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All the world is love's dwelling; why talk of a mosque or a church?—HAFIZ.

Christmas Trees and Tree Gods.

THE other day a newspaper writer referred to our ancient English Christmas customs, and amongst these, the use of the Christmas tree. One does not look for strict accuracy from the ordinary journalist, but in this instance he would doubtless reflect the general opinion on the matter. And this opinion may be taken as an illustration of the way in which knowledge of the origin of a custom—once the custom is established—dies out, and an altogether false belief develops. As a matter of fact, the use of the Christmas tree in England was practically unknown before it was introduced from Germany by the Prince Consort. Nor, as a Christmas tree, does it appear to be very ancient in Germany; although the practice of decorating trees at that time of year is a very old one. During the nineteenth century its growth, all over the world, has been very rapid, but I fancy it is now undergoing a decline.

Other customs connected with Christmas have a more widespread antiquity, although there is nothing specifically Christian about them. Or, to put the same thing in a more correct form, they are Christian in the same sense that they are heathen, in the sense that heathenism and Christianity are parts of a world-wide mythology, no one part of which has a greater claim to truth than any other part. Indeed, in some respects, Christianity is further from the truth than many other creeds; for, while one can see plainly *their* meaning and their mode of origin, Christianity has been so overlaid with gloss and interpretation that, in its present form, it resembles an elaborated falsehood of so complex a character that its original nucleus is only discernible with considerable difficulty.

It is not, however, seriously questioned to-day that most, if not all, of the customs associated with Christmas, including the date at which they are carried out, are of pre-Christian origin. The use of mistletoe is a direct heritage from the Druids, who placed it, at the time of the winter solstice, on the altar as representing the spirit of the tree. The decoration of the house with evergreen was also intended to provide a resort for wood spirits, so that they might, as one writer puts it, "remain unripped with frost and winds, until a milder season had renewed the foliage of their darling abodes." The feeding and merry-making are perpetuations of customs that ancient peoples possessed long before Christianity, as such, was heard of. The burning of the yule-log is a practice that has descended from the hearth fire associated with ancestor worship, and which was rekindled once a year from the ever-burning village fire. And the date of the birth of the god Jesus—not fixed until some five hundred years after the alleged event—was also the birth-date for Bacchus, Mithra, Horus, and numerous other deities, and for exactly the same reasons.

All this, however, by the way. The persistence of the tree in Christmas and Christian religious festivities points to a much wider and deeper truth than

that of their obvious affinity with pre-Christian beliefs. The whole structure of Christianity connects it with the world-wide belief in vegetation gods and solar gods, the two being, naturally, very closely connected. The festivals of Christmas and Easter have no other reasonable origin, except their connection with the death and re-birth of vegetation. Both are, in the truest sense of the expression, nature festivals. And Frazer has proven to demonstration—to all whose minds are open to proof—that the sacrifice of Jesus is, not as orthodox Christianity has represented it, the sacrifice of one god to placate another, but the creation of a god by the act of killing, for the purpose of renewing vegetative life.

Why is this so? Before answering that question, it is essential to recognise how widespread is the worship of vegetation gods and tree gods, the two being closely associated. So far as I am aware, there does not exist a people anywhere who have not a belief in vegetation gods of some kind or other; which gods are credited with a very profound influence on human affairs. It is needless to give a large number of specific examples; but those who desire to see how widespread is this belief may consult an exceedingly well-balanced essay by Mrs. J. H. Philpot, *The Sacred Tree*, where a good store of well-chosen examples of tree-worship, in all its forms, is presented within a small compass. The folk-lore of Europe is full of references to tree-deities, while with primitive peoples there often goes the custom of addressing an elaborate apology to the spirit of a tree before cutting it down. Grimm says, indeed, that in Teutonic mythology—

"Temple means also wood. What we figure to ourselves as a built and walled house resolves itself, the further back we go, into a holy place, untouched by human hand, embowered and shut in by self-grown trees. There dwells the deity, veiling his form in the rustling foliage of the boughs."*

And Robertson Smith says, quite accurately, that the tree is not merely the symbol of the god, but his embodiment.

"The god inhabits the tree or raised stone, not in the sense in which a man inhabits a house, but in the sense in which his soul inhabits his body. In short, the whole conception belongs, in its origin, to a state of thought in which there was no more difficulty in ascribing living powers and personality to a stone, tree, or animal, than to a being of human or superhuman build."†

Finally, there is reason to believe that many of the fully developed deities, such as Bacchus, Osiris, etc., were originally vegetation gods.

But how did men ever come to worship trees? That is a question the complete answering of which would take us right back to the origin of religion. And, in my judgment, the only theory that adequately accounts for the *origin* of gods is the one that is so brilliantly sketched by Spencer in the first volume of his *Principles of Sociology*. It is not necessary to state this theory in full; it is enough for my present purpose to say that the idea of God owes its origin to the belief in a ghost or double, suggested by dreams and enforced by other experiences. By a gradual elaboration the ghost becomes the god, and the powers that it possessed as a ghost are continued by it as deity. I do not mean by this

* *Teutonic Mythology*, i. 9.

† *Religion of the Semites*, p. 85.

that all gods were originally ghosts; but that, unless people had acquired the notion of gods in the manner suggested by Spencer, they would never have created gods by other means. For the gods are obvious copies of men, and no other theory has yet been presented which fits in so well with the facts, and which is so, a priori, probable. And god-making is not one of the lost arts. Among many people it is still in active operation, and the various stages of the craft can be easily discerned.

If we refer to primitive peoples we find that all the operations of nature are credited to the activities of spirits—and spirits mean to them simply ghosts. The spirits are the ghosts of the dead. If the crops are plentiful or scarce, it is because the tribal ghosts are pleased or angry. The same service is paid to the ghost of the dead that is afterwards paid to the god, and exactly the same service is expected of it in return. It is presented with offerings, it is praised, it is asked to do things, and its good or ill-will is divined, as its devotees realise their desires or not.

Taking this point as established—and the proofs that the gods come from ghosts are ample—we can take the next step in searching for the origin of tree worship in the company of Mr. Grant Allen. In an essay on *The Attis* of Catullus, that extremely suggestive writer put forward a very probable reason why the ghosts, or gods, should have become peculiarly identified with vegetation. In the first place, the tumulus over a dead body is freshly-turned earth, and surface earth that has been collected from round about. Next, food is scattered over the grave to feed the ghost. Animals are killed on the grave, and their blood soaks into the grave. These, with other circumstances, form obvious reasons why vegetation should grow more richly on the grave and in its neighborhood than elsewhere. For example, it is still a custom in some of the Hebrides for milkmaids to pour a little of their milk, morning and evening, on the fairy mounds. Naturally, these mounds are of a richer verdure than elsewhere. But the verdure is not attributed to the milk, but to the fairies. And when we note that these fairy mounds are, when examined, nearly always found to be primitive graves, we have a clear object-lesson in the truth of what has been said. Using the same mode of reasoning, primitive man does not, then, attribute the better growth on the grave to the better-fed soil; it is due entirely to the ghost. It is the life of the ghost manifesting itself in vegetation. If a tree springs up and flourishes, it is the abode of the ghost; and this at once gives a simple explanation of the existence of sacred trees and of tree worship all over the world.

This leads to one more step that brings us in peculiarly close connection with the Christian myth. From the belief that the fertility of crops depends upon the activity of the ghost or god, to the practice of creating a ghost or god for the express purpose of seeing to the crops is an easy and natural step. And there is no doubt whatever that gods have been made for precisely such a purpose. The argument is that if plants grow best where the man is buried, to bury a man where a good crop is desired promises success. Mr. Frazer will supply anyone who consults his works with abundant instances of the custom of annually killing a victim, and either burying him whole in the centre of a field, or sharing the flesh out and burying a portion in each field belonging to a village. In these cases man is simply creating a god by the fact of killing the creature. And when we bear in mind that, as Frazer has also shown, the primitive king is a direct descendant of the ancestral ghost, and is thus already divine, there is given the reason why the selected victim is crowned with royal honors and treated for the time being as a royal personage—as in the case of the New Testament Jesus.

For this story brings us into direct touch with the Christian myth. It is a later version—mixed up with a great many other details, as is naturally the case with late versions—of the primitive practice of creating a god for the special purpose of looking after

the people's welfare in this or that direction. The importance of Mr. Frazer's researches lies in connecting the Jewish myth, not merely with the myths of comparatively developed peoples, but with the actual practice of savages. The true key to religion lies in anthropology. It is in the practice of the most primitive of our ancestors, and in that of the most primitive of our contemporary races, that it is possible to find an adequate explanation of the most advanced form of religious belief.

C. COHEN.

Christmas Curiosities.

CHRISTIAN scholars are forced to admit that the date of the Savior's birth cannot possibly be determined. Not even the year can be fixed, nor the place. According to Matthew, he was born during the reign of Herod, who died in the year A.D. 4; but if we follow Luke we must place the event some ten years later. If the year cannot be discovered, it is a more hopeless task still to ascertain the month and the day; and we find so orthodox a divine as the late Dean Farrar reluctantly confessing that "as to the day and month of the nativity it is certain that they can never be recovered." It is well known that from the middle of the fourth century December 25 has been set apart for its commemoration; but it is not so well known that the Armenian Church celebrates it on January 6 to this day. The latter date was observed by the ancient Church for a considerable period; and it is a suggestive coincidence that this was the date of the Alexandrian feast of the appearing of Dionysus, the jolly Greek God. Prior to this, however, numerous attempts had been made to fix a date. Antonmaria Lupi informs us that there is no month in the year to which the nativity has not been assigned at one time or another.

Now, Professor Usener, of the University of Bonn, affirms unblushingly, in his Nativity articles in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, that the Church fixed upon December 25 "by mythological analogy." Bold as is that statement, made by a Christian writer, it by no means embodies the whole truth on the point in question. It should be borne in mind that by the middle of the fourth century Christianity was all-powerful as the religion of the State, and that its most fondly cherished ambition was to suppress the Pagan worship at whatever cost. All conceivable machinery was put in operation in order to satisfy such a pitiful ambition; and as a result Paganism was speedily stamped out. The Christian contention is that it richly deserved the terrible doom inflicted upon it. Let us see to what extent, if any, that is true. We are told, for example, that the object in choosing December 25 for the festival in memory of the birth of Jesus Christ was to supplant the corrupt Saturnalia, a festival in honor of the God Saturn, which was observed at this season; but that is a total mistake. Christmas is the Saturnalia, taken almost bodily over, and dedicated to a new purpose. The great festival of Saturn was originally celebrated on December 19, but in consequence of Cæsar's reform of the Calendar it fell on the 17th, and subsequently the 18th was added, while the 19th and 20th were devoted to Ops. Later a fifth day was set apart, and ere long the people fell into the habit of extending the festival to seven days. It was a time of general rejoicing and merry-making. The ordinary business of life was entirely suspended; and the people gave themselves up wholeheartedly to fun and frolic. The schools were closed; the army enjoyed a holiday; social distinctions vanished; slaves sat at their masters' tables and were actually waited upon. Fun and merriment became the order of the seven days. Saturn was believed to be the God of plenty, who taught the Romans agriculture, and instilled into them the ambition to cultivate civilisation and morality, and so to abandon their savage mode of life. No wonder that they thoroughly enjoyed the festival of such a beneficent Deity.

Originally, no doubt, the Saturnalia was a happy celebration of the winter solstice. It afforded the people an opportunity of giving outward expression to the joy that filled their hearts at the promise of spring and summer with their attendant blessings. The sun was still far away and the earth was dead and chill; but the life-giver's face was turned towards them, and they wildly danced in the fulness of hope. Winter's death-knell was already sounded, and soon the world would become a lovely paradise once more, joyously responding to the needs of its denizens.

Now, whether the Christians of the fourth century understood the true nature of the Saturnalia or not, they were discerning enough to realise that if they appropriated it, with certain alterations, they would thereby deal Paganism a severe blow and greatly fortify their own position. It was not a case of borrowing, but of downright stealing, to the glory of God. But, in spite of all the modifications made, the festival has retained its Pagan characteristics down to our own times; and it is these that account for its survival. This is only an illustration of the phenomenal elasticity of the Christian religion. When it was weak and pure it raised its voice to a perfect thunder against all forms of gaiety and pleasure. The early Fathers described as "rank idolatry" the decking of doors "with garlands or flowers on festival days according to the custom of the heathen"; but after it became the established religion of the Roman Empire, Christianity quickly adapted itself to the new conditions, and learned to find in the Paganism which it had formerly cursed in its entirety much that would prove advantageous to itself, all of which it made its own without a qualm. Thus, in the sixteenth century, Polydore Virgil, kinsman of a Cardinal, who at the instance of Henry VIII. wrote *Historia Anglica*, was not ashamed to own the heavy indebtedness of Christianity to Paganism. He frankly admitted that "the decorating of temples with hangings of flowers, boughs, and garlands, was adopted from the Pagan nations, who decked their houses and temples in a similar manner." Perceiving this truth, the Puritans denounced Christmas as a relic of Paganism, and had they been able would have abolished it. Prynne called it "the very ape or issue" of the Roman Saturnalia. He hated it as violently as Tertullian would have hated it, had he lived to see it. But the Puritans were right. As celebrated in their day and still in ours, Christmas must be pronounced a Pagan institution thinly sprinkled with Christian ceremony.

The Rev. J. E. Rattenbury contributes "A Christmas Homily to the Christmas number of the *Methodist Times*, in which he emphasises, not the theological, but the secular, character of Christmas. But like all divines, he makes the mistake of treating the secular elements as if they were the direct results of a Divine incarnation, ignoring the fact that mankind had been familiar with them for countless ages before that alleged event took place. He says:—

"Christmas is the great human festival, because God himself could find no way of talking finally and authoritatively to man save through man."

How does Mr. Rattenbury know that God has ever spoken to man at all? He can only answer by quoting a well-known verse from Hebrews written by an anonymous person who had no better means of knowing than himself, or anybody else. In his emotional excitement a preacher imagines that he knows much more than he does. There is no end to his fancied assurance. Listen:—

"People imagined, and still imagine, that the spiritual and material are divorced: at Christmas God and man are made one. Jesus makes all common things sublime. The secular perished at the manger. Life became sacred for all that have eyes to see. Anyone who supposes the secular exists to-day is to that extent blind."

If that is not claptrap, in reason's name what is it? What right has Mr. Rattenbury to insult people who do not agree with him by characterising them as blind? And he must know, if he thinks at all, that he is talking nonsense when he says that "the

secular perished at the manger." The secular is with us in full evidence at this moment, while the spiritual is only an *imagined* reality. What about the submerged masses who inhabit the slums? Does not the secular have a most grim reality for them, and has any sane person the hardihood to call their common things sublime? And they are there to-day, full of misery and pain, though the Savior of the world is said to have arrived some two thousand years ago. The manger is an empty dream to them, poor creatures. But Christ is both able and willing to save them, cry the preachers, and we answer, Then, in heaven's name, why does he not do it? Oh, the preachers retort, "Christ and the people must be brought together." Well, really, what is the use of an eternal and omnipotent Christ if he cannot get at the people who need him? The situation would be irresistibly comical were it not so tragically serious. The following are the words of a twentieth century popular preacher, and they put the whole case in a nutshell:—

"In surveying the unwelcome facts, marshalled with such skill and effect by the Dean [of St. Paul's], I have rejoiced with joy abundant in the Gospel of the grace of God. I look at our distracted world, and I see everywhere gaps and wounds, divisions and empty places. I turn to Jesus Christ, and I find in him a fulness for every void and a balm for every sore. Christ wants the democracy and the democracy needs Christ."

Surely, this man of God ought to be profoundly ashamed of his rejoicing. He ought rather to take his place with Job among the ashes and curse the day wherein he was born. A preacher of the Gospel of the Grace of God is a criminal if he rejoices while the world is distracted with suffering and sorrow. The Gospel of the grace of God, Christ's fulness for every void and balm for every sore—all this is sheer mockery and humbug as long as the world is all wrong. An all-right Christ is no good until he sets an all-wrong world gloriously right.

The only conclusion to which we can legitimately come, while facing all the facts, is that Christmas is a mere farce except as a festival of the winter solstice. In no other connection has it any intelligible meaning whatever. Our only source of rejoicing at this season is in the knowledge that it is the pledge of a mighty natural revival, the nearest approach to a resurrection known to us. Nature is not dead, but only resting in sound slumber. She is already rubbing her eyes and slowly beginning to rise; and soon, as we look at the old earth, what bliss it will be—

"To see it rise thus joyous from its dreams,
The fresh and radiant earth. The hoary grove
Waxed green—and flowers burst forth like starry beams."

Then the prepared soil shall welcome the mature seeds, and in due course the golden grain shall deck the fields to supply the needs of man and beast. Such is the message of Christmas to men and women of bright faith and strong courage; and intelligently listening to such a message we can sincerely wish one another

A RIGHT MERRY CHRISTMAS.

J. T. LLOYD.

Sir Oliver Lodge on Religion and Science.

"In disposition also Religion and Science are opposite. Science cultivates a vigorous, adult, intelligent, serpent-like wisdom, and active interference with the course of nature; Religion fosters a meek, receptive, child-hearted attitude of dove-like resignation to the Divine Will."—SIR OLIVER LODGE, *Man and the Universe*, 1908, p. 11.

"The great thing to remember is that the mind of man cannot be enlightened permanently by merely teaching him to reject some particular set of superstitions. There is an infinite supply of other superstitions always at hand; and the mind that desires such things—that is, the mind that has not trained itself to the discipline of reasonableness and honesty—will, as soon as its devils are cast, proceed to fill itself with their relations."—PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY, *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911.

"If Sir Oliver Lodge came before his public, and said 'I am a man who, on different occasions, asks you to listen to

me as addressing you in different capacities—one that of the eminent scientific specialist, the other that of an eminent lay clergyman, and it is in the latter capacity only that I indulge in these authoritative utterances,' he might claim a respectful hearing, for he is (if I may venture to say so) a man whom we all respect. But if he pretends that these utterances have anything to do with science—with any discoveries of new facts, or with any method of interpreting them on coherently philosophical principles—he is either involuntarily taking his public in, or is else exposing to its ridicule the principles he is anxious to support."—W. H. MALLOCK, *Fortnightly Review*, July, 1906.

SIR OLIVER LODGE stands upon a different plane to any of the other apologists we have considered. In matters of fact he goes all the way with the scientists. He does not attempt to trace back things to a "First Cause" who created matter and force. As Mr. Mallock pointed out, "Sir Oliver, in his own way, is as pronounced a Monist as Professor Haeckel is."

Some religious apologists delight in pointing out the differences of opinion existing between men of science upon some points, such as the age of the earth or the antiquity of man. But Sir Oliver observes:—

"I suggest that there is more nearly an orthodox science than there is an orthodox theology. Professors of theology differ among themselves in a rather conspicuous manner.....as is evidenced by the existence of sects ranging from Unitarians on the one side to Greek and Roman Catholics on the other. In science sectarianism is less marked, controversies range chiefly round matters of detail, and on all important issues its professors are agreed. This general consensus of opinion on the part of experts.....is what I mean by the term 'science as now understood,' or, for brevity, 'modern science.'"*

Sir Oliver goes on to say that it must be admitted that modern science "exercises a sort of blighting influence upon religious ardor," and

"In fact, it may be held that the general drift or atmosphere of modern science is adverse to the highest religious emotion, because unconvinced of the reality of many of the occurrences upon which such an exalted state of feeling must be based if it is to be anything more than a wave of transient enthusiasm" (p. 4).

To the question as to wherein lies the incompatibility of the atmosphere of modern science with the atmosphere of religious faith, Sir Oliver replies that—

"Orthodox modern science shows us a self-contained and self-sufficient universe, not in touch with anything beyond or above itself, the general trend and outline of it known; nothing supernatural or miraculous, no intervention of beings other than ourselves being conceived possible" (p. 6).

Religion, on the other hand, he observes, "requires us constantly to be in touch—even affectionately in touch—with a power, a mind, a being or beings, entirely out of our sphere, entirely beyond our scientific ken." Without absolutely denying the existence of such beings, or putting any limit to their potential powers, Science, says Sir Oliver, "definitely disbelieves in their exerting any actual influence on the progress of events, or in their producing or modifying the simplest physical phenomenon." He goes on to observe:—

"Whatever they might be able to do if they chose, for all practical purposes such beings are to the average scientific man purely imaginary, and he feels sure that he can never have experiential knowledge of them or their powers. In his view the universe lies before us for investigation, and, so far as he can see, it is complete without them."†

To sum the whole matter up, says Sir Oliver, there are only two theories of the universe possible.

- "1. Are we to believe in irrefragable Law?
- "2. Are we to believe in spiritual guidance?"

The alternative to these two beliefs, he observes, is a universe of random chance and chaotic disorder, not a cosmos or universe at all—a multiverse rather. It is here that Sir Oliver diverges in an important respect from the ordinary apologist, who always puts the antithesis of spiritual guidance or creation on

the one hand against chance and chaos on the other. Sir Oliver makes it clear once for all that Science puts aside both these views as equally false and irrelevant. He illustrates the different mode of expression used by Science and Religion by observing:—

"The death of an archbishop can be stated scientifically in terms not very different from those appropriate to the stoppage of a clock, or the extinction of a fire; but the religious formula for such an event is that it has pleased God in His infinite wisdom to take to Himself the soul of our dear brother, etc. The very words of such a statement are to modern science unmeaning."*

He goes on to observe that while men of science have been "keenly alive to law and system and material fact, they have been occasionally insensitive to art, to emotion, to poetry, and to the higher mental and spiritual environment which inspires and glorifies the realm of knowledge." And it is to poetry and emotion, and not to any facts of science, that he appeals for belief in Religion.

Sir Oliver takes the oil of Science and the water of Religion, mixes them together, and shakes them vigorously, inviting us during the process to observe how successful he is in combining two opposites; but when the shaking is over we soon perceive that the separation is as complete as before and all his labor has been in vain.

But there is no necessity to follow Sir Oliver through all the divagations into which his thesis leads him. There is not an opinion or belief upon Religion held by learned and pious believers that has not been controverted and the exact opposite maintained by equally learned and pious believers, and Sir Oliver's beliefs are not exempt from the general rule. Mr. Mallock—although, as he observes, he has himself sought to establish the same general conclusions—has upon more than one occasion applied a drastic criticism to Sir Oliver's methods. In an article entitled "Sir Oliver Lodge on Religion and Science," in the *Fortnightly Review* (November, 1905), he points out that the great difficulty of modern religious thinkers has been to reconcile the ruthless indifference of nature to the claims and happiness of the individual. "And yet," he says, "Sir Oliver, in one of his recent essays, declares that science is now 'raising us to a conviction' that 'we are enfolded (by the All-one) in an embracing and interpenetrating love.'" Mr. Mallock goes on to observe:—

"Of all the sins or blunders which Sir Oliver imputes to God, by far the most remarkable and frequent is his cruelty to men, women, and children indiscriminately, which is not only essential to the evolutionary process, but is emphasised by the volcanic destruction of entire populations, and which no Nero in his maddest moments could equal. By reference, then, to what scientific facts does Sir Oliver single out cruelty as the sin which God most detests, and declare that our relations with Him are relations of a love that is 'embracing and interpenetrating'? And the answer is that he refers to no such facts at all. He gives us nothing but a number of vague assertions, which have not even the merit of agreeing with one another. We find him at one moment enunciating a system of ultra-Spencerian Monism, declaring that we are microbes evolved from the universal substance, and that the universe is full of imperfections for which 'God is in some sort responsible'; and the next moment he is sitting with the doctors of the Anglican Churches, quoting the Gospels to show with what sins God alone is angry, and debating whether He is not much too just and sensible to be appeased by the sacrifice of His Son. When once he has placed himself on this quasi-ecclesiastical plane, his contentions, whether true or false, may have some intelligible basis. But how did he reach this position? Where is the scientific step-ladder by which he has climbed up? It is nowhere. However he climbed up, he did not climb up by that."

Sir Oliver's rise from Science to theology, says Mr. Mallock, reminds him of the feat accomplished by a medium at a *séance* at which he was once present, who, when the light was turned on, he—who had been sitting between two ladies—was visible, together

* *Man and the Universe*, 1908, p. 3.

† *Man and the Universe*, p. 10.

* *Man and the Universe*, p. 10.

with his chair, in the middle of the dining-room table. How he got there he could not or would not explain. All they knew was that the feat had been accomplished in the darkness; and—

"Sir Oliver Lodge's rise from science to theology is accomplished under like conditions. He talks about science during the process, but merely to create a fog worse even than Mr. Whetham's; and in that fog he rises. He first says that we are immortal because we existed before all worlds. He then says that we are immortal because the worlds existed before us. He then interjects a statement that all existence is one. He then falls foul of Professor Haeckel for asserting the same thing, and declares that a spiritual universe is evolved from the material, which transcends, dominates, and utilises 'the material aspect of the whole.'"

The *Hibbert Journal* (January, 1909)—which ought to change its title to that of the *Nonconformist Review*—reviewing Sir Oliver Lodge's book, *Man and the Universe*, observed:—

"There appears to be a sort of tacit agreement among what are known as advanced theologians that people are to believe what they like, provided only that they call it Christianity.....The result is that the Christian religion, which was once so boldly dogmatic, has become a kind of Proteus, which on your grasping it evades you in a stream of pious phraseology" (p. 318).

"A stream of pious phraseology"—that exactly characterises the whole of Sir Oliver's contributions to religion.

Consider, for instance, Sir Oliver's teaching as to immortality, that it lays with each man individually whether he shall, by creating his own character, attain to immortality or not. Mr. Mallock, in another article dealing with Sir Oliver's book, *Life and Matter* (*Fortnightly Review*, July, 1906), observes:—

"Again, as to the question of whether man is mortal or immortal, which Sir Oliver says depends for each man on what he makes of himself—is it credible that a scientific expert should have solemnly enunciated this doctrine as the outcome of scientific discovery? At what point does want of character become character, and does unworthiness become worthiness to such a degree that the supreme change is effected, and a trivial and perishing accident turns into an eternal entity? And is the acquisition of a strong character enough to effect this change? Or must the character be good also? Or need it be good only? Not only have Sir Oliver's dicta with regard to all these questions no relation to scientific facts of any kind, but they are incapable of even being stated in any intelligible and coherent form. We must say of him what he says about certain views of Haeckel's, that if they are put forward as the mere personal opinions, or conjectures, or fancies, of an individual, they can do no harm, and nobody has any right to complain of them; but if they are put forward in the name of science, and as deriving any weight from the authority of a man of science, then, in the interests of science and religion alike, it is necessary to protest against them."

Now, as the same writer has pointed out—

"The attention which, when he speaks on religious subjects, Sir Oliver Lodge claims and receives from the public is essentially due, both in his opinion and theirs, to the fact that he professes to bring to the old problems of theology the special and expert knowledge of a master of modern science."*

But Professor Lankester publicly protested, in the *Times*, that on more than one occasion Sir Oliver

"made statements to large and popular audiences with reference to matters touching the groundwork of some forms of religious belief, which statements are absolutely at variance with fact. He made these statements as a professed exponent of physical science, and they have been quoted throughout the country as the testimony of a man of science against the conclusions which science had been popularly supposed to have reached."†

Sir Oliver seems to possess a dual personality—like the hero of Stevenson's novel—a kind of theologico-scientific Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. There is Dr. Jekyll, the scientist, and Mr. Hyde, the theologian. The Sir Oliver addressing a Brotherhood or P.S.A. meeting is not the same Sir Oliver lec-

turing upon the ether or electrons before a scientific society; and the prestige he has earned by his researches upon these matters—in which he dispenses with any aid from gods or spirits—he uses to enforce his fantastic views on Religion when expounding them before popular audiences who are unable to distinguish between the conclusions founded upon Science and those derived from "poetry and emotion," and he never takes the trouble to distinguish the one from the other. Sir Oliver's theological works must take their place upon the shelf along with the similar works of Newton, Gladstone, Wallace, and many others.

W. MANN.

Notes on the "Blasphemy" Case.

SOMETHING I did not expect has happened. I have received two letters from one of the prisoners for "blasphemy" in Armley Prison. Mr. Stewart wrote me—on prison paper, of course, and how it roused old memories!—that he had applied for leave to appeal against the verdict and sentence in his case; which gave him the right to communicate with persons outside whose help he might require. He wanted a book, which I got and sent him. He also wanted my advice. This I gave him at considerable length and as carefully as I could. He wrote thanking me and expecting to have to write again very shortly. But the correspondence stopped dead, and I hear indirectly that leave to appeal has been refused him. He will therefore simply have to serve the remainder of his sentence.

* * *

It seemed to me a good step to appeal if it were possible. One gain at least would be the increased ventilation of the case. The public would learn more about it from the newspaper reports. The sentence of three months, in itself, seemed excessive in view of the sentence of one month passed upon Mr. Boulter in London for a precisely similar offence. Some grounds that Mr. Stewart thought much of I thought very little of, and I had to tell him so, and why. I had also to tell him quite plainly that, in my opinion, the appeal should be entrusted to legal hands.

* * *

One point that I myself should argue if the appeal were in my hands is quite novel. Arguing it before the judges in the Court of Appeal would involve profound knowledge of the history and application of the Blasphemy Laws and close familiarity with all the most important "cases." It would be a waste of time to coach a mere amateur for such an argument, but I would gladly have coached a K.C. The argument is that the Common Law can not only be altered but even abolished by the indirect action of new Statutes. I contend that certain Statutes—I cannot go into the matter more fully now—have subverted the foundations of the Common Law of Blasphemy and left it a mere castle in the air, a ghost without a body, a name without a substance. I may be wrong, of course; but I recollect that nearly everybody said I was wrong when I began establishing the Secular Society, Ltd.

* * *

It should not be supposed that an appeal, such as Mr. Stewart contemplated, involved any sort of cowardice. It was a move in the game which he was entitled to make if he could. And if the conviction were quashed, or the sentence reduced, it would have added to the difficulties of the bigots in attempting any future prosecutions. Mr. Stewart is open to criticism on other grounds, but he has given no one a right to question his courage.

* * *

I have received a letter from Mr. Ernest Pack, rather ostentatiously marked "copy," in which he challenges (ostensibly on Mr. Stewart's behalf) the statements I made last week concerning the interview he sought with me at the *Freethinker* office,—

* *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1905; p. 840.

† Cited in same article.

particularly the statement as to what he said his earnings were and the amount he had expended on Freethought propaganda. I do not propose to hold any correspondence with Mr. Pack. I merely say publicly that I have nothing to withdraw, and that I can produce corroborative evidence when necessary. One is tempted to ask what Mr. Pack is seeking. Does he mean to say he is not aware that Mr. Stewart's romantic tongue is a by-word amongst those who know him? * * *

I regret to say that the cheque I sent to Mrs. Stewart, when she directly appealed to me for assistance, has been returned to me. It was sent on Friday, December 8. She did not acknowledge its receipt until Sunday, December 17. She did not use it, and was therefore not in such dire need as I imagined. She is saying that she returned it to me because of what I wrote about her husband. But she did not return it to me. She placed it in other hands to be returned to me,—on Wednesday, December 13—twenty-four hours before she could have seen the *Freethinker*. She had been "advised" that there was no need for help from London, after all; and it is easy to guess the identity of the adviser. * * *

My cheque was not private. I had no personal acquaintance whatever with Mrs. Stewart, and except for my being President of the National Secular Society she had no reason in the world for applying to me specially. The N. S. S. Executive made a generous offer, and made it promptly. The offer not being accepted the N. S. S. Executive is saved a considerable responsibility. I imagine it will not move again without a clear and pointed invitation. Meanwhile one is pleased to announce that a Committee has been formed at Leeds, with Mr. H. R. Youngman, 102 Becket-street, as secretary and treasurer. Mr. John Grange has joined this Committee and his name inspires confidence. Subscriptions sent to this Committee will be devoted to supplying the wants of Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Gott (if necessary). I do not wish subscriptions to be sent to me. Let them be sent direct to Mr. Youngman. * * *

Mr. McKenna's reply to Mr. Crawshaw-Williams in the House of Commons on the Leeds "blasphemy" case seemed to leave the door open for possible action by the Home Office. Nothing definite could be done or said while the case was before the Court of Criminal Appeal, but that state of things is now ended, and I have heard whispers that the Stewart and Gott sentences may be dealt with (meaning, of course, shortened) and that an idea is entertained of reforming the law of "blasphemy." But the only way of reforming it is to abolish it. As long as it exists in any shape or form it will always be available for the use of bigots against the most obnoxious Freethinkers. * * *

Personally I should be very glad, for more than general reasons, if the Blasphemy Laws could be abolished absolutely. It would be a personal relief to a man in my position. In former days the prosecutors struck at the undoubted leaders of Free-thought in England; now they strike lower, and if the law remains they will strike lower and lower still. This makes it all the more difficult for a man in my position to write, speak, and act so as to please everyone. It is indeed impossible, and I have not attempted it. The wise and dignified plan is to accept Victor Hugo's advice and "Follow the Light and do the Right" as one sees it oneself. The Executive of the National Secular Society has gone along with me thus far, after free and full discussion, and the Executive's judgment is something that should command respect. An irresponsible critic here or there will be almost angry that my judgment does not square with his. It is a pity, no doubt; but—!

G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

Christian missionaries have talked for a hundred years about the degradation of woman in India. Some of them may be mistaken observers; the rest must be rank liars. Woman is really more honored in India than in England. It is only by an accident, for instance, that a woman rules in England, but the thing has been common enough in India. A case in point has just been referred to in the *Daily News* report of the Coronation Durbar at Delhi. During the ceremony of doing homage to the King-Emperor, in which the native princes knelt one by one before the imperial throne, the following incident occurred:—

"The Princes of Central India next approached, and a palpable hush came over the vast assemblage as the Begum of Bhopal advanced to the throne, for in this slight-veiled figure all present recognised one of the ablest and most enlightened of Indian rulers, and as she returned to her seat, after making her homage, she was given an ovation." That sort of thing seems to us a great improvement on the street fights that go on here between suffragettes and policemen.

"Their Majesties seated on Golden Thrones" was a newspaper headline of the Coronation Durbar at Delhi. What a splendid illustration of the Sermon on the Mount, which missionaries offer the people of India as the fundamental ethics of Christianity! And see how beautifully religion of any kind binds people together. Hindus, Mohammedans, and Sikhs held separate processions and services of prayer before the great popular fête opened. It is dangerous for people of different religions to associate too closely, and dangerous to let them get too far apart. Religion and religionists, in short, want watching.

Rev. C. Pierrepont Edwards, of Hastings, is a politician and displays the public vices of two professions. He is reported to have referred to Mr. Lloyd George, at a Primrose League gathering, as "Whitefield's Professor of Calumny at the University of Ananias." Liberal papers say this is libellous. Even if it be so Mr. Lloyd George would be foolish to sue the rev. gentleman for damages. Jury and judge, between them, would probably make *him* pay the damages for complaining of freedom of speech on the part of a Tory. Besides, Ananias was a good early Christian who came far nearer to obeying Christ than either Mr. Lloyd George or the Rev. C. Pierrepont Edwards.

It is a favorite dodge of the clergy nowadays to pretend that they went through the gloom of "doubt" before they came to the bright light of Christianity. Even the Bishop of London affects great sympathy with young men that "doubt" has in its clutches, as he suffered in the same way "before he arrived at the faith which is now his joy." He is ready to help them when they "wonder what is behind the veil." Young men often do that, but we never heard of their wanting the assistance of a middle-aged Bishop in finding it out. What is behind the veil is so often in connivance with the enquirer.

The *Christian World* points out that in Germany "the powerful Socialist party is the strongest guardian of the principles of peace." It also admits that the Socialists "are not only passive to religion, but actively hostile to the Church of Christ." This, the *Christian World* says, tends to build up a wall between them and political parties in Britain. But why should it? And if it does, one can need no clearer proof of the anti-social nature of religion. Here is a question of overwhelming importance to the world's welfare. Here is a political party in Germany strongly in favor of peace; and we are warned that political parties in this religious little country cannot join with them because they are hostile to religion. More shame to the religionists of this country, will be the conclusion of every right thinking man and woman.

Last week we chronicled the praiseworthy action of the Rev. T. P. Castley, who surrendered £290 a year and a residence, rather than preach doctrines he had ceased to believe in. This week we have to record another sample of clerical straightforwardness. A Calvinistic Methodist minister, writing in *Y Geniven*, complains that not a single religious connection in Wales has yet ventured to issue a work honestly trying to familiarise the public with as much of advanced Biblical criticism as is accepted and taught in theological colleges. There is one teaching for the selected few, and another teaching for the masses. We appreciate the protest, but feel bound to say that this is not wholly peculiar to Wales. We are inclined to believe that there are very few clergymen with any pretence to education who are not

teaching their congregation as unquestionable truths things which they know—to put it mildly—are very questionable indeed. In fact, it is often frankly avowed that it is not the business of the pulpit to put "unsettling views" before a congregation. And this, in substance, means that it is the duty of clergymen to keep on with old views just so long as they think their congregations do not know any better, and only to tell a little of the truth when no other alternative seems possible.

This reminds us of a sentence in a recent sermon by the Rev. Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury Chapel. This gentleman remarks that the Dean of St. Paul's, in dealing with certain tendencies of the age, has mistaken the pains of growth for the pangs of death. The pains of growth! Why should there be any pains about growth? What are called "growing pains" in children are anything but promising symptoms. They are indications of ill-health—mostly of a rheumatic character. Growth is not painful in itself, but growth in the presence of forces that place an emphasis on arrest may involve very severe pains. All the talk of the pains people go through in giving up religious ideas are quite adventitious in character. They result from illiberal tendencies of the people with whom they are intimately associated. It is the break with human associates that is painful, not the acquisition of new ideas. A good Christian—and the better the Christian the worse he is in this respect—feels that he can no longer associate on the same terms as heretofore with one who has no longer the same beliefs as himself. As this is so common and general a feature of Christians, most of those who are outgrowing the old faith take their complete or partial ostracism as a matter of course. It is bigotry that provides all the pains incidental to growth, and, in so doing, manufactures mental cowards and hypocrites by the gross.

The Portuguese Government has decided to sell all the jewels and valuables found in the royal palaces of Necessidades, Ajuda, and Pena. The Government holds that these valuable trumperies do not belong to the dethroned royal family, but are a part of the Crown treasures which were confiscated by the State. The larger part of the amount realised will be devoted to national educational purposes. A very sensible change!

Rev. W. Temple, headmaster of Repton School, preaching at All Saints' Church, Derby, in celebration of the hundred and second anniversary of the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary, said that such measures as Old Age Pensions and the Insurance Bill were "a sign of that awakening which was nothing but the spirit of Christ among the people." Well, that is good. It was not an English Bishop, but a great "infidel," who first proposed Old Age Pensions. Thomas Paine's scheme was published in the second part of his *Rights of Man*. What on earth, we should like to know, has Christ or his "spirit" to do with Insurance of any kind? His teaching is all about the next world. "Take no thought for the morrow" would be the funniest motto for an Insurance Company. What the reverend gentleman really means, we think, is that Christianity is once more patronising and nobbling a movement that it opposed as long as it dared.

When will the religious people leave off calling Freethinkers, by implication, fools? Whatever else they may be, they are certainly not that. From three different religious papers, issued during the same week, we learn that Freethought is strong in France only because Frenchmen had before them a corrupt Roman Church; that unbelief has grown in Italy from the same cause; and that in England it is the quarrels and uncharity of Christians that creates un-believers. This, we repeat, is giving Freethinkers less credit for intelligence than they deserve. For our part, we assure the writers in these journals that if the Christian Church all over the world was without blemish and Christians without spot, it would not materially affect Freethought and Freethinkers. The latter are quite able to discriminate between a thing and its abuse; and the former is based primarily, not upon what Christianity does, but upon what it is. It is the truth of Christianity that is the point upon which Freethought rests its case; and this is not decided by any discussion as to whether certain churches or certain preachers, are good, bad, or indifferent. There is a place for the discussion of the moral value of Christianity and Christians, but that is another question altogether. Meanwhile we beg Christian journalists to remember that Freethinkers are not quite such fools as to base their rejection of Christianity upon the fact of certain Churches being dangerous and certain preachers rascals.

"A swarm of missionaries"—we quote from a religious weekly—are preparing to invade Tripoli to begin propaganda

among the Arabs. Judging from reports, there is more need for propaganda among the invaders. We fancy the Arabs, like the Chinese, will put up with the missionaries just so long as they are forced to tolerate them.

The Bishop of Manchester has been making discoveries. Preaching at Rochdale, the Bishop said that a man might make a fortune by dishonest methods, and afterwards live a perfectly respectable life, and perhaps be a great Church benefactor. We fancy the Bishop would not have to look far down the list of Church benefactors to find more than one specimen of this class. The Bishop also remarked that when God gave a man wealth he placed him in a position of great danger, and Christians ought to pity them because of their dangerous situation. The same old cant! As though ninety-nine and a-half per cent. of the Christian world would not gladly face all the risks if they could only grasp the money! And as though there is in any other country in the world such undisguised worship of wealth as in those countries that call themselves Christian! Cant and cash! Cash and cant!

The Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Burton-on-Trent, is in the doleful dumps because, like the Dean of St. Paul's, he has the courage publicly to confess what all know to be true, namely, that the Christian Church is a woefully hypocritical institution. She "has bowed before the storm, and is openly ridiculed by the masses" in consequence; and Mr. Boulton is afraid that her downfall is drawing nigh. Already "her hope flickers and wavers like the failing light. What wonder that she suffers?" Indeed, the world generally is seriously on the down grade. Strikes, suffragetism, the universal uneasiness and unrest, are but symptoms of decline. Even "governments are shamelessly beguiling and robbing the people, and bribing their leaders to betray them." The one thing the reverend gentleman does not seem to understand is that he is the minister of a religion that clearly stands condemned, on his own showing, as the most gigantic failure in history.

Orthodoxy is not a dead horse that needs no more flogging. The orthodoxy of the famous Bishop Wilberforce is still rampant in some quarters. Letters are now appearing in the *Presbyterian*, in which science and scientists are treated with sublime contempt. Darwinism is correctly described as being essentially anti-Christian. This is the only consistent attitude. One correspondent puts the whole case neatly in a nutshell thus:—

"When did man become possessed of an immortal soul, if not by the act of God in creation? If he was originally *only* an animal, he must continue to be only such still, and the whole basis of Christianity and immortality is swept away."

Quite so. There's no answer to that except theological or metaphysical thimble-rigging.

It is well known that the Puritans regarded Christmas as a Pagan and sinful institution, and that they tried hard but failed to legislate against its observance; but once the Pilgrim Fathers settled in New England they completely ignored the day, treating it exactly as they did any other week-day. For a century and a quarter the inhabitants of Boston did not observe it, the observance of it being looked upon as a silly superstition.

Of course, there were some to whom Christmas was a purely Christian festival, and who were anxious to keep it as such. These even ventured to keep it more or less privately; but the bigoted Puritans would not tolerate such behavior. We learn from the *Truthseeker* that they went further and legislated as follows:—

"At General Court, Boston 11 May, 1659.—For preventing disorders rising in several places within this jurisdiction, by reason of some still observing such festivals as were superstitiously kept in other countries, to the great dishonor of God and offence of others, it is therefore ordered by this Court and the authority thereof, that whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either by forbearing of labor, feasting or any other way, upon any such accounts as aforesaid, every person so offending shall pay for every such offence five shillings, as a fine to the County. And whereas not only at such times, but at several other times also, it is a custom frequent in many places to expend time in unlawful games as cards, dice, etc., it is therefore further ordered, and by this Court declared, that after publication hereof, whosoever shall be found in any place within this jurisdiction playing either at cards or at dice, contrary to this order, shall pay as a fine to the County the sum of five shillings for every such offence."

Christians are all cocksure and all ready to persecute each other when they differ. That they should pretty well all agree to persecute "infidels" is only natural. Such persecution is Christian vitriol splashed on outsiders.

Rev. R. J. Campbell writes to the English papers denying the truth of statements made about him by "irresponsible newspaper reporters" in America. He is very indignant at their misrepresentations. But why? Mr. Campbell preaches a real historical Christ because it pleases him to do so. It suits his mental outfit. Well, it pleases the American reporters to print yarns about Mr. Campbell. It suits their mental outfit. What is more, it suits their pockets. If the pleasure and profit that flow from them are a sufficient justification of statements about Christ they must also be a sufficient justification of statements about Mr. Campbell.

We see from a South African press cutting that the Krugersdorf Town Council has refused an application from a body called the Central South African Christian Gaza Baptist Church for a grant of twelve stands (about six acres) in the new native location as a site for a church, residence, schools, and shops for native trading purposes at an estimated cost of £8,000. Mr. Wade, who led the opposition, declared that the whole thing was a commercial venture, with a prospect of becoming something worse, under the cloak of religion. He said it was brought forward by a "buck nigger."

Mr. Heaford raised the alarm in our columns some time ago about the Spanish artist Firmin Sagrista, whose cartoon "Homage to Ferrer" so incensed the priest-led Spanish authorities that they had him arrested, tried, condemned, and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. Such brutal vindictiveness calls for a protest from the whole civilised world. We are glad to see that nineteen members of the Royal Academy of England, with many other distinguished artists, have signed a letter to the Spanish Ambassador in London begging him to use his influence to induce King Alfonso to use his prerogative of mercy to shorten this "severe punishment." Amongst the signatories to this letter are Walter Crane, Frank Dicksee, W. B. Richmond, Briton Riviere, and Alfred Parsons. The Spanish Ambassador replies that he has forwarded the letter to the proper quarter. We wish we could believe it would do any practical good. We are grateful, however, to the English artists who have moved in this matter.

Mr. Heaford's article on "Religion and Torture in Spain" was, quite unintentionally of course, corroborated by a letter from Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham in Monday's *Daily News*. Mr. Graham was just back from Madrid, and he states that the torture of the prisoners in Callera is "looked upon as the most natural thing in the world." "No one doubted it," he adds, "and the defenders of the Government merely shrugged their shoulders when it was discussed."

Tchakirdjali, the famous Anatolian brigand, has had his hash settled at last by a company of Turkish soldiers. The Constantinople correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* describes this predatory gentleman's career as one of "sword and fire, of blood and murder, of unspeakable cruelty and boundless recklessness." But he did not lack religion:—

"He was pious withal. All the brigands of the Near East are pious. Our Fra Diavolo never omitted to visit his mosque to perform every day the five ablutions prescribed by the Koran, and to pray with all the fervor of a true believing Islamite. On one occasion he worshiped with clots of human blood clinging to his brigand cloak, which he had no time to wash off in his eager desire to please Allah. The Creator of the world, the brigand thought, would disregard the spilt blood of a hateful enemy, but would never forgive the omission of prayer."

This reminds us of the Catholic brigand who would not eat meat on a Friday but would cut a traveller's throat with the greatest cheerfulness.

What a story of piety and rascality was unrolled recently at the Birmingham Stipendiary's Court. Harriett Roberts, a domestic servant, sought a contribution towards the support of a child from an elderly man, William Alfred Proverb. Three years ago he was known to her as William Ernest James. He made love to her, presented her with an engagement ring, and became intimate with her. Then he went away to Manchester, and soon afterwards she received a letter from "Charles Harper" stating that "his cousin, Ernest James," had died after an operation for appendicitis. She also received a letter that he had written to her on his deathbed, ending with these touching religious expressions: "God bless my darling Harriett, and keep her from all harm in the years to come is the last prayer of your ever loving Ernest." It appears, however, that the dying Christian who thus commended his sweetheart to God was a married man with two children. His pious trick succeeded well. "Dear Harriett" thought his body was in the grave and his soul in

glory. But about a year later she suddenly saw him walking in the old neighborhood. She spoke to him, but he denied ever having known her, it was a case of mistaken identity. Subsequently she identified him in the Choral Society, singing just as he used to in former days, and there was no more room for doubt, as the pious humbug himself recognised, for he instructed his solicitor merely to keep the magistrate's order as low as possible. The godly Don Juan has to pay 5s. per week, and it will take a good deal more than prayer to save him from the consequence of non-payment, so he must bear his martyrdom with as much fortitude as possible.

Edgar Belcher, aged twenty-seven, a veterinary surgeon lately practising at Reading, committed suicide at the Waterloo Hotel, York-road, London, S.E. Evidence at the inquest showed that the unhappy man suffered from religious mania. The jury returned the usual verdict of "unsound mind."

Rev. C. Hutchinson, rector of Rayne, Essex, has started a series of smoking concerts for the men of his parish. Beer, tobacco, tea, coffee, and cake are supplied. We hear nothing of communion port, which might be a considerable attraction.

Parsons running smoking concerts act quite appropriately. The greatest smoking concert of all is held in hell. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever" and the musical program is "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Joseph Fletcher, recently executed at Walton Gaol, Liverpool, for murdering his wife—his two children having testified against him at the trial—was not allowed to lose his seat in heaven. The Bishop of Liverpool confirmed him and administered the Holy Communion to him before the hangman went through his official performance. The poor murdered wife may be spending her eternity in the wrong place, and the murderer husband may congratulate himself on having made the best of that deal.

Church parsons and Nonconformist preachers are on strike at Rotherham. For obvious professional reasons these gentlemen object to Sunday funerals. They have even petitioned the Borough Council to stop them, and as the Council will not do so the men of God have given notice that on and after January 7, 1912, they will refuse to conduct funerals after 9.30 a.m. on the holy Sabbath. We believe this will mean a loss to the men of God. Many corpses will get buried without the "sure and certain hope"—and will never miss it.

"The McNamara brothers, having contracted the habit of exploding bombs, have dropped one into the camp of their defenders by confessing themselves guilty as charged in the Los Angeles indictments. The crime for which they were arrested was the blowing up of the Los Angeles *Times* newspaper on the morning of October 1, 1910, to the destruction of twenty-one lives. James B. McNamara pleads guilty to that crime. John B. McNamara, who was secretary and treasurer of the International Bridge and Structural Ironworkers' Association, admits his complicity in the destruction of the Llewellyn Iron Works. Their principal counsel, Clarence S. Darrow, states that the change of plea was made in the hope of saving the life of one or both of the accused men, and because the case of the prosecution was so complete that an acquittal had become impossible. Thousands of dollars had been raised in labor union and Socialist circles on the supposition that the men were the innocent victims of a capitalist conspiracy to discredit the cause of labor, and it is probable that this would have been maintained in the event of their conviction. Among their defenders are persons who take the view that the blowing up of buildings where non-union labor is employed is a part of the war between capital and labor, and that as soldiers in the cause the McNamara brothers should be not only defended but honored. Hope for their acquittal was based, in the case of one well-informed man, who spoke his mind to us, on the fact that the accused were Irishmen and Catholics. Said he: 'Any man going into this business will never be hung.' This man, it was apparent, believed that the brothers had done the dynamiting, and that their act was not a crime. Others, discussing the circumstance of the accused being Catholics, have informed us that the Church had definitely washed its hands of them. Their confession takes a strain off the mind of the public, which will perhaps be satisfied with their imprisonment for life."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. Foote's Engagements

January 7, Shoreditch Town Hall; 9, London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner; 14, Shoreditch Town Hall; 21, Glasgow.
February 18, Manchester.
March 24, Leicester.
April 14, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 31, Harringay. January 7, Edinburgh; 14, Liverpool; 21, Shoreditch Town Hall; 28, Battersea. February 11, Glasgow.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £331 19s. 2d. Received since:—Sydney Smith, 5s.

J. H. DANNETT.—The Vance Testimonial Fund was closed early in October, and the presentation made publicly by the N. S. S. President. We are not acknowledging further subscriptions, but we have passed your letter and enclosure on to Miss Vance.

FRED COLLINS.—Directed and forwarded. Thanks for good wishes.

R. STUBBS.—We did not see what there was to answer. A difference of experience between Belfast and London is quite intelligible.

JOSEPH BATES.—Thanks for useful cuttings.

J. B.—Glad to see the further correspondence in the *Birmingham Daily Mail*—especially your own letter.

H. R. YOUNGMAN.—Your letter is referred to in our notes.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Subjects shall be sent in good time. Official conditions noted. Thanks.

JOSEPH YOUNG (Transvaal).—See paragraph. Thanks for good wishes.

GAINSBORO' "SAINT."—Sorry it is impossible, but we recognise your generous intention.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Thanks for the paper. We hope you will succeed in getting a sympathetic meeting at Newcastle to protest against the revival of the Blasphemy Laws.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always very welcome.

THOMAS DIXON.—The Branch is quite welcome. We are always glad to help in that way.

C. REPTON.—Sorry you cannot obtain the *Freethinker* of your newsagent until Friday. You ought to get it early on Thursday. The paper is published quite regularly. If the fault does not lie with the newsagent, he might inform us, through you, what wholesale agent supplies him, and we would then see what could be done.

W. DODD, Colliery Engineer, Cannock, Staffs, has about thirty photos of Mr. W. W. Collins, and will be glad to send one gratis to any applicant, as long as the supply holds out. A pleasant and liberal offer.

ANDREW MILLAR.—We will see, but the matter is a long way off (say) London. Isn't it?

W. MILLARD.—No harm done. You are entitled to your opinions. Leave us the same right.

J. W. GIBB.—You suggest that we should publish articles against Spiritualism. But is it a real danger, like Christianity? A certain number of people, who give up the orthodox faith, still cling to the ghostology in which every religion originated. This is bound to last for some time, but not for ever. Thanks for new year's good wishes.

A. M. DENT.—We don't think the reference is worth troubling about. Thanks, all the same.

R. CHAPMAN.—The whole matter will be considered at the next meeting and you will hear again immediately afterwards.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

WHEN the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivered the final lecture for 1911 at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening. Considering the wretched weather, which has become quite a standing dish for Sundays, there was a remarkably good and extremely enthusiastic audience. Mr. F. A. Davies occupied the chair.

There will be no Sunday evening Freethought lectures at Queen's Hall in January, but the Hall has been engaged by the Secular Society, Ltd., for February, March, and April. Mr. Foote will open the new course of lectures with some special subjects. He has been asked to deal with Shakespeare again. What do London "saints" say on that point?

Mr. Foote is taking two Sundays off during the Christmas-tide. That will give him time to give more attention to his other work, which is always in arrear—and probably always will be so, unless he is able to get hold of a private secretary who can live upon nothing and work hard upon it, or unless the Freethought millionaire comes along and finds the money. On the first Sunday in January the course of lectures at the Shoreditch Town Hall is started by Mr. Foote.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., takes place as usual at the Holborn Restaurant on the second Tuesday in January (9th). This is always a very enjoyable function. The 4s. ticket includes the dinner and the subsequent entertainment, with speeches to toasts by the best-known Freethought lecturers in London. Mr. Foote is to be chairman, and the list of speakers includes Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Moss, Heaford, Davies, and Miss Kough.

Mr. Cohen had a very successful first Saturday night meeting at Birkenhead, where the Liverpool Branch is breaking new ground.

The *Yorkshire Observer* returns to the subject of the Leeds "blasphemy" case and incidentally says a good word for Mr. Gott as a man. The writer says he has known Mr. Gott for more than a quarter of a century and while he was "not by any means refined in speech or manner" he "had a generous disposition" and "I remember many little kindnesses he has done to me and others for which I shall always be grateful." "I know," the writer adds, "that his kindness of heart has interfered with his success in business." The writer concludes by declaring Mr. Gott's imprisonment "an outrage against the principles which Christians profess." "And indeed," he says, "the sentence passed upon these men is a greater blasphemy against Christianity than they have ever uttered."

The New Year's number of the *Freethinker*, dated January 7, will be a special one, and we hope more than usually interesting. Some of our friends may take extra copies in order to introduce it to fresh readers.

VOLTAIRE.

Diabolically smiling,
Up to Priest and Prince he strutted,
Tapp'd his snuff-box, and politely
Crack'd his jokes at the Madonna!

Nought of holy reputation
'Scaped the ribald rascal's laughter;
Far away as Rome the Churches
Echoed with his jests profane.

Then, behold, a transformation!
Suddenly he rose, transfigured;
Periwig and snuff-box vanished,
And an Angel stood revealed.

In his hand the sword of Freedom
Flashing on the eyes of Europe—
While the hounds of persecution
Paused, and Calas kissed his feet!

—Robert Buchanan.

An Ethical Fragment.

THE supernatural origin of the moral sense in man continues to command a widespread acceptance. Large masses of the population are incapable of realising that morality is the product of evolutionary growth. Yet the proposition that all ethical phenomena find their only possible explanation in the growing needs of organic structures is illustrated and supported by abundant evidence.

Throughout the Christian world, the genesis of morals is traced to the Commandments, given by Jahveh, through Moses, to the Jewish people. These laws were in turn supplemented by the teachings of Jesus. Why men were impelled to lead upright lives many centuries before Moses was born, and why millions of highly civilised people obeyed high moral precepts during the years that intervened between Moses and Christ, is never explained. Nevertheless, the historical circumstance that various civilisations flourished in happy ignorance of the Mosaic decalogue, is well known to all. Obviously, therefore, the moral requirements essential to the well-being of these civilised communities were adequately met. It is not for an instant suggested that the Hebrew decalogue sprang ready made from the brain of the Jewish god. One of the best established commonplaces of Biblical criticism informs us that the Hebrews derived their moral code from the more cultured and civilised peoples, with whom they came into contact. Every educated clergyman is well acquainted with this fact. But the sinister circumstance remains that, for various reasons, the clergy, when addressing their flocks, seldom or never mention the critical results which all well informed men now take for granted.

When we turn from the exploded explanations of belated theologians, we naturally seek the services of science in unravelling the secret of the origin and development of morals. We then discover that evolutionary science and philosophy hold the key which unlocks the mystery. Plants and animals low in the scale of life, are just capable of adapting themselves, in a more or less successful manner, to their enviroing conditions. Most, and probably all of their activities, are merely automatic. But even with so lowly a creature as an earthworm, complete adjustment to its conditions involves considerable diversity of conduct. When we reflect upon the further complexity illustrated by the activities of fishes, and to an even greater extent in the lives of birds, we easily recognise a marked advance in the complexity of response to environmental stimuli. The fish family devote little care to the well-being of ova or offspring; but we witness in the bird group a moral sense in an advanced stage of development. Birds will unite to defend themselves against more powerful enemies; their nest building and egg preserving activities, succeeded, as these are, by tender care for their young, all illustrate this. Back-boned animals still higher in the scale of life, manifest even more pronounced ethical development. So highly evolved is the quality of faithfulness in many dogs that our canine friends are frequently more reliable than our human brothers. An examination of the wonderfully well organised societies which are made up by the social hymenoptera, forces every unbiassed inquirer to conclude that the insects which maintain them display ethical activities of a very exalted order. In the absence of this morality, the maintenance of the ant republic and the bee nation would be impossible.

As a mere matter of fact, all the moral qualities of men are potentially or actually present in the lower animal world. Naturally, therefore, we turn with confidence to our nearest animal relations when we wish to gain some insight into the dawn of human ethics. The still surviving man-like apes act in a manner which is startlingly analogous to that of primitive savages. They erect rude shelters against inclement weather; if they do not employ the gestures of savages with so much meaning; if their

chatterings fail to carry the same intelligence as the rudimentary languages of aboriginal men, they certainly manifest most, and perhaps all, his moral qualities. Apes and monkeys most certainly display the same care and affection for their offspring as their savage cousins.

Morality may be defined as being that course of conduct which ministers most fully to the well-being of the social unit, the family, and that particular social structure of which the individual social unit is a member. No mode of conduct can ever be socially moral which is injurious to the healthy activities of the community as a whole. As a consequence, in all ages and climes, morality—unless overshadowed and eclipsed by dark religious superstition—has been invariably associated with those forms of human effort which promote and sustain the welfare of society. If any tribes, clans, or societies ever existed in which detrimental courses of conduct were regarded as beneficial, such human aggregates have failed to survive, and have not even left one single memorial of their former existence.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, it scarcely seems strange that men's moral activities must be regarded as the result of inherited or acquired experiences, and not as the outcome of divine command. All the divine commands in the world would fail to secure their supposed object, were they to run counter to the conditions imposed by the circumstances of society. And this point is ingeniously conceded by those apologists who plead that the divine revelation was progressive. We are now told that the Almighty, when he issued commands and condoned crimes, which, to the modern mind, appear more devilish than divine, he was compelled to comply with the conditions he had himself created. But hard pressed reconcilers aside, in the evolution of society, men soon learnt that murder within the family, or tribe, was fatal to its existence. But long after this was realised, the murder of members of other families, tribes, or clans was considered more meritorious than blameable. And ages after the horror of homicide had extended to all members of particular races or nationalities, warfare with foreigners, most sanguinary and merciless in its nature, continued. To this very hour, Englishmen may be met with who rank the natives of India as a vastly inferior stock. American treatment of the negro population is still open to improvement. Humanism has a heavy task to accomplish ere it permanently broadens the outlook of the various nationalities of Europe when these direct their prejudiced gaze upon the shortcomings of their neighbors. In a word, wholesale destruction of life and property would be enthusiastically welcomed in a military or naval conflict with a foreign power by myriads who would recoil with horror at the murder of an innocent child of their own special race.

Wherever property has been prized and valued—that is, in every permanent social fabric—stealing was bound to become an unsocial act. The attitude of evolving humanity towards theft underwent a similar development to that of homicide. The rights of property were first respected within the family group, and this recognition was slowly extended to the tribe and nation. But, suggestively enough, the disingenuous dealings of powerful states with their weaker neighbors and competitors, abundantly illustrate the circumstance that the evolution of morals in this department is far from complete. As in the case of homicide, principles of organised plunder, which would redden the cheeks of the most unpurpulous company promoter, are regarded as perfectly justifiable when defenceless alien races are being attacked and outwitted. Nevertheless, the conscience of the nations is being slowly awakened, and with the vast extensions of international relationship which science and invention are opening to us, insular ignorance and one-sidedness must ultimately disappear. The right to enjoy their own property in comfort and security must, in the long run, be conceded to all the numerous human societies of our planet.

Although an evolution of the still scarce virtue of veracity has doubtless taken place, it has not progressed in anything resembling a satisfactory manner. Many leading authorities inform us that, with the majority of savage peoples, the gentle art of truth-telling is practically non-existent. One writer states that "in common with all savage tribes, truth is held in very low estimation, and it is never considered wrong to tell lies; indeed, a successful liar is considered a smart, clever fellow, and rather admired!" This unflattering picture of the natives of Uganda is fairly representative of the majority of savage peoples. Judging from their sacred books, the ancient Hebrews were much the same; at a late stage of Judaic development false witness against a neighbor was sternly reprobated, but this was not extended to outside communities. Jahveh was himself shamelessly mendacious when he sent a lying spirit to mislead the prophets of Ahab. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all liars of the purest water; and Jahveh, while showing them the most marked distinction, never condemned their mendacious practices. With the later prophets, however, the vice of untruthfulness was strongly insisted upon, and a few passages in the New Testament also indicate a very considerable moral development among the Jews.

But sundry data furnished by explorers, missionaries, and scientific travellers concerning savage races, in all degrees of development, present startling anomalies. Our pride is smitten by the discovery that some uncivilised people are far more veracious than the average European. The honesty and truthfulness of the wild Veddahs of Ceylon do not stand alone; many of the hill-tribes of India are so untainted by lying that the less scrupulous neighboring races regard them as fools. And with other savage or barbarian peoples in Northern Asia, South Africa, and America an almost instinctive desire to speak the truth is known to prevail.

If we are to judge from the wholesale lying indulged in by the gods of early Greece, mendacity was a very general characteristic of primitive Greek life. And we have every reason to believe that the later cultured and refined Attic people did not permanently reside in a palace of truth. Although credulity in the Christian Middle Ages was almost boundless, and millions of people were prepared to vouch for signs and wonders that never occurred, there was probably, even in that benighted period, less deliberate falsification of fact than that which adorned the public and private utterances of many temporal and spiritual lords in the period of the Renaissance.

Veracity is to this hour one of the rarest of virtues. Misrepresentation, exaggeration, and false statement generally everywhere abound. The child is always apt to turn to lying when driven to excuse or palliate a blunder or a fault. All occurrences sufficiently interesting to attract public attention are decked out in glowing colors for popular consumption. The qualifying words and phrases in which our language is so rich readily lend themselves to the most artistic forms of misstatement. We are almost driven to the melancholy conclusion that, with the increasing complexities of social activity, the art of lying has every assurance of extreme longevity.

Were we to credit the statements of their political enemies, party politicians of the opposite camp would be regarded as expert disregards of the truth. Theologians were never very remarkable for veracity, and if we are entitled to form our judgments from the latest and most accomplished Christian Evidence lecturers (who are supposed to represent the genuine theologians), the magnificent art of mendacity still possesses some of the most brazen representatives and expositors our fallen nature has so far succeeded in producing.

T. F. PALMER.

A Glance Backwards.

PERHAPS the feeling is one of the many that have become instincts from centuries of uninterrupted experience, and that endure despite the inimical forces of conquering civilisation. Perhaps it is but the blossom of associated ideas ruthlessly flung into our minds during their infancy, and fed, instead of destroyed, in the years of youth. Perhaps it is only the play of powerful environmental phenomena over emotions untrained and uncontrollable. Perhaps it is the mingling of instinct and idea and environment that produces within us the indefinable feeling. Whatever may be the key, the gloomy fastnesses of a night-clad forest exert a peculiar influence upon us. There is a something about them that overwhelms us; and there is a something within us that goes out to meet the influence that fascinates while it repels.

So quietly does the feeling steal into our minds and through our bodies that we are captured long before we recognise our captivity. Gradually, as we walk along amongst the dark, motionless trees, there grows upon us a strange fancy that we are impotent; that something broods over and enslaves us. It is shadowy, but has a certain sense of reality. It is remote, and yet it seems uncomfortably close. We could swear it spoke; but the silence is terrible in its rigid intensity. Movement it seems to possess; but the movement is as that which heralds the dawning of life. It is vast, and dim, and dreadful, seemingly without restriction; but we are sure it is confined within narrow limits around us. Our hands could touch it, we think, were we to stretch our arms out; yet it is not there. Imagining we could see it, we peer, penetratingly, into the blackness; but it is invisible: we see nothing but the dark tree-trunks that loom indistinctly within range of our vision. It grips our hearts with a cruel ferocity; but it is as calm and serene as the brow of a dead child. It is ugly; yet its ugliness is clothed in an alluring beauty that entices and enthralls. Mystery, the fumes of reeking ignorance, floats up to touch our consciousness of the reality of this vague presence with a tinge of stifled knowledge: we feel, rather than know, we are accompanied by an incomprehensible something whose presence awes and troubles, and fills us with forebodings and unintelligible thoughts.

All around is a dense accumulation of cold uncertainty. A heavy, thick, impenetrable blackness confronts and surrounds us. Not a single glimmer of cheerful light relieves the darkness. The oppressiveness of the odorful air lies like a great unwieldy burden upon us. We are cramped and confined, laden with chains not made of iron, but of stuff as imponderable as the false sense of sin. No indestructible barriers imprison us; we can turn to the right or to the left, if we will; yet every step takes us from one dungeon to another, of which the invisible warders are insecurity and uncertainty. Overhead, the swaying branches are a ghostly confusion of chimerical shadows silhouetted against a black clouded sky that is seen only in filigreed patches. The low, soft murmur of the wind-stirred leaves seems to drop from the haunts of dying birds, and seems to contain the melancholy music of anguish for life. It accentuates the intolerable silence that presses upon us, as if it would rob our hearts of their vitality and make them one with itself.

The magnitude of the surroundings, their solid depths of darkness, the gloom that but becomes more acute as our eyes become accustomed to it, evoke a new and painful sense of our own puny limitations. The grandeur of man fades away into a pitiful myth before this overpowering vastness. His wonderful resources pale into miserable meagreness, and become strangely inactive and inefficient when face to face with this something that the forest calls its own. Against this indefinite immensity, that, though shapeless, seems to hover near us, the vain

Had Eve been up-to-date, what a fool she would have made of the Serpent!

cry goes up to summon every grain of courage to a fray not of our seeking; for it seems as if the something were antagonistic to us, and demanded warfare.

We brace ourselves bravely, maybe, for a fight that never takes place. We gather together the loose and scattered units of our knowledge to fling them against the absent foe. We square our shoulders, proudly cognisant of our moral strength of character, and glare, to give proof of our dauntless courage, into the black depths, with an array of flashing, cynical lights in our eyes, and feel heroic enough to brave the Devil himself. But the forest presence prevails and assimilates all our spasmodic endeavor. The shoulders relinquish their appearance of bravado; the flicker fades from our eyes; the cynicism dissolves into timidity; and the fingers clench, and the heart yields itself to the gloom.

As we move forwards, knowing not where the next step may take us, seeing nothing but the tree-trunks that appear little more than solid pillars of darkness, hearing nothing but the rustle of the leaves far above, every nerve becomes alive, strung tightly to its highest pitch. The idea of loneliness rushes into our minds with a keen sharpness seldom, if ever, experienced before; and it sets all the emotions and self-preservative instincts athrill with the passion of life. Every reserve power of mind and body becomes charged with an intensity too acute not to demand more satiation than we can give, with the result that the intensity comes and goes with a motion like that of a palpitating heart. We are one mass of quivering anticipation, full of illusive possibility, hanging on the slender thread of every second of time, and ever mistily conscious that the thread is on the point of breaking.

And then there is a sudden sound behind us. The silence, the intensity, the oppressiveness, are shattered, in an instant, to bits. The high nervous tension reaches, at a bound, its uttermost height, toppling over with an abruptness that vibrates every nerve and muscle. Thought goes spinning in riotous confusion through negation. There is a concentration at the heart, a sudden contraction, an intensifying of the restriction, as if some unknown power were upon us with all its unimaginable, destructive desires clutching at the centre of our lives. Then follows a swift retreat that leaves us in a cold shiver. A complete collapse into powerlessness changes into a renewal of the nerve tension so unexpectedly as to throw our disordered minds into a more helpless state of confusion. Instinctively, our heads turn round, and we glance backwards in fear.

The glance backward epitomises religion: religion is a glance backwards, an awe-struck look of dismayed and distorted inquiry sent in search of an idea that has no objective significance. Fear lay at the bottom of supernaturalism; and supernaturalism lies at the bottom of fear. The savage filled the haunting hollows of the dark, gloomy forest with grotesque embodiments of malignity and horror. We are more artistic. The gloom is the home of a something beautiful and appalling, insidious and repellent, magnificent and unlovable, grand, but fraught with aspects that bring every self-preservative instinct from dormancy to vibrant expectancy of attack. Between the savage conception and ours the difference is merely one of degree, dependent upon mental culture. Ignorance and the sense of insecurity labor and bring forth the same feeling in both cases; but, while the first is coarse and harsh, the second is softened and smoothed by some appreciation of the beauty. But, however strongly we may admire the peculiar loveliness that lives in darkness of the forest deeps, our delight in it dwells upon unsubstantial fear, a fear ever in readiness to blur the beauty and despoil our appreciation.

We can easily understand how the solemnity of the night-bound forest, its silences, its productiveness of the painful sense of insecurity, should convey to the savage mind an impression of supernaturalism, when it exerts so powerful an influence upon us. To

him the life struggle was a grim fact. He faced it and fought it day by day. It dogged his dreams by night. He escaped from it only when he acknowledged defeat. Naturally enough, the forest, full of incomprehensible, unseen dangers, was the fit place for the habitation of foes. Here, if anywhere, the life-struggle became bitterly poignant; and here, in the gloom and darkness, dwelt the Gods or Devils that were to be worshiped in fear and trembling.

To us the forest is awe-inspiring; and we have been taught that God is awe-inspiring. The association of the two ideas—God, and that something that has been named, or misnamed, the forest-presence—is, perhaps to a greater extent than we think, inevitable. Both possess identical qualifications for an appeal to the imaginative faculties. They are both immersed in the silence of solitude. They are unknown, mysterious, vague, and illusory. Before both our diminitiveness is naked and manifest. They have the same subduing effect, coupled with the same fearsomeness, from which amalgamation is born the uncertainty of their love or hate for us. Perhaps it is from the strenuous endeavor to rid himself of this uncertainty that religious man has obtained some of the strength of conviction to emphasise either God's pure love or God's hard hate for his worshiping children.

Were it not for the fear the forest awakes within us, the adult religionist of to-day would not hesitate to assert that the forest presence was God's presence. Everything that is beautiful, or weird, or wonderful the Christian ascribes to God. But fear sticks in his throat. In the past he has swallowed a good number of bulky indigestibilities. To-day, most of these have to be peptonised before they can be assimilated. The savage was sure God dwelt in the forest; the Christian is not sure about this, as he is not sure about most things relating to Deity.

Religion has made man a mental coward. From this cowardliness we are gradually being led by heroes as yet unrecognised and unrewarded. Their day is yet to come. And in that day, when fear and its many missionaries have disappeared never to return, and when men's minds are purified from their long defiling influences, those, whose love for the wonderful shall prompt them into the dark aisles of the forest, shall enjoy the peculiar appealing beauty, free from the fear that prompts the glance backwards.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Freethought and Literature.

FRANCIS THOMPSON was a poet and a Catholic, but his love of literature was superior to his piety, and he told the religious world a most unpalatable truth. At the beginning of his notable article on Shelley he says:—

"The Church, which was once the mother of poets no less than of saints, during the last two centuries has relinquished to aliens the chief glories of poetry, if the chief glories of holiness she has preserved for her own. The palm and the laurel, Dominic and Dante, sanctity and song, grew together in her soil; she has retained the palm, but foregone the laurel."

This fact has been denied again and again by journalists who have turned Christian for half-an-hour to earn money, and have succeeded so well at their sorry work that the world would indeed be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of the famous writers were Freethinkers. Shakespeare, the supreme glory of the world's literature, was a sceptic. The greatest of Shakespeare's immediate predecessors, Kit Marlowe, was a militant Freethinker, and his untimely death only prevented his trial for blasphemy. Burns was, like Thomas Paine and Voltaire, a Deist. Shelley was a notorious Atheist. His children were taken from him on that account, and men and women were imprisoned for selling his books. Byron's writings are full of scepticism. Landor, Keats, Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt

were all Freethinkers. Matthew Arnold and "George Eliot" were both secularistic in their outlook. Edward Fitzgerald was as much an Epicurean as Omar Khayyam himself. Arthur Hugh Clough was a sceptic. William Morris was a Materialist and James Thomson was an Atheist. Buchanan, Gerald Massey, Swinburne, George Meredith, and John Davidson were all consistently anti-Christian. Rationalism pervades the writings of Blake, Rossetti, Symonds, and Bourke Marston. Edward Gibbon and George Grote, two of our greatest historians, were Freethinkers. Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Thomas Huxley, Clifford, Tyndall, and a host of other scientists were sceptics.

Turning to other countries, we find that in Italy Freethought is in evidence in the works of Leopardi, Carducci, Guerrini, and Gabriele D'Annunzio. Priest-ridden Spain produced Espronceda, Batrina, Curros, and Castelar. In Hungary Imre Madach, and in Sweden Snoilsky and many another, attuned their lyres to liberty. Holland boasts among her Freethinkers Genested and Coombert. Portugal claims Nazimento. Norway's importance in literature is mainly due to the Freethinkers Henrik Ibsen and Björnson. Even Russian tyranny failed to silence Lermontov and Puskin. In Belgium Maurice Maeterlinck merits universal attention. In France Freethought tradition has been carried on by an army of writers from the days of Rabelais to those of M. Anatole France. The greatest German writers, Goethe, Heine, Schiller, Schopenhauer, and Wieland, were all sceptics. America has produced in Walt Whitman a poet who was as unconventional in his religious views as he was unlike other poets in his verse. Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, and Mark Twain were also sceptical.

In spite of all this, the Great Lying Church still wishes its deluded followers to think that the intellect of the world is on her side, and to this end takes the meanest advantage of her dead antagonists. She put the holy wafer into the mouth of the dying Freethinker, Sir Richard Burton. She smuggled Prince Jerome Napoleon into the Church when the death agony was upon him. She buried Charles Darwin "in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection," and with equal effrontery and impudence mumbled her mythological nonsense over the coffins of doubting Thomas Huxley and Robert Buchanan. At the interment of Swinburne, in spite of the known wishes of the great poet, a Christian priest recited the ritual of that religion which had been wont to excite the whole vocabulary of the dead man's scorn. The aged Marquis di Rudini, one of the most notable figures in Italian political life and a well-known Freethinker, was also buried with Christian rites. At Cotter Morison's funeral, as at that of George Meredith, the abracadabra of ritual was performed. That the clergy knew they were humbugging the public is proved by the fact that Meredith and Swinburne were both refused burial in Westminster Abbey. The clergy hypocritically pretended that the Abbey was too crowded, and quietly found room for the deceased wife of one of their own officials.

The weapon used by the priests is a double-edged one. When the Freethinker is alive, they pour out upon him all the vituperation which their practised tongues know so well how to use. If, in spite of their opposition, he gains fame, then they claim him as one of their own. It is nothing to these priests that their malpractice would, if taken seriously, give the lie to the whole lives of the dead Freethinkers. All they care for is that the great, ignorant, unthinking public should believe that the terrible infidels had submitted to the Church at the last. Like vultures which feed on corpses, so does the Christian Church fatten her waning reputation on the defenceless memories of the dead soldiers of the Army of Progress.

MIMNERMUS.

It was a sad case of vegetable depravity when the first apple set out to destroy the first pair.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF SPECIAL EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON DEC. 11.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Barry, Cohen, Davey, Davies, Dawson, Davidson, Heaford, Judge, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Dr. Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Silverstein, Thurlow, Wood, Miss Kough, and Miss Stanley.

The President explained that this meeting had been specially called to consider the position of the Society in regard to the Leeds Blasphemy Case, read some lengthy correspondence, and gave details of the subject.

After a careful discussion, the following resolution was proposed by Mr. Moss, seconded by Mr. Cohen, and carried unanimously:—

"That this Executive endorses the President's action in replying to Mrs. Stewart's letter, and undertakes, if acceptable, to see to the financial needs of Mrs. Gott and Mrs. Stewart during their husbands' imprisonment on condition that no other fund be kept open for the same purpose."

A further resolution was moved by Mr. Cohen, seconded by Mr. Barry, and also agreed to:—

"That this Executive protests against the revival of the Blasphemy Laws at Leeds in order to punish improprieties of speech at public meetings, and demands that such offences be dealt with under the ordinary law."

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

The Solace of the Book.

THEY say the Book yields solace: there I sought,
Once, when a victim of malign despair.

I read of tribal fouds, of battles fought,
Of plague and lust and blood, and God-set snare;
Fierce maledictions hurled from heaven to earth,
Mingled with myths and fancies nothing worth.

They say the Book yields solace: so I passed
From Yahveh's effort to the later Will,
Thinking to find some gleam of light at last—
Finding myself in blackest darkness still.
For promises of other worlds of bliss
Do naught to banish suffering in *this*.

They say the Book yields solace: and I read
How Jesus lived, and most ignobly died;
How he arose, the first fruits of the dead,
And levitated to his Father's side,
Leaving the world in ignorance as deep
As on the day he took his earthward leap.

The Book yields solace! God the man most vile
Is nobler far than God as here portrayed;
A Spirit tempts mankind with deadly guile—
A Fiend our loving, heavenly Father made.
Nothing, to God, avails a life well spent—
Damnation is the free man's punishment.

No hope I found in ancient rites and creeds,
But in the words of "infidels" who taught
That man's deliverance lies in goodly deeds—
That on *this* side the grave must heaven be sought;
That Ignorance made the gods to whom we bow,
Whilst Knowledge proves our Savior—*here and now*.

JOHN YOUNG.

"Oh well," soliloquised Adam after the Fall, "I was rather tired of the simple life we were leading."

Then, mopping the unfamiliar sweat from his brow, he hitched up his fig leaf and got busy with the spring gardening.

Uncle Sam (in the sweet by-and-bye): "Gee-whiz! I don't see many of my country here, but if I'd only guessed it was one-half as fine as this I'd have died long ago. The only thing against it is we're all one sex."

That economy is of ancient origin is shown by the fact that Solomon was particular to corner the yellow metal before he accumulated a great many wives.

Missionary: "I hope I'm not too late for dinner."
Cannibal Chief: "Cliky no. You're just in time to make some soup."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

LONDON**INDOOR.**

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Mr. Neary's, 94 Lordship-road, Church-street, Stoke Newington): Sunday, Dec. 31, at 7.30, Monthly Meeting. Business—*Re* Society's Dinner, etc.

OUTDOOR

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Ivan Paperno and Walter Bradford. Newington Green: 7.30, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture. Highbury Corner: Wednesday, at 8, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, J. Lockwood, "Haeckel Discounted."

BUSINESS CARDS.

Short advertisements are inserted under this heading at the rate of 2s. per half inch and 3s. 6d. per inch. No advertisement under this heading can be less than 2s. or extend beyond one inch. Special terms for several continuous insertions.

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Hunting Skunks*, G. W. Foote; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll. 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 6d. per hundred, post free 7d. Special rates for larger quantities. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

WIDOW LADY desires Post as Cook-Housekeeper; experienced; superior cooking; excellent references; Freethinker.—MRS. EDMESTON, 69 Gloucester-street, S.W.

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Free Will

OR

Determinism?

BY

C. COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

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Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

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but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

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