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It is the misfortune of worthy people that they are cowards.—VOLTAIRE.

The Fear of Death.

To religious people death is the King of Terrors, not because it puts an end to life, but because it does not. The continuity of life is a fundamental doctrine of theology. The only thing that death ends is man's duality. According to Plato, death signifies the soul's emancipation from the bondage of the body. In the Christian creed, it means the spirit's departure from earth into the immediate presence of God in the unseen world. Now, it is the dismal doctrine of sin that has made death so terrible. An unsaved soul is doomed to eternal damnation. On its arrival in eternity it goes down straight into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Milton informs us that death is the offspring of sin, and is "black as Night, fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell." It is not death, however, but "the dread of something after death," that puzzles the will and unnerves the heart. To die is to fall into the hands of the living God, who "is a consuming fire," than which nothing can be more terrifying.

What a fearful weapon death has been in the hands of the preacher. How often has it been brandished, with shuddering effect, over the heads of timid children. "If you were to die to-night, where would you be?" "As this may be your last day on earth, make your peace with God this moment, and so be ready to meet him as your judge." Such was the language in which young people were addressed fifty and sixty years ago. Tracts were issued, with lurid titles, such as *Are You Afraid to Die?* *Everlasting Damnation.* *Straight to Hell.* Well do we remember being asked, on one occasion, "Do you not know that the Lord is angry with you because you forget him and neglect his house, and that unless you repent and turn to him he may cast you headlong into the Bottomless Pit, there to be in torment for ever and ever?" Death was thus the twin-keeper with sin of hell-gate; was indeed sin's offspring, her "inbred enemy." Milton represents sin as thus describing death's birth:—

"At last this odious offspring whom thou seest,
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way,
Tore through my entrails, that, with fear and pain
Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
Transformed; but he my inbred enemy
Forth issued, brandishing his fatal dart,
Made to destroy. I fled, and cried out *Death!*
Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sighed
From all her caves, and back resounded *Death!*

Grim Death, my son and foe."

—*Paradise Lost*, ii., 781-789, 805.

It should be borne in mind that the Miltonic interpretation of death is simply Paul's expressed poetically. You will find the central idea in Romans v. 12:—

"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned."

Now, Dean Alford, a pre-Darwinian commentator, who took Scripture as it stood, candidly admits that

by death, in that passage, is meant "primarily, but not only, physical death; and thus (by this entering in of sin and death—i.e., in fact, by this connection of sin and death) death spread through unto all men." Alford's exegesis is undoubtedly accurate. Paul verily believed that prior to the Fall death was unknown in the world, and came in only as the penalty of sin. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews shared that belief, for he refers to Satan as having the power of death, to bring whom to naught was Christ's object in coming into the world. The curious fact in this connection is, that the Devil is brought to naught not by the annihilation of death, which sin brought into existence, but by the deliverance of believers from the fear of it. From physical death there is absolutely no escape, believers being as subject to it as unbelievers; but it is falsely supposed that from spiritual and eternal death the Savior graciously releases all who put their trust in him.

At this time it is scarcely necessary to point out that both Paul and Milton were radically mistaken. Death is an immutable law of Nature. All living beings, whether vegetable or animal, are mortal. This is now a truism, to attempt to prove which would be a culpable waste of time. Knowing this, the newer theologians assure us that the death spoken of in Genesis does not denote physical, but spiritual, death. Nothing can be more certain, they allege, than that Adam did not physically die on the day he sinned, though spiritually he most assuredly did. At this moment all who do not believe in Christ are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and doomed to eternal death in the world to come. What makes physical death so great a terror is that it translates the soul into a realm in which, if unsaved, it becomes the victim of eternal death. This is the fear of death through which the majority of people are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Even believing Christians are slaves to it, because they are never absolutely sure that they are among the elect. There are very few so-called people of God who are quite free from it. But this modern interpretation of death was adopted by the divines in consequence of the fact that geological and biological discoveries had completely discredited the Pauline and Miltonic theory. That death can be treated metaphorically is true enough. It may legitimately be said of a man that he is poetically or artistically dead, or that he is dead to the higher feelings and instincts of humanity; but to describe us all as being by nature dead to spiritual and eternal realities is to build upon a rotten fabric of guess and speculation. Spiritual and eternal realities exist only in the imagination of speculative theologians. The Great Beyond, as it is called, is Shakespeare's "undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns"; that is, the country of which positively nothing is known, not even that it exists. This being clearly the case, it follows that the religious fear of death is utterly irrational. "The dread of something after death" is as groundless and absurd as any castle in the air, because, judging by all the evidence in our possession, death ends all for individuals.

Mark the fundamental inconsistency of Scripture in its references to God and the future. The author of Hebrews says that to die is a fearful thing because

it is equivalent to falling into the hands of the living God, who is a God of vengeance. St. John tells us, on the contrary, that God is love, in whom is no vengeance. The truth is that both God and the future are unverifiable assumptions, while to die is the most natural thing in the world. Death is simply a return to the inorganic state whence all living beings have issued. Generally speaking, life is organisation, and death disorganisation.

We now confidently ask with Lucretius:—

“What is there left for us in death to fear?”

for the only answer is:—

“When once that pause of life has come between,
’Tis just the same as we had never been.”

There is really nothing more to be said, because there is nothing left for us in death to fear. To anyone who still fears to die we can say, again in the words of the great poet, Lucretius:—

“The worst that can befall thee, measured right,
Is a sound slumber, and a long good night.”

Dying, it is maintained by those who have studied the process most closely, is practically painless, almost like falling asleep, or being born. There has been a correspondence on the subject in the *Times* lately in which almost all the writers agreed that the fear of death is entirely groundless. On February 21, Professor J. Cook Wilson contributed a most interesting letter in which he described his father's death which occurred twelve years ago:—

“My father, a hale old man, was struck down in his eighty-eighth year by influenza which ended in failure of the heart. In the last stages there began the rapid labored breathing which is a familiar feature of such cases. It was most distressing to hear and watch, but the doctors assured me that the patient knew nothing of it. One did not doubt that there was some ground for the medical opinion, but one could not help reflecting that it was at best a probable inference, and that the only decisive proof could be an experience which, in the nature of the case, it seemed impossible to have. However, my father, being an exceptionally strong man, survived the dreadful night. In the morning his breathing became much quieter, he recovered consciousness, and became able to speak a little. Knowing the doctor was coming, he managed to say quite clearly, ‘Tell the doctor that I have had a very comfortable night.’ I was astonished and grateful beyond measure to have the best evidence possible in the patient's own testimony.”

Such a letter is bound to do much good. An eminent physician says that it will convince people that the medical profession does not deceive them when it gives the assurance that there is no such thing as the Death Agony. “The death rattle,” he adds, “is a purely automatic and reflex action. The explanation of it is just this: In the dying moments the windpipe cannot deal with the secretions; it is merely a mechanical noise.”

Thus, from every point of view, the fear of death is seen to be totally without excuse. The thought of leaving loved ones behind to mourn one's loss cannot in the nature of things be pleasant, and their keen sense of deprivation must be painful; but in death itself there is nothing to fear. The time is coming when science shall have banished disease from the earth, with the result that in every case death shall be perfectly natural, coming neither a moment too soon nor a moment too late, but only when life, and the desire to live, are physiologically at an end.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Revival of Religion.

A GERMAN preacher, at present on a visit to England, recently informed a representative of one of the religious papers that there were signs of a spiritual revival in Germany. He admitted that Christianity had lost its hold on the “intellectuals,” and also on the working classes; also that the influence of Non-

conformity was very slight; still he discerned—probably with the eye of faith—an awakening of religion in the near future. This kind of statement is not at all uncommon, in this country at least, and one has therefore the better means of seeing just what it is worth. When Dr. Clifford delivered his last New Year's address, he also discovered signs of a spiritual awakening in England. Dr. Horton reported the same tidings from America; and in ordinary matters one would take this concurrent testimony of, and from, different countries as being good evidence. But in this respect religion is not an ordinary matter. The testimony is itself suspect. We have heard it so often, and we have so much of it. And there is so much evidence on the other side. We see the Churches steadily emptying. We see the best brains, and the best character, steadily disassociating itself from religion. The slump in belief continues in spite of all the prophecies of a great spiritual awakening.

The very proofs advanced in favor of a revival of religion are evidence to the contrary. The German doctor referred to, for example, said there had been a decrease in Materialism in Germany because the younger generation have abandoned the belief in the efficacy of legislation, and are now inclined to place more emphasis on personal influence, and to “regard social reform from a more human point of view.” That means, he says, “that religion will play a larger part than it has done in the past.” Really! There is no mention that the younger generation is believing more fervently in a God, or a soul, or in supernaturalism generally; only that it is more inclined to regard reform from a human point of view. Well, if that is all, and nothing else is given, it looks suspiciously as if the new generation will be more deeply tinged with Freethought than the older one. For that is precisely what Freethinkers have been striving for, and precisely what the Churches have declined to do. Let us test everything from the human point of view, and we are quite content to abide the result. We may make mistakes even then; we probably shall do so. But our mistakes will be due to our want of knowledge, and our blunders will in time supply their own corrective. We shall not have our blunders hedged round with dogmas and doctrine, and worshiped as the outcome of a wisdom that passes human understanding.

This German gentleman had fallen into the cant of which all religious preachers—particularly when they call themselves “advanced” thinkers—are so fond. In this country we are perfectly familiar with the breed. Because there is a growing interest in social reform, because people are more alive than they were to the necessity of decent homes and decent lives, these things are made part and parcel of the religious revival. Any passing popular cry—an eight-hours' day, a living wage, the nationalisation of the land, old age pensions, the Insurance Act, are all made to do duty as proof of the revival of religion. One wonders why all these things were not accomplished facts during the days when religion was really strong. One wonders whether the scheme of Christianity really involves these things, and if so why none of the Christian leaders of the past ever found this out. It is quite an affecting series of pictures. Jesus Christ—very God of very God—coming to earth, being crucified, and rising from the grave, so that an Old Age Pension Act might be passed some eighteen centuries after he was dead. Think of the early Christian martyrs dying in order that we might realise the importance of a living wage! Or the great historic Christian Churches, with all their legends of miracles and saints and martyrs, existing solely that we might look at things from a human point of view!

It is all cant, sheer cant! And unless we credit many of these preachers with almost miraculous stupidity, they must know it is cant. What aspect of religion is it that promises a revival? Is it the belief in God? How many of those who do not believe at present are likely to have a belief created?

Why even professed believers are busily engaged in so stating this belief that the God presented is hardly worth while anyone troubling about. He is no longer a God who does things, but a Deity who leaves things severely alone—and one must confess that if we must have a God that is the most desirable sort to possess. And, meanwhile, the number of people who disbelieve is unmistakably on the increase. So with the belief in the soul, so with the belief in all those forms of supernaturalism that were once universal. Does anyone seriously believe that any of these things are on the increase, or that they are likely to increase? If they do, where is the evidence? If they do not, what is the good of talking about a coming revival of religion? Morality is not religion. Social reform is not religion. These things have only been accidentally associated with religion, and their separation means the death of religion in every civilised community.

What we can observe in this and other countries is a continuance of the historic tactics of the Christian clergy. Ever since Christianity—essentially an Eastern creed—was forced upon the West, it has only managed to maintain itself in an unmodified form during those periods when it was able to exercise absolute coercion. Forced upon an alien population, its subjects have been more or less in revolt against it; and, what is more important, the forces of social growth have inspired the revolt. Even though outwardly submissive, the Western world has time after time modified Christian teaching, much as China has more than once seized and conquered its nominal conquerors. This was the case when the Church was compelled to accept the Copernican for the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. It was the case when it compelled the Churches to reject witchcraft as an idle superstition, or, in our own day, to reject the literal inspiration of the Bible, and to accept the general doctrine of evolution. The present is only another phase of the same movement. Living at a time when large numbers of people are beginning to realise the essential stupidity of theological questions, and also to realise the importance of social and ethical problems, leaders of Christianity are shrewd enough to see that they must accommodate themselves to the new spirit or disappear. Accordingly, they discover that Christianity contains a social gospel, just as the Church found scientific teachings in the Bible when it was no longer possible to suppress them, and no longer paid to denounce them as untrue. These concessions may deceive some—undoubtedly they do—but this does not prevent others recognising these for what they are—theological fool-traps.

There is a well-known passage in Gibbon's *Roman Empire* in which he speculates as to what might have happened had Charles Martel been beaten by the Mohammedans in the eighth century. He says that Mohammedans would then have overrun Europe, and we might have had the Koran preached in Westminster Abbey instead of the Bible. Very likely; but it by no means follows that by this time things would have been much different to what they are. We should, in all probability, have had much the same modification of Mohammedan teaching that we have had of Christian doctrines, with the same process of obstruction and final acceptance. Beliefs are as much subject to social selection as organisms are to natural selection. A society acts on any belief that is introduced into its midst much as food is acted on by the animal organism. It selects, assimilates, and rejects. And this selection, assimilation, and rejection is largely determined by forces that are beyond individual control. Force an alien belief upon a society, and what it cannot assimilate it rejects, and what it retains is inevitably modified to a larger or smaller degree. The whole history of Christianity proves the truth of this. The history of its successive modification is not, as apologists say, the discovery of a truer form—the truest form is the oldest and the deadest—it is the registration of the effect of social forces upon a religion that had to be modified or altogether perish.

There is at hand no revival of religion, still less is there a probable revival of Christianity. There is, it is true, an immense mass of superstition still latent in the community, and that always represents an element of danger. But religion in general has never been at so low a point as it is to-day. There is not a single department of life in which it can be said that religion is recognised as possessing genuine authority. It is not only that the leaders of thought, the "intellectuals," do not recognise the authority of religion; it is true of others. The average man does not go to the Churches for his science, his philosophy, or his sociology. He recognises for the best in these departments he must look elsewhere. All he can get in the Churches is a faint echo of the best that can be got outside. And he is so accustomed to look at the Churches from this standpoint that he has ceased to see in it anything peculiar. He does not realise that religion once ruled life, and that the Churches once laid down laws for guidance where it now begs for a word of patronage. But if he does not recognise the profound nature of the change that has taken place, he cannot avoid its consequences. He develops in a freer, healthier atmosphere than did preceding generations. Instead of religion being the controlling influence in his life it sinks to the level of a mere speculation or theory. If he reads, he discovers that he can get more benefit from an hour or two with a good book than from a score of sermons. If he thinks he realises what a game of make-believe the whole thing is. Religion loses its coercive power because daily experience drives home the lesson that the vital issues of life are being decided without the least reference to its teaching. Religion in social life is suffering from the fate that overtakes a disused organ in the individual body. It is a pure case of atrophy.

This talk of the revival of religion is, I repeat, pure cant. It belongs to the same gender as the fantastic reports of wholesale conversions published by evangelists of the Gipsy Smith type. It may soothe the dwindling faithful, but imposes on no one else. It may even keep up the courage of the leaders. Donkeys are said to lash themselves into a temper by the free use of their tails, and where tails are wanting tongues may perform the same service. But you cannot revive Christianity unless you can undo all that has been done during the past three centuries. If the united action of the Churches can convert the globe into a plane, if it can set the sun travelling round the earth instead of the earth round the sun, if it can destroy medical science and re-establish demoniacal possession, if it can destroy evolution and enthrone special creation, if education can be abolished and heaven and earth repopled with an army of supernatural beings—if, in short, all the knowledge and discoveries and inventions of the last three centuries can be wiped out—then indeed will there be some hope for a revival of Christianity. But if these things cannot be done, then the case of the Churches is hopeless.

C. COHEN.

"He Ascended Into Heaven."

So he did. There was absolutely nothing else to be done if the Gospel were to be carried to its logical end. For the kingdom of Christ could not be established in the first century, is not established in the twentieth, and never will be established in any future century.

"India will never become Christian," I heard the late Romesh Chunder Dutt say. Dutt was a poet, a statesman, and, at one time, occupied the position of Prime Minister to the Gaekwar of Baroda. He observed, he reflected, and he knew.

If India, which is the most religious country on earth, will not accept the Christian faith, the refusal is an indication of the attitude of the whole world. But the loyal orthodoxists are very slow to recognise

the hopelessness of the prospect. I rode in a train the other day with a simple-minded companion, shrewd at business but very wanting in acumen when he came to things theological. He had beamed with pride as he showed me one of the wonders of the United States,—the horseshoe curve in the Pennsylvania Railroad near Altoona. But when he fell to discussing the future of Christianity, and asked me if I did not think India would accept Christ, and I said "Certainly not!" his countenance fell, and I seemed to feel the chill of his atmosphere. What is one to say to the ignorant and unreflecting mind which knows so little of the world outside a narrow commercial circle as to imagine that scientific Europe and the proud old soul of Asia are going to dance in the train of the Salvation Army, or join in a Presbyterian rally, or march, to the sound of "Onward, Christian soldiers," to the Anglican or Roman baptismal font? Ask the leaders of the Chinese republic; ask the Indian passive resisters in South Africa; ask Mr. Gokhale and the Indian Nationalists, if Asia is likely to take up the cross and follow Jesus, and you will receive a most emphatic reply.

My Pennsylvanian friend had just come from a little city, which I had myself visited, in a remote corner of the Appalachian mountains. There had been a whole week of Revival services, and the hymns had proclaimed the triumph of Christ. Hundreds of hearts glowed with anticipations of the world-dominion. Already, the map of the world seem flagged all over with tokens of battles won for the martyr of Calvary. I had a glimpse of one or two meetings. A voluble mulatto from Porto Rico was telling of the victories achieved by missionaries in that West Indian island.

"Even the chickens fight no more," he cried; meaning, in his somewhat imperfect English, that the spread of humane feeling had put an end to cock-fighting. Indeed, I would heartily applaud any Christian, or anti-Christian, who assisted in fostering kindness to animals.

An hour or two later, I observed a group of young men,—well set-up and manly Americans,—listening to a fervid evangelist, not older than themselves, and as cocksure as he was ill-informed in his history and psychology.

"Fellows," he exclaimed, "send in your prayers to Christ. If wireless telegraphy can despatch messages to far-distant points, why should not the message of prayer reach the throne of God?"

The lads he addressed were destined to become engineers and farmers, and to do splendid service to the American commonwealth. I have met many such eager young spirits, who are the backbone of the commercial prosperity of the United States. I have met elder business men, whose genius for finance and law and organisation is eminent, and whose energy is the pride of their country. Yet I cannot help remarking that the American mind, taken as a broad average, moves on a lower level when it deals with the great intellectual and religious questions of the day. I remember the Moody and Sankey revival in London in 1878, and I believe that unwholesome scene is impossible of repetition in England. But such excitements are still feasible in the United States, where enormous material enterprises absorb so much thought-power, and leave inadequate capacity of judgment for the more delicate issues of religion and philosophy.

In the small city referred to, I attended service at a Methodist church, the windows of which blazed with colored pictures of Christ agonising at Gethsemane, Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, and Christ ascending into heaven. I noticed with much pleasure that the preacher followed the beneficent trend of the times: he made no allusion to the mediæval doctrine of the Blood-atonement, and no allusion to the doctrine of Hell-fire. When the story of our age is penned by posterity, the record will tell, on the positive side, of the development of the Education movement, the Labor movement, and the Woman movement; and, on the negative side, of the happy decline and fall of

these unwholesome and barbaric faiths. As a matter of fact, there is a correlation between the positive and negative movements.

Nevertheless, though an improvement on Spurgeon's low-plane creed, the Methodist preacher's message had no dynamic. I listened as a politician. My politics is an instrument that grips pretty hard. It grips at the evils of the factory and hovel, the mine and the slum, the docks and the foundry, the haunt of the prostitutes of the West, and the huts of the Mahars and Chandálas of India. These are my test cases. Whoever comes to me with a revelation or a program must show me how, in some reasonably effective manner, these evils will be assuaged. Whoever you are, O prophet, you must declare your thought about these infernal horrors of Benares, of Paris, of Pittsburg, of Johannesburg. Asquith or Woodrow Wilson, Jaurès or Christ, speak!

Well, I waited in patience while the Methodist preached on the alternative,—Either one must take sides for Christ, or against him. Very good. There was apparent value in the presentation, just as there was undoubted color,—most vivid red and blue and green—in the stained-glass pictures of Gethsemane, and Joseph of Arimathea's garden, and the Mount of Olives, and the ascending God.

Once, I thought my pulpit friend was becoming dynamic. His speech waxed warm; his phrases became crisper; he seemed to approach a proclamation; and presently, he cried out in a loud voice, and told us how the forces of Christ in the State of Pennsylvania were gathering for a grand attack upon.....*the liquor traffic.*

Was that all? The manifesto might or might not stir the brewing-trade. It made no impression upon me, though I have abstained from alcohol about forty years, and detest it as much as I detest (O smokers! pardon) tobacco. I glanced at the congregation. Those pretty American misses, those demure tradesmen and professional men, those feathery and silken mammas,—no! I swear they were little likely to succumb to the devilry of rum or beer. Perhaps that was one reason why the pulpit carried on this holy war.

We doubters are so impatient. Why not give the good Methodist another chance,—twenty chances? I did; for I sat out the sermon and contributed to the collection. Once again, the volume of menace gathered; the eyes of the apostle sparkled; the fist was clenched; surely, the gates of sin will tremble at the word that is coming! It came, and it summoned all the chivalry and virtue of Pennsylvania to sally forth to the annihilation of.....*the liquor traffic.*

The sorrows of Benares, Paris, Pittsburg, and Johannesburg must, therefore, go on indefinitely so far as this Pennsylvanian cares. If this is the outcome of many centuries of theological and Biblical study of social needs and possibilities, I count it an excessively mean show; and, as a politician, I can rise to no enthusiasm on this platform. It is a miserable disappointment. I make no remarks on the questions that involve the future of art, of literature, of science. I just select the most obvious and the most tragic of human problems,—the problem of poverty; and I affirm, quite simply, that the gospel of Christ has not met it, and does not give any valid token of meeting it, and the people cannot wait. Whatever its merits may have been, the Christian system has not adapted itself to the terrible needs of earth.

"He ascended into heaven."

Of course.

F. J. GOULD.

U. S. A., February 14, 1914.

Concealment regarding a question of such vital importance as the truth of Christianity is to be deplored; while an attitude of indifference on a subject that should be of surpassing interest to us all can only be characterised as amazing—unless, indeed, the real explanation be that men have ceased to believe.—*Philip Vivian.*

Science and the Soul.—VI.

(Continued from p. 134.)

"Civilisation has always and everywhere been evolved out of savagery. The mass of evidence on which this assumption rests is, in my opinion, so great as to render the induction incontrovertible. At least, if anyone disputes it I do not think it worth while to argue with him. There are still, I believe, in civilised society people who hold that the earth is flat and that the sun goes round it; but no sensible man will waste time in the vain attempt to convince such persons of their error, even though these flatteners of the earth and circulators of the sun appeal with perfect justice to the evidence of their senses in support of their hallucination, which is more than the opponents of man's primitive savagery are able to do."—PROFESSOR J. G. FRAZER, *Psyche's Task*, p. 162.

"The soul has given up its ethereal substance, and become an immaterial entity, 'the shadow of a shade.'.....There has arisen an intellectual product whose very existence is of the deepest significance, a 'psychology' which has no longer anything to do with 'soul.' The soul's place in modern thought is in the metaphysics of religion, and its especial office there is that of furnishing an intellectual side to the religious doctrine of the future life.....Yet it is evident that notwithstanding all this profound change, the conception of the human soul is, as to its essential nature, continuous from the philosophy of the savage thinker to that of the modern professor of theology."—E. B. TYLOR, *Primitive Culture*, vol. 1., p. 501.

As we have seen, primitive man, in his first outlook on nature, was the prey to a multitude of deceptions, from which it has taken him ages to emancipate himself. Not only was he deceived by the workings of nature outside of himself, but also by the inward workings of his own mind.

His interpretation of the phenomena of dreams, of visions, of his shadow, of his reflection as shown in water; his interpretation of swooning, epilepsy, delirium, madness, unconsciousness, and death, were all wildly wide of the truth, and gave birth to the innumerable host of superstitions which have scourged mankind with whips of scorpions ever since.

No God guided the childish footsteps of primitive man, groping in the darkness and mists of ignorance. As Herbert Spencer has somewhere remarked, man has taken all the wrong roads before he found the right.

"In the eyes of the evolutionist—and we are all evolutionists nowadays—man springs from beast, humanity from animality," says that cultured Frenchman, M. Salomon Reinach,* and he adds, "We must look for the origin of religions in the psychology, not of civilised man, but of man the farthest removed from civilisation." But of this primitive man, before history, we have no direct knowledge; so, continues M. Reinach, "to supplement our information, three other sources have to be tapped: the psychology of the present-day savage, the psychology of children, and the psychology of the higher animals."

It is the glory of the English nation to be the pioneers in the work of explaining the origin of religious ideas. M. Reinach, with the modesty of true greatness, observes:—

"Had I been the first to formulate them, I should rank with the first thinkers of my day, and modesty alone would preclude me from saying so on the house-tops. As a matter of fact, I do not exactly know who made the discoveries. The names of Tylor, MacLennan, Smith, Frazer, and Jevons suggest themselves; but the one thing certain is that it was not myself. Mine has been a lowlier part,—to grasp the ideas of my betters, and to diffuse them as widely as I might" (p. 12).

On the next page, M. Reinach gives "thanks to the diffusion of the English works which have inspired me." Further on (p. 2) he also mentions the names of Lubbock and Herbert Spencer. This is a high tribute from one who is equally distinguished in art and science.

It falls to the lot of exceedingly few to be a pioneer in a new department of science; and forty-six years later, in face of the vast accumulation of new facts—mainly through the interest aroused by

his book—and in the face of the most drastic criticism, to be able to claim, as Lord Avebury (Sir John Lubbock) does, "In the main it seems to me that the conclusions which I ventured to put forward have received additional support from the evidence which has since accumulated."* If a brand-new scientific theory runs the gauntlet, and survives for forty-six years, you may depend that it has a pretty solid foundation.

For this work, which required the study of the ideas and modes of thought of innumerable savage tribes and communities, our nation was peculiarly well qualified. Our travellers, explorers, and merchants had penetrated every part of the globe. Our colonies and dependencies, especially in Australia and Africa, had brought us directly in contact with the most primitive savages yet surviving, whose manners, customs, superstitions, and modes of thought had been minutely described in books, journals, letters, and communications to the various learned societies, thus accumulating a rich store of social facts, which only awaited the illumination of genius to marshal them into order and deliver up their secret.

To Sir John Lubbock—after Lord Avebury—must be awarded the palm of priority, with his *Prehistoric Times*, first published in 1865, and his *Origin of Civilisation*, in 1870. This was quickly followed, in 1871, by Dr. E. B. Tylor's great work, *Primitive Culture*. Tylor, however, was not in any way indebted to Lubbock, his important discovery that "Animism" was the clay, as it were, out of which religions evolve, was entirely original. As Darwin himself truly remarked, it is "a most profound work," and he added, "It will make me for the future look at religion—a belief in the soul—from a new point of view."† Herbert Spencer's powerful and masterly work, *Principles of Sociology*, also dealing with religious origins, was published in 1877. These works caused as great a revolution among men's ideas of the origin of religion as Darwin's works did, in their ideas of the origin of man and the different species of animals and plants.

Take, for instance, the origin of the idea of a soul. The savage has great difficulty in distinguishing between sleep, trance, swooning, unconsciousness, and death. A man falls asleep, to wake after a while refreshed; another time he, or one of his companions, falls into a swoon or trance, or is rendered unconscious by a blow; he cannot be awakened, he lies deadly pale and insensible, perhaps, for hours or even days, and yet, after all, he revives. Savages say that "such a one died for awhile, but his soul came back again," says Tylor; and—

"they have great difficulty in distinguishing real death from such trances. They will talk to a corpse, try to rouse it and even feed it, and only when it becomes noisome and must be got rid of from among the living, they are at last certain that the life has gone never to return. What, then, is this soul or life which thus goes and comes in sleep, trance, and death? To the rude philosopher, the question seems to be answered by the very evidence of his senses. When the sleeper awakens from a dream, he believes he has really somehow been away, or that other people have come to him. As it is well known by experience that men's bodies do not go on these excursions, the natural explanation is that every man's living self or soul is his phantom or image, which can go out of his body and see and be seen itself in dreams."‡

The waking visions and hallucinations, which some men are subject to, would help to confirm this explanation.

Moreover, as Tylor further remarks:—

"That men have such unsubstantial images belonging to them is familiar in other ways to the savage philosopher, who has watched their reflections in still water, or their shadows following them about, fading out of sight to reappear presently somewhere else, while sometimes for a moment he has seen living breath as a faint cloud, vanishing though one can feel that it

* Lord Avebury, *Marriage, Totemism, and Religion* (1911), p. 7.

† G. W. Foote, *Darwin on God*, p. 42.

‡ E. B. Tylor, *Anthropology*, p. 343.

* M. Reinach, *Cults, Myths, and Religions*, p. 5.

is still there. Here, then, in a few words is the savage and barbaric theory of souls, where life, mind, breath, shadow, reflection, dream, vision, come together and account for one another in some such vague confused way as satisfies the untaught reasoner. The Zulu will say that at death a man's shadow departs from his body and becomes an ancestral ghost, and the widow will relate how her husband has come in her sleep and threatened to kill her for not taking care of his children; or the son will describe how his father's ghost stood before him in a dream, and the souls of the two, the living and the dead, went off together to visit some far-off kraal of their people. The Malays do not like to wake a sleeper, lest they should hurt him by disturbing his body while his soul is out."*

This is not a theory evolved, like the German metaphysician's camel, out of the scientist's inner consciousness. It is founded upon a solid and indestructible basis. Williams, in his book on *Fiji and the Fijians* (p. 203), says: "I once placed a good-looking native suddenly before a mirror. He stood delighted. "Now," said he, softly, "I can see into the world of spirits."

Mr. Howitt, one of the best authorities on the Australian aborigines, says that the Kurnai believe every person has within him a spirit called Yambo; one of the Kurnai was asked if he really thought his Yambo could go out during sleep, and said, "It must be so, for when I sleep I go to distant places, I even see and speak with those that are dead."

Im Thurn, speaking of the Indians of Guiana, writes:—

"The dreams which come to him in sleep are to him as real as any of the events of his waking life. He regards his dream acts and his waking acts as differing only in one respect, that the former are done only by the spirit, and the latter by the spirit in the body. When the Indian just awake tells the things which he did whilst asleep, his fellows reconcile each statement by the thought that the spirit of the sleeper left him and went out on its adventures."†

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

AND SO THEY WERE MARRIED.

Minister (to a man wishing to be married): Do you wish to marry this woman?

Man: I do.

Minister: Do you wish to marry this man?

Woman: I do.

Minister: Do you like the city as a place of residence?

Man: No, I prefer the suburbs.

Minister: Do you like the suburbs?

Woman: No, indeed; I prefer the city.

Minister: Are you a vegetarian in diet?

Man: No; I hate vegetables. I live on beef.

Woman: I can't bear meat. I am a vegetarian.

Minister: Do you like a sleeping room well ventilated?

Man: Yes; I want the window away down, summer and winter.

Minister: Do you like so much fresh air?

Woman: No; it would kill me. I want all windows closed.

Minister: Do you like a light in the room?

Man: No; can't sleep with a light; want the room dark.

Minister: Are you afraid in the dark?

Woman: Indeed, I am. I always have a bright light in the room.

Minister: Do you like many bedclothes?

Man: All I can pile on.

Minister: Do you?

Woman: No; they suffocate me.

Minister: I hereby pronounce you man and wife, and may the Lord have mercy on your souls.

CONFIDENCE.

A motorist, stopping his car at a country hotel, called to a man who was passing to look after the car. With much dignity the man replied, "Do you know that I belong to the Salvation Army." "Oh!" replied the motorist, "that doesn't matter. I'll trust you."

Acid Drops.

What a wonderful story of efficiency and success is that of the submarine A7 which sank in Whitsand Bay on January 16. First of all, the "rescuers" couldn't find her at the bottom; and after spending a lot of time in searching for her, they found her—just below the spot where she disappeared. Ever since they have been trying to shift her, but her stern part is well embedded in some twenty or thirty feet of mud and sand, and naturally she refuses to stir a single inch. They tried to shock her out of her stubborn inertia by putting a battleship going full steam ahead on to a hawser to which she was attached; but she stopped where she was, and the hawser it was that went. This is all that Admiralty science can do at present, and it might have been recognised before. The play is not all over, however; for religion has got to have its look in before the curtain is rung down. The "last rites" over the quiet dead in the ship which remains their tomb are to be performed on board H.M.S. the *Forth* two days after we pen this paragraph. Much good the hocus-pocus will do them! The performance has been delayed two months. Suppose it were delayed for ever. Who would suffer? The answer to that question is "The clergy." They must be regarded as indispensable. If they are not that, they are nothing at all.

Profanity spreads even in unlikely directions. The *London Teacher* prints a story of a boy who constructed a cardboard church. Over the portal he inscribed what he thought a suitable text: "Thou wilt be done."

The Salvation Army is holding a "Self-Denial" Week. As their female soldiers beg money from all and sundry, it would be more correctly described as "Other People's Self-Denial," under the auspices of the Salvation Army.

The Birmingham magistrates have imposed a fine of £5 and costs for "improper patter" at a music-hall. If those J.P.'s attend a place of worship, the parson will have to be careful when reading from "God's Word."

Two new bishoprics have just been added to the Church. The poor fishermen-apostles put their nets into the seas; their wealthy disciples to-day draw their sees into their nets.

A Bill has been introduced into the House of Representatives, Washington, which aims at regulating the tide of immigration. Mr. Burnett, who introduced the Bill, told the House that it aimed at those aliens who have "no God, no law, and no master"—a rather comprehensive program. As the main provision seems to be a money qualification, we must assume that having a God, etc., is thought to be a question of dollars. Anyway, we do not see how any Bill is going to keep these people out. Certainly, if a confession of faith is required, it can only keep out those who are honest. Dishonest ones will lie just as much and as strongly as is needed. And that is the usual effect of religiously inspired legislation. It almost invariably sets a tax on honesty and a premium on humbug. Our own laws against freedom of thought and speech have never made a single man or woman honest, but they have manufactured liars and hypocrites by the thousand.

Nonconformists are explaining the Welsh Nonconformist protest against the Disestablishment of the Church in Wales on the ground that the signatures were obtained under pressure. People were afraid they might lose something if they refused to sign, or hoped that they might gain something if they did. We do not dispute this for a moment; on the contrary, we are quite prepared to admit that many signatures have been obtained in this way. But this is not a method that is confined to upholders of the State Church, and we are quite sure that the Disestablishment of the Church will not put an end to it. It is exactly the policy of all Christians when their position enables them to follow it. We know of scores of newsagents who are prevented displaying the *Freethinker*, for example, by the threat of boycott held out by their Christian patrons. And this is more or less true of all Freethinkers in a business that is susceptible to boycott. There are very few Christians who understand the meaning of fair play. They naturally squeal when this kind of unfair pressure is brought to bear upon them, but the experience never prevents their dealing in exactly the same manner with others when occasion offers.

The Bishop of London says that for every step a man takes to find God, God takes a step to find the man. We do

* E. B. Tylor, *Anthropology*, p. 344.

† J. H. King, *The Supernatural*, vol. i., pp. 168-9.

not know on what Bishop Ingram bases his arithmetic, but it is evident that there is going on a fine game of holy hide-and-seek.

"Country Services Now Running," reads a big advertisement in the daily press. It does not refer to a revival of Christianity, but to omnibus trips, Sundays included.

Pancake carnivals are among the amusements of followers of the Man of Sorrows. Let us hope that the chefs employed do not use Ezekiel's memorable recipe for cakes.

A correspondent of a daily paper writes to say that at the church he attends the offertories amounted to precisely the same sum on two different Sundays. Buttons and bad coins included, we presume.

Truth (New Zealand) dated December 20, 1913, contained the following paragraph:—

"*Truth's* representative was travelling from Christchurch to Rangiora a short time ago, and heard two men talking of bullock-driving as done at the Christchurch show. After a while a wiry-looking, tall old man chipped in. 'Driving bullocks. Not one of them knew how to drive—didn't know the language—none of them could get a team of lazy bullocks out of a bog. Bah!' The representative listened with interest, because he knew 'the language,' and knew that every bullocky in Australia in the old days had a pet name for each bullock—'Strawberry,' 'Creamy,' 'Milky,' 'Spud,' and what not. One day a well-known driver, noted for his animal vocabulary, got his team stuck in a bog-hole. His whip cracked and the surrounding air was lurid with language. A country parson rode up, halted, listened in horror to the volley of oaths, and watched, with pain, the cruelty of the whip. Unable to contain himself longer, he said, 'My good friend, it is painful to witness your cruelty to those poor, dumb animals! Why cannot you be more patient and trust in Providence?' The bullocky looked at him and retorted, "'Providence' be b—; 'Providence' is the worst b— bullock I've got in the whole b— team!"

Evidently they want Mr. McKenna out there.

One of the religious weeklies discovers that a great many people in these days think that they do not believe in Christianity when the real truth is that they do not believe its literal and historical interpretation. There is nothing startlingly new about this deliverance, and all it means is that modern thought has made many Christians more or less ashamed of the only Christianity that has ever existed. If historical Christianity is not genuine Christianity, what is it? If it has never yet existed, why claim anything for it? Nothing could be more ridiculous than to elaborate one moment the benefits that Christianity has given to the world, to dwell upon the value of this Church and that Church, and then turn round and say that these Churches did not teach Christianity, and that Christianity has never existed except in the mind of an enthusiast here and there. That Christianity will do great things in the future because it has done great things in the past is an intelligible proposition. But to argue that it will do great things because it has hitherto done nothing is a form of reasoning that it takes a "liberal" Christian to appreciate.

Of course, it may be said that it is all a matter of interpretation, and with this we agree. And it remains this whether we are dealing with the first century or the twentieth. To say that Christianity is a matter of interpretation is only to say that there is a doctrine and a man, and the former is what the latter understands it to be. Those who lived at the beginning of the Christian era, and who had the advantage of living in an intellectual environment in which Christian doctrines were fashioned, understood Christianity to involve a belief in a literal heaven and hell, in angels and devils, in miracles and vicarious atonement, and a number of other things that are now very generally rejected. That was the original interpretation, and in the main it was an essential part of the Christianity that ruled the world. Afterwards other interpretations were offered, not due to a better understanding of that religion, but entirely due to the need of squaring Christianity with its changed knowledge and sentiments. The twentieth century interpretation of Christianity is another stage of the same process. It is the pastime of such as have wit enough to see some of the faults of the old creed, but who lack the courage, or the insight, or both, to base their philosophy of life upon modern knowledge and needs.

Ball, alias Sumner, the Liverpool murderer, made a confession to the Bishop of Liverpool, who confirmed him as a

penitent—so that's all right. Peter very likely welcomed him with a brass band. His sister told him not to cry; he would be better off in heaven. Nothing seems to have been said about the poor lady who was brutally murdered, and trussed up, and thrown into a dock. Her fate, of course, is too insignificant for consideration.

Mdlle. Gaby Deslys, the famous comedienne, has lost her pet monkey. Will she now adopt a tame clergyman?

Professor T. W. Gregory has assured the Royal Geographical Society that the earth is not drying up. The same thing may be said of the popular preachers.

During a recruiting week at Glasgow the clergy were asked to preach special sermons to enlist the sympathies of their congregations. As the majority of worshipers are women, we cannot see how that could help the Territorial Forces, unless it is proposed to raise regiments of amazons.

The following is from the Montreal correspondent of the *Daily News* (Feb. 26):—

"Colonel Samuel Hughes, the Dominion Minister of Militia and Defence, has provoked a lively discussion by expressing the opinion in a public speech that more wars are caused by clergymen than by soldiers. The Minister, who declares that he has nothing to retract, says that he did not suggest that all churchmen were quarrelsome or aggressive, but merely called attention to the fact that more controversies have been caused by religious differences than by disputes on any other subject."

The black army don't have it all their own way, after all; not even in Catholic Montreal.

A play on the Biblical subject of Samson and Delilah has been produced in Berlin. In England, we fear, its career would be as short as Samson's hair after the lady had used the scissors.

Canon Rawnsley has left his self-imposed censorship of literature for the moment, and is busying himself with the tone of the picture exhibitions. He quotes some American teachers as saying that some pictures contain incitements to grossness, illicit passion, and homicide. The Canon ought to train his guns on the Old Testament, which children are compelled to read, and which contains many stories that dare not be filmed.

Apparently the *Christian Commonwealth* has only just discovered the famous—or infamous—*Sight of Hell*, a Roman Catholic manual for the use of children and young persons. Anyway, its issue for February 25 contains a description of the pamphlet, with some expressions of opinion about it. It says that the book is "a vile production, and ought to be suppressed by law. It must poison the mind, vitiate the moral sense, distort the vision, pervert the judgment of any child or young person who has the misfortune to read it." We are not fond of suppressing publications by law, otherwise we quite agree with the *Commonwealth* writer's opinion of the pamphlet. It is a horrible publication; it must have a bad effect on all who are influenced by it—save in the direction of laughter. Only we would beg the *Commonwealth* to restrain its indignation for awhile, and remember that it is a Christian publication—written by Christians for Christians and proclaiming what is the best attested of all Christian doctrines.

Let us keep before our minds the fact that for hundreds of years the Christian Churches preached this doctrine without the slightest suspicion that it was either untrue or evil. Some of the greatest writers and preachers in the history of Christianity taught it, in much the same language of the *Sight of Hell*, down to our own day. There is nothing in it, for example, worse than Spurgeon taught. Let us grant that it poisons the mind, vitiates the moral sense, and perverts the judgment; grant all this, and you at once frame a splendid indictment against the whole of historic Christianity. No Freethinker could say more; it is, indeed, only repeating what Freethinkers have said and have been denounced for saying. Then let the *Christian Commonwealth* reflect on the probable consequence of this poisonous, demoralising doctrine, taught generation after generation as beyond question, and try to calculate how much Christianity is responsible for coarsening and brutalising human character. And when it realises this—and if it does not it should apologise to the author of the pamphlet in question—then let it apologise for all its nauseous, sentimental claptrap about the sweetening and purifying influence of the Christian creed.

It is all right. Americans may take heart. Dr. R. F. Horton recently paid America a visit, and while there he found out what Americans were created for. The idea "stole" into his mind that the responsibility for saving the world "did not, after all, rest upon the effete nations of the Old World, but was being entrusted to the vital forces of the New." Then, he says, "a great sigh of relief seemed to go up from my heart." We are glad Dr. Horton gained this relief, but it seems rather rough on the "effete nations of the Old World." Hitherto, we have taken it for granted that this peculiar privilege of saving the world was reserved for the British Empire. That is why we have annexed so large a part of the earth's surface, solely to carry out our spiritual mission. Now it seems that we are to make way for America. It looks a bit rough on the Old World, but now we know, at least, *why* America exists.

Dr. Horton says they have one great advantage in America, which is religious equality. By this he means that they have no established Church. This is true, and so far there is equality between Christian sects. But it is not equality of religion that profits a nation, but equality of opinion. And America has not that yet. The legal dice are loaded in America against the Freethinker as they are elsewhere. But we daresay that Dr. Horton would take that as one of the proofs that God has designed America for a great spiritual work.

Rev. T. F. Bull, of Southsea, is a cleric of the good old sort. He writes that he is convinced "the growing laxity and demoralisation of civilised nations is due not to ignorance but to knowledge," and he warns reformers against thinking themselves wiser than God. We are not sure that there is a growing laxity and demoralisation. Manners change, and a change is often enough thought to be bad mainly because it is different from what we are accustomed to. All the same, Mr. Bull is a type of cleric that is becoming rare, and we salute him accordingly.

Mr. H. G. Wells has been giving his impressions of Russia. He says that in Russia he felt himself for the first time in a Christian country. The people—he is referring, of course, to what are called "the masses"—he says, are organically religious. We quite believe him. And those who know the state of Russia have not been slow to connect it with the hold religion has on the people. Were Russia a little less Christian it might easily be a little more civilised. The misgovernment of the people has been made possible by their eight centuries of religious dragooning, and the power of religion must be broken before liberty can be secured or progress made sure.

Referring to Mr. H. G. Wells' remark that were Nelson alive to-day he would not "be given the ghost of a chance of putting his gifts at his country's service" because of his relations with Lady Hamilton, the puritanical *Daily News* says that "there is no profession outside the Church in which conventional immorality is to-day the slightest bar to success." Our Nonconformist contemporary has soon forgotten Dilke and Parnell, who were both men of Nelsonian morals.

A correspondence has been going on in the *Times* on the subject of whether death is painful or not. The general opinion is that it is usually painless, which we can quite believe. Acute pain is generally a characteristic of acute vitality rather than the reverse. In normal cases death occurs when the body has been worn out by disease, and the capacity for feeling is therefore at its lowest point. The spasmodic actions that take place on the approach of death are more often than not in the nature of reflex action, and have very small psychological significance. It is a pity that so much religious legend should have gathered round the fact of death, and very often deliberately manufactured for religious gain.

The religious comments upon this painlessness of death are, as usual, amusing. The *Church Family Newspaper* has the usual fatuous remark about pain serving a useful purpose, and explains the painlessness of death by saying that "when death is inevitable pain ceases to have an educative value, and therefore death is unaccompanied by pain." Now, bearing in mind the fact that when death is painless it is probably because so much pain has already been experienced, the stupidity of the comment seems fairly complete. Let anyone consider in how many illnesses death is preceded by months of pain, and they will appreciate the value of the above quoted comment. Even if it were granted—what is not always true—that pain educates, what education is there in one suffering for months and then dying? Ob-

viously the only possible education here would be if the patient recovers. But when the patient dies? Of course, there are the people who are left alive, and the believer in God *may* argue that the patient suffers to educate those who are well. It would be quite in line with the general run of Theistic arguments to put this plea forward. Where absurdities are so numerous, one more or less can make little difference.

Sir Thomas Dewar has been telling the public of his big-game exploits through the press under the title of "Lions I Have Met." Wouldn't the journalists like to meet the prophet Daniel and listen to his exploits?

"Always a Warm Welcome" reads an advertisement in the daily papers. It does not refer to hell, but to a new radiator.

"You pass into Euston Station as into a cathedral that is to convey you somehow directly to heaven," says a *Daily Chronicle* scribe. Isn't it smoky enough to suggest that the trains go to the other place?

Mr. A. C. Benson thinks that people are not so certain as to what is going to happen to them after death as they were in the past ages. Yet 50,000 professional, and as many amateur, preachers try to tell people the Bible "truths" every Sunday. Hell ought not to be "shut down" with so many "stokers."

For burning a maidservant's arm with a heated poker, a man was sent to prison for a month with hard labor by the Mansfield magistrates recently. Yet there are people who profess to believe that the majority of the human race will be subjected to eternal torment in the fires of hell.

Mr. H. G. Wells thinks that the extended use of the aeroplane will eventually lead to a floating population. It is, however, curious that the record for aviation belongs to a Jewish carpenter, who lived twenty centuries ago, and who "flew" without a machine.

A magistrate recently stated that it did not pay to joke with a police-constable. Especially when one is a Free-thought speaker and the man in blue has no sense of humor.

A new Ingersoll story is going the rounds. Speaking of a person of enthusiastic character, but not conspicuous intellect, the Colonel said "he would go to the stake for a principle under a misapprehension as to the facts."

A CALIFORNIAN'S PRAYER FOR RAIN.

O Lord of Storms, be good anon,
And vindicate our trust;
Send down thy saving rains upon
The just and the unjust.
Alike they pray—upon their knees
Those, and upon their neighbors these.

Behold, thine earth is very dry
(And similar thy bard)—
We've naught to make it lighter lie,
Our very cider's hard.
Our fields so long have moisture lacked
They gape. Our preachers, too, are cracked.

They tell us that of righteous men
The prayers avail, but lo!
They take not their umbrellas when
To pray for rain they go.
But, Lord, in the resulting show'rs
Thy saints are sometimes seen with ours.

We've set apart with sweet accord
A day of gratitude.
(The Spaniard and the turkey, Lord,
Are dissident and rude)—
Our pious hearts are full, but pray
Take soundings in our wells to-day!

For next year's harvest fit our lands—
For grain and grape and peach;
This season's crops are off our hands—
Sold, and beyond thy reach.
Lord, from thy creatures turn this woe,
And let it fall on Mexico.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

March 22, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £63 2s. 9d. Received since:—Alfred Delve, £1 1s.; H. Kennedy, £2 2s.; G. Raggett, 10s.; H. W. B., 3s.; J. Pendlebury, £2; W. Bailey, £6; R. S. P., 10s.; V. M. Crosse, 2s.; F. M. A., 10s.

J. WOOD.—Ingersoll's writings and lectures contain hundreds probably thousands, of such epigrams. We cannot undertake to give reference to all or any of them.

J. SHOOTER.—We are quite unable to supply readers with questions or answers for use in debating societies. We should have no time left for our proper work. Glad you find the *Freethinker* interesting and informing. You might try to read some of the books we advertise or refer to from time to time.

JAMES WILLIAMS.—Sorry we can't oblige. We have not issued a weekly contents-sheet for many years. So little display was given to it that the game was not worth the candle. We have a permanent bill, which your friend might like to display. Please apply, in that case, direct to our shop manager. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

J. W. O'LEARY.—All the Sandwich family ever did, that we know of, was to give a name to a well-known "snack." His present lordship's prophecy about religion and science is of no importance.

J. ALLEN.—You mean well, but what interest can you imagine the enclosure could have for us? We would send the pious thing back, but it isn't worth the trouble or postage.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always useful.

WALTER STEWART, compositor, aged 73, asks for the vote and interest of any *Freethinker* who can give the same to his candidature for election to the Printers' Pension Corporation. It is a deserving case, and this is his second application.

W. BAILEY.—We appreciate your generosity in relation to our Honorarium Fund.

R. S. P.—Better late than never, but better early than late—as you say. We wish all subscribers (who can) would remember it.

F. GATESHILL.—Lecture notices should be framed on the model of our printed list. We are glad to see the St. Helen's N. S. S. Branch holds its first meeting at 7.30 on March 7 in the Central Café, Bridge-street, the President giving an address.

C. T. SHAW.—Thanks but Tuesday is too late for this week's issue.

F. M. A.—Sub. acknowledged; letter next week.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings.

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The wet weather at Glasgow on Sunday did not damp Mr. Foote's ardor nor the enthusiasm of the fine morning audience and the crowded evening audience that assembled to give him another welcome after a long absence. Many ladies were present, and "saints" came from Kilmarnock, Paisley, the Bridge of Allan, Dundee, Aberdeen, and other places. Mr. Turnbull presided at both meetings and warmly invited new members, in which we hope he was successful. Several questions were asked after the evening lecture and suitably answered. But when a familiar voice started asking "What about Capital?" everybody knew it was time to wind up and go home.

Mr. Foote left home at 10.30 on Saturday morning, and arrived in Glasgow at 10.30 p.m. It was a long while to be "upon the road." Sunday's lectures were, of course, very heavy work. On Monday there was the journey back from Glasgow, leaving at 10 in the morning and arriving home at 9 in the evening. Really a good half of a week gone; a big inroad on the time otherwise available for the *Freethinker*, which suffers to some extent in consequence. Mr. Foote will, however, make up for this as far as possible in the next number. Meanwhile we are glad to state that the Glasgow visit made him rather tired, but did not affect him in any other way. The lectures themselves, and meeting old friends again did him good.

Mr. Cohen lectures at the Manchester Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, to-day (March 8). Both afternoon and evening subjects should attract large audiences.

The *Leamington Chronicle* fairly reports Mr. Cohen's lecture before the Literary and Philosophical Society. In the editorial notes, however, it rather suggests that the Committee was "had." It is even hinted that Mr. Cohen's visit was rather a slight upon Sir Oliver Lodge. Tut, tut! Sir Oliver Lodge is only Sir Oliver Lodge. He is not everybody. There were thinkers before he was born, there will be thinkers when he is dead, and there are thinkers while he is living. This may sound odd in the Midlands, but it is true. We have what we hope is a proper respect for the Principal of Birmingham University, but when we hear his name used to belittle other men's names, we are inclined to say with Hamlet, "Something too much of this."

Mr. Lloyd lectures for the West Ham Branch at the Workman's Hall, Stratford, this evening (March 8). The local "saints" should see the place well filled. They can do this by advertising Mr. Lloyd's visit amongst their friends and acquaintances.

The Annual Meeting of the Humanitarian League will be held at the Westminster Palace Hotel on Thursday, April 2, when the chair will be taken at 7.30 p.m. by Mr. Ernest Bell. An address will be given on some points connected with the League's work, and the Annual Report for the past year will be submitted for adoption. The business concluded, a conversazione, with a short musical program, will follow. Members are invited to attend and bring friends. Mr. Foote has often wished to attend the annual meeting, and he will make an effort to do so this time.

The National Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws will hold a public meeting at Essex Hall on Friday evening, March 20.

The Secular Education League holds its annual Members' meeting on Tuesday evening, March 24, in Room I of the Caxton Hall. The chair will be taken at 7.30. This will be followed by a public meeting at 8.15. It is hoped that Mr. George Greenwood will be able to preside, and the list of speakers includes Mr. Halley Stewart, Sir Henry Cotton, Lady Byles, Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., Rev. Dr. Walter Walsh, and Mr. G. W. Foote.

The Rationalist Peace Society holds its Annual Members' Meeting at 167 St. Stephen's House, Westminster, on Thursday evening, March 5, at 8 o'clock. Report and Balance Sheet to be presented and Officers elected for the ensuing year. This is a very late announcement, but the fault is not ours.

We have only space and time for a few lines on the *English Review* for March. We shall give it greater attention next week. For the present we can only say that it is a full number and an excellent number, which we warmly commend to our readers' attention. We may mention the editor's capital article on "Crime and Punishment" now, as it deals with a passing topic—Mr. Frank Harris's imprisonment.

Mr. W. Heaford writes:—"In reference to my article of March 1 on M. Daanson's book, *Mythes et Legendes*, the author informs me that the price stated (10 francs) was the price for subscribers only before the work was issued. M. Daanson's publishers are, he states, Marcel Rivière et Cie, 31 rue Jacob, Paris, and the price of the book is now 15 francs (or 12s.), post free. It is but fair to our readers to put this matter of price right at once. I may add that M. Daanson has confirmed my impression that his present work is but the synthesis of a larger work. In elaborating his theory in definitive form, M. Daanson will devote some eight years to further research and classification, and at the end of that time he hopes to publish a work in two volumes, one on *The Origin and Evolution of Myths*, and the other on *The Origin and Evolution of the Jesus Legend*."

The Half-Yearly Meeting of the London members of the National Secular Society has been arranged for Tuesday, March 24, at Chandos Hall, Maiden-lane, Charing Cross. The production of a card of membership is sufficient to obtain admission. Members desiring to introduce any particular business should give previous notice to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary. The chair will be taken, of course, by Mr. G. W. Foote.

The Church and Literature.—III.

(Concluded from p. 140.)

JUST three centuries ago Pope Sixtus V. finally organised a special "Congregatio Indici," which is still in operation, and which, besides publishing a list of prohibited books the writing, printing, publishing, distribution, reading, lending, or having possession of any of which is visited with excommunication, publishes also an *Index Librorum Expurgandorum*—a list of books which may be read after being expurgated and freed from certain offensive passages. In the words of Milton, they "rake through the entrails of many an old good author, with a violation worse than any that could be offered to his tomb."

The latest edition of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* on the reference shelves of the British Museum Library is dated Rome, 1877. A later one has been issued by the present Pope. It gives a list of over a thousand names of persons, from Abaelardus to Zwinglius, whose works must be avoided by the faithful. The work is a curiosity from many points of view. Thus it contains the name of Erasmus Darwin, but the works of his more famous grandson are apparently unknown. Many of the works of the heresiarchs are not enumerated, but have simply the words *opera omnia*, so that it is an offence to read even an ordinary letter by these authors. The list of works deemed objectionable by the Church contains some of the most eminent names in every department of literature. Our historians are represented by such men as Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Hallam, and even Oliver Goldsmith. Among foreign historians Macchiavelli, Guicciardini, Raynal, Sismondi, Botta, Mosheim, and Ranke are interdicted. Philosophy is represented by the most illustrious names: Occam, Bruno, Bacon, Campanella, Pomponatius, Hobbes, Descartes, Bayle, Pascal, Leibnitz, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, Comte, Hegel, Kant, Fichte, V. Cousin, and Vera. J. S. Mill is catalogued as Stuart, not for his *Logic* or *Essays*, but for his *Political Economy*. Archbishop Whateley's *Elements of Logic* is forbidden. Hume is inserted both as Mr. Hume for his *Essays*, and as David Hume for his *History of England* and *opera omnia*. Addison is down for his *Tours in Italy*, Swift for his *Tale of a Tub*, Lord Chesterfield for his *Letters to his Son*. That exceedingly chaste novel, *Pamela*, is interdicted, although, apparently, the Congregation of the Index do not know the name of its author, Samuel Richardson. Among novelists are George Sand, Balzac, Soulié, Murger, and Flaubert. Poets are represented by Ariosto, Petrarch, Milton, La Fontaine, Lessing, Lamartine, Béranger, Carducci, and Heine. Shelley and Burns are apparently unknown to the Congregation. Dante has the honor of a place, not for his epic, but for his treatise, *De Monarchia*, in which he argues against the Pope's temporal power. Hugo is catalogued for his *Nôtre Dame*, not for his *Torquemada* or *Religions and Religion*. Among theologians one finds, of course, the names of Wiclif, Hus, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Servetus, Sherlock, Tillotson, and Michaelis. The critical works of such learned Catholics as Father Simon and Dupin are interdicted, as are also Fenelon's *Maxims of the Saints*, the complete works of Molinos, and the reconciliations of Bordas-Desmoulins.

Of the Freethinkers, of course, all works are excluded as far as known. In the case of Voltaire an attempt seems to have been made to enumerate his objectionable works, but it does not exhibit much bibliographical knowledge. The well-known works of Dupuis, Volney, and Pigault Le Brun are inserted, as well as the treatise on Religion by Benjamin Constant, and the modern works of Rénan, Strauss, Péyrat, Jules Soury, Baissac, Larroque, and Jacolliot. The numerous translations of Draper's *Conflict of Religion and Science*, and Büchner's *Force and Matter*, have got those works inserted in the Index; but there is no mention of important Freethought works best

known in England, possibly because it is understood that all works coming from heretics are forbidden.

There are also upon the Index a number of works such as most fathers would keep from their children. Rabelais, Boccaccio, and others, of course, are there. Among the smuttiest collections are the works of Aretino, who was a Cardinal's favorite, and the *Facetiae* of Poggio, who was apostolical secretary to three popes. These are inserted, although, in several editions, Poggio is carefully concealed under the name of "Florentinus"; but we miss the works of Abbé Brantôme and others only too well known in the Church.

In addition to the published list of prohibited literature, bishops and priests are supposed to exercise a censorship over the reading of those under their charge. Peignot, in his "Dictionary of the principal works which have been committed to the flames," gives a ridiculous instance of the way in which this has sometimes been carried out. He says:—

"In Styria the censorship of books is carried on in singular style, and one which shows that the function in Austrian states is not confided to very enlightened men. In the year vi, [*i.e.*, 1798] one of these censors condemned as heretical two books, of which one was entitled *Principles of Trigonometry*, and the other the *Destruction of Insects*. The censor thought Trigonometry was closely related to the Trinity, upon which it is forbidden to write; and took *Insects* for *Jesuits*."

Let not Protestants lay the flattering unction to their souls that it is the Catholic Church alone that has made war upon literature. Penal laws against the full expression of opinion are yet in force in every Protestant country. Many heretical works have been burnt by the common hangman and summarily suppressed both in England and Germany. In the reign of Elizabeth the Independents had to have a private travelling printing press to issue their Marprelate tracts. Among works publicly burnt were all the early Unitarian and Deistic pamphlets, John Milton's *Defence of the People of England*, and Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. The works of Servetus were seized by Bishop Gibson, and burnt in 1728; and the same dignitary suppressed the second volume of Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. In my *Historical Sketches of Freethought in England* I have, I believe, adduced sufficient evidence that it is to the labors and sufferings of the Freethinkers that we are mainly indebted for a Free Press, the palladium of civilisation.

No doubt, in the palmy days of Christianity, the Church could claim that such literature as there was bore the impress of Christian teaching. The only opening for talent was by entering the service of the Church, and the blighting influence of its creeds is evident in all the writings of the Middle Ages, when it has been said there was no such thing as philosophy, but only scholastic logic and theology. The nature of the Trinity, of the soul; "whether angels in going from place to place move over the intermediate space"—such questions as these formed the intellectual exercises of the cultured, while the mental pabulum of the unlearned consisted mainly of lying legends of the saints. With the renaissance of Pagan learning came a change for the better; Erasmus, Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Spinoza, Hobbes, Descartes, Bayle, and Voltaire found new directions for the human mind. Gradually the affairs of this world took pre-eminence over those of a speculative world to come. Historical criticism, directed at first to "profane" matters, gradually trenched upon the domain of Jewish records labelled "sacred." Science, ascertaining more and more of the workings of nature and of the immutability of law, has gradually displaced "Providence"; and literature, despite the copious publication of unheeded sermons, becomes ever more and more secular in its character. Theology, which a few centuries ago commanded the attention of the highest minds, is now left to rhetoricians like Farrar or charlatans like Cook.

The world is beginning to give more heed to the opinions of the most insignificant journalist of the present than to the united pulpit speaking with the voice of a discredited Church of the past.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

Aphrodite and Adonis.

THE religious beliefs of all primitive peoples appear to have been greatly influenced by the constantly changing phenomena of the seasons. Ever at the mercy of the elements, early savage races were never without warning of their entire dependence on the ceaseless alterations which the rolling years disclosed. The wintry blast, the fallen snow, the bare and withered vegetation, the frozen rivulet and lake, the scarcity or disappearance of animal life with the departing summer, each and all conspired to impress upon prehistoric man his utter impotence while within winter's cold embrace.

There is much reason to believe that at an early stage of man's development the idea was almost universally entertained that the flight of summer might be stayed by the influences of magic art. There is positive evidence that among many races spells were recited and ceremonies conducted to cause the sun to shine, the rain to fall, the animals to abound, and the earth to give forth her fruits. This cultural stage was to some extent succeeded by another, in which a religious superstition born of wider knowledge and experience began to supersede the belief that the course of the seasons could be arrested by the potent spells of magic alone. A belief arose that higher and greater powers determined the coming of spring, the sweetness of summer, the tinted robes of autumn, and the darkness and cold of winter. The development and decay of plant life, the scarcity or abundance of animal organisms, now came to be more and more regarded as the rising and declining powers of divine creatures who passed from youth to old age, and who gave birth to offspring like common human mortals.

From direct magical exertion over the forces of Nature, men turned their attention towards the gods and goddesses they had themselves created, and strove to assist these divine creatures in their conflict with the dark and sinister powers of death and decay. It was therefore essential to do something to recruit the declining powers of the deities, and when at last they passed unto death to secure their resurrection from the grave. All the world over, magical ceremonies are based on the assumption that by simulating the end desired its accomplishment will be effected. There is in all probability no rural district in Western Europe—the most civilised area in the world—in which these superstitions are not commonly credited to this very hour. The extent to which these primitive beliefs prevail, even in England, is well illustrated in Hardy's *Return of the Native* and *Wessex Tales*.

So far as research has hitherto disclosed, the rites and ceremonies designed to assist the gods have been nowhere more elaborately observed than in the countries which environ the Eastern Mediterranean. In Egypt and Western Asia the birth, decay, and revival of animal and vegetable life were personified as divinities who died and rose from the grave. Adonis, Attis, Osiris, and Tammuz, not to mention a more modern divinity, were all gods of this kind. The details recorded concerning them vary, but in substance they are the same, and a study of the god Adonis will in reality embrace the others.

To the student of Greek literature the story of Adonis has long been familiar, and in Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" we possess a poem of deathless charm. But Adonis was not born on Greek soil. Under the name of Tammuz he was worshiped by the Semitic inhabitants of Syria and Babylonia centuries before his entrance into Greece.

"The true name of the deity was Tammuz: the appellation of Adonis is merely the Semitic 'Adon,' *lord*, a title of honor by which his worshipers addressed him. In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament the same name Adonai, originally perhaps Adoni, 'my lord,' is often applied to Jehovah. But the Greeks, through a misunderstanding, converted the title of honor into a proper name..... We first meet with Tammuz in the religious literature of Babylon. He there appears as the youthful spouse or lover of Ishtar, the great mother goddess, the embodiment of the reproductive energies of nature. The references to their connection with each other in myth and ritual are both fragmentary and obscure, but we gather from them that every year Tammuz was believed to die, passing away from the cheerful earth to the gloomy subterranean world, and that every year his divine mistress journeyed in quest of him 'to the land from which there is no returning, to the house of darkness, where dust lies on door and bolt.' During her absence the passion of love ceased to operate; men and beasts alike forgot to reproduce their kinds: all life was threatened with extinction."*

So necessary was the goddess to the world of life that the great god Ea sent a messenger to restore Ishtar to the light of day. The difficulties of the lower regions overcome, Ishtar returns to earth, presumably with her loved Tammuz, and with their reappearance Nature resumes her garment of fertility. In some of the Babylonian hymns the death of Tammuz is deeply deplored, and he is compared with the plants that quickly die. His untimely death was commemorated with sad ceremonial every year, and the object of these observances was to awaken the god from the slumber of death. The legend of Adonis finds a fuller expression in Greek literature than in the Babylonian fragments that have so far been deciphered.

In the Greek myth the maiden Symrna had grown cold in her devotion towards the goddess Aphrodite, and was cursed by the angry divinity with an unnatural desire for her father. This part of the myth bears some resemblance to the story of Lot's chaste daughters, as Symrna was not above the practice of deceit in order to secure her desires. Assisted by a nurse, she succeeded in sharing her father's couch without being known to him. When he discovered his daughter's sin he determined to slay her; but she escaped, and when nearly captured she implored the gods to make her invisible. They were moved by her tears, and transformed her into a tree. At the end of nine months the tree opened, and Adonis was delivered. Aphrodite was so smitten by the loveliness of the child that she hid it in a chest, which she entrusted to Persephone's care. When, however, Persephone discovered the beauty of the treasure entrusted to her keeping she refused to part with it. After an angry dispute, the case was carried to the court of Zeus, and the great divinity decided the difficulty by declaring that for four months of each year Adonis should be free to himself, that for an equal period he should dwell with Persephone, and that during the remaining four months he should remain with Aphrodite. Adonis, however, elected to live with Aphrodite during his period of freedom, and thus was with her eight months of the year. Afterwards the beautiful youth met his death from the wound inflicted during the chase by the ferocious wild boar. When we remember that Aphrodite was the goddess of love, and Persephone the divinity of death, it becomes obvious that the contest between the two deities for the possession of Adonis personifies the struggle between summer and winter for supremacy.

The attributes and character of Aphrodite—the Greek equivalent of the Roman Venus—naturally excited the affections of Adonis. She was the divinity of love and beauty. Sprung from the foam, she was the personification of the procreative processes of Nature and the begetter of all living things. During the combat of Typhon with the gods, Aphrodite metamorphosed herself into a fish, and this denizen of the deep to the Greeks was the possessor of the greatest powers of fecundity. Zeus

* *Golden Bough*, Part IV., pp. 6, 7.

asserted that she ought to occupy herself with marriage celebrations and wedding feasts. The beauty and gracefulness of Aphrodite were beyond compare, and Paris awarded her the prize for loveliness. The myrtle, rose, apple, and poppy were sacred to her. Winged creatures were her messengers and chariot-drawers—the swan, the swallow, the sparrow, and the dove. The ram and the tortoise were especially associated with her worship, and sacred to the goddess were the planet Venus and the month of April. The characteristics of Persephone, her great adversary, were, on the other hand, those of gloom and darkness. Syria and Cyprus were leading centres of the worship of Adonis, and both on the mainland and in the island the cult long flourished. In Syria a great sanctuary of Aphrodite or Astarte stood at a spot on Mount Lebanon, a day's journey from Byblus.

"The spot was probably Aphaca, at the source of the river Adonis, half-way between Byblus and Baalbec; for at Aphaca there was a famous grove and sanctuary of Astarte which Constantine destroyed on account of the flagitious character of the worship. The site of the temple has been discovered by modern travellers near the miserable village which still bears the name of Afker, at the head of the wild, romantic, wooded gorge of the Adonis."

This is one of the loveliest landscapes in the world, and it was upon this sacred spot that, according to the tradition, Adonis encountered Aphrodite for the first and final time, and here his mangled corpse was consigned to mother earth. "A fairer scene could hardly be imagined for a story of tragic love and death." In ancient times this splendid valley was sacred to Adonis, and broken weather-worn monuments still remain to testify to the piety of his worshippers. One of these records is at Ghineh, where a huge rock is carved with the forms of Adonis and his mistress. Adonis is represented awaiting the onrush of a bear, while Aphrodite is reclining in an attitude of grief.

"Every year, in the belief of his worshippers, Adonis was wounded to death on the mountains, and every year the face of nature itself was dyed with his sacred blood. So year by year the Syrian damsels lamented his untimely fate, while the red anemone, his flower, bloomed among the cedars of Lebanon and the river ran red to the sea, fringing the winding shores of the blue Mediterranean, whenever the wind set inshore, with a sinuous band of crimson."

A sanctuary of Aphrodite at Paphos, in Cyprus, is one of the most celebrated. Whether reared to the worship of that goddess or to older deities, it was of extreme antiquity. In this instance, as in so many others, the names of the gods were changed, but the ideas underlying their worship remained immutable. The image of the goddess was a simple white cone, and the phallic ceremonies which attended her worship distinguish her as the divinity of motherhood and fertility. The sacred image was anointed with oil on certain solemn occasions, and "To this day," as Dr. Frazer says,

"the old custom appears to survive at Paphos, for 'in honor of the Maid of Bethlehem, the peasants of Kuklia anointed lately, and probably still anoint each year, the great corner stones of the ruined temple of the Paphian goddess. As Aphrodite was supplicated once with cryptic rites, so is Mary entreated still by Moslems as well as Christians, with incantations and passing through perforated stones, to remove the curse of barrenness from Cypriote women, or increase the manhood of Cypriote men.' Thus the ancient worship of the goddess of fertility is continued under a different name. Even the name of the old goddess is retained in some parts of the island; for in more than one chapel the Cypriote peasants adore the Mother of Christ under the title of Panaghia Aphroditessa."

The resemblances to the legend of the Nazarene contained in the story of Adonis are certainly suggestive. Whether Jesus is to be regarded as an historical character or not, there can be little doubt that the main outlines of his story have been built up out of similar materials to those that went to fashion the myths and legends of Adonis, Attis, Osiris, and various other Oriental divinities.

T. F. PALMER.

Human Filth.

A MISERABLY cold wind was blowing from the east, a penetrative damp wind, with an unjoyful trait of discovering and assailing all the most susceptible parts of your body. A fortnight's rain had turned the road and pathway into thick mire. Darkness of the quality that miraculously descended from the land of light that people name Paradise, upon Jerusalem on a famous occasion, engulfed us, making the travelling heavier and more wearisome.

We were trudging along bravely, keeping up our spirits with visions of a cheery fire and an appetising supper in a cosy room, within an hour's time, when, on turning a bend, something white seemed to gleam in the grass by the pathside. My companion stumbled against some obstruction, and nearly fell. She gave a startled exclamation of fear, and through me flashed the unpleasant sensation that tells of sudden fright. For a second there was the shock of suspended consciousness. For a second I was a savage in the blackness of a primeval forest. For a second I unconsciously awaited the unknown terror.

In the piercingly brilliant rays of the electric lamp we saw the most pitiable, perhaps the ugliest, sight we have ever seen. Lying outstretched in the wet grass was the body of a woman. From the waist downwards her only garments were a pair of torn, bedraggled skirts and a pair of equally ragged stockings. This paucity of garments, when the night was so bitterly cold, in itself, made us shiver, and feel as if tears would be a relief. Her limbs were splashed with mire, ugly blotches of mud on the white flesh, that burned into the brain, and made us sick. In one place there was a deep, red tinge that meant blood. A beautiful statue defiled would evoke resentment in the least artistic sense; but those unsightly, horrible splashes of mud on the white limbs brought nothing but an all-consuming despair, and a pity as sorrowful as the utter loneliness of her death. Pity and repulsion struggled hard for mastery, and repulsion won; for they were as ugly as death—as repulsive.

The upper portion of her body was wrapped in a wet shawl, half covering her head. Her hair was loose, and damp, and stringy. Round her neck was a circlet of red beads. When I removed the shawl from her head I noticed that the rats and weasels had already feasted on the flesh of her face.

Quickly I put the lamp in my pocket and let the shawl drop over the hideous spectacle; but it was too late; for my companion clutched me nervously by the arm, saying in a choking voice, "Come on! Come on! I feel sick."

Hastily I pulled the poor body into the hedge, arranged the skirts, and laid an overcoat on top for protection against hungry animals. Then we resumed our tramp in silence, each engrossed with our own thoughts, towards home, and all the invaluable comforts home entails.

There was no sleep that night. My mind returned, in time, to a sermon I heard in my boyhood days, a powerful sermon by a powerful preacher. "Mary Magdalene" it was entitled. I remember it well. I remember the solemn stillness that filled the church and acted upon us as the religionist imagines the Holy Spirit would influence us. I remember how the minister gripped his congregation; how he held them by the strength of his words. I remember the emotion lights and shadows that sped rapidly over the faces of my friends. I remember the glowing peroration about the cleansing, redeeming, revitalising blood of Jesus. And I remember my sarcastic comments when the sermon was afterwards applauded. And I am still unrepentant.

With the vision of the lonely woman, lying out there in the cold on the wet grass, before my eyes in the darkness of the room, I was sorry I had not been able to speak more strongly. With the knowledge of the tragedy of her death, the awfulness of her condition, and the hateful position she occupied in Humanity's life, I wished, with a savage longing, I

had been born a Shakespeare, a Shelley, a Voltaire. Unbefriended, uncared-for, dying like a dog left broken-limbed in a ditch, human filth that she was in the estimation of society, yet she represented, for me, the dark side of the cloud of Christianity.

Never needs religion ask for more proof of its monstrous failure while she and such as she live and die. Contrast her existence with the social power of religion. Reckon its secular power by its churches, its priests, its communicants. Gauge the opportunity ever before religion by the wealth, the position, the strength of its friends. Add the centuries of its life. Multiply the total by the omnipotency that religion professes to have as its chief lever, as its principal justification. And the abjectness of its dominion is of such a miserable degree that you cannot even laugh.

What mattered all their sublimely beautiful words, all their glorious perorations, all their throbbing references to a sympathetic Jesus? What mattered their wonderful language, their divine example, their verbal obedience to the commands intrinsic in that example? What mattered their influence, their power, their opportunity? They, these apostles of Christ, even the best of them, spoke plenty.

The people came forth from the pews, and their sensitive hearts were touched with divine pity, and their eyes were moist with the God-given tears of welling sympathy for the woman of whom their Lord and Master was not ashamed. And out in the cold, in the darkness, on the wet grass, the modern Mary Magdalene was lying, her body exposed to the rain and wind, and providing a meal for rats and weasels.

Listen to the pastors' championship of the love of God, to their joy at finding Christ, to the power of Christianity, to its achievements, to the necessity of its existence for the safety of society, and all the rest of the priestly lies. The ocean of oratory around the barnacled rocks of its accomplishments.

The story of Christ Jesus and Mary Magdalene has brought tears to the eyes of thousands, perhaps millions; but Mary still dies, unknown, forsaken, worn out, by the pathside of life. The story has awakened emotions by the million; but never a reasonable endeavor to rid the world of its Magdalenes. Priests and pastors still pray and preach; the secular power of Christianity is still capable, if used, to move society, almost to unimaginable lengths; religion's opportunity still remains; the Christian God, we are informed, still lives; his Son and the Holy Ghost still influence, we are told, the minds and lives of men; and Mary Magdalene still dies in the wet, cold grass by the wayside, her only companions the hungry rats and weasels.

ROBERT MORELAND.

The "Face" of God.

"When, by His Grace, I shall look on His face,
That will be Glory, be Glory for me."
But I think that the question is not out of place:
What sort of a face do you think you will see?
That is all right to sing, but a face is a thing,—
Whoever may own it, though he be by birth
A saint or a sinner, a clod or a king,—
That has special regard to the things of this earth.
Take a nose, for example, a feature that's built
To receive and expel the material air.
Be it straight or *retroussé*, whatever the tilt,
Without breathing or smelling it's no business there.
Now what use would a nose to a spirit be, pray,
Without air to breathe, or an odor to smell?
Yet a face, minus nose, would but scare one away,
And what if the face lacked a mouth, Sir, as well?
But a spirit, you'll say, needs a mouth when it sings.
Yet a mouth without teeth, Sir, would captivate few:
Steaks and chops and sea biscuits and similar things
Are for bodies. With spirits they've nothing to do,
It is open to question if eyes are of use
For the light that the substance called ether conveys;
But what will be said for the eyelids that serve
To protect mortal eyes from the sun's fiercer rays?

And what useless appendages ears would become
With no vibrating matter its sound-waves to send;
For the ear, as we know, from the lobe to the drum,
Has in this useful office its practical end.
Will the Lord be baldheaded and smooth at the chin,
Or will he rejoice in long hair and a beard?
If he favors a "Billygoat" many will grin,
And if "sideboards" are there the effect will be weird.
"Hold! 'tis blasphemy, thus to speak lightly of God."
But the crime is with you, Sir, who sing of his "face."
If the thing as a whole can be thought of at all,
To discuss its formation can be no disgrace.
The fact is, a spirit, whatever it be,
Can have nothing in common with you, Sir, or me;
And there's naught with a face in earth, heaven, or hell,
That doesn't possess, Sir, a belly as well.

H. W. THURLOW.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON FEB. 26.
The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Baker, Barry, Bowman, Cohen, Cowell, Cunningham, Davey, Davidson, Heaford, Judge, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Schindle, Thurlow, Wood, Miss Kough and Miss Stanley.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted. New members were admitted for the Edmonton Branch and the Parent Society.

An application for permission to form a new Branch at St. Helens was received; and the conditions having been complied with, permission was granted.

The Secretary reported as to arrangements for the Summer propaganda.

The usual circular concerning invitations for the Annual Conference was ordered to be sent out.

The Secretary reported the result of investigations in a case of religious persecution in the Midlands, and it was resolved that the Birmingham Branch be thanked for their assistance in the matter.

The Secretary was instructed to arrange for the Half-Yearly Meeting of London members, early in March.

A communication from the International Freethought Bureau was ordered to stand over till next meeting.

Notices of motion for future business were given.

The Secretary reported a highly successful Annual Dinner.

E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

Correspondence.

THE LEAMINGTON MEETING.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A crowded meeting at the Café Royal, Leamington, on Tuesday, February 24, listened to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "God and the Soul in the Light of Science." The lecture was in connection with the Leamington Literary and Philosophical Society, and had been brought about by Mr. F. W. Walsh, one of its members. Mr. Cohen was in very fine form, and he was followed by his audience with the closest attention. Several members of the Society spoke against Mr. Cohen's views, but their objections were effectively replied to by the lecturer. The best of spirit maintained throughout the evening, and, though this was the first lecture of its kind under the auspices of the Society, it should not be the last in Leamington. Mr. Walsh should be very pleased with his effort which brought it about. Among the audience were ladies and gentlemen from Birmingham and Coventry.

J. PARTRIDGE (for F. W. Walsh).

ATHEIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of the 1st inst., you refer to an editorial footnote to an anonymous letter in the *Sentinel*, in which it was stated that "even so distinguished a Free-thinker as the late Charles Bradlaugh never condescended to call himself an Atheist." This was literally wrong, of course, as I perceive upon refreshing my memory by reference to my copy of Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's *Life*; but without entering into details, perhaps you will allow me to say that what was really in my mind was that there was a considerable distinction between the Atheism of Mr. Bradlaugh and that of the correspondent calling himself "Atheist," to whose letter the footnote was appended and that is still my view.

THE EDITOR OF THE "STAFFORDSHIRE SENTINEL."

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. Miller's, 8 Matthias-road, Stoke Newington): Monday, March 9, at 8.30, Business Meeting—To consider appeal *re* W. J. Ramsey and other important matters.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Various Delusions About Life."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.45, J. Rowney, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (North Saloon, City Hall): Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, 12 noon, "Britain and Germany"; 6.30, "The Faith Men Live By."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Cohen, 3, "Religion and the Breeding of a Better Race" 7.30, "God and Morals."

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