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*Some people's minds are like a place of public meeting
—all kinds of opinions appear there in turn, and leave
it just as they found it, empty and open to every comer.*

—ARNOLD TOYNBEE.

There are Others.

It seems one of the most difficult things in the world to get Christians to recognise the existence of others. At first glance this seems an extravagant statement, since one would imagine that the existence of non-Christians was too obvious to be ignored. In a sense, this is so. Christians will admit the fact even while they deplore it. But the great bulk of believers, having made the admission, appear to consider that their duty in this respect has been fully discharged. When they come to consider the value of proposed measures before Parliament, or discuss any subject of social consequence, the argument is conducted, very largely, as though Christians were the only people that needed consideration, and the bearing of legislation on the Christian religion the really important point at issue. Under pressure, it is admitted there are others; but straightway their existence is ignored.

Take, as an illustration, the education question. This is constantly discussed among Christians as though the whole of the problem was how to secure a working agreement between the sects. I admit this is a problem, and if it could be secured there would be little chance of any other claims receiving consideration. Fortunately, the conflicting claims of the sects cannot be adjusted for any length of time, and so others are secured against a larger measure of injustice than would otherwise be the case. But how often does it dawn upon these people that there are others besides Christians to be considered? The modern civilised State is not a Christian State in any genuine sense. It is made up of all sorts of religious believers, with all sorts of creeds, and a large and growing number of unbelievers. And you cannot possibly satisfy sectarian demands for privileged treatment without inflicting an injustice upon those who are outside the sects. For, in the modern State, even the Christian believers, as a whole, represent nothing but a sect. A large one, maybe, but still a sect. This is a consideration that few Christians bear steadily in mind.

It is the same with the Sunday question. Christians demand, and feel morally injured if the demand is not granted, that nothing shall be done on that day that "outrages" the feelings of believers. They do not say nowadays that you must go to church, but they do say that you must do nothing on that day that hurts their feelings. It is exactly the same with Sunday concerts, Sunday excursions, and Sunday picture shows. No one should be allowed to say or do anything that displeases the Christian. He lives under the stupid delusion that the modern State is a Christian society that must be controlled in strict accordance with what he calls Christian principles. He does not always say this in so many words, but the idea is there all the same. He does not realise that the only rational basis for the modern State is to ignore these sectarian differences and

deal with people on the basis of a common social life. He forgets, in short, that there are others.

In this matter, the Christian suffers from a very bad heredity. He has had it all his own way for so long, that he naturally finds it difficult to realise any radical change in the situation. He is in the position of a spoilt child who has never known what it is to have a wish refused, and who has seen the whole household arranged to suit his whims. The average Christian is not living in the modern State at all. Mentally, he is still living in the Middle Ages, when society was deliberately organised, so far as was possible, with reference to the maintenance of Christian doctrine, however much the doctrines might change from time to time. He simply cannot understand that society is, with increasing rapidity, freeing itself from the controlling influence of religious ideas. He not only continues to discuss social movements from the point of view of whether they hinder or promote the dissemination of religious beliefs, but he expects others generally to take up the same attitude. The discovery by an infant of its own toes, in all probability, initiates a very profound psychological revolution. But it is a trifling affair compared with the one that will be worked when Christians genuinely appreciate the existence in the State of others besides themselves.

The need for this revolution is shown very curiously, but very plainly, in the course of a recent article in the *Inquirer* on the Blasphemy Laws. The *Inquirer* has on several occasions spoken in favor of the repeal of these laws, but nearly always as though the decisive consideration was a religious one. In the present article, after expressing its dislike of the Blasphemy Laws, it points to the "injury which they do to the cause of religion," regrets that the agitation should be left largely in the hands of freelances and Freethinkers," and asserts, "There is nothing in the least hostile to Christianity in the movement for the repeal, and it will be unfortunate if the impression is created in the public mind that what is demanded is greater liberty to attack the faith of other people in blunt and disagreeable language."

These strike one as rather poor reasons for supporting an excellent cause, and though doubtless they will appeal with some force to religious people, the strength of their appeal is derived from the inability of Christians to recognise the legitimate claims of non-Christians. Is it really a vital question whether the operation of the Blasphemy Laws injure religion or not? Would the *Inquirer* support prosecutions for blasphemy if they helped religion? Once upon a time, they unquestionably did this. In a society where religious belief is general and uniform, it can hardly be doubted that the suppression of anti-religious opinion helps to preserve and perpetuate religion. Persecution can accomplish its end if it can be made effective enough. It may work greater evil in other directions, but it can do, and has done, time after time, all that it aimed at doing. Assuming, then, that all attacks on Christian belief could be crushed out by persecution, would the *Inquirer* support it? If it would not, does it matter whether these laws injure religion or not? It is quite sufficient that they are unjust, that even though they benefit religion they strike at the higher interests of the whole of society. And their

removal is demanded on the ground that in the modern State they are inevitably unjust and fundamentally vicious.

Why should it be unfortunate if the public—the Christian public, of course—get the impression that the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws will mean greater liberty in attacking religion, even in “blunt and disagreeable language”? It is quite a matter of taste whether language is disagreeable; and *blunt* speech is anything but a vice. Why should the faith of the Christian not be as open to attack as one's opinion concerning vaccination or the land laws? If the Christian will only awaken to the fact of others being in the world, he will realise that these others have the same right to attack him that he has to attack them. The demand of any believer that laws such as the Blasphemy Laws shall be maintained because their removal would make attacks on religion easier is a piece of sheer impertinence. If religion is attacked, it must depend for defence upon the weapons that every threatened opinion has to depend upon. But non-Christians do not now exist in virtue of the gracious kindness of Christians, and they decline to be muzzled in order to gratify the egotism and cowardice of believers.

To be quite frank, Freethinkers do want greater liberty to attack religious opinion—not merely legal liberty, but social liberty. What is the use of liberty if it does not include the right to attack—within limits recognised by all and *imposed upon all*—anything that we consider untrue or dangerous? Truth is always attacking. Justice is always attacking. There is no good done in the world without attack. And we object to special limitations being imposed upon Freethinkers when they choose to attack religion. We object to the policeman being turned into a theological expert, or a judge in first instance, as to what constitutes profane or blasphemous language. When the Catholic Church punished people for blasphemy, it had at least the dignity and sense to bring the offender before a court of ecclesiastics who might be considered experts on the subject. If the charge was damnable, the procedure was dignified. But it never condescended to the ridiculous measure of calling in the watchman or the man-at-arms to inquire whether his chaste ears had been affronted by the language used. Why, if Christians were only moderately endowed with a sense of humor, the Blasphemy Laws would not need repealing—they would be laughed out of existence.

What the Christian must be brought to realise is that we are not living in the thirteenth, or even in the seventeenth, century. We are in the twentieth century, and the conscious basis of the State is no longer what it was in the Middle Ages. Society is no longer made up of believers, and no one expects that it ever will be made up of believers. The existence of all sorts of opinion is not merely regarded as inevitable; it is accepted as something that is beneficial to the State. Uniformity of religious belief is as impossible in modern society as it is undesirable; and by mere social growth the position of religion has changed from one of paramount importance to a matter of purely private opinion. As an opinion, it can lay no greater claim to special treatment than opinion in general. If attacked, it must defend itself as it best can; but it is justified neither in resenting attack nor in calling in the aid of the policeman to repel it.

There are others. That is the immediate lesson for the Christian to learn. The modern State is not Christian. It is not based upon Christianity; it does not aim at the realisation of Christian ideals. The Christian is a member of the State. So is the Jew, so is the Mohammedan, so is the Atheist, so are scores of others. The Christian is no longer cock of the roost. He is but one of many. It may be disturbing to his egotism to face the fact; but face it he must, sooner or later. And when he does face it, if he does not become a better Christian in consequence, he will at least be a better man and a more profitable citizen.

C. COHEN.

Good Friday.

BOTH historically and mythologically Friday is an eminently interesting day. The Scandinavians regarded it as the luckiest day of the week. Such it turned out to be on six of the greatest occasions in the life of the illustrious discoverer, Columbus, the most wonderful of which was the discovery of the American continent on Friday, June 19, 1494. It was on a Friday that the famous battle of Bunker's Hill was fought; and it was on a Friday that John Adams made the motion that the United States were and ought to be independent. It was on a Friday that the *Great Eastern* sailed from Valencia, and it was on a Friday that she landed in safety with the cable at Heart's Content, Newfoundland.

It was on a Friday, mythology tells us, that Adam was created; on a Friday that, alas, he partook of the forbidden fruit, thereby bringing “death into the world, and all our woe, with loss of Eden”; and it was on a Friday that he died. Friday is a mythological term, signifying the day consecrated to the goddess Freya, or Frigga, a Scandinavian divinity of the character of the Roman Venus. Frigga was the wife of Odin, and the mother of Balder and other gods. She was worshiped as the goddess of fruitfulness and sexual love. Consequently her day was looked upon as a lucky one. But the moment we come to Christian mythology Friday becomes an unlucky day. In the Catholic Church, the Greek Church, and the Anglican Church it is a day of abstinence and mourning, in memory of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. It used to be the day commonly selected for the execution of criminals, and was in consequence often called “the hangman's day.”

“But once on a Friday ('tis ever they say)
A day when misfortune is aptest to fall.”

A man is styled “Friday-faced” because he is dejected and melancholy. Because Jesus is believed to have suffered a violent death on a Friday, every Friday is to be devoted more or less to fasting and lugubrious meditation.

It naturally follows, therefore, that Good Friday is pre-eminently a day of profound and universal grief. The Anglo-Saxons and Danes called it Long or Great Friday, and we read that “housel [eucharist] ought not to be hallowed on Long Friday, because Christ suffered for us on that day.” From the fourth century the prohibition of communion became common. For a time it was customary in Spain to close the churches altogether as a sign of mourning; but in the seventh century the prohibition was condemned by the Council of Toledo. The Catholic Church has always insisted upon a specially rigorous fast on Good Friday. During the celebrations everything is draped in black, the officiating clergy not excepted. Even in Lutheran churches black is the universal color. The Church of England has a three hours' continuous service, during which the so-called “last seven words” are read and commented upon; and a tolerant, compassionate spirit seems to prevail. In one of the Collects this remarkable petition occurs:—

“Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.”

O the cruel irony and mockery of it all! In one form or another that petition has been going up to a deaf and silent heaven for many long centuries, and yet Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics are as far from conversion to-day as ever, if not much farther. This is the day of the suffering Savior of the world. All the week he has been slowly and wearily treading the Sorrowful Way, and to-day it has landed him upon the cross of shame, and his suffering is so extreme that it drives him to the heartbreaking con-

clusion that his Father in heaven has utterly forsaken him. Why was all this cruel suffering inflicted upon him who never did any wrong? Why did the Father desert the Son with whom he was declared to be always well pleased? It all happened to him, we are confidently assured by both Bible and Church, because he represented us; because, though he knew no sin, he was yet made to be sin for us; in other words, because he was earning, through obedience and suffering that cost him his life, the right and the power to be the Redeemer of a lost and ruined world. Well, what proof is there that the colossal sum-total of tragic suffering was accepted by Heaven as an adequate propitiation for the sins of the whole world, or as the supreme pledge of his redemption of humanity? The certain fact of his resurrection some thirty-five hours later, answers Paul. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4).

Now, the doctrine of the Cross is fully before us. Let us look at it from several points of view. In the first place, although the story of crucifixion is very dramatically told, the Gospels cannot be pronounced to be perfect works of art. They represent Jesus as solemnly foretelling, in clearest language, and repeatedly for many months, the exact nature of the approaching end, which was not going to be an end, but only a new beginning, merely the gate into a larger and infinitely more efficacious and glorious ministry. And yet when the end did come the disciples are described as being in a state of the utmost despair, as if they had never heard their Master's confident prediction of his speedy resurrection. This is one evidence that the Gospels are not historical documents. According to one account they all forsook him and fled in his hour of direst need, following the example of his Father. In the second place, if the Church verily believes her own doctrine of the Cross, what canting hypocrisy it is, on her part, to mourn on Good Friday. If it became God the Father, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," why should the sons who are being brought unto glory hang down their heads and weep on this the greatest and grandest day in all history? Is it not an unmistakable sign that the Church does not truly believe her own doctrine? Thirdly, if the doctrine of the Cross is true, how can you account for the incontestable fact that the alleged Spirit of the Cross has completely failed to win a dominant position in the so-called Christian world? Europe is governed to-day, not by the spirit of love, but by stern physical force. We sometimes hear London boasted of as the most thoroughly Christian city in the world, but London is kept in order from day to day, not by the love of God, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," but by the police, who never leave our streets, night or day, and who never venture out on duty without weapons of defence and attack. The same thing is true of Edinburgh, which is frequently spoken of as the city of churches. This is the rule throughout Christian England, to which there is not even one exception. What brazen mockery it must be, then, to claim Jesus Christ as "our Lord, who ever liveth and reigneth" with the Father and the Holy Spirit, "one God, world without end."

Is it not a reasonable, necessary, even inevitable, inference from the existing conditions of life in Christendom that Good Friday and Easter Sunday are of a purely mythological character, and that Christianity, resting upon the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Resurrection, is as mythological as any Pagan cult it ever succeeded in forcibly crushing out of existence? Every return of the sun, every fresh advent of Spring, is a beautiful and inspiring spectacle, and as we witness it year after year we do well to feel joyous and jubilant; but the idea that individual and social salvation can come by mystic union with a dying and resurrected Savior-God is so visionary, so chimerical, and so fantastic that one

cannot but be amazed at its survival in its Christian form. It is highly amusing to read present-day discourses upon "The Triumphs of the Cross" when the only things visible to the eye of reason are "The Glaring Failures of the Cross." It is perfectly true that Christianity did succeed in establishing itself in Europe; but its success, its so-called triumph, was due to the fact that the secular power was on its side and gave it the free use of its sword. The triumphs of the Cross have always been the triumphs of physical force. It has never reconstructed social life. It has ever winked at, sometimes even formally encouraged, injustice, the inequality of the sexes, the sovereignty of wealth at the expense of the poor, and class divisions and antagonisms. The truth of that statement is abundantly proved by the very fact that such social wrongs exist at this moment. It is well known that Charlemagne was a great Christian Emperor who flourished some four centuries after Christianity had become the State religion; but the administration of justice in his reign was a horrible travesty of justice. The plaintiff and defendant, in each case, were requested to cross their arms upon their breasts, and the verdict went to him who could hold out the longest. Charlemagne was a great conqueror, who gave the conquered the altogether delightful choice of either becoming Christians or being put to death. To those who read history dispassionately and impartially the establishment of the "Holy Roman Empire" under this monarch was one of the darkest deeds ever perpetrated, for it enabled Church and State to play into each other's hand in the most wicked manner imaginable.

Good Friday thus stands condemned as the date on which there came into being, according to the theologians, a new religion in which was revealed the infinite love of a heavenly Father, but which in its influence upon the world engendered suspicion, jealousy, and hatred, and has caused more bitter strifes and brutal wars than all other agencies put together, but which at last, we rejoice to know, is gradually taking its departure.

J. T. LLOYD.

Organisms Antagonistic to Health.—II.

(Concluded from p. 221.)

THE general conditions that govern the relationship of bacteria to diphtheria are substantially those that apply to all other diseases of bacterial origin. The disease germs invade the body, reproduce themselves, and evolve toxins. Anti-toxins and other opposing substances battle with the toxins, and the patient is restored to health. So far, however, in very few instances have disease-controlling substances of outside origin been discovered which may be injected into the tissues for the prevention or cure of human ailments.

All known anti-bacterial products are specific. That is to say, the anti-toxin of diphtheria, for example, has no preventive or remedial effect on any other disease. Animals into whose bodies the poisons of tetanus, or, as it is commonly termed, lockjaw, have been injected, manufacture the anti-toxin of tetanus and no other.

The problem of immunity to disease is a very instructive one. Some subjects never contract certain diseases however frequently they may be exposed to infection; and it is only in rare instances that we meet with patients suffering a second time from the same disease. Again, grown people seldom contract those complaints that commonly affect children. This absence of susceptibility to disease is what is meant by immunity. And this phenomenon may be usefully considered under two heads—that which is natural and that which is acquired.

Micro-organisms of one kind or another appear to be present in every human or other animal body. Natural immunity to disease, however, is much more

general than susceptibility. The reason is not far to seek. Unless the invading germs discover a favorable environment, they fail to develop their malignant powers. There is abundant evidence for the view that bacteria generate disease in a small percentage only of the individuals they attack. Proof positive exists that the germs of pneumonia and other maladies are to be found in the bodies of those who betray no signs of disease. Several ascertained causes account for this. Pathogenic germs are being constantly devoured by the white cells of the lymph and blood; soluble substances present in the blood oppose themselves to bacterial injury; anti-septic body conditions check bacterial growth; the poisonous products of bacteria are rendered impotent for ill by the anti-toxins which the cells of the healthy animal body secrete. The part performed by these four valuable physiological processes varies widely with different individuals. Broadly considered, they all reach their highest state of efficiency when our minds and bodies are in a thoroughly healthy state. Conversely, they are least efficient when the mental and physical powers are depressed. Physicians testify to this in the case of many maladies. In dealing with the baneful tubercular diseases, it is regarded as of the utmost importance to aim at the restoration of the general well-being of the body if tuberculosis is to be cured or prevented.

But where ideal physiological conditions are lacking, a state of affairs which commonly exists, protective inoculation has proved extremely serviceable. The great Pasteur discovered that the toxins of cattle anthrax and chicken cholera, when they are developed in pure cultures in test tubes, tend to become weaker as the cultures grow older. Other means have since been devised by science through which it is possible to lessen the virulence of bacterial toxins. Prolonged investigations have proved that if weak toxins are first injected into the system, there is merely a mild attack of the malady. Then if toxins of steadily increasing strength are successively introduced into the animal body, the organism becomes more and more immune to the disease, until it is ultimately invulnerable to all further attack.

There is every prospect of the thoroughly successful application of the above principle to typhoid in the near future. The cholera so fatal to swine and the distemper so mortal to dogs, are diseases which are being treated by the same process, and let us hope that in the end much valuable food will be saved, and thousands of our faithful and intelligent canine companions will be spared a premature death.

It is of some interest to know that a few simple precautions may avert the unspeakable woes to which disease germs so frequently give rise. In the greater number of instances the bacteria enter the alimentary canal with food and water, they find their way into the breathing organs, are introduced into the blood through insect punctures, or secure an opening into wounds.

Asiatic cholera and typhoid fever are intestinal disorders generated by germs which are spread by excrement. Insect activity, aided by ill-regulated drainage, cause the contamination of nutritious matters, such as milk, fruits and vegetables, and oysters. Moreover, that indispensable necessity to health and cleanliness—drinking-water—is liable in such circumstances to constant contamination. Where these diseases prevail, every drop of water should be boiled, and all foods, including fruits and salads, should be cooked. The menacing powers of the dingy milk vessels are by no means inconsiderable.

Turning to the risk of infection through the organs of respiration, we find that tubercular affections are salient examples of these. Tubercle bacilli enter the lungs in many ways, and anything that encourages the dirty habit of indiscriminate spitting, slobbering, the fly pest, impure air, doubtful milk, and even the insane passion for draughty apartments is highly favorable to the dissemination

of this infernal disease—a disease which has affected and proved fatal to some of the brightest intellects of the human race.

The natural healthy healing of wounds is absolutely dependent upon the absence of bacteria or the presence of some powerful anti-toxin. Any serious cut demands medical attention, and this, above all, in the case of those whose general health is in any way undermined. The use of surgically clean bandages and instruments is an all-essential condition if the very serious danger of lockjaw or septicæmia (blood-poisoning) is to be avoided. The inflammation of any wound, great or small, is a certain sign of bacterial activity.

Malaria is a disease of animal origin, which, in its worst forms, has long been one of the greatest scourges to mankind. Many valuable territories of wide extent have remained outside the pale of civilisation owing to its death-dealing powers. Malaria remained a practical mystery until the early 'eighties, when a protozoan parasite was detected in red blood corpuscles. From the earliest times malaria had been universally attributed to the poisonous vapors or miasma which haunted swamps and marshes. The word "malaria" itself means "bad air." In 1897, however, a British army officer, the now world-famous Sir Ronald Ross—an excellent Freethinker, by the way—demonstrated that the germs of malaria develop in the stomachs of mosquitoes which have absorbed the blood of malarial fever patients. In the following year, other scientists proved that mosquitoes, which suck the blood of diseased subjects, transmit the malarial parasites in drawing the blood of persons free from the malady. It has since been positively proved that the anopheles mosquito is the carrier of malaria, and this has led to a crusade of extermination against these offending insects.

Another protozoan disease is that horrible African disorder, the well-known sleeping-sickness, which has proved fatal to more than half-a-million natives of the Congo during the past dozen years. Sleeping sickness is caused by—

"a parasitic protozoan which is injected into the human blood-plasma by the bite of a peculiar African fly. The parasite swims freely in blood-plasma. Many experts on parasitic diseases are now engaged in studying the sleeping-sickness; but so far no satisfactory remedy has been discovered. It is spreading rapidly, and has become one of the greatest problems in Africa."

Other derangements, the protozoan genesis of which, although practically certain, so far lack conclusive proof, are yellow fever, scarlet fever, hydrophobia, and smallpox. In the case of yellow fever, however, it has been demonstrated that one of the various mosquitoes is concerned with the transmission of the undiscovered disease germ. The mosquito has, in consequence, been condemned, and the war of extermination waged against it has very materially minimized the death-rate from yellow fever both in Cuba and Panama.

The ubiquitous "harmless" house fly is a notorious disseminator of disease. It enters into every nook and cranny, and nothing is sacred to it. The insect is as partial to the refuse-heap as to the sugar-box, and wherever it wanders it carries the seeds of disease and death. Bacteriological science has shown the imperative need of a war to the point of extinction against the noxious creature. Experiment proves that if a fly is made to move across a sterile gelatin plate, it leaves along its line of march innumerable bacteria which it has gathered during its previous visit to the dunghill or other putrefying mass:—

"Now, if a fly walks on sewage containing germs of typhoid or of other intestinal diseases, or on sputum from a tuberculous patient, and later on walks on food or on dishes ready to be used for food or drinking-water, it may leave in its tracks dangerous bacteria, which may be taken into the body with the food or water, and then cause disease. It is obvious that in this way a single house fly may be a very dangerous animal."*

* Bigelow, *Introduction to Biology*, p. 285.

The importance of sanitary dustbins, good drainage, and the absence of decomposing substances of all kinds in the vicinity of human habitations cannot be too urgently insisted on. The removal of the favorite breeding-place of flies is of as much consequence to us, as the destruction of mosquito-breeding spots has been to areas formerly decimated by tropical diseases.

And before leaving this filth-distributing and disease-creating insect, it will be well to remark that it is now definitely known that the biting stable fly is guilty of transmitting the germs of infantile paralysis.

Possibly the most disgusting of all known parasites is the tapeworm. All these loathsome creatures, and very many species are known to science, take up their abode in the alimentary canal of man and other animals. Destitute of mouth or digestive organs, they absorb through their integument the digested food of the organism on which they prey. The tapeworm's body is ribbon-like in form, is divided into segments, and narrows towards the head, which is rounded and provided with hooks and suckers. These last appendages enable the parasite to cling securely to the lining of the intestine.

Each of the larger posterior segments—those nearer the rectum of the animal host—has a complete bi-sexual reproductive system. After each of these reproductive segments has undergone the process of self-fertilisation, the segments which lie nearest the orifice of the animal they inhabit become swollen with ripe eggs. The mature segments now separate from the parent body, and are discharged with the excrement of their host. As the old segments drop off and are carried away, new ones are being formed. In the case of the human tapeworm, should the ripe segment happen to alight on herbage cropped by cattle, or infest the food of pigs, it secures an easy entrance into their stomachs, the digestive juices of which dissolve its outer covering and liberate the embryo tapeworm. Being now at liberty, it bores its way into the flesh of these animals and becomes encysted.

If underdone pork or half-raw beef be eaten by man, there is thus a risk of the encysted bladderworm attaching itself to the intestine, and there developing into an adult tapeworm. The most terrible of the roundworms is the trichina, and if pork infested with this parasite is used as food, the dangers are very serious indeed. In a single German city in 1884, the flesh of one pig infested 364 people, of whom 57 died within a month.

The foregoing description of the life-cycle of tapeworms affecting man is equally true of tapeworms in general. Two hosts are necessary, one for the adult tapeworm and one for the succeeding bladderworm stage. The early, or bladderworm, period of the tapeworm of gulls is passed in earthworms; that of cats in rats and mice. There is a large human tapeworm in Asia which goes through its first stage in the bodies of certain fishes.

The dog is a great sufferer from tapeworms, and one of the commonest of these pests (*Tænia canurius*) infests the intestines of the animal in its mature stage. The embryonic form of this parasite has been found in the brain of the sheep, occasionally in that of cattle, and more rarely in that of the horse. Another parasite passes its cystic stage in the bodies of hares and rabbits, which naturally form part of the food of the dog, and this tapeworm reaches maturity in that animal's intestines. As in the cases instanced above, the segments of the worm are expelled with the fæces, and the eggs they contain fall on the herbage, which is eaten by the rabbits and hares. But probably the most remarkable parasitic biography is that of a small, but long cucumber-shaped, tapeworm, the segments of which, when ripe, escape from the dog's intestines and scatter their ova upon the animal's skin. The eggs are there eaten by the dog louse or the dog flea, in whose bodies the ova are hatched and develop into cysts. The fleas and lice irritate the dog, who, in hunting for them with tongue and teeth, is apt to

swallow some of them. The eggs in their bodies are then hatched in the dog's interior, and soon reach the mature form. So that we see that the wants of the tapeworms are better provided for than the fall of the sparrows.

T. F. PALMER.

Omar Khayyam.

"Golden Eastern lay
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well,
A planet equal to the sun
Which cast it, that large infidel,
Your Omar."

—TENNYSON.

THAT large Infidel!

An advertisement of the Young People's League connected with St. James's Congregational Church, Newcastle, announcing "An Evening with Omar Khayyam," with the additional attraction of a song cycle, "In a Persian Garden"—a selection of the quatrains to be rendered by a quartette—was sufficiently alluring to tempt me into the religious atmosphere of a church meeting. I was curious also to see how the philosophy of old Omar would be received in such a quarter, and how it would be treated by a Christian speaker. The reflections of the Persian poet on life and destiny, so utterly at variance with Christian thought and tradition, if presented in all their naked significance, would surely shock the religious susceptibilities of even a Congregational audience. Or so I thought. But one never knows. The old Presbyterian church of my childhood was recently the scene of an amateur theatrical performance—notwithstanding that the Westminster Confession forbids stage-plays as a breach of the seventh commandment, a sin in the same category as adultery. Could it be that these Congregationalists, also forsaking their one-time belief in heaven, were going to give god-speed to the Caravan starting for the Dawn of Nothing?

The evening's program was arranged by a Mr. Arthur Lambert, well known in local musical circles, and a member of the said church. In his introductory lecture, before the appearance of the quartette, Mr. Lambert said it would be his purpose, the better to enable them to appreciate the music that was to follow, to try and create something of an Oriental atmosphere. To that end he had been drinking black coffee and smoking Turkish cigarettes all the day. And everything seemed favorable to the lecturer's object: the fine commanding presence of the speaker, a good audience, a splendid lecture-hall, a desirable platform arrangement, and a subject worthy of the occasion. But somehow the Oriental atmosphere was not forthcoming. The few bald facts connected with the poet's life and Fitzgerald's popular translation of the Rubaiyat which he presented, failed to conjure up the faintest trace of an Eastern environment. Indeed, it was not long before one realised that the philosophy of Omar Khayyam was beyond the speaker's mental grasp. Omar's verses, he said, had a peculiar fascination for him; but it was apparent that it was not the sentiments or ideas of the poem that charmed him; it seemed rather that fatal kind of fascination produced on the mind by the repetition of phrases like "Punch, brothers, Punch." And when the speaker rather pityingly apologised for the heresies of Omar, by declaring that if the Persian's search for God was unavailing, the search itself was to his credit, inasmuch that many people at the present day never even troubled to seek for him, it was evident that his point of view was a serious hindrance to his understanding of the old Pagan. The Christian apologist is always assuming that every philosopher in the world is in search of the little tribal Deity of the Jews, whom he has been graciously pleased to adopt as his own pet idol. He is unable to realise that a thinking person may meditate on the deeper things of life without reference to his theistic beliefs; and it is this limitation which prevents him from comprehending a wider outlook than his own.

Perhaps the most objectionable feature of the address was the statement that it was permissible for each individual to read into the text his own particular views, no matter how much at variance, apparently, they might be with its obvious meaning. This ingenious method of interpretation might, indeed, cause some surprise, if we did not know that it is the usual Christian method of explaining away views and opinions with which they disagree. A French translator of the Rubaiyat, Mons. Nicholas, in order to hide the pronounced irreligious opinions of Omar, substituted for the words "wine" and "winebearer," the terms "Dieu" and "La Divinity"; although he exposed his own verbal jugglery by stating, in his notes, that whatever be the nature of the wine that Hafis drank and sang of, it was the veritable juice of the grape that Omar used. It was a strange method of exegesis that could extract a divine meaning from the following:—

"Ah! take heed to stay me with the wine cup, and make this amber face like a ruby. Wash me when I die with wine, and out of the wood of the vine make the planks of my coffin."

As a friend of mine very neatly puts it, in his booklet, *Omar, the Tentmaker*: "It was a prodigious stretch of the imagination that drew a theological inference from that quatrain."

A Mrs. Cadell, too, an Englishwoman, attempted to revise the Rubaiyat on the plea that it was "too unbelieving." In the preface to her booklet she says: "Omar was a person of varying moods, strong feelings, and remarkable boldness; but he had some sort of belief at bottom"—meaning that he had some sort of belief in a Deity or the supernatural. In one quatrain she makes Omar say:—

"Oh! Khayyam, this thy body is a tent.
Death, the tent pitcher, strikes this tent of thine
For life's next stage, whence thy soul hence must roam."

And thus the words of this "large infidel," by Mrs. Cadell and other Christian pietists, are twisted and distorted, interpreted, translated, and explained, to mean anything or everything but what the text plainly indicates. Showing that whatever virtues the Christian religion may have emphasised, intellectual honesty is not one of them. One has only to put some of Omar's verses side by side with Christian teaching to see how utterly irreconcilable the two are. Take, for instance, the believing suppliant looking up into the heavens and crying,

"Our Father who art in Heaven.....
Give ——."

and then listen to old Omar's reply to all such futile prayer:—

"that inverted Bowl we call the sky,
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to It for help—for It
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I."

Again, Christian saints and sages have invented for us pictures of the felicities of heaven and of the tortures of the damned in hell; they have taught us how to make the best of both worlds; they have essayed to unravel the knots of human death and fate, and professed to possess the key to futurity and be able to pierce the Veil of the Hereafter. Omar summarily dismisses all such pretensions:—

"Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two worlds so learnedly, are thrust
Like foolish prophets forth; their words to scorn
Are scattered, and their mouths are stopt with dust."

Omar's oft-repeated praise of the Wine-cup stamps him as an unbeliever in religion. Not that the Christian has any quarrel with him on that score—or did not have, until the rise of the modern temperance movement. But the Koran strictly forbids alcoholic intemperance, and this prohibition he satirises as follows:—

"I drink wine and mine enemies from left to right say, 'Do not drink wine, for wine is the foe of religion.' When I heard that wine was the foe of religion, I said, 'By Allah! let me drink the foe's blood, for that is lawful.'"

When we remember that in chapter two of the Koran it is written that all foes to Islam may be slain with

impunity, the quality of the sarcasm is seen to be simply superlative. Von Hammer was justified in calling Omar "A Freethinker." But it is more than probable that his lavish praise of wine is purely iconoclastic.

Mr. Lambert, in the early part of his address, illustrated the general ignorance of the Persian poet by the following story. A commercial traveller of literary bent had recently taken two grocers in the neighborhood, who were brothers, out to dinner. In the course of the meal he asked how they liked Omar Khayyam? Said the younger of the two: "I think I like Chianti better." On the way home, the elder took his younger brother severely to task for his display of ignorance. "Whenever you are in any doubt about a subject like that," he said, "you should be careful not to say anything definite so as to give yourself away. Omar Khayyam is not a wine—it's a cheese!"

Which reminds me that the gentleman who seconded the vote of thanks at the end of the meeting must also have been a grocer, as his knowledge of Omar Khayyam was as newly acquired as the pitman's of the Crucifixion. This collier, on the way home from work, met a peddling Jew, whom he very soundly thrashed. "What you do that for?" said the astonished Hebrew. "Well, wasn't it you Jews that killed Jesus Christ?" "My dear fellow, that was two thousand years ago." "Never mind," said the pitman, unabashed, "A'w only heard about it yisterday." And so the seconder of the vote of thanks, who professed his ignorance of what the lecturer had called one of the world's poetic gems, only appeared to have heard of old Omar that night for the first time.

Whether this gentleman in particular, or the audience in general, were much the wiser as the result of the meeting respecting the profound philosophy of Omar, may reasonably be doubted. A Christian apologist makes but a poor expositor of the Rubaiyat. As we left the meeting, the lady who accompanied me said she thought an evening with Omar Khayyam was much better spent "beneath the Bough" or at the fireside. And I thought so too.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Acid Drops.

According to the orthodox creed, Easter is the anniversary of a judicial murder. Judging by all the circumstances surrounding it, it might be the anniversary of a wedding. Excursions by road, river, and rail are advertised wholesale. The common salutation of friends is, "Going away for Easter?" Given fine weather, the beauty spots around London will be crowded with thousands of holiday-makers solely bent on enjoying themselves. Hardly one in the whole lot will think of the holiday as in any way connected with the death of the Son of God for the sake of their sins. Sympathetic souls, if they happen to hear anyone piling on the agony about the agony and death of "our Lord," may, like the old lady in the story, reflect that it happened a long while ago, and hope that it is not true. But the vast majority won't care a brass button whether it is true or not. Easter is a holiday for them, and nothing else matters.

Easter is not the anniversary of an historic event in the way that June 18 is the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. It is a piece of very ancient world-wide mythology and was in existence before Jesus was ever heard of. Its date is avowedly fixed by the spring equinox, and this was a period of rejoicing among all the nations of the ancient world. Attis, Adonis, Osiris, Dionysus, all had, like Jesus, their death and resurrection symbolised at the spring festival. Easter has nothing whatever to do with the resurrection of a man, but it has a deal to do with the nature festival celebrating the resurrection of nature after the apparent death of winter. All that the Christian Church did here was to take the old myth and attach it to a supposed historical personage. Take Easter for what the Churches say it is, and an educated man is either disgusted or amused. Take it for what we know it to be, and we can appreciate its significance to primitive peoples, and still utilise it as a piece of poetic imagery now that its mythological significance has passed away.

The Christian Endeavor Union of Washington, U.S.A., has founded a society for the prevention of Easter desecration. It is objected that Americans utilise the "sacred season" as an occasion for displaying fashionable dress. The members of the new society pledge themselves not to wear any new clothes from Palm Sunday until after Easter. This is self-sacrifice beyond question. But why not revive the good old religious practice of doing without clothes altogether; or, at least, going without a wash?

The Bishop of London's Bill, introduced in the House of Lords last week, is pure Sabbatarianism, with the usual addition of personal tyranny that accompanies such measures. It proposes not only to still further limit the hours during which publichouses are to be opened on Sunday, but provides that the licensing justices may attach any conditions they see fit to the renewal of a licence. It also gives these same justices the power to issue a "general order" closing all the publichouses in a district during the whole of Sunday. No one but a religious "reformer" or a fool would dream of favoring proposals of this kind. His idea of reform is invariably that of forcing other people to act so as to please him. So far as we are concerned, the publichouses might be closed altogether without causing us any personal discomfort; but at present selling drink is a legitimate business, and there is no justification for placing them at the mercy of religious bigotry. If our legislators were stupid enough to make this Bill law, it would mean another sacrifice of personal liberty to the tyrannical spirit of Sabbatarianism.

The combined stupidity and injustice of the Blasphemy Laws could not be better exhibited than is done, quite unconsciously, in a leaflet that has been written and is being circulated in favor of their retention. We are told that the law only interferes in a case of blasphemy "in order to prevent a disturbance of the peace," because "blasphemous preaching and writing has led, and may lead, to dangerous outbreaks of fanaticism." So the real trouble is, evidently, not the "blasphemer," but fanatical people who are neither level-headed enough nor civilised enough to hear their opinions assailed. One would think that the real cure for this state of things would be to take hold of these ignorant and fanatical people and teach them better manners. The writer of the leaflet evidently thinks they deserve special protection, if not patronage. His defence of the laws is really an attack on religious believers. The sum of his argument is this: If religious people were all cool and level-headed there would be no need for Blasphemy Laws. But, he says, we are not that. We are hot-headed, we easily become brutal, we lose our tempers, we easily become fanatical, and unless the State stops people "blaspheming" we are bound to misbehave ourselves. Usually we aim at suppressing the lower in the interests of the higher. Here the only argument found in favor of the Blasphemy Laws involves the suppression of the higher in the interest of the lower. The "blasphemer" must be suppressed in order that the ignorant fanatic may flourish. It is not we who say this. It is the Christians themselves who say so.

The cocksureness of the religious mind is becoming modified. The *Guardian* says, "We greatly doubt whether the collective mind of our race would desire for itself a perpetuity of life on this planet, except under conditions widely different from any that are likely to obtain." What of the credo, "I believe in the resurrection of the body"?

We are pleased to find the *Baptist Times* approving the advice of an American writer who warns us that there has been too much dwelling of late on vice, and that no nation is ever made better or healthier by such means. This is exactly what we have pointed out when dealing with writers like Mr. Harold Begbie, preachers like Rev. F. B. Meyer, and organisations like the Salvation Army. These people and parties have of late gone in for a perfect carnival of exaggeration and deliberate lying concerning the amount of vice in our midst. They have set thousands of amateurs prowling round in search of vice of one sort or another, who have developed in turn a Munchausen-like aptitude for narrative, and a credulity that would have made Tertullian green with envy. "Educationally," says the *Baptist Times*, "it is a mistake to be always looking at the dark side of life." Of course it is. Life is not all dark side, and a healthy vision sees life whole. But it is worth noting that those who have served most powerfully to demoralise the public mind of late have been Christian preachers and writers.

From the New York *Truthseeker* we see that Police-Lieut. Becker, who was recently convicted and sentenced to death

for murder and "graft," has spent the time pending his appeal in religious meditation. Becker is a staunch Roman Catholic, and the only event in his life he expresses remorse for is that of remarrying after being divorced. The agent of Becker during his official career, Jack Rose, turned State evidence, and was the principal cause of securing a conviction. Rose is also a very pious person. He has become a preacher, and spends his time on evangelical tours. Now, if only Becker is released eventually, and if he and Rose could join forces and go round the world conducting revival meetings, we feel sure that they would make more—far more—in this way than they ever made out of bribery and assassination. Both have had the finest conceivable preparation for a successful evangelical combination.

"From America, the Chapman-Alexander Mission has descended on Scotland to give the populace religion, and judging by a meeting in Edinburgh they are getting it hot and strong. We knew Mr. Alexander as a singing evangelist some years ago in partnership with Dr. Torrey; Dr. Chapman is newer—and different. 'So help me God,' he exclaimed in one part of his sermon, 'if you, you the keeper of a publichouse—you who are helping to ruin young Scotland worse than the plague of tuberculosis, worse than cancer, are in this audience, so help me God I would fight you to the last drop of blood left in my body. If you continue in it you are worse than a murderer, a murderer, a murderer! You get it, don't you? You are worse than a murderer.' This may demonstrate that Dr. Chapman is teetotal, but it is not convincing evidence that he is sober. Mr. Alexander should prevail upon his brother to cool his throbbing brain under the pump."—*John Bull*.

The minister of the Upminster Congregational Church understands the way to untie the pursestrings of the average Christian. In the *Monthly Calendar* for April he writes that "the more we give to Foreign Missions the more prosperous shall we become at home in every way." That is the right note to strike. Spiritual advancement abroad with material progress at home. The spread of the Gospel with a solid cash dividend. That is what the ordinary Christian likes, and he is never happy till he gets it.

"How was it," asks Rev. R. J. Campbell, "that Christ was able to sweep that whole [Pagan] Pantheon out of existence?" Well, he didn't. That is the plain and complete answer to the query. "Christ" was, indeed, part of the Pantheon. The heaven-born, crucified savior was one of the world's religious figures long before the Christian Church was heard of. Mr. Campbell himself says:—

"The practice of the Roman Catholic Church to-day..... is exactly that of the pagan world out of which it arose, and has doubtless been copied from it. People went to certain shrines to be healed, and hung up their crutches and other relics of their infirmity as a thanksgiving for recovery. The little niches in the walls and inside the dwelling-houses which used to be occupied by little statues of gods are now replaced by those of saints. The old processions, feast days and fast days, the candles and the incense, even the altar vestments of the priests, have been adopted into the Church. It is not too much to say that the worship of the Madonna in the countries of Southern Europe is a survival of the worship of Isis; as some authorities declare, the Madonna is but Isis renamed."

If this is so, where is the sense of asking how Christ cleared out the Pagan Pantheon? The Christians simply adopted an old business as a going concern, and effected various modifications in view of a larger turnover.

What nonsense some of our religious philosophers do talk! There is no law of progress, declares Dean Inge, because only a proportion of the race really makes progress, and because degeneration is as common in nature as ascent. We do not think anybody ever questioned these rather commonplace observations. All they prove is that there is no certainty of progress. That is admitted; but the "law of progress" only means a statement of the conditions under which progress is achieved. And, obviously, these conditions admit of a summarized statement whether progress be an isolated or a universal phenomena, or whether it is permanently cumulative or merely sporadic.

"The quarrel between theology and physical science," says Canon Carnegie, "is almost a thing of the past." We should say quite a thing of the past. It takes at least two to make a quarrel, and theology has been so hopelessly beaten here that it no longer pretends to put up a fight. Canon Carnegie goes on to say that "the best theologians and the best scientists have practically agreed to delimit their territories and to exchange their former attitude of

hostility for one of friendliness, and often of cordial co-operation." We were not aware of the fact. There is only one limit to the region over which science rules or claims the possibility of ruling, and that is the limit fixed by all knowledge, actual and possible. Everything that is known or may be known forms a portion of the scientific domain. What lies beyond this is blank, irretrievable ignorance. Religion is quite welcome to reign over that territory, and science has never questioned its jurisdiction. One only wonders how there can be any co-operation between the two. The fact is that it is too dangerous nowadays for religion to lay claim to special knowledge concerning anything that is made the subject of verification. It tried that game for centuries, and has evidently learned a little wisdom from its decisive defeat.

Canon Carnegie says, "We are inclined nowadays to regard the Cardinals who tried Galileo, and forced him to recant his statement that the sun goes round the earth, as a very arrogant and foolish set of old gentlemen." Personally, we are not inclined to regard them as foolish, although they may have been arrogant. They were even wiser in their generation than Canon Carnegie is in his. They were Christians, their business was to uphold Christianity, and they saw, with absolute accuracy of vision, that to admit the teaching of the new astronomy was to take the first step towards the disintegration of Christian doctrines. Subsequent events fully justified their judgment in this direction. True, they were mistaken in thinking they could altogether crush the new knowledge. But they did their best. They were Christian soldiers fighting a forlorn hope, and one really feels a more sincere admiration for these men who fought to the last, and who would admit of no compromise, than for those who, on the approach of the enemy, show an overpowering anxiety to come to terms.

Suppose the Church could have crushed out the new astronomy, as it had crushed out the science of antiquity? Suppose it could have crushed out the teachings of Copernicus, of Galileo, of Newton, of Buffon, of Laplace, of Lyell, of Darwin, would not Christian belief have been sounder and stronger, and unbelief more of a rarity, than is the case to-day? We should still have had the earth as the centre of the systems, we should still have believed in witches, in demoniacal possession, in miracles, in direct answers to prayer. We should be living in a quite Christian world, and our knowledge of nature would have offered no serious obstacle to the reception of Christian doctrines. We should have been very much more ignorant, much more brutal, but we should have been much more Christian. These Cardinals and their kind did their best in a desperate situation. And it ill becomes a Christian preacher, whose chief anxiety is to run with the hare and keep in with the hounds, to call them "a very arrogant and foolish set of old gentlemen." Their real fault was that they were Christians who believed in their creed and in their Church.

Few Christians need to pray to be given a good conceit of themselves. It appears to be part of their nature. Here is the Dean of Durham, Dr. Hensley Henson, calmly remarking that the Christian seems "marked out at this crisis for the rescue of the country," which is rather cool considering the large share Christians have had of getting it into difficulties. Dr. Henson offers two reasons for his belief. One is that the Christian is pledged to self-sacrifice, and is not daunted by the sacrifice of self-interests; the other, that "his religion is a genuine enfranchisement, making him what a Secularist can never be, independent of his circumstances." We do not care what the Christian is pledged to, we only know that there is to be found in any church or chapel in the country as fine a collection of greeds and self-seeking as can be found anywhere. The average Christian talks about sacrifice, and imposes it upon other people. As to the Christian being independent of circumstances, that is just sheer nonsense—the kind of nonsense that constitutes nine-tenths of pulpit talk nowadays. If the country's only hope lies with Christians, the outlook is a poor one indeed. But this assumption that Christians are the only ones that really count is merely a part of Christian egotism and impertinence.

Every Englishman, said Heine, will say something stupid if you talk to him about religion. Heine intended this, not for those whom nature has liberally endowed with folly at their birth, but for those who, in other directions, were blessed with a fair share of common sense. The strange thing is that so many of these act as though their chief object in life was to demonstrate the truth of Heine's observation. Judge Parry, for instance, contributes articles to the *Sunday Chronicle* that are usually marked by good feeling and good sense. But, in the issue for April 5, he

brings in Christianity, and straightway what he says reminds one of Heine. Judge Parry is an Englishman; he touches on religion; he says something silly. Heine would have said it could not be otherwise. And we agree with Heine.

Nineteen hundred years ago, says Judge Parry, "a new principle was introduced into the world. It was the principle of unselfishness." Really! One wonders whether Judge Parry seriously believes that unselfishness began two thousand years ago. If he does, and he will turn into one of the excellent libraries that Manchester possesses, and spend an hour or two with any one of the Roman writers—Seneca, or Epictetus, or Aurelius, for instance—he will find how woefully he is mistaken, and how unwise it is to import into a newspaper article the irresponsible chatter of the pulpit. Two thousand years ago, we are told, doing good to others, promoting good-will instead of strife and ill-will, these ideas "as business propositions" were as unknown as railways, telegraphs, or aeroplanes. Well, this is simply not true. They were taught then as they are taught now, and we seriously invite Judge Parry to open his eyes and reflect on the huge war taxes that the whole of *Christian* Europe is groaning under, and also to reflect on the further fact that Old Rome could maintain its rule with an army of 400,000 men, where Christian Europe needs 4,000,000, and is clamoring for more. A vision of to-day, says Judge Parry, would seem to Marcus Aurelius like a "wild fairy tale." Hardly that; more probably a nightmare. And one can imagine the grand old Roman philosopher wondering what all our talk of progress is about if the Europe of to-day is all we have to show for what has been done since the sceptre of Roman rule was broken.

Pious invective is often found in the sporting pages of the lively *Referee*, but "Vanoo" recently made a slip in his theological terminology by saying "If the Cabinet does not destroy the Empire, the All-compassionate Allah will have intervened." "Jehovah" is first favorite in England, and "Allah" a rank outsider.

The Oxford manner has been described as like that of Almighty God addressing a bug, but sometimes under the haughty culture there is something of note. Dr. T. B. Strong, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, preaching at Southend-on-Sea recently, said:—

"There was one view of the Bible and one way of teaching it that had become impossible. They could not go to it any longer for information upon the subject of natural science. When they read its history—say the history of the Kings of Israel—they must bring to it the same tests as history of other sorts; and therefore the notion that they could teach people religion by making them read the Bible without note or comment had, in his opinion, disappeared for good. It never was true, and it only seemed to be true because they had never realised the context in which the books of the Bible were written and should be read."

If this sort of thing goes on, Mr. Foote's *Bible Heroes* and *Bible Romances* will be used as Sunday-school prizes.

"Abolish religion and we go back to the stone age," says Mr. Winston Churchill, the American novelist. In spite of Winnie's tears, we are going back.

"It is safe to disregard what is known as the spirit of the age," says Canon Green. Some greener Christians prefer the spirit of the Stone Age.

There is just as much religion in making a good pie as there is in making a prayer, says the Rev. R. L. Jones. Very likely; but there is a deal of difference from the point of view of nourishment.

The *Times* Literary Supplement published a two-column appreciation of the great Italian poet, Giosue Carducci, and referred to him as "the greatest poet alive at the beginning of the twentieth century." Of course, no mention was made of his Freethought opinions. On this subject the *Times* is always "out of joint."

The Southend-on-Sea Town Council have transferred the care of the Borough Cemetery from the Entertainments Committee to that of the Health Committee. An appropriate text for the cemetery gates would be the quotation from the Prayer Book, "There is no health in us."

Religious periodicals still persist in their statement that "popular Freethought is dead." The editors are now trying to ignore a very lively corpse.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £124 6s. 11d. Received since:—"Manchester" (per J. T. Lloyd), 5s.; T. A. Matthews, £1; Juliet and Julian, 7s. 6d.; Josh Roeckel, £1 1s.; Wm. Stevens, £1 1s.; Mancunian, 2s.

ANTI-CAST.—Some good might be done by Secularists joining these "brotherhoods," and then insisting on expressing their opinions about religion, but we are not very hopeful of what can be accomplished in that direction. As you say, it would test the genuineness of the talk about "brotherhood." The probability is that they would be made to feel so uncomfortable that they would soon leave again. They would not be directly excluded, they would be quietly squeezed out. We do think, however, that in most organisations Freethinkers too easily permit Christians to air their religious opinions whenever and wherever they please, while maintaining silence about their own convictions. If they would insist on the same right for themselves, they would soon find themselves in a position of advantage and respect.

H. PAGE.—We noted that one of the jurors in the Starchfield case affirmed, and that his affirmation was taken without trouble. This is usually the case in the higher courts and before responsible judges. It is usually the fussy, irresponsible J.P. or Coroner who makes a bother about permitting a Freethinker to exercise his legal rights. We, personally, agree with you on your comments concerning the facility of capital punishment, and also as to what you say on the question of punishment in general. But our criminal code is a semi-barbaric survival, and reforming ideas progress almost as slowly in legal matters as in the Church.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—Received, but we are arranging for a reply from another quarter, and there is no need for duplication.

H. D. MARSH.—We do not see that it is any special concern of yours where the discussion on which Mr. Moss based his article, *A Three-Cornered Contest*, took place, and we decline to bother him about the matter. The only legitimate concern of readers is whether anything is said that misrepresents the speakers in the discussion. For our own part, we do not care whether the discussion ever took place in fact or not. Imaginary conversations constitute a perfectly legitimate vehicle for the expression of opinions. We were under the impression that everybody was quite aware of this, but your letter shows that we were mistaken.

MANCUNIAN.—Acknowledged as desired. Your communication will appear next week. Mr. Foote, as you will see, is improving in health, but is not yet able to resume work.

CORRESPONDENTS will greatly oblige, and will also facilitate the dispatch of business, if they will mark all letters "Private" that are intended for Mr. Foote and are of a personal nature. Those containing editorial matter may be addressed in the usual manner.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the 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.

Personal.

I HAVE little to say to my friends amongst my readers except that I am gradually getting my strength back, and that this is one of the most melancholy businesses I know. But I have no doubt I shall get to the end of it before very long, and my pen will (so to speak) long for fresh activity when the hour strikes. Meanwhile I have two duties to perform; one is to keep as quiet as I can,—the other is to thank Mr. Cohen for doing the editorial work of the *Freethinker* in my absence. He is not merely doing a good turn for a friend; he is serving what George Meredith called "the best of causes." For there is only one *Freethinker* in the world. And we have all of us made it what it is.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Whit-Sunday is now only six weeks ahead, which is the date of the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society. The place of meeting is not yet fixed, but Branches should be preparing, so as to send in good time any resolutions they may have for the Agenda. The Executive of the N. S. S. is keenly alive to the need for a more effective organisation of propaganda throughout the country, but much of what it is able to do in this direction will depend upon the amount of local interest exhibited.

Branches are reminded that all Notices of Motion for the Agenda should reach the Secretary by May 2, so that they may appear in the *Freethinker* a fortnight prior to the meeting. The annual collections, one on behalf of the Benevolent Fund and one on behalf of the General Fund, are also due on the same date.

The April number of the *English Review* opens, as usual, with specimens of poetry. Sometimes they are striking and meritorious, but they cannot always be so, for good poetry is seldom written. This month's batch of verses can hardly be regarded as successful, though there is a touch of originality—or should we not rather say frankness?—in "Lips of My Love" by Katherine Prichard. Mr. Henry Newbolt's prose article on "The Poets and their Friends" is interesting in its way, but not of any special value. We confess to being bored by every fresh instalment of Mr. H. G. Wells's "The World Set Free." "An Ordinary Corpse" by Grant Watson is a gruesome story. When you have finished reading it your consolation is that it can't be true. James Stephens' curiously named "Essay in Cubes" is an extraordinary mixture of sense and nonsense. There are some excellent things in "Some Maxims and Reflections" by the late Professor Churton Collins. Here is a good sample:—

"'I will give you,' said a certain tutor of my time at Oxford, 'all Theodicy in a nutshell. There is a pond and a duck. The Ancients said the pond was made for the duck; the Moderns say the duck was made for the pond; but the really wise man says there is the pond, and there is the duck.'"

Mr. Harrison's editorial contributions are always good reading. This month's is no exception to the rule.

From the last issue to hand of the Christchurch (N. Z.) *Examiner*, we regret to see that Mr. Collins' health has "completely broken down." We do not know the exact nature of the trouble, but we have a suspicion that the cares attendant to running a Freethought journal—never an easy task—are not unconnected with it. We hope that Mr. Collins will abide by the decision of his medical adviser and give himself the complete rest ordered. It may be the quickest and most profitable way in the end. His many friends in this country will hear of his illness with regret and join with us in wishes for his speedy recovery.

There is hardly any talk more mischievous than that which proceeds by way of asserting the "God-given" supremacy of this nation or that race. It is a gospel of international or inter-racial hatred and tyranny that brings its own nemesis sooner or later. Here, for example, is Major S. L. Murray preaching, in the *Nineteenth Century*, the "God-given" supremacy of the white man over all others, and calling upon the European peoples to combine in order to dominate all others. Above all, the white man is implored to organise so as to keep the yellow man out of Australia. These short-sighted preachers of racial animosity do not realise that their own preaching is a very active force in bringing about international trouble. It is teaching the millions of Japanese and Chinese that the only way to make the white man act fairly to them is by their being strong enough to compel him to act justly. The notion that the population of Australia can for ever bar out the Japanese and the Chinese is a dream of white egotism and greed. The yellow races will only submit to exclusion so long as they cannot prevent it, and they will meanwhile, under the constant irritation of exclusion, serve as a real danger elsewhere. The real "yellow peril" is created by the white man's treatment of people as civilised as himself, but whom he persists in treating as his natural inferiors.

When religious differences come to be and are regarded as mere differences of opinion, it is because the controversy is really decided in the sceptical sense, though people may not like to acknowledge it formally.—"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," Sir J. Fitzjames Stephen.

Louise de la Ramee.

Ouida: A Memoir. By Elizabeth Lee. (T. Fisher Unwin.) 1914.

To those who are passing into middle life the name of Louise de la Ramee, better known as Ouida, will recall a novelist who earned the title of the queen of the circulating libraries. A younger generation may have favorites of its own, but the great mass of English readers grew up under the influence of Ouida's genius, and delighted in each manifestation of her brilliant intellect. Her novels charmed their earlier years, and the freshness of her powers seemed only to furnish them with fresh gratitude every time they were exercised. They may have got to know the tricks of her style and the turn of her mind; but such knowledge served only to heighten the pleasure in a delightful personality that could not be disguised, however it was clothed.

It required extraordinary talent for a young and unknown woman to make a name in the literary arena as a novelist in 1863. At that date many really great writers held the field against all comers. Dickens and Thackeray were at the zenith of their extraordinary reputations. George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Lytton, Lever, Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins, and Charles Kingsley were popular and deserved favorites. Obviously a new and untried writer had to contend against the giants. That Ouida did this successfully shows the fascination of her work.

It was in this year that Ouida captured her public with *Held in Bondage*, and she held her own successfully until the end. A very late work, *The Masarenes*, an able study of a plutocrat, showed all of the old magic. *Under Two Flags*, issued in 1867, is probably her best story, excellent in plot and movement, and containing a charming story of a vivandiere.

Ouida had power, imagination, and more knowledge than many of her rivals, having a keen interest in intellectual and social matters. She had an abiding sympathy with suffering, and was a humanitarian before that pursuit became fashionable. Her gift for epigram was not confined to novels; and, unlike Mr. Chesterton, she always mixed her epigrams with common sense.

A striking personality, she had her little vanities. "You must make much of me, for now George Eliot is gone there is no one else who can write English," she writes. With scornful accent she tells Mrs. Shirley Brooks that she "ought to be listened to even if singing is going on." So proud was she that she tore up cheques sent to her when she was in poverty, and on the edge of want she would entertain with oriental hospitality. She was a friend of Lady Orford, who powdered her hair with flour, and used the kitchen dredger in the process; and Ouida's own unconventionality was worthy of the model.

The most marked trait in Ouida's character was her love of animals. She was an early champion of those dumb slaves for whom Mr. Henry Salt and the Humanitarian League have since done so much. She was attracted to Matthew Arnold by his love of dogs, and her elegiac lines upon him recall his own lines upon "Geist's Grave":—

"Stern law of every mortal lot!
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where.
But thou, when struck thine hour to go,
On us, who stood despondent by,
A meek last glance of love did'st throw,
And humbly lay thee down to die.
Thy memory lasts both here and there,
And those shalt live as long as we,
And after that—thou dost not care!
In us was all the world to thee."

Thackeray was fond of dilating upon the power that novelists enjoy of conferring pleasure. He tells how he read Scott, Fenimore Cooper, and Dumas as a boy, and he boasted that the tastes of his youth had not deserted him in manhood. How many hours of pleasure has not Ouida given to her

readers? For over forty years she delighted the reading public. All Englishmen knew her books, and their popularity in the Colonies was enormous. In America rival publishers competed which should be first to print them for Transatlantic readers.

Yet it would be a mistake to dwell merely on the amusement that her books provided, or to think of Louise de la Ramee as an idle writer of an empty day. The appeal of her novels may have been melodramatic; but their most censorious critic could not deny that their author had brains. From storytelling Ouida turned easily to intellectual matters. She put forward arresting opinions on Italian politics, on the development of woman, on Socialism, on the defects of society, and on the rights of downtrodden races. On all the movements of her time she formed clear and strong opinions. She denounced militarism with all the wealth of her poetic and voluminous vocabulary. In religious matters Ouida was an outspoken Freethinker, and her picturesque denunciation of the Christian superstition had something of the eloquence of Ingersoll.

Ouida was more than a mere writer, for she fought in the Army of Human Liberation. On the battlegrounds of Freedom the soldiers get many wounds. If Ouida's works exhibit this warfare and this tumult on too many eloquent pages, we judge with the wisdom which tempers justice with sympathy. Her first claim is genius; but we recognise in Louise de la Ramee a woman born of that heroic temperament to which, after life-long recognition of the vanity of vanities, Liberty never grew old, nor Love failed of his loveliness.

MIMNERMUS.

Christian Apologetics.

I.—THE APOSTLE BARNABAS.

SOON after the publication of the first primitive Gospel, and many years before the appearance of the four evangels which are called "canonical," we find a considerable number of Christian writings of an apologetic nature in circulation among the primitive Christians. Some of these were of such an outrageous character that in later times, when many educated Pagans had entered the Christian fold, they were rejected as fabrications, their authorship was ascribed to heretics, and they were called spurious or apocryphal.

Apart from these, however, there were several writings that were received by all Christians as genuine documents, written by men who were said to have been companions of apostles, or to have been taught by apostles. Among the latter are the compositions of five writers who are called "Apostolic Fathers." These are: Barnabas, Hermas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp. The first, Barnabas, is said to have been Paul's colleague on his first apostolic journey (Acts xiii. 2—xv. 39); the second, Hermas, is said to have been the person named in Rom. xvi. 14; the third, Clement, to have been a companion and fellow-laborer of Paul mentioned in Phil. iv. 3; the fourth, Ignatius, is said to have been appointed bishop of Antioch less than forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, and to have known and conversed with many of the apostles; the fifth, Polycarp, is said to have been a disciple of the apostle John, and to have been made bishop of Smyrna by apostles. Each of these "apostolic" fathers left writings behind him connected with the Christian religion, most of them containing quotations from the primitive Gospel. These quotations have been carefully examined by our modern Christian apologists, and those that are found to be in almost verbal agreement with similar statements in the canonical Gospels are declared to have been taken from the latter.

I will now briefly notice the so-called "apostolic" writings, with the view, chiefly, of fixing the date and illustrating the character of each. They are adduced by Christian apologists in proof of the apostolic authorship of the canonical Gospels.

The "Epistle of Barnabas" is found, with the "Shepherd" of Hermas, in the oldest MS. extant—the Sinaitic Codex—the two being placed after the other New Testament books. The Epistle is not addressed to any church, nor to any individual: it bears neither date nor author's name. It is therefore impossible to say with certainty when or by whom it was written. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 198) is the first who mentions it, and he quotes it as "scripture." Though Clement calls the writer "the apostle Barnabas," the writer himself as good as says he was not an apostle. He states, for instance:—

"I, then, not as your teacher, but as one of yourselves, will set forth a few things by which.....ye may be rendered more joyful" (par. 1)—"And this also I further beg of you, as being one of you, and loving you individually and collectively" (par. iv.)

The writer of the Epistle was not the Barnabas who is said to have been the Hebrew companion of Paul, nor was he even a Jew. This will be seen from the following extract:—

"Moreover, I will also tell you concerning the temple, how the wretched Jews, wandering in error, trusted not in God himself, but in the temple, as being the house of God.....for through their going to war, it was destroyed, by their enemies; and now they, as the servants of their enemies, shall rebuild it," etc. (par. xvi.)

The allusion here to the Jews having to rebuild their city and temple as servants of the Romans is a clear reference to the building operations under Hadrian. About A.D. 120 that emperor commenced to rebuild Jerusalem, which he named Ælia, and he also caused a temple dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus to be erected on the site of the old Jewish temple. After the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans (A.D. 70) over 100,000 Jewish prisoners were sold into slavery, and an edict was issued forbidding all Jews to enter the holy city. Hence, when Hadrian commenced rebuilding, it is more than probable that all Jews found in or near Jerusalem were pressed into the service and made to assist as laborers. At any rate, it cannot be shown that the Epistle of Barnabas was written before A.D. 120, or even so early. The fact that Barnabas refers to a rebuilding as about to take place shows that if the building of the city had not already commenced, materials for the work—and probably the men also—had arrived there.

Again, no Jew, however much a Christian, would speak of his countrymen as "the wretched Jews," nor would glory in the destruction of their city and temple. Moreover, Paul's companion, Barnabas, was a Jew first, before being a Christian (see Gal. ii. 13). Furthermore, Barnabas says (par. xv.): "For which cause we observe the eighth day with gladness, in which Jesus rose from the dead." The regular observance of this day by the Church as a sabbath is another mark of the late date of the Epistle: no such observance can be traced to the first century.

With regard to the character of the so-called Epistle of Barnabas, this will best be perceived by giving three or four samples of the writer's teaching; for notwithstanding his disclaimer, it is clearly evident that the composer was a primitive Christian teacher.

(1) "Blessed be our Lord, who has placed in us wisdom and understanding of secret things. For the Scripture says concerning us, while He speaks to the Son, 'Let us make man after our image and after our likeness.'.....And the Lord said, on beholding the fair creature man, 'Increase and multiply and replenish the earth.'.....Again, I will show thee how, in respect to us, He has accomplished a second fashioning in these days. The Lord said, 'Behold, I make the last like the first.' In reference to this, then, the prophet proclaimed, 'Enter ye into the land flowing with milk and honey, and have dominion over it.' Ye see, therefore, that we have been refashioned; as again He says in another prophet, 'Behold,' saith the Lord, 'I will take away from them their hearts of stone, and I will put into them hearts of flesh'" (par. vi.).

I have not omitted a syllable that would add to the lucidity of the foregoing teaching: I have placed the writer's quotations from the Old Testament in italics, in order to make the reasoning—I mean

"teaching"—somewhat closer; though I cannot say that I thoroughly understand what he is elucidating. The only point that appears certain is that Barney claims to have been inspired by "the Lord" to correctly interpret the Jewish scriptures.

(2) "Moreover, when fixed to the cross the Lord had given him to drink vinegar and gall. Harken how the priests of the people gave previous indication of this. His commandment having been written, the Lord enjoined that whosoever did not keep the fast should be put to death, because He also Himself was to offer in sacrifice for our sins the vessel of the Spirit..... What says he in the Prophets? 'And let them eat of the goat which is offered with fasting for all their sins. And let the priests alone eat the inwards unwashed with vinegar.' Why so? Because to Me, who am to offer my flesh for the sins of my new people, ye are to give gall with vinegar to drink" (par. vii.).

The foregoing exposition is a tissue of falsehoods and a conglomeration of nonsense. No such passages are found in the Old Testament, and no such commands were given to the Jews. The "inwards" were always washed, when not burnt (Lev. i. 9, etc.); the priests only ate choice portions (Lev. viii. 31—34; x. 12—15), and never with vinegar: it is not easy to see how or where the gall comes in. It should also be noted that the writer confounds "the Lord" of the Old Testament with Jesus Christ, both being called "the Lord" by the primitive Christians (including Barnabas), and both applying, without the smallest hesitation, anything stated of the god Yahweh to "the Lord Jesus." The foregoing extract furnishes further evidence that the writer was not a Jew.

(3) In the following paragraph Barnabas ascribes to Abraham a knowledge of the Greek language and numerals, though that patriarch, assuming him to be historical, lived more than a thousand years before a Greek kingdom or language came into existence. Barney assumes that Abraham knew that IH were the first two letters of the name Jesus, when written in Greek capitals—IHSOUS—and that I stood for 10, H for 8, and T for 300, as numerals. He says (par. x):—

"Learn then, my children, concerning all things richly, that Abraham, the first who enjoined circumcision, looking forward in spirit to Jesus, practised that rite, having received the mystery of the three letters. For the Scripture saith, 'And Abraham circumcised ten and eight and three hundred men of his household.' What, then, was the knowledge given to him in this? Learn the eighteen first, and then the three hundred. The 'ten' and 'eight' are thus denoted: 'ten' by I, and 'eight' by H; you have thus the initials of 'Jesus.' And because the cross was to express the grace of his redemption by the letter T, He says also 'three hundred.' He signifies therefore 'Jesus' by two letters, and the cross by one. He knows this who has put within us the engrafted gift of his doctrine. No one has been admitted by me to a more excellent piece of knowledge than this: but I know that ye are worthy."

The foregoing is most certainly an "excellent piece of knowledge," and for an ingenious and unscrupulous distortion of a simple passage in Genesis, Barney beats all our modern commentators hollow. I have space for but one more "excellent piece of knowledge" from the pen of this gifted writer.

(4) In the following extract Barnabas explains a portion of Lev. xi., in which the Jews are forbidden to eat the flesh of certain animals:—

"'And thou shalt not eat, he says, the lamprey, or the polyppus, or the cuttle-fish.' He means: Thou shalt not join thyself to be like to such men as are ungodly to the end, and are condemned to death. In like manner as those fishes, above accursed, float in the deep, not swimming like the rest, but make their abode in the mud at the bottom. Moreover, He says, 'Thou shalt not eat the hare.' Why so? Thou shalt not be a corrupter of boys, nor like unto such. Because the hare multiplies year by year the places of its conception..... Moreover, 'Thou shalt not eat the hyena.' He means, Thou shalt not be an adulterer, nor corrupter, nor like them that are such. Why so? Because that animal annually changes its sex, and is at one time male, and at another female.....Behold how well Moses legislated? But how was it possible for them to understand

or comprehend these things? We, then, understanding His commandments rightly, explained them as the Lord intended. For this purpose he has circumcised our ears and our hearts, that we might understand these things" (par. xi.).

The suggestions in the foregoing paragraph prove the writer to have been a man of very impure mind, with a coarse and positively filthy imagination. Setting aside his crass ignorance of Natural history, and his impudence and presumption in offering his own crude ideas as an interpretation of a passage which required none, only one of the animals he mentions—the hare—is named in Lev. xi. (or in Deut. xiv., from which that chapter is derived).

Paley tells us that the first promulgators of the Christian religion were men of "probity and good sense": but it is far more probable that they were, like Barnabas, silly, conceited, mendacious, and what we would now call old "bounders." ABRACADABRA.

Times of Tears.

SEE how they swing life along through the days, these ordinary pleasures and pains with their red drapings, their thousand shades, their art free from guile, and their philosophy in homespun! There is no room for God in the crowded thoroughfares of life's ordinary sorrows and joys. He is banished, but not, it may be, deliberately. Rather unconsciously than from clearly conceived desire is God forsaken in the laughter and tears of the everyday life. And, sometimes, when the mind is wearying in the drab plethora of the modern religious art that sings of God's many marvellous manifestations, it is refreshing to turn to the commonplace and see truth.

There is so little evidence of God in it that, after the ponderous weight of words, after the glaring colorings of religious experts, after the poetry and prose of supernatural passion, all flung heedlessly upon the commonplace by those inspired painters, we are surprised to find a strangely artistic plainness about the ordinary happenings of our lives.

God is not essential to our lives, nor to our happiness, nor to our sadness. Everything around us proclaims it very complacently. Everything proves it. Everything upholds the simple plain truth of it. Elaboration there is none; nor is there the least endeavor to force its evidence. You see it clearly, and feel it easily. God is not here. And, when I reflect upon this strange truism, there arises in my mind the old sense of the marvel of it all. God is not here. The great exertions of priestcraft to disprove it are like gossamers trailing after the sun to die in the west. The huge organism called the Church is a mirage whose last visioned palm melts with the taste of the real waters of truth. The verbal splendors of the glories of God are so many wind driven doves that fall dead and unnoticed by the waysides of the commonplace. God is not here. The natural passing of the hours, the ordinary fleeting of the days, gives God no opportunity. To be with us he must be brought.

Banal experience tells us that God, when he *does* come into the average mind, comes as an intruder. Whatever the heights of happiness we may be enjoying, whatever depths of despair we may be suffering, the entrance of God is heralded by a chilly breeze through the corridors of the brain. His welcome is cold in varying degrees. Never does the average mind glow warmly with appreciation. If merriment touch our moments with sunshine, God's welcome is zero. If we are nursing the little devils of human sadness the degree of cold generally corresponds with their number. We are more inclined to question the propriety of his entrance at these times than we are to bless him, or rather the people who announce his arrival, for without them he does not exist.

The ordinary person, it is noticeable, prefers to shake the wise head, smile somewhat sadly, and say,

"Ah! you don't understand; you can't understand. Nothing can comfort me." And if the little devils are very numerous, and their prongs very sharp, God's welcome is very unsatisfactory. The average human mind simply won't tolerate God's soothing presence. It is more of a slight on the sincerity of the sadness than anything else. To be very sorrowful, then suddenly to be aware of the divine joy, and to use it as if it were really joy, is pretty much like playing the fool. Christians understand this; but, peculiarly enough, they do not seem to comprehend that it is rather hard lines on God.

Sometimes, too, the introduction of God is the introduction of the author of the sorrow; but not so much nowadays as it used to be. Still, there is a goodly number of people who feel themselves, in some dimly conceived way, opposed to God at these periods. Pastors tell us so, at any rate; and we believe them. And to bring God into the grief is like bringing the robber to anoint the wound with solace. Naturally enough, this is resented, in a quiet, furtive manner. Besides, is there not a double dose of bitterness in it? The burglar is recognised, and so also is the utter hopelessness of expecting a return of that which he stole. What God takes God keeps.

As I looked into the fire just now, I noticed, reclining against a caked mass of churls, a white-hot piece of coal shaped like a cross, and glowing amidst blue flames. Perhaps it is an omen, a warning to me for this blasphemy. Who can say?

While God's presence is chilly, nowadays, during all the ordinary sorrows of commonplace life, there is yet a warm corner for him when the cold arms of death reach out from the darkness, as pastors put it, to encircle the body of someone dear to us. There is not so much God at the first crisis of human life, birth, in modern times; still less at the second crisis; but he still draws near at the third and last. Perhaps it is a crude, hard thing to say; but it seems that when decay begins God's opportunity comes.

The day may not be far distant when the only occupation allotted to priestcraft will be that of bidding farewell to the bodies of the dead. Gradually has God been shut out from the times that are draped with the dark curtains of sorrow in the lives of the common people. Already he has totally disappeared from their times of sunshine and happiness. Only death is left him.

And even here the warm corner is not without its discomfort. Minds are less sure of him than ever they were; and the twinge of heart-pain is not made any less severe by the mind's fitful struggles to think itself into a belief the heart cries out against. No matter for how long the dove of heaven may have fluttered through the skies of religious beliefs, no matter how strong may be the conviction that God dealt the blow from the kindness of his great love, neither the strength nor the age of the belief influences the dull pain one whit. The heart closes around its own woe. God, and his consolation, play only on the surface, when they play at all. The average person, at these times, hangs around the consciousness an impenetrable egoism, through which I doubt, often, if even the dearest friend can enter. And the truth that is human tells us that a sister, a brother, a father, or a mother, well-beloved, comes nearer to the average heart than all the gods that were ever spun from fables and fears of man's mind.

When death speaks to us, a harder, and sadder, perhaps, realisation of the verities surges over our minds; and in the process there is a self-concentration that debars God. Unaccustomed to the strong faith of our philosophy, the average person pleads for an immortality his sorrow denies; and he pleads against a vague conviction that the after-life is a dream. With death in the darkened room close by, the ordinary mind is dubious of the heaven above; but, in its longings, despite the teachings of modern religion, it adheres more to the idea of resurrection than to that of an incomprehensible immortality. Only when the minister arrives does God make his

entrance. The doubts are lulled. Resurrection gives place to immortality. The contradictions are smoothed down. The minister panders to the desires; and the closed door of the mind opens to let in—an instinct. The minister takes God away with him, and leaves immortality.

Without the idea of an after-life there would be no God. Immortality really keeps God in the picture. Nowadays God is a cosmic force, his supreme activity the making possible of another life where the old loves, cut asunder by death, will be relinked. Sensitive people, actuated by desire, and deluded by religion, still think the idea of immortality is a feeling, an instinct, something that lowly whispers to their hearts the graphic statement that it is something. This is the instinct of immortality. It only operates when the sorrow is somewhat assuaged by the balsam of the commonplace, when the curtain of egoism has been lifted by the pressure of the demands of the days. In times of tears there is no God; and immortality comes only as a longing, a sudden rush of the spring-waters of human love, when the mind discovers that the opportunities are lost for ever.

There is more truth in the commonplace times of tears and joy than in all the mighty works of religious learning; and some day, when the priests and pastors have been vanquished by the Army of Free-thought, the people will marvel and wonder at the gullibility of their forefathers.

The white cross in the fire has crumbled to ashes. Underneath there is still the glow of red cinders. That, too, will disappear; but sleep will not come less soundly because the cross has crumbled; nor will the commonplaceness of life lose its social strength and health because the fires of religious faith are burning out.

ROBERT MORELAND.

National Secular Society.

THE Second Half-Yearly Meeting of London Members was held on Tuesday, March 31, at Chandos Hall, Strand.

Mr. Cohen was elected to the Chair, the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, being unable to attend on account of illness. A letter from Mr. A. B. Moss was read explaining his absence for the same reason. After the Chairman's opening remarks, the discussion was opened by Mr. Cunningham, who regretted that the resolution remitted from the last Conference, to arrange public demonstrations in places where the Free-thought movement was not making satisfactory progress, and the resolution moved at the last half-yearly meeting, that Branches should be asked to break new ground by holding meetings at places adjacent to their present stations, had not yet been carried into effect; and, as a recommendation to the Executive, moved a resolution embodying both the foregoing, but making it apply more particularly to the Metropolitan areas. This was seconded by Mr. Rosetti.

Mr. Heaford thought that the term "Metropolitan areas" should be literally interpreted, and suggested taking advantage of the cheap excursions to provincial towns, and believed many men could be found to do pioneer work of that kind. After further discussion, Mr. W. Davidson moved, as an amendment:—

"That the Executive be asked to appoint a committee of two to work in conjunction with the General Secretary in organising demonstrations and extra meetings on new ground within the London district, with a view to extending the work of the Society."

This was seconded by Mr. H. Thurlow. The resolution was then withdrawn and Mr. Davidson's motion was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

Mr. Collinson, North London Branch, moved a resolution expressing the opinion that the interests of the Cause would be furthered by a more systematic method of organisation, and that this could be accomplished both successfully and economically by merging the existing London Branches into one. This was seconded by Mr. Hecht, Edmonton, and gave rise to much discussion. Mr. T. Thurlow was opposed to the principle of relying upon a centre. Mr. Roger pointed out its impracticability, in view of the great distances across London; and Mr. W. Heaford most emphatically protested against it, saying that what was required of the Secularist Party, which was the oldest organised party in Great Britain, was the intensification of local interests, and sug-

gested that the compilation of a directory of Freethinkers would enable them to be brought together whenever necessary. Mr. Davey, Kingsland Branch, objected on the ground that it would destroy home rule. It was suggested that the experiment of amalgamation might be tried with the North London Branches, which lie close together. The Chairman thought the suggestion would be workable, if carried out on the lines of the old London Secular Federation, which all would agree, did good work, and pointed out that where Branches, or local Freethinkers, were in need of assistance in organising, the services of the Executive could be relied upon. Though lost when put to the meeting, it was felt that the discussion this resolution had given rise to, had been exceedingly useful.

A suggestion from the Kingsland Branch that a monthly list of all out-door lectures of the London Branches should be published, and a further suggestion that the Editor of the *Freethinker* be asked to publish condensed reports of Branch lectures, at least monthly, in that paper, were discussed, and the Secretary was asked to lay both matters before the Executive.

Reference was made to the increasing number of requests for N. S. S. members to act as stewards at meetings, and on the motion of Mr. Earthy, North London Branch, it was resolved to recommend that members be invited to add their names to the list of those already willing to act as stewards.

The Secretary promised to arrange a meeting of Branch Secretaries, at headquarters, at an early date.

The Secretary was instructed to convey to Mr. Foote the good wishes of all present, and their hopes that he would soon be able to resume his work for the cause to which he had devoted himself for so many years.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

CUNNING AND CREDULITY ON THE NIGER.

Until quite recently on the banks of the river which flowed beneath the windows of our last station, a human sacrifice was offered at the beginning of each fishing season, to ensure good fortune to the nets. The victim was bound to a stout stake, driven deep into the mud, left bare at low tide, to be drowned by the rising water. One year the man chosen chanced to be of unusual strength. By straining every nerve he burst the bonds which held his huge limbs, and found himself free once more, but with no place of refuge, since every town was closed to him, and to take to the mangrove swamps meant not life but a lingering death. In this desperate strait he decided on a daring stroke. Back to the beach he swam, where townfolk were merrily holding his death-feast. It chanced that he was blind of an eye, so no sooner did he near the shore than he began to upbraid them, in the "Juja's" name, for daring to offer a blemished victim—stating that the Spirit had sent him back as unworthy, and with the command that a better should be substituted. Unquestioningly the people obeyed. A perfect victim was chosen and offered up, while the resourceful one-eyed deceiver lived out his life to a peaceful close.—*P. Amaury Talbot in the "Times."*

Obituary.

It is my painful duty to record the sudden death, at the age of 61, of Mr. John Easton, whose stalwart figure and genial expression was generally conspicuous at all meetings, lectures, etc., in Newcastle that had for their object the advancement of intellectual progress. He had a wide circle of friends, who will never forget the cheerful smile, the sterling and honest outspokenness of this admirable man, whose generous and sympathetic heart never failed to respond to others' troubles. His loss to the Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S. will be most keenly felt by those with whom he has taken an active share of the work for over twenty years. Being also one of the active workers of the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society, of which he was a member since its inception in 1883, he was followed to the grave by a large number of friends from both Societies. Here, what the deceased had often expressed his fear of, happened. Despite the fact that a written request to be cremated, and that his funeral be a Secular one, had for some time been carefully prepared, a parson was engaged and buried him with the usual "Sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection," much to the disapproval of many of his best friends. On March 30 Mr. Easton went to bed healthy and apparently well, and had slept peacefully away before anyone was aware of the fact. He leaves a widow, four grown-up sons, two daughters, and an aged mother, twenty-three years older than himself, to mourn their loss. We share their grief, but rejoice that he lived.—J. G. BARTRAM.

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