

493

CHRISTMAS NUMBER

OF

THE FREETHINKER.

REGISTERED FOR]

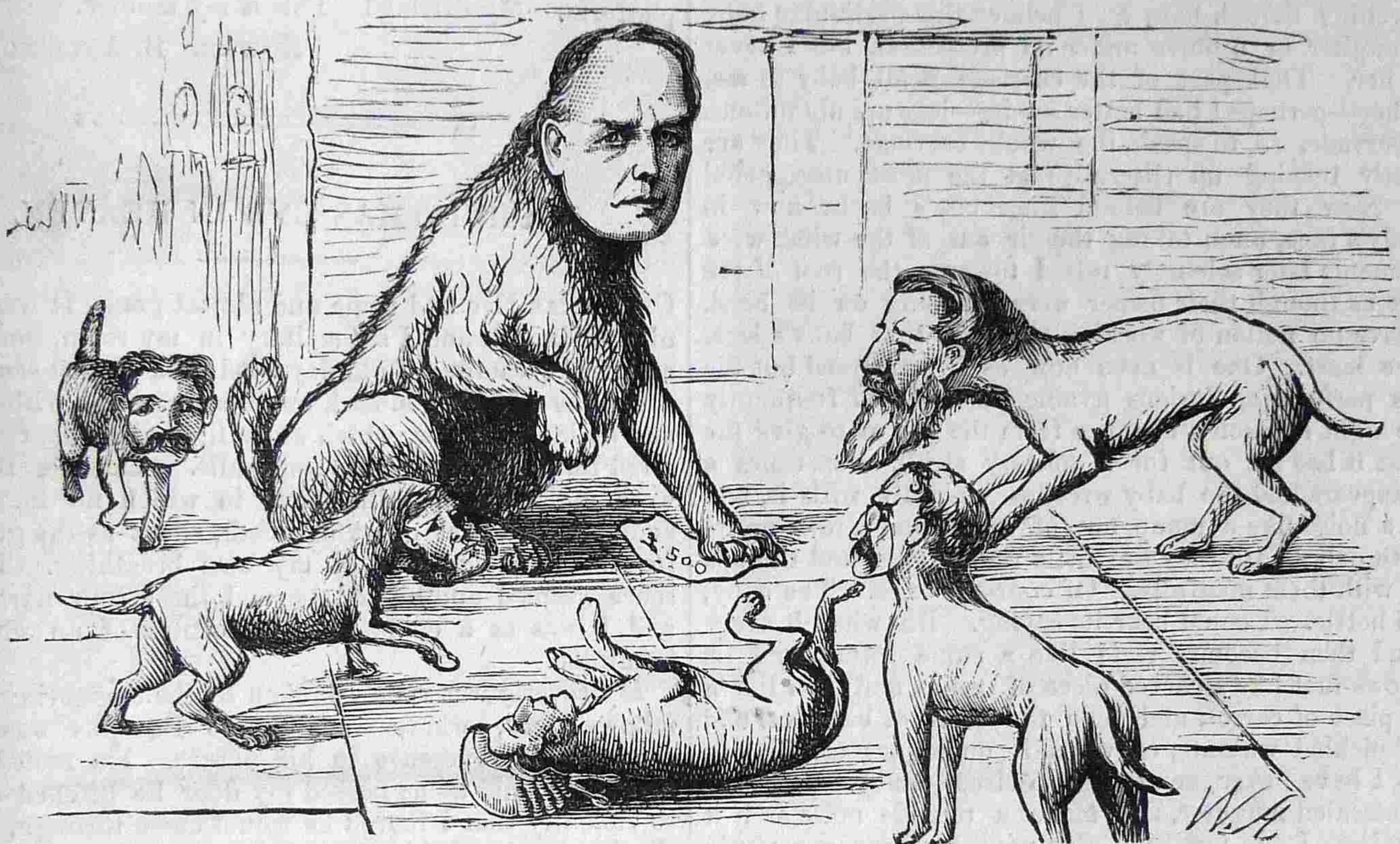
EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE 2d.

CHRISTMAS, 1881.

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BRADLAUGH'S SEAT; OR, DON'T THEY WISH THEY MAY GET IT!

A YOUNG FREETHINKER AT CHRISTMAS-TIDE.

DECEMBER 24TH, 1800 and something. To-morrow is, therefore, as a careful arithmetical calculation will show you, Christmas Day. Hurra! I wish you all a happy Christmas, and, as I before remarked, Hurra! I'm off to-day. I'm on my way off now, I am. This handsome cab, with the high-stepping horse—my annual hansom—I always indulge in one at Christmas—is carrying me towards—where do you think? Towards the station? Yes; but somewhere else. Towards the express train? Yes; but somewhere else. Towards home! There! I can keep it in no longer. I am going home.

Every year as Christmas comes on I grow homesick. So I cure myself homœopathically by a dose of home. I'm on my way to the medicine-bottle now.

What do you think I'm taking home for my mother and father and them all? Try and guess. Is it something nice? Yes, very nice. Is it something pretty? Yes, ha! ha! very pretty. Is it something good to eat? Oh no, no, nothing good to eat. Is it something expensive? Yes, ha! ha! it's something very dear. Is it alive? Yes, it's alive. An animal? Yes, a very troublesome animal; ha, ha, ha! No, it's not a dog, nor a cat, nor a horse, nor a bird, nor a white mouse, nor a snake, nor an elephant, nor a hippopotamus. No, no, not one of them. It's a wife. That's what it is. Ha, ha, ha!

Here she is nestling warmly by me in the cab; her two eyes looking out like twin stars from a firmament of hat and boa and hair. But you don't see her to advantage now. She's so muffled up. You call at 147, Pentonville

Road any time after the second of next January, about a quarter to seven p.m., and play "See the conquering hero comes" on the front-door with the knocker, and before you get to "Sow-ow-ow-ound the trumpets," that door'll fly open, and—but no, I don't think you'd better do it unless you're a lady and pretty strong, because you'd be dragged in headlong and hugged in the passage and hustled out of your great coat and hat, and pushed into a warm parlor and precipitated into an easy-chair by the fire, and your boots dragged off before you could say Jack Smith, much less Jack Robinson, and your feet thrust into burning-hot slippers, and your hair combed off your forehead by a lot of warm fingers, and you'd have a cup of tea in your hand and a piece of buttered toast in your mouth, and an arm round your neck and a soft cheek against yours in less than no time.

Hullo! Here's the station. Hurra again! I spring lightly from the hansom, as if it were a circus horse and I one of the maniacs who prefer riding on bare backs to sitting decently and comfortably in a saddle. I hand her out. I give the driver his legal fare + 1s., which is the sum he expects, + 6d. for Christmas time. I wish him a happy Christmas. I race after a gigantic porter who is running away with our luggage as if it were a lady's reticule and he'd a match on against time. I see it labelled. I shower coppers upon the porter—pooh! who cares for bye-laws at Christmas time? I rush wildly up and down the platform some twenty-seven times to find the Booking Office. I get two third-class tickets. I race up and down again with my wife tacked to my arm, and streaming generally in my wake like the tail of a kite. I hear guards roaring at me, bells ringing at me, engines whistling at me; I plunge head-first into a compartment and drag my wife

in after me as if she were a bale of goods. I find us both seated panting for breath, but smiling amiably just as the train begins to move. Who cares? For the fourth time, Hurra!

"You're sure this is the right train? Have you the tickets? Is the luggage safe?" She asks. These encouraging queries are always made at the precise moment when it is too late to rectify any mistake. As I assure her all is well I experience a prod in my neck. Further investigation reveals this as due to the dumpy, flannel-covered foot of a baby. Why do babies always travel third-class? And how do the railway companies manage to supply one for each compartment? Given a third-class carriage and you at once and with accuracy predicate a baby, I never saw one put in, nor put out (except in a metaphorical sense). But one is always there. Do the directors put them in that every one may be driven to ride second-class or first-class to escape that ghoul-like creature, the travelling British baby? I believe this particular baby has a mother or a nurse under its protection, but I never notice her. That part of the carriage is all baby to me. His or her—perhaps I had better say its—legs are ubiquitous. They pervade, so to speak, the whole carriage. They are constantly turning up (literally) at the most unexpected spots. Now they are behind somebody's back, now in somebody's face, anon taking the air out of the window, a few moments later solemnly raised towards the roof of the carriage as though their owner were standing on its head. They have no notion of working together, that baby's legs. Not the least. One is even now as if paralysed but the other is performing furious gymnastic feats. I frequently see the right at such a distance from the left as to give the idea that it has set out for a solitary stroll. At times a bottle appears and the baby wrestles violently with it, and makes a noise like a pump out of order, and screws up its feet with delight till they are little round balls, and thumps the air with them manfully. Of course it cries. The baby, not the bottle. I could bear its crying. But when it every now and then becomes rigid like a stone infant, and its face grows first like a carved piece of turnip, and then like a carved piece of carrot, and then the color of beetroot, and then of pickled walnuts, or when it undergoes contortions such as I have never seen outside a circus, and vibrates as if with concealed laughter, and makes a terrible noise as if it is drowning, I am terrified. My wife, however, constantly regarding this disgraceful infant with the sweetest, most placid smile, calls this last performance "its laughing," and when the creature becomes rigid she says "it's taking notice."

I whisper to her, "Do you think, dear, that ever our——" But she puts her finger on my lips and blushes.

What shall we do when we get home? Why there'll be such introductions, and hand-shaking, and kissing, that nobody will be clear as to which particular member of the family he is for a few minutes. Then we shall drive across country to my old farm-home, and there *will* be a meal! Go to church to-morrow? WHAT? Oh! no, no, no. We are all Atheists. I thought you'd know that from our being so happy. Yes, she is one, thank Man! Why do we keep Christmas Day? Because we find it good to set aside certain days in the year for holiday-making, laughter, and rest. That they happen to be Pagano-Christian festivals makes no difference. Go to church, indeed! No; we shall rise early, and after a real country breakfast, we fellows will go for a big walk. We'll be back with our faces all aglow, and with the appetites of giants, to dinner. Ah! that will be a dinner. Home-grown, home-cooked. No need for servants with such deft fingers as my sisters have, and such a manager as my mother. We shall drink one another's healths, and really mean it. They'll drink hers, and want me to reply. She can do it herself, bless her. She's ready enough. There'll be games, and hot chestnuts, and a Christmas tree for the grandchildren (I am one of the youngest sons), and during that time she'll sit a little quiet and thoughtful, for she mustn't romp too much. But she won't let any of us see if the tears do gather to her eyes. And when the little ones are tired out and gone to sleep, how we shall talk of old times, and of our different work—each will be so anxious to know all about the others—and of the future! And those two dear ones, whose past is more than sixty years, and whose future is now so narrow, but so bright with their children's love, will sit hand in hand. My mother will have my darling by her side, be sure. They will talk of old times, and we shall all listen with bowed

heads to the beloved voices. And upon our happiness throughout the livelong day no shadow of religion shall for a moment descend. The name of god will never jar upon our ears. The phantasm of a father in heaven shall never intervene between us and our loved ones, dimming the light of their dear faces. Of Christ, as of all great and good men we may on that day speak, quietly and thoughtfully. We shall remember him as human brother, fallible, as we are, but struggling to attain his ideal in the first century, as we struggle to attain our nobler one in these riper times.

I beg your pardon! I have been prosing on dreadfully. Forgive me! Why here's the station. And there they all are. Hurra! Happy Christmas, mother! Happy Christmas, father! They don't see me! They're waving their hands at a stout old military man in a first-class carriage, and he doesn't like it. Ah! now they see us. Good bye, sir! Good bye, baby! Heaps of happy Christmases to you, fearsome thing. Out at the door. On to the platform. My darling! This is my mother.

EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN HEAVEN.

CHRISTMAS Eve had come and almost gone. It was drawing nigh midnight, and I sat solitary in my room, immersed in memory, dreaming of old days and their buried secrets. The fire, before which I mused, was burning clear without flame, and its intense glow, which alone lighted my apartment, cast a red tint on the furniture and walls. Outside, the streets were muffled deep with snow, in which no footstep was audible. All was quiet as death, silent as the grave, save for the faint murmur of my own breathing. Time and space seemed annihilated beyond those four narrow walls, and I was as a confined living centre of an else lifeless infinitude.

My reverie was rudely broken by the staggering step of a fellow-lodger, whose devotion to Bacchus was the one symptom of reverence in his nature. He reeled up stair after stair, and as he passed my door he lurched against it so violently that I feared he would come through. But he slowly recovered himself after some profane mutterings, reeled up the next flight of stairs, and finally deposited his well-soaked clay on the bed in his own room immediately over mine.

After this interruption my thoughts changed most fancifully. Why I know not, but I began to brood on the strange statement of Saint Paul concerning the man who was lifted up into the seventh heaven, and there beheld things not lawful to reveal. While pondering this story I was presently aware of an astonishing change. The walls of my room slowly expanded, growing ever thinner and thinner, until they became the filmiest transparent veil which at last dissolved utterly away. Then (whether in the spirit or the flesh I know not) I was hurried along through space, past galaxy after galaxy of suns and stars, separate systems yet all mysteriously related.

Swifter than light we travelled, I and my unseen guide, through the infinite ocean of ether, until our flight was arrested by a denser medium, which I recognised as an atmosphere like that of our earth. I had scarcely recovered from this new surprise when (marvel of marvels!) I found myself before a huge gate of wondrous art and dazzling splendor. At a word from my still unseen guide it swung open, and I was urged within. Beneath my feet was a solid pavement of gold. Gorgeous mansions, interspersed with palaces, rose around me, and above them all towered the airy pinnacles of a matchless temple, whose points quivered in the rich light like tongues of golden fire. The walls glittered with countless rubies, diamonds, pearls, amethysts, emeralds, and other precious stones; and lovely presences, arrayed in shining garments, moved noiselessly from place to place. "Where am I?" I ejaculated, half faint with wonder. And my hitherto unseen guide, who now revealed himself, softly answered, "In Heaven."

Thereupon my whole frame was agitated with inward laughter. I in Heaven, whose fiery doom had been prophesied so often by the saints on earth! I, the sceptic, the blasphemer, the scoffer at all things sacred, who had laughed at the legends and dogmas of Christianity as though they were incredible and effete as the myths of Olympus! And I

thought to myself, "Better I had gone straight to Hell, for here in the New Jerusalem they will no doubt punish me worse than there." But my angelic guide, who read my thought, smiled benignly and said, "Fear not, no harm shall happen to you. I have exacted a promise of safety for you, and here no promise can be broken." "But why," I asked, "have you brought me hither, and how did you obtain my guarantee of safety?" And my guide answered, "It is our privilege each year to demand one favor which may not be refused; I requested that I might bring you here; but I did not mention your name, and if you do nothing outrageous you will not be noticed, for no one here meddles with another's business, and our rulers are too much occupied with foreign affairs to trouble about our domestic concerns." "Yet," I rejoined, "I shall surely be detected, for I wear no heavenly robe." Then my guide produced one from a little packet, and having donned it, I felt safe from the fate of him who was expelled because he had not on a wedding-garment at the marriage feast.

As we moved along, I inquired of my guide why he took such interest in me; and he replied, looking sadly, "I was a sceptic on earth centuries ago, but I stood alone, and at last on my death-bed, weakened by sickness, I again embraced the creed of my youth and died in the Christian faith. Hence my presence in Heaven. But gladly would I renounce Paradise even for Hell, for those figures so lovely outside are not all lovely within, and I would rather consort with the choicer spirits who abide with Satan, and hold high revel of heart and head in his court. Yet wishes are fruitless; as the tree falls so it lies, and my lot is cast for ever." Whereupon I laid my hand in his, being speechless with grief!

We soon approached the magnificent temple, and entering it we mixed with the mighty crowd of angels who were witnessing the rites of worship performed by the elders and beasts before the great white throne. All happened exactly as Saint John describes. The angels rent the air with their acclamations, after the inner circle had concluded, and then the throne was deserted by its occupants.

My dear guide then led me through some narrow passages until we emerged into a spacious hall, at one end of which hung a curtain. Advancing towards this with silent tread, we were able to look through a slight aperture, where the curtain fell away from the pillar, into the room beyond. It was small and cosy, and a fire burned in the grate, before which sat poor dear God the Father in a big arm-chair. Divested of his godly paraphernalia, he looked old and thin, though an evil fire still gleamed from his cavernous eyes. On a table beside him stood some phials, one of which had seemingly just been used. God the Son stood near, looking much younger and fresher, but time was beginning to tell on him also. The Ghost flitted about in the form of a dove, now perching on the Father's shoulder and now on the head of the Son.

Presently the massive bony frame of the Father was convulsed with a fit of coughing; Jesus promptly applied a restorative from the phial, and after a terrible struggle the cough was subdued. During this scene the Dove fluttered violently from wall to wall. When the patient was thoroughly restored the following conversation ensued.

JESUS.—Are you well now, my Father?

JEHOVAH.—Yes, yes, well enough. Alack, how my strength wanes! Where is the pith that filled these arms when I fought for my chosen people? Where the fiery vigour that filled my veins when I courted your mother?

(Here the Dove fluttered and looked queer.)

JESUS.—Ah, sire, do not speak thus. You will regain your old strength.

JEHOVAH.—Nay, nay, and you know it. You do not even wish me to recover, for in my weakness you exercise sovereign power and rule as you please.

JESUS.—O sire, sire!

JEHOVAH.—Come now, none of these demure looks. We know each other too well. Practise before the saints if you like, but don't waste your acting on me.

JESUS.—My dear Father, pray curb your temper. That is the very thing the people on earth so much complain of.

JEHOVAH.—My dearly beloved Son, in whom I am not at all well pleased, desist from this hypocrisy. Your temper is as bad as mine. You've shed blood enough in your time, and need not rail at me.

JESUS.—Ah, sire, only the blood of heretics.

JEHOVAH.—Heretics, forsooth! They were very worthy people for the most part, and their only crime was that

they neglected you. But why should we wrangle? We stand or fall together, and I am falling. Satan draws most souls from earth to his place, including all the best workers and thinkers, who are needed to sustain our drooping power; and we receive nothing but the refuse; weak, slavish, flabby souls, hardly worth saving or damning; gushing preachers, pious editors, crazy enthusiasts, and half-baked old ladies of both sexes. Why didn't you preach a different Gospel while you were about it? You had the chance once and let it slip: we shall never have another.

JESUS.—My dear Father, I am reforming my Gospel to make it suit the altered taste of the times.

JEHOVAH.—Stuff and nonsense! It can't be done; thinking people see through it; the divine is immutable. The only remedy is to start afresh. Could I beget a new Son all might be rectified; but I cannot, I am too old. Our dominion is melting away like that of all our predecessors. You cannot outlast me, for I am the fountain of your life; and all the multitude of "immortal" angels who throng our court, live only while I uphold them, and with me they will vanish into eternal limbo.

Here followed another fit of coughing worse than before. Jesus resorted again to the phial, but the cordial seemed powerless against this sharp attack. Just then the Dove fluttered against the curtain, and my guide hurried me swiftly away.

In a corridor of the temple we met Michael and Raphael. The latter scrutinised me so closely that my blood ran cold; but just when my dread was deepest his countenance cleared, and he turned towards his companion. Walking behind the great archangels we were able to hear their conversation. Raphael had just returned from a visit to the earth, and he was reporting to Michael a most alarming defection from the Christian faith. People, he said, were leaving in shoals, and unless fresh miracles were worked he trembled for the prospects of the dynasty. But what most alarmed him was the spread of profanity. While in England he had seen copies of a blasphemous paper which horrified the elect by ridiculing the Bible in what a bishop had justly called "a heartless and cruel way." "But, my dear Michael," continued Raphael, "that is not all, not even the worst. This scurrilous paper, which would be quickly suppressed if we retained our old influence, actually caricatures our supreme Lord and his heavenly host in woodcuts, and thousands of people enjoy this wicked profanity. I dare say our turn will soon come, and we shall be held up to ridicule like the rest." "Impossible!" cried Michael; "Surely there is some mistake. What is the name of this abominable print?" With a grave look, Raphael replied: "No, Michael, there is no mistake. The name of this imp of blasphemy is—I hesitate to say it—the *Free*—"

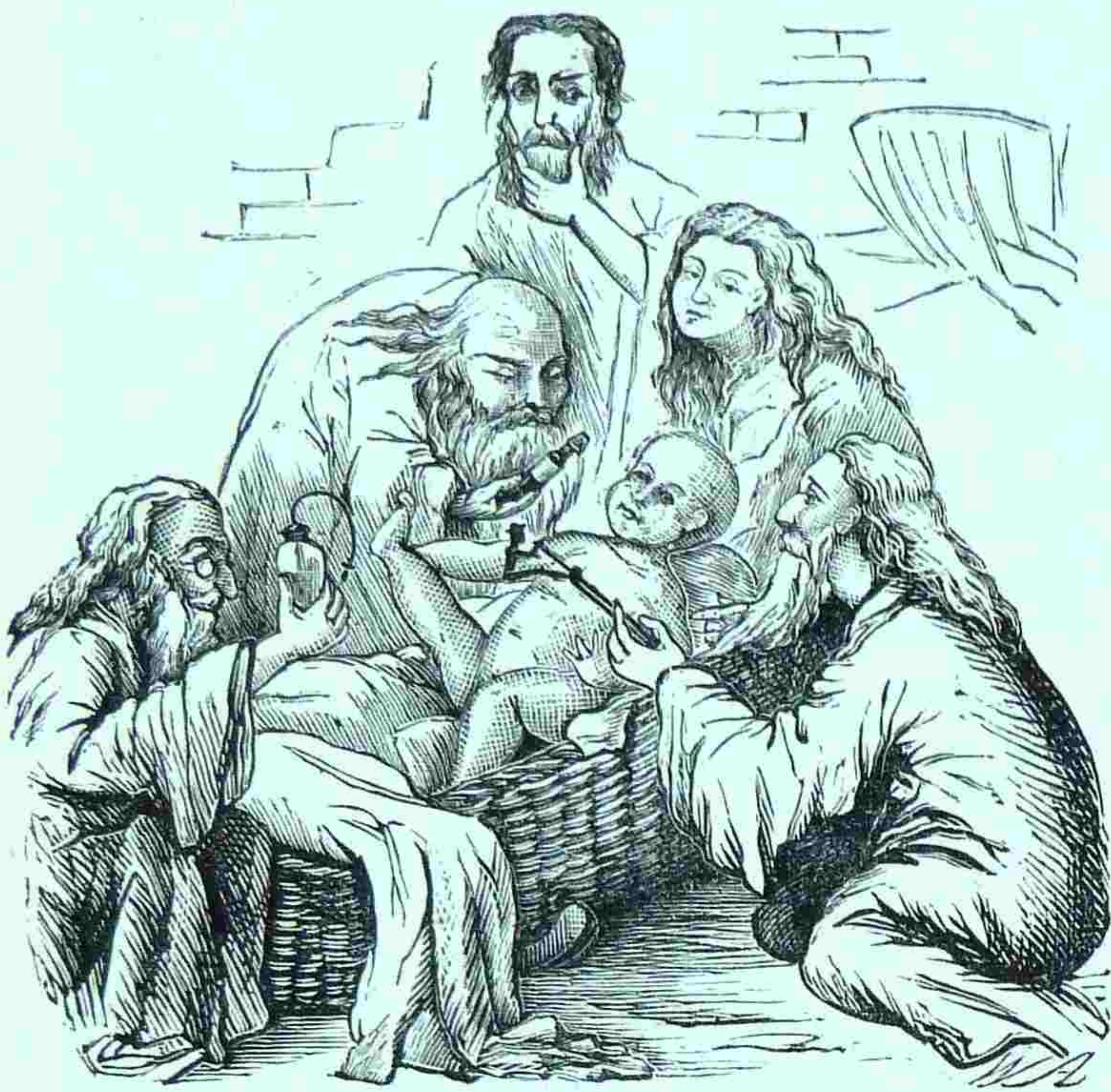
But at this moment my guide again hurried me along. We reached the splendid gate once more, which slowly opened and let us through. Again we flew through the billowy ether, sweeping past system after system with intoxicating speed, until at last, dazed and almost unconscious, I regained this earthly shore. Then I sank into a stupor. When I awoke the fire had burnt down to the last cinder, all was dark and cold, and I shivered as I tried to stretch my half-cramped limbs. Was it all a dream? Who can say? Whether in the spirit or the flesh I know not, said Saint Paul, and I am compelled to echo his words. Sceptics may shrug their shoulders, smile, or laugh, but "there are more things in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in their philosophy." G. W. FOOTE.

A TEACHER was explaining the meaning of faith. He pointed through the school-room window to a boat on the river and said, "If I were to tell you there was a leg of mutton in that boat, and you believed me though you had not seen it, that would be faith." Every boy in the class understood it at once. The following day Billy Smith came upon the word "faith," and to refresh his memory, the teacher asked, "what is faith?" Quick as lightning Billy had it, "A leg of mutton in a boat."

A BARBER was shaving a country parson with a bald and glossy pate, and as he finished the operation by sticking a piece of skin plaster on a decapitated pimple he remarked, "Parson, your head reminds me very much of heaven." "How so?" asked the astonished soulcurer. "Cos its a bright an' shinin' place," said the barber as he pocketed his fee, "An there's no partin' there."

THE BABY GOD.

A COMEDY OF BLUNDERS AND ABSURDITIES.



CHRISTMAS is come! Hurrah! This is the birth-day of a little God. Then it was—1881 years ago or so—that

“His wondrous love the Godhead showed,
CONTRACTED TO A SPAN,
The *co-eternal* Son of God,
The *Mortal* Son of Man.”

“Veil’d in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate deity!”

“Glory be to God on high,
And peace on earth descend;
GOD COMES DOWN, He BOWS THE SKY,
And shows Himself our friend:
God the INVISIBLE APPEARS!”

“Emptied of His majesty,
Of His dazzling glory shorn,
Being’s source BEGINS TO BE,
And God himself is BORN!”

“Stand amazed, ye heavens, at this!
See the Lord of earth and skies;
Humbled to the dust He is,
And in a manger lies.”

These are pious scraps of theological rant collected from the Wesleyan Hymn Book. Of course, we expect few people to be perfectly sober when high jinks are afoot; and just now Christians go stark mad for a time over their creeds. When a man talks about infinity “contracted to a span,” of the eternal Son of God becoming a mortal son of man, of God bending down the sky, of the invisible appearing, of “being’s source beginning to be,” and only 2,000 years ago, too, we know that there is something amiss. The man is drunk or otherwise insane. The religious spirit is even more intoxicating than whiskey or *eau de vie*. Too much of either will make a man, not else insane, talk downright folly and absurdity; and to a man full of the Holy Ghost “all things become possible,” and impossibilities are easy.

Charles Wesley, unfortunately, does not stand alone. Millions upon millions of people go wild over a stupid impossibility at this season of the year. There is a baby born in Judea; his mother, poor thing, is betrothed, but not married. An angel superfluously told her she would have a son; and angels now come and tell some shepherds that he is born. Those angels evidently did not understand the ways of civilisation. Amongst them marriage, as Jesus later informs us, is unknown: “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” (Matt. xxii., 30.) Not being far enough advanced socially themselves to appreciate the

advantages and necessities of marriage, those simple-minded and primitive angels could have no scruples about singing a song at the birth of poor Mary’s son. Still, they ought to have seen her married first.

Another blunder also should have been avoided. Joseph should have been the father of Jesus, but the Holy Ghost was.

That star, too, which appeared in the East, whereupon “wise men”—exceedingly so—journeyed to Jerusalem, it turned out to be useless, for it guided them to Jerusalem, where the baby-God was not, instead of Bethlehem, where he really was. A Chinese lantern or a sky-rocket would have served the purpose far better. Besides, in going to Jerusalem they aroused Herod—so the book says—and thus the blundering star led to the slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem, for those children would not have been molested had not those star-guided magicians gone to Jerusalem.

But those magicians are deceived after all. They go to the stable where the dear little God lies crying and laughing by turns. How queer! He had lived an eternity without laughing or crying, and now begins to suck and puke, to laugh and cry, to scream with pain or pleasure, to kick about its tiny legs, to play with its big toes, and evolute like a young kitten. This *is* evolution! This is transformation! The God wouldn’t know himself. Another blunder!

Well, the “wise men,” finding the mother and her old man very poor, gave them some gold; and, observing an awful odour in the stable, left frankincense and myrrh to be burnt for neutralising its effect and sweetening the place. Here was another blunder. Had I been an old God, resolved to renew myself and be born again, I should have come in decent fashion; I would have chosen parents who were married, industrious, possessed of enough wealth to be above poverty, and have given them as little trouble as possible.

Those “wise men,” star-guided, came to worship a baby-king of the Jews; but they paid their adoration to the wrong infant. They came to reverence a prince; it was only a peasant. Jesus never was a king, though he much longed to be; and, poor fellow, was much more fit for an asylum than a palace—as most kings and princes are. Here is a commentary upon divine providence:—The whole of whose plans end in blunders. He brings the magicians from the East to do honor to—himself, in fact, transformed to a baby, and the wrong baby gets the honor and presents after all.

Let me see. We must not be too hard upon the deity just now though. Serpents and crabs, when sloughing their old skins and casting their old shells, are rather helpless. So the poor god, after that tremendous squeeze which reduced him from infinity to infancy, could not be expected to have his wits about him; hence, no doubt, the blunders connected with his incarnation. Still, it is true, there were two thirds of the godhead still left in their original shape and size, and they might have conducted things better while the other third was shrinking up to next to nothing. Yes! But you cannot expect a tripod nor any other trinity to work well with one third of it wanting or undergoing thorough repairs. By the bye! I wonder if Jesus weighed any more than ordinary babies? He should have done, for Paul tells us that the whole godhead was in him. Perhaps so. Perhaps so. Professor Tyndall thinks a few grains of iodide of amyl would be sufficient to make a large comet; and I know that half a grain of theology or less would make any number of gods you might desire.

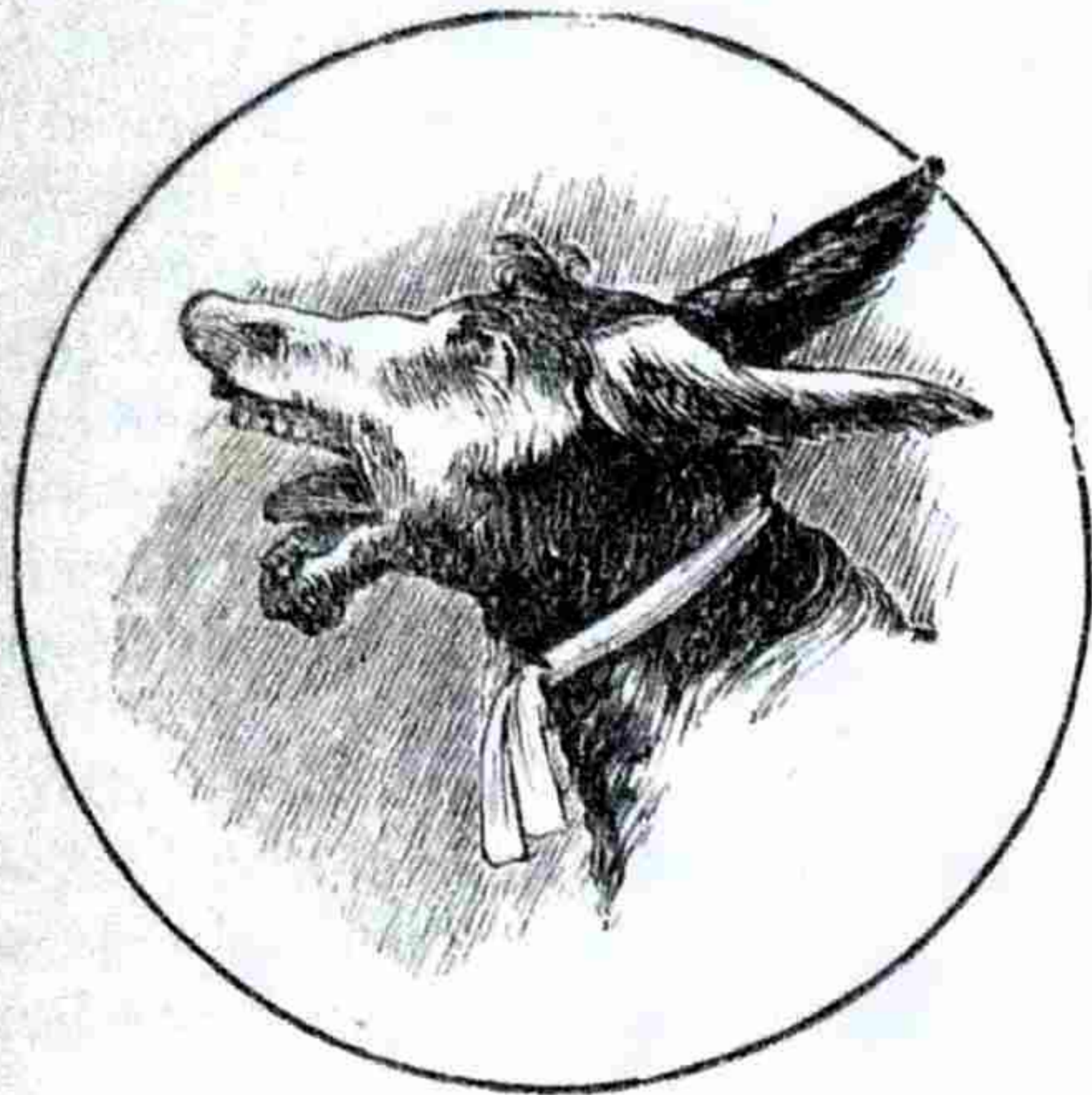
When this baby-god grew up his life was one series of blunders. He lost himself in Jerusalem and gave endless bother to his ma and her old man; he followed no trade, and so lived the life of a vagabond, running about the country, preaching his coming kingdom, pretending to heal the sick, raise the dead; hurling curses against his opponents and the ruling authorities; creating a riot in the temple, or riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, surrounded by a blatant crowd of idlers shouting Hosanna! going to a wedding, and by some trick supplying wine enough to swill an army. At last he died a cruel death at the hands of the Jews, and his followers and friends saw his ghost frequently afterwards.

Such, in plain blunt English, is the story of the incarnation of the Christian God. Thus, Jehovah sowed his wild oats and went out on the spree. But he has never tried the game again. When it is suggested to him now to become incarnated once more, he replies, “Not I, in faith! They crucified me the first time; they might boil me the next. Once in eternity is quite sufficient for a spree like that

Some of you angels and archangels may make the experiment if you like."

Well, suppose he were to become incarnated again, and to repeat now the whole of the gospel story in actual life, there is not a Christian now living but would scout Mary as a disreputable woman, laugh at Joseph as an old goose, and regard Jesus as a maniac or a blasphemer!

JOS. SYMES.



A PREACHING ASS.

"And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass."—Numbers xxii., 28.

WHY PEOPLE GO TO CHURCH.

Some go to church just for a walk ;
 Some to stare, and laugh, and talk ;
 Some go there to meet a friend ;
 Some their idle time to spend ;
 Some for general observation ;
 Some for private speculation ;
 Some to seek or find a lover ;
 Some a courtship to discover ;
 Some go there to use their eyes,
 And newest fashions criticise ;
 Some to show their own smart dress ;
 Some their neighbors to assess ;
 Some to scan a robe or bonnet ;
 Some to price the trimming on it ;
 Some to learn the latest news,
 That friends at home they may amuse ;
 Some to gossip false and true,
 Safe hid within the sheltering pew ;
 Some go there to please the squire ;
 Some his daughters to admire ;
 Some the parson go to fawn ;
 Some to lounge, and some to yawn ;
 Some to claim the parish doles ;
 Some for bread and some for coals ;
 Some because its thought genteel ;
 Some to vaunt their pious zeal ;
 Some to show how sweet they sing ;
 Some how loud their voices ring ;
 Some the preacher go to hear,
 His style and voice to praise or jeer ;
 Some forgiveness to implore ;
 Some their sins to varnish o'er ;
 Some to sit, and dose, and nod ;
 But few to kneel and worship God.

JUPITER AWAKENED.

(A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT.)

SCENE—Olympus ; Time, December 25th, 1881.

JUPITER (*stretching his limbs and yawning.*)

Hi, Mercury! what's the time o' day? Surely I drank deep last night and overslept myself. What a cursed dream I've had.

MERCURY: Sire! 'tis now approaching 2,000 years since your godship and your fellow Olympians drank deep and laid down to rest.

J.: 2,000 years! That rascal Gannymede must have given me nepenthe instead of nectar. How has the little world and all its little women got on without me?

M.: Dreadfully bad, sire. The earthlings spread a report that we were all dead, and showed your tomb in Crete. They've

almost forgotten us all except your daughter Venus, and they even tried to dispense with her by macerating the flesh like the old yogis of India.

J.: The fools are kicking up a precious row down there just now. What's up?

M.: They are celebrating the birthday of their man-god Jesus, a poor craven-hearted Jewish bastard. Not knowing anything about him, they've taken the birthday of the Persian Mithra and the Hindoo Buddha and called it his.

J.: That's the fellow I've been dreaming about, ugh! The very remembrance makes me shudder. I saw the poor young enthusiast hung on a cross with two thieves, and with blood and water streaming from his side. There was no ichor, so he could not be one of us.

M.: One of us! Of course not. He was just a poor Jewish peasant whom the fools put into your place because you were sleeping.

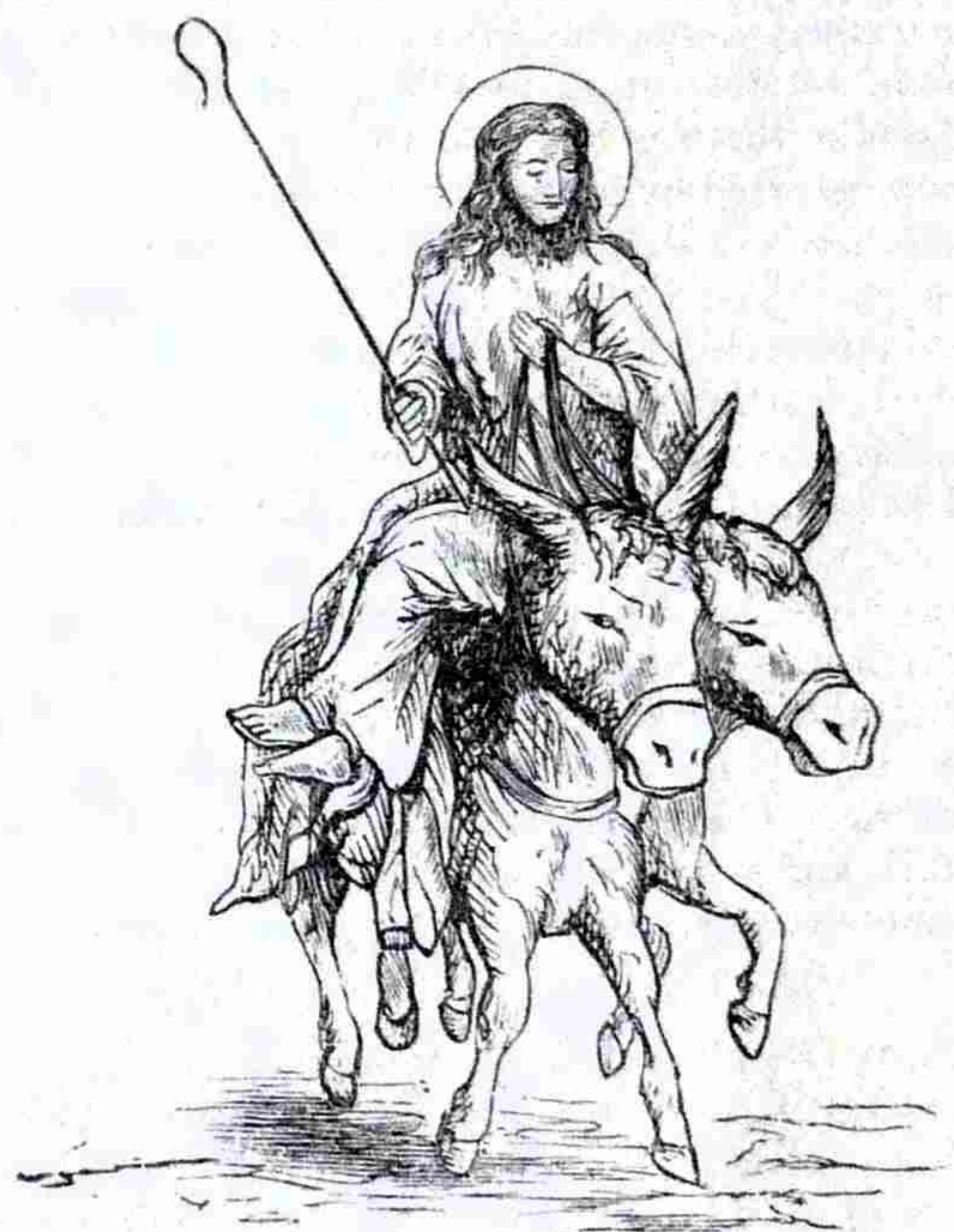
J.: Ah but, Mercury, there's many a pretty Jewess you know. It's a wise father that knows his own children. How could he have the impudence to set up for a god, not having any of the true ichor in his veins?

M.: Oh, sire, he never claimed godship; his followers did that for him, and I fear we set them a bad example by having too many men-gods; and, if I may say it without offence, sons of gods from daughters of men.

J.: Right you are, Mercury, my son. But we'll soon put the Jew boy into his proper place. I call Styx to witness that before the next 2,000 years he shall be as much forgotten as I have been. No more of him. Tell Gannymede to bring me a full goblet, and warn the young vagabond that if he gives me another overdose of nepenthe I'll make him a priest of Cybele.

CELSUS.

J.P.Y.



AN AWKWARD RIDE.

"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."—Matthew xxi., 5.

PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE.—A missionary in the South Seas having created a strong impression on a chief, and convinced him that he and his people were miserable sinners, at the same time describing the Atonement of Christ, the chief held a council of his warriors, and it was unanimously decided that hell-fire seemed imminent unless immediate action was taken; but they utterly repudiated the idea that merely believing that Jesus died to save men would avert the evil decree. In their simple logic it seemed natural that if God's wrath had on one occasion been averted by the sacrifice of a good and holy being, their best plan was to offer the most sacred being they knew of, in the hope that it would prove acceptable in their case. The missionary consequently was invited to permit himself to be crucified; but, strange to say, the man of God did not see the force of the argument when brought so near home, and declined. Another meeting was held, at which it was resolved that although it was a pity that the missionary did not follow Christ's example and offer himself voluntarily, the next best thing was to crucify him whether or not, with the addendum that if after he was dead they ate him it would be an effectual way of partaking of the Holy Communion; and it was only by a discreditable ruse the missionary escaped.—*Harbinger of Light* (Melbourne).

A SHORT SERMON ON FAITH,

“Hey, diddle diddle, the Cat and the Fiddle,
The Cow jumped over the Moon,
The little Dog laughed to see the sport,
And the Dish ran away with the Spoon.”

THESE inspired words, my dear friends, will be remembered by you all. You will all retain the recollection of the time when, seated on your dear grandmother's or mother's knee, the beautiful text I have just chosen for the subject of my discourse this evening, was instilled into your young and pliant mind. We know that it was taught by our grandmother's grandmother to our grandmother, and it is difficult to fix the date of the first utterance of these beautiful and comforting words. They have been handed down from generation to generation, and have become a part of our nursery faith. As children we were taught to believe in them implicitly, and why, my dear friends, should we not, with increasing years and stronger intellects, still as implicitly believe that which we have no right to doubt? Is it possible that those who had the care and training of our young minds, would wilfully lead us into error? No. Therefore I will proceed to discourse upon these time-honored words, and I hope that the faith you have in the truth of them may assist you to appreciate their moral worth.

“Hey, diddle diddle.”

The very commencement of the line proves that the intention was to convey to the mind a proper way of getting on through life. “Hey, diddle diddle.” And you must admit, my dear friends, that those loving words of advice have not been poured into most of our ears in vain, for diddling has certainly formed a vast and beautiful part of some natures. With them, to get on it is Diddle, Diddle; and without Diddle, Diddle, there is but a small chance of success in life. It has been asserted by ancient historians that the next part of the sentence was written in order to procure a rhyme for the first part. “The Cat and the Fiddle.” And this opinion has gained strength from the fact that the feline animal and the musical instrument (beyond being in the poem) are of no particular interest: they are simply there for the purpose, as I said before, of rhyming with diddle diddle. But, my dear friends, who shall dare question the fact that there is a mysterious and beautiful allegory attached to them, a moral utility which it is beyond our poor minds to fathom. To assert that they were placed there for the purpose of a miserable rhyme is to insult the great source from whence they sprung. Therefore believe this, I say, steadfastly believe this, and your faith will have its reward in the self-consciousness that you believe what you are told.

“The Cow jumped over the Moon.”

Ah, my dear friends, this is another evidence of the grand triumph of faith. The unbelievers will no doubt scoff and say,—Impossible. A jumping cow, in itself is a rarity, but a cow to jump over the moon, Impossible! Oh, ye of small faith—What is impossible to the true believer? Remember, we have not a modern cow or a modern moon to deal with. Who is there among you that dares to assert that the elasticity of the cow mentioned in that ancient history was not sufficient to enable it to perform the task of clearing at a bound the moon of the period? Have you not all, you true believers, been taught, and have you not read, that stars and moon danced quadrilles and tumbled about in a most reckless manner? Does not Revelation tell you this? Are you not also told that the sun stood still, and did you not, and do you not, believe it? Then I claim the same belief for the cow and the moon. I am sure your clear sense of truth must shine on this occasion, and although you may deem such things impossible in these degenerate days of literal facts, yet to disbelieve what was told you as a fact occurring ages ago, is a proof, my friends, of the wrong-going of your souls. It is not, for weak mortals like ourselves, to enquire into the purpose for which the cow performed that gymnastic feat. There are, no doubt, many lost sinners who would assert that it was to get to the other side. There is, no doubt, a beautiful hidden purpose into which we may not enquire; for to do so would be searching beyond the bounds of mortal reason. And that my dear, dear friends, we are taught we must not do; like the darling child who has a beautiful tart given to it but is not allowed to bite.

The next portion of the text, although strange, does not strike us, my friends, as being altogether so wonderful.

“The little dog laughed to see the sport.”

Now the risible power of the dog may or may not be disputed, but I can assure you my friends, in all truthfulness, that I have heard a dog laugh, positively laugh, or produce a sound exactly resembling the human laugh; and, as most of us know, hyenas indulge in the amusement, although it is on occasions when the sport to them is invariably the other way about for their victims. And now comes the question—Why should the undoubted gravity of the situation be termed sport, for we must all admit that it was the *centre* of gravity? Here is another instance of the great wisdom displayed. Here is an act and occasion of the greatest solemnity, and on which (were it possible for us to gaze) *we* should look with awe and amazement. This act, on the part of the cow, is positively hailed by the dog as a sportive arrangement, and one which should be received with approving laughter. But, my friends, there is no record of the end of that dog. Is it not possible that he was tempted of a devil to laugh at this wonderful and awe-inspiring phenomenon, and as an everlasting punishment for not resisting that influence which he had no power to resist, he was doomed to everlastingly bark at everlasting cats and never get a bite?

It has been asserted by eminent writers that the cow, for her noble heroism in obeying the command which was given to her to prove her faith, was immediately introduced to the great Bull of Nineveh, and that they are both alive and doing well.

I trust, my friends, that up to this time you have benefited by this beautiful lesson on faith. And you will not, I sincerely hope (should such a position as the unfortunate dog's ever be yours), give way to spontaneous merriment, but view the solemn action with becoming gravity, and depend upon it—oh, depend upon it—you will get your reward. You will be allowed to choose your own wings.

“The little dog laughed to see the sport”—unhappy animal—“And the dish ran away with the spoon.” Before proceeding to discuss this last portion of the marvellous history, I must make a few remarks as to the difference of opinions which exist as to the actual words. One great writer hath it, “The dish ran *away with* the spoon;” whilst others have translated it “The dish ran *after* the spoon.” That these discrepancies should exist is to my thinking to be deplored, for although it cannot shake or affect the faith of the true believer, yet it gives those unhappy wretches, those misguided men and women who do not believe, an opportunity for disputing the beautiful fact. They would say that it materially affects the facts of the case. That if the dish ran *away with* the spoon it would tend to prove a preconcerted act on both their parts, and it would also imply that some criminal act had been committed, or they would not have run away. On the other hand these wretched Atheists argue, that if the translation, “The dish ran *after* the spoon,” be correct, it alters the entire meaning and sense of the sentence. On the one hand you have the two useful and closely connected articles of domestic use fleeing from wrath, or possibly eloping. On the other hand you have the picture of a piece of willow-pattern crockery being pursued by a spoon. If the one is correct the other must be wrong, they argue. That is the believer's difficulty, he cannot argue as to the A B C of the case, but he must argue by faith—beautiful faith of which they know nothing.

But, my faithful hearers, the Greek word “away with” might in the hurried moment of translation be mistaken for after. There is, we will say, no similarity between them, but what of that? Is a slight oversight or technical error to upset and destroy the great fundamental principles of our belief? If so, then we are indeed lost. But to return to my subject. The beautiful, gymnastically-constructed cow sinks into positive insignificance beside the proceeding of the dish and spoon. Away, away into the realms of space are these two hurried on. On, on, for ever, perhaps—perhaps not—hurried on to realms where crockery is not required, and where spoons are at a discount. For what purpose? There we pause. We believe, and that is a sufficient answer. We are happy in our beliefs—and that also is a sufficient answer. For if we question the great purpose of the great worker of miracles who changed everything into anything, and back again into nothing, we insult the lofty mind whose one idea was to practise inconsistency so that we might thoroughly appreciate the value of consistency in after ages. And so long as you believe that water flowed from barren rocks, that water was changed to blood, that water was changed to wine, that the sun stood still,

and that God was not legally married to the Virgin Mary, you must join with me, my dear friends, in the pious belief that

"Hey diddle, diddle, the Cat and the Fiddle,
The Cow jumped over the Moon,
The little Dog laughed to see the sport,
And the Dish ran away with the Spoon.

UNREVEREND JOSIAH.

HUMANITY.

Faith has found her own perdition,
Cry of man has gone abroad,
Reason now for Superstition!
And Humanity for God!

Fear is banished now by Science,
Law and order understood
Hope of man, and sure reliance
For the universal good.

Foes of Progress! man must fight them,
Strong of heart and judgment clear:
Wrongs! and man alone must right them,
Man! no longer slave of fear.

Aided by no supplication,
Fearing no Omnipotence,
Man works out his own salvation
From the hell of ignorance.

Dead the priestly power that chaineth!
Dead the old Divinity!
Freedom, Truth and Progress reigneth!
Hail the nobler Trinity! L. D. NICOLSON.

A HEAVENLY VISION.

ONE day during the past summer, that fast and commodious steamer "Prussic," of the Black Star Line, Commander Captain John Smith, was about to start from New York on her way to Liverpool, when at the last moment there was a great commotion on the wharf, and an extravagant quantity of personal luggage was hurried on board, followed by its proprietor, physically a very diminutive, but sartorially a magnificent specimen of our American cousin, who immediately inquired in the loftiest manner for the Captain, to whom he impressively introduced himself thus: "Good-day! how do? Captain—let me see—Smith, I think. Yes; of course—Captain Smith. Did you hear that you were to have *my* company across this trip?"

"Well, sir," said the Captain, "upon my honor I did not, indeed. I am not yet aware of the name of the gentleman I have the pleasure of addressing."

"Really now," said the magnificent midget, "that beats all; it almost transcends belief. Why, sir," and here he illustrated the fable of the frog and the ox by swelling himself to an abnormal condition of tightness, "*my name is Washington Pegler Jackson! I am the son of Senator Jackson, of Cincinnati!*" and he stepped a pace backward to observe the effect of his stunning announcement, the manner of which certainly caused the Captain to exhibit signs of astonishment if the matter did not.

On the first day afloat he repeated this communication, with but slight variation, wherever he could find an audience, without, however, bating one jot of his importance, but causing plenty of amusement, which he was far too well satisfied with himself to attribute to the real cause.

The next morning the Captain, the central figure of a chatty group, enjoying the breeze on deck, had just observed, "But where is his mightiness, the *son of Senator Jackson, of Cincinnati*—I haven't seen him this morning;" when up swaggered the individual in question, and, elbowing his way through, confronted Mr. Smith, and the following conversation took place:—

Son of Senator Jackson: "Good morning, all—morning, Captain. What sort of time are we making? Beautiful morning! How did you sleep?"

Captain Smith: "Moderately, thank you. Rather troubled with dreams."

Son of Senator Jackson: "Is that so? May I inquire what about?"

Captain Smith: "Well, strangely enough, I had a most remarkable dream about you."

Son of Senator Jackson (suddenly growing about two inches). "Indeed! Will you kindly relate it to us, Captain Smith?" "With pleasure, if you think it will interest you."—You see, I dreamt you and I died, and you were good enough to allow me to accompany you to the gates of heaven, where I immediately made application to Peter for admission. The old man, however, appeared very crusty and, on hearing my name, abused me

terribly for my impudence. "No go! No go!" said he, "Bad lot! Used to swear at the Sailors! I know you! Never read service yourself! Left that to the doctor! Get away! Be off! Leave the premises! Cut!" I retired very crestfallen you may be sure. You advanced, and with that easy confidence which is begotten of real merit, demanded immediate entrance. Peter scowled, and his eyes literally flashed fire as he thundered out—"Who are you? A friend of this Smith fellow, I fancy;" Then you courteously but with much dignity explained, "*My name is Washington Pegler Jackson, I am the son of Senator Jackson, of Cincinnati.*" On hearing these words Peter made as much haste as his poor old joints would let him (he is getting very old you know) to undo the gate, and with many apologies for having kept you waiting, ushered you into the presence of some of the notables, to whom he introduced you, and who seemed very much flattered and gratified at meeting you. The Virgin Mary dropped you a "charity bob" almost to the ground. Noah was rather too familiar and wanted to know if you had such a thing as a "go" of rum about you. David said, had he known you were coming he would have composed a harp fantasia in your honor. Jeremiah grumbled as usual, and begged you to use your influence to get his halo changed, as it didn't fit. Poor old Origen seemed very down in the mouth, and was sorry he'd been such a fool. St. Polycarp wanted to be very affectionate, but as he smelt like frizzling tallow, you held your nose and passed on. Elijah and Elisha (who now wears a wig) were profuse in their offers to show you the stables where the fiery horses were kept. At last you and your guide arrived at the throne, and with consummate grace you waved your hand to its august occupant. "Ah, lahveh! how do, how do!" His majesty started up in a rage at being addressed in so off-hand a manner. "Peter, who is this fellow," said he, but before an answer could be given you stepped forward and with a smile explained, "*My name is Washington Pegler Jackson! I am the son of Senator Jackson, of Cincinnati.*" Then ensued a scene the like of which was not remembered by the oldest inhabitant. His majesty grasped your hand warmly, and exclaimed in a voice thick with emotion, "Well, well! this is indeed an honor, long expected come at last. Jesus, you young scamp, get up this instant and let the gentleman sit down."—Then I woke!

I SOMETIMES THINK.

A HETERODOX RHYME.

I SOMETIMES think when I behold
A pious bigot raving
That Jesus saves a lot of souls
That are not worth the saving;
I even think (although no doubt
God nothing can arrange ill)
That Dandy Churchill's bound to make
A shabby-looking angel.

I sometimes think (although, of course,
It is a wicked rudeness)
That piety is nothing but
A cheaper sort of goodness;
That grace is not the kind of stuff
To feed a hungry sinner,
And people often give a prayer
When they should give a dinner.

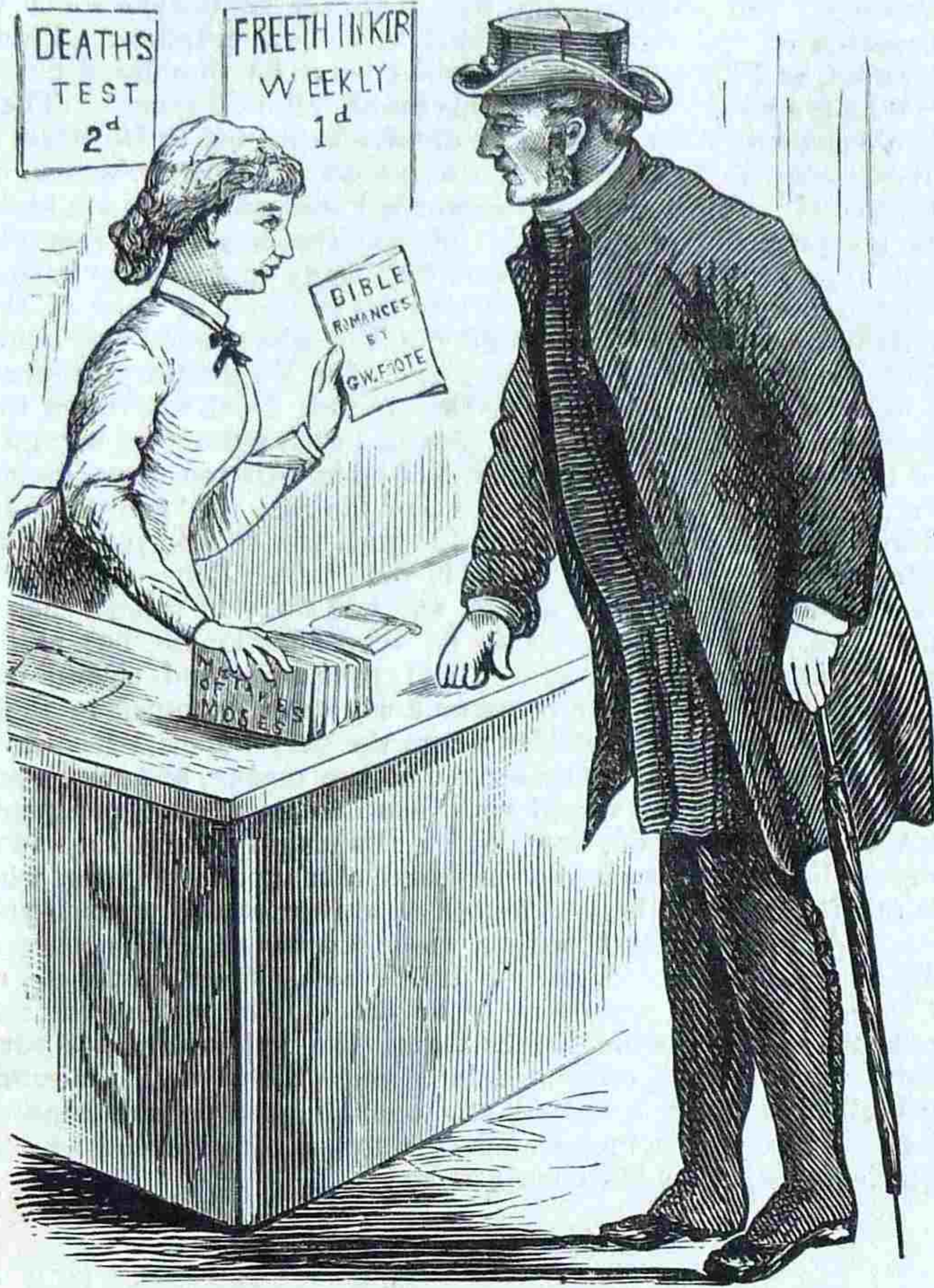
I sometimes think—oh, saintly folks,
Forgive me if you can—
That he may be a perfect saint
Who is not half a man;
That if religion meant good deeds
No honest man would doubt it;
If less it means, then honest men
Can get along without it.

I sometimes think, and dare to say
In spite of pious drivel,
That when man sends the priest away
He'll shake hands with the devil;
If men would think instead of dream,
And work instead of fret,
Hell would cool for want of fuel
And heaven would be to let.

I sometimes think that, after all,
God, if his name be hallow'd,
Will judge us by our deeds, not by
The dogmas we have swallow'd;
That he alone is truly good,
Though fools and priests may doubt it,
Who lives a useful honest life,
And holds his tongue about it. W. NELSON.

"WHAT is the meaning of a backbiter?" asked a gentleman at a Sunday school examination. This was a puzzler. It went down the class until it came to a simple urchin, who said, "Perhaps its a flea!"

AN INQUIRING BISHOP.



Scene—SHOP IN MANCHESTER.

BISHOP F—R: I want something suitable for a converted ballet girl, something entertaining as well as instructive.

SMART SHOPWOMAN: Here, Sir, is just the thing—Foote's "Bible Romances;" or perhaps you would prefer Ingersoll's "Mistakes of Moses." There's a great demand for both amongst the clergy just now. The *Freethinker*, Sir, you know already.

THE GOBBERGAMMERGOW PANTOMIME.

It is not generally known that, in the year of grace 1382, the so-called "Emperor of the Romans" happened to pass through the village of Gobbergammergow, which lies in an out-of-the-way valley of the Tyrol. Strange to relate, on that particular occasion none of the inhabitants of the village were pillaged or violated by the Kaiser or his soldiery. In consequence of this most unaccountable miracle the peasants of the village made a solemn vow, swearing by the hind leg of the lamb of God, that they would repeat once in every fifty years the performance of an ancient mystery play, or rather, as it should be more correctly designated, a miracle pantomime.

As it is feared this interesting relic of mediæval superstition has been allowed to die out, owing, it is said, to an influx of English and American tourists, I put myself, during my autumnal vacation, to the trouble of interviewing "the oldest inhabitant," in order to present the curious world with a slight synopsis of some of the scenes of this most peculiar performance.

It would appear that, as originally represented, the pantomime had a sort of prologue introducing a bed-chamber scene between an angel, or fairy, and a young lady. It is supposed that this scene must have been suppressed by the Gobbergammergow censor of morals, together with a horrible exhibition of the chopping up of young children which followed it.

The opening scene of the pantomime proper, then, introduced a howling hairy man in a howling wilderness. He eats locusts, and preaches in dumb show to dumb beasts in the wilderness. To him enter the chief personage, a pale, long-haired young man of some thirty summers or so, with a golden nimbus round his head. Hairy man seizes him by the nimbus, and ducks him in adjacent stream. Paper pigeon is lowered from the flies. Tableau, and curtain.

Upon the rising of the curtain, another view of the wilderness was shown, with the pinnacle of a temple and an exceeding high mountain represented in the distance. The chief personage of the pantomime discovered looking very thin. Enter gentleman in black, with a roll of Hebrew manuscripts under his arm. He facetiously suggests dinner by offering the chief personage a stone to munch. After some strolling together, and some references to the good jokes contained in the old manuscripts,

the black gentleman tries to induce the chief personage to go down on his marrowbones, whereupon the chief personage shows the black gentleman the least dignified portion of his person. Exit black gentleman down trap-door, and enter angels, or fairies, with refreshments. Ballet.

The next scene showed a view at the sea coast with a number of fishermen engaged in their avocations. Enter chief personage who calls on them to follow him. They bundle up their traps and follow him accordingly.

In the ensuing scenes the chief personage went through a variety of feats of conjuring, such as turning water into wine, devils into pigs, curing the blind by spitting in their eyes, bringing money out of a fish's mouth, withering a fig-tree, etc., amid much applause. These feats were succeeded by a display of equitation; chief personage riding into a city in triumph on an ass and a colt the foal of an ass. Grand spectacular procession.

The fun now grew fast and furious. An elaborately set scene in a temple in which all the supernumeraries were thrashed with a whip, stalls overturned, and goods scattered in a true pantomimic *melée*, carried the performance on to its *denouement*.

The chief personage is arrested and after making fun of his judge by assenting to what he says, is condemned and taken away to be crowned in mockery, and hung with thieves. But all ends happily.

A dark scene which followed, merely led up and gave effect to the grand transformation scene in which the chief personage was seen going up in the gauzy clouds amid colored fires.

As the harlequinade which followed was of a yet more tedious character than the preceding, I suspect that readers will neither require a description nor regret the falling into oblivion of the Gobbergammergow Pantomime.

LUCIANUS.

J.M.W.

THE REAL TRINITY.



£ s. d., £ s. d.,
That's the real Trinity;
Three in one and one in three,
Ever-blessèd £ s. d.
Priests may call thee filthy trash,
Yet we know they preach for cash;
Every call by th' Holy Ghost
Means a higher salaried post.
Bishops make a heavy pile,
Knowing well that all the while
They are gathering coals to swell
Their own fires in blazing hell;
For they teach that Heaven's door
Opens only to the poor.
Humble curates even plan,
Like the prouder working man,
How to make the Church more true
By raising their own little screw.
Moody comes to save us all
From the pain of Adam's fall,
To rescue sinners from the pit,
And make them all with Jesus sit.
Yet how he profits by the game,
And finds it pay to preach God's name
He wields the heavy Gospel lash,
And souls are saved—and so is cash.
Talmage next across the ocean
Comes to make a great commotion;
He'd save us from God's awful curses,
He wants our souls—he means our purses.
But why the simple tale prolong?
Brief be our wit and brief our song.
To end—the clergy see 'tis vain
To dogmatise and not explain;
They give up flams for which they fought,
And square themselves with modern thought.
So now the simple message heaven-sent
Is "Trust in God and pay your pew-rent."
£ s. d., £ s. d.,
That's the real Trinity;
Three in one and one in three,
Ever-blessèd £ s. d.

EVE AND THE SERPENT.



“ Mother of man, cool dew o'erbrims the flowers
That star the curtains of thy od'rous bed,
Wells bubble ceaseless through the lazy hours
Sought readier than the fruit above thy head.
But ah! it reck's not, female will o'erpowers—
The arrow from the shaft of fate hast sped,
And thou, poor world, hast got a bitter lesson
Out of a silly petticoat's transgression.

“ The act is yet undone—but soft, behold!
Steals from the thicket to the blazing sun
A wondrous thing in mail of green and gold
And ruby red, alternate bright and dun,
Pois'd on a coil of rings scarce half unrolled;
Erect! A sight she vainly sought to shun,
For, lo! it held her with its gleaming eye,
Deep burning in its socket, keen and shy.”
From “Paradise Lost: A New Version.” By PATROCLUS.

THE STONE EVANGELISTS.

A CHURCH FRAGMENT.

Wherever the builder had been at a hitch
For an ornament he had left a niche;
There were twenty or more from altar to door,
But the holiest out of the lot were four,
Wherein perched high over pew and column,
Stonily stupid, sleepily solemn,
Each with a nose and a member gone,
Stood Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John.

Saintly once, but humorous time
Has no great fancy for things sublime,
And Matthew's eye had the ghost of a wink,
And Mark had yawned, or a cynical chink
Had gaped well for him, while Luke had a grin
You could put the end of a prayer book in,
And a pert young sparrow had roosted on
The head of the apostolic John.

Six days in silence they slept each one,
Till the bells chimed out in the morning sun,
And the folks of the town came struggling in
To shrive their souls of the six days sin,—

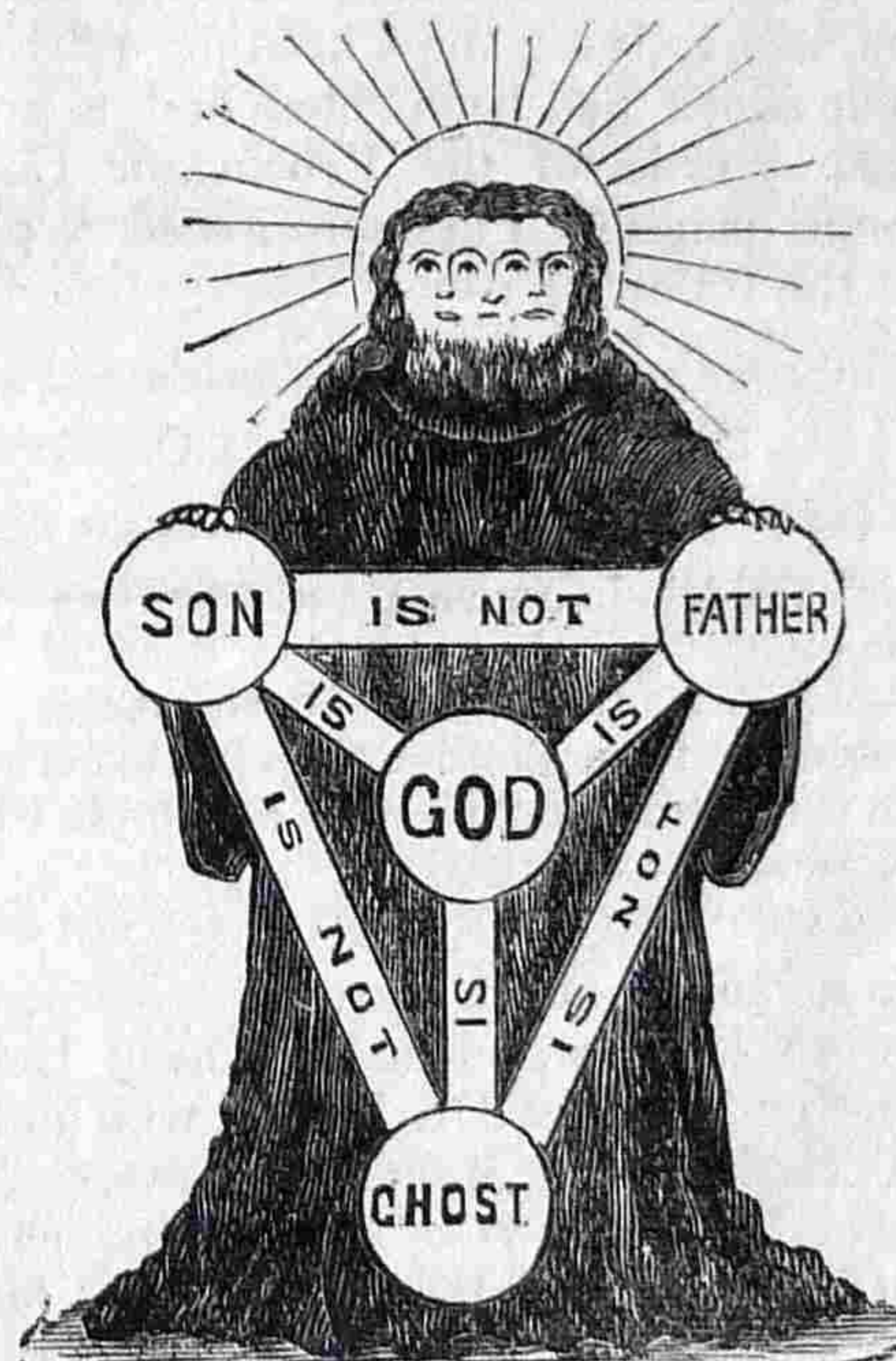
For a spice of heaven gives zest to hell,
And an old church suits a new bonnet well.
Then “Hist,” said Matthew, “Heigho!” said Mark,
And Luke in Greek said “*Αντι τα λαρκ.*”

* * * * *
The preacher prefaced his dry prelection
With a brief appeal for a good collection;
The money had gone, or so he said,
To give the apostle Paul a head,
And now he must earnestly once more beg
For the glorious object of Peter's leg.
Then he gave out a text by way of a peg
To hang a half-guinea sermon on,—
“I'm damned if I ever said that!” quoth John.

Then he quoted the gospel of Mark, who shook
With rage till he almost fell from his nook,
And as for Luke, his grin was a gasp
That would take in a Bible up to the clasp,
And Matthew was black in the face at fiction
From the time of the text to the benediction,
And they all four muttered with one accord
That they wished they had never seen the Lord.

* * * * *
Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John
Have each of them got new noses on;
Matthew and John can boast of limbs,
And Luke's mouth gapes o'er a book of hymns;
Mark has of late been quite converted,
His legless middle is now stone shirted,
And though the old and the new don't match
They and the Gospels are all of a patch.

M. W.



A PUZZLE EXPLAINED.
FROM AN OLD JESUIT PICTURE.

THE LAST TRIALS FOR FREE DISCUSSION
IN SCOTLAND.

ONE of the most interesting and inspiring phases in the history of our past is the record of the long and persistent struggle by Freethinkers for the right of freely publishing their opinions. The muster-roll of the army who have fought and suffered in this cause is a very extended one. We propose from time to time to call attention to these departed worthies; but for the present confine ourselves to a near time and a narrow field—the last persecutions in Scotland.

Thomas Paterson is one of those whose names have almost been lost amid the crowd of abler and worthier men. Yet his services in carrying on the battle against bigotry and superstition at a critical period were of the most signal character. He brought to the advocacy of Freethought a bull-dog pertinacity and indomitable courage, then sorely needed to tame the rampant beast of Christian persecution. In 1842, when the sprightly and well-beloved Charles Southwell lay a prisoner for twelve months in Bristol jail for publishing in No. 4 of “The Oracle of Reason,” an article entitled “The Jew Book,” Paterson persisted in

reading this article before lecturing at public meetings. When, within a few months of the incarceration of his friend Southwell, G. J. Holyoake, the second editor of the "Oracle of Reason," was sent to Cheltenham jail for six months, Chilton and Ryall made Paterson the third priest of the Oracle, which but for their pluck, would have become as silent as the oracles of old. The third priest shared the fate of the former two. He was arrested for exhibiting profane placards, and incarcerated in Tothill Fields prison for three months, after perhaps the most audacious and astounding defence ever set up in a court of justice. He persisted in considering God as the plaintiff, and in quoting the coarsest passages from "The Jew Book," to show the plaintiff's bad character. Paper after paper was taken from him by order of the court, and even his pocket Bible impounded, "for reading such texts as might tend to throw discredit on religion," as the magistrate declared. The full report of the trial, "God *versus* Paterson," was however published, and remains to this day among the curiosities of literature.

When the impossible crime of blasphemy was met by civil penalties the "irreconcilable school" of Freethinkers felt it a duty to blaspheme, and Paterson was one of those ever ready to blaspheme accordingly.

He had not been long out of prison, where he had been treated as a common felon, deprived of all communication with his friends, and made to pick oakum until his fingers bled (a circumstance touchingly alluded to in Emma Martin's poem, "The Last of the Martyrs"), when, hearing that prosecutions were taking place in Scotland, his native country, he started north for Edinburgh. Messrs. Robinson and Finlay had been arrested in that city for selling works "calculated to bring the Christian religion into contempt." Their shops had been rifled and a great quantity of books seized by order of the Procurator Fiscal. While their trials were pending Paterson issued a placard, from which we cut the following:—

"Under the patronage of the Procurator Fiscal
PATERSON AND CO.
(of the Blasphemy Depot, London).

BEG to acquaint Infidels in general, and Christians in particular, that, in consequence of the immense demand for blasphemous works—the Procurator Fiscal himself having taken some hundreds of volumes from another shop in this city—they have, with a view to furnish the public with an ample supply, opened a depot at 38, West Register Street.

The Bible and other obscene works NOT sold at this shop."

His billstickers and himself were apprehended, and, while bailed out before his trial, he had his head badly hurt at a public meeting on behalf of Dr. Kalley, who had been prosecuted by the Catholics of Maderia. Paterson's trial took place on November 8th, 1843. In his eloquent and argumentative defence he met the charge by a justification of his opinions and of his right to publish them. "Her Majesty's advocate," said he, " marvels that I should think Christianity a cunningly devised fable; and I marvel greatly that any educated individual can be found in this age of science and discovery capable of supposing it divinely concocted truth. To me it is astonishing that anyone should seriously believe that millions shall be damned for not believing the vague accounts of miraculous works, which were rejected with scorn by those whom the accounts say saw them performed." Such a course was little calculated to ensure an acquittal. He was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment; Robinson received twelve months, and Finlay sixty days. And then stepped on the scene a Freethought heroine, Matilda Roalfe.

Miss Matilda Roalfe, who had left London to assist in "the movement," opened a shop at No. 105, Nicholson-street, and published a manifesto to the public of Edinburgh, wherein she stated:—"I neither hope nor fear anything from authority; and am resolved to supply the public with works of a controversial and philosophical character, whether such works do or do not bring into contempt the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion."

Police-officers were speedily sent by the Procurator-Fiscal to purchase "The Oracle of Reason" and other "blasphemous works." Both Miss Roalfe's shop and her private dwelling were ransacked, and a considerable portion of her stock carried off to the police-office. She was brought before the Court on Tuesday, January 23rd, 1844, Sheriff Tait presiding. Miss Roalfe conducted her own defence. Questioned as to the sale of the works, she replied:—"I

did sell them, but am not guilty of doing so with a wicked and felonious intent. I am quite satisfied that the quotations made from the books may be borne out by reference to the Bible."—Sheriff Tait: "In vending them you are guilty of breaking the law."—Miss Roalfe: "I have read the books bought, and I don't see anything in them that I am not prepared to defend. I do not think that such works are calculated to demoralize the readers of them." The officer who gave evidence against her was considerably *non-plussed* by being asked, "Are you less moral in consequence of having read them?"

She stated in her brief defence that it was the reading of the Bible alone which had changed her opinions. She had been for many years teacher in a Sunday School, and made a practice of telling scholars to ask for an explanation of passages they did not understand. Was repeatedly asked questions she could not answer, and resolved to study the Bible more attentively than she had done before. The result was she lost her belief in the supernatural character of the Christian religion. Had been much happier since and derived more pleasure from the study of the sciences than she had ever derived from the study of theology. She did not regret what she had done, and as soon as she was at liberty should consider it her duty to do the same thing again. The question was not whether Christianity was true or false, but whether Atheists had an equal right with Christians to publish their opinions. She had only to repeat that it was her intention to pursue the same course as soon as she should be at liberty.

Sheriff Tait, having referred to the decisions of the High Court of Justiciary as settling the law, gave the heaviest sentence in his power—two months' imprisonment.

By her temperate and courageous defence, Miss Roalfe had enlisted the sympathy of a crowded court, and the sentence was received with hisses, necessitating a threat that the court should be cleared. Miss Roalfe exhibited great firmness, and, on being removed to jail, the assembled crowd gave vent to their feelings in three hearty cheers. Those cheers signalized the end of legal persecution. The persistently-fought battle for free discussion was won. No sooner was Miss Roalfe incarcerated than *The Movement* announced that—

"Mr. William Baker of the United Order of Blasphemers, London, has arrived in Edinburgh to take the superintendence of the Atheistical Depot in Nicholson Street during the absence of Miss Roalfe."

Upon her liberation, Miss Roalfe resumed her shop in Nicholson Street, and continued the sale of Freethought literature for a year without further molestation. She thus described her treatment in prison:—

"When I was removed from the bar after sentence was pronounced I was conveyed in a cab to Calton jail. On my arrival I was placed in the 'receiving ward' with a number of other prisoners, where I remained until about seven o'clock, when I was ordered to strip myself of every article of clothing and plunge into a bath in the presence of above half a dozen persons. Against this, however, I strongly protested, and neither would nor *did* submit to such an indignity. I was then given the prison dress and locked up in a stone cell without fire, and treated in every respect as a common felon. During the first three weeks of my incarceration I suffered very severely both from cold and hunger. At the expiry of that time I was removed to another cell, which was lighter and rather warmer, and was ordered some additional flannel by the doctor, as I was suffering from severe pains; no alteration whatever was made in my food. I was neither permitted to write nor to receive letters, and although many were sent by persons in various parts of the country, yet I was not permitted to receive them till the morning of my liberation. Amid all the privation I endured there was yet one glorious privilege of which they could not rob me, my thoughts were still unfettered; our persecutors have yet to learn that when they have turned the dungeon key upon us, there is still that, over which they have no control, thought free as ever defies all their attempts to enslave it, and until they can do this their triumph is incomplete. I still feel the most thorough contempt for that law, which will concede to one portion of society rights which it withholds from another.

"I therefore resolved to act in defiance of such a system, and having weighed all the consequences before I did so act, I have never for one moment regretted it. Let us unite all our energies, nor relax our endeavors until we have obtained the abrogation of a law which is an insult alike to common sense and justice."

These are the brave words of a brave woman, prepared to suffer as well as to speak, for the right of free thought and free discussion. It is to such courageous martyr spirits that we Freethinkers owe the priceless liberty that we to-day enjoy.

CURIOUS POLICE CHARGE.

BOW STREET.—Sergeant Sharp, of the detective division, applied for a warrant to arrest an elderly individual of the Hebrew persuasion, understood to bear an unpronounceable name variously reported as Jahweh or Yahveh, *alias* Adonay, *alias* Aleim; and with various other aliases. It seems that in the rubbish at Scotland yard, Sergeant Sharp discovered evidence that the said Yahveh had formerly been leader of a horde of banditti, whom he incited to the most nefarious practices and atrocious cruelties. These documents, it is said, prove Yahveh to have been a most sanguinary wretch; and it is even reported that his craving for blood led to the murder of his only son. The magistrates, after looking at the documents, the original of which were in Hebrew, said there was a clear case for inquiry, and immediately granted the warrant. It is but fair to the accused to add that an opinion is prevalent that if Yahveh is discovered he will be prepared to prove an *alibi*.

THE NEW AND TRUE DOXOLOGY.

(To be used by persons coming from churches, prayer-meetings, or tea-fights).

Praise Cant, from which our riches flow!
Praise it ye clerics here below!
Praise it ye "nobs"—a mighty host—
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

Praise God for all the simple fools
Who make for us such ready tools,
Without whose aid throughout the land,
Scarcely a day our craft could stand.

Praise God for our old worn-out creed
By which we yet the people bleed!
And let us raise our voices higher—
Praise him for brimstone and hell-fire!

Praise him for queens and tyrant kings!
May we all value such *dear* things!
And teach the people 'tis God's will
Their toil should royal coffers fill.

Praise God for dukes, and lords and earls,
All better flesh than common churls,
Praise him for bishops strong in might,
To bless the wrong and curse the right.

Praise God for partridge, pheasant, deer,
For brandy, wine and tithe-got cheer,
And tell the people, lacking bread,
Christ had not where to lay his head.

Praise God above, praise Cant below,
Praise God in haste, and praise Cant slow,
Praise God aloud, but praise Cant most,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

R. ANDERSON.

THINGS TO PONDER.

MAX MULLER ON ATHEISM.—There is an Atheism which is unto death; there is another Atheism which is the very life-blood of all true faith. It is the power of giving up what in our best, our most honest moments, we know to be no longer true; it is the readiness to replace the less perfect, however dear it may have been to us, by the more perfect, however much it may be detested, as yet, by others. It is the true self-surrender, the true self-sacrifice, the truest trust in truth, the truest faith. Without that Atheism no new religion, no reform, no reformation, no resuscitation, would ever have been possible; without that Atheism no life is possible for any one of us.—*Hibbert Lectures*

DOUBT.—Scepticism is guilt in the eyes only of those who fear truth, since it is the essential pre-requisite of it.—*Dr. Maudsley*.

TO BIBLE READERS.—My own constant cry to all Bible readers is a very simple one:—Don't think that nature (human or other) is corrupt; don't think that you yourself are elect out of it; and don't think to serve God by praying instead of obeying.—*John Ruskin*.

A DIFFICULT QUESTION.—An ancient Greek was once asked who or what God was. He asked a day's time to

think of his answer. On subsequent days he always doubled the time required for deliberation: and when asked the reason, he replied that the longer he considered the subject the more obscure it appeared.

WAS CHRIST A GOD?—If *Christ* was in fact *God*, he knew all the future. Before him, like a panorama, moved the history yet to be. He knew exactly how his words would be interpreted. He knew what crimes, what horrors, what infamies, would be committed in his name. He knew that the fires of persecution would climb around the limbs of countless martyrs. He knew that brave men would languish in dungeons, in darkness, filled with pain; that the *Church* would use instruments of torture, that his followers would appeal to whip and chain. He must have seen the horizon of the future red with the flames of the *Auto-da-Fe*. He knew all the creeds that would spring like poison fungi from every text. He saw the sects waging war against each other. He saw thousands of men, under the orders of priests, building dungeons for their fellow-men. He saw them using instruments of pain. He heard the groans, saw the faces white with agony, the tears, the blood—heard the shrieks and sobs of all the moaning, martyred multitudes. He knew that commentaries would be written on his words with swords, to be read by the light of fagots. He knew that the *Inquisition* would be born of teachings attributed to him. He saw all the interpolations and falsehoods that hypocrisy would write and tell. He knew that above these fields of death, these dungeons, these burnings, for a thousand years would float the dripping banner of the cross. He knew that in his name his followers would trade in human flesh, that cradles would be robbed, and women's breasts unbabed for gold, and yet he died with voiceless lips. Why did he fail to speak? Why did he not tell his disciples, and through them the world, that man should not persecute, for opinion's sake, his fellow-man? Why did he not cry, You shall not persecute in my name; you shall not burn and torment those who differ from you in creed? Why did he not plainly say, I am the *Son of God*? Why did he not explain the doctrine of the *Trinity*? Why did he not tell the manner of baptism that was pleasing to him? Why did he not say something positive, definite, and satisfactory about another world? Why did he not turn the tear-stained hope of heaven to the glad knowledge of another life? Why did he go dumbly to his death, leaving the world to misery and to doubt?—*Ingersoll*.

MORALITY AND MODERN ATHEISM.—All I maintain is, that the power and persistence of morality among men are not at all at the mercy of the religious or any other convictions of this, that, or the other person or group of persons. Without being an institution of the arbitrary will of a being who insists upon it as man's only chance of a comfortable immortality, it may yet have all the coercive strength while escaping the rigidity of such an institution, for it may depend upon what are, if less arbitrary, at least as exacting as the will of any conceivable God—the conduct-conditions of man's life. To ascertain categorically what these (ever slightly fluctuating) conditions are, would of course be a superhuman task, since their complexity must equal that of the compounded and averaged requirements of all and every member of a many-millioned humanity. No religion has yet settled them for us definitely and finally. So much of them as we have felt out, forms, nevertheless, the basis of our rectitude, whether we give ourselves a religious explanation of our code or not.—*L. S. Bevington*.

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT.—Why do we admit design in any machine of human contrivance? Simply because innumerable instances of machines having been contrived by human art are present to our mind. The analogy which you attempt to establish between the contrivances of human art, and the various existences of the universe, is inadmissible. We attribute these effects to human intelligence, because we know beforehand that human intelligence is capable of producing them. Take away this knowledge, and the grounds of our reasoning will be destroyed. Our entire ignorance, therefore, of the Divine nature leaves this analogy defective in its most essential point of comparison. From the fitness of the universe to its end you infer the necessity of an intelligent Creator. But if the fitness of the universe to produce certain effects be thus conspicuous and evident, how much more exquisite fitness to his end must exist in the

Author of this universe? If we find great difficulty in conceiving that the universe has existed from all eternity, and to resolve this difficulty suppose a *Creator*, how much more clearly must we perceive the necessity of this very *Creator's* creation? The assumption that the universe is a design, leads to a conclusion that there are an infinity of creative and created Gods, which is absurd. It is impossible indeed to prescribe limits to learned error, when Philosophy relinquishes experience and feeling for speculation.—*Shelley's* "Eusebis and Thesephus."

WHETHER there be one God or three,—no God or ten thousand,—children should have enough to eat, and their skins should be washed clean. It is not I who say that. Every mother's heart under the sun says that, if she has one.—*John Ruskin.*

RELIGION must not attempt to force on our acceptance, as explanations of the universe, dogmas which were originally the childish guesses at truth made by barbarian tribes.—*G. H. Lewes.*

SCIENCE AND GOD.—It seems to me impossible to obtain from science any clear ideas respecting the ways or nature of the Deity, or even respecting the reality of an Almighty personal God. Science tells us nothing of the infinite attributes of an Almighty Being; it presents to us no personal infinities, whether of power, beneficence, or wisdom. To speak in plain terms—so far as science is concerned, the idea of a personal God is inconceivable (*I mean these words to be understood literally*), as are all the attributes which religion recognises in such a Being.—*R. A. Procter.*

THEOLOGY.—Well-being is the main thing—belief is secondary. To patch up a system of religion before one has thought how to bring men to the harmonious exercise of their duties is an inane conceit. Are two vicious dogs made good by being imprisoned in one kennel? It is not agreement in *opinions*, but agreement in *virtuous actions*, that renders the world peaceful and happy.—*Lessing.*

ELISHA YE PROPHET.

A Nursery Tale with a Moral for "Little Children."

(See 2 Kings, chapter ii.)

Ye Prophet—

Elisha was a prophet
Quite good enough for Jews,
He was the son of Shaphat,
And wore Elijah's shoes.

Hys miracles—

He healed the leper Naaman
And made an axe to swim;
Yet, though a wonder worker,
He'd one thing wrong with him.

Hys faylinge—

His scalp required thatching.
(To make a barber's wig
His holy bumps to cover
Was a miracle too big.)

Hys curse—

So when he went to Bethel
The little ones did roar
"Go up, go up, thou bald-head"—
Then the prophet cussed and swore.

Ye catastrophe—

Lo! from a wood came running
Two God-inspired bears,
And forty-two they gobbled
Of the naughty little dears.

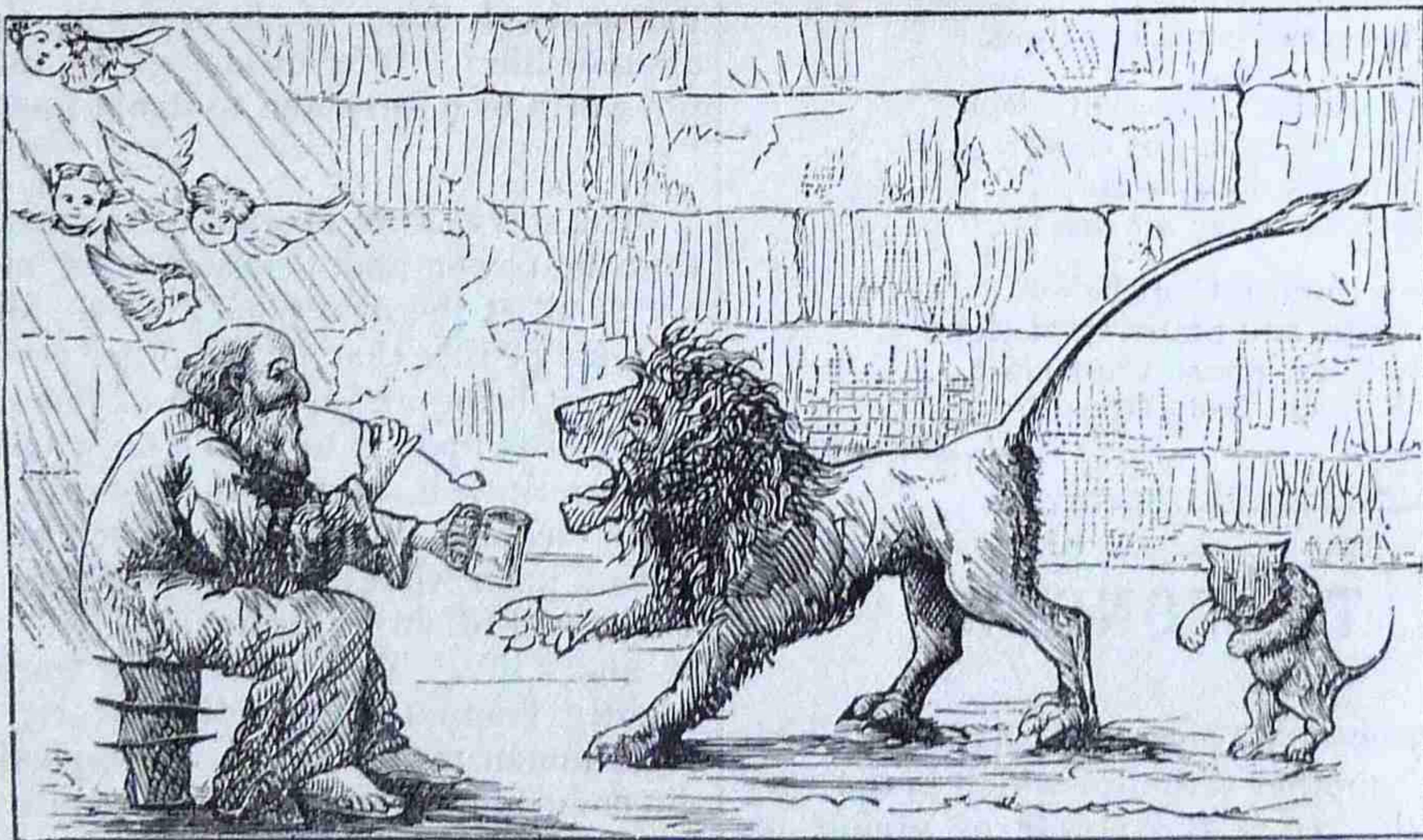
Ye explanatione—

To make some "Hair Restorer"
The prophet needed grease,
And the bears would now be fat ones,
Having twenty-one a-piece.

Ye Morale—

So girls and boys, be careful,
You see you can't afford
To speak your mind to bald-heads
If prophets of the LORD.

LAON.



DANIEL IN THE DEN.

THE IMPIETY OF THEISM.

HERBERT SPENCER'S observation that "volumes might be written on the impiety of the pious" is as true as it seems paradoxical. Among no class of men are the qualities of reverence and humility more conspicuously absent than among that of the so-called religious.

The very attempt to prove the existence of a God—a being above and beyond nature—is an act of irreverent audacity. Theism is based upon the assumption that the powers of nature are limited—otherwise the supposition of a God would be unnecessary. But what could be more irreverent than such an assumption? What could be more audacious than to suppose finite man capable of pointing to a certain phenomenon and saying "Here Nature ends and God begins?" Besides, to assert that the powers of nature are so

very limited is to betray a very low estimate of the universe which, according to Theists, God was at the trouble of creating. If the Atheist is wrong in not believing in God's existence, he, at any rate, is not guilty of underrating God's handiwork.

It is hardly possible to conceive of anything more irreligious than the conception of God set forth in the Bible. Pious people doubtless regard with feelings of horror the ancient practice of representing the Trinity in religious prints as three persons standing in one pair of boots. And yet the Bible God is as grossly anthropomorphic. He is represented in Genesis as taking a walk in the garden of Eden. If the Bible can permit him to take a walk it is difficult to see why Christians can refuse him a pair of boots.

God's character, as portrayed in the Bible, is not only immoral but positively revolting. According to this holy book, God has pronounced an eternal curse upon every

creature born into the world, not for any crime the creature has committed, but because somebody else, some thousands of years ago, offended him by wickedly eating an apple. It would be wasting words to dwell upon the impiety of such a conception of Deity. Suffice it to say that if theological divines do not assure us that this Being was the Lord, ordinary people would take him for the Devil.

One has only to hear an occasional sermon, or read an occasional religious periodical, to be assured that the prominent idea of God is that of an infinite theologian—a sort of omnipotent John Calvin—who, at the Day of Judgment, shall subject all us poor devils of mortals to a rigid theological cross-examination, punishing the heterodox with eternal torments in hell, and rewarding the orthodox with eternal bliss in heaven. Such a conception of God is a thousand times more irreverent than the most dogmatic Atheism. Fancy a God having strong opinions on theology! Fancy the author of the universe insisting on a point of doctrine! Fancy the infinitely good and wise God sending a poor devil to hell because he failed to solve the riddle of existence aright! Think of the author of all good damning a man for bad logic! The idea is preposterous. Even man has outgrown the more barbarous forms of persecution. We no longer use the rack and the thumbscrew to convince those who differ from us. We are beginning to admit that a man may be a sceptic without being a scamp. But, according to Christians, God sticks to the old theory of torture. We are above burning heretics on earth, but God is not above burning them in hell. We no longer keep an inquisitor, but God still keeps on the Devil. In a word, God is going to do in the next world what good men are above doing in this. Yet thousands of people, having such a conception of God, brand Atheists as impious for simply admitting their inability to solve the mystery of nature. Theism is an impiety, and the Bible is one of the most irreligious books in the world. True reverence consists in refraining from dogmatism in any form whatever, and in humbly admitting the transcendent mystery of the universe. Goodness is true piety, and work is the noblest of prayers. True religion consists not in praising God, but in helping man. Whether there is a God or not, or a hereafter or not, one thing is certain—a well-lived life is never a mistake. Virtue does not need a heaven—it makes one; it does not need a God to reward it—in the long run it never fails to bring its own reward.

W. NELSON.

HOLY BIBLE.

“Holy Bible
Book divine,
Precious treasure
Thou art mine.”

“Holy Bible”—glorifies
Deeds of darkness, deeds of lies,
Unsurpassed for treachery,
Done, O God of love, by thee!
Murder, robbery and lust,
Changing horror to disgust,
Blacken page on page of thine
Holy bible book divine.

“Book divine”—no human pen
Now would give to sons of men
Morals, science, got from thee
Wonder-working Deity.
None who follow thee but find
Reason must be left behind;
Such a book must be divine,
“Precious treasure thou art mine.”

“Precious treasure”—thou O Lord
Hast declared it thine own word,
But for that we gladly would
Have believed thee wise and good,
Have believed that in thy name
Enemies had wrought thee shame;
What more can we—but resign
“Holy Bible book divine.”

“Thou art mine”—we will not part,
Nor accept thee as thou art;
What is good we dearly prize,
What is bad we but despise;

Nobler future we foresee
For our great Humanity;
Than within thy pages shine
“Holy bible book divine.”

ELLJAYENN

FREETHOUGHT PROPAGANDA.

I HAVE before spoken of the necessity for leaving Secular literature in places of public resort, but I have as yet said nothing about the great *delicacy* with which this important duty should be performed. Christians who from their position and education, should know better, are for ever intruding their religious convictions upon the notice of persons who, very frequently, are excessively annoyed by such intrusion.

For years I have been an active propagandist of “infidelity,” yet I have never permitted my zeal to betray me into *forcing* my own convictions upon others. When religion is forced upon me I answer courteously, but firmly, defending my Atheistic position, and, as a rule, I find that orthodox opponents become frightened, and drop the conversation when they see that I am in earnest and that I have always an answer ready. The average Evangelical Christian is so ignorant, so convinced of the infallibility of his creed, that his confession is as ludicrous as it is painful when once he finds himself assailed with the cut and thrust arguments of common sense: “*Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.*”

In this country (Italy) I am frequently pained by the conduct of many English men and more English women. These weak but well meaning people go about distributing the most foolish little halfpenny tracts. They frequently give them to persons unable to read, or to young men whose education renders the offer of such literature (below the intellect of an intelligent child of five) an insult.

If these bodies and gentlemen could only hear what Christians say of them *behind their backs!* May Freethinkers never learn such monkey tricks!

Still more objectionable is the practice of giving controversial literature to children; yet I have often been disgusted by the spectacle of this.

As to the propriety of giving liberal literature to persons who manifest no repugnance to it, or who have by the offer of Christian literature laid themselves open to attack, there can be no reasonable doubt, though even in the latter case the rules of politeness should never be forgotten.

The leaving of such literature in places where it is likely to be seen is also, in my opinion, perfectly fair. No one in his senses expects to see a man converted by the reading of a Freethought book, but a man's attention may be arrested and his interest awakened by such reading, and were our movement brought more frequently to the notice of the general public people would soon begin to think “there was something in it.”

Every true Freethinker should feel that it is his duty to do something. Few men possess literary talent, but all men of ordinary intelligence can *speak* at the proper time and place and make known the writings of others. It would be well were every Secularist to remember that every time he leaves a book, a journal or a tract in a place where it is likely to be seen *he does something.*

R. H. DYAS.

RIB TICKLERS.

CLERGYMAN: “No, my dear, it is impossible to preach any kind of a sermon to such a congregation of asses.”—Smart young lady: “And is that why you call them ‘dearly beloved brethren?’”

“It's a long way from this world to the next,” said a dying man to a friend who stood at his bed-side.—“Oh, never mind, my dear fellow,” answered the friend, consolingly; “you'll have it all down-hill.”

SIDNEY SMITH was an awful wag. Clergyman as he was, he would have his joke, even if the Scriptures were profaned. One day, after a long discussion about some foreign bonds in which he had speculated, and which had proved worthless, his opponent gave in, saying, “Well, almost thou persuadest me.” Whereupon the witty Dean of St. Paul's rejoined, “I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, *except these bonds.*”

A LADY in the North had asked her son, who was going up to town, to bring back with him a certain motto, for the Christmas decorations in the parish church. On arrival at his destination he found that he had lost all recollection as to the size and description of the motto. Thereupon he telegraphed back, and received the following answer: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, 9ft. long by 2ft wide.”

THE minister asked the Sunday School—“With what remarkable weapon did Samson at one time slay the Philistines?” For a while there was no answer, and the minister to assist the children a little commenced tapping his jaw with the tips of his

fingers, at the same time saying, "What's this—what's this?" quick as thought a little fellow quite innocently replied, "the jawbone of an ass, sir!"

A CLERGYMAN on his way to church one Sunday was overtaken by a heavy shower of rain. On arriving at the vestry, he exclaimed, rather impatiently, "I wish I were dry!" "Never mind," said his colleague, "you will soon be in the pulpit, and there you will be dry enough."

A YOUNG student, showing the museum at Oxford to a party, produced a rusty sword, which he assured them was the identical sword with which Balaam was about to kill his ass. One of the company observed that he thought Balaam had no sword, but only wished for one. "You are right," said the student, "and this is the very sword that he wished for."

AN elderly woman, having experienced the effects of a prosy sermon, in a Scotch church, unfortunately fell asleep. The minister observing her, paused in his discourse, and in a loud voice thus addressed the delinquent: "Woman! there is no preaching in hell." "Perhaps not," was the reply. "But it's no for want o' parsons."

It is a well known fact that the late Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, possessed the power of repartee in a remarkable degree, and it is said that he even carried it with him "beyond the grave." Upon reaching the gate of heaven and knocking for admission, he was answered by Peter, who asked who it was knocking. The reply was Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield. Peter at once replied he could not think of admitting him; as he had told too many lies whilst upon earth. Benjamin hearing the sound of the retreating footsteps of Peter, imitated the crowing of a cock "twice," upon which, the door was immediately opened and Peter appeared and exclaimed, "For goodness sake, man, come inside, and let by-gones be by-gones!"

A VERY religious man, who wished to teach his workpeople moral precepts, had put on the walls of his extensive warehouse a number of Scripture texts. One of these read: "God helps those who help themselves." One of the workmen wrote underneath: "God helps those who help themselves; but God help any one who helps himself here."

AN old woman said "Thank God for putting Sunday at the end of the week, when he might have put it in the middle, and so made a broken week of it."

MORE discerning was the Scotch widow who had lost her thriftless husband. "Sae Providence in his mercy has seen fit to take awa' the head o' yer hoose Jeannie?" said a pious neighbor. "Och ay," replied Jean, but, thank gudeness, Providence in his mercy has seen fit to tak awa' the stummack tae."

A DARKEY when partaking of the Holy Communion tipped off a full goblet of the consecrated wine, and, smacking his lips, exclaimed. "How me loves my Jesus. Him mighty good for black sinners like me."

A LITTLE while ago, in the city of Chicago, a gentleman addressed a number of Sunday School children. In his address, he stated that some people were wicked enough to deny the story of the deluge; that he was a traveller; that he had been to the top of Mount Ararat, and had brought with him a stone from that sacred locality. The children were then invited to form in procession and walk by the pulpit, for the purpose of seeing this wonderful stone. After they had looked at it, the lecturer said: "Now, children, if you ever hear anybody deny the story of the Deluge, or say that the ark did not rest on Mount Ararat, you can tell them that you know better, because you have seen with your own eyes a stone from that very mountain."—*Ingersoll*.

A YOUNG clergyman made a doubtful illustration once, seeing a large fly walking across the book while he was exhorting, he raised his hand, saying, "My brethren, as sure as I shall kill that fly we shall all be damned." Then bringing down his fist with a bang he added, "Damn I've missed it!"

BENDIGO, the converted pugilist, gave a discourse to his comrades from the appropriate text: "Hit his eye, Peter, be not afraid."

THERE is a version of the Holy Scriptures in which owing to the dropping of the letter *c*, Paul is made to declare [1 Cor. xv. 51.] "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be *hanged*."

Two sailors entered a tabernacle at Portsmouth, where a revival was going on. Several of "the workers" described themselves as vile sinners, brands plucked from the burning, and the like. One of the tars convinced of the truth of their statements whispered his mate. "D'ye hear what d—d scoundrels we've got among Jack? Let us sheer off before the whole crew are sent to blazes."

A CABMAN had died, and a few of his late companions were talking together on the cabstand. One said "Where's Mike?" Another replied "Why, he's dead, and a good job too for him." "How's that?" "Oh, he has gone down below, and picked up the best berth there." "What's that?" "Driving the water-cart."

"MA," said a little girl, "I don't think Solomon was so rich as they say he was." "Why, my dear, what makes you think

so?" "Because he slept with his fathers; and I think if he had been so rich he would have had a bed of his own."

"My dear boy," said a Methodist mother with the poker in her hand, "God is everywhere!" "Is God in that poker, Ma?" asked the boy. "Yes, my dear," said the mother, "God is even in that poker now." "Then stick it in the fire, Ma," said the little fellow, "stick it in the fire!"

A WAG lent a parson a horse which ran away and threw him and then he took credit for "spreading the gospel."

"Ah! parson, if I could only take my gold with me," said a dying man. "If you could, it might melt," was the reply.

Said Stella to our greatest dean,
"What reason can be given
Since marriage is a holy thing
That there are none in heaven?"

"There are no women:" thus Swift said;
But she returned the jest—
"Women there are, but I'm afraid
They cannot find a priest."

It is related of an Aberdeen minister, whose preaching was very rambling and "through-ither," that, observing one of his hearers, as he fancied, sound asleep, he paused in his discourse and shouted out, "John Tamson! sit up; ye're sleeping." "I'm no sleepin'," was the rejoinder. "But ye were." "I wasna." "Weel, tell me what I said last." "I cannot do that," said John, with a sarcastic grin; "can ye do that yoursel'?"

A NEGRO at the point of death was told by his minister that he must forgive a certain darkey against whom he seemed to entertain very bitter feelings. "Yes, sah," he replied, "if I dies I forgive dat nigger; but if I gets well dat nigger ab better look out!"

CURIOUS PRAYER.—The following was the nightly prayer of a citizen of Cambridge: "O Lord, thou knowest that I have nine houses in the city of London, and also that I have lately purchased an estate in fee simple in the county of Essex. Lord, I beseech thee to preserve the two counties of Essex and Middlesex from fires and earthquakes. And as I have mortgage in Hertfordshire, I beg thee likewise to have an eye of compassion on that county. And, Lord, for the rest of the counties, thou mayest deal with them as thou art pleased. O Lord, enable the bank, to meet all their bills, and make all my debtors good men. Give a prosperous voyage and return to the Mermaid sloop, which I have insured. And, Lord, thou hast said that 'the days of wicked men are short,' and I trust thou wilt not forget thy promises having purchased an estate in reversion of Sir J. P.—, a profligate young man. Lord, keep our funds from sinking; and, if it be thy will, let their be no sinking fund. Keep my son Caleb out of evil company and from gaming houses. And sanctify, O Lord, this night to me by preserving me from thieves and fire; and make my servant honest and careful, whilst I, thy servant lie down in thee, O Lord. Amen!"

Two studious young men were examining some fossils from the coal measures and speaking of the immense coal forests in which the *Calamitis*, *Segilaria*, and *Lepidodendron* grew, when an old miner approached and after listening for a while, said, "For shem o' yorsell young man, gammen agyen the scriptors like that, thor nivvor was onny forests thar." "Well then," said the young man addressed, "how came these plants and animals down in the earth." The pious old man looked at the impressions and replied, "God Almighty shoved them down through the cracks in the orth hinny."

A LEARNED divine found an argument for the exclusion of women from the celestial city, on the passage in the Apocalypse which states: "there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour."

D O U B T.

Doubt! brave Doubt! without a fear!
Let the sacred church revile thee,
We will hail thee pioneer!
Vanguard! hope of Liberty!

Superstition draped in woe,
May lament a people free,
Danger-daring Doubt, we know
Truth and Progress follow thee.

First dim light before the dawn,
First to be forgotten when
Day is breaking, though withdrawn,
Light is flooding eyes of men.

Yet through darkness on, and on,
Sorrow-laden, lone and drear,
First dim light before the dawn,
Doubt! brave Doubt! without a tear!

L. J. N.

A TRUE CONVERSATION.

(Sworn to by Our Special Reporter, who was concealed under the table.)

SCENE.—A chamber in the Temple belonging to a fourth party.—Was it Kydd?

PERSONÆ.—Mr. Charles Newdigate Newdegate, Mr. Henry Lewis Clarke, and Sir Hardinge Giffard.

Newdegate.—My dear Sir Hardinge, that wretched Infidel has foiled us again. Would I had never entered on this dreadful business! My prospect of ever getting that £500 is exceedingly hazy, and if we lose the suit how on earth shall I be able to pay the costs?

Giffard.—My dear sir, pray don't be alarmed. My legal acumen is not often at fault, and I confidently predict that Bradlaugh will lose.

Newdegate.—So you said before, but you prophesied falsely. He has won. The verdict of a respectable British jury, mostly of our way of thinking, was our only chance; and now the judges have granted a new trial our last hope is gone. Besides, we shall have to go through all the cross-examination again. Oh the torture of that witness-box! I felt like a lost soul at the Judgment Day.

Giffard.—Well, to tell the truth, you did look uncomfortable, and some people said even worse.

Newdegate.—Worse! What do you mean?

Giffard.—Why some said—Bradlaugh's friends, of course—not ours—that you were the worse for—well, you know what.

Newdegate.—I the worse for liquor? for that's what I suppose you mean. I repudiate the insinuation. I never was the worse for liquor in my life.

Giffard.—Quite true, my dear sir; nobody ever was; but you've sometimes been the better for it.

Newdegate.—Never, sir; never.

Giffard.—What, never?

Newdegate (smiling grimly, like moonlight on a dark pool).—Well, hardly ever.

Clarke.—Gentlemen, this levity is perhaps excusable on the ground of your youth; but it ill becomes a man of my years, a sober retired surveyor, accountant and gentleman, to—

Giffard.—Pardon me; but when were you an accountant or a surveyor?

Newdegate.—And (damn you for interrupting!) when were you a gentleman?

Clarke.—Thank you both! I do your dirty work, I suppose! But I should like to know who is to pay me for it.

Newdegate.—Oh, you'll get paid in time, Clarke.

Clarke.—In time! If I don't receive it soon I shall have to be paid in eternity.

Giffard.—For heaven's sake, don't talk in that way! If you do the case is over. Confound it! I really believe Bradlaugh is dragging the case on in the hope that you will die and so end the suit.

Newdegate.—Die! End the suit! Then who's to pay costs? I shall be bankrupt instead of Bradlaugh.

Giffard.—No, no. Think of the magnificent subscription we are going to raise in recognition of your "bold and spirited" attempt to keep the Atheist out.

Newdegate.—You may well say going to raise. I see nothing of it yet. The committee has changed its secretary two or three times, and that's about all the change I am ever likely to see. Why did you and the rest inveigle me into this business?

Giffard.—Inveigle! We inveigle you? Sir, we are above it. Where is your proof?

Newdegate.—Ay, that's it. Where? You know I have nothing in black on white—no documentary evidence.

Giffard.—Come now, it is useless to continue in this vein. Let us consider what we shall do.

Newdegate.—We must of course continue the suit.

Giffard.—Certainly. I, as a lawyer, could never say no to that.

Newdegate.—But do you think we shall succeed?

Giffard.—Frankly I—that is—Oh, of course we shall.

Newdegate.—I wish I could be sure of it. But I am really apprehensive. Will all the previous cross-examinations be used against us?

Giffard.—Certainly.

Newdegate.—Then the Lord help us. I feel—what do I not feel? We shall assuredly lose. The tide has turned in the Infidel's favor, and we shall be stranded while he is floated to success, and what is worst of all, to his seat!!

Clarke.—Ah, ah! He, he! And if you win the £500 you won't keep Bradlaugh out of his seat. He, he! They'll let him in next time. Northcote won't take the matter up again now Gladstone has declared himself, and what's the use of little Churchill and all his little friends? Bradlaugh could eat them all. I'm sure he's big enough. He, he!

Newdegate.—A truce to this levity, sir. Our interview must terminate.

Giffard.—You will be looked after, sir, surveyed that is, and accounted with by Tory gentlemen. Mr. Newdegate will continue the suit—that is, you will; and if we lose (I assure you Mr. Newdegate) the Tory party will come to our relief.

They go out one by one, and speak in asides—

Clarke.—I wonder if I shall ever get the promised five hundred.

Newdegate.—I wonder if the costs will bankrupt me after all.

Giffard.—Whoever loses I win. Thus do I ever make my fool my—etc.—Iago.

THE ATHEIST'S GRAVE.

I wandered among the churchyard dead
On a sunny Sabbath day,
And I marked a grave where the sexton said
An Atheist's ashes lay.

A headstone pointed the lowly spot,
Inscribed with his age and name;
But other memorial there was not
To draw either praise or blame.

Yet the daisy there was as fresh in its hue,
The elm did as lightly wave,
And the springtide grass as greenly grew
As o'er the Christian's grave.

And I marked that the sunbeams through the trees
Fell as lightly on the sod
As if its inmate had been of these
Who had lived in the faith of a God.

And o'er my mind the reflection came
Of a new and startling kind;
'Twas whispered within me that man may blame
Where Nature no fault can find.

The bigot's curse from the Gothic pile
On the sceptical few may fall,
But Nature extends with a mother's smile
Her pity and love to all.

HERESY AND HERETICS.—On religion in particular the time appears to me to have come when it is the duty of all who, being qualified in point of knowledge, have on mature consideration satisfied themselves that the current opinions are not only false but hurtful, to make their dissent known; at least, if they are among those whose station or reputation gives their opinion a chance of being attended to. Such an avowal would put an end, at once and for ever, to the vulgar prejudice that what is called, very improperly, unbelief, is connected with any bad qualities, either of mind or heart. The world would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments, of those most distinguished even in popular estimation for wisdom and virtue, are complete sceptics in religion; many of them refraining from avowal, less from personal considerations, than from a conscientious, though now in my opinion a most mistaken apprehension, lest by speaking out what would tend to weaken existing beliefs, and by consequence (as they suppose) existing restraints, they should do harm instead of good.—*J. S. Mill*, "Autobiography," p. 45.

JUDAISM.—Judaism as a whole, has never been anything but a religion of blood and thunder; of which the votary offered the one for fear of the other.—*Wm. Repton*.

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