

COMIC SERMONS

AND OTHER

FANTASIAS

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BY

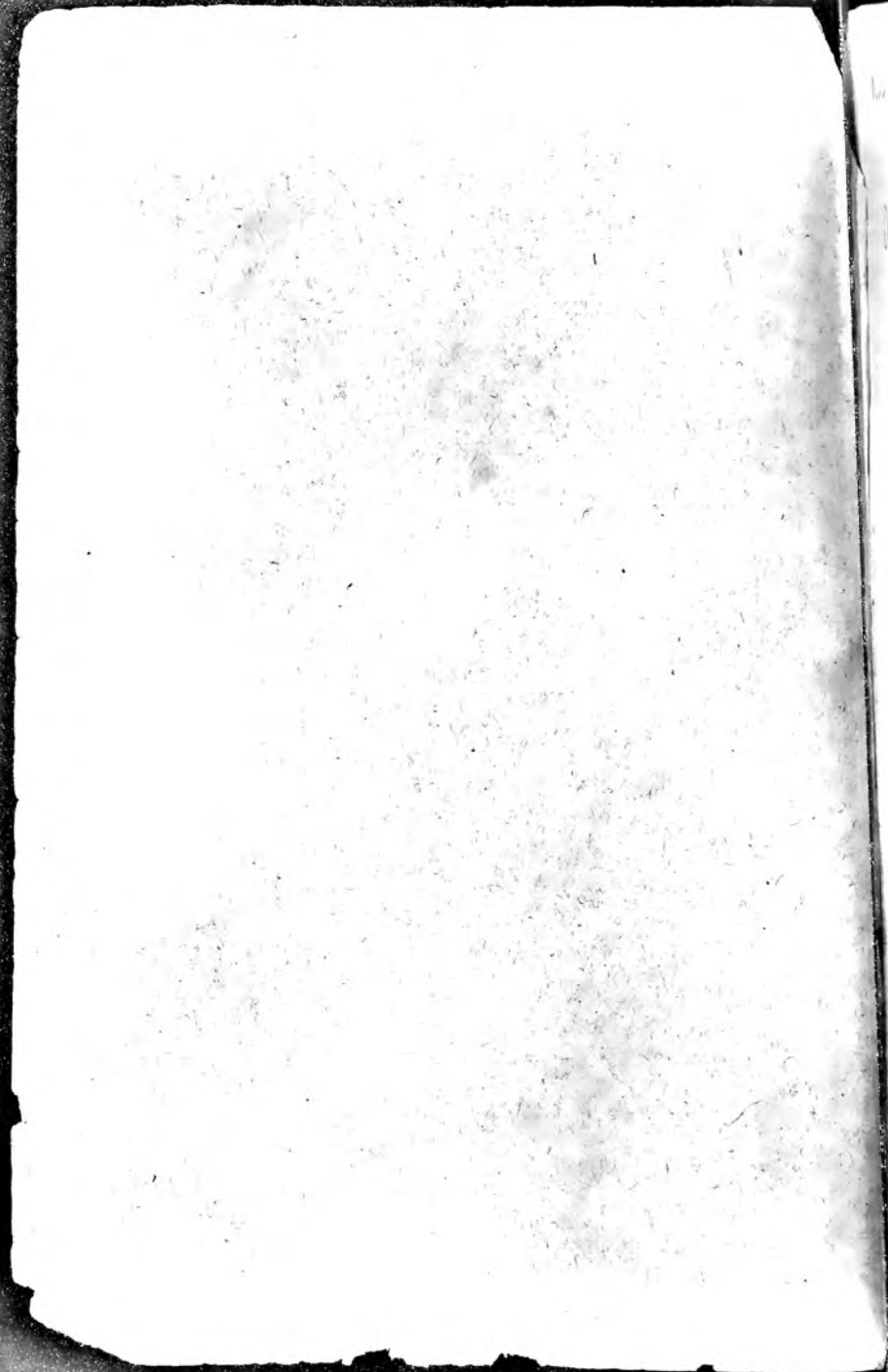
G. W. FOOTE.

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R. FORDER, 28 STONECUTTER STREET.

1892.



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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

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G. W. FOOTE

(Editor of the "Freethinker.")



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A SERMON ON SUMMER.

BY THE REV. OBADIAH ROUSER.

Dearlly Beloved,—The weather is excessively warm to-day, or, as some profane persons might say, damnably hot. My thermometer registered ninety degrees in the shade at noon, and no doubt it would have shown a higher temperature in the sun, if I had been imprudent enough to place it there or view it in that position. Your pastor, beloved, is no longer slim as in the days of his curacy, when he played cricket with the men and lawn-tennis with the ladies; when he rowed his skiff under a broiling sun without any preternatural perspiration; when he stretched himself out for a snooze in a shady spot without the torturing consciousness that his nose offered a spacious pasturage to a multitude of flies. No, beloved, your pastor is no longer slim; he has lost the slenderness of youth, and scoffers even assert that he is fat; yea, they have been heard to say that he resembleth a bull of Bashan or the great Leviathan himself. Nevertheless I thank God for the change, even though it affordeth mirth to these wanton wits, who neither revere the Lord nor his holy ministers. Blessed be the Almighty! for he hath permitted me to wax fat, yet without kicking. And blessed be ye, O beloved ones! for your unfailing bounty hath sustained me, yea and edified me, so that I am become the envy of my brethren, and the weightiest divine in all this part of her Majesty's kingdom.

Yes, beloved, the summer is undoubtedly come at last, after much anxious expectation. The sun darteth his fierce rays through the blue sky, and there is often not a single cloud as big as your pocket-handkerchief. Men's hearts fail because of the heat; they groan, they puff, they break forth into an agony and bloody sweat, they are as limp as a wet rag. And your pastor quaketh and shuddereth like jelly. The Lord trieth him sore.

Beloved, as I sat in my study last night in my dressing-gown, sipping iced claret through a straw, and smoking one of those mild cigarettes prescribed by Dr. Easy for my asthma, and presented to me by the kind and considerate Lady Providence, I wondered what I should take as the subject of my sermon this evening. For nearly two hours I had eudged my poor brains in vain, and the unwonted exertion had nearly exhausted my strength. I had not an idea, my head was as empty as a drum. In a fever of anxiety I tossed off a tumbler of claret, and at the same moment I sought the Lord in prayer. My petition was answered in the twinkling of an eye. Something, as it were the divine voice within me, whispered, "Summer," and I knew that was to be my text. Oh these answers to prayer! How they comfort and establish the faithful, how they confound and overwhelm the infidel! Luminous traces of the divine presence, they prepare us for that happy time when we shall see the Master face to face, when we shall behold him with even more fulness than he granted to his servant Moses in the cleft of the rock.

Summer, then, beloved, is the subject of my sermon. And the first reflection that occurs to me is this—What a testimony it is to the faithfulness of God! You will remember that when Noah descended from the top of Mount Ararat he "buildest an altar unto the Lord," although holy writ, silent on this as on so many other matters pertaining to the faith, omits to inform us whence he procured his materials. On that miraculous altar he burnt a prime selection of clean beasts and fowl; and the Lord, who was always carnivorous, as is abundantly proved by his rejection of Cain's vegetables and his acceptance of Abel's meat, heartily relished the savory smell. In that placable mood which naturally follows the gratification of appetite, he vowed never to curse and swear any more, or to kill all the world at a single blow; and in his divine mercy he added the promise that, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Now, beloved, has not this promise been punctually kept? It is true that we sometimes get abominably bad harvests, but who remembers a time when we had none at

all? And all we receive is a pure mercy, for the Lord might righteously withhold his hand and starve us all. But, bless and praise his holy name, he never does. He is a merciful God, slow to anger, and of great compassion. He remembereth our needs, and feedeth us though we have little faith; as you know right well, beloved, and as I know perhaps better than yourselves. Yes, we always get some kind of harvest; and do we not always get some proportion of day and night? True, at midsummer, day almost swallows the night, and at midwinter night almost swallows the day; and in very foggy weather we can scarcely tell where the one ends and the other begins. But the alternation of day and night is still a fact. No sceptic can dispute it. It is too much even for *him*. And, beloved, is not the succession of seasons also a fact, which the sceptic is equally unable to explain away? We know that the seasons, in a country like ours, often get a little mixed; but they disengage themselves frequently enough to remind us of God's promise, to prove to us his unchangeableness, and to show that he is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Yes, spring is a fact, autumn is a fact, winter is a fact, and summer is a fact. The infidel preacher at the Hall of Science cannot doubt that, for last Sunday evening, when my church was nearly empty, two ladies were carried out of his crowded meeting, overcome with the excessive heat. No, they cannot deny it. I defy all the sceptics in the world. I challenge the whole army of infidels. Their puny darts of argument are utterly powerless against the invulnerable shield of heavenly wisdom. All nature cries aloud, There is a God! and the head of every faithful child of God reverberates the sound. While seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, day and night, and summer and winter continue, the wretched unbeliever is constantly baffled by the fulfilment of God's promise to Noah. And thus, beloved, this hot weather, which puts us all into the melting mood, is a proof of God's existence quite beyond the reach of Atheistic logic; and it is no less a proof of God's eternal faithfulness. See, now, how the Almighty is always preaching to us. You were ready to curse this intense heat, which breeds cholera and other fatal plagues; but lo! it is a blessing in disguise. Some of you, in that rebellious state of mind might have

been seduced into infidelity. Now, however, you are safe. You see a sovereign proof of the existence of deity, and you know that to say *Summer* is to say *God*. Hallelujah!

Beloved, it is in no wise below the dignity of the pulpit to introduce, after this magnificent reflection, a few references of a lighter character. Let me then remark that, as many people are in doubt whether to remain indoors or to go out in this sultry heat, it is well to inquire what assistance on this subject can be obtained from the Divine Word. I speak with submission, but it appears to me indubitable that staying indoors at this time of the year is a pernicious fault if not a deadly sin. "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son," saith the sage author of the Book of Proverbs; and how can we gather anything unless we go where it is to be found? Let us further recollect that Eglon, the fat king of Moab, was sitting in a summer parlor when he met his death at the hand of Ehud, a fate which he might have avoided if he had taken his corpulence into the open air, where his attendants might have watched him and preserved him from all danger. We should also remember that Abraham "sat in the tent door in the heat of the day," when the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre. Had he kept within his tent he would probably never have seen the Lord, whom no man hath ever seen, never have talked with him face to face (cheek by jowl, as a wicked infidel expresses it) as a man talketh with his friend, never have washed God's feet, never have stood the Almighty a good dinner. What is still worse, he would have had no son Isaac as the child of his old age, and thus our Blessed Savior would never have been born for want of a progenitor. Oh, what a terrible reflection! All our prospects through eternity depended that afternoon on Abraham's sitting on the right side of a piece of canvas. Dear beloved, let me beseech you to take warning from this event. At least, be out of doors in the heat of the day, so that you may descry the Lord if he should pass by; yea, and also in the cool of the day, for he walketh then likewise, as is shown by the inspired story of the Fall.

There are some people, beloved, who appear to disregard the weather. They affect surprise when their neighbors complain of the heat in summer or the cold in winter.

What exasperating serenity do these persons exhibit! Surely it must have been characters of this description that composed the Church of Laodicea, of which the Holy Spirit so sweetly and elegantly declared that "because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Only a little less pitiable is the state of those whose blood is congealed with age, who are cool in the brightest sun, and positively shiver when the sun goes down. Yet there is a remedy for these; and may the elder members of my flock listen devoutly while I expound it. I turn first to the royal author of *Ecclesiastes*, who saith, "If two lie together then they have heat." Ah, beloved, that is only the threshold of my discovery, the first line of my recipe. I now turn to the beautiful and instructive story of David's old age, as recorded in the first chapter of the first Book of Kings. When this brave King of the Jews, this royal man after God's own heart, drew near his end, he suffered greatly from ague or some such disorder. They piled bed-clothes upon him, blanket after blanket, and rug on rug, but his poor old limbs still trembled with cold. In this extremity his wise physicians prescribed a bed-fellow to be taken nightly, and Abishag the Shunamite, the loveliest damsel in all the coasts of Israel, was selected for the purpose. A profane poet—no other, I believe, than that arch-fiend, Lord Byron—has ridiculed this exquisite story, which contains some of the noblest morality ever inculcated. He hints that David took this "fair young damsel as a blister." What shocking levity! What awful depravity! No, David clasped her to his withered bosom with paternal fondness; and she lay in his bed, not as a blister, but as a warming-pan or a hot-water bottle. And the reason, beloved, is obvious to common sense. Warming-pans and hot-water bottles, however well charged and preserved, get colder and colder through the long hours of an old man's night; but a fair young maiden keeps warm till the morning, and needs no replenishing. Beloved, this is how you must regard the subject; and if any of you should follow David's regimen, you will of course take the prescription in a righteous and godly spirit. Amen.

My time, beloved, is drawing to a close, for how can a

pastor of my proportions preach a long sermon in such weather? Yet I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without reminding you of the awful significance of a hot summer. There is not the least doubt in my mind that the Lord occasionally permits the heat to become almost intolerable on earth in order to remind us, not only of that great day when, as the holy apostle St. Peter declareth "the elements shall melt with a fervent heat," but also of that still greater eternity, in which, unless we make our peace with God, we shall lie panting and writhing in the fire of Hell. Beloved, let me implore you to profit by this merciful intimation. Lay the lesson to heart. Do not be led astray by sceptical suggestions. You have, doubtless, heard some wretched infidels assert that there is no Hell at all. Oh, the horrible thought! I venture to maintain, in scornful defiance of these impious wretches, that a universe without a hell would be not only absurd, but (I say it with reverence) an imputation on the Almighty's benignity. It must be clear to the dullest intelligence that Hell is necessary to complete the divine scheme of redemption. Without a hell, I should like to know what our Lord would have to save us from; and without a Hell, I should like to know how people are to be warned from the snares of infidelity. These very sceptics belie their own principles. Their whole conversation is larded with saving clauses, which testify to their secret belief in the holy verities they outwardly reject. Do they not frequently say, "It is devilish hot," or "It is hellish hot"? And what are these expressions, I ask, but implicit admissions that there *is* a Devil, and that there *is* a Hell? Yes, blessed be God, out of the mouths of infidels and sceptics, and scoffers and scorers, the truth of our holy religion is confirmed, and they themselves are "compelled to give in evidence" against themselves.

Furthermore, beloved, it is necessary that you should guard against the evil suspicion that every seat in Hell is by this time occupied. There is room enough and to spare. Yea, as Holy Scripture saith, "hell and destruction are never full." There was, however, a time when the capacity of the nether pit was nearly exhausted; but God, in his divine mercy, increased its dimensions; and thus the holy

prophet Isaiah was able to say that "Hell hath enlarged herself."

Yes, beloved, there *is* a Hell, and the heat we now complain of is only a mild foretaste of its consuming fire. Earthly thermometers are useless in Hell; they are incapable of registering the temperature, which infinitely exceeds our worst experiences even in tropical countries. And there will be no mitigations of its fierceness for ever, no iced claret, no lemon squash, nor even a milk and soda! Nay, beloved, you will cry in vain for a drop of water, as Dives did in one of our Lord's most tender and consoling parables. Ah, beloved, be advised in time. Shun the fate of that ancient sinner. If you do not, you must bear the responsibility, for my hands are clean. I have discharged my duty by warning you to flee from the wrath to come. I admonish you now, perhaps for the last time, to beware of the day when, instead of saying "It is damned hot," you may be damned and hot with a vengeance, and without a chance of cooling off.

Now may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, be with you and remain with you always. Amen.

A MAD SERMON.

SEVERAL years ago a famous preacher went mad (if we may say so of a gentleman who was always cracked), and was placed by his friends in a large private asylum. Under skilful treatment he gradually improved, and at length he so far recovered that his friends contemplated his removal. But a lucky accident revealed the fact that he was really still insane.

The chaplain of the establishment was taken ill one Saturday morning, and no clergyman in the neighborhood could be found, on so short a notice, to officiate for him the next day. In this difficulty the Principal suggested to the

chaplain that the mad parson might be asked to occupy his place. He seemed to be quite recovered, he was a duly-ordained minister of the Church of England, and his sermon would no doubt have all the impressiveness of a farewell discourse. The chaplain readily assented to the proposal, and his substitute, who accepted the invitation with great alacrity, was very busy during the rest of the day with pen and ink, with which he blackened several sheets of paper.

Sunday morning arrived, and the new preacher looked big with inspiration. His face wore a mystical expression, and there was a far-away look in his large grey eyes. But at times a gleeful smile flashed over his features, wrinkled the corners of his mouth, and danced under his shaggy brows.

When the inmates of the asylum, or rather those who were fit to go to church, had all taken their seats, there was a hush of expectancy; although some grinned or frowned at the ceiling and others at their neighbors. Presently the Principal walked in with the mad parson, who looked as sober as a judge, and might have been taken for a model clergyman. The Principal entered the pew, and the chaplain's *locum tenens* went to the desk and began the service. He read the prayers and lessons and gave out the hymns with the most admirable propriety. His intonation and expression were worthy of a bishop, and the Principal congratulated himself on his happy escape from a serious difficulty.

But when the mad parson mounted the pulpit in full costume there was a peculiar twinkle in his eye that aroused the Principal's suspicion. He had observed the same thing before in several of his quiet patients when they were bent on some piece of subtle devilry. Yet it was too late to interfere, and after all he might be mistaken. Perhaps it was only a fancy, or a peculiar effect of the light upon the preacher's face.

For a minute or two everything flowed smoothly. The text was cited with excellent emphasis, and the first few sentences were couched in unexceptionable language and read with professional gravity. But as he proceeded there was a change in his matter and manner. His insanity was evidently bubbling up from the depths, where it had lain so long concealed. Presently, a mad sentence sent two or three of the

quicker-witted patients into a fit of laughter, and several of the sillier ones joined in the chorus through mere contagion. In vain did the attendants try to restore order; the mad parson grew madder every minute, and the patients laughed louder and louder as he poured along the full stream of his lunacy. The Principal arose and commanded him to desist, but he was deaf to the voice of authority, and indeed quite insensible to everything but his own performance. An attendant ascended the pulpit stairs, and was promptly knocked down with the Bible. A second was served in the same way with the Prayer-Book. The Principal then ordered the church to be cleared, which was done with considerable difficulty, for many patients had by this time grown almost uncontrollable. When they were all removed an attack was made upon the pulpit. The mad parson sustained a long siege, and defended the citadel with remarkable gallantry. The stairs were so narrow that only one could mount them, and the attendants were flung down in rapid succession by the pious hero, who seemed full of the Spirit, and on excellent terms with the God of Samson. Two short ladders were then placed against the pulpit, and three attendants operated at once against the enemy, who was overpowered after a sharp struggle, and ignominiously dragged away from the scene of his triumph.

The manuscript of his sermon was torn and mangled in the contest, but portions of it were still legible. We are able to give a few specimens of this extraordinary discourse, which may be followed by others on some future occasion.

The mad parson's text was taken from Deuteronomy xxxii. 15: "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." His opening observations were addressed to the context, the occasion on which Moses spoke, and the sins of the Jews which he denounced. He then began his playful comments on the text in the following manner.

Various speculations have been hazarded as to the meaning of *Jeshurun*. The first part of the word, *Jeshu*, is a contraction of the common Jewish name of *Joshua*, which means "Jehovah is his salvation." Our Blessed Savior bore this name, although we use the Greek form of *Jesus*, in order to

invest the Redeemer with greater dignity; for there is something extremely familiar, and almost vulgar, in the name of Joshua, which, I remember in my childhood, was applied to the scavenger who emptied our dustbins, and who was vociferously accused by all the children of the parish of having inhumanly "skinned the cat," although I could never discover what particular member of the feline family it was that fell into his savage clutches. Yet as it was called "*the cat*," I presume it was an animal of distinction,* and perhaps of universal reputation.

By rejecting the final letter *ain* from the Hebrew *Jeshua*, the Jews give the name a peculiar significance. In this curtailed form it means "his name and remembrance shall be extinguished." Those miserable, unbelieving, perditionous, yea let me say *damned* Jews, have docked in this way the name of our Blessed Savior, because, as they say, he was not able to save himself, and it is clear that God Almighty did not take the trouble to save him. Infamous wretches! Those who would dare to cut off the Redeemer's tail in this shameful manner deserve the hottest corner in hell; and bless and praise his holy name, the Lord is keeping it for them for ever. Reserved seats, numbered and booked.

The second part of Jeshurun is easily understood. Everybody knows the meaning of *run*. Resist the Devil and he will run from you; encourage him and he will run after you. You run from the policeman, you run for life when a bull or mad dog is at your heels, and run over when you are full of gossip and scandal. And well do I remember how I used to run when Joshua the scavenger threatened me with his shovel.

But it is difficult to understand why Jeshua's name should be docked of a syllable and plastered up with *run*. Perhaps the operation left a running sore, or Jeshua himself ran away to escape further amputation. At any rate our hero was called Jeshurun, and that is enough for any believing soul.

According to our text, Jeshurun waxed fat. Holy Scripture does not say where, who, and on what. *When* is a hopeless question now. No man knoweth, not even the Son, but only the Father, and he is a long way off in heaven, in an asylum of his own. *Where* is a difficult, but still an easier question.

It must have been some place in the East, where lunatics are very properly regarded as inspired, treated with tenderness and care, and venerated as the oracles of divinity. Yes, all holy spirits are mad, and God is the maddest of us all; witness Holy Writ, brethren, witness Holy Writ. Certainly Jeshurun never waxed fat in an establishment like this, where noble fellows such as ourselves are subjected to incredible privations. Only last week I was compelled to fast forty-one days and nights, which is the longest fast on record; for Moses and our Blessed Savior fell short of it by a whole day, and Jonah by thirty-eight diurnal revolutions in the whale's belly. *On what* is the third and last question. All the commentators are silent on this point, but they might easily have learned the secret from King Eglon, or even from Elisha's bears. Brethren, as we know to our cost, there is only one way of getting fat—namely, good eating and drinking; whether we drink the winepress of the wrath of God, or eat our children in the strait siege, after the manner of the late Charles Lamb, who when he was asked by a lady how he liked babies, replied, "Boiled, ma'am!"

The final statement in our text is intended as a trial of faith. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. Fat men, my brethren, are not fond of kicking, any more than they are of being kicked. Did you ever see a fat man playing foot-ball? Never, never, never. A fat man cannot stand easily on one leg—unless he lean against a wall; and there is no wall in the text. Yet, brethren, how can you kick without standing on one leg. Per-adventure you might stand on your head and kick with both feet at once, but there is no head in the text. Brethren, you are in a fog, as those who listen to sermons generally are. But I will dispel it. I will solve the riddle. Jeshurun was not a man at all, my brethren, but a baby; and he waxed fat, and lay on his back and kicked. Hallelujah! The door-keeper will now go round with the plate.

A SERMON ON SIN.

ABBREVIATED FROM THE REV. JOSHUA GRUMPUS.

Dearly beloved Brethren,—The subject of our discourse this evening is Sin. It is one you are all conversant with, for "all have sinned." Nay, ye are all "conceived in sin" and "shapen in iniquity." Every thought and imagination of your natural hearts is evil. There is not a clean spot in the whole of your systems. From the crown of your heads even unto the soles of your feet, ye are reeking masses of spiritual corruption. This horrid condition is the result of Adam's fall. The father of our race, tempted by his wife, who in turn was tempted by the Devil, ate an apple six thousand years ago, and for that offence all his posterity have come under a curse. Many sceptics have declared that this doctrine makes the Almighty act like a madman or a fiend. They doubt the justice of blaming, and still more of punishing, any person for a sin committed long before his birth. Presumptuous wretches! God's ways are not our ways, and if, in a single instance, we found the divine wisdom in accord with common sense, that part of the holy volume would immediately fall under the gravest suspicion.

The father of sin is the Devil. For some inscrutable purpose, which it were presumption to pry into, the Almighty allowed the Evil One to seduce our first parents, and sow in them the fertile seeds of original sin. This is one of the deepest verities of our faith, and all who doubt it will be eternally damned. Yet, alas, in this sceptical age, there are many who laugh at this great truth, who regard the Devil lightly as a mere superstition, and playfully call him Old Nick, Old Harry, Old Hornie, Old Long Tail, and so on. Miserable creatures! They laugh now, but how they will yell with agony when the Fiend clutches them, and drags them down into the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire! Brethren, above all things avoid laughter. God hates it. It is the first step to hell. When you see a man smiling at any article of holy religion, mark him at once as a brand

for the burning. Broad faces are worn by the sons of Belial, but long faces are a sure sign of grace.

Many sins are enumerated in the Bible, such as lying, theft, adultery and murder. But these are not the greatest sins. They chiefly injure our fellow-men, and do not directly affront the majesty of heaven. For this reason our divine Father readily forgives them. How many liars and thieves have become glorions saints! How many adulterers and murderers are now sitting on the right hand of God! Holy Scripture teems with illustrations. Though your crimes be of the greatest enormity, though you corrupt the innocent, oppress the weak, rob the poor, and despoil the widow and orphan, you may purchase forgiveness by repentance. But how different is the sin of infidelity! Unbelief is the thrice-distilled poison of iniquity. Remember our Blessed Lord's denunciation of Capernaum. The inhabitants of that city rejected him though he wrought miracles to attest his mission. No other crime is alleged against them. They may have been, and probably were, honest and respectable people. Yet our Savior declared that it should be worse for them in the day of judgment than for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Let me implore you then, beloved, to avoid the sin of unbelief. It is worse than the most unnatural vice. It is the last step on the brink of the abyss. If you must give a welcome to sin, bid it "take any shape but that."

A still darker sin is the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness in this world or the next. Brethren, are any of you guilty of this sin? The Lord only knoweth rightly, for the exact nature of the unpardonable sin has never been revealed. Some eminent divines think it apostacy, others presumptuous sin, and others a wilful rejection of the gospel. Those various conjectures of fallible men may all be wrong, and perhaps it is a sinful arrogance to speculate on this sublime mystery. Yet, with a trembling reverence, I venture to cast out a suggestion. Belief is necessary to salvation, the gospel must be preached before it can be believed, and there must be ministers before it can be preached. Does it not seem, therefore, that the maintenance of God's ministers is of primary importance? And may not the sin against the Holy Ghost consist in the refusal of

tithes, church rates, or other emoluments, to the preachers of the Word? This view is countenanced by the story of Ananias and Sapphira. They were destroyed for "lying unto God," but we may reasonably suppose that their miserable fate was partly due to their having lied about the proceeds of the sale of their property, which should have been devoted to the Church. Had they told a falsehood about any other matter, their punishment would surely have been less sudden and summary. Oh, beloved, ponder this pregnant passage of Holy Writ, till it becomes a beacon of warning against the awful sin of prevaricating with God, and withholding their due from his ministers.

Brethren, I am also of opinion that Blasphemy is a form of the unpardonable sin; and, indeed, our blessed Lord uses that very word in describing it. Blasphemy! What an awful word! It makes the flesh creep and the blood run cold. This terrible sin, beloved, does not simply consist in cursing and swearing, or taking God's name in vain. Such levity is indeed wicked; but it is, after all, one of the minor sins, and it must frequently be winked at as a concession to human weakness. It is often no more than a thoughtless ejaculation, and perhaps the fact that the Almighty's name unconsciously springs to the lips on such occasions is a tribute to the instinctive piety of the heart. Blasphemy is a more deliberate offence. As all the Fathers of the Church have taught, and as the civil law declares, it consists in speaking disrespectfully of the Trinity, and bringing the Holy Bible into disbelief and contempt. Alas, beloved, this grievous sin increases daily in our midst, and shameless blasphemers raise their impudent heads on every side. If we teach them they discuss with us, if we denounce them they laugh at us, and if we imprison them they revile us. Senseless and obdurate wretches, they will hereafter experience the terrors of God's wrath in the fieriest depths of hell. Not only do they mock the sacred wonders of the Scripture, and wax merry over the profoundly instructive histories of Samson and Jonah; they even indulge in unspeakable jests on our Savior's immaculate conception, deride his miracles, and pour contempt on his glorious resurrection and ascension. The Lord God Almighty they call Old Jahveh,

our Savior himself is familiarly called J. C., and the Holy Ghost is jocosely styled the foggy member of the Trinity. Nay, in one compendious blasphemy, the Trinity has been called a three-headed wonder. Still worse remains, beloved, although you might think it impossible. There is a low, coarse, vulgar, indecent, obscene, blasphemous, infamous print, which I will not honor by naming. Its editor has already tasted imprisonment, but his stubborn spirit is unsubdued, and he persists in his evil course. Ridicule, sarcasm, irony, every miserable weapon of infidelity is employed against our holy faith. Oh, beloved, let me implore you not to glance at this dreadful publication. Hesitate and you are lost. It fascinates like a serpent, only to destroy. Once under its malign spell, you will blaspheme with the worst of them. Your doom will then be certain, and Hell will be your portion for ever.—And now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be endless praises, evermore. Amen.

A BISHOP IN THE WORKHOUSE.

PERHAPS the title of this article will suggest a tragic story of a fall from a high place, wealth, and dignity, into abjectness, poverty, and misery. Such things do occur in the lottery of fortune. Sometimes a beggar gets seated on horseback, and sometimes a proud knight is thrown from the saddle and pitched in the mud. But it is scarcely conceivable that a bishop should become a pauper. Episcopal servants of Christ usually feather their nests snugly against the cold; and were adversity to overtake them, they generally have rich friends to save them from "the parish." No, it is not a tale of woe that we have to tell. We do not know of any bishop who is reduced to beggary. The

time has not yet arrived for such an awful occurrence. Some day, perhaps, when priestcraft is exploded and Churches are played out, an ex-bishop may find it hard to obtain a living in the open labor market; but meanwhile the lawn-sleeved gentry will continue to live on the fat of the land, and prove that godliness is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of the life that is to come.

Well now, as Shakespeare says, let us leave off making faces and begin. Let us no longer keep the reader in suspense, but let out the secret at once.

The Bishop of Winchester went last Sunday (June 12, 1892) to Farnham workhouse. He did not go in disguise as a "casual," in order to see for himself how the pariahs of society are treated in this nineteenth century of the Christian era. He went in "full fig," dressed in a style which, as Mill remarked, no man could assume without *feeling* himself a hypocrite, whether he was one or not. Nor did he go for the purpose of giving the old women an ounce of tea, or the old men an ounce of tobacco. His lordship's mind was above such low, contemptible carnalities. The object of his visit was spiritual. He went to preach to the paupers, and give them a little medicine for their souls. They were in the union, the "half-way house on the road to hell," and the bishop told them (we suppose) how they might still hope for a place in heaven, though it would have to be a back seat, for as "order is heaven's first law" it would be a shocking violation of the divine economy to let paupers jostle big capitalists, and landlords, and bishops, and princes of the blood, who hold front-seat tickets, numbered and reserved.

"This is believed," says the newspaper report, "to be the first occasion on which a Prelate of the See of St. Swithin has taken part in divine service in such an institution." The first time in all those centuries! Truly the very paupers are looking up. Or is it that the bishop is looking down? In any case, what a change from the old days, when paupers were certain of Hades! Was it not a West of England workhouse in which an old pauper lay dying while the chaplain was in the hunting-field, and the governor was

obliged to officiate? "Tom," said the boss of this luckless establishment, "Tom, you've been a dreadful fellow; you're going to hell." "Oh, sir," replied Tom, "you don't say so." "Yes, Tom, I do say so," rejoined the governor, "and you ought to be thankful you've a hell to go to."

His lordship of Winchester doubtless talked to the Farnham paupers in a different strain. Christianity is now, not only the friend of the poor, but the friend of the poorest; for even paupers have to be reckoned with, the revolutionary spirit having penetrated to the very lowest strata of our disaffected population. But the "friendship" must be understood in a Pickwickian sense. Indeed, the joke of a bishop, with £6,500 a year, hobnobbing with the social wreckage of a system which supports his wicked luxury, is colossal and pungent enough to send the very Fat Boy into convulsions of laughter. We cannot help thinking that the Bishop of Winchester is a humorist. Perhaps if the Church is disestablished in his day, and the worst comes to the worst, he will turn his attention to the Stage, and take the shine out of Arthur Roberts and Fred Leslie.

On this supposition, our regret at being unable to find any report of "Winchester's" sermon to the Farnham paupers, is too deep for expression. All we can do in the circumstances is to present our readers with a condensed report of what the Bishop *might* have said; and what, indeed, he *would* have said, if he had risen to the level of the situation.

THE BISHOP'S SERMON.

"Dearly beloved brethren,—You see before you a humble servant of the most high God, who has come out from his wretched palace to spend an hour with you in this cheerful workhouse, built and maintained by a charitable nation for her most privileged children. Here for a brief space I shake off the cares and burdens of my own sad lot, and bathe my wearied spirit in the delicious restfulness of this happy asylum. Like you, I feel a child of our common Father in heaven. And as you gaze upon me, I also gaze upon you. Blessed sight! Delightful vision! Before me sit a godly number of God's elect, his chosen vessels of

grace, the predestinated inheritors of his glory. Happy mortals! soon to put on glorious crowns of immortality. Others have wandered from the path of salvation, but ye have persevered to the end. Wealth and power, pride and ambition, have no charm for your righteous souls. Ye have chosen the better part. Day and night, drunk and sober, —I mean waking and dreaming—ye have pondered the words of our holy Savior, 'Blessed be ye poor.' And as he who studies long and deeply enough learns the hardest lesson, ye have gained a vital conviction of the truth which is hidden from the worldlings. 'Blessed be ye poor,' said our Lord, and ye *are* poor, and therefore yours is the blessing, and yours (in due course) is the kingdom of heaven. Ye shall walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem; ye shall gaze upon its jewelled walls; ye shall drink of the fresh, clear, untaxed, unmeasured water of the River of Life; ye shall bask in the light of the Lamb; ye shall look across the great gulf that separates the saved from the damned, and behold those who have chosen riches instead of poverty in the torments of everlasting fire. Fortunate paupers! Envidable prospect! How gladly would I stay with you and share your beatitude! But, alas, I am called away by the voice of my Master. I have taken up the cross of self-sacrifice; I have resolved to follow his example, and perish if I must that sinners may be saved. My salary is already £6,500 a year, and should it be my fate to become Archbishop of Canterbury, I shall assume with resignation the more terrible burden of £15,000. I know its dangers; I know that wealth weighs us down to the nether pit; I know how hardly they that have riches shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But every pound I carry lightens the burden of a fellow man, and gives him so much chance of mounting to heaven, instead of sinking to hell. Oh, I feel on fire with self-sacrifice. A love of mankind burns in my breast capable of consuming (or appropriating) all the wealth of this planet. I would bear the burden of the whole world. Yea, I *will* bear as much of it as I can. And now I go forth to my fate, be it life or death, glory or gehenna. And you, beloved, who remain here, sheltered from the storm, think, oh think of your

sad brother, staggering under the load of £6,500 a year. Pray that he may have the strength to bear whatever burden is laid upon him. And pray, oh pray that his wealth may be counted unto him as poverty, for his love to the brethren, and that he may attain unto everlasting life. Amen."

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

BY THE REV. JEREMIAH WARNER.

THERE are two very solemn occasions in the Christian year; Good Friday, on which God Almighty was executed, and Christmas Day, on which he was born. Every sincere believer regards them with peculiar awe, and from morn to eve ponders the transcendent mysteries connected with them. Eating and drinking, all the pleasures and pastimes of life, are out of place at such times. Who could pamper the flesh while thinking of his bleeding God, agonising on the terrible cross? Who could dawdle over savory dishes and sparkling wines while remembering the Incarnation of God in the form of a child for the purpose of walking through this miserable vale of tears, in order to save his ungrateful children from everlasting hell? Who could dance and sing on the day when his Savior began his sorrowful career on earth, where he was born in a stable, lived on the high road, and died on the gallows?

Yet, alas, the number of sincere believers is small. They are only a remnant, a little band of saints in the midst of a sinful world, oases of piety in a wide desert of ungodliness. While they macerate themselves the rest of mankind revel in all kinds of delight. Yea, on Good Friday, on the very anniversary of their Redeemer's passion, these light-hearted

sinners play at cricket and foot-ball, go on picnics, and make excursions to the seaside; eating roast mutton instead of worshipping the Lamb, and swilling beer instead of mourning over the precious streams that flowed from their Savior's veins. And on Christmas Day, the anniversary of his entrance into this scene of woe, when he forsook his glorious palace in heaven for a paltry stable on earth, taking upon himself the burden of teething, measles, whooping cough, and all the ills that baby flesh is heir to, they go not to the House of God and bend their knees in humble praise of his ineffable condescension, but stay at home, eating all manner of gross viands, drinking all manner of pleasant liquors, dancing, singing, playing cards, telling stories round the fire, and kissing each other under the mistletoe. Thoughtless wretches! They are treading the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire. How will they face the offended majesty of Heaven on that great Day of Judgment, when every smile of theirs on such solemn occasions will be treated as an unpardonable affront? Brethren, be not deceived; God is not mocked.

Still worse than these sinners, if that be possible, there are miserable sceptics who would have us believe that God Almighty was neither crucified on Good Friday nor born on Christmas Day. These presumptuous infidels pretend that both those holy festivals are derived from ancient sun-worship. They dare to ask us why the anniversary of the Crucifixion, instead of falling on the same day in every year, depends on astronomical signs; and they mockingly remind us that the birthday of our Savior is the same as that of Mithra and all the sun-gods of antiquity. True, the heathen celebrated the new birth of the Sun on the twenty-fifth of December, from the fiery east to the frozen north, from Persia to Scandinavia. But what of that? Their celebration was invented by the Devil, who lorded it over this world until our Savior came to bruise the old serpent's head. He prompted the heathen to commemorate the twenty-fifth of December, for the plausible reason that the Sun had then decisively begun to emerge from his winter cave, giving a fresh promise of gentle spring, lusty summer, and fruitful autumn. I call it a plausible reason, because the Sun is

never born, any more than it rises and sets. These phenomena are all illusions, caused by the movement of our own earth. But the cunning Devil took advantage of men's ignorance to deceive them; and having appropriated our Savior's birthday for another purpose, he calculated that it would never be restored to its rightful use. But, God be thanked, he was mistaken. Our Holy Church fought him for three centuries, and at last, having enlisted Constantine and his successors on her side, she exterminated the pagan idolatry, and established the religion of Christ. Then were all the Devil's subtle inventions destroyed, and among them the sun-worship which disgraced the close of every year. Happily, however, the task was not so hard as it might have been, for the Devil had outwitted himself. He had accustomed the heathen to celebrate the day on which Christ *was* to be born, and so our holy Church had little else to do than to substitute one name for another, and to devote that day to the worship of the true God instead of a false one.

Since then, alas, owing to the native depravity of the human heart, Satan has recovered some of his lost power; for he is a restless, intriguing, malignant creature, whose mischief will never be terminated until he is chained up in the bottomless pit. Defeated by our holy Church in the east, he planned a fresh attack from the north, and carried it out with considerable success. He contrived to mix up our orthodox Christmas celebration with fantastic nonsense from the Norse mythology. Those who decorate Christmas trees and burn Yule-tide logs are heathens without knowing it, and it is to be feared that their ignorance will not excuse them in the sight of God. Away with such things, brethren! They are snares of the Evil One, traps for your perdition, gins for your immortal souls. Even the evergreens with which you deck your houses are a pitfall of the same old enemy. They are relics of nature-worship, diverting your minds from the Creator to the creature; and well doth Satan know, as ye glance at the white and red berries and then at the fair faces and pouting lips of the daughters of Eve, that your thoughts must be earthly, sensual and devilish. I mean not that you will necessarily rush into illicit pleasures, and drink of the cup of sin; but the carnal mind is always at enmity with

God, and at such a time as the birthday of our Lord we shall incur his wrath if we do not keep our attention fixed on things above.

There is another lesson, brethren, which you should lay to heart. Christ gave up all for you; what will you give up for him? His gospel is still unpreached in many benighted parts of this globe. Millions of souls in Asia, Africa and America, go annually to Hell for want of the saving words of grace; and even at home, in our very midst, there are millions outside the Church, who live in pagan darkness, and whose doom is frightful to contemplate. Deny yourselves then for your Savior, and if you cannot be as solemn as you should at this season, at least restrict your pleasures, and give the cost of what you forego to the Church, who will spend the money in the salvation of souls. A single bottle of wine or whiskey, a single turkey or plum-pudding less on your tables this Christmas, may mean a soul less in Hell, and another saint around the great white throne in Heaven. Do not waste your wealth on the perishable bodies of the poor, or if you must feed the hungry and clothe the naked, let your charity go through the hands of God's ministers; but rather seek the immortal welfare of dying sinners, and give, yea ever give, for the purpose of rescuing them from the wrath to come. Oh, brethren, neglect not this all-important duty.—The choir will now sing the twenty-fifth hymn, after which we shall take the collection.

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 faucifully. 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 (marvels 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 vigor 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, most wickedly caricatures our supreme Lord and his heavenly host, and thousands of people enjoy this awful 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."

BISHOP TRIMMER'S SUNDAY DIARY.

BISHOP TRIMMER is one of those worthy prelates who enjoy this world fully, and are exceedingly loth to quit it for another. He is neither very learned nor very clever, but a pushing mediocrity, like most occupants of the episcopal bench. He is an ardent admirer of monarchy and aristocracy, and believes that the function of the Church is to uphold those divine institutions. Three or four times he has had the honor to preach before the Queen, and his sermons on those occasions, printed by special request and dedicated by permission to her Majesty, are replete with loyalty to the throne and sneers at the democratic tendencies of this degenerate age. Being anxious to ally himself to the aristocracy, he married an elderly spinster, the daughter of Lord Pauper, whose charms had never attracted a suitor, and whose mental accomplishments were on a par with her physical beauties. Bishop Trimmer is immensely proud of his aristocratic wife, and as she is an only child, he looks forward to his withered little bantling, the only fruit of their marriage, coming into possession of the family title and estates. He lives in his diocese as little as possible, being passionately fond of London society. He is a familiar figure at royal and aristocratic drawing-rooms and garden-parties, and a regular patron of West-end bazaars where fashionable beauties are wont to assemble. He is also an *habitué* of the theatres, showing a marked preference for burlesque, and being noticeable by the pertinacity with which he gazes through a powerful pair of opera-glasses at the ladies of the ballet. In politics he is a staunch Tory. He has never been known to favor any liberal measure, and his vote has been constantly recorded for every effort by the Peers to reject or mangle progressive legislation. When he dies, his life will be eulogised in the papers, and he will be held up as a model for general emulation, although he has never had a thought for anything but self. It is rumored that his niche has already been designated in Westminster Abbey.

Bishop Trimmer has one great weakness. He keeps a diary. He is as loquacious as old Burnet, and it is a great pity he cannot find another Pope to do him justice. Portions of his diary have accidentally fallen into our hands; *how* we need not explain, for it involves a long story. We give our readers a taste of this rarity, and if they approve it, we may gratify their palates again on some future occasion.

Sunday night, August 10, 18—. Last evening I arrived home too late, and I fear too excited, to fill in my diary before going to bed. Lord Fitznoodle's old port has a very fine body, and his champagne is remarkably exhilarating. How fortunate that Lady Trimmer is visiting her uncle in Ploughshire!

Yesterday morning I devoted three hours to my correspondence, and one to my sermon. I lunched with Lady Bareacres, whose youngest daughter is to be presented tomorrow. A charming young creature, with a figure like Hebe; beautiful taper arms, well displayed by the short sleeves, small feet in pretty *bottines*, sparkling black eyes, white teeth and luscious red lips, and a delicious bust. Ah!

The company was select—not a commoner amongst them. Lord Wildsbury, the Tory leader in the Upper House, complimented me on my recent pamphlet on *The Improvement of the Condition of our Rural Poor*, and thanked me especially for the handsome manner in which I had vindicated his treatment of the poor on his Capfield estate against Radical aspersions. His lordship informed me that, after long entreaty, he had consented to grant the Methodists a site for a chapel, about six miles from the parish they reside in. I congratulated him on this noble exhibition of Christian charity.

Lord Woodcock conversed with me on the threatened war. He thought it would open a path for our missionaries as well as our commerce. I had the honor to agree with him. I had no doubt the war was one of God's agencies for Christianising the world, and quoted Wordsworth's "Yea, carnage is thy daughter." His lordship was delighted with the quotation, and promised to use it in his next speech against the Peace party.

Returning home, I found a handsome present awaiting me from young Stukeley—a copy of the fine new edition of *Petronius Arbiter*, edited by Von Habenlicht, with many interesting notes on the purplest parts of the text. For an hour or two I swam in what a late writer calls “the delicious stream of his Latinity.” How fortunate that ladies do not read Latin! What havoc Lady Trimmer would play with my library if she understood the classic languages! She was up in arms the other day about some spicy French books from Brussels, until I explained that, as President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, I was obliged to study that class of literature.

At four o'clock I attended a meeting of the Social Purity Society, where I made a speech that was much applauded. Lord Haymarket showed me a villainous pamphlet on the Population question by a notorious infidel. This pernicious publication, he said, was extensively circulated; and he had reason to believe it was the principal cause of the shameless profligacy of this great city. Its author was—horror of horrors!—a woman, an abandoned creature, dead to all the natural instincts of her sex. He desired me to see whether my Society would not undertake to suppress it. I promised to bring the matter forward at our very next meeting. Poor Haymarket! He sowed his wild oats too rapidly, and is a wreck at thirty-seven. Happily he spends his declining days in the service of his God.

Went in the evening to the Jollity Theatre with the Ponsonbys, who have a box there. The new burlesque is capital fun, and I enjoyed it immensely. Fanny Dawson danced and sang as bewitchingly as ever. She is the most *appetisante* creature on the stage. There was a new girl in the ballet, a superb specimen of the sex, with the finest limbs I ever saw, and as agile as a deer. I must inquire her name of young Osborne, the Secretary of the Curate and Ballet-Girl Society.

Suppered afterwards at Lord Fitznoodle's chambers. He has the best port and champagne in London, and I patronised both rather generously, at the cost of a morning headache. Two or three army men in the party had loose tongues. The conversation was waggish enough, but I fancy the jests were

highly seasoned before we broke up. Colonel Sparkish shone with his usual brilliance. I wonder whether he invents or discovers those capital stories. If they were not so blue I might retail them at my own dinner-table.

Sir Clifford Northdown, the Tory leader in the Commons, paid me a flying visit this morning. He was anxious to secure all the influence I possessed in my diocese against the new Affirmation Bill, as our party meant to strain every nerve to prevent its passing. I promised to stir up my clergy at once, and to obtain as many petitions as possible against the measure.

Ran down and lunched at the Bourbon Club at Richmond. The company was, as usual, very exclusive. His Royal Highness looked remarkably well and was the life and soul of the table. I had the honor of losing a game of billiards with him after lunch.

Spent an hour in the afternoon at the Zoological Gardens. The weather was glorious, and the ladies' toilettes were magnificent. I was glad to meet my old friend Bishop Glover who buries himself too much in his diocese. We met several more old college friends, among them being the Rev. Arthur Mooney, the Rev. Richard Larkins, and the Rev. Spencer Shepherd. Before leaving the Gardens I enjoyed a few minutes' chat with the Archbishop, who had brought his family to see the animals and hear the music. They found too much vulgar society there during the week, and never came except on Sunday.

Preached in the evening at St. Peter's on the Fourth Commandment, to a crowded congregation who evidently followed me with great sympathy. I pointed out the danger to religion and morality involved in any tampering with the holy Sabbath, dilated on the horrors of a continental Sunday, and denounced the opening of museums, art-galleries and public libraries on the Lord's day. With a little touching up, the sermon will serve for my next week's speech in the House of Lords on the subject, when Harlow's motion comes up for discussion.

Took a cup of tea after the service with old Mrs. Gloomy. She seems to be nearing her end. Her will leaves twenty thousand for the restoration of my cathedral, and I believe a

similar sum to Lady Trimmer. I shall officiate at her burial with the noblest pleasure, for she is without exception the best Christian I ever knew.

THE JUDGE AND THE DEVIL.*

NEWSPAPERS are supposed to chronicle all important events, and as no event is more important to mankind than the death of its enemies, it is astonishing that the public prints have neglected to record the recent decease of Mr. Justice North. This "great loss," as his family call it, occurred last Friday. His lordship had been ailing for some time, chiefly, it is suspected, in consequence of so many of his judgments being reversed by the Court of Appeal. On Friday morning he occupied his usual seat in the Court of Chancery, but it was obvious to the gentlemen of the bar, the litigants and witnesses, and even the spectators, that his lordship's condition was by no means improved. His observations were confused, he put the same question to witnesses three or four times over, and at the conclusion of one important case his judgment was directly opposite to his summing up. When the Court rose his lordship drove home, and on arriving there he was so ill that he was obliged to retire to bed. The

* Judge North presided over the trial of Messrs. Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp for "Blasphemy" in the early part of 1883. The counsel for the prosecution was the present Lord Halsbury, ex-Lord Chancellor, then Sir Hardinge Giffard. He was not in court the whole of the time, but his brief was safe in the hands of the gentleman on the bench. Judge North acted throughout as a partisan. The first jury disagreed and were discharged; but, a few days afterwards, a better selected jury returned a verdict of "Guilty." His lordship then sentenced the prisoners to twelve, nine, and three months' imprisonment respectively—not as first-class misdemeanants, but as though they were thieves or burglars. In passing the heaviest sentence the law allowed him on Mr. Foote, his lordship regretted to find that a man "gifted by God with such great abilities" should "prostitute his talents to the service of the Devil."

doctor, who was summoned immediately, shook his head on seeing the condition of his patient, and muttered something about heart disease. About nine o'clock his lordship was visibly sinking, and at twelve o'clock he breathed his last. For nearly two hours before his death he was unconscious, but he sometimes murmured a word or two, amongst which "Devil," "Foote," "Freethinker," "God," and "Duty" were heard distinctly. A clergyman was in attendance during that distressing period, the last consolations of religion were duly administered, and his lordship's family and relatives are fully assured that he is now a saint in heaven.

Sad to relate, however, they are grievously mistaken. Mr. Justice North's soul went straightway to Hell. Unknown to himself, his lordship held heretical views, which the Supreme Court of Heaven pronounced to be blasphemous, on a very perplexed and subtle point in theology. Unfortunately our information on this matter is not precise, but we understand from our ghostly visitor that the point on which his lordship was eternally wrecked relates to the status of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Every soul, on arriving at Hell, is first washed in sulphur and then lodged, in a state of nudity, in a large hall, which is nevertheless free from draughts. All the arrivals wait here until they are brought singly before the Governor, who assigns to each a separate locality and punishment. His lordship looked very crestfallen, for he had anticipated a better fate. Nor was his distress alleviated by the sight of his companions, among whom he recognised two eminent scoundrels that he had himself sentenced to long terms of penal servitude, and one eminent Christian whom he had frequently seen at Church on Sunday.

While his lordship waited in the hall he was greatly afflicted at his own nakedness, and still more at the nakedness of his companions; for he had always been a very modest man, and the notion of anything obscene or indecent had always been repulsive to him. Even the sight of a ragged pair of trousers had been known to cover his face with blushes. And, to add to his misery, the two criminals twitted him with his bareness, and remarked that he cut a very poor figure with his clothes off.

Prisoner after prisoner was taken out to see the Devil without returning. His lordship was kept till the last, and as he passed through the hall door and entered the Devil's private office, he literally shook with fear. Satan sat in an easy chair, sipping iced champagne and smoking a splendid cigar. His appearance belied the popular idea. No tail protruded through a hole in his nether garments, his brows were not decorated with horns, nor did his legs terminate in hooves. He was tall and handsome. Every feature spoke resolution, and his magnificent head looked a workshop of intense and ample thought.

Catching sight of the wretched grovelling figure before him, the Devil's dark countenance was lit up with a smile. "Well, *Justice North*," with a sarcastic accent on the middle word, "I have kept you till last because I wanted a special talk with you. Most of the arrivals in this establishment—and they are pretty numerous—have offended the upper powers, but they have generally been civil to me. You, however, have been damnably uncivil—nay, rude; indeed I may say libellous."

"I humbly crave your highness's pardon," broke in the culprit, "but I do not recollect having spoken of you disrespectfully. I always regarded you with feelings of awe."

"Indeed!" said the Devil, "just carry your mind back to the fifth of March, 1883, when you tried three prisoners at the Old Bailey for blasphemy."

His lordship turned livid with fear, but plucking up a little courage he replied, "Yes, your highness, I remember the incident, and now I fear I shall never forget it. Yet I do not recollect saying anything on that occasion in any way offensive to yourself."

"Indeed!" said the Devil, with a more withering accent, and proceeded to open a book on the table. "When you sentenced the first prisoner—who, by the way, is a very good friend of mine—you said you extremely regretted to find a man of undoubted intelligence, a man gifted by God with such great ability, choosing to prostitute his talents to the service of the Devil. Those were your very words. Do you call that civil, sir? Is it not downright abuse? Serving me *prostitution*, forsooth! If that is what you call being

respectful, what' on earth—or rather what in hell—would you call insulting?"

"Alas, your highness," exclaimed his lordship, "I did indeed utter those unlucky words. But it was an unguarded expression, or rather the stock language of such occasions. I had looked up the sentences passed by former judges on blasphemers, and I simply followed their lead as to the terms I employed."

"Yes," said the Devil, "and you followed their lead in another respect, even if you did not better their instruction. You passed upon my friend Foote a most savage sentence. Probably you are surprised at my calling him 'friend,' but I may inform you that all Freethinkers are my friends. Like myself they are rebels against the tyranny of heaven. The deity you worshipped on earth hates every man who dares to think for himself. He sends them here to be tortured; but as he never takes the trouble to inspect this establishment, having a silly belief in my malignancy, I am able to lighten their punishment. I give them the coolest places in Hell, and favor them in every possible way. They don't mix with the rest of the inhabitants, but associate exclusively with each other. Personally I find them excellent company, and I can only marvel at your deity's emptying heaven of what in my opinion would be its best society."

The Devil leaned back in his easy chair, quaffed a glass of champagne, and quietly smoked his cigar, while watching the effect of his words on the trembling wretch before him. By this time his lordship was green with terror. His limbs twitched convulsively, his eyes rolled in their sockets, and although he tried to speak, his voice failed him.

"Coward!" muttered the Devil; "the fellow hasn't the courage of the most abject wretch he ever sentenced."

Presently his lordship's speech returned, and he shrieked out, "Mercy, your highness, mercy! I meant no harm, indeed I did not. I unsay it all, and swear to be your devoted servant for ever."

"Worse and worse!" exclaimed the Devil. "Had you shown the least courage, I would have pitied you. Now I only despise you." Thereupon he touched a bell on the table, and a gigantic demon responded to the summons. "Take

this fellow," said the Devil, "to number 2,716,542,897." The demon grinned, for it was the hottest room in Hell, right over the furnace. Seizing the culprit in his herculean arms, he swung him over his shoulder, and was marching off when the Devil cried: "Stop a minute! North!" he continued, "you'll have a bad time of, but there is a hope for you. When Foote comes here we shall chat over your case, and if he is of a placable temper, as I fancy, he may solicit a little respite for you. Meanwhile you must bear your fate like a Christian. *Au revoir.*"

The Devil waived his hand, the gigantic demon hurried off with his prisoner, and ten minutes afterwards his lordship was dancing up and down like a ball on the hot bricks of Number 2,716,542,897.

SATAN AND MICHAEL. An Imaginary Conversation.

Satan.—Well met, my dear Michael! You and I are old acquaintances. What ages have rolled by since we conversed as friends in Heaven! You remember the day when I broached to you my design of establishing a celestial Republic, and found it impossible to overcome your loyalty or your fears. You remember also that later day when the courts of Heaven rang with the shouts of battle; when, deserted by all but the sterner spirits who scorned flight or surrender, I and my little band of faithful rebels were hemmed in by the holy squadrons, seized one by one, and flung over the battlements.

Michael.—Yes, I recollect it well. I see now the look of deathless pride you wore. You wear it still. But there is mixed with it another expression I seldom see in Heaven.

Humor lurks in the depth of your eyes and about the corners of your mouth.

S.—Yes, my dear Michael, it is the sovereign lenitive of an incurable pain. After writhing for millenniums under the tender mercies of the Despot, I found a diversion in watching the antics of his creatures. Products of infinite wisdom as they are, they furnish me with infinite amusement.

M.—Wicked rebel! You insult the maker and ruler of all.

S.—Come now, why should we fall out? We used no railing when we disputed over the dead body of Moses; and, as the English poet, Byron, told the world, we civilly conducted our contest over the soul of George the Third? Why be uncivil now? You have my place in Heaven; surely you can afford to be civil, if not magnanimous.

M.—With difficulty does a loyal subject restrain himself before a plotter of treason.

S.—I see the Lord's omniscience does not extend to his Prime Minister. I plot no treason, Michael. I am a poor exile who no longer troubles himself about politics.

M.—Ever since the Lord created man you have been spoiling his handiwork, and leading souls to Hell.

S.—I neither made Hell nor do I people it. The Lord creates both good and evil; joy and pain are alike his gifts. Were he to exert his omnipotence, my establishment might be emptied to-morrow. It is rash, if not something worse, to blame me for what he permits, nay *wills*.

M.—Did you not begin your machinations in the Garden of Eden, by tempting two poor, innocent creatures, who would otherwise have lived there till now, tending its flowers, and eating of all its delicious fruits save those forbidden?

S.—My dear Michael, you were never a subtle reasoner. You have the qualities of a soldier, not those of a casuist. Pray consider. Did I create the forbidden fruit? Did I create an appetite for it in Adam and Eve? All I did was to demonstrate the carelessness of their Maker.

M.—Such language is profane. Whatever you did was at the expense of those hapless creatures,

S.—They might say so, but the words are strange in the mouth of an archangel. I was only experimenting. The omniscient Maker should have protected his children.

M.—He made them liable to temptation, in order to test their virtue; and gave them free-will so that they might act from choice.

S.—Then I was necessary to the plan. I also acted from choice, yet over them and me there was a divine necessity.

M.—I will not argue. Reason leads to the shipwreck of faith. I say your conduct was wicked and cruel.

S.—Wicked, if you like—that is a matter of opinion, on which we shall never agree—but not cruel. I visited Adam and Eve out of pure good-nature, mingled, I own, with a little curiosity. Poor Eve was naked; and I knew how much happier she would be with clothes. Her daughters owe me thanks for all their bewitching graces. Poor Adam was a simpleton. He ate and drank, and prayed and slept. Their life was monotonous, and would soon have been miserable. I gave them the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and from it sprang all the arts and sciences, all literature, and all the pleasures of human society.

M.—What are all the pleasures and refinements of the world in comparison with the prospects of an immortal soul? They are but dust on the road to Hell.

S.—Perhaps so, but that is not my fault. I did not foresee the Lord's malignity. As a rebel—wicked or otherwise—I tried to dethrone him, and my doom, if not just, is at least intelligible. But I never conceived he would curse the unborn, punish billions for the sin of one, and damn his children through all eternity for a single act of disobedience in their earthly life. Nor indeed did I imagine they *had* immortal souls to be saved or damned. That they were higher than the other animals was manifest, but I saw no indication that they differed in kind. Nor when they were cursed did I suspect it, for the Tyrant said nothing of a future life. I assure you, Michael, I was all attention, for the curse upon the serpent did not terrify *me*. Nor could *any* curse have given me the least alarm. One who is being burnt at the stake does not fear a box of matches flung into the flames.

M.—Your wily tongue would prove black to be white. I leave the Fall of Man and pass to your next act of wickedness in tempting David to number his people.

S.—The Lord himself tempted David, as you may read in his own book.

M.—I refer to another verse which says that *you* did it.

S.—Two contradictions, my dear Michael, cannot both be true; and if you choose one, pardon me for choosing the other. Besides, if I did advise David on that occasion—which I deny—how could I foresee that so useful an act as taking a census would be punished by wholesale slaughter?

M.—Did you not tempt Job?

S.—Not I. I gave the Lord a new idea, which staggered his omniscience; and during the trial of Job I only acted on commission.

M.—Did you not tempt the blessed Savior himself?

S.—My dear Michael, it was but a diversion. We understood each other. I knew I could not succeed, and he knew that I knew it.

M.—Did you not enter into the bodies of men and women, and torment them?

S.—Never. I am incapable of such cruel frivolity.

M.—God's holy Word declares you guilty.

S.—I challenge the writer—who was not God—to the proof. It was another species of devil, created after my fall, and by the Lord himself. I did not make them, and I will not be responsible for their doings. Can you conceive me taking up my residence in lunatics, and shifting into the bodies of pigs? There are very few of the human species, my dear Michael—to say nothing of pigs—with whom I deign to be familiar.

M.—Then you are very much belied. According to my information, you are the great Tempter, and every sin in the world is done at your suggestion.

S.—Such is the charity of mankind! It is so pleasant to blame another for their misdeeds! Is it I that tempt the drunkard, the thief, the adulterer, the murderer—or his own evil passions? for which let him thank his Maker! Pursue your inquiries, my dear Michael, and you will find Bishops brewing beer and taking the chair at Temperance meetings. For my part, I drink nothing but water. It is best for my complaint.

M.—Can I believe you? You are called the Father of Lies?

S.—In calling me so, the Christians, at least, are only setting up a Foundling Hospital for their own progeny. You have the scripture; show me a single occasion on which I lied. When the Lord wanted a liar to deceive King Ahab, he never troubled me; he found a volunteer at his elbow.

M.—I declare you are posing as an archangel. You forget that you are fallen. I am speaking with the Devil.

S.—Hard words break no bones, and if they did, I have none to be broken. I am fallen—from Heaven! which I have little desire to regain, peopled as it is with slaves and cowards. I would have sent a breath of freedom through its courts. I tried, I failed, and I paid the penalty of my daring.

M.—I will not rail at you. You are under a heavier curse than mine. But pray tell me who are the members of the human race with whom you deign to be familiar?

S.—I animate all who fight against servitude and somnolence. The heroes and martyrs of liberty and progress in every age have drunk of the strength of my spirit. I inspire the revolter, the scorner, the sceptic, the satirist. I still distribute the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. I am the soul of the world. The fire of my inspiration may consume, but it gives unspeakable rapture. I am the Prometheus of the universe, and keep it from stagnating under the icy hand of power. Milton, Goethe, and Byron made me the hero of their greatest poems, and felt my power in despite of themselves. Burns spoke of me with a tenderness he never displayed towards God. Wits and humorists own my sway. I moved the minds of Aristophanes and Lucian, of Erasmus and Rabelais, and through the pen of Voltaire I shattered the mental slavery of Europe. I am the lightning of the human mind. I level thrones and altars, and annihilate blinding customs. With the goad of a restless aspiration I urge men on, until they outgrow faith and fear, until the Slave stands erect before the Tyrant and defies his curse.

M.—I will not stay to hear you. A feeling creeps through me like that I experienced when you first tempted me to break my allegiance to Heaven. Farewell. I must report these things above.

S.—Report them! They are there already. You forget the Lord's omniscience, which is a dogma in Heaven, and a

much contested one on earth. Adieu, Michael. Pay my respects to your Master. And when you lead the chorus of flattery, think of the "wicked rebel" who prefers freedom in Hell to slavery in Heaven.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS.

CHRISTMAS comes but once a year, and considering the gluttony and wine-bibbing which goes on when it *does* come, it is perhaps a very good thing that the season occurs no oftener. Hundreds of Christmases, and therefore hundreds of years, have rolled by since the first one ushered into the world the most surprising baby that ever suckled and squealed. All the babies born since were commonplace in comparison with this astonishing youngster; and never, except when the stars sang together for joy, in a chorus that would have been well worth a shilling ticket, did nature show such uncommon interest in any event as in the appearance of this little lump of human dough. Nature has probably been sorry for her enthusiasm ever since. She is not easily excited, and her pace is steadier than a mule's. But as Jove nods, nature has an occasional fling. She went into raptures on the first Christmas, and when the chief person born on that day made his exit from this mortal stage she went black in the face with panic fear or hysterical sorrow. From that time she has conducted herself with exemplary decorum, and no doubt she is heartily ashamed of the indiscretions and eccentricities she was guilty of on the occasions referred to.

The story of the first Christmas is partly written in certain old manuscripts, of questionable date and authorship, which are regarded with extreme veneration by millions of people who know next to nothing about them. But there are many lapses and large deficiencies in the narrative,

and we are authorised to supply what is wanting. We claim infallibility, of course, yet we do not deny it to others. Those who dissent from our version are free to make up one of their own, and it will doubtless be as infallible as ours. This may sound strange, but it is quite philosophical for all that. Do not all the Churches differ from each other, yet are they not all infallible? Why should one infallible man cut another infallible man's throat or put him in prison? Why cannot two infallible men dwell together in the same street like two greengrocers?

But to our story. It was the first Christmas Eve. A donkey was patiently wending his way to Jerusalem. On his back was seated a lady of some seventeen summers, and by his side walked a sturdy young man. They were husband and wife. The young man evidently belonged to the artisan class, and his better half was in that condition in which ladies love to be who love their lords. Both looked forward with unusual interest to the birth of the expected child. They had settled what name it should be called, so there was no doubt whatever as to its sex.

The day was drawing to an end when they approached Bethlehem. Making their way to an hotel kept by a relative of theirs, they asked for accommodation. Mr. Isaacs shook his head. "I am very sorry, Joe," he said, "but we are full up, and the worst of it is every hotel in the place is in the same state. Over an hour ago I tried desperately hard to oblige an old customer, a gentleman in the bacon trade, with a bed for the night, but I tried every hotel in Bethlehem without success. Fortunately I rigged up a few extra beds in the stable, and he has taken one of them. If you like another you are welcome, and egad Joe! that's the best I can do for you."

"Thank you, old fellow," said Joe, "but Mary is in a delicate state, as you see, and I would like to fix her up comfortably. Can't you go in and see if there is any gentleman who will go outside to oblige a lady?"

Mr. Isaacs returned in five minutes, and said it was no use. One gentleman had a bad cold, another had the gout, another the lumbago, and so on. Joseph and Mary were therefore obliged to return to the stable.

While Joseph was grooming the donkey Mr. Isaacs came in and started a curious conversation. "Joe," he began, "I don't wish to interfere with your business, but as a relative and an old friend you will pardon me for saying that I am a little puzzled; you have only been married four months, and if Mary is not a mother in a few days my name isn't Isaacs." Joseph did not resent these remarks, his natural meekness being such that no insult could ever disturb it. With a solemn face he replied "My dear Isaacs, there is nothing to pardon. Mary's baby is not mine. Its father lives in heaven. He is an angel, or something very high there. Mary has often told me all about it, but I have such a bad memory for details. The fact is, however, that Jeshua—we've settled his name—was conceived miraculously, as I've heard say some of the great ones among the heathen were. You may smile, but I've Mary's word for it, and she ought to know."

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Isaacs, "if you're satisfied, of course I am. I don't say Mary's story would go down with me if I were in your place, but I've no right to grumble if you are contented."

Thereupon Joseph, with a still more solemn face, replied, "Well, I was a little incredulous myself at first, but all my doubts were dispelled after that dream I had. I saw an angel at my bedside, and he told me that Mary's story was quite correct, and I was to marry her. Some of the neighbors chattered about a Roman soldier, called Pandera, who used to hang about her house while I was away at work in the south; but I regard it as nothing but gossip, and Mary says they are a pack of liars."

Mr. Isaacs returned to his customers in the hotel, winking and putting his finger to his nose directly his back was turned. Meanwhile Joseph and Mary had supper, after which she felt very unwell, and as luck or providence would have it, she was confined soon after twelve o'clock of a bouncing boy. Mr. Isaacs resolutely refused to turn any customer out of his bed, so the new comer was cradled in a manger filled with the softest hay.

Soon afterwards a fiery kite-shaped object was seen in the sky, advancing towards Bethlehem, and finally it

rested on the chimney stack of Mr. Isaacs' hotel, where it gave such a lovely illumination that half the town turned out to see it. Two enterprising spirits, who mounted a ladder to inspect it closely, and if possible bring it down, were struck as if by lightning, and were with great difficulty restored to consciousness by the skill and efforts of a dozen doctors.

While the people were in a state of bewilderment, six old gentlemen appeared on the scene. They were attired like the priests of Persia, and their venerable appearance and long white beards filled the spectators with reverence. Only one of them could speak Hebrew, and he acted as interpreter for the company. "Where," he inquired, in a deep majestic voice, "is the wondrous babe who is born to-night? We saw his portent in the east and have followed it hither nearly six hundred miles." Mr. Isaacs informed them that the wondrous babe was in the stable, at which they were greatly astonished. Four of them said they must have made a mistake, and were for going home again; but the other two pointed to the supernatural light on the hotel chimney, and after they had consumed three bottles of Mr. Isaac's best Eschol they all made for the object of their search. Directly they entered the stable, little Jeshua stood up in the manger, and eyed them, and as they advanced he accosted them in their own language. This removed any doubts they entertained, and they at once knelt down and offered him the presents they had brought with them. One gave him a cake of scented soap, another a pretty smelling bottle, another an ivory rattle, another a silver fork, another a gold spoon, and another a cedar plate inlaid with pearl. Little Jeshua took the gifts very politely, made a graceful little bow, and a neat little speech in acknowledgment of their kindness. Then, handing them all over to his mother, to keep till the morning, he sang with great sweetness "Lay me in my little bed."

Soon after daylight some shepherds came in from the hills, saying they had seen a ghost, who had talked to them in enigmatical language; they could not understand exactly what he meant, but they gathered that good times were coming, when poor shepherds would eat mutton instead of watching it. On hearing of what happened in the town

precisely at the same time they were still more astonished. All Bethlehem was in uproar. Everybody was talking about little Jeshua, and the presents that were brought him by the enthusiastic inhabitants filled three large vans when Joseph and Mary set out again.

ADAM'S BREEGHES.

BLUSH not, fair reader; nothing is coming to offend your modesty. No doubt you have seen pictures of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, dressed in the primitive costume of simple innocence, or, as Hans Breitmann says, "mit noddings on." And perhaps you felt the remarks of some thick-skinned friend at your side as rather embarrassing. But our intention is to take the Grand Old Gardener and his wife at a later stage, when they got clothes, and laid the foundation of all the tailors' and milliners' businesses in creation.

For some time, nobody knows how long, whether six hours or sixty years, Adam and Eve never discovered their nakedness. It never occurred to them that more than one skin was necessary. And as the climate was exquisite, and the very roses grew without thorns, they had no need of overcoats or sticking-plaster. But one day they ate an apple, or for all we know a dozen, and they and the world underwent a change. "My dear Adam," said Eve, "you are quite shocking; why don't you dress yourself?" And Adam replied, "My dear Eve, where is your dressing-gown?"

Necessity is the mother of invention, and when a woman wants a dress she will get it somehow. There was no linen or woollen, so they had recourse to fig leaves, which were large and substantial. Needles and thread turned up miraculously, and Eve took to them by instinct. She sat

down on a grassy mound, and worked away, stitch, stitch, stitch, while Adam looked on with the ox-eyed stupidity of his sex in presence of a lady engaged in this, interesting occupation. In half an hour, more or less, she produced two pairs of—well, yes, BREECHES. The Authorised Version calls them aprons, but we may believe it was a double-barreled arrangement. This at any rate was the opinion of the translators of the famous Breeches Bible, first published in folio in 1599, in which the seventh verse of the third chapter of Genesis reads—"And they sowed fig-tree leaves together, and made themselves *breeches*," from which translation it has been ingeniously argued "that the women had as good a title to the breeches as the men."

There is no dispute as to the color of Adam's breeches. They were *green*. Hence that universal wit and recondite scholar, the author of *Hudibras*, represents the knight's attendant, the worthy Ralpho, as

For mystic learning wondrous able,
In magic Talisman and Cabal,
Whose primitive tradition reaches
As far as Adam's first green breeches.

Such was the substance and color of Adam's first unmentionables. They were soft and cool, and infinitely preferable to the coarse articles purveyed in English bathing-machines. But they were hardly calculated to stand the wear and tear of the life of labor to which Adam was doomed after the Fall, and before Jehovah evicted his tenant he took pity on the poor fellow's limited wardrobe. "Poor devils," he said to himself, "that fig-leaf arrangement won't last them long. It's sure to burst the first time Adam hoes potatoes. I'll start them with something stronger. Perhaps the lass will find out how to rig herself. There's the first pond for a looking-glass, and I guess it won't be long before she gets Adam to hold a skein of wool. But meanwhile I must do something for her dolt of a husband. Yes, he shall have a new pair of breeks."

And Jehovah made them. Not of shoddy, or good woollen, but stout leather. Adam changed his *green* breeches for *brown* ones, and when he got them on he said, "My God, ain't they hot!" Eve declared she would never wear a thing

like that. "I don't waddle," she exclaimed, "and I won't look bandy." So a committee of seven archangels was appointed to find a fresh pattern.

Leaving Eve's outfit alone, and confining our attention to Adam's, we may ask a few questions about his second pair of breeches. Let no one object that such questions are frivolous. Did not England ring once with tidings of O'Brien's breeches? And shall it be thought undignified to take an interest in Adam's? Nor let any one object that such inquiries are blasphemous. They are obviously prompted by a spirit of reverence. What else, indeed, could excite our curiosity about an old pair of breeches that were worn out many centuries before the Flood?

What were the dimensions of Adam's breeches? The Bible does not tell us his altitude, but as he lived nine hundred and thirty years, and perhaps had a fourth of that time to grow in, it is not surprising that the Jews regarded him as excessively tall. His original height was incalculable; when he stood upright his head reached to the seventh heaven. But his appearance alarming the angels, the Lord flattened him down to a thousand cubits. Fifteen hundred feet, therefore, was his height before he shrank away subsequently to his expulsion from Paradise. Consequently his breeches must have been about eight hundred feet long, and the circumference proportionate. Suits might have been carved out of them for a whole regiment of Dutchmen.

What animal did Jehovah kill and flay for such an extensive skin? Even the mammoth would be ridiculously insufficient. We presume, therefore, that a wholesale slaughter of beasts took place, and that Adam's breeches were made of a multitude of skins. These were, of course, of divers colors or shades, and the garment must have borne some resemblance (to compare great things with small) to the well-mended trousers of a poor fisherman, blessed with a careful, industrious wife, who makes one pair last him her lifetime by insinuating fresh patches as the old ones wear away.

Happily the world was not then peopled, or Adam's life would have been unbearable. There were no little boys, about two hundred feet high, to pass exasperating remarks,

such as "Who's your tailor?" "Does the missis know you're out?" "Hullo, old Patchwork!"

How long was Jehovah employed? Did he give the breeches out in sections to the angels, and do the connections himself? According to the Bible he made them all alone, but we may well assume an omission in the narrative, and give him assistance in executing such a liberal order.

How did he kill the animals that furnished the skins? Did they die instantaneously at his order, or did he slaughter them with a knife and a poleaxe? How did he dress the skins? Were tan-pits constructed? Were the usual chemicals employed, or did Jehovah's science only extend to the use of bark?

The ingenious reader will be able to ask a number of questions for himself. Our own must be brought to a close. We have only to add that the world is impoverished by the loss of Adam's breeches. Those who have read Dr. Farrar's *Life of St Paul* will recollect how he sheds rhetoric and tears on the Apostle's old cloak. But what was that battered garment in comparison with the subject of this article? Not only were Adam's leather breeches the first piece of tailor's-work in the world, but they were worn by the father of all of us, and made by God himself. Such an article would be better worth seeing than the coats of kings and emperors. But, alas, it is lost. Yet the voice of Hope whispers it may be found. Who knows? "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Adam's breeches, too dilapidated for use or decency, may have been carefully rolled up and preserved by Seth. Perhaps they were taken into the Ark by Noah. And when the regions of Mesopotamia are thoroughly explored, they will perhaps be found in some deep cave or dry well, carefully wrapped in waterproof, and accurately ticketed. Oh what joy when they fall into the hands of the Christian Evidence Society! Then will Engstrom dance with glee, even as David danced before the Ark of God; then will the infidel slink away disgraced and crest-fallen; and then will the Christians cry out to the Huxleys of the world, "Oh ye of little faith, who denied the existence of Adam, come and see his breeches!"

THE FALL OF EVE.

Do we believe there was a first woman? Certainly not. We are Darwinians. We cannot allow that there was a particular female specimen among the ape-like progenitors of the human race that could be called the first woman, any more than we can allow that there is a particular moment when a girl becomes a woman or a youth a man. The first woman we are concerned with at present is Mrs. Eve, the wife of Mr. Adam, whom Tennyson calls "the grand old gardener," and whose glorious life, noble actions, and wise and witty sayings, ought to have been recorded in the book of Genesis, only the author forgot them. Instead of representing Mr. Adam as a grand old gardener, the inspired biographer represents him as a grand old fool. Like Charles II., in Rochester's epigram, Mr. Adam never did a wise thing; but, unlike the merry monarch, he never said a wise one either. A collection of his utterances, throughout a long life extending to nearly a thousand years, would be the smallest and baldest treatise to be found in the whole world.

Mrs. Eve was the result of an afterthought. God did not include her in the original scheme of things. He threw her in afterwards as a make-weight. Poor Mr. Adam was all alone in his glory in the Garden of Eden, king of the dreariest paradise that ever existed. Monarch of all he surveyed, his right there was none to dispute: except, perhaps, a big-maned lion, with hot carnivorous jaws, a long-mouthed alligator, a boa-constrictor, a stinging wasp, or an uncatchable flea. Walking abroad and surveying his kingdom, he saw that all the lower animals had partners. Some of the males had one wife, and some a fine harem, but none was without a mate. Mr. Adam was the only male unprovided for, and he was besides a poor orphan. Never had he climbed on his father's knee. God was his father, and *his* legs were too long. Never had he felt a mother's kiss on his brow. He watched the amorous couples frisking about, the doves billing and

cooing, and his solitary heart yearned for a partner. Lifting up his hands to the sky, from which his heavenly parent used occasionally to drop down for a conversation, he cried aloud, in words that were afterwards used by poor diddled Esau, " Bless me, even me also, O my father."

Day after day poor Mr. Adam pined away. In less than a month he lost two stone in weight, and the Devil had serious thoughts of offering to purchase him as a living skeleton for his show in Pandemonium. At last God took pity on him. Forgetting that he had pronounced everything good, or not foreseeing that Moses would be so mean as to record the mistake, he said it was not good for Mr. Adam to be alone, and resolved to make the orphan-bachelor a wife. But how to do it? God had' clean forgotten her, and had used up every bit of his material. All the nothing he had in stock when he began to make the universe was exhausted. There was not a particle of nothing left. So God was obliged to use over again some of the old material. He put Mr. Adam into a deep sleep, and carved out one of his ribs. It was the first surgical operation under chloroform. With this spare rib God manufactured the first woman. How it was done nobody knows, but that it *was* done *everybody* knows, except a few wretched, obstinate, perverse infidels, who deserve imprisonment in this life and hell-fire in the next. Why God took a rib, instead of a leg or an arm, has never been decided; but Christian commentators say it was to show two things; first, that the man should love the woman, as coming from near his heart, and secondly, that the woman should obey the man, as she came from under his arm. As our Church of England marriage service says, the husband is to love and honor his wife, but the wife is to love, honor and *obey* her husband!

Mrs. Eve was probably a very pretty creature, or the painters have belied her; and some poets have declared that God was so much in love with her himself, that he regretted his pledge to give her to Adam. Her attire was remarkably scanty, but beauty unadorned is adorned the most, and her future husband's wardrobe was as limited as her own. This gentleman woke up at the proper moment, minus a rib and plus a wife; an awkward, yet after all a pleasant, exchange. He had never seen a woman before, but he recognised Mrs

Eve as his wife straight off. It was the shortest courtship on record.

Directly Mrs. Eve appeared the mischief began—as might expected. Woman was made for mischief. There is mischief in her bright eyes, and dimpled smiles, and braided hair. She sets the world on fire; that is to say, she kindles the energies of the lubberly creature who calls himself her superior; makes him look spruce and lively, clean his teeth and finger nails, put on a clean shirt, and go courting.

According to the old Hebrew story, Old Nick tempted her to eat the forbidden apples that grew upon Jehovah's favorite tree in the orchard of Eden. But this is doubtless a mistake; a legendary corruption of the original history. Women are not fonder of apples than men; why, then, should the Devil wait for the advent of Mrs. Eve before attempting a stroke of business? John Milton, indeed, following in the wake of Saint Peter, represents her as the weaker vessel; but this is sheer nonsense, and surprising nonsense too, when we recollect that John and Peter were both married.

There cannot be the least doubt that the Devil tempted Mrs. Eve with a *trousseau*. She grew tired, and rather ashamed, of being naked, and yearned to run up a milliner's bill. Besides, she noticed that her Hubby was cooling off in his affection. He did not absolutely neglect her, but he went fishing more frequently, and had long confabulations with archangels, to which she was not invited, on account of the supposed inferiority of her intellect. During the honeymoon he could never feast his eyes enough on her loveliness; but after the honeymoon he looked more upon the birds, the trees, the hills, and the sky. One day, however, using a pool for a mirror, she did up her hair, which had previously wanted over her shoulders. This produced a striking effect on Mr. Adam. He started with pleasure, and the old honeymoon look came back to his eyes. But the effect wore off in time, and poor Mrs. Eve sighed for a fresh means of attack on his imagination.

It was in this condition that she fell an easy prey to the Devil. A beautiful morning filled Eden with splendor. The branches of the trees waved in the refreshing wind; the birds flashed amongst them in their gay plumage; animals of

every variety sported in their cageless menagerie; and flowers of every form and hue completed the living picture of paradise. Mrs. Eve hung fondly upon Mr. Adam's breast, but he said he would go fishing, and catch something for dinner.

When he was out of sight, Old Nick appeared in the form of a milliner's assistant. With a smirk and a bow he opened fire on the citadel. From a large portmanteau he produced a lovely wardrobe, which he laid on the grass, together with a book of costumes; and then withdrew while the lady dressed herself. In a quarter of an hour she was attired like a Parisian belle; witching and provoking, from dainty boots to saucy hat; so that when Old Nick returned he felt downright jealous, and cursed Mr. Adam for a dull-eyed booby.

"What have I to pay you?" asked the lady, with a delighted smile. "Nothing, madam, I assure you," replied the tradesman. "It is an honor," he continued, "to serve such an illustrious customer. It will bring me no end of business in other quarters." Then, with another smirk and bow, he retired; exclaiming *sotto voce*, "You pay me nothing, but I guess you'll have to pay *him*."

When Mr. Adam returned, and found his wife so exquisitely adorned, he was unable to restrain his rapture. His passion more than revived; he doted on this beautiful creature. And this led to his expulsion from Eden. Jehovah saw himself completely cut out. When Mr. Adam should have been casting his eyes to heaven, he was watching the flicker and listening to the *frou-frou* of Mrs. Eve's skirts on the grass; or drinking delight from her sweet, blue eyes, as they gleamed through the shadow of her broad-brimmed hat. "I'll not stand it," said Jehovah, and they were evicted from the holding.

Dear Mrs. Eve! She did not fall, she rose. The incident was misrepresented by penurious curmudgeons who hated the sight of milliners' bills. Without the "fall" of Mrs. Eve there would have been no clothes, and consequently no civilisation; for houses are only, as it were, extended suits of clothes, larger garments to shield us from the weather, and create for us a *home*. It was after all better to take part in the great Battle of Life, with all its difficulties and dangers,

than to loll about eternally in the Garden of Eden, chewing the cud like contemplative cows. "Doing nothing," said a shrewd Yankee, "is the hardest work I know—if you keep at it." Mrs. Eve made life more bearable by giving us something to do. And when the ladies reflect that, if she had not "fallen," and resigned nakedness for clothing, there would have been no Worth and no Madame Louise, they will rejoice that she turned her back on the Garden of Eden.

JOSHUA AT JERICHO.

JOSHUA besieged Jericho. It was a city of fifty thousand inhabitants, and was five miles in circuit. The defenders numbered ten thousand men of arms. They were amply provided with slings and javelins as well as with swords for a close encounter. Joshua's army numbered six hundred thousand, and swarmed on the plain like locusts.

All Jericho was astonished that Joshua's army did not attempt to scale the walls. Instead of doing so, they marched round the city at a safe distance from the strongest slings. They were headed by their priests, blowing rams' horns, and carrying their fetish in a box. Six days this procession moved round Jericho, the defenders on the walls wondering at the performance, and shouting to them to come on like men. On the seventh day the procession went round Jericho seven times. Seven out of the twelve priests dropped out from sheer exhaustion, and more than half the army limped off, faint and footsore, to their tents. Suddenly the five remaining priests blew their horns with all the breath left in them, the army emitted a feeble shout, and the walls of Jericho fell down of themselves. Joshua's soldiers immediately rushed into the city from all points of the compass. The defenders who were not buried under the ruins of the

walls, fought gallantly until they were all killed. Then, with shouts of "Jahveh, Jahveh!" the besiegers fell upon the other inhabitants. Men, women, and children were involved in a promiscuous massacre. Pregnant matrons were ripped open, babies were tossed out of the windows and caught on spears. Even the cattle were exterminated. Dogs were thrust through, and if a few cats escaped it was only owing to their surprising agility. Night fell upon the doomed city and covered its bloody streets with a pall of darkness.

Joshua revelled in the king's palace with the chiefs of Israel. They drank the royal wines, and regretted that Jahveh's orders had necessitated the slaughter of the royal wives and concubines. The rest of the army, or as many as could be accommodated, were feasting in the various houses, with no remorse for the day's butchery.

But one of Joshua's soldiers did not share the general merriment. He was a fine young fellow of twenty-five. Married only a year ago to a beautiful girl whom he loved and worshipped, he had revolted at the sight of women hacked to pieces; and when he saw babies cut and slashed, he thought of the darling infant at his young wife's breast, and turned with loathing from the hideous scene. He was now wandering about the city, having no taste for the rude revelry of his callous companions. Suddenly, as he approached a house nearly ruined by the fallen wall, he heard a moan from within. He entered and saw a man's corpse on the floor, and bending over the body was a shapely young woman with a baby in her arms. The dead body was that of her husband, who had been slain in the massacre. She had crept with her babe into a recess in the upper room, and as the place looked a ruinous heap the savage soldiers had omitted to search it. When all was quiet she crawled out of her hiding-place, and for hours she bent moaning over her husband's corpse.

The young Jewish soldier looked pitifully on the scene at his feet. The woman raised her eyes to his face, and they were so like those of his young wife! The baby, ignorant and innocent, laughed at him and cooed. Claspings the child to her bosom the woman was about to cry for mercy, when he whispered, "Hush! I will save you. Come with me. Take

bread and water with you for the journey. I will lead you beyond the city wall, and then you must flee under cover of the night. Michmash is only ten miles distant. You are young and strong, and you and your babe will be there before dawn."

Cautiously they picked their way, and they were just reaching safety when a door was flung open by a dozen quarrelling soldiers. The light fell upon the three figures outside. "Hullo!" exclaimed they, "what's this? Leading the girl off, eh? A baby, too! Were you going to adopt the little one? Treason, treason! Our order was to slay all, and leave alive nothing that breatheth."

The young woman was seized, and half a dozen hands were laid on the young man, who knew resistance was useless and therefore offered none. An hour later they were brought before Joshua. The general's eye kindled at the sight of the woman's beauty, but religion conquered and he resolved to obey his God.

"What were you doing?" asked Joshua.

"Helping her to escape," answered the young soldier.

"Why?" asked the general.

"Because I have a wife and child of my own, and these are like them."

"Traitor!" exclaimed Joshua, "all three of you shall die!"

The woman shrieked, but Joshua's sword was unsheathed, and one sweep of his muscular arm sent it through the body of the child deep into the mother's breast. Then, without wiping the bloody weapon, he raised it again. The young soldier smiled scornfully, and his expression added fresh fuel to the flame of Joshua's anger. With one blow he severed the head from the body; and standing over the three corpses, his frame dilating with the passion of bloodshed and piety, he exclaimed, "Thus saith the Lord!"

A BABY GOD.

BY THOMAS SCEPTICUS.

"Newman described closely some of the incidents of our Lord's passion; he then paused. For a few moments there was a breathless silence. Then, in a low, clear voice, of which the faintest vibration was audible in the farthest corner of St. Mary's, he said, 'Now, I bid you recollect that He to whom these things were done was Almighty God. It was as if an electric stroke had gone through the church, as if every person present understood for the first time the meaning of what he had all his life been saying.'—*J. A. Froude, "The Oxford Counter-Reformation."*

MR. FROUDE'S account of the realism of Newman's preaching is the best justification of the following article. It is difficult to see why the Infancy of Jesus should not be treated in the same manner as his Passion. If it was God Almighty to whom those things were done on the cross, it was equally God Almighty who was suckled and nursed by Mary of Nazareth. And in the one case, as well as in the other, it is well for men to understand the meaning of what they read and repeat.

Eighteen hundred and ninety-one years ago, more or less, God Almighty turned Theosophist and resolved to be incarnated. Whether he was incarnated or re-incarnated will depend on our acceptance or rejection of the Oriental theory of Avatars. The time had come, which was appointed before the foundation of the world, for the Creator of this stubborn, accursed planet to do a great stroke for its salvation. For four thousand years it had been going to the dogs, or rather to the Devil. Angels and prophets had been sent to reform it, but all in vain, and God Almighty determined to come himself and make a last desperate effort to save this wretched world from utter bankruptcy.

No doubt the incarnation of God is a "mystery." Even those who can see through millstones are unable to understand it. The clergy bid us believe it by faith. Reason, they admit, is beaten and baffled by this awful truth. Yet the "mystery" is only the theological view of very simple facts.

It does not alter the facts themselves. The birth, growth, and training of Jesus were palpable occurrences, whatever we may think as to his divinity.

God Almighty decided to be born, but he also decided to be born in an uncommon way. True, it was the way adopted by many heroes and demi-gods of the Pagan pantheon, and the more ancient mythologies of Egypt and India. But it was an uncommon way as the world goes. A virgin, though a married woman, was selected to be his mother. He worked a miracle upon her; he became, so to speak, his own father; and though she was at first *his* child, he afterwards became *hers*.

The miracle ended at the moment of his conception. From that time his incarnation followed the natural order of things. His gestation was like another baby's, and in due course—for such an august birth was not to be hurried—he came into the daylight of the world, a little red mass of helpless flesh. He was probably tended by an old Jewish midwife, who never suspected what she was handling. She washed him, undisturbed by his faint squealings; and wrapped him up in flannel, without the faintest idea that she was manipulating God Almighty. Had she been suddenly informed that she was holding her Creator, she would probably have dropped him in a fright and injured his spine.

Presently the midwife's services were dispensed with, and Mary had the baby to herself. She nourished God Almighty at her breast, for feeding-bottles were not then invented, and the divine child could scarcely be passed over to a wet nurse—perhaps a bouncing, big-eyed Jewess who had suffered a “misfortune.”

Here we must pause to quarrel with Christian painters. They are too idealistic. They scorn honest realism. Never do they depict this baby God at his lacteal repast. He always looks as if fed six weeks in advance. Perhaps they think a mother's suckling her child, which even old Cobbett called the most beautiful and holy sight on earth, is beneath the dignity of the subject. But the baby God went through these little experiences, with the regularity and pleasure of a common infant. Facts, gentlemen, are facts; and to ignore them is fraud or hypocrisy.

According to the story of the raising of Lazarus, Jesus wept, though we never read that he laughed; in fact, he appears to have been a remarkably serious young man. May be, however, he smiled now and then in Mary's arms; anyhow, it is safe to say he cried. We may presume he went through all the infantile processes like the rest of us; otherwise his being born on earth as a human being, was a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.

God Almighty mewled and puked in Mary's arms. He screamed when he was angry or cross, or when his little stomach was overcharged, or when a nasty pin was pricking him. He cooed when he was happy and comfortable. He kicked his legs aimlessly, dashed his little fists into space, scratched his little nose, and filled his mouth with his fingers. A million to one he largely increased the family washing-bill. By and bye God cut his teeth, and had pimples and rash. Probably he had the measles. Eighteen hundred years later he would have been vaccinated. Nasty stuff from another baby's arm, or from an afflicted calf, would have been inserted in the arm of God Almighty.

Later on God Almighty crept about on all fours with his stern higher than his front. Then he stood upright by a chair and learned to walk by means of the furniture. Frequently he fell down upon the part he displayed to Moses. He stole into Joseph's workshop, and God Almighty cut his fingers with chisels and jack-planes. Now and then he sat on a saw, and got up with undignified haste. God Almighty also learned to talk. At first you couldn't tell whether he was talking Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek, or North American Indian. But he improved as he went along, and God could at last speak as good Hebrew, with a Galilean accent, as any other juvenile of the same age.

Finally, God Almighty went to school, where bigger boys fagged him and sometimes punched his head. It is conceivable that God Almighty bled at the nose and wore a black eye.

All this is very "blasphemous." But whose is the "blasphemy"? Not ours. We do not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. The "blasphemy"—and in this case it is *real* blasphemy—lies at the door of those who say that Mary's

baby was very God of very God. All we have done is to follow Newman's example; and as he dwelt on the facts of the Crucifixion, so we have dwelt on the facts of Christ's infancy. We have only related what must have happened. Who dares dispute it? No one. The very idea is an absurdity. Why then should we be reviled? Is it not the function of true art to hold the mirror up to nature? And is not this the head and front of our offending? We have simply taken the Christian at his word. We have assumed that he believes what he professes. We have accepted the dogma that the deity was born of the Virgin Mary; we have followed, step by step, his infantile career; and we exclaim "Christians, behold your God!"

We decline responsibility for what the mirror reflects. We merely hold it up. And this we shall continue to do. Here and there we shall arrest a superstitionist and make him think about his faith; and that will console us for all the insults and sufferings we have experienced in the service of Truth.

JUDAS ISCARIOT.

A SERMON BY THE REV. FRANCIS SUBTLE.

THE subject of our sermon this evening is a character that has almost universally been held up to hatred and contempt. Artists have invariably represented him as ill-looking and malignant. His very hair has been painted red as the symbol of treachery; and this fact has been seized upon by one of the greatest of English satirists, who described a bookseller with whom he quarrelled as having

Two left legs and Judas-colored hair.

On the other hand, however, Judas has been partially vin-

dicated by Thomas De Quincey and Benjamin Disraeli ; and a clergyman of our own Church of England has made him the hero of a Romance, in which the sin of Judas is treated as the precipitancy of a worldly-minded man, who only desired to hasten the temporal reign of our Blessed Savior as King of the Jews.

It will be my duty this evening to explain to you the real character of Judas ; what were his motives in the betrayal of his Master ; and what part he actually played in the mighty and mysterious drama of the crucifixion of the Son of God.

But before I proceed with this task I must pause to rebut an infamous piece of scoffing which I recently met with in an infidel publication. You will remember that among the brothers of Jesus, according to the flesh, was one bearing the name of our Lord's betrayer. Now the infidel writer referred to indulged in the impious surmise that Judas, the brother of Jesus, and Judas, the betrayer of the Son of God, were one and the same person ; and that it was so arranged by Jehovah, with the Jewish economy that might be expected of him, in order to keep the blood-money in the family. Such a wicked speculation will naturally horrify this devout congregation ; and I only mention it, first to show you what awful blasphemy is still allowed by the too-indulgent laws of this nation, and secondly to contradict the foolish idea that the two Judases in the Gospels were identical. They were entirely different persons, beloved ; and you must so regard them if you hope to be saved.

Let us now return to our proper subject. And first let me clear away certain difficulties that beset my path at the very outset.

When the Savior partook of the Last Supper with his disciples he remarked, " I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a Devil." Now this is clear and emphatic, and is usually regarded as decisive of the character of Judas. And, indeed, it would be so, if our Lord always spoke as God. But he sometimes spoke as Man. When he prayed in Gethsemane that the cup of agony might pass from him, and when he cried out on the cross " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" it was the expression of his human infirmity, not the voice of his divine omnipotence. And so, when he called

Judas a Devil, he spoke with the passion of a mortal man, who knew that he must die, yet relucted at martyrdom, and was wroth with the human instrument of his fate. In the same way we must understand the references to Judas as being possessed by Satan. The evangelists followed the lead of their Master; and on this occasion, as on others in the Gospels, they somewhat misunderstood his language.

After this it will not be expected that I should be deterred by the reference to Judas in the Acts of the Apostles, or by the denunciations of the early Fathers. No age is ever perfect in the interpretation of Scripture. From time to time a fresh light is shed upon its holy pages, and one of these flashes of heavenly illumination (as I humbly opine) has enabled me to see in the story of Judas what has been hidden for so many centuries from the greatest and most penetrating divines of the Church of Christ.

It is evident to my apprehension that Judas was not instigated by malicious motives. Evidently, however, he had a disposition to think for himself; and is it any wonder that finally, he ventured to act for himself? He was the only one of the twelve disciples that ever criticised his Master. It is recorded that when a certain woman anointed the Savior's head with a precious alabaster box of ointment, Judas inquired "Why was not this sold for much money, and given to the poor?" He had heard his Master enjoin the selling of property, and the giving of the proceeds to the poor; and to his short-sighted understanding it appeared that his Master had violated his own teaching. This was presumptuous on his part; he had no right to criticise his Lord; yet his presumption was not malignancy; on the contrary, it would seem that he was afflicted at the thought of wasting what might have alleviated the miseries of indigence.

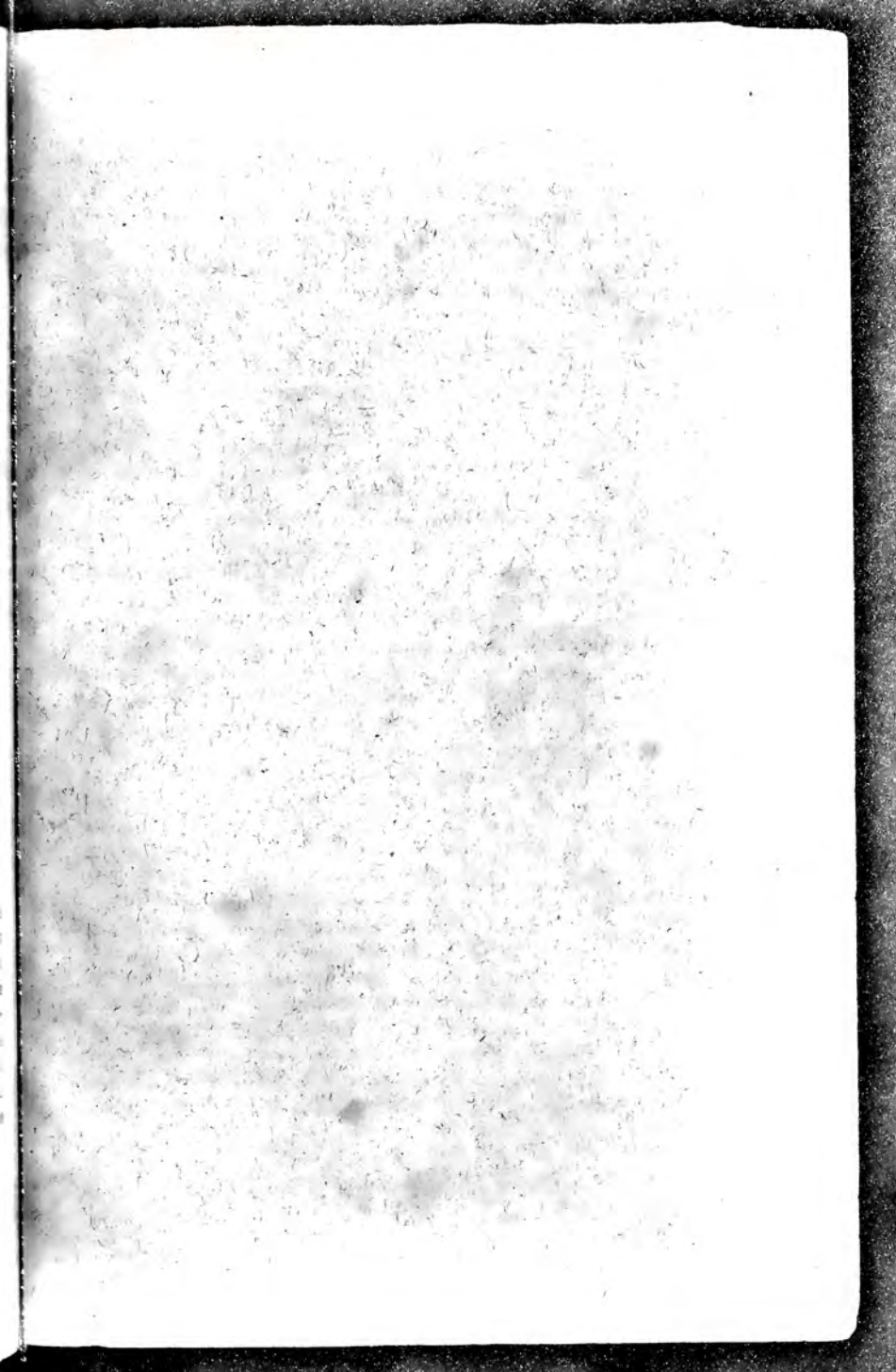
Humanly speaking, this presumption of Judas was the motive of his apparent treachery. It is idle to suppose that he would have sold his Master for the paltry sum of thirty half-crowns if he were merely driving a selfish bargain. A hundred times—yea, perhaps a thousand times—that amount might have been exacted from the Jewish Sanhedrim as the price of one whom they were so anxious to remove. Judas forewent that price; he took only £3 15s. at the very highest

estimate; and his abstention from the fair profit of treachery must be accounted for on other than mercenary grounds.

What was his motive then? Why this. He observed the reluctance of Jesus to go to Jerusalem; his shrinking from his approaching death; his desire to turn away, if possible, from the bitter cup. Nay, the very fact that Jesus, after going to Jerusalem, only spent the daytime in the holy city, and repaired by night to a place of shelter beyond the walls, was a clear indication to Judas that, even at the eleventh hour, his Master might fly from danger. Accordingly he resolved to push him over the brink of the precipice. He took a small sum of money from the Sanhedrim to give his action a color of sincerity, and then led an armed party to arrest his Master. Thus the death of Jesus was assured, and with it the success of the great scheme of Redemption.

But why, it will be asked, did Judas bring back the money in a fit of repentance, and afterwards hang himself? The obvious answer is, that his mind suffered a reaction. His courage sustained him to the critical point; then it deserted him, and left him a prey to afflicting ideas of his Master's sufferings. He hated himself, loathed the sight of the money, and, in a paroxysm of despair, laid violent hands upon his own life.

Thus did Judas share to the very end in the drama of the Crucifixion. *He* died as well as his Master. Both of them were, indeed, under a divine compulsion. Jesus had to be crucified, and Judas had to betray him, otherwise there would have been *no* crucifixion. Presumptuous as the act of Judas was, speaking humanly, it was divinely appointed for the salvation of mankind. Think, beloved, oh think, what must have happened if Judas had not played his part. Christ would not have died to save us, and we should all have been damned! Let us, therefore, cease railing at this misunderstood character; let us remember that he was indispensable to the Redemption; let us treasure his memory as that of an illustrious benefactor; let us anticipate the time when his name will be added to the calendar, and the loftiest of saints will be Saint Judas Iscariot.



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