

and philosophic Jesus said, "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep," *i.e.*, laugh and be damned!

A biographical notice of a very religious family, quoted by a very religious contemporary, states that "for five generations the family had been possessed of sterling qualities of head and heart, and that during that time there had not been in it a prodigal nor an infidel." Then follows the moral:—"It is better than keeping houses or lands to keep holding on to such precious legacy of faith and worth." Passing over with a smile the usual goody, truthful, regardless of police records, coupling of *prodigal* and *infidel*, we cannot but shudder at the intellectual and moral state of this family, which for five generations produced not a single doubter. Think of it! For five generations men and women thought David, Jacob, and Noah were holy men, and held up their unsullied lives as fit examples for children to follow. And then, no doubt, instead of holding on to houses and lands, they made over the precious legacy to the Church (or why the moral?). There is one thing certain, and that is, that owing to the progress of Freethought, the next five generations will not be so barren of infidels.

The 'New Zealand Methodist' gives as an instance of the power of special prayer, that for 120 years a ship has annually left England for the "Moravian Mission," in the arctic regions, without the loss of a single ship or passenger by storm, iceberg, or wreck. We wonder which the rev. editor prefers when he travels, a vessel well prayed for and poorly officered, or the reverse. We know which we prefer. Now, that ungodly Cunard Company, after thousands of trips at almost racehorse speed across the Atlantic, also boast that they have not lost a single ship. But then they take good care to pay highly for the best commanders obtainable! as perhaps the Moravian mission does, and so "keep their powder dry." But, Mr. Rev. Editor, is not this statement rather rash? Suppose next year proper precautions are not taken, and a vessel is lost. Won't the heathen laugh! It seems to us that you have placed your God under an obligation, and if a vessel or passenger should come to grief, that you will be quite justified, like the poor African, in smashing up your idol.

This naturally leads us into the question of insurance — and we wonder if this "Moravian Mission" insure their vessels, and, if so, whether the insurance companies make any reduction in premium owing to the "special prayers?" We have often thought it lacking in faith for the sects to insure their churches, for surely God can look after his own. However, by a late return we see that during last year over four hundred churches in the United Kingdom were struck by lightning. This surely must be because God, amongst the numerous sects of America, is somewhat perplexed to know his own; unless it is to reprove those unfaithful servants who have erected lightning conductors on the house of God itself.

The same paper also gives a graphic description of the great fear in an Indian village during a lunar eclipse — how, with the blowing of horns, sounding of gongs, etc. (like the concert before the walls of Jericho), the inhabitants endeavour so to frighten the moon as

to prevent her from swallowing the earth, or, having swallowed it, to compel her to disgorge it without delay. The writer then *naïvely* remarks that, as they always seem to succeed, so the Hindoos go back to their homes perfectly satisfied that they have rendered distinguished service to the whole human race. Just so! — enlightened Methodists, but poor heathen Hindoos! Now the poor Hindoos have some foundation for their simple faith, for a lunar eclipse always does pass away; but how about these Christian prayers, for rain, for instance, that are of no avail, unless the wind is from the right quarter; or for the conversion of Freethinkers, which are also of no avail, unless Freethinkers first agree to subordinate their reason to religious hysteria.

A truly faithful Christian, not understanding the spirit of the nineteenth century, has requested Bishop Moorhouse, of Melbourne, to pray to the Almighty God to strike with sterility the rabbits of Victoria, and so abate the rabbit nuisance. A few years ago this would have been looked upon as a most natural request, but now, owing to the spread of Freethought, it is ridiculed from one end of the colony to the other. We fail to see why, for surely the God who removed the sterility of Abraham's Sarah could, and should, impose sterility on the rabbits—for no one can deny that this would be a great blessing to man, whereas the propagation of the Israelites (if you can believe the Bible records) was one of the most damnable curses of ancient times; for, not content with murdering and raping the surrounding nations, this insignificant handful of "God's own people" actually presumed to crucify and put to death the creator of this vast and incomprehensible universe.

The Rev. Mr. Whitehouse (Anglican) gave a lecture in Wanganui on Freethought, and we were scarcely surprised, though rather disappointed, to find that it contained about as much argument and unproved assertions as the usual run of sermons. We were told that the Church need not fear Freethought, and that to shun enquiry shows that its foundations are false. We take the rev. gentleman at his word, and say that the Church has, and does, shun enquiry, and therefore its foundations must be false. Need we mention the names of Hypatia, Bruno, Galileo, Bacon, Vesalius, Colenso, and Darwin?—and further ask, what is the present attitude of the Church respecting evolution and geology?

Of course the French Revolution was dragged in, for we never yet heard a lecture on Freethought without this being instanced as a case of the excesses committed by a people when they have thrown over all belief in a God—totally ignoring the historic fact that these were the natural results of centuries of degradation and outrage, committed on the people by a tyrannical government and a corrupt aristocracy. And to the shame of the Christian Church, it was allied with the tyrants! Can it be wondered at that when the inevitable conflict came (a conflict foreseen and foretold by the prophet Voltaire), that the degraded people could not discriminate between the Church and the tyrant? No! And we say that that Church was largely responsible for these excesses, and truly reaped where it had sown!