

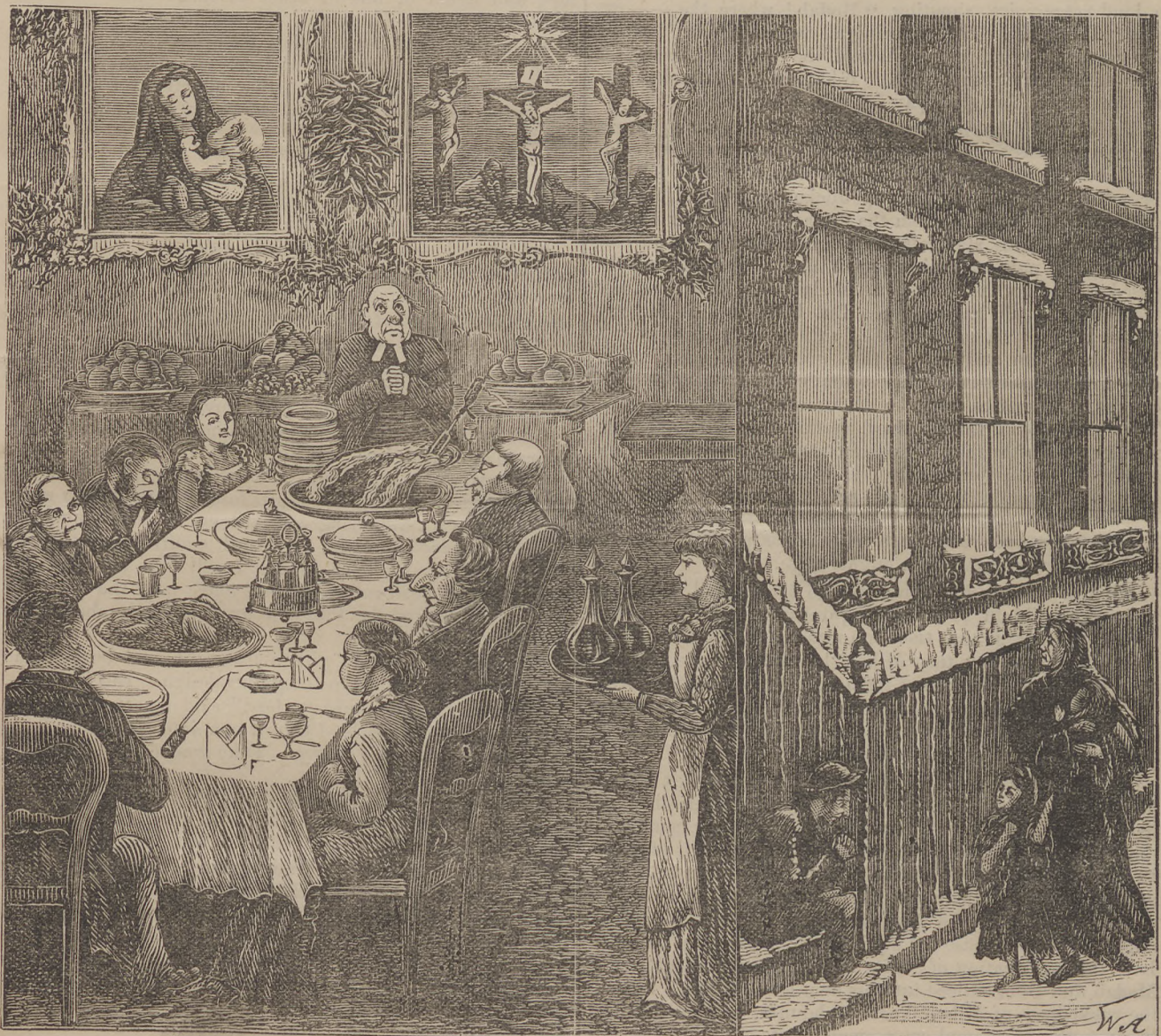
THE  
CHRISTMAS NUMBER  
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A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Inside and Outside.

HOW A FAIRY WAS TRANS-  
FORMED.

THERE once lived many ages ago a fairy king, named Mihole. He dwelt in a far-away land, and was ruler over a very large kingdom. Mihole was skilled in magic, and could work the most astonishing wonders; out of nothing he made worlds, and living beings like men and women out of clay. But this great king was wayward, cruel, jealous, headstrong; and delighted in nothing so much as shedding blood and inflicting misery. So cruel was he that he even exerted his magic to create living things for the sole purpose of tormenting them.

At one time he made a world of pretty large size, just like the earth. Then he made all sorts of plants and animals grow in it; and even made a pair in his own likeness, who could reason and talk like men. This pair he put into a palace where there was a room locked, which they were commanded not to open on pain of death. He then gave them the key and departed. As he left he chuckled with glee at the thought that they would disobey him, as he knew perfectly well they would. To be sure, they were mere babies, without experience to guide them.

Now Mihole, in order to make sure that Madab and Biba (for those were the names of the unfortunate pair) should unlock the fatal door, sent a sort of monkey, named Jocko, to them, who amused them exceedingly by his antics. This





monkey could talk, and was a clever, gay, sprightly fellow, of endless fun and frolic. He was at once a favorite with Madab and Biba, and they could not bear for him to be out of their company. One day Jocko snatched away the key from Madab and began to examine it with pretended surprise; and after a time he fitted it into the lock of the room they were forbidden to enter. Both Madab and Biba ran to him in alarm and tried to persuade and coax him not to open the door, telling him that Miholé would kill them if they did. At this Jocko laughed till the Palace rang again, saying, "Are you such babies as to believe that Miholé was in earnest when he bade you not to enter this room. Booh! He was only joking. Come on; we will see what is inside."

He opened the door and entered, Madab and Biba reluctantly and timidly following. When they were in they were delighted beyond measure. Here were all things rich and rare that Fairyland could ever produce, in the greatest profusion too. In this room the three friends enjoyed themselves the whole afternoon, and paid no heed to the waning of the day. Before they knew how late it was, they heard a loud fierce voice, shouting, "Madab! where the—are you? Here, I have been running all over the Palace looking for you the last half-hour. What!" he continued, seeing the door of his secret room open, "What! have you broken into my treasury? You shall pay for this, I promise you!"

Madab and Biba, in dire confusion, and blank with terror, excused themselves by throwing the blame upon poor Jocko. And Miholé at once made a great dark pit full of fire and brimstone, and there he shut up Jocko for ever. He would die at once, of course, from the fire and the stifling vapors, but the cruel king magically keeps him alive for the purpose of inflicting pain and misery upon him. When he had disposed of Jocko, he turned to Madab and Biba, and told them they would have to die. But here, too, he tortured before killing. "You shall die," said he, "but not just yet. You shall live and people this world with your miserable brood, who shall suffer want, cold, hunger, cancers, coughs, rheumatics, and a thousand horrible tortures. They shall die of famine, flood, pestilence, earthquake, war, murder; and after they have died once they shall live again, and be cast with Jocko into the unquenchable fire, where they shall gnash their teeth and yell with anguish and despair for ever and ever." Then he drove them out of the Palace to the open field, fastened the door, put the key in his pocket, and went away in a mighty rage.

All the evils he had threatened to Madab and Biba, and their poor children, came trooping one after another or altogether at times, so that their life was dreadfully bitter; and they cursed the day that Miholé had made them, as well they might; for he meant them nothing but mischief from the first, and had even planned and incited their disobedience for the sake of gratifying his own malignity in seeing them and their children suffer every variety of torture.

Now fairies are not like men and women, for they live for millions of years. Madab and Biba, after their disgrace, lived on to old age, and then died leaving their country to their children; and they to theirs for thousands of years. In the meantime poor Jocko was burning in his hell, with now and then a holiday granted him by Miholé, who let him out for nothing in the world but sheer mischief; so that he might have an excuse for punishing him yet more, and also have the gratification of seeing multitudes of the children of Madab and Biba enticed into his own lake of fire. Indeed, the wickedness of Miholé knew no bounds, and the older he became the more and more malignant he grew, as the following will show.

He had an only Begotten Son, whose Mother was unknown even to his best friends. There was a mystery about this son; though, being the only one, he was made much of. Now a grand and awful scheme entered into the head of Miholé. He bethought himself thus:—"Those beings I made, Madab and Biba, have deeply offended me; and I will never forgive them. Of course, I planned it all; but I shall not forego the gratification of punishing them on that account. I can do what I will with my own. Still, I will not send the whole race of their children into that fire; I will select a few and bring them to my Palace to live with me. They will make good sport for me, no doubt; and the craven spirited wretches will sing my praises and honor me, though they are well aware that I am roasting their own flesh and blood in the lake of fire. Yes! I will do it. But I must have satisfaction. I am not going to save them from the fire for nothing. I must and will have some equi-

valent. If I forego the pleasure of damning them, I must and will have an equivalent of pleasure in another way.

"Now this is what I will do. I will take my only son Jessah, and will transform him by magic into one of the descendants of Madab and Biba; and then I will get him crucified; and on the cross he shall suffer the most excruciating tortures that even a fairy can endure. Bah!—never mind the pain. I shall not feel it. I shall glory in it. And thus I will redeem to myself a few of the doomed race. This is my will, and it shall, it must be done."

"Jessah!" shouted he to his son. His son came and paid him his respects.

"My son, you know I love you tenderly, do you not?" said Miholé.

"Yes, sire," replied the son, with no great enthusiasm.

"Well, my boy, I have some work for you to do. You remember how Madab and Biba disobeyed me about 4000 years ago, and how I have had no good will towards the race of them from that time till now. You know how I have punished them, and how I have merely made a favorite now and again of one or other of them whose crimes or stupidity served to amuse me. Now I intend to save a few of them from entering that fiery pit below there, and bring them hither to live in this Palace. But I must have an equivalent of suffering in another direction for the pain I am going to remit to them. Do you understand me, my son?"

"I believe I do, sire," replied Jessah. "And I am glad you are going to show them mercy; though I wish you would forgive the whole race and Jocko, too, and not trouble about any equivalent of pain."

"Ah! ah! Just like the child you are. You do not understand business, my boy," replied the old fairy. "Give up a privilege without compensation! No! No! I have spent many a year of pleasure in hearing their groans, and do you suppose I am going to forgive them and stop their yelling! I had rather give up all I have and die myself than put out hell-fire or release a prisoner without compensation! So no more on that point, my son! No more!"

"Now listen to me. You go at once to the world where the race of Madab live, and by a trick I will show you you can transform yourself into a baby and be born of one of the same race. I may tell you beforehand that I am going to make you a sin-offering for that cursed race; and you will be crucified and die in awful agony to gratify my fierce wrath and justice. Then I will raise you up to life again, and you will return to the Palace none the worse for your journey, and be followed by a select number of the children of Madab."

Poor Jessah was wild with amazement, and begged and prayed his cruel father to forego his design. But in vain.

"You will do as I bid you, boy," said he, "or—do you see yonder lake of fire?—I'll hurl you into that and roast you there as long as I live. Take your choice. It is all one to me."

So the son yielded to the mad father's whim, and became incarnate; lived a miserable life; was crucified by enemies instigated thereto by his awful father, who heaped upon him all the agony in his power while dying. Three days after death he restored his son to life and took him home. And there was end of the farce. Miholé was no more satisfied than before. He resolved next to send his son again to the world of Madab to call all its inhabitants to judgment; then to burn up the world with fire, and to shut up most of the unfortunate race in Jocko's hell for ever. But the son, sick and disgusted, fled from his father's den for ever, to escape the misery and humiliation of executing his father's mad schemes and infernal wishes.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Which things are an allegory." My Fairy Tale is the Christian Scheme of Redemption, stript of its pious trappings, writ as it ought to be writ, and exhibited in its gory features and its diabolic qualities. I hope it may help to throw contempt upon the pious tomfooleries of Christmas-tide, and expose to ridicule the farce of the incarnation of the Son of God.

JOSEPH SYMES.

ONE of the Salvation lasses the other day was found sprawling in the mud in a state of intoxication. A disgusted "bobby" bade her get up, applying to her at the same time sundry opprobrious epithets. "How dare you insult me," exclaimed the irate Salvationist, "I am a respectable married woman. I am married to Jesus Christ." "Well," quoth the policeman, "your father-in-law ought to be ashamed of you."



## ELISHA THE SCALP HUNTER:

A Romance of the Woods.

A LONG time ago when the Lord took delight  
In setting his creatures to wrangle and fight,  
And by reason of paramount gifts in that time,  
The nation of Jews had the blessing divine:  
In the days of king Ahab, who tried ev'ry art  
To rival "the man after Jahveh's own heart,"  
But, too timid in murder or lies or seduction,  
Failed to please and so speedily came to destruction;  
In these charming old times, when the Lord's work was done  
By himself, not as now, by his good natured son,  
Who, corrupted at birth by humanity's taint,  
Readjusted the qualities prized in a saint.  
Revolted from carrion or reeking or roast,  
And disgusted his dad and his partner the ghost,  
By teaching good morals and mercy; and worse,  
Attempting to put the commandments in force,  
When, as every one knows who has read Scripture o'er,  
The Old Testament God only priz'd the first four.  
In those times since with earth's greatest rascals he sided,  
The Lord's work was heavy and so was divided.  
Then, as now, he'd a very large tribe of sleek priests—  
Last at work, but the first at all plunder and feasts;  
Then as tools for all active disturbance and harm, he  
Maintained an irregular Damnation Army  
Of prophets, who varied as humor inclined,  
"Twixt grumbling at God and tormenting mankind.

When Ahab was monarch these prophets would seem  
To have swarmed in the land thick as dust in a beam,  
So much so that Jezebel thinking the vermin ate  
More food than they work'd for began to exterminate,  
And dispatched the whole lot save a hundred saved by a  
Loose principled governor called Obadiah.  
But kill prophets or cockroaches off' as you would,  
'Twere quite vain to imagine you'd squelch the whole brood.  
And Ahab and Jezebel found to their cost,  
God made two to replace ev'ry one he had lost.  
While to make the pest worse the prophetic gift enters  
Into two special men who became great head centres.  
Elijah the Tishbite is one who was reckoned  
The chief among seers; but a very good second  
Was Elisha his comrade and son to old Shaphat,  
(Which one of the firm that employ'd him might chafe at  
For all good scripture students admit themselves rather  
Befogged when they try to determine *his* father.)  
They were greatly alike, tho' Elijah, perchance,  
In the matter of mischief was well in advance.  
But we mustn't for this of Elisha think ill,  
For 'twas clearly more lack of occasion than will,  
Or whene'er a fair chance or indeed the mere ghost of it  
Appeared, he with fine holy zeal made the most of it.

They were both pretty clever at legerdemain—  
Filled ditches with blood, kept the keys of the rain.  
Lodged for years with old women, but strictly on tick,  
And wiped off all scores with a conjuror's trick.  
Got God to put children in moribund swoond,  
To gain some small credit by bringing them round.  
Dealt largely in oil, which is quite in the line  
Of persons employed in the service divine.  
Elisha, 'tis true, rather copied the other,  
Repeated his dodges one after another;  
But contrived as atonement (see 2nd Kings, vi.)  
To anticipate one of Christ's favorite tricks.  
Elisha had rather more medical fame,  
While Elijah excelled in the handling of flame;  
When for instance he got all Baal's priests put to slaughter,  
By using petroleum and shamming 'twas water.  
Then his grand pyrotechnic display at the last,  
The obscure dwindling out of the other surpast;  
Who probably either went utterly crazy,  
Or caught his disease (serve him right) from Gehazi.  
But the point where these men most undoubtedly vary,  
Was—Elisha was bald, while Elijah was hairy.

Now this troubled Elisha far more than you'd fancy,  
And they hint that if t'other had giv'n him a chance he  
Would have scalped him off hand and endeavored to rig  
The spoil on his own shiny pate as a wig.  
But the Lord saw his notion and just in the nick  
Of time snatched Elijah a minute too quick.  
But as henceforth Elijah would wear a white gown,  
The Lord stript the prophet and threw his clothes down;  
Which Elisha accounted great mercy and grace,  
Being fond of old clothes like the rest of his race;  
So he gathered them up, and went trudging away,  
As pleased as an ass with a mouthful of hay—  
Till he came to the Jordan:—He crost it dry-shod—  
A lanc thro' a river's a tittle to God.  
But they stoop him at Jericho, thinking his story  
Of Elijah's splendiferous journey to glory

Was rather too fine to be strictly correct,  
And they prayed for permission from him to inspect  
The scene of these wonders—in manner so bland,  
That he didn't destroy the whole lot out of hand,  
But allowed them to go.

While we wait their return,  
I think, gentle reader, it's well you should learn  
There's a very strong notion Elisha succeeded  
In securing the scalp after all—which he needed—  
Killed Elijah and buried the corpse. And the story—  
At present believed—of his gallop to glory  
Was all an invention to cover the crime.  
Well—the searchers returned in the process of time.  
And it's hinted they made poor Elisha uneasy;  
But to set all the points in discussion at peace, he,  
To the weal of the town, made three good contributions:  
Cleansed the water supply from all sewage pollutions;  
Made the barren fields fruitful, and then ('twas as well)  
He took himself off in all haste to Beth-El.

Now the scalp which has been the chief cause of his crime,  
He had never once dared to try on all this time.  
(You see that this version's the one I've preferred;  
It's a great deal more likely than that in God's Word).  
But he donn'd it when once on the road from the town,  
And smirk'd like a maid in her first party gown.  
"I think," he reflects, "this is just vot I need,  
And I now may lay claim to be perfect indeed.  
In the past my bald skull spoil'd my luck vith the sex,  
But no more their disdain my sweet nature shall vex.  
The sight of this wig to sweet smiles shall attune 'em;—  
Vait Elisha, you dog, till you get back to Shunem!"

Now people will talk tho' town councils sing mum,  
And tho' Jericho's voice was officially dumb;  
Still the talk of the town had been busy some time  
With details of Elisha's detestable crime;  
And even the children, dear hearts, knew them all.  
And now, as ill-fortune would have it befall,  
A band of them came down the road to the city,  
All merrily singing some nursery ditty.  
Tho' covered with scratches and dirt from their rambles,  
A searching for blossoms and fruit in the brambles—  
When they saw the sour prophet come scowling along  
A spirit of laughter possessed the glad throng;  
And they cried in their glee as they noticed his rig,  
"Ah, go up, thou bald-head—how much for that wig?"

Now, chaff's what no prophet or priest can endure,  
And Elisha was sore on this subject, be sure;  
So without more ado he turned round in the road,  
And curst the poor things in the name of great God,  
Who true to his friends—when it suits him—made haste  
To perform a small job very much to his taste;  
And sent two she bears from the depth of the wood,  
Which delighted the prophetic cantankerous mood  
By falling unseen on the innocent band,  
And killing two score of the children off-hand.

But still the poor prophet was not quite at peace  
Till an angel suggested one day "try bears grease."  
Then he went and by miracles caught the two bears  
Who destroyed those that mock'd at his absence of hairs;  
Boiled them down in due course, made an ointment—and such  
Was its virtue that, ere he had used very much,  
Long hair covered over his skull bit by bit,  
As thick as the heads that believe Holy Writ.

The rest of the story is written in Kings—  
How he went back to Shunem; and all the strange things  
He did then and after; and how with his aid  
The Shunemite woman a mother was made.  
The moral—if, reader, for morals you care—  
Is there's nothing so good as a good head of hair.

NICODEMUS.

THE scriptures tell us that we always have the poor with us.  
The rich go out of town in the summer.

CONVERTED Jim wants to know why we should pay 9d. a  
pound for mutton when we can get the Lamb of God for  
nothing.

CLERGYMAN (to big boy): "Who made you?" B. B.: "Don't  
know, sir?" C. (to little boy): "Who made you?" L. B.:  
"God, sir." C. (to big boy): "This little boy knows more  
than you, dunce." B. B.: "So he ought; he ain't long been  
made."

"Do you know the nature of an oath?" asked the judge of  
a colored woman. "Yes sah; I reckon I does." "You know  
then what it is to swear?" "Yes sah; I reckon I does."  
"Hold up your hand and swear." She held up her hand and  
ripped out an oath which almost took away the judge's breath.  
"I'll send you to gaol for this, you miserable wretch." "For  
what jedge?" "For using profane language in the court-  
room." "Well, jedge, I don't know what you calls 'fane  
langwidge; yer tole me ter swar, and I just swar'd."





### TRIAL FOR BLASPHEMY.

*Matthew*, alias *Levi*, a publican; *Mark*, of no certain occupation; *Luke*, a physician; and *John*, a retired fisherman, appeared before the court of Common Sense on an extraordinary charge of blasphemous libel.

The indictment, in twenty-eight folios, set forth that the defendants being wicked and evil disposed persons did publish or cause to be published, certain blasphemous, impious, scurrilous, libellous and scandalous matters, wickedly and profanely devising to asperse and vilify Almighty God, and against his honor and dignity, to the tenor and effect following, to wit, among other matters, that he, Almighty God, did cohabit with or overshadow a certain Jewish virgin named Mary, and hocus her affianced husband Joseph, and that, as result of such overshadowing an illegitimate son named Jesus was born. Concerning whom the defendants alleged divers, monstrous, blasphemous and profane libels—to wit, that he, Jesus, was God himself, that he overturned God's immutable laws, and alleged that the All-Merciful had prepared eternal torments for those who would not believe in him, the aforesaid Jesus, and further that such torments were especially prepared for the great mass of God's creatures on account of sins committed before they were born.

C. RITIC, Q. C., appeared for the prosecution; Mr. Luke Sharp conducted the defence.

C. RITIC, Q. C., briefly stated his case. The libels complained of appeared in certain widely spread papers circulated in the names of the defendants, and he submitted that there was evidence of conspiracy. The wild assertion of the first defendant Matthew about angels appearing to Mary and Joseph, the silly tale of a star showing the way, and the fable of a massacre of children, being modified by Mark and amended by Luke; while the whole purpose of the writing by John was to spread the blasphemous and profane libel that Jesus was God. How little concern the defendants had for the said Jesus was shown by their alleging that he neglected and abused his mother and various other matters little to his credit. He should call the brother of Jesus, and other persons who knew him well, to prove the utter falsity of the blasphemous imputation that he either claimed to be God, to work miracles, or that he was born of a virgin.

In conclusion the learned counsel declared that while not desiring to press unduly against the defendants, he must remind the Court that in consequence of their fables being believed in by crowds of credulous persons, who were frightened by the defendants' threats concerning the destruction of the world and eternal torments afterwards,

a number of persons were living in the land without doing any work, obtaining their living from their deluded victims, under the false pretence of defending them from these threatened calamities, and providing them with heavenly mansions after death.

JAMES, described as the brother of Jesus was then called. Witness refused to swear on the ground that it was unlawful. Upon being asked if he was Bishop of Jerusalem, witness replied that he knew nothing of bishops but only of elders. He has four brothers, Joses, Simon, Judas, and Jesus. Witness would be indeed surprised to learn that his mother was a perpetual virgin. Did not believe that his brother worked miracles. Jesus was dead. Knew nothing of his rising again. Never said he was God. Perhaps his sayings had been tampered with. He taught only morality—works, not faith. Knew nothing of the doctrine of eternal hell. Pure religion is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Cross-examined by Mr. Smart—He was not James the son of Zebidee nor of Alpheus; nor the cousin instead of the brother of Jesus. If Hegesippus said he never used oil or took a bath it was not true. He recommended anointing with oil and praying for the sick. If the defendants said that his brethren did not believe on Jesus it was true. That referred to his alleged Messiahship and miracles. He knew nothing of any gospels or other writings by the defendants. He did not believe them capable of writing them. Was of opinion that rich oppressors of the poor were blasphemers.

SIMON CEPHAS, alias PETER, deposed that he knew the said Jesus, but had never heard of his calling himself God. Witness had written a letter dated from Babylon, but would not say if he meant Babylon when he said so or if he had ever been in Rome [document put in, first epistle of Peter]. Had not written any other epistle. Many spurious productions were circulated in his name. Never heard of the miraculous incarnation.

Cross-examined by Mr. Smart—His real name was Cephas. He did not live by gulling the dregs of the populace with a cock and bull story. It was not true, as stated in the Acts of Andrew, that witness made a camel go through the eye of a needle. Witness had lots of lies told about him. Knew one Paul, but thought him an interloper. Did not deny his master, Jesus, because he had cured witness's mother-in-law of a fever. Refused to say he did not deny him. Upon being asked if he was cocksure about this matter of the denial, witness began to curse and swear, and was ordered by the Court to stand down or he might find himself in the same dock as the defendants.

SAUL, calling himself PAUL, a tent-maker of Tarsus, was the next witness. He was a little, bandy, bald-headed, hook-nosed man, but the merriment excited by his appearance was at once subdued, as much by his resolute look and voice as by the order of the Court. Witness deposed that he knew nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Never heard of the Jesus being God the Son, born of a virgin. Knew nothing of the defendants or of the events recorded by them. He believed in one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Jesus was the son of man. Believed that the son would be subject to the Father that God may be all in all. Never heard of a virgin having children. Had a poor opinion of women, and would not think of worshipping one. As many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God. His doctrine was not founded on the letter but on the spirit.

Cross-examined by Mr. Smart—Witness had been in prison oft for sedition and blasphemy. It was not true, as alleged by certain Ebionites, that he became a convert in order to obtain a Jewish lady. He wished all remained unmarried even as himself. His conversion happened through a sun-stroke. Had not seen Jesus in the flesh but in the spirit. Could not say whether he was in the body or out of the body at the time. Witness was troubled with a thorn in the flesh. Had heard things it was not lawful to utter. The followers of Christ jabbered with tongues. He thanked God he jabbered more than any of them. Did not know the meaning of the words Trinity, Eternal Torments, Incarnate God, Virgin Mother, or Immaculate Conception. Knew the last witness Cephas (alias Peter), who thought himself to be something. Witness did not think much of him; but withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed. Witness taught faith, not works. Knew nothing of any



other gospel than his own, and would not have any other though an angel brought it from heaven. By scripture he meant the writings of the Old Testament. Witness could not say that the defendants wrote the blasphemous libels attributed to them, but believed them quite capable of doing so.

CLEMENT OF ROME corroborated the evidence of the last witness. He knew nothing of Jesus being born of a virgin, of his working miracles, or being God. Nor could he say that the writings complained of were written by the defendants.

C. RITIC, Q.C., said that he had Messrs. Barnabas, Polycarp, Hermas, and others in court, who, if it was thought necessary, would corroborate these witnesses as to the falsehood of the allegations concerning Jesus. He would, however, content himself by bringing the matter home to the defendants by putting one more witness into the box.

PAPIAS, calling himself Bishop of Hierapolis, was then examined. He stated that he had made inquiries concerning Jesus and his apostles, and heard that one Matthew wrote some sayings of Jesus in the Hebrew tongue, and that another person, Mark, had written down such fragments as he has heard fall from Peter. If Matthew said Judas died by hanging, and Luke that he fell and burst himself—both were wrong, for he was crushed by a chariot.

Cross-examined by Mr. Smart—Did not personally know anything of the matter. Lived 120 years after the death of Jesus. Knew nothing of the defendant Luke. Could not swear that he knew the defendant John. Probably it was John the Presbyter he had seen. Matthew wrote in Hebrew. Mark did not write in order, but gave fragments of Peter's preaching. Had heard and believed that Jesus was soon coming back in the clouds when he would give his followers as much cake as they could stuff and as much wine as they could swill. The witness, who said this with much simplicity and gusto, then stood down amid the laughter of the Court.

This concluded the case for the prosecution.

Mr. SMART, on rising, stated that never in the course of his professional career had he witnessed so ignominious a failure to establish a case as the failure to bring the blasphemous libels complained of home to his unfortunate clients. He would not comment upon the fact that the parties supposed to be libelled—viz., Almighty God and Jesus Christ—had neither of them ventured to come forward to the witness-box, nor would he dwell upon the absurdity of any Court pretending to judge what were or were not blasphemous libels against these mysterious persons or attempting to vindicate their honor and dignity. He would simply point out the credulous character of the witnesses for the prosecution and the utter absence of any jot or tittle of evidence to prove that his clients had been guilty of the alleged crime. Neither James, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor Clement knew anything of any such writings as those attributed to the unfortunate men in the dock. He ventured to say that had Barnabas, Polycarp, or Hermas come forward they would have had the same story. The only witness who could say a word in this direction was Papias, who lived over one hundred years after the libels were said to have been written. This witness he must say, with all submission, was evidently a doddering old idiot, who went about gathering all the idle tales which anyone chose to impose on his credulity. Yet he knew nothing of the two defendants, Luke and John. Matthew, he said, wrote the sayings of Jesus in Hebrew. But the libels complained of were something more than sayings; they were historical narratives, or at any rate romances. Moreover, the only writings put into court, or indeed known of, were written in Greek, conclusively proving that the author or authors were not his clients, who were unlearned Jews. Mark, moreover, the witness Papias alleged, wrote down the preaching of Peter, but not in order. But the witness Peter never said anything of the kind. Moreover, the writings complained of attributed to Mark, was written in order, and was no more like the records of preaching than the moon is like green cheese. He should not waste the time of the jury by calling any witnesses, nor insult their intelligence by further comments. He confidently left the matter in their hands, sure that in the interests of justice, reason, and common-sense they would give a verdict for his clients.

After a brief consultation the jury, who had carefully

examined the documents, were of opinion that there was nothing to prove that the prisoners wrote the libels complained of.

A verdict of acquittal was accordingly entered, and the prisoners discharged.  
J. M. WHEELER.

A FREETHOUGHT PSALM.

Brothers, your hands,  
The dark clouds drift away;  
Lo, in the night grown grey  
The angel of the morning stands:  
Brothers your hands.

I, the singer, heard a singing circled round the circling world,  
Like a haze about it clinging ere in cloud caught up and furled,  
Hymn lethargic, rising, falling, with a measured pulse and roll,  
Land with land united calling to the silent Over-soul!

Shout, ye lands, and be it rolled louder on from sphere to sphere;  
Lift your hands, O priests white stoled, to the being ye revere;  
Gaze into the empyrean, bow ye humbly to your God;  
Proud is he to hear your pean, though he formed you from a sod!

Thus I cried, and still they chaunted: 'Oh, He heard!  
'Twas but his way  
To put off (or so they vaunted) answers to some other day!  
Wait a little, damned sceptic, wait a little; you shall see,  
By a taste of hell proleptic, what the Great One thinks of thee!

Verily, I cried in answer, that were easy to be borne,  
Though it fooled the tropic Cancer or the fevered Capricorn;  
Knowledge that he had the power so to bind or so to loose  
Would be worth it, though that hour I would curse him for its use.

Listen priests, ye sons of profits; listen! though you thus consign  
To your base and vulgar Tophets, those who know not the divine,  
Lo, amidst your organ-pealing, your tempestuous song and psalm,  
Comes a breath of music stealing, most divinely still and calm.

Laugh, fools! sneer fools! curse fools! never doth it 'bate  
its sweeter chime,  
Deepening and swelling ever to an ecstasy sublime;  
Though you deem your louder singing its far-reaching  
potence mars;  
Still it speeds, its grand way winging farther out amid the stars.

Pull your loudest Diapason, crash forth all the myriad stops,  
Sweep your pedal-thundering base on! still your earthquake  
it out-tops:  
See, as its clear notes wax stronger, wheresoc'er its flood  
hath streamed;  
Dead men rise, death's slaves no longer—the real host of  
the redeemed.

Backward reel the old phantasms, that your wizardries  
maintain,  
To their dark and noisome chasms, never thence to rise  
again;  
Man for God and Joy for weeping, Truth for error, Love  
for strife,—  
Flood on flood of splendor leaping all the barriers of life.

M. W

WHAT A STATE OF THINGS IN THE "STATES"!—American teacher: Who was the first man? Head scholar: Washington; he was the first in war, first in— Teacher: No, no; Adam was the first man. Head scholar: Oh, if you're talking of foreigners, I s'pose he was



## A CHRISTMAS PANORAMA.

IN the good old times, when I was a lad, education had not made boys so critical and sceptical as they are in these days, and pictures which the pious would now think blasphemous if they appeared in the *Freethinker* passed as genuine illustrations of the old Bible stories.

Well do I recollect being terrified by the picture of Apollyon in my grandmother's copy of Bunyan, in which the old gentleman, with many names, figured with horns, hoofs, tail and pitchfork, in even more fearful aspect than he does on the wrapper of this Christmas Number. [By the way, our artist has well followed the theologians in not giving much to choose between the ugliness of Jahveh and that of his rival.] But like a garrulous old man I am already digressing.

One of the funniest incidents of my youth occurred one Christmas time when the parson, to give his Sunday scholars a treat, engaged the services of a travelling panoramaist with a show of Biblical pictures. The parson had intended to give illustrative comments himself, but having been unexpectedly invited to keep the birth of his God-baby with rich friends in London, this part of the performance was left to the tender mercies of the showman. This person, I now fancy from my vivid remembrance of the glib-chuckling way in which he continually repeated the expression, "haccordin' to the blessed scripters," must have been a sceptic in disguise, taking advantage of the situation. Probably familiarity with "the blessed scripters" had led to the proverbial contempt. At any rate, I remember him with gratitude as having been the first to loosen my mind from the bondage of Bible superstitions.

Premising that the showman was a cockney, and that each change of scene was accompanied by a grating sound as of winding up clockwork—which may, perhaps, be represented by the letters Br—wr—m—the following is something like what we saw and heard.

"Hact the fust, scene the fust, Hadam and Eve in the Garding of Heden (two very Dutch figures, in a more so Dutch Garden, with a superabundance of red and yellow spots of fruit on the bushes). Hobserve Hadam is in 'is native hinnercence, haccording to the blessed scripters. Heve is looking sort of spry. Hon the right is Sating, the tempter of wimming-kind, disguised as a sarpint. He stands on his tail, not yet being cussed to crawl upon is belly, accordin' to the blessed scripters. Boys and geyurls, these kind of animiles are now extinct. Br—wr—m."

"Scene second. Turned out. Hon the left hobserve the Cherrybum, with flaming sword of burning yellow fire. Hadam and Heve are a blubbing because they have to work for their livin', and all their ancisters will go to hell-fire." The exhibitor permitted the impressive scene to stamp itself indelibly on our memories, while he played "Farewell to Lochaber" on a broken-winded concertina.

"Hact second, scene fust. Cain a killin' of his brother Habel, which was wrong. He its 'im with a cane as 'ard as he's able" (much laughter—a big, red man, with long hair and chopper, standing over pale one on the ground). Br—wr—m.

Scene second. The Deluge. Nozh a shovin' of the animiles inter the Ark.

Here the showman indulged in the usual patter concerning the "animiles," including the monkeys, who "ran away with the nigger wimming, which accounted for the milk in the cocoanut and the monkey's face outside;" and the crocodiles, "who measured thirty feet from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail, thirty feet from the tail to the snout, and thirty feet back again, making ninety feet in all for these hextraordinary animiles." Br—wr—m.

Having no further pictures of the patriarchs, our exhibitor here accompanied, with his cracked concertina, the ditty:—

"God chose three blessed Jews.  
Three blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed,  
Blessed, blessed Jews.  
The first was Abe—er—ham.  
A—a—a—bram, bram, bram.  
The first was Abe—er—ham,  
The second's name was I—i—sick;  
I—i—i, sick, sick, sick.  
The second's name was I—i—sick.  
The third one's name was Ja—a—cob,  
J—a—jay—cob, cob, cob;  
The third one's name was Ja—a—cob."

The chorus was taken up in such a cheery style as to completely drown the concertina.

"Hact third. Scenes from the life of Moses, who led the Jews out of Egypt and spiled the Egyptians—haccordin' to the blessed Scripters. In these scenes Moses may be known by his blooming conk, showing he is one of God's chosen people. Scene fust: Moses discovered in the bulrushes, and taken a fancy to by Potiphar's daughter. Scene second: He slays an Egyptian, and hides him in the sand—haccordin' to the blessed Scripters." Here the concertina gave vent to something like "Down among the Dead-men." Br—wr—m. "Scene third: Moses and Haron before Fairo. Haron transmogrifies his rod into a sarpint, who swallows up the other sarpints; and the Egyptian magicians do likewise with their enchantments. Scene four: The children

of Israel, having plagued and spiled the Egyptians, gives them a cheque on the banks of the red sea, which is crossed by Moses and Company, which was an earlier banking transaction than when Paul lodged with one Simon a tanner—haccordin' to the blessed Scripters. Scene five: The children of Israel a wanderin' for forty days and nights in the wilderness. They don't require any grub, because of the sand—which-is there—while they were mustered, howsumdever, the Lord peppered them with manna, and sent quails and sarpints among them, whereby seventy thousand were smitten in their hinder parts, and Moses cured 'em by erecting a brazen himage, which was breaking the fust commandment and a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, haccordin' to the blessed Scripters. Scene six: Moses coming down from the Mount, where the Lord had revealed to him his back parts, breaks all the commandments at once upon seeing the children of Israel dancing naked, jingaring around the golden calf, haccordin' to the blessed Scripters. Scene seventh, and last: Moses seeing the promised land from Mount Pisgab. His eye was not dim nor his natural dander abated; but he died there, and the Lord buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, and the Devil and St. Michael disputed for the possession of his sacred bones, haccordin' to the blessed Scripters."

Here the cracked concertina gave vent to "God save the Queen," and we had to leave.  
HABAKUK WALKER.

## A BALLAD OF THE GODS.

A CRY of pain went circling up  
From a weary man to heaven,  
Wandering 'wildered here and there,  
To each of the gateways seven.

And first it wailed at the gate of Jove;  
Quoth he: "I say, here Nemesis,  
I can't stand many more rows like this  
On my ethereal premises!"

So it wandered on towards Odin's seat,  
Its tale of woe to stammer;  
But he roared out to the boozing Thor,  
"Hit him over the head with your hammer!"

Then Buddha, hearing it at his gate,  
Said: "Seek out a lonely hunnuck;  
To get your mind in a pleasing state,  
Just ponder the pit of your stomach."

And Brahm looked over his gate and said:  
"I'm not much use; I'm neuter;  
And Vishnu's out; and I've no idea  
What shape he'll take in the futur'!"

So it cried in its pain at Jahveh's door.  
Quoth he: "Are you a Jew, sir?"  
The cry said "No." "Then you may go,  
As quick as you like, to the deuce, sir!"

At last it came to the throne of God.  
Quoth he: "See Christ, this sobber  
Got into the sheepfold over the wall  
In the night like a thief and a robber."

Thus findin' nought to ease his pain,  
He sought a lower level;  
(Not being a moral *felo de se*)  
The poor soul went to the Devil.

M.

## THE PIOUS EDITOR'S PRAYER.

(By no means whispered in the closet.)

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, we thank thee for all thy manifold mercies, and in especial for thy great goodness in placing us here in a well-watered garden, which we beseech thee to keep out of any further liquidation. We labor not, O Lord, for the meat that perisheth, although we bless thee that thou keepest our plate full. We desire to bring souls unto thee, to uphold thy Church, and to honor thy glorious name; and if we are blessed with abundant increase on this side of Jordan, let it not be made a reproach unto us by the scorners. The Lord giveth (to us), and the Lord taketh away (from others); blessed be the name of the Lord. We thank thee, O thou God of power, that thou hast so removed us from the outer darkness, where we were poor in mind, poor in spirit, and poor in purse; and brought us into this glorious light, where the carnal mind cannot dwell, where the proud in spirit cannot come, and where only thy humble servants can abide and enjoy thy fulness. O Lord, thou hast been pleased to extend our circulation, as it were from a small grain of mustard seed to a plant which covereth the whole earth. Bless it still further, O Lord. We pray thee for all who are engaged in spreading thy Gospel through its agency; give grace unto their pens, O Lord, that the world may buy and be converted. And, O Lord, bless and ever bless our immense circulation of two hundred and fifty thousand a week, which maketh us a most excellent medium for advertisements. Amen.





MOSES GETTING A BACK VIEW.

*And it shall come to pass that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and I shall take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts.—EXODUS xxxiii., 23.*

JOCULAR JEHOVAH.

The parson is blaring his balderdash perched in his pulpit to people below,  
 Persuading his hearers to praise the good God who ordains all their blessings to flow;  
 But what a nice party to worship! The mind of a mortal can scarcely conceive  
 An immortal Creator descending to cobble up breeches for Adam and Eve.  
 What! worship a *tailor*? Oh, hang it! I fancy you come it a trifle *too* strong.  
 Why couldn't the Almighty—"ninth of a man"—have created 'em? Am I wrong?  
 After forming magnificent planets and suns out of nothing, but just by his will.  
 To say he sat down with his goose and his shears is a leetle too much of a pill.  
 I really can't worship a tailor, though never so good as a snip.

Now Moses the meek was a man who regarded, with reverence deep and profound,  
 'This God of the parsons who wielded the needle in Eden's mysterious ground;  
 And he served him so well that the Mighty one promised upon a particular day,  
 To grant him a glimpse of his glory so grand, as he toddled along on his way.  
 So Mo'ey took up his position, I think in the cleft of a rugged old rock.  
 Well primed with a cozple of Brandy-and-sodas to help him in standing the shock.  
 His hopes were elated, but suddenly dashed; and he left with a terrible frown;  
 For the humorous deity showed him his— well just the part upon which he sat down.  
 This God is exceedingly vulgar, uncouth in behavior and rude.

Yet again, when in Egypt he hardened the heart of the king to the plea of the Jews,  
 Alternately making him give his consent to their leaving and then to refuse.  
 Behold the Unchangeable changing each day in a passion of frenzy and hate,  
 Like a pettish and badly brought up little child that will quarrel and play with its mate.  
 And after he'd plagued them with lice and with flies and had given them blood for their drink,  
 He finished his series of practical jokes in a manner that's awful to think:  
 For no crime of their own, but to glut and to gratify Infinite malice and spite,  
 Some millions of lively young fellows were suddenly changed into corpses one night.  
 Fine work for the bold undertakers, but brutal and savage indeed.\*

Take Abe for an instance—the party I mean who enjoyed the distinction of friend,  
 Whom the parsons trot out as a model for those on the ladder of Faith who descend.  
 "I Am," it appears, had some troublesome doubts if his pal was as green as the rest,  
 So paid him a visit and wished him to sacrifice Ikey by way of a test.  
 And Abe, nothing loth, took his son and a knife, like a butcher all pity who scorns,  
 But the Ram of God lucky for Ikey they twigged, he was stuck in a bush by the horns:  
 So Ikey was reprieved, and the ram was dispatched (did you ask of me why should he die?)  
 That the odor of blood and the stench of burnt flesh might ascend to the nostrils on high.  
 This God is a bloodthirsty ruffian, a *butcher* not tailor by trade.

That baldheaded beggar Elisha, you know, was a cheeky conceited old ass,  
 Who always left trouble and mischief behind in the districts through which he might pass.  
 When the infants were let out of school, and made fun at his limited quantum of hairs,  
 His tender Divinity settled their hash with the claws of a couple of bears.  
 Woe's me, I have called him a baldheaded beggar, whatever on earth shall I do?  
 Let's hope that Jehovah won't send on my track all the animals kept in the Zoo.  
 If he wouldn't look over the fault that the children committed in ignorance, why  
 He'll scarcely regard my enormous offence with a jocular wink of the eye.  
 This God is splenetic and vengeful, not pitiful, tender and true.

Sometimes he was kept in a beautiful box, while at others he dwelt in a cloud,  
 Yet again he was turned to a pillar of fire, and would rarely astonish the crowd.  
 But whatever the form he was pleased to assume, or wherever he chose to reside,  
 He had such a remarkable relish for Blood that there flowed a continuous tide.  
 Poor Cain whose tribute of carrots and turnips awakened his deadliest hate,  
 Not knowing his taste was carnivorous, met with a vagabond's rascally fate.  
 In fact this peculiar Deity gloried in those who were villainous knaves,  
 And so I must look for another one who in a far better manner behaves.  
 This patron of priests and of parsons, is too big a rascal for me.

D. EVANS.

\* Doubtless St. Joe, Christ's father, combined the two callings—viz., Carpenter and Undertaker; and when disputing with the Doctors, Christ, I take it, was merely discussing professional matters, amount of commission etc., they were to receive.

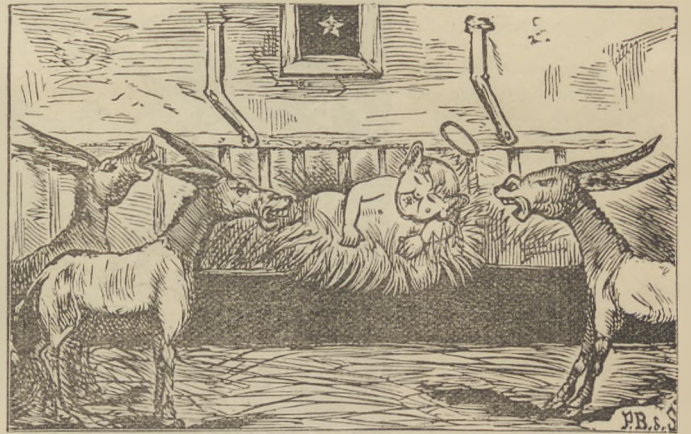
A YOUNG man was recently reading the *Freethinker* in the underground railway, when a bible-banging looking individual exclaimed, "Young man, are you aware that with that wicked paper in your hand you have the very Devil staring you in the face?" "Well, please look another way then," said our reader.



# A NEW LIFE OF CHRIST.



1. He is annunciated.



2. He getteth born in a manger, and is worshipped by wise ones.



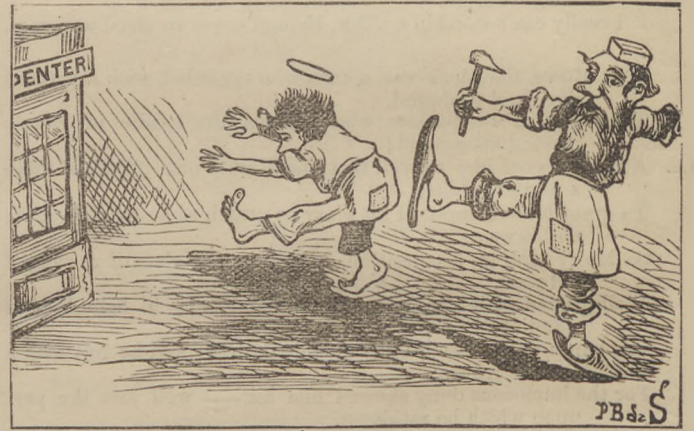
3. He turneth shavings into fire : his first miracle.



4. He puzzleth the Jerusalem big wigs.



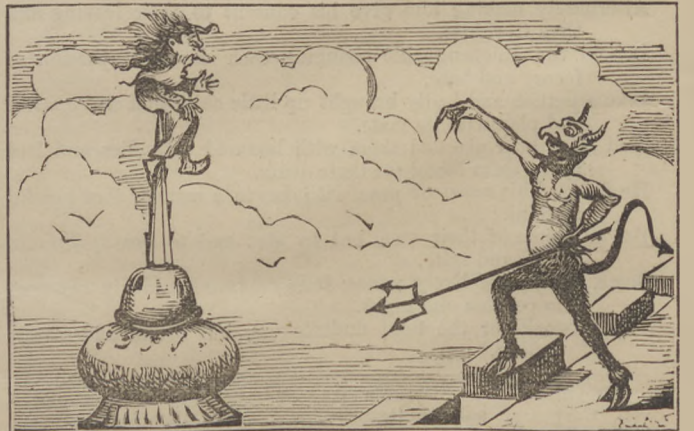
5. He cheeketh his mother.



6. He goeth home again.



7. He getteth baptised.



8. He is tempted by the Devil.



# A NEW LIFE OF CHRIST—Continued.



9. He turneth water into wine.



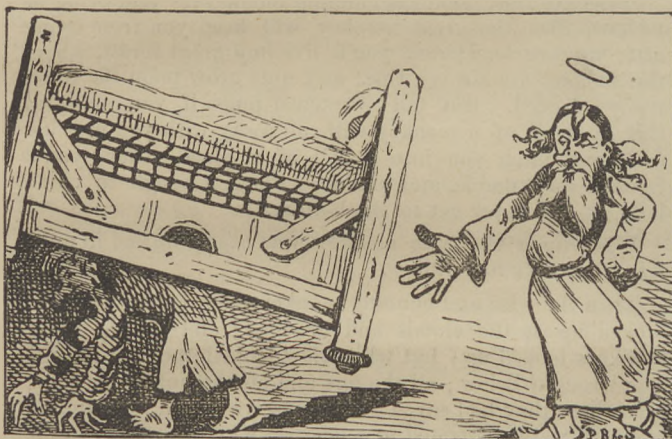
10. He preacheth from the Mount.



11. He raiseth the dead.



12. He cureth the deaf.



13. He ordereth the infirm to take up their beds and walk.



14. He rideth into Jerusalem



15. He is run in for Blasphemy,



16. He visiteth Hell and preacheth to the T'ovi's.



## A NEW LIFE OF CHRIST. — Concluded.



17. He surpriseth his disciples.



18. He vanisheth.



## THE FANATICAL MONKEYS.

A Parable for the Wise.

"I shall not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau,  
If beasts confabulate or no;  
'Tis clear that they were always able  
To hold discourse—at least in fable."

COWPER.

A RACE of monkeys once inhabited the depths of a gloomy forest, and they were indeed the strangest race of animals which ever breathed the breath of life. Their actions daily exhibited the extensive domain the evil spirit had over them, and their history is one which should exert some influence over the larger species of nut-cracking animals called man. All were born into the world equal, yet became unequal; all inherited in common the same forest; all had the same privilege guaranteed them by Nature at their birth, to enjoy the bounties which she bestowed spontaneously. They plucked the nuts, and ate them at pleasure; they sucked the juice of the lemon and chattered noisily and merrily among the green boughs.

Gradually some became more cunning than the rest; desiring to live without the trouble of climbing the trees, they planned the means by which to induce others to give them of their food. They declared that dreams had been dreamed by them in the night when deep sleep falleth upon monkeys. They repeated these dreams in their own language to each other, and then cunningly interpreted them, and they were accounted wise. The dreams multiplied, and the interpreters too, and those who received their interpretations paid them homage and brought them food. Marvels increased, and nuts, melons, and oranges poured into the laps of the learned monkeys, and they looked demure and made sorry faces, and some of the race were alarmed; but the greater number of figs brought them the less they

growled; and they said, as only monkeys can say it, "We are not avaricious, beloved brethren; we care for none of these things, but we will give them to the old pugs, who cannot climb, and the sickly monkeys whom we love. Bring us all you can; they'll very soon rot or grow mouldy, and be of no use to you; but give us one melon in every ten and we will give them to the weak, the maimed; and a hundred times as many will rain out of the clouds one fine day into your precious jaws, if you will but open them wide enough. There is a great big monkey upstairs, sitting in the clouds, and he has his eye upon you; and oh! brethren mind the whisk of his long supermonkey tail. An old monkey of our tribe saw it once; it had three ends, and only one top, and the stump was like three, and the ends were one; and this great monkey had a cub, which never was born, and it was as old as its dam, and its dam was its sire, and its sire was itself. He came down to this forest, and some wretched unbelieving monkeys made him so wild he grinned and chattered and bit his tail till he squeaked; then grew so angry that he killed himself to be satisfied. But beloved brethren, he didn't die—he only—" And the learned monkey cracked a nut; the other monkeys chattered.

"Believe this," said the cunning monkey; "and bring us melons, then the great monkey will keep you from dying after you are dead; and you'll live in a great forest, where the melons are always ripe, and nuts grow upon the trees, ready cracked. But Oh! wretched pugs, if you doubt all this, a devil of a monkey will run away with you in a big sack and pitch you into a hell of a place, where you'll tumble, and tumble, and tumble, without a bough to catch hold of, and never get to the bottom."

Whereupon the wise monkey was nearly buried in nuts, figs, and other nice things.

Then the wise and cunning monkeys rolled their eyes and looked up at the clouds and groaned; and all the other monkeys looked up; but while they looked above, a change was wrought below; all the figs and all the nuts were gone, even those they had saved for themselves; and the cunning monkeys were prostrated unconcerned with their faces in the dust, chattering—"Blessed be Jocko! he does as he likes."  
—Attributed to Chas. Southwell.

## GOOD YOUNG MEN.

An Exeter Hall-ish young man,  
A don't think at all-ish young man,  
A demure looking sheep-ish  
And quite half a sleep-ish  
Booked through for Heaven young man.

A Shaftesbury-petted young man,  
A dreadful sin-fretted young man,  
A Samuel Morley-ish  
Feel-rather-poorly-ish  
Down in the mouth young man.

A Besant molesting young man,  
A Bradlaugh detesting young man,  
An Atheist hating  
And out-door debating  
Book of quotation young man.



A Foote on the brain young man,  
 A talk in one strain young man,  
 A Christian Defences  
 Heap of pretences  
 Clerkenwell Green young man.

A Sunday School teaching young man,  
 An occasional preaching young man,  
 A soft-soapy tea-fighting  
 Plausible backbiting  
 Loaf round the girls young man.

A "come to Christ, sister" young man,  
 A next Sunday kissed her young man,  
 A religion and flummery  
 Sly Brigham Young-ery  
 Half-crown a week young man.

BROWN'S STORY;

OR,

The Dying Infidel.

[THE following story may or may not be true. It comes from a very old friend of mine, who claims a knowledge of all the facts. He states that he is well acquainted with the clergyman who received Brown's confession, and who was so struck by it that he wrote out as much of it as he could remember immediately after the interview. From these written recollections, and some notes and correspondence which fell into his hands during his inquiries into the case, my friend composed this narrative, which he says is a faithful redaction of the original documents. At the same time I must candidly inform the reader that my friend is of a dreamy turn of mind and somewhat prone to hallucination. Having no time at present to test his statements, I therefore hold my judgment in suspense as to the truth of this pathetic story. Yet I confess that it looks true, and reads like a narrative of facts.—G. W. FOOTE.]

SIT down, sir. Fortunately there is one chair in this wretched room. I am sorry, however, the place is so cold, for my story is a long one, and I may not be able to tell it quickly. But you wished to hear it, and this is the only place I shall ever speak in again.

You know that I am not fond of gentlemen of your cloth. Their garb is the sign of all I hate. But you are at least kind, and a man's heart seems to beat beneath your cassock. Had you been different my lips would have remained sealed. Even now I have no desire to unseal them, and I merely tell you my story to gratify your wish, and so make the only possible return for your well-meant but mistaken kindness. When I have finished you will understand my hatred of your creed, and why my only regret in dying is that I cannot do it any further injury, or watch any longer its slow perishing from the world's neglect and scorn.

You must pardon my strong language. I am speaking sincerely, as I mean to do throughout. You had better prepare yourself to hear still more unpleasant words, or acquit me of my promise and leave me at once. If you are the man I take you to be at bottom, you will understand that frankness is the best compliment. Remember the fine sentence of Mark Antony's—

"Who tells me true, though in his tale lie death,  
 I hear him as he flattered."

By the way (and you must also pardon my digressions) what a mind Shakespeare had! What marvellous powers of observation, as well as of imagination and intellect! He seems to have been before one in every experience of life. Talk about inspiration! If ever man was inspired, he was. I have read your Bible carefully enough, and I allow that it shows some knowledge of the human heart, and that, especially in the Old Testament, it contains some grand poetry. But how limited it all is compared with the universality of our supreme poet. If the English speaking nations want a Bible, let them leave the old one to the Jews and take their own Shakespeare instead.—But let me return.

I was born in the South, far from this bleak northern town where it is my lot to die. Although I left my native place at an early age I still vividly remember it. A sweet little cove nestling at the foot of two chalk hills, sheltered from north and east winds, and only open to the west and south; the home of yachts and fishing boats, which found there a perfect safety from the fiercest storms; for the rocky gateway to the sea was narrow, and broke the force of the strongest waves. Inside the small craft only rocked merrily, even when the breakers roared outside, and the white spray whirled nearly to the hilltops. The high down stretched away nearly a mile and then met some larger hills, beyond which lay the loveliest lowlands, frequent in homestead, and in the autumn a paradise of orchard and corn. I see it all now clear as a picture, Dear old home! How we yearn backward to the days of childhood, when hope was as fresh as the

spring grass and life as fair as its sky! How vividly the scenes of youth recur to us in after years, though the memory of later experience is often vague or blurred! As a true poet writes (I am fond of the poets, you know)—

"Life all past  
 Is like the sky when the sun sets in it,  
 Clearest where furthest off."

About half a mile from the little sharp-shelving beach, at the very end of the village which wound along the road between the hills, stood the cottage where I was born. Perhaps it deserved another name, but I know not how else to describe it. It contained six rooms, three on each floor, besides an outhouse; and it stood in a pretty large garden. I remember the fine apple trees, the rose bushes, the flower beds, and above all the smooth grass-plot where I learnt to walk, and where I afterwards played with little cousin Alice. She was the only child of my mother's favorite sister. Her father had been drowned at sea only a few months before her birth, and his poor young widow was so shocked by the news that she never rallied from her confinement. I too was an only child, and as my mother adopted Alice at such a tender age, we grew up like brother and sister. She was a dear little creature, with the sweetest blue eyes and pale golden hair; rather delicate, as might be expected, and gentle and timid as a fawn. Yet to me she showed the fearlessness born of perfect trust. My boy's strength was ever at her service, and with her hand in mine she would have walked unflinchingly to the world's end. Sweet Alice! Too frail and guileless for this rough world. Poor victim of its brutality and the lust of a pious knave, thou hast long found the inviolable shelter of death, and the violet I plucked from thy grave is the emblem of thy purity and peace.

There was a strong family likeness between Alice and my mother. Their eyes and hair were of the same color, and their features bore a marked resemblance. But there was more firmness in my mother's composition. She was a duteous housewife, a noble companion to her husband, and a tender mother to Alice and me. Her tastes were all refined. She was well-read, and I have seen some drawings from her hand, which showed a lack of training but considerable delicacy and grace. Music, however, was her passion. I can recall the feeling with which, as a child, I watched her fingers glide over the keys, and listened to the notes as they flowed from her skilful touch; now in a soft stream which reminded me of the birds and flowers and sunlight sea, then in a stronger current which awoke my memory of the boats crowding in from a rising gale and the hurry of feet to the shore, and anon in a fierce flood which roused my remembrance of the furious waves storming the bar, and the mad roaring of the wind between the hills.

My father was steward to an old asthmatical squire who lived in the South of France. The estate was a small one, and the agent's salary was therefore limited; but it was enough to keep us in comfort, and to allow of a little saving besides. Although a fine handsome man with a singularly frank bearing, strictly honorable, and well educated, my father was in ill odor with the respectability of the district. I often noticed the fact, and as I grew older I found out the explanation. He had the reputation of being a sceptic. It was said that he did not believe in the Bible, or even in the Devil; and this latter piece of infidelity seemed to shock the neighbors more than anything else. They could have overlooked a good deal, but that was beyond forgiveness. Yet I dare say their dislike would have yielded at last to my father's sterling character, if the parson had not stimulated their bigotry whenever it appeared to languish. He took good care that his parishioners should never forget the injunction to "hold no fellowship with unbelievers." He even tried to get my father dismissed from his stewardship, but the old squire, besides having a real liking for him, had himself become a trifle infected with heresy during his residence abroad; so the man of God failed in his philanthropic scheme.

I cannot say that my father ever tried to imbue me with his scepticism. He did better. He educated me himself and trained me to think. I read plenty of good books, but your Bible was not one of them. My father's object was that I should hear as little as possible, for or against Religion, until I was able to judge for myself. From the bottom of my heart I thank him for this.

Well, my life passed happily year by year until I was fourteen, when I experienced my first great sorrow. My mother died, and we followed her coffin with heavy footsteps to the grave. Dear mother! I see her face now as she lay in the coffin, stone still and stone cold, but with a soft smile on the beautiful white face. Ah, what a treasure is a mother's love! There is nought like it on earth; no selfish passion mingles with it; it is pure and steadfast as a star. I have often thought that Catholicism shows more of human nature than your cold Protestantism, in neglecting the severities of faith, and turning with fondness to the holy mother bending over the divine child.

My mother's death told heavily on my father. He had gone so little into any society that she had been all in all to him. He never seemed quite the same man after the loss of his devoted wife. It was like wrenching away one half of a vital thing and leaving the other to drag out a maimed life alone. You may ask what virtue there was in his sceptical philosophy if it afforded him no consolation in his sorrow. I simply reply that all such



consolation is imaginary. It is idle mockery to talk of assuaging a great grief with words. Religion is as impotent as philosophy in our direst need, and all the most eloquent and plausible fictions fade before the stern reality of death.

Two years later the old squire died too. His death made a great change in our circumstances. A nephew inherited the estate. He was a pious young man, well known in the amateur religious circles of London. Besides having no taste for country life, he was at that time assiduously courting a rich widow, whose munificent gifts to religious societies were the talk of the town. He therefore preferred to draw his rents without residing on the estate, and it is probable that my father would have continued in his old post, if the meddling parson had not set the pious heir against him. The man of God made an express visit to London to compass his amiable desire. He returned home with a beaming face, and soon afterwards my father was informed that his services would no longer be required.

We bade adieu to our dear old home and went to a southern town nearly a hundred miles away, where my father obtained a small house-agency. I was then nearly seventeen, and being resolved to earn my own living in some way, I took a clerkship at a moderate salary. Alice was our housekeeper. She was then sixteen. Her figure was tall, slim and graceful. Budding womanhood had deepened her sweet blue eyes, but the pale gold of her hair was unchanged, although its soft masses, when unconfined, reached down to her slender waist.

We had not been long in our new abode before Alice made the acquaintance of some girls of her own age. She was naturally much absorbed in these friendships. A new life seemed revealing itself to her inexperience. Every week brought some fresh delight, and we were pleased to witness her sudden enthusiasm. My father loved her as a daughter and I as a sister. We had grown up so together that I should have regarded any other feeling as a sacrilege.

Two of Alice's girl friends became her especial favorites. They attended a High Church near their home, and she was induced to go with them. Gradually the fine music, the gaudy ritual, and the affected mysticism, seized on her impressionable nature. Father saw this with ill-concealed alarm; but his principles forbade him to use any restraint. He explained his objections and then left her free. At first she yielded to his remonstrance, but the fascination grew upon her again, and she returned to the fatal church.

The vicar was a tall dark man of forty. Many called him handsome, especially the women. And he would have been really so if nature had endowed him with more brains. His brow was low, and the weight of his head lay all behind. His lips were coarse and sensual, but the ladies declared them fine, as they were always red with health. He was almost incapable of preaching a tolerable sermon; yet, being an adept in the safe imitation of Romish rites, he managed to draw a large congregation, in which of course the fair sex preponderated immensely. He called himself a "priest," and introduced the confessional. Young ladies, of the most blameless character, suddenly found they had many sins to confess. Men did not confide in him, and I suppose the sins of elderly ladies were not sufficiently interesting for encouragement.

Alice became one of his devotees. With her, as with others, he made the confessional an instrument of spiritual debauchery. Her unsuspecting innocence made her an easy victim. The priest was too holy to suggest anything wrong; she was flattered by his attention; and his subtle questions seemed to echo the voice of nature. Why should I dwell on all these things? Alice was undone.

What a moment it was when I first suspected the fact! A thousand emotions tore me at once. I resolved to say nothing to my father, but to watch. One night I waited until all had left the church. At least it seemed so; but I knew that Alice was still inside. Instinct led me to the private door behind. By-and-by Alice came out. As she paused in the doorway I saw a man's lips pressed to hers. It was the "priest."

Did I tell you that the wretch was a husband and a father? You may imagine my feelings. I was half-mad with wrath, but I kept quiet. I watched Alice pass out of sight, and then I waited—for him.

As he stepped out and closed the door I confronted him. My passion poured forth in a torrent of words. He listened calm and careless. When I had finished, he blandly defied me. He asked who would believe my story if I told it; and for the rest he denied that there was anything serious between Alice and himself. I expressed disbelief, but he protested that he spoke the truth. Doubting, yet anxious to believe, I left him, and walked home.

What was to be done? That question burned within me all night. My father's weak health made it impolitic to tell him. Speaking to Alice might only alarm her; and how could I probe her as to all that had happened? Would it not be best, I thought, to trust to the priest's fear of consequences? Would he not cease his pollution now he was observed? And might it not be true that matters had not gone so far as I suspected?

Would I had spoken out at once! Alice might not have been saved, but the profligate would have been exposed and punished; whereas he now lifts his head proudly, knowing that the secret of his crime is buried for ever in his victim's grave. Alas! I was

too young and ill-versed in the world's ways to act wisely then. I did my best and failed.

Weeks went by, and Alice grew sad and melancholy. One day I thought I would keep silent no longer but speak out. When I returned from the office to tea she was not in. I waited hour after hour, but she did not come. At last father returned from a day's journey. I told him of Alice's absence and went to look for her. All my inquiries were fruitless; no one had seen her. At last I resolved to visit the priest. He denied having seen her either, and with such an air of truth that I could not doubt him. But the wretch lied. I subsequently learned that, as the poor girl could not much longer hide her shame, he had persuaded her to screen him by flight.

Next day we received a letter from her, saying that something she could not explain had happened, that she could not give us her address yet, but that she was quite well, and we were not to be anxious. Then I was obliged to tell my father all. With a fierce oath, the first I had ever heard from his lips, he dashed out of the house. I followed him. He went straight to the priest's; but the lying knave coolly denied all knowledge of the girl's whereabouts, and when we threatened him he simply defied us.

I will not try to picture our despair. Father was utterly prostrated, but I longed for action. Soon I obtained a clue; Alice had taken a ticket for London. With a portion of father's small savings I set off in quest of her.

How the vastness of the mighty city oppressed my spirit! When I saw its myriad streets, its ceaseless traffic, and its streaming crowds, my task seemed hopeless, and my heart sank. But I soon recovered and began the search. I set detectives to watch, and I incessantly walked about myself, scanning the multitude of faces, and hurrying after distant figures that resembled her's.

Weeks elapsed, and still no tidings of Alice. At last I was obliged to relinquish the search and return home, for my father was dangerously ill. His health had for some time been enfeebled, and this dreadful blow was too heavy for his strength. I nursed him tenderly, but he slowly sank away. Three months after Alice fled from home, he expired in my arms. He was patient and gentle to the last, and he died with a conscious serenity. He gazed at me calmly before the end; a soft smile played over his fine features; he whispered my name lovingly; then the light gradually faded from his eyes, and vanished softly, like twilight deepening into night.

I was now alone in the world. Only a few pounds of my father's savings were left, and with these I journeyed to London, where I meant to earn my living, and if possible to find Alice. My means were soon exhausted, but I obtained a situation before I was reduced to want.

Prematurely saddened, I lived almost entirely to myself. I read much during the first three months. Many sceptical works fell into my hands and were eagerly devoured. They made me decisively a Freethinker. I read what was written on the other side, but I found it weak and apologetic; and since then I have never had a doubt of the falsity of your creed.

After this I was seized by a wild unrest. My solitary room became quite hateful, and when I tried to read the letters danced before my eyes, or I traversed page after page without remembering a word. The spirit drove me forth into the wilderness of streets. I walked mile after mile and hour after hour in the darkness. Sometimes I lost all sense of locality and even of time. The streets stretched out into infinity, and the lamps were as stars of immeasurable night.

One evening as I turned out of a bye-street on to the Embankment, a woman timidly extended her hand soliciting an alms. There was nothing unusual in the circumstance, and after dropping a small coin into her hand I was about to pass on. But at that moment the light of a passing cab flashed full on her face. I started forward with a loud cry—"Alice! Alice!"—and the next moment she was in my arms. As she drooped there, a lifeless thing, I could feel how wasted was her form, and I saw that her face was white and pinched like that of a corpse.

I will draw a veil over the scene. Three weeks later she found the peace of death. Months of misery had done their work only too well, and recovery was impossible. Before she died I learnt from her poor pale lips the history of her fate. The vile priest had implored her to screen him by flight. He had promised to send her money for her support, but he never did. She was ashamed to come or send to us; so she got some sewing work and earned a little bread. Her baby was fortunately still-born. Utterly broken down in health, she was at last reduced to beggary in the streets.

Tell me! Had your God no thunder-bolt left in the quiver of his vengeance to hurl at the priestly seducer? Why talk of divine justice, when the wrong-doer triumphs and the victim carries a bleeding heart? The irony is too grim. But enough of this carrion priest. She forgave him, and told me to leave him to his own thoughts. Sweet Alice! Her mind was untainted, and she was pure and loving to the last.

I told you that I had become a thorough Freethinker. Well, that fact was known in the office, and not long after Alice's death it reached the ears of my employer. He was a very good man in his way, kind, and charitable; but he was a religious bigot, and his sympathies were rigorously bounded by his creed. He called me



into his private room, told me what he had heard, and said that infidel books and papers had been seen in my possession. He believed infidelity, as he called it, to be an infectious disease; and unless I got cured of it I should have to leave. In fact, he had determined that every person in his employ must be a member of some Christian body. As I could not comply with his will, I received notice there and then. But this was not all, nor even the worst; for when I sought another situation I found I was dogged by his malice. For weeks I was half-starved, my means having been exhausted by the expenses of Alice's sickness and burial. Out of this misery I was rescued by an old gentleman whom I protected from thieves one night near my lodgings. He satisfied himself as to the truth of my story, and being a city merchant himself, he gave me a clerkship in his own establishment. The salary was good, and I was promoted in less than six months.

My prospects were now brighter, and although bitter memories kept me grave and sad, I began to feel more interest in life. I read plenty of English and French literature, and commenced to learn German. But my principal delight was in music, for which I inherited my mother's passion. I had little technical knowledge of the art, but I was extremely sensitive to its influence. I floated away on the tide of harmony, oblivious to all things, while imagination wove its many-hued and many-textured dreams.

Four years passed away thus, and then came the crowning joy and the crowning calamity of my life. I was one night at a concert in a famous West-end hall, listening breathlessly to a violin solo by a great Hungarian player, who more than any other artist I ever heard realised that majestic line of Keats':—"The music yearning like a god in pain." Just when the rapture was at its keenest I chanced to look away from the player, and, as I did so, my gaze fell upon a strangely beautiful face. The dark dreamy eyes half-veiled by their long lashes; the finely pencilled arcs surmounting them; the broad brow shadowed with black wavy hair; the firm straight nose; the soft sweet mouth, and the thoughtful face; formed the loveliest picture that ever greeted my vision. I regarded it like one fascinated, while the music seemed a far-off sound. When the piece was finished the object of my attention stood up for a moment, and I saw that the figure was worthy of the face. It was that of a girl of nineteen or twenty, moderately tall, and supple though robust. Strength and grace were blended in every line.

Six months afterwards that beautiful creature was my wife. I will not weary you with a story of how we became acquainted. Love is cunning and suggested the means. Suffice it to say that she was almost as alone in the world as I. Her parents were dead, and she was earning a scanty and precarious livelihood as a teacher of music. Her only relative was an elder sister, who lived in Yorkshire.

My darling was as pure and good as she was lovely and accomplished, and I felt for her more than the adoration of a worshipper for his god. Three months of perfect bliss sped by, and then our peace was marred by the advent of her sister; a tall, angular, repellant woman of six-and-twenty; shrill of tongue, and religious to the finger-tips. She had just left a situation as governess because the family were too worldly, and she threw herself on our hospitality until she could find another.

This venomous creature gradually poisoned my darling's mind. I could never learn the secret of her baneful influence, but I felt it like a haunting shadow. She occasionally took Clara to hear a favorite preacher of hers, a man of thunderous eloquence, who talked of nothing but sin, death, and hell. This went on in my absence, and I only learnt it when Clara began to look dejected and I questioned her as to the cause. I resolved to hear this Boanerges, whose preaching had induced my darling to fancy that she was full of sin. He was a thrilling speaker, and although I was proof against his eloquence, I could understand its effect on emotional minds not so fortified. When we returned home I pointed out the monstrous absurdity of the man's creed, and I noticed that my darling's face brightened as I spoke.

All would probably have been well if that accursed sister had gone, but she remained, and continued her work. Clara was then in a condition which made her doubly sensitive, and the evil grew so obvious that at last I interfered. I ordered her sister out of the house. But alas! it was too late. My poor darling's brain was completely turned. She felt she had seceded from good, she had incurred the hatred of God, she was a lost soul. The religious madness never turned her against me, but always against herself.

One night she was very restless. I pretended to sleep, and watched. She got out of bed and knelt in prayer. When she laid down again, she shook with suppressed sobs. I took her in my arms, and quieted her to sleep.

The next morning as I left for the office, she clung to me passionately, looked stedfastly into my eyes, and seemed loth to let me go. I kissed her into a faint smile, and then I left her. As I turned to look back I fancied there was a strange light in her dark eyes.

When I returned in the evening she was out. On the table there lay a note in her handwriting addressed to me. I shudder as I think of it. She said that she should never see me again; God had told her to leave me; she was a lost soul. I feared the worst at once. Her words could only have one meaning.

Oh, the horror of that night! The fruitless search, the wild hope suddenly rising and then dashed down, the frenzy of anguish, and the icy gloom of despair!

Two days after I looked on my darling's dead face. She had drowned her madness in the river, which has hidden many a misery in its dark depths.

Since then my life has been a burden, and I shall be glad to lay it down. If I thought there was a God, I would hurl at him my curse. But I have no such belief. Your creed is perishing, yet it still holds us through our women. But their emancipation has begun, and when it is completed your power will vanish. My memories are nearly all of the bitterest; my life has been frustrated, and I am now reduced to what you see; but I still nurse a gleam of hope. I shall pass away with the night, but my fellows after me will stand in the great dawn of a new day.

## A TALK WITH MEPHISTOPHELES.

"I called the Devil and he came

He is an agreeable, charming man,  
A man in the prime of life."—HEINE.

It was in my orthodox days; those days in which young men can see visions. As nearly as I can remember, my object was to ask him how he bore his manifold misfortunes—for in those days I cherished a Coleridgean system of thought in which Christianity figured as in very truth the salvation of the human race; and it seemed to my perspicacious juvenile intelligence that Mephisto, with his acute intellect, must have seen the other side held all the trumps, and that his great game was as good as played out.

My surprise at his *insouciance* was as great as Heine's at his agreeable presence. There were no marks of care on his brow. You would have said he looked confident of winning. But, secure in my conception of Christianity-with-the-latest-improvements, I was not to be put out of countenance in that fashion. I felt an agreeable sense of superiority to the personality of my childhood, when I felt towards Bunyan's Diabolus a mixture of respect and fear. I now knew that every age incarnated its own spirit of evil; and in my happy Coleridgean condition there was no question of inquiry as to whether my visitor were a personality or an abstraction. Was there not a Reason above the Understanding, and was not Truth essentially abstract?

"I presume I need not explain"—I began.

"Quite needless," was his genial interruption. "You were wondering how I could keep my head above water when everything was so clearly making for righteousness."

[He positively quoted Mr. Arnold—though he did not refer to "Something not ourselves." The entry in my diary is conclusive. I had at that early age commenced the practice of making a note of my conversations with notabilities. Hence it is that I can reproduce this memorable dialogue so accurately.]

"Well, as between men of the world, you know" (I was Goethean as well as Coleridgean, of course), "what can you have to say? The human race is clearly becoming possessed of a moral idea. It is making an end of slavery. It is resolved on systematising charity. It has grasped the idea of heredity; likewise that of progress. On all sides there is discernible a moral enthusiasm, commensurate with the enthusiasm of humanity."

"Just so," was his smiling reply. "Suppose we descend to particulars. It was always my forte, you know; and with your generous views of things you will want to see me at my best."

"Naturally," I replied. "I simply seek truth."

Before I could open the discussion he picked up from my table a report of the Society for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts.

"This, I suppose, is one of your posers?" he lightly inquired.

"Undoubtedly," I answered. "The Acts themselves are but a temporary aberration of the national Understanding; the higher Reason, which is truly moral, is bestirring itself as you see. Its triumph is certain. It is a beautiful illustration of—"

"You know some of these ladies?" he interrupted, pointing to a list of names.

"I do. One, as probably you are aware, is my godmother."

"She holds that the nation is simply playing pander to its soldiers by these Acts; and insists that it should treat them on Christian principles?"

"As I expected, you quite appreciate the situation. You see, a number of the opponents of the Acts are well-meaning Agnostics; but, as you know very well, the moral impetus of the age is purely Christian."

"Just so. Now, has it ever occurred to you to inquire why your godmother did not carry her morality further and protest against the nation's keeping a body of hired slayers, whose profession, from the point of view of a purely rational morality, is the most grossly immoral in existence?"

"Stuffy," I remarked sharply, "you are evading the question and becoming sophistical. I thought you had given up that sort of thing."

"My dear young friend, pray do not let us adopt the debating style of the Christian parlor. Tell me how you would make out that your godmother is not straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel."



"A soldier," I replied, "is as it were a function of the nation—a sort of beak or claw through which it puts out its destructive energy. He is to be regarded from the national point of view. Here the Understanding and the Reason are at one. Of course the glorification of the military profession in times of warlike excitement is an extravagance of the mere Understanding. His profession is honorable as the physician's is."

"He undertakes for so much a day," said Mephistopheles, musingly, "to make war on any nation without asking whether his country is in the right or the wrong."

"You are positively superficial," I observed.

"In the process of killing," he continued, "he becomes for the time a savage. He kills with an enjoyment of carnage. He is a wild beast."

"Abuse is not argument," I reminded him.

"The officer," went on the Evil One, "talks of the honor of a soldier. This honor is not held to be soiled by appearance in the Divorce Court. It is unaffected by the act of slaying any number of men with whom he has no earthly quarrel. It permits him to take the property of the men he kills. Where does he 'feel his honor grip' as our honorable Burns put it? It makes him pay his debts—except those to tradesmen; and positively forbids him to cheat at cards."

"I repeat," I said, "I regard the soldier as a national function. And what has all this to do with my godmother?"

"Well, I would put it this way," he went on. "Your godmother is willing to be one of the employers of this civilised assassin. Wouldn't it save a lot of trouble if the nation were to regard his intercourse with prostitutes as equally defensible with his undertaking to kill whomever he is told to?"

"Stuffy," I said sternly; "don't be ribald. This movement, as you know very well, is a spontaneous protest of pure natures. In this view it is most essentially Christian—purity being, as you have cause to know—"

He smiled.

"No scandal about the Virgin," I insisted. "It seems to me this conversation is not likely to be profitable to either of us. I thought you had grown superior to crude blasphemy."

"There was no such stuff in my thoughts," he protested. "But just let us look at this question of purity. You think there is a regenerative movement in that direction?"

"Undoubtedly. Look at Mrs. Stowe's book on Byron. By the way, now, what was really the truth in that business?"

"Would you have me reveal the secrets of the prison-house? But answer me, my young friend. You admire Mrs. Stowe—you have her autograph. What do you suppose she thinks when she sees her children reading the Bible? Does she reflect as to whether they take a proper view of the matrimonial relations of Cain and Abraham and Jacob?"

"This conversation," I replied, "must cease. Your views are hopelessly crude; you have no philosophy; you—"

"You forget—I have only an Understanding," he laughed.

"That is it," I returned. "And your latest instrument, Mr. Bradlaugh—"

"Oh, come, you know, that's quite too bad," he interposed. "I am the spirit that denies: he emphatically wants to affirm—"\*

Here he disappeared.

MACRIBUS.

### THE PRECIOUS BIBLE.

It must a revelation be, it tells  
So many things we could learn nowhere else.  
How that the world was made a week within,  
And eating fruit damned all of us with sin.  
How God inside a garden once did walk,  
A serpent spoke, an ass likewise did talk.  
How Mother Eve from Adam's rib was made,  
And twice the sun in its career was stayed.  
How Mrs. Lot into some salt was turned,  
For looking back to see how Sodom burned.  
It also tells how a just God did choose  
To be his favorite, some scurvy Jews.  
As cheating Jacob, Abraham who lied,  
The wise much-married Solomon, beside  
The murdering David, after God's own heart,  
And Moses, whom he showed his hinder part.  
For drunken Noah he gave proofs of care,  
And Samson, whose great strength was in his hair.  
Who tied three hundred foxes tail to tail.  
Jonah was safely housed inside a whale.  
Three men within a furnace were not fried;  
And lots of whopping miracles beside.  
Which if you don't believe you'll get damnation,  
Confess indeed it is a revelation.

LUCIANUS.

\* The closing remark, it will be seen, has an odd application to present circumstances. It of course had reference to some former public appearance of Mr. Bradlaugh in connection with the giving of evidence by Freethinkers in courts of law.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—The Land Flowing with Milk and Honey; Balaam's Ass; Noah's Ark; the River Jordan; the Red Sea; Joseph's Coat; the Ten Plagues; and the Devil.

HOLY GH—T.—If it is proved that you are the father of the child you no doubt will have to pay five shillings a week towards its support.

POOR OLD JOE.—When you see him in your house again kick him out. We should advise you to get a divorce; if not get our new magazine called *Progress*.

JOSEPH'S BROTHER.—No doubt you are correct in thinking that as Jesus was born in a stable, Mary must have gone to a lying-in-hospital.

ONE OF THE WISE MEN.—You cannot do better than get all our back numbers and have them bound for the youngster.

FORTY YEARS' SUBSCRIBER.—Glad to hear from you; we thought you had perished in the Deluge.

LONG-FACED CHRISTIAN.—Your Redeemer must have followed the occupation of a crossing-sweeper. You seem to forget the shortest verse in the Bible, where it says Jesus (s)wept.

GABRIEL.—Buy the child an ounce of Fote's Sugar Plums. Contents bills sent.

OLD TESTAMENT.—The Bible says God rested on the seventh day and was refreshed. Se—e has his-drops. It's a wonder he (h)allowed it.

JEREMIAH.—There is no reason to suppose that because Moses was hid in the bull-rushes that he was a cow-herd.

JONAH.—Try some of Thwait's Liver Pills; one is worth *it's weight* in gold.

HAPPY SAL.—It is absurd to think that the forty days Jesus fasted should be deducted from his age.

ARTHUR PLANTAGENET SMITH.—If you send us any more of your anonymous letters, be sure you write our name in full.

SIR H. TYLER.—We wish you a merry Christmas. We send you Defence Fund sheets. Thanks for jokes. We are always pleased to hear from you.

LITTLE MOSES.—(1) The Dean of Westminster does not allow ten minutes for discussion after his sermons. (2) There is no bell tolled at the Hall of Science—our followers don't require so much waking up.

JACOB.—Your father must have been very stupid to let you be apprenticed as a hot-cross bun-maker; you will be nearly always out of work. Join the Salvation Army at once.

RANDY PANDY.—Perhaps the Dogs' Home at Battersea will suit you. We will endeavor to get you a ticket of admission. The only drawback is that there is no cl plain attached to the Home.

LITTLE SOLDIER.—We have it on the best authority that the Duke of Cambridge will review the Salvation Army next Easter—D.V. and weather permitting. Well he ought to do something for his money.

SOLOMON.—Your love song is far too broad for publication. The verse "Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn whereof every one bear twins," is as doubtful in grammar as in taste. To compare your beloved's nose to "the tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus," is rather far-fetched.

C. H. SP—N, Mentone.—Your profane jokes are not up to our usual standard.

AN UNKNOWN CORRESPONDENT sends us a queer production headed "The Revelation of Saint John the Divine." It apparently emanated from a lunatic asylum. We asked Lottie Fowler to call up the spirit of Daniel to interpret the meaning thereof, but Daniel gave it up. John himself couldn't come, being engaged as keeper of the beasts before the throne, which he dared not venture to leave for a single second; so we are obliged to follow Dan's lead.

W. BOOTH.—You have sent your appeal for cash to the wrong quarter.

C. NEW—GATE.—We really cannot insert your dolorous rubbish. Why don't you ask the Lord to send you the five hundred and have done with it. It's simply absurd to suppose we are going to ask the other party to pay up. Our prescription is—port wine and patience.

B—N DE W—S.—It isn't true that C. B. keeps a dummy Jew and stuffs mashed sausage in his mouth every Friday, and if you oppose him on that ground you are very much mistaken. Besides, you ought to know that London sausages are pretty innocent of pork.

S—T. P—L.—A trifle too thin. You are evidently suffering from that old sunstroke.

MOSES.—What! Do you really think we can open our columns to a fellow who broke all the Ten Commandments at once? By the way, what *was* it you really saw up the hill?

WHEN the Cape Town railway was being opened, a black man was observed looking on with open mouth. A bystander asked him what he thought of the train as it run along the line. The black man said, "I tink him Debble, run away with a row of houses."

"DOCTOR," said a London lawyer, who was lately examining a mine in Cornwall, to a clergyman, his friend, who stood at the top, "As you know all things from the surface to the centre, pray how far is it from this pit to that in the infernal regions?" "I cannot exactly ascertain the distance," replied the divine; "but let go your hold, and you'll be there in a minute."

DURING the time a concourse of people were assembled in the fields near Pancrass, to observe M. Garnerin's ascension in his balloon, an officious zealot for religion, raised on an eminence, attempted to preach to them, taking as his text those words from Scripture, "What come ye to see?" An honest tar immediately exclaimed, "Why, d—n your eyes, the balloon to be sure



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*"Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when THEY arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."—ISAIAH xxxvii., 36.*

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHERN,—Presumptuous rationalists wresting the inspired word of God to their own destruction, may see no miracle in the event thus recorded for our edification and instruction. In spite of the plain evidence of language, and the ordinary rules of grammar, they will foolishly argue that it was when somebody else, altogether unmentioned in Holy Writ, arose early in the morning, the Assyrians were all dead corpses. But, brethren, those who received with unquestioning faith the oracles of God, those who believe that the Holy Ghost means what he writes, will find no difficulty in believing that it was the Assyrians who arose early in the morning and found themselves dead corpses. Such an event would be strange, indeed, in human history, but not in divine history; such occurrences were only Jehovah's peculiar methods of manifesting his glory. To the unholy scoffer it may seem strange that Jesus being God should pray to Himself and that He should put Himself to death to satisfy Himself. But we know that the carnal mind is at enmity with God, who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. The miracle recorded in our text is not a whit more miraculous than, when the Incarnate God died, the graves were open and bodies of the saints arose and went into the holy city and were never more seen or heard of by either Jews or Christians. Nor is it more curious than the reanimation and re-extermination of the Amalekites, whom the Lord ordered Moses to blot out the remembrance of, and afterwards (Deuteronomy xxv., 19) told Saul "to go and smite and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Sam. xv., 3). We read in verse 8, that Saul took Agag alive and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. Agag was hewn to pieces by the prophet Samuel, yet David, as we read in 1 Sam. xxvii., 8, had to go to war with these Amalekites afterwards. He "saved neither man nor woman alive" (v. i.). These same Amalekites (chap. xxxv., 1) again invaded the south, but "they slew not any, neither great nor small," but carried away the chosen people of God. These same Amalekites were again smitten in the days of Hezekiah (1 Chron. iv., 43) "because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exodus xvii., 14). Verily, verily, his ways are not our ways. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!

Nor need the pious believer be astonished at the number of Assyrians who were slain. When the men of Judah went against the men of Israel they slew five-hundred-thousand at one time (2 Chron. xiii., 17). The Lord slew fifty thousand and three-score, and ten men of the village of Bethshemesh for looking into his divinely constructed travelling trunk (1 Sam. vi., 19). He and his chosen people, brethren, always did things on a big scale. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Always remember this brethren, lest peradventure it be said of you, as of the Assyrians, "and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses."

*"And the Lord shall bring thee unto Egypt again with ships by the way whereof I spake unto thee. Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bond-women, and no man shall buy you."—DEUT. xxviii., 68.*

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHERN.—In this blessed passage of the Divine Word we gather two ideas which could only come by inspired revelation. In the first place, the Jews were to be brought back to Egypt and yet were not to see it again. In the second place they were to be sold and yet no one should buy them. We may therefore conclude that they were to be literally blinded and figuratively sold. All difficulties in the Bible, my beloved brethren, may be easily solved by understanding them to be either literal or figurative,

or something else. The Jews were often figuratively sold by God. They thought themselves so when he kept them on manna for forty years; and the man after God's own heart cries out in the twelfth verse of Psalms xliv., "Thou sellest thy people for nought and dost not increase thy wealth by their price," which is easily understood if no one bought them. And the Lord himself asks in the first verse of Isaiah, chap. l. (turn up your Bibles brethren), "Which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" Evidently this transaction is not the same as that referred to in Joel iii., 8, where the Lord says "I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far-off; for the Lord hath spoken it." We are all, brethren, even as the Jews, slaves of the Lord, some created to honor, some to dishonor; as it is written Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth. Oh brethren, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Let us pray.  
J. GRIMES.

THE DEVIL IS DEAD.

Sigh priests, cry aloud, hang you pulpits with black;  
Let sorrow bow down every head:  
The good friend who bore all your sins on his back—  
Your best friend, the Devil, is dead.

Your Church is a corpse; you are guarding its tomb;  
The soul of your system has fled.  
That death-knell is tolling your terrible doom:  
It tells us the Devil is dead.

'Twas knowledge gave Satan a terrible blow;  
Poor fellow! he took to his bed.  
Alas! idle priests, that such things should be so—  
Your master, the Devil, is dead.

You're bid to the funeral, ministers all;  
We've dug the old gentleman's bed:  
Your black coats will make a most excellent pall  
To cover your friend who is dead.

Ay! lower him mournfully into the grave,  
Let showers of tear-drops be shed;  
Your business is gone; there are no souls to save—  
Their tempter, the Devil, is dead.

Woe comes upon woe: you can ne'er get your dues—  
Hell's open—the damned souls have fled;  
They took to their heels when they heard the good news:  
Their jailer, the Devil is dead.

Your preachings henceforth will be needed no more;  
Revivals are knocked on the head;  
The orthodox vessel lies stranded on shore;  
Her captain, the Devil, is dead.

[WM. DENTON, *Radical Rhymes.*]

A MIDSUMMER DAY'S DREAM.

ONE pleasant day last summer I strolled into the cemetery at Lone Mountain, San Francisco, and finding a shady nook in respectable proximity to a costly family vault, sat down and began to ponder upon the probable hereafter of those slumbering about me. From this my thoughts strayed to the Day of Resurrection, and the lively time which might be expected in that vicinity when Gabriel should give the signal for a general getting up to breakfast. The subject was somewhat too much for me, so I betook myself to an opiate I had in the tail-pocket of my coat, and soon went to sleep. I knew not how long I lay thus, but as I was suddenly conscious of some one kicking me, and, strangling a magnificent snore, I sat up. Gabriel stood at my side, and was just lifting his boot for another admonition, but at my appealing look he relented, and hitting me with his bugle, told me to "get out of that." I got up and strode contemptuously away, rubbing my eyes. I observed that the cemetery had increased somewhat in population since I had lain down, and now extended over the entire peninsula. A gang of stout demons, apparently Chinese, were advancing in line among the graves, each armed with a corkscrew seven feet long. These they wormed into each grave, and drawing forth the occupant, stood him on his feet, extracted the screw by a dexterous turn of the wrist, and proceeded silently to the next. I observed that about one grave in ten thousand was already vacant before they came to it, and while seeking for an explanation, there suddenly popped into my head the words, "and the dead in Christ shall rise first." I afterwards learned that this admirable arrangement was adopted to prevent fighting.

I seated myself comfortably upon an old rusty metallic coffin, and took observations. It was really delicious to see those



fellows snaked out, and I was surprised to see that whenever a parson was drawn forth, the screw had entered his body to a totally unnecessary depth, and the final twitch of extracting the steel was unjustifiably staggering. At such times the solemn countenances of the resurrectors relaxed an instant into something like a smile. There were some half-dozen who, as soon as they were drawn out, writhed about, and digging their fingers into the soil, endeavored to take the entire cemetery along with them. They brought away whole handfuls of earth and jammed it into their pockets. These, I afterwards learned, had been railway projectors, and their graves had been placed in a circle, or "ring."

While I was wondering at these things, my attention was attracted to a particularly active old fellow, with nothing remarkable in his appearance, who was going about among the resurrected with a big book under his arm, and stopping before each one. He seemed to have come from a long distance, and his clothes were covered with dust, which emitted a strong smell, like that of your last match as it expires in gloom. He would first approach a rejuvenated corpse and ask him his age at death. Upon receiving a reply, he marked down a long number in a column of his book headed "years." I noticed the number was large in proportion to the age given. He would then inquire the date of arrival in California, and those who came early caught a sweet thing in figures. Some who came in '49 got so many numerals opposite their names that there was not room for them on the page. The next question was with regard to occupation, and the brokers and editors suffered most. Then various other questions were put with regard to politics, etc. The final question was this: "Did you ever, during life, belong to the Methodist Church?" If this was answered in the affirmative, the judge took a piece of charcoal and marked on the back of the unhappy wight, "Furnace No. 697,000—hot."

The dapper old gentleman soon came up to where I was sitting, and smiled. "What's your age, sir?" "Forty-seven." Down went 459,000,000 years; the old gentleman merely smiling and muttering, "New trial at the end of that time." Then without looking up from his book: "How long in California?" "Six weeks." This staggered him, and he said, "My friend you don't belong in this crowd, do you?" I nodded sorrowfully, and he added only 3,000,000 years. "What's your occupation?" "Bohemian." (593,872,951,347 and six months). What did you die of?" "Starvation." He crossed out one month. "What paper did your talent adorn?" "*The News Letter!*" You ought to have seen that particularly active old gentleman take leave!—*Dod Grile.*

### RIB TICKLERS.

ADAM fell for an apple. We, his descendants, not unfrequently come to grief on a piece of orange peel.

THE serpent left his trail in the garden of Eden, but the general belief is that Eve's dress-pattern was too scanty to enable her to do likewise.

"Ah, my dear," said a loving wife to her husband, "I believe mine will be the fate of Abel." "How so, my love?" "Abel was killed with a club, and a club will kill me if you continue to go out every night.

"I BRING you a grain of comfort, come see,"  
The Bible Reader said.

He answered, "Oh, spell your grain with a D,  
And I'm on with you for a spread."

It is related of a certain clergyman, who was noted for his long sermons with many divisions, that one day when he was advancing among the teens, he reached at length a kind of resting-place in his discourse, when, pausing to take breath, and asking the question—"And what shall I say more?" A voice from the congregation earnestly responded—"Say amen."

A DARKEY minister was relating miracles to his brethren. They appeared rather dubious and got excited. "See here, there were five thousand loaves and two thousand fishes and five people to eat 'em, and they ate 'em all up, every blessed scrap." "Well, and where's the miracle in that?" asked a doubtful auditor. "Why, the miracle is that they didn't all bust."

Two colored men took refuge under a tree in a violent thunder-storm. "Julius, can you pray?" "No Sam," was the reply; "nebber prayed in my life." "Well, can't you sing a hymn?" Just then the lightning struck a tree near by, shivering it, when the first speaker exclaimed—"See heah, honey, sumfin' 'ligious has got to be done, an' dat mighty suddin', too; s'pose you pass around de hat."

A "HARD CASE" was interrogated the other Sunday by a friend who had just seen him at church, but whom he now found swallowing a glass of brandy and water at a public bar-room. "I saw you in church this morning listening to a discourse upon righteousness and temperance. How comes it that I now see you here drinking?" "I always thirst after righteousness!" was the reply.

"Yes," said happy Eliza, "look at me and my 'usband; we are saved; a short time ago we was drunkards—'orrible, beastly

drunkards. We was starvin'; we was without clothes. I had only one chemise to my back. But I am saved, and now I has two chemises, not to mention other articles. Has I not, captain?" And her captain, with grace and salvation on every feature replied, "Missus, you 'as."

The following conversation took place during a sermon preached by the Rev. L. Owen, at Sutton Scotney, a short time since:—*Rev. L. O.* (expounding text): Now I may remark that commentators do not agree with me. *Parishioner* (partially deaf, to wife): What did 'e say, Martha? *Martha*: Common tators didn't agree wi' un. *Parishioner* (with an eye to business): Then I'll take 'un up a sample of they Red Skin Flour Balls. They'll suit 'un.

A FEW sailors had managed to save themselves from a watery grave, and also a clergyman, who had struggled terribly for his life. One of the sailors remarked, "I wonder what has become of our poor mates." "Ah, my friend," said the parson, "they have gone to a better world." "Better world be damned," replied Jack; "you took deuced good care to keep out of it."

"I HATE to see a woman with rings in her ears," exclaimed a Bible-banger, they ain't natural. If it was intended for a woman to wear them, she would have been born with holes in her ears. The first woman didn't wear ear-rings, I'll be bound." "No," drily remarked a sceptic in the corner; "nor anything else." The discussion was brought to an abrupt close, and the Bible-banger adjourned without delay.

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