,”  
I'd curse thee as a tyrant—from the heavens  
None worse e'er fell.

But thou wert simply man! Poor carpenter,  
Poor peasant-priest—  
Ignorant, mad; but that is over now,  
All suffering ceased!  
Then pass away, we give thee many a tear,  
We pity thee;  
And in our time, commit thy best offence  
Of blasphemy.

Farewell to thee! and with thy name shall die  
The name of god,  
Father and son, and spirit stain no more  
Earth's sea or sod.  
No god we need, no Christ, no after death—  
Eternity!  
All these are passing. Serve and worship now  
Humanity!

ALFRED R. ANDREWS.

### WOOLSTON ON THE MIRACLES.

WOOLSTON'S first discourse is sarcastically dedicated to the Bishop of London, who had been instrumental in instituting the first prosecution against him on account of the Moderator. He sets out by stating that it is his purpose to show that the literal history of many of the miracles, as recorded by the evangelists, implies absurdities, improbability, and incredibilities; consequently they were never wrought as commonly believed, but are only related as prophetic and parabolical narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by Jesus. This proposition he backs up by the saying of Origen, that “There are some things inserted as history in the Scriptures which were never transacted, and which it was impossible should be transacted, and other things again, that might possibly be done, but were

not.” St. Hilary also says, “There are many historical passages of the New Testament that, if they are taken literally, are contrary to sense and reason, and therefore there is a necessity for a mystical interpretation.”

Woolston applies this to all the miracles. First he takes that astonishing one of casting the traders out of the temple. Origen says: “The whole story is a parable. If Jesus had attempted such a thing, he would have been made answerable to the authorities.” By the temple he understood the church. St. Hilary is of the same opinion as Origen. Particularly he hints that by the seats of those who sell doves may be understood the pulpits of preachers who make sale of the spirit which is represented by a dove. St. Jerome says: “There are absurdities in the letter; but, according to its mystical meaning, Jesus will enter his temple of the church, and cast out of it bishops, priests, and deacons who make a trade of preaching.”

He then takes the miracle of casting the devils into the swine, remarking, “It is not credible there was any herd of swine in a country where they were held in abomination. It is commonly said that the miracles of Jesus were all useful and beneficent to mankind, and that he did no wrong to anyone. But how can this be rightly said of him if this story be literally true? The proprietors of the swine were great losers and sufferers, and we don't read that Jesus made them amends. Indeed they besought him to depart from their coasts to prevent further mischief, which was gentler resentment than others would have made of the like injury. St. Hilary says it is typical and parabolical. “If this miraculous story had been recorded of Mahomet and not of Jesus, our divines, I dare say, would have worked it up to a confutation of Mahometanism. Mahomet would have been with them nothing less than a wizard, an enchanter, a dealer with familiar spirits, a sworn slave of the devil; and his Mussulmen would have been hard put to it to write a good defence of him.” If when Pilate asked what evil had Jesus done, the merchants of the temples and the owners of the pigs had come forward, it would not have been easy to vindicate his innocence.

Woolston calls the Transfiguration the darkest and blindest story of the whole gospel, and he questions whether any two thinking doctors agree about it. The Greek word used implies metamorphosis. The form of Jesus was changed. What use was it? And what did Moses and Elias on the mount with Jesus? It is said they were talking with him. What then did they talk about? The three greatest prophets and philosophers of the universe could not possibly meet and confer together but on the most sublime, useful and edifying subject. It is strange that the apostles, who overheard their confabulation, did not make a report of it, and transmit it to posterity for our edification and instruction.

In his next discourse Woolston first takes up the case of the woman who for twelve years had an issue of blood. He points out the absurdity of calling the cure a miracle when the nature of the disease is not known. St. John of Jerusalem says it was her own imagination that cured her. Woolston mentions similar miracles said to have been performed by the pope.

In regard to the woman with a spirit of infirmity, he says: “If the story of such a miracle had been related of any impostor in religion, of an arch-heretic, or popish exorcist, our divines would have flouted at it; they would have told us there was nothing supernatural and uncommon in the event, nor anything at all in it to be wondered at. Take the devil out of this story, and there's no more in it than what is common for a simple, melancholy, and drooping woman, to be cheered and elated upon the comfortable advice and admonition of a reputedly good and wise man.” He further remarks that the writings of the evangelists so abound with stories of Satan, Beelzebub, the devil, and of greater and less numbers of devils, and of demons and unclean spirits, more than any other histories before, so one would think if these stories were to be literally understood, that was the age in which Christ came that hell first broke loose.

At the well of Samaria Jesus is represented as a fortune-teller. Woolston wonders the gypsies do not account themselves genuine disciples of Jesus.

The cursing of the barren fig-tree is termed, “such an absurd, foolish and ridiculous, if not malicious and ill-natured act in Jesus, that I question whether for folly and absurdity it can be equalled in any instance of the life of a reputed wise man.” St. Augustine very plainly says that this act,



upon the supposition that it was done, was a foolish one. To curse the fig-tree because hungry and disappointed, was as foolish and passionately done as for another man to throw the chairs and stools about the house because his dinner is not ready. If he was of power to provide bread for others on a sudden, he might surely have supplied his own necessities and so have kept his temper. But what is yet worse, the time of figs was not yet when Jesus looked and longed for them. Did anyone ever hear or read of a thing more unreasonable than for a man to expect fruit out of season, What if a yeoman of Kent should go to look for pippins in his orchard at Easter (the supposed time when Jesus sought for these figs), and, because of a disappointment, cut down all his trees? Again, whose figtree was it? Jesus owned nothing. Even among the relics preserved by the church of Rome there was not so much as a three-legged stool or a pair of nut-crackers that belonged to him. This miracle must be interpreted figuratively. Some of the Fathers explain the figtree as signifying human nature, others the church, and others the Jewish nation.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

## ACID DROPS.

WONDERFUL is the credulity of the world. A new journal has appeared with the title of "*The Wonder*—the prophetic words and voice of the times; a weekly journal of astrology and hidden mysteries." Of course this journal confidently refers to the bible as sanctioning its humbug about astrology and hidden mysteries. Any surprise at the existence of such a journal in the nineteenth century may be modified by a remembrance that one is liable to imprisonment for disputing the tale of the witch of Endor having raised the ghost of Samuel, or any other of the legends of the Jew-books which are inculcated in our infancy. People who believe in the mystery of the trinity and the miracles of the bible are fit prey for all who live on superstition.

"EPICETUS" sends us the following lines on "The Sublime and Mysterious Language of Prophecy"—

The prophet's voice is vague to-day, as it was in that of yore;  
Ezekiel is as Zadkiel; Elijah as Old Moore.  
Though all profess to be "inspired," they do not care to say  
Exactly what will come to pass on such and such a day.

"Mysterious language" is their shield—a buckler broad and strong,

Behind it they defy attempts to prove their forecasts wrong.  
But when a fire or famine comes; popes die, or kings get killed—

They rake up misty prophecies and say they are fulfilled.

"How many gods are there?" asked a Roman Catholic missionary of a heathen convert to whom he had administered the sacrament. "None, sir," was the unexpected reply. "You said there was only one, and I ate him this morning." This old story is suggested by the news that a golden box containing 500 consecrated wafers—which, according to the Council of Trent, contain the very bones and nerves of the divinity—have been stolen from the cathedral of Clermont-Ferrand in the south of France. We fear these 500 gods will not find their way into orthodox stomachs.

"DR." F. ROWLAND YOUNG is still lecturing on "Modern Unbelief." He ought to know something about the subject in relation to his degree.

PREACHING last Sunday at Clapton Park Congregational Chapel on behalf of the London City Mission, the Rev. Archibald Brown, of the East London Tabernacle, touched on the subject of the present agitation in reference to the state of the poor of the metropolis. Like the worthy currier who declared there was nothing like leather, this parson affirms that for the misery of outcast London the only cure is the gospel. He knew of seventy-five families crowded into one hundred rooms, and another instance of more than twelve hundred individuals being huddled in 340 rooms. He appealed for funds for the 400 missionaries who went forth with no other weapon than the bible and with strong faith in the power of the gospel and the efficacy of prayer.

WHAT a farce! The present state of horrible London is a sufficient comment on the powerlessness of the bible and the inefficacy of prayer. The poor want food and the missionaries offer them tracts. They need room to breathe and are told of the heavenly mansions after death. If instead of taking "no other weapon than the bible," the missionaries

were provided with a plentiful supply of soap and whitewash, they might with better grace appeal for subscriptions.

SPEAKING of the indifference of the poor to the ministrations of religion, the *Christian Commonwealth* admits that "the influence of modern Christianity is feeble enough to be not merely a source of reproach but an actual ground of impeachment of the divineness of our faith." A sufficient impeachment, too, we should think. If the fact that Christianity has not yet reached a quarter of the world's inhabitants, and that it is rejected by a large number of those best acquainted with its teachings is not a sufficient refutation of its supernatural claims, that refutation may be found in the fact that its influence is practically *nil* in the countries where it is adopted.

WELL might Swinburne address the figure on the crucifix:—

"The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls  
Now deathward since thy death and birth.  
Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls?  
Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?  
Or are there less oppressions done  
In this wild world under the sun?"

THE *Truthseeker* office (New York) has just issued the third and enlarged edition of "*Crimes of Preachers in the United States and Canada, from May 1876 to May 1883*," collected by M. E. Billings. This collection gives a catalogue of 870 divine rascals who have been brought before the public in America during the last seven years for crimes ranging from drunkenness to murder most foul and unnatural. Mr. Billings estimates, however, that only one clerical crime out of sixteen is brought to public notice, as the churches do all in their power to screen the evil-doers, to prevent the scandal on the holy institution. The Catholic church especially is a close corporation whose emissaries must commit a flagrant crime indeed to be brought before either a legal or ecclesiastical court.

THE 870 sky-pilots are taken from a number of 35,000. Here is a larger proportion of crime than in any other profession. The *Truthseeker* points out that if Mr. Billings' contention is allowed, and he gives data to show that this is not an unfair proportion, it would follow that over a third of the American ministers ought to have been brought before legal tribunals.

It is noticeable that the majority of sins in the clerical catalogue are against chastity. The Methodists take the disreputable lead, the Baptists closely following. After them come the Catholics. It is a significant fact that the further from orthodoxy the sect is, the further from state prisons are the ministers of that sect. Only two Universalists figure in Mr. Billings' book, and no Unitarians.

A FEW reasons suggest themselves why more criminals are found among the clergy than in other professions. A class of men who are looked up to as having peculiar privileges and who demand esteem and confidence because of their pretended influence with unseen powers, will come to look on their dupes as a legitimate prey and to feel aggrieved if all their unjust demands are not complied with. Accustomed to assert that to be true of which they know nothing, morality is sapped at its basis. Moreover, the results of modern science are now so diffused that preachers must either be dull or dishonest; dull if they don't see the antagonism between their teaching and the facts of nature; dishonest if they disregard this antagonism.

CHRISTIANITY has a wonderful reconciling power. It can find an agreement between Darwinism and the legend of Moses about making a woman out of a man's rib. Canon Farrar has declared that the doctrine of evolution is not antagonistic to Christianity. Henry Ward Beecher has announced himself a believer in evolution. And now Dr. McCosh—better known as Dr. McBosh—of Princeton, appears in the list of those who accept the theory. His attitude is that of one who would reject evolution if he conscientiously could, but who finds it up to a certain point irresistible.

A BOOK has just been published entitled "*Evolution Explained and Compared with the Bible*," giving a scientific interpretation of the atonement, by W. Woods Smith. It may give some idea of the scientific interpretation to know that Jesus represents "the equilibrated variety of the race in whom all the promise of future life and equilibration rests."

A LARGE wholesale ironmonger from Sheffield was walking over the fields with his little boy when the following conversation took place. Son: "How big is hell, father—as big as this field?" Father: "Yes, I am afraid, bigger than this field." Son: "Is it as big as these two fields together, father?" Father: "Yes, dear, as big as these two fields; and I am afraid as big as all these three," pointing to another. Son: "I say, father, would you not like the order for the fender?"



## SPECIAL NOTICES.

Next week will appear an account of a visit to Mr. Foote at Holloway Gaol by J. M. Wheeler.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

February 27, Hall of Science. March 2, Claremont Hall; 9, Milton Hall; 16, Manchester. April 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 24, Hall of Science. May 4 and 11, Hall of Science.—All applications for lectures during March, April and May, to be made to Mr. Forder. Stamped envelope to be enclosed for reply. Mr. Foote can only lecture in the provinces on Saturday and Sunday during these months.

## DR. E. B. AVELING'S LECTURES.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture on Sunday Dec. 2, at 11.30 and 7, at Ball's Pond Secular Hall. At 4 p.m. at South Place. Subject:—(Free Lectures to Working Men) "Science and Religion."

## CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Manager, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.O. 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. 7d.

MR. W. J. RAMSEY'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 8, Norwich; 12, Hall of Science; 23, Manchester. January 13, Walworth.—Applications to J. T. Ramsey, 18 Pearson Street, Kingsland Road, E.

RECEIVED.—Aga, S. J. Baker, J. R. Holmes, T. R. Pocklington, E. A. T. Haynes, E. C. B., A Fatalist.

J. ELDON.—We never pry into the private life of public characters, but leave that to the inquisitive and prurient.

H. HARDING.—We fear we can put what you want as an advertisement only.

C. K. LAPORTE.—The Latin is good but the idea too broad.

S. B. BARRETT.—Glad to have some more as good.

DEVIL'S-HOOF.—The date of the erection of the first Christian hospital, Los Invalides, was 1670. There were hospitals in Egypt and India preceeding the Christian era.

VERITAS.—We have "The Fall" and "The Flood" in hand, but fear their length may preclude their insertion.

G. BATE.—You will do well to try your own hand in a letter to the editor.

SUBSCRIBER.—Professor Dana is a very fossilised geologist indeed. The statement that Genesis is in perfect accord with known science will not bear the light of the facts adduced by such men as Sir Chas. Lyell and Mr. Geikie.

BABOON.—The anthropoid apes are tailless, or with but rudimentary tails, similar to those of the coecyx in man.

ARUS.—You can send on your paper on the "Bible and Science"

J. S.—We will try and get the address for you by next week.

H. A. HOPKIN'S, formerly a member of Coward Whitmore's congregation in Wilson Street, Drury Lane, expresses his astonishment—not at C. J. W.'s illiterateness, but at his condescending to write at all. H. A. H. says he wrote to him on behalf of his half-starved missionary, Joseph Gray, without even receiving an acknowledgment of his letter.

OLD SARBUT.—Your suggestions are taken in good part. Indeed we agree with your opinions. It is not always possible to state the price of books sent in for review, but we shall endeavor to do so in future.

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.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY writes to the *Academy*: "Except in the sense that a forced loan is sometimes called a contribution, I have not contributed to the *Agnostic Annual*. The editor of that work having thought fit to publish a letter which was intended as my private reply to certain inquiries of his, and to print my name in his list of contributors without my permission to do so."

At a meeting of the council of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, held on Friday under the presidency of Lord Aberdare, the Archdeacon of Llandaff drew attention to an article in the *National Reformer*, in which

pleasure was expressed that Professor Lloyd Tanner, who has recently been elected to the Chair of Chemistry, was a member of the National Secular Society.—Principal Jones, in reply to questions, did not deny the truth of the assertion, but said that Professor Tanner had withdrawn from all public or active connexion with the National Secular Society.—Lord Aberdare read the fourth clause of the constitution, which held that no tests should be applied; and Mr. Henry Richard, M.P., wrote against the application of any test on religious matters.—The Dean of Llandaff moved that Professor Tanner's engagements terminate at three months.—The Rev. C. J. Thompson, vicar of St. John's, Cardiff, took a different view from the Dean.—The Rev. A. Tilly (Baptist) moved the previous question, which was seconded by Judge B. T. Williams.—The amendment was carried by 13 to 8.

COMMENTING on Mr. Ramsey's release, the *Weekly Dispatch* says: "The disgrace to English law, or its methods of administration, and to the social tyranny that has backed it up, incident to the cruel and wanton imprisonment of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey, is not in the least removed by the fact that on Saturday morning Mr. Ramsey, having served his term, was released from Holloway Prison, and welcomed by his friends as a liberated martyr. Mr. Foote remains in gaol, and even any remission of the remainder of his sentence, were it now to be allowed by Sir William Harcourt, would hardly improve matters, except to the extent of lessening his personal discomfort. The legal crime has been committed, and the time for palliating it by any act of 'clemency' is past. Sir William Harcourt and those who back him up need not wonder or grumble at the inevitable consequences of their foolish favoring of tyranny. Mr. Ramsey has been made far more influential than he was before, and from him at once, and from Mr. Foote as soon as he is a free man, we may expect much louder and effective impeachment of our national hypocrisy, calling itself religion, than either of them ventured upon before."

*Reynolds's* says: "The release of Mr. Ramsey, yesterday morning, from Holloway Prison, where he has been incarcerated for nine months for conscience' sake, shows that thought is still fettered in England. A man may not, says the law, believe as his reason guides him. If he follows his intellect, and publicly says so, he stands in near danger of the cell, a barbarous revival of mediæval usage. . . . It is a crying scandal that, in spite of our boasted Protestantism and our loudly-vaunted plea for the right of private judgment, the tribunals of the land can still send a man to prison for a prolonged period, even if he has been guilty of no worse crime than sticking to his own belief in theological matters."

AN East London correspondent reports that on Thursday, November 15, Mr. James Allanson Picton, adopted second Liberal candidate for the Tower Hamlets, addressed a crowded meeting of electors at the Bow and Bromley Institute. At "question time," I asked, "Was he in favor of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws?" In reply, Mr. Picton said, "He was decidedly opposed to putting men in prison for printing or uttering blasphemy, no matter in how offensive a form it may have been said to be done. If a person with a placard, etc., caused a crowd to assemble, to the danger of public peace, he should be dealt with; but he was strongly opposed to putting men in prison as had recently been done." (Loud applause). It is worthy of note, too, amongst such an intelligent and educated audience as was there present, the speaker's mention of the name of Luther did not provoke a sound.

In the enthusiasm of the moment, Mr. Ramsey on Saturday thought he would do at once a descriptive account of his prison life. He has had, however, too many demands on his attention; and by the advice of friends will take a short holiday at the seaside previous to resuming business duties.

MR. ARTHUR B. MOSS lectured three times at Jarrow on Sunday last. Mr. John Rowell Waller, who presided, made an appeal on behalf of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey, which elicited a hearty response from the audience; and a very fair collection was made on behalf of our friends. Mr. Ramsey's resolve of war to the knife evoked enthusiastic applause.

On Tuesday night the Rev. Canon Shuttleworth lectured at the offices of the English Church Union, Wellington Street, on the subject of "Christian Socialism." The lecture was noticeable for permitting and eliciting a strong opposition. Dr. Edward B. Aveling, E. Belfort Bax and Andreas Scheu all contended that the merits of Socialism had no chance with the people while obscured by an alliance with Christianity.

On Sunday Mr. Jos. Symes will lecture at Milton Hall Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town; at 11.30 on "The Natural History of Morals;" at 7.30 on "The Queer Ways of Divine Providence."



ON Monday next a concert and ball is to be given at the Ball's Pond Secular Hall in aid of a fund to purchase a large telescope of Mr. Symes. A first class band will perform the instrumental music; and some good vocal music will be given. Concert at 8; dancing at 10. Tickets 1s. Tickets must be secured not later than Sunday.

THE sub-committee appointed by the Executive of the National Secular Society have arranged the following programme for the Symes' presentation on Thursday, Dec. 20. Supper at 8 p.m.; songs, recitations and speeches from 9 till 10.30; to which the public will be admitted to the galleries on payment of 3d. each. At 11 o'clock there will be dancing for those who wish to stay. Tickets for supper and entertainment, 2s. 6d. each.

### WHAT DO WE OWE TO GOD?—I.

BEFORE we acknowledge indebtedness to any person whatever, we should at least be sure in our minds that the being to whom we pay our homage has a real existence, and is not like Mrs. Harris, a purely imaginative creature, conceived in the fertile imagination of some modern Mrs. or Mr. Gamp.

What do we owe to god? is a question that would naturally be answered by "all sorts and conditions of men" in a variety of fashions, and I am not sure that the answer I shall give will be considered satisfactory by the orthodox gentry of this country. But an answer is expected of me, and I will not hesitate to reply to the best of my ability.

And in the first place I ask, If I owe anything to god, which god is it? Brahma, Buddha, Vishnu, Krishna, Jove, Jupiter, Jehovah, Jesus, and a host of others, have each been claimed as deities deserving of the worship of mankind. Am I now expected to judge of the relative merits of these gods without having heard counsel in favor of the most insignificant among them, as well as a special pleader for two of them who have been palmed upon the people of this country for centuries? Candidly, I do not think it is fair. If we are to be asked anything concerning our indebtedness to god, why not include the lot, and not exclude any poor deity whose reputation has gone down in this quarter of the globe, but ask the question honestly—What do we owe to the gods?

Here the Christian interrupts. He says that there is only one god, the god revealed in the bible, and that we may at once dismiss the others from our minds and not trouble ourselves about them, for we are not likely to be asked any questions concerning them while we remain in this country, and when we are, it will be quite time enough to answer. And so for the present the matter is simplified.

What do we owe to god—the bible god, the god who made man perfect and placed him in a garden; who put a serpent there to tempt him; who knew that he would fall, and did not try to prevent him; who knew that the fall meant everlasting ruin to generations yet unborn; who caused women in suffering to bear children; who allowed man to become depraved and sow the seeds of depravity in every human heart; who permitted the wickedness of man to increase so that men's thoughts were evil continually; who drowned all the inhabitants of the earth except one family, who, so far as we know, had done nothing to elevate their brethren; who confused men's tongues so that they should not understand one another, or even understand themselves, while they attempted to build a tower that should reach to an unknown "castle in the air." Who allowed the children of Israel to be put into bondage in order that Moses might perform some silly tricks of legerdemain; who plagued the unoffending Egyptians and slaughtered thousands of cattle; who playfully hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he should not let the children go, when he had previously determined that he should; who killed all the firstborn among the Egyptians when they were as guiltless of crime as the second or thirdborn. Who encouraged the Israelites to rob the surviving families of their jewels of gold and silver; and engulfed beneath the waves of the Red Sea all who had the courage to offer defence?

What do we owe to the god who directed Moses to slay all the males among the Midianites, and preserve the females to satisfy the lustfulness of a brutal horde of soldiers? Who commanded the Israelites to make slaves of the heathen round about them; to slaughter mercilessly all who should conscientiously desire to worship some other god; to stone to death the blasphemer, and not even allow a poor old man

to pick up sticks on Sunday without paying with his life the penalty for Sabbath-breaking?

What do we owe to the god of the bible who inspired men to write passages so obscene, that it is a crime punishable with heavy sentence to publish these passages of the bible separately?

What obedience do we owe to the god who loved the lying Jacob and assisted him to successfully carry on his nefarious practices? Who despised the magnanimous Esau, who was generous enough to forgive his wicked brother his trespasses against him?

What love can we have for a deity who favored brutal David, the man "after his own heart," and punished with sore affliction the virtuous Job?

What respect can be due from us to a god who made a hell wherein to burn, through all eternity with inextinguishable fire, the largest majority of his children? What, I ask, do we owe to a deity of this kind? ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### EXTRACTS FROM THE ATHEIST'S DICTIONARY.

**THE BIBLE.**—A collection of eastern semi-historic, semi-mythological books, written at different times during about 1,000 years, in praise of various heathen gods and tyrannical heroes. A book sent into the world for the purpose of teaching young people immorality, and confusing men's ideas of right and wrong. A book the various divinely inspired and infallible churches have been picking to pieces and fighting about for nearly 2,000 years, and can't yet understand.

**BLASPHEMY.**—The crime of daring to say that black is not white, evil not good; and daring to show unthinking congregations that they have been and are still being humbugged.

**THE CHURCH.**—A Soul Insurance Company and Universal Agency, which takes as its fees an enormous portion of this world's goods, and in return gives its supporters promises of magnificent mansions somewhere up in the clouds (castles in the air?) which no one has ever yet seen, and promises of eternal bliss which no soul has ever yet tasted of. The same institution keeps agents in almost every continental town, to prevent English men and women learning anything from the intelligence of other nations. It encourages ignorance, intolerance, idleness and drunkenness, and costs the country about 5,000,000 a year.

### SANDY'S SABBATH.

I do not know, Mr. Editor, whether the first impressions of a Scotch Sunday might interest your readers. I grant that the subject is decidedly prosaic, if not, indeed, repulsive; that the surroundings of the so-called "lord's day" in Scotland are not of such a nature to arouse pleasurable feelings. Still—to quote a clerical stock phrase—as there are often lessons to be learned by looking at the darkest side of human nature, it may prove instructive to glance for a moment or two at the *modus operandi* of once-a-week god-worship in the land o' cakes.

Information is often obtainable from the least expected sources. The other day, when walking through the Liverpool Art Gallery with a staunch but thoroughly decent Christian friend, we came across a picture representing several girls walking barefoot on the seashore. "Ah!" said my friend, "French girls going to bathe, doubtless; look at the catalogue." I looked at the catalogue and found the picture entitled, "Returning from the Confirmation." The mental and visible contrast was so striking that my friend was constrained to grin a ghastly smile at one of the more sacred rites of the Christian church. I fear, indeed, his respect for confirmation balderdash will be sadly shattered every time the ridiculous picture crosses his mind. 'Twas it is that out of trifles sometimes grow life-long impressions; and I can only hope that if these lines should meet the eye of some wavering Scotch readers, they will ask themselves whether an exhibition of funeral hypocritical piety is anything like an agreeable concomitant to the misnamed day of rest.

The first thing which strikes the newly-arrived visitor at a small Scotch town on Sunday is the grave-like, lonely, "cock-rachy" quiet which pervades everything and everybody. Black coats and long faces seem to be the order of the day, and such a worldly attribute as a smile seems to be withdrawn while "the sweet savor of the Sabbath" lasts. Indeed, did fashion—but why do I mention such a peculiarly terrestrial feature?—yet did fashion introduce the wearing of black plumes on men's hats, I have no doubt Scotch Sabbatharians



would be the first to support the introduction. Oh! "Sabbathless Satan," how I do envy you, to be sure!

The Scotch Sunday is not even sulphur and treacle, the latter being conspicuous by its absence. There is no jam to get the powder down, and a person is obliged to face the unpalatable as best he may. Let us brace ourselves up, therefore, for the attempt, and join the melancholy stragglers who wend their way to the "free kirk." "Can I have a seat, please?" I ask at the door. "Shoost gang whaur ye like, sir, naeboddy'll onterfere wi' ye at a'" says a grey-haired Presbyterian at the door. The interior reached, I was agreeably surprised to find that civilisation had so far penetrated this dingy hole as to tolerate a stained-glass window. The window was beautiful, but inexpressibly silly. The centrepiece consisted of a full-length picture of Christ in scarlet robes trimmed with gold. I had always been of opinion that Christ was poor and lowly, and that he did not affect the masher or Beau Brummel of his period—but then, we live and learn. The democratic lecturer of Galilee carried a most jovial-looking lamb with ears cocked out in regular rollicking fashion, as much as to say: "I'm all out of place in this nasty, cold kirk. I'd much rather be gambolling in the meadows. If ever Mary had a little lamb, I'm sure she didn't take it to kirk with her. How I do wish they'd pass me on to Mary!" Besides the funny-looking little lamb, a couple of grave-yard sheep adorned the picture. But, hush! my musings on the sheep and lambs are interrupted by the entrance of a "little, round, fat, oily man of god," who opened the performance by a prayerful prologue, telling god that "we had had a week of varied experience." It was certainly a safe commencement. How little the prayer-maker knew of the week's varied experience of at least one of his audience. A week ago in the excitable vortex of journalistic London; now banished, for a time at least, to the uninteresting vicinity of a little Scotch village! After the prologue came a psalm sung in the most execrable manner I had ever heard. The conductor—I beg pardon, the precentor—beat time with his forefinger; the soprano's shriek outvied the shrill music of an enterprising railway whistle, and would have made a Mohican's war-whoop hide its diminished head. Altogether I came to the conclusion that the Hebrew deity's knowledge of music must be exceedingly limited if he accepted such discord as artistic praise. After the musicless overture a chapter in Proverbs was read, and then another prayer, in which was confessed that there was folly rather than wisdom prevalent among the congregation; that they were obtuse, blind, stupid of the earth, earthy, etc., and a host of other truisms acknowledged with a candor truly astonishing. During the delivery of this most accurate confession, the clergyman's thumbs played a tattoo on each other, as a sort of solatium for the want of time, noticeable in the preceding psalm. The sermon, which induced somnolent symptoms all round, was of an unconscionable length, and dealt with the well-worn story of John the Baptist's heralding of Christ. It was simply a reiteration of assertion upon assertion. No argument whatever was attempted. The usual stock phrases were strung together as artlessly as could be for the first twenty minutes or so, at which period merciful Morpheus had pity on me, and when I awoke, nearly half-an-hour later, it was only to hear the sonorous tones of the benediction praying the people out.

WHYTE TIGHE.

OBITUARY.—There has just died a Secularist in Leeds who must have been familiar to most of our lecturers a few years ago, viz., Nicholas Dunn. He was for many years a good, earnest, and honest member of our society there, who commanded the respect even of his theological enemies. I knew him well and highly respected him. Several years since he experienced a paralytic stroke, which rendered him almost helpless; yet I never found him in low spirits nor heard him grumble. On November 12 he closed his career, without a struggle, at the age of 82. Our societies cannot have too many members like him.—JOS. SYMES.

#### WAS IT JOB THAT HAD WARTS ON HIM?

"PA," said young Mulkittle, "was it Job that had warts on him?"

"Didn't I tell you," exclaimed his father, "that I would punish you if you ever again attempted to question me in regard to the bible?"

"But I want to know."

"Why don't you instruct the child?" remarked Mrs. Mulkittle.

"Because he's too foolish to be taught anything. He doesn't really want to know. He merely wants to talk."

After remaining silent for a few moments, Mr. Mulkittle suddenly remembered that he had not answered the boy's question in regard to Job, and not wishing to leave the child under the impression that the biblical example of patience was afflicted with warts, he exclaimed, "No."

"No what?" asked the boy in surprise.

"I say that Job did not have the warts."

"What was the matter with him?"

"He had boils."

"Did god make the boils come on him?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"To test his patience."

"How?"

"Why, to see—that is, to determine the extent of Job's fidelity."

"Job didn't want the boils, did he?"

"I suppose not."

"But god wanted him to have 'em, didn't he?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"And if god wanted you to have boils you'd have 'em, wouldn't you?"

"I think so."

"But you don't want 'em, do you?"

"No."

"But if god wanted you to have 'em you'd be compelled to have 'em, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

"But you don't want god to want you to be compelled to have 'em—"

"That's enough, sir. You never will have any sense. I am ashamed of you, and don't want to associate with you," and the good man went into his study and composed a sermon on the "Early instruction of children."—*Little Rock Gazette.*

## PROFANE JOKES.

A BURNING QUESTION?—Hell.

WHAT man had no father?—Joshua, the son of Nun.

WHY have chickens no fear of a future state?—Because they have their necks twirled (next world) in this.

A PARSON, who was a great snuff-taker, regaled himself with pinch immediately after the preliminary prayer, and forthwith gave out his text: "My soul cleaveth unto the dust."

"GEORGE," said the teacher of a Sunday-school class, "who above all others, shall you first wish to see when you get to heaven?" With a face brightening up with anticipation, the little fellow shouted, "Gerliah!"

MAGISTRATE'S clerk (swearing witness): "Kiss the book, Mr. Joller." Mr. Joller (exemplary old peasant, never been before a magistrate before): "Noa, noa! I bean't a going to kiss nobody 'cept my ow'd woman."

A TRAVELLER says: "When I travelled, in 1871, in Palestine, an old servant from the monastery of Ramleh, about fifty miles west of Jerusalem, showed me the supposed place where Samson killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. When I expressed my doubts as to the length and strength of the jawbone, considering the great number of surrounding enemies, the good man explained the case in the following manner:—'Well, he took hold of the ass by the tail, and swung the animal against the Philistines in such a manner that only his head, and of this especially the jawbone, struck the Philistines, keeping off in this way the surrounding warriors, and giving the blow the necessary force to kill.' I affirm that, in this manner, Samson could have slain a million Philistines, providing the tail of the ass did not break."

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A Monthly

Magazine.

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Edited by

G. W. Foote.

Interim Editor, EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc.

N O W R E A D Y .

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