

THE Freethinker

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Truth 'tis supposed may bear all lights; and one of these principal lights or natural mediums, by which things are to be viewed, in order to a thorough recognition, is ridicule itself.—EARL OF SHAFTESBURY.

Science and a Future Life.

WHAT is science? Organised common sense, said Huxley. Partly unified knowledge, said Spencer, leading to a completely unified knowledge—which is philosophy. I agree with both definitions. The essential work of science is classification and description. Its business is to collect facts, group them, and then frame some generalisation that will describe their operation and express their relation to other groups of facts. That is what Newton did when he framed the law of universal gravitation. He expressed in a single formula the movements of bodies from atoms to planets. He added nothing to the facts; they were always there. The law of universal gravitation simply gave us a short and easy formula by which to express what occurred. And that is the business of science in all directions. It is not concerned with what metaphysicians call "ultimate truth," because all truth, as we know it, is relative. It is not concerned with *why* things exist, because all we know is that they do exist; and all we can do is to describe the relations of these things one to the other. This is not only all we can know or all we can do; but no other knowledge and no other doing would be of the slightest value to us.

It is this conception of science which prevents my appreciating much that Mr. Quinn has to say in his reply, in last week's *Freethinker*, to my article on "Freethought, Religion, and Death." For I gather that, like many other religious apologists—including the superficially subtle Mr. Balfour—when he speaks of science he has always before his mind physical science only. He resents the dismissal of the belief in a future life on the ground that there is no scientific warranty for it, because "Science is an attempt to state the universe in terms of physics. Religion is an attempt to explain the universe in terms of psychology." Certainly science deals with facts, but with all facts, and that Mr. Quinn appears to overlook. The material for science is not limited to physical facts. There are other "facts" that come equally within the scope of science. The phenomena of intellectual and emotional life are as much "facts" for the work of science as are chemical and physical phenomena. So are religious "facts." The belief in God, in a soul, in spirits, while constituting the material of religion, are in essence facts of psychology. They are part of the material dealt with by the science of psychology, and it becomes the duty of science to reduce them to order, to classify them, to describe their relation to other groups of facts.

Mr. Quinn comes near this point of view when he says, "that theory which unifies the phenomena best and renders them most consistent, will be accepted"; but he departs from it when he adds that "its value will not be its truth, but its utility for the purposes of unity and consistency." In what lies the truth of any generalisation but in its power to unify

a given group of phenomena, and its consistency with what is already known to be true in other directions? The purpose of Mr. Quinn's qualification is obvious. It assumes that self-consistency is the only thing required to establish a theory, and that so long as this is the case there is no need to check it, by verification or contrast, with other known truths. It is this method which gives us many religions, while its rejection has left the world with only one science.

Mr. Quinn complains that I regard it as unreasonable to believe anything except on scientific lines, and so reject immortality because it lacks scientific proof. I am afraid that I must persist in my "unreasonableness," only remarking that by "scientific lines" I understand something different from what Mr. Quinn means by the phrase. There are other methods of scientific proof or disproof beside that of the retort or the test-tube. It may be quite true that mankind will persist in believing a number of things without scientific warranty for so doing, although I do not agree that these are "outside the scientific purview or method." "Artistic judgments and theories" certainly are not. The very fact of these being judgments and theories proves this is not so. There may be greater difficulty in classification, but that does not rule out the possibility of classification. Besides, I must remind Mr. Quinn that the difficulty of getting a common judgment concerning a piece of music, a picture, or a poem, is a very different thing from framing laws concerning poetry, painting, and music.

What, then, is the scientific attitude in regard to a future life? Mr. Quinn admits there is "no scientific evidence of a life hereafter; no scientific theory that tends in that direction." But, he says, "On the other hand, there is no scientific evidence against the belief in a life hereafter; therefore, as science says nothing pro or con, it is perfectly neutral." This is not quite exact. The business of science is, as I have said, to classify facts. Mr. Quinn's belief—and that of others—in a hereafter, is one of the facts of life with which science must deal. And in dealing with it science sets up a very strong presumption against its truth. In the first place, the survival after death of human individuality would be an absolutely unrelated fact in the universe. Up to man, at least, the law of nature is the impermanence of the individual. This is true right from tiniest atomic structure up to living beings. Why, then, the exception with man? Where is the evidence of its truth?

Secondly, science cannot see in man, or with man, anything that survives death. Structure and function is all that it sees; and, rightly or wrongly, it at least claims the possibility of explaining all mental phenomena on this basis. Science does not treat man as a duality, or as a trinity, but as a unity. Man is to science an organism with certain functions. And for the survival of the latter after the destruction of the former, is a scientific inconceivability.

Finally, science, pursuing its work of classification, takes this modern religious belief in a something which survives the disintegration of the body, and places it as one of a group of similar beliefs. And having grouped it with other beliefs that are qualitatively identical, it is able to arrange them in something like a linear series. Just as it traces the physical structure of man back to the lowly *Ascidia*,

so it traces this modern belief in a soul back to the fear-ridden ignorance of the primitive savage. The soul's genealogical table is clear and distinct. And we know that it was born of a blunder; inevitable, if you will, but none the less a blunder. It was a primitive theory framed to describe certain experiences; but as Mr. Quinn says, fresh observation "may very easily require the recasting of a theory." Quite so; and fresh observation required a recasting of this one. Every fact upon which the "soul" theory was built is now explained in a totally different way. It exists only as a survival.

Now, it is surely not a correct representation of the facts to write that science has nothing against the belief in a future life. Science does not say, "I am at a loss to explain such and such a phenomenon unless I assume the existence of a soul." On the contrary, its general attitude is that of Laplace's "I have no need of that hypothesis." It does not pretend to completeness of knowledge, but it hopes to make good all deficiencies by the same instruments and methods that it has hitherto found so effective. It therefore sets up a strong presumption against immortality. In tracing the origin of the belief, and in explaining the phenomena of the human organism without the hypothesis of a soul, science comes as near proving a negative as is possible.

I do not see what support for his belief in a future life Mr. Quinn hopes to gain from his excursus on the difficulty of a man conceiving himself as unconscious. I agree with him as to the difficulty, even the impossibility, of a man thinking himself as not thinking. But I do not see what this has to do with the point at issue. What do we mean by consciousness? The only test that I know of whether a body is living or not, is response to stimuli. If it does not respond, we say that life is not present. And the only test of consciousness is response in a specific direction to stimuli. Now, we can realise that other people will lose this capacity for response, and when it is gone, we say they are unconscious, or dead. And we can further realise that just as the body of A or B has lost this power of response, and is dead, so we shall one day pass through the same phase and present the same appearance. Our inability to picture ourselves as non-existent has nothing whatever to do with the point at issue. That is no more than an infirmity of thought, and no one will seriously argue that infirmity of thought is the measure of truth or reality.

Mr. Quinn is quite wrong in thinking I believe that religious theories are based on emotion. I believe that all modern religions *appeal* to emotion, but that is a different thing. There is, as he says, an intellectual element in all emotional states, and there is an emotional element in all intellectual states. The Freethinker's complaint here is, that in connection with the belief in a future life, the desires and emotions of people are cited as if they were evidence of the truth of the belief. They write and speak as though the universe was under some obligation towards them to satisfy their feelings and to gratify their desires. They will not realise that because every frame of mind has both an emotional and an intellectual aspect, the argument from feeling or desire is wholly fallacious. The believer says he will be unhappy without the belief in a future life, because he conceives himself as possessing his present feelings, *minus* his present beliefs. And that is an impossibility. The beliefs and emotions of each person sooner or later accommodate themselves one to the other. No one knows this better than the Freethinker, and no Freethinker is likely to underestimate the value of emotion in life. But amongst other feelings he gives the desire for truth a much higher place than is given it by the Christian. To the Freethinker the desire for truth is one of the cardinal qualities of a fully developed nature. It implies sincerity, and its tendency is to develop courage. And he who possesses these qualities will always be ready to face whatever the universe has in store.

C. COHEN.

Slow and Intermittent Progress of Freethought.

A Short History of Freethought. By John M. Robertson. M.P. (Watts & Co.) New edition in two volumes. Pp. 434 and 535. 10s. net.

IDEAS, blossoming into ideals, are the real rulers of the world. From the beginning there have been two sets of ideas, the one being the offspring of the imagination and the other of the reason; and these two classes of ideas have inevitably given rise to corresponding ideals. The imagination is a genuine creator, and the only one known to us. Its creations are most varied, and many of them of truest value. Amongst them are art, poetry, metaphysics, and religion. Art and poetry, and the ideals that spring from them, are invariably treated as imaginary products. Pictures represent, not literal realities, but what artists have seen through their imaginative eyes, and what they have succeeded in enabling many others to see in the same way. The same thing is largely true of poetry, as Shakespeare, in his own inimitable style, tells us:—

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
And, as imagination bodies forth [heaven,
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

When we come to metaphysics and religion, however, we descend to a much lower mental plane, where imaginary objects are treated as literal realities. In religion, particularly, imaginary creations degenerate into objective existences. Now, religious ideas naturally mature into religious ideals. Thus, the idea of God suggests godliness as the corresponding ideal. So, likewise, the idea of heaven yields the ideal of heavenly-mindedness, which is made to stand out in opposition to earthly-mindedness.

Now, we find that in every age there has been a number of people to whom religious ideas and ideals have appeared utterly irrational, and who have advocated the cause of reason against that of fancy, of knowledge as a substitute for that of blind faith. Most of them are known to have been ardent admirers of art and poetry, and their opposition to religion can only be accounted for by remembering that in religion the original playthings of the imagination have crystallised into hard, cold, unwieldy dogmas, assent to which has been rendered compulsory by a self-appointed external authority. We are often assured by its champions that religion is poetry; but when we insist upon placing God and his angels in the same category as King Arthur and his Round Table, we are charged with spiritual blindness, irreverence, even blasphemy. God, Christ, the angels, and the unseen world are spoken of not as poetic dreams, or hypothetical assumptions, but as eternal verities, in which we must believe, or everlastingly perish. But there have always been people to whom belief in the supernatural was an impossibility, and whom religious teachers have been in the habit of denouncing as enemies of the race, being intellectually perverse and morally abandoned. In reality, they have only exercised the inalienable right to think for themselves, untrammelled by either tradition or prejudice. It is a comprehensive history of such Freethinkers from earliest times down to our own that Mr. J. M. Robertson presents to us in the work now under review. When it first appeared in 1899, it was in one volume of less than five hundred pages; but in the third edition it has been expanded into two volumes of about five hundred pages each. Considering the lengthy period and the number of countries which it covers, it still answers to its original title of *A Short History of Freethought*. It has the merit of being the first work of the kind, on strictly scientific lines, written by a thoroughly Freethinker, and dedicated to another equally thoroughgoing. In estimating its worth, it is essential to bear in mind the incalculable amount of

original research, in all sorts of almost inaccessible fields, that must have been accomplished before the writing of such a work, crammed with an infinite wealth of information, became possible; and we sincerely congratulate the author upon the magnificently successful manner in which he has performed his stupendously difficult task.

Mr. Robertson's definition of Freethought is worth quoting:—

"For practical purposes Freethought may be defined as a conscious reaction against some phase or phases of the conventional or traditional doctrine in religion—on the one hand, a claim to think freely, in the sense not of disregard for logic, but of special loyalty to it, on problems to which the past course of things has given a great intellectual and practical importance; on the other hand, the actual practice of such thinking" (vol. i., p. 9).

Such being the nature of Freethought in its special bearing on religion, the aim of this History is thus described:—

"In the present sketch, framed though it be from the rationalistic standpoint, it is proposed to draw up not a counter indictment, but a more or less dispassionate account of the main historical phases of Freethought, viewed on the one hand as expressions of the rational or critical spirit, playing on the subject-matter of religion, and on the other hand as sociological phenomena conditioned by social forces, in particular the economic and political" (*Ibid*, p. 15).

Of course, Freethought derives its significance from the fact that religious thought is conventional and traditional, and, consequently, in no true sense free, though at one time exceedingly orthodox. Faith and knowledge are always at strife, though in the end knowledge gloriously prevails. Faith is at its strongest when knowledge is at its weakest; and in proportion as knowledge grows, faith declines. In primitive times the growth of Freethought was painfully slow because the general ignorance was so dense, and this is still the case among savages; but even in the most primitive times there were those, however few, who disbelieved the popular religion, and disbelieved it in the name of the little knowledge they possessed. Well, it was during this time of primal stupidity that religion took root and began to grow, and when it was fairly well developed the progress of Freethought became more rapid, though only for comparatively short periods at a time. "Early Rationalism, in short, would share in the fluctuations of early civilisation; and achievements of thought would repeatedly be swept away, even as were the achievements of the constructive arts." It was in India, perhaps, that the most signal instance of this process was witnessed. In ancient times there the two main cults of Agni and Indra prevailed side by side, and in combination with these was the worship of other deities too numerous to mention just now. The worship of so great a multiplicity of gods tended to discredit all the cults alike. There was such a chaotic medley of cults that, as Mr. Robertson observes, doubt was cast upon them all in the eyes of the thoughtful. Even the priests themselves doubted, and the laity, indubitably, largely followed the priestly example. Corresponding to the Greek Dionysus, Soma was the Indian God of Wine, whose chief business, however, was to fling all the doubting and irreligious folk into the abyss. For a period the people were, under the Brahmanic law, the most priest-ridden in the world. But about the fifth century B.C. the Sankhya philosophy arose, which claimed the name of "lordless" or "atheistic" as its distinctive title. There was a complete revolution of thought throughout the country, and in the Sutra period the hymns of the Veda lost all their supernaturalist meaning. As Mr. Robertson puts it:—

"In short, every form of critical revolt against incredible doctrine that has arisen in later Europe, had taken place in ancient India long before the Alexandrian conquest. And the same attitude continued to be common within the post-Alexandrian period; for Panini, who must apparently be dated then, was acquainted with infidels and nihilists; and the teaching of Brihaspati, on which was founded the system of the Kharvakas

—apparently one of several sections of a Freethinking school called the Lokayatas or Lokayatikas—is extremely destructive of Vedic pretensions" (*Ibid*, pp. 52, 53).

For many centuries India, under Buddhism, was the peaceful home of Atheism, which was carried by numerous zealous missionaries into many other countries, with the result that even to-day, according to statistics cited by Professor Rhys Davids in his *Buddhism* (p. 6), there are 500,000,000 Buddhists in the world.

We have no space in which to trace the varying fortunes of Freethought in Mesopotamia, Ancient Persia, Egypt, Phœnicia, Ancient China, Mexico, and Peru; but we are profoundly impressed by the fact that the practice of the art of criticism helps to improve religion both intellectually and ethically, and that, often, by reducing the number of its supernatural beliefs and by recharging its moral enthusiasm. As Mr. Robertson remarks, "Wherever conduct is a matter of sheer obedience to a supernatural code, it is *ipso facto* uncritical and unprogressive." As a matter of fact, supernatural belief, however fervently held, has not, as such, been productive of an elevated moral tone, or an ennobling aspiration. "Indeed, the singular diversity between profession and practice among Christians has in all periods called out declarations by the more fervid believers that their average fellow-Christians are 'practical Atheists.'" They are not, as a rule, but the intensity of their faith does not necessarily impart moral passion to them. As Bryce puts it (*Holy Roman Empire*, p. 134): "Resistance to God's Vicar might be, and, indeed, was admitted to be, a deadly sin, but it was one which nobody hesitated to commit." The same thing exactly is true of disobedience to God; it is acknowledged to be a heinous offence, but nobody hesitates to be guilty of it. The only effective sanction of morality is its exceeding reasonableness, and the reasonableness of it tells only when practically enforced by a strong social sense developed by precept and practice.

(To be concluded.) J. T. LLOYD.

The Voices of the Stars.

Glendower.—At my nativity
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
Of burning cressets; and at my birth,
The frame and huge foundation of the earth
Shaked like a coward.

Hotspur.—Why, so it would have done
At the same season, if your mother's cat had
But kittened, though yourself had ne'er been born."
—SHAKESPEARE, *Henry IV.*

THOMAS MOORE, the poet, was nearly choked with indignation by being asked by a lady at dinner how he got his forecasts for his Almanac. Yet the fact remains that "Old Moore," the prophet, counts more readers to-day than the author of *Lalla Rookh*, a poem much admired on publication, and for which the poet received ten thousand pounds.

It used to be said that prophecy found a man mad, or left him so; but an exception must be made in the case of "Old Moore," the most genial of prophets, whose Almanac is known to everybody. Not long ago, there rose up, in an idle week, the old newspaper dispute over the names of the twenty greatest men now alive and famous. Reputations tossed and rose and fell. There were odd folk who were not quite sure about Mr. Lloyd George. Over the merits of the Bishop of London and Mr. Horatio Bottomley there were unkind comparisons; but none of the correspondents ever questioned the right of "Old Moore" to be considered a great man.

His is a fame that flourishes wherever the English language is spoken. He has shown to hundreds of thousands the vision of the future, and he has carefully observed the secret of anonymity. As for the public, the prophet serves us well. His manly utterances set us right at the moment when a new bacillus has put us in bodily fear; when we are anxious

over the coming eclipse, or the press-gang screams over the inadequacy of the defences of the country.

"Old Moore's" Almanac for the coming year suggests that the "voices of the stars" are very clamorous. The prophet's principal hieroglyphic for 1916 is a fearsome and a wonderful sight. To the uninitiated onlooker the chief features seem absolutely weird. In the top corner is a picture of the British lion, weary and war-worn, apparently making a meal from a heap of cannon-balls. Next to him is a bishop with a wooden leg, whilst a good-sized angel appears to be about to polish the episcopal silk hat. The accompanying letterpress conveys the distressful information that "the Church will be in some danger," and, presumably, upon its last legs. The foreground shows a soldier, wearing a German helmet, gazing at a large mirror, in which may be seen a figure of death. Near at hand is a group of women standing round a greasy pole and watching the efforts of a "flapper" to reach a soldier, who sits up aloft. The remainder of the drawing shows the Russian bear wheeling a coster's barrow, and a truly harrowing picture of the dove of peace, transfixed by an arrow, and resting upon a dilapidated sundial.

This artistic combination, "Old Moore" informs us, "is full of ominous significance"; but, lest any reader should get cold feet in consequence, the prophet concludes his remarks with the inspiring words, "God Save the King." The dozen smaller cartoons, thoughtfully provided for the twelve months of the year, supply considerable food for reflection, and amplify the large picture. From the accompanying letterpress we learn that "we are all passing along the milestones of life," and that "a great statesman" will shuffle off this mortal coil in April. More saddening still, "reckless girls" will do much "wanton destruction" in July, and "the police will have a very hard time of it" in the same month. "A very great lady" will be beckoned from the stage of life in December, but the medical profession will do their best to keep her in this vale of tears.

Of more interest to our readers is the forecast for April, when the prophet suggests that considerable discussion will take place on religious matters. Shareholders in breweries and others will note with alarm that further curtailment of the hours for drinking will take effect in August, a time of the year provocative of thirst. Lest this calamity should induce pessimism, we hasten to point out that there will be a "little boom in stocks" in September, and in October "we may enjoy some glorious weather."

"Old Moore" should know something about the stars, for he has been in active communion with them for over two hundred years. At least one of the editions of his Almanac claims to be in its 219th year, whilst another is said to have a circulation of over a million copies annually. It is true that the name of "Francis Moore, Physician," is not in the Medical Directory, but, probably on account of his great age, he is on the retired list. He must have seen many ups and downs during his interesting career, having started in business as a prophet prior to the reign of good Queen Anne.

There are so many people out walking in the street who are celebrities, that it is a novelty to find a prophet whose features are veiled. In this Bagdad of ours no Haroun al Raschid can venture abroad undistinguished. But "Old Moore's" fame is still safe without his portrait being reproduced in the half-penny newspapers. Let all other prophets give us as careful and comforting anticipations, and there will be an end of the slump in prophecy.

MIMNERMUS.

The Air and Water Currents of the Earth.

IN his clearly written work, *The Earth: Its Life and Death*,* the eminent oceanographer, Professor Alphonse Berget, compares the various phenomena

* G. P. Putnam's, London and New York. 1915.

which make up our planet's existence with the functions of a living organism. Just as the blood circulates through an animal's body, and much as the sap circulates in plants, so our earthly residence is provided with its own special modes of circulation.

The earth's crust, and also its interior regions, display an electrical circulation. And to all the multitudinous modes of life which dwell in the air, on the land, and in the rivers, lakes, and seas, the circulatory movements of the hydrosphere, as the waters of the world are called, and those of the atmosphere which everywhere environs us, are demonstrably of measureless importance. Although atmospheric and hydrospheric phenomena are inseparably associated, and act and react upon each other in the closest relationship, it is perhaps advisable in the interests of clearer exposition to study them separately at the outset, for in this way their truly inseparable character will then stand out all the more strikingly in the sequel.

The terrestrial atmosphere—at all events those layers of it that surround us—is composed of 78 per cent. nitrogen, 21 per cent. oxygen, and 1 per cent. of argon, while it also contains very tiny traces of those extremely rare gases, neon, xenon, krypton, as well as hydrogen and helium. Two gaseous compounds, carbonic acid (carbon-dioxide), and water vapor, which are likewise present in the atmosphere, perform sterling functions, inasmuch as they serve to maintain the earth's surface temperature by preventing excessive radiation. The proportion of hydrogen and helium in the atmosphere constantly increases as we ascend into the upper regions of the air until at its greatest heights, what little atmosphere there is, is formed by 99 per cent. hydrogen and 1 per cent. helium.

These various aerial substances are controlled by two forces. The earth's rotation subjects them to the influences of centrifugal force, which tends to drive them into space, while our globe's gravitational powers tend to bind them to the earth's surface-surroundings. Again, the several constituents of the atmosphere are ceaselessly exposed to the heating influences of the sun. The best absorbent of the solar rays is water vapor, and this substance consequently becomes the chief agent in raising the temperature of the air when this stores up the energy it receives from the sun.

Now, if our planet's surface conditions were alike throughout, instead of being what they are, partly soil and partly sea, and if the earth's rotation were perpendicular to the plane of its orbit, instead of being inclined, its temperature would be uniform throughout its entire area, with the trifling exception of the varying quantities of heat received owing to the earth's least or greatest distance from the sun.

The path pursued by our planet in its annual journey round the sun is not a circle, but an ellipse, so that the earth is three million miles nearer to its luminary at one period of the year (perihelion) than at another (aphelion), its average distance being about ninety-three million miles.

With the above reservation we may assert that if the earth's surface were made up of some homogeneous material, and its axis were perpendicular to the plane, so that it travelled in an upright position, there would be equal days and nights of twelve hours each all the year round in every part of the earth. The sun would then constantly appear vertically overhead at the equator. The hottest weather would be experienced at the equatorial surfaces upon which the solar rays would exercise their maximum power. But the temperature would fall with steady regularity as we approached the poles, where the sun's rays, just reaching the surface, would confer no heating power at all. There would therefore appear no seasonal change, and the different climates of the earth's regions would vary in strict accordance with their proximity to the tropical belt. As a matter of fact, however, the conditions which govern our atmospheric phenomena are far more

complex than these. To begin with, the earth's axial rotation is not upright. It is inclined at an angle of $23\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ from the vertical, and it is to this inclination that we owe the changes of our seasons. To this inclination, then, is due not only the spring, summer, autumn, and winter of the revolving years, but the accompanying inequalities of the nights and days. To the same phenomenon is likewise traceable the arrangement of the earth's surface into geographical zones: the Equatorial or Torrid Zone, the two Frigid Zones, whose centres are respectively the North and South Poles, and the two Temperate Zones, which embrace all the regions which lie between the two Frigid Zones and the Torrid Zone.

The unequal distribution of land and water adds a further factor, which must not be neglected in reviewing the earth's differing climates. Nearly three-fourths of the earth's area is occupied by water, while the land presents markedly dissimilar features, which include huge mountain masses, extensive valleys, plateaux of considerable elevation, deep depressions, and desert wastes. Then there exist pronounced variations in the nature of the soil itself, and, consequently, in its power to absorb solar energy. And, as a result of this, the temperature of the neighboring air will vary with the varying nature of the earth on which it rests.

The influence of the oceans on local atmospheric conditions is much more easily estimated, as the sea surfaces are composed of like substance, and are normally destitute of irregularity. According to theory, fairly stable atmospheric states should be found over the great waters, such as the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, the Southern Seas, and, above all, the vast Pacific Ocean. Now, these assumed states do actually exist, and to these phenomena a small space may be devoted.

The sun shines most fiercely in the Tropical regions, for twice a year the solar orb appears immediately overhead at true noon, when its heating power is at its maximum. The solar rays falling vertically to the earth raise its temperature enormously, as the lower layers of the atmosphere contain a much larger quantity of water, vapor, and dust particles in suspension, and thus absorb more fully the heat sent from the sun. These are the two chief reasons of the intense temperature of the tropical belt. Professor Berget states:—

"By means of instruments called bolometers the quantity of heat thus received annually by the equatorial belt has been measured. It has been found that it is sufficient to vaporise a layer of water four metres [12.2 feet] deep covering the same area. Now, meteorologists, on the other hand, have determined by means of observations extending over numerous years the average yearly quantity of rain which falls on the equatorial belt; it is represented by a layer of water two metres [7.5 feet] in depth. Even admitting that the whole of this water was vaporised by the solar heat, and that none of it worked into the soil on which it fell, it is obvious that after complete vaporisation there would remain a surplus quantity of heat sufficient to vaporise as much again."

Nature turns this surplus heat to account in another direction. This heat is utilised to raise to an even greater intensity the already high temperature of the tropical atmosphere. This immensely heated air is extremely light, and therefore ascends to considerable heights. And in the Torrid Zone this phenomenon is not intermittent but invariable, as the generator of this great convection current—the heating power of the sun—is in constant operation. This circumstance has far-reaching influences on the world's weather, for, in consequence of the ascension of these extremely attenuated volumes of heated air into the upper regions of the equatorial atmosphere, there is left along the earth's tropical surface a region of low pressure where there is a marked deficiency of air. As the outcome of this, from the regions of high pressure which contain a surplus of air, in other words, from the Temperate and Frigid Zones, the cold heavy air flows towards the Tropics to take the place of the superheated air

that has risen to the upper equatorial atmospheric strata. If the earth were motionless, then northerly winds would be normal in the northern hemisphere, and southerly winds would blow in the southern hemisphere, as the air currents flowing towards the equator from their respective hemispheres would blow from the south in the one case, and from the north in the other.

But the earth revolves on its axis in an easterly direction. In virtue of this, all objects on the globe's surface are ever journeying towards the east. The greatest rapidity of this motion is experienced at the equator, a circle which measures 25,000 miles in circumference, and the complete rotation of which within twenty-four hours is equivalent, so far as any particular spot at the equator is concerned, to a velocity of over 1,000 miles an hour, or about 17 miles per minute. This rate of easterly movement becomes steadily less with the diminishing magnitude of the parallels of latitude. Many remember, and possibly some have forgotten, that a parallel of latitude is a circle passing round the earth from west to east, every part of which is at an equal distance from the equator. In other terms, were a line drawn round our globe so as to connect all places which lie at the same distance from the equator, it would necessarily be parallel to the equator. Such a line is therefore a parallel of latitude. Under a parallel of 60° —the latitude of London is $51\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ north of the equator—at a latitude of 60° then, a circle of 12,000 miles only, or less than half the measure of the equator, is rotated within the same period of twenty-four hours which gives at any given spot a rate of motion of only 500 miles an hour, while at the poles themselves actual motion vanishes.

It therefore follows that the air in circulation, that is, the wind, which travels over the earth's surface towards the equator is constantly reaching places which are rotating at a quicker rate than itself. Hence the air current will lag behind; it must, consequently, to the north of the tropics, be deflected towards the left, while the air arriving from the southern hemisphere will be deflected towards the right. Thus both currents will tend to blow from an easterly quarter. Since, as we have seen, the wind north of the equator is subject to the influence of two forces—one pulling it south, and the other drawing it west—it is compelled by the combined forces to flow in an intermediate direction, that is, from north-east to south-west. Similarly, the air currents moving from the south towards the equator will blow from south-east to north-west. We should find, then, north-east winds to the north of the equator, and south-east winds to the south of it. All scientific observations support this reasoning.

These air currents render invaluable aid to the merchant marine, and are therefore termed Trade Winds. They carried the sailing-ships of Columbus on his immortal voyage of discovery, and many a succeeding navigator has blessed them for their help. The paths pursued by these constant currents are now completely known. Maury, the gifted pioneer of oceanography, prepared the first monthly maps which made available to mariners an acquaintance with those ocean routes, which lessened by half the time previously spent in long voyages in the old sailing-vessels.

Those masses of heated air, previously mentioned, which are drawn up by the solar rays into the upper tropical atmosphere travel towards the Poles and slowly descend as they cool, thus supplying the place of the air from the Temperate and Frigid regions which has flown towards the equator. These winds are known as the anti-trade winds. Their existence may be easily ascertained in Western Europe, particularly when the ground current is blowing from the east or north-east. Those beautiful cloud-forms called cirrus clouds appear at a much greater height than any others and, in the northern hemisphere, always travel from the south-west towards the north-east. During the splendid weather

recently experienced in England the prevailing winds were easterly, yet nearly all the clouds that passed over the sky were cirrus clouds, which moved across in opposition to the earth currents, and represented the condensed vapor arising from solar activity originally exercised in the far distant tropics.

(To be continued.) T. F. PALMER.

The Red Trail.

NATURE was enjoying an afternoon nap. The heat had worn away the hem of her impetuosity. She was sleepy. The air, drowsily full of the humming of bees, and unmolested by the spirits of the wind, had drawn around her a mantle of somnolent softness, that her slumbers might be quiet and peaceful. Even the burn slept sluggishly in the shadows of the young firs and raspberry bushes. And the hills, if one could have seen them, were leaning against the haze, their cheeks pressed close to the bosoms of their misty lovers. Grouse and pheasants, and hares and rabbits populated the woods and hills; but all of them had snuggled down into the heather and tufted grass and bracken, to dream the hours away, or had disappeared into the cool recesses of the foliage to forget for a little that they had lived.

Warfare and the struggle to exist had apparently ceased. Nature proclaiming a truce, gave her children the happiness of peace; and one would have thought that the sturdy young firs revelled in the embraces of the fruit-laden rasp bushes they were destined, some day, to extirpate.

Two people lazily reclined on a thickly grassed bank that sloped gently down from the fringe of the wood to the water. The girl, her feet resting on a strayed rock, was busily engaged endeavoring to pull pleasure from a cigarette. Unlike her environment, she was energetically awake. A magazine, war-red from cover to cover, lay in her lap. Her eyes were glued to the reeking print, and the smoke issued between her lips in quick puffs. Her chum watched the gyrations of midges as they hurled themselves in consternation from this pipe-fog, while he thought over the contents of the book that now formed his pillow. Blissfully content to be alive, carelessly observant of the day-long labors of the insects, and amused at the horrible tragedy of a soulless life, such as his own was, and the vast array of mental misconceptions to which he offered a respect that was nothing, as the author implied, but dogged ignorance, he was yet an unconscious element of strife.

Fanned by journalistic realism, and blown upon by the clamorous breeze of patriotism, the spirit of his companion, or the flames of the war fever in her heart, were rapidly becoming dangerous. Suddenly she sat up, and tossed her loose hair from her shoulders.

"Oh, I wish I were a man!"

He stretched himself into a more comfortable position, and the movement was like kerosene poured over a fire.

"I said I wish, wish, wish I were a man."

"Yes."

"I want to fight the beastly Germans. I want to help to pulverise them; to stamp them out; to help to make the world forget they ever existed. They are not fit to live; not fit even to be remembered as bogies. Their methods of war are so utterly disgusting that no sensible man can possibly refuse to condemn them. They are barbaric brutes, absolute cannibals who practically eat human flesh. It makes one's blood boil. Haven't you read about their treatment of prisoners, and women and children, and their own wounded? The brutes! Even the earth is sick of them and shudders when they fall into it!"

Her pal closed his eyes as if to shut out the peaceful beauties of nature. Everywhere this terrible war spirit burst into fire. It invaded territories wholly antagonistic to its influence. It bombarded citadels built by the hands and brains of men, fortresses of the future, that it destroyed callously and ruthlessly

till the labor of years were masses of ugly debris. It permeated the pages of books whose ideas and visions were spun on the loom of peace, and whose teachings had no truths for times of war. It sneered at justice and reason. It laughed at humanism. It opened the sluices of reactionary thought and deed; and nowhere was peace found; for his mind had become as a mirror that reflected the flames of fear and hate, and it needed but a word to turn the mirror to the glare.

Right into the quiet heart of nature the spirit of war had come, with its paroxysm of grief and tawdry glory; and the charm had evaporated like a dewdrop sparkling on a leaf of grass in the sunrays. It had assailed the quietude of repose with its blatant shrieking and shouting. He could hear the yells of agony, see the flowing blood, smell the reek of gore; he could experience the mad joy of murder, and the sullen astonishment of the man who is hit; he could feel the unconquerable nerves that shook and shivered, that danced and sang, that grew greyer in a sodden patience unending in the intensity of its possibilities. He became old and neurotic; young and daredevilish; sick and feeble and weary; lusty as a sea-gale, full of an unknown, powerful vitality. He felt the mingled sorrow and pleasure, the grief for him who had grandly died for his country and his people, and the heart-pain that robbed the pleasure in crape. He felt it all, and behind his closed eyelids a film of moisture burned and passed.

He saw the trail of blood and tears stretching away out through the days that were yet to be, the festering sores on the body social, the tired ailing feet, the corruptions of the mind manifesting their presence on the face and in the eyes of society. The abstraction had long since become a personal reality. Society was a fellowman with a life similar to his own: he was a Humanist.

"Speak, can't you? Why do you lie there like a dog?" she said, after a few moments of silence.

He opened his eyes, and looked around. Nature was still the same happy, sleepy, beautiful mass of seeming amities. Obviously, Nature cared not a straw for man's foolishly tragic playing. Apparently she was quite indifferent whether man profited by her teachings or not. Nature, as a whole, seemed remotely apart from the warrings of her several children. As an entity in herself, she appeared uncognisant of the turmoil of her opposing offspring. It mattered not very much to her that animals fought for their lives against each other; that plants struggled with each other for the privilege of being consumed by hungry insects; that the song of the bird should be merged in the satisfied grunt of a beast that lived but as fodder for a stronger cousin. Nature smiled complacently.

Perhaps Humanity took its characteristics from the larger all-embracing Nature, and smiled at the deadly disputes of its integral parts. Humanity lived, although these died. But man's reason intervened. Man could think. Man could act, if he willed powerfully enough, contrary to the forces of Nature. He could make these forces his servants. He could understand and control them. He need not be a brute. Surely there were more rational ways of attacking brutes than by using brutish methods. In any case, whether it was more reasonable to assail the hidden roots of an evil than to divert all one's attention to the stem and foliage and fruit, forgetting that the life of a habit lay in its roots? There were times, seasons, when the leaves fell, and the stem withered. There were periods when it seemed as if the plant had died; but in season and out of season the roots drew nourishment from Nature, and lived in the dark, ever ready to renew their youth, to spread forth their foliage, to blossom, and to fructify. Were the roots more important at all times than the green glory, the blood-red blossoms, and the bitter fruit?

"Yes," he said; "I could speak for months, and it would all be useless. You are on the red trail, Mainie. Everything you say is true from your view-point; from mine, it is equally true and false."

You are right according to the present. I am right according to the future. Were I incarcerated for life, with no hope of freedom, I should still be a Humanist, thinking more of the permanent than the ephemeral. Practically, I am imprisoned now; yet it makes no difference. When one is on the red trail the present suffices. But I am on the long lone trail; and every aspect of every custom, of every deed, of every thought, reflects and is transformed by the golden sheen that gleams from the always distant future."

"You're a hopelessly impossible dreamer."

"I am."

ROBERT MORELAND.

Acid Drops.

Miss Marie Corelli says that she has been called an Atheist by people who have never read a line she has written. If our services are of any value to the lady, we beg to assure all and sundry that there is not the slightest word of truth in the allegation. Anyone who has read her books will realise that no Atheist could have written them. Whatever may be brought against Atheism, it is not open to that charge. Miss Corelli says that if she lived a thousand lives in a thousand different worlds, nothing could shake her faith in God. Hear! hear! Although, when one comes to think, if most people lived through half-a-dozen lives in half-a-dozen worlds, it might be enough to confirm their faith. Miss Corelli goes at it the other way about—some people would say the wrong end up.

According to the daily papers quite a roaring trade is being done in fortune-telling just now. Thousands of people are anxious to gain tidings of those belonging to them in the Army, and under the stress of the War the latest superstition of the people is showing itself. Some sand, or tea-leaves, or some ink, or a crystal, is all that is necessary as a stock-in-trade, and a number of credulous women furnish the clientele. We presume this is one of the evidences of the growth of religious feeling as a consequence of the War.

Dr. Dixon has returned to London from America, and reports that one thing that surprised him was the revival of religion in the United States. One might have counted on that. Was there ever a time when a parson returned from a preaching tour without finding a wonderful revival of religion? It is always occurring, and yet somehow or other the number of the non-religious steadily increases. The parson sees it all with the eye of faith.

The Rev. Dr. Orchard is convinced that the intellect craves for religion. The intellect! All he really means is his intellect, and that is really not enough on which to base a universal proposition. There are millions of people in the world who have no such craving. To pass by ordinary people—a poet like Shelley, a reformer like Garibaldi or Bradlaugh, a scientist like Darwin, a novelist like George Eliot or Meredith, a philosopher like Spencer, a musician like Wagner, had no such craving. Are all these to be set on one side because Dr. Orchard's intellect craves for religion? Dr. Orchard should bethink himself that a craving can prove no more than its own existence. There is a craving for whiskey, and yet teetotalers are not abashed. A craving is an indication of taste, of education, of temperament; it is no use whatever as a test of truth. And yet Dr. Orchard is one of the philosophers of the religious world!

Here is a touching appeal from the agony column of the Times: "Advertiser would like to hear from a man of the world who, having overcome religious doubts, is now firmly convinced of a future existence." We wonder if Mr. Bostomey has replied.

Under the heading of "The Pipe in War," the *Daily News* has an account of the distribution of tobacco among troops by the Young Men's Christian Association. It looks as if the Christian religion were ending in smoke.

"Clothes make the man," says the proverb. Adam and Eve would have denied the soft impeachment.

Professor J. C. Boso, of Calcutta, has made some discoveries which tend to show that plants and trees have a

nervous system, and are responsive to external conditions in the same manner as human beings. This is interesting! What agonies the apple-tree in Eden must have endured!

The incumbent of Henry Ward Beecher's Church, Plymouth, recently informed his congregation that he intended pursuing a new path. He had, he said, hitherto given his time and attention to business and material prosperity, with the result that he owed about \$90,000, and now recognised that he had strayed from the path a minister should follow. The preacher's voice, the newspaper report says, choked with emotion, and at the end of his sermon he wiped the tears from his eyes. His business speculations had been unfortunate, so that it does not seem necessary to travel far to discover the cause of his repentance. We wonder what would have happened if the \$90,000 had represented a profit instead of a loss? In that case, we suspect, he would have returned thanks to God for his manifold kindness, and still pursued the even, and profitable, tenor of his way.

The modern Bible prophets have been exercising their ingenuity in trying to prove that the German Kaiser is the "beast" mentioned in "Revelation." Their predecessors in the same line of business professed to identify the great Napoleon, and later Napoleon the Third, in the same way.

How these Christians love one another! A row took place at the German Church, Brompton-road, London, because the service was conducted in German, and some uninvited English visitors objected. Perhaps the pastor will petition the Throne of Grace in Volapuk.

Speaking at the autumnal meeting of the Congregational Union at Leeds, the Rev. W. B. Selbie said, "It would not matter much whether their theology was new or old." Presumably, the main thing is the steady flow of threepenny bits in the collection bags.

Hair-cuts are costing more owing to the War. Let us hope it will not cause a revival of the tonsorial fashions in use in Galilee in the times of Christ.

M. Paul Sabatier, though himself a clergyman, has a very low opinion of the French Church. In an interview granted to the *Christian Commonwealth*, he admits that there is a revival of religion going on in France, but asserts that it "has not come through the Church." The revival he describes has really nothing technically religious about it, being a revival merely of the spirit of patriotism and brotherhood. In this sense the soldiers are "too religious to care for sermons," and for the same reason they "sometimes refuse to accept the New Testaments which are given to them, and will not listen to the sermons." In any case, the Churches do not count, while the religion advocated by Sabatier is not materially different from Secularism.

Viscount Esher says "we are all actors in this great tragedy" of the War. Surely not all! Some are merely supers—like the clergy who console the girls the other fellows have left behind.

The Rev. A. T. Guttery wishes the Theological College to be closed to enable the students to assist in the Young Men's Christian Association huts for soldiers. As these dwellings have billiard tables, the theological students might finish up as billiard-markers.

A new book has been published with the alluring title, *The Devil's Mistress*. Surely it is high time that Satan had sowed his wild oats.

The Archbishop of York, in a letter to the diocese, says that "now is the time for British people to show the stuff of which it is made. We have too long had a false ideal of freedom." What would this bellicose follower of the Prince of Peace say if the Government compelled all the clergy of military age to join the colors as real soldiers?

The Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke, M.A., of the Hampstead Garden City Free Church, says "it is terrible that after nearly two thousand years of Christianity, we should be involved in a vast war"; but he finds "significance in the pathetic hope which all nations entertain, which even cynical statesmen find it necessary to encourage, that this may be the last." Such a result can only be ensured, the reverend gentleman adds, by "a complete change of spirit and temper," and to effect such a change "God

himself is needed, and he alone is equal to the vast task." But is not Mr. Rushbrooke aware that God is the Ancient of Days, and has been in the world from the beginning? Has the task been too vast even for the Almighty? To say that "a complete change of spirit and temper" is needed is equivalent to admitting either that the Lord is not equal to the task, or that he has culpably neglected to perform it. In either case, the only possible inference is that there is no God.

Once upon a time the Rev. R. J. Campbell used the vocabulary of common sense, but he now talks like a medicine-man—perhaps fortified by the possibility of a bishopric in the future. Preaching on the "Mons Angels," he said he could not dismiss the story as impossible, for since that time the nation had been roused. Roused to laughter would have been more correct.

A number of people have asked the question why the Mons angels did not interfere in time to save the soldiers who were killed? Mr. R. J. Campbell, who knows considerably more about things in heaven than about anything on earth, replies that the purpose of "Divine intervention" is not to save lives, but to save souls. "And no one could deny that since then the soul of the nation had been roused." The worst of these preachers is that they make their own people look such a poor lot. The "soul" of Belgium could be roused without angelic intervention. So could that of Italy, and of France, and of Russia. Poor old Britain alone was so far gone that it needed an angelic vision to save her. We do not say so, but that is the only inference we can draw from Mr. Campbell's apology.

"Clergyman as Stoker" was a headline in the press. It suggests that he had gone to the place he so often preached of.

Sir Malcolm Morris says that "indulgence in luxury was constructive treason during war-time." To avoid being shot in the Tower of London, the dear bishops had better disband their flunkies and sell their motors.

The Salvation Army has been reporting very large numbers of their men as being at the Front; but official figures have just been given by Lord Newton, in response to an application for the appointment of chaplains from that organisation. Lord Newton says that there are not more than 13,000 in the Army, so that the inflated figures supplied to the public have now received correction. But one may trust the S. A. not to be niggardly in the matter of figures when it is advertising itself.

"In the trenches," says the *Daily News*, "where there is religion at all the religion is one." *Where there is religion at all!* That is a very unkind way of putting it after the Bishop of London and others depicting the soldiers as being brimful of religion and crying out for more chaplains to be appointed.

The Rev. Dr. Selbie says that the Christian Church only touches the fringe of the population. So long as it is the wealthy fringe, we do not think they will worry very much.

Mr. Harold Begbie is hurt that the *Church Times* should charge him with "unlimited credulity." But the charge is quite of his own fault. A really clever man who intended "working" the Mons business would have put in a doubt here and there, so as to lull the suspicions of the more critical, and make even the credulous place more value upon his support. But Mr. Begbie was in such a hurry that he overdid it. He swallowed everything, and seemed ready to bolt any more that happened to be forthcoming. And that was really not wise. Such amazing credulity as that professed by Mr. Begbie would have made even a Hottentot a little suspicious.

The puff preliminary of a new book, entitled *The Man, Jesus*, states that Christ was "the most extraordinary figure in history." Remembering that he was three persons rolled in one, this is not astonishing.

Those universal providers, the Young Men's Christian Association, are now supplying "threepenny baths" for soldiers. In former days they professed to wash men in the "blood of the Lamb" without money and without price.

Writing on the need of soldiers, a correspondent of the *Daily Mail* says, "We have six-feet curates handing round

afternoon tea in drawing-rooms." And he might have added, thousands of "soldiers" in the Church and Salvation Armies who only fight the Kaiser with their mouths.

It appears that Christians, after all, are the real "intellectuals." The Rev. F. W. Andrews says that their "mental perplexities are many." Just so! The dogma of the Trinity ought to give an elephant a headache—and there are other "perplexities."

The clergy seem to be divided in opinion as to whether the present War is favorable to the Christian superstition or otherwise. Many profess satisfaction, but the Rev. F. W. Andrews, speaking recently at Southend-on-Sea, said "there had been no revival of religion in this country." Perhaps the man in the street recollects that Christians profess to worship the Prince of Peace.

The *Daily Chronicle* quotes from a German religious organ to the effect that—

"the War is in consonance with the plans of Divine Providence, and points out that the Almighty, in permitting its long duration, is simply following a definite and fore-ordained scheme. War is the scourge of God, and from time to time he wields this scourge for the benefit of his creatures. He purges them with death and famine, and continues this salutary process until they return to him repentant. For this reason war has been permitted in the Divine order of things from the beginning of time, and will continue until the end of time."

This is only what a number of our preachers are saying. If Germans are under the delusion that religious stupidity is all on their side of the North Sea, we can assure them they are mistaken. When it comes to that kind of thing Great Britain can hold its own with the greatest of ease.

The rice-Christian is a familiar figure in the mission field, and the people who attend churches for the coals and blankets at Christmas are not unknown nearer home. Something of the kind is happening in the Trenches. A French officer saw a huge African soldier wearing religious medals on his breast. "Are you a Catholic?" asked the astonished officer. "Yes," said the man, with a grin. "More religion, more coffee in the canteen."

Bishop Gore says he can tolerate almost anything more easily "than the voices of those who make this War a reproach against God, or a reason for disbelieving in God." We do not doubt it for a moment; for disbelieving in God means also disbelieving in *him*. And that is a serious outlook indeed.

The most common question asked in the street, train, or club, and especially at the Front, is, "How much longer will the War last?" says the *Daily Mail*, and professes to answer the question by saying, "There is only one that can tell to a day when the War will cease, and that is the Great Architect of the universe." Dear, Dear! And he's not on the telephone!

The *Sunday Pictorial* complains that the salaries paid to Cabinet Ministers are "fantastic" in time of war, and that their continuance is "a scandal." £5,000 is the average figure. What does our contemporary think of the salaries of the Archbishop of Canterbury, £15,000; the Archbishop of York, £10,000; and the Bishop of London, £10,000?

The World-War is not the sole concern of Providence, and recently a hurricane caused the deaths of 256 persons in Mississippi and Louisiana. There was considerable damage over a wide area. His loving kindness is over all his works.

The Dean of Durham, preaching at Nicolas Cole Abbey, E.C., said there had been demands for reprisals in the present War, which hardly had a Christian sound, and for vengeance, which was plainly anti-Christian. The poor Dean has our sympathy. It must be difficult to reconcile the "maxims" used by Christian soldiers and the maxims of Christ.

Time works wonders. In Queen Victoria's days the yellow-back novel aroused mixed feelings in the breasts of the orthodox. Recently, several clergymen officiated at the unveiling of a memorial at Richmond to the late Miss Braddon, the novelist, who wrote seventy sensational stories. A text on the memorial announces, "The Lord preserveth the souls of His saints." Will there be yellow-back novels in the next world?

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Received from March 15: Previously acknowledged, £151 13s. 4d. Received since:—"Somewhere in France," £1; P. Hertz, 2s. 6d.; G. B. Taylor, £2; L. Gjemre (Newcastle-on-Tyne), £5; V. Caunter, £1 1s.; E. Parker, 2s. 6d.; T. W. Love, 5s; Sergeant of the British Army and Wife, 10s. 6d. Per Miss Vance: Postman (second contribution), 2s. 6d.

T. J. DAVIES.—Very pleased to hear of the good results of Mr. Cohen's lectures at Abertillery.

J. O. HARDING.—We are not at all surprised that the soldier's letter from which you quote, and written immediately after the Battle of Mons, makes no mention of the angels. As a matter of fact, none of them did. The vision was invented for them.—Paley's work was never much more than a piece of clever special pleading. Butler's Analogy is a far more important, and a more robust, production; but the controversy with which it deals is now out of date. Its value is now almost entirely historical. His sermons on morals, on the other hand, will well repay careful reading, even to-day. You can, of course, disregard the theological implications.

G. B. TAYLOR, in enclosing cheque towards the President's Honorarium Fund, hopes that the Freethinkers of this country will "buck up," and give the Freethinker the support it deserves. Our correspondent need not fear that there is any immediate question of the Freethinker ceasing to exist. It is a question of the whole of the party sharing a burden which has become more than usually heavy owing to causes with which everyone is now acquainted.

"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE."—Best of luck, and thanks for good wishes.

P. B. FAITH.—In spite of all you say, we do not think that raising the price of the Freethinker would be a wise step. At any rate, it would cripple the usefulness of the paper.

W. E. JARMAINE.—We have not printed contents bills for the Freethinker for some time. Hence your newsagent's inability to get them.

C. O. THOMPSON.—Certainly a penny is a better propagandist price than twopence, but it would mean a greater loss. And the increased sale would not make up for the lower price—at least for some considerable time, and one would need a long purse to stand the strain. We know what we are talking about, because the Freethinker was sold for a penny for some years, and only sheer necessity led to a rise in price. For the rest, we agree with you that to gain new subscribers is a very real and valuable way of helping.

C. F. RUDGE.—There is no use in saying what postage will be required to carry the Freethinker if the proposed postal changes become law, as there is no certainty as to what they will be. But so soon as the regulations on the subject are definite, you may rely upon our publishing full instructions for the benefit of subscribers.

R. OWEN.—Pleased to know that the Freethinker has been of so much help to you. Mr. Cohen will write you shortly.

E. PARKER.—Pleased to have the support of one who has taken in the Freethinker since its first issue. Mr. Foote is making as rapid progress as one can reasonably expect, although we are afraid that recovery never seems rapid to those who have been ill. Fortunately, he is blessed with a fair share of patience.

A CORRESPONDENT, who signs himself "The Ark Angel," says it is Mons-trous that angels rejected by Noah should be accepted at Mons. Now we hope that our readers will realise some of the evils that result from crass superstition.

LETTERS for the Editor of the Freethinker should be addressed to 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon-street, London, 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.

THE only acquaintance I ever had with chaplains was those whom I met, or who met me, in Holloway Prison. They were not a very brilliant lot, but Government had to supply them. It was according to law, and I was there according to law. There was no salary for me even as a show prisoner, whilst most of them got far more than they could earn in the open labor market. I will take, for instance, the little chaplain, stout and ungracious, who greeted me on the ecclesiastical side, where he welcomed me, and no doubt wished me to the Devil. He had a very loud voice, and bawled at me in tones derived from long practice. I did not bawl back, but regarded him with a satirical smile that must have been

exasperating. He could get no ill-temper out of me, and I could get no good temper out of him. He told me I was sure to go to hell, and I told him that I would as soon meet him there as here. The new prisoners, who first heard him roar from his point of vantage in the gallery pulpit, were nearly startled to death, but they recovered in time for he was perfectly harmless, except when he could work a Church of England prisoner into some little post that was otherwise being reserved for a Presbyterian, or something of that kind. His salary was something like a pound a day, with coals and gas free, in a rent-free mansion, a fellow to the governor's, frowning at the front gate. He was very familiar with "the Lord," and did his best to familiarise his hearers with that mysterious personage. This he never did in whispers. He always bawled. He bawled when he gave the lesson out; he bawled when he preached; he bawled when he left off and pronounced the benediction. He bawled himself into chronic sore throat. He bawled himself into double pneumonia; and, at last, he bawled himself out of this world altogether. Few of us would like his practice, but I think we should all like his income. Perhaps I shall reach it some day.

* * *

Some time before his death a new chaplain was introduced. He was acting as locum-tenens during the absence of the regular chaplain, who was away nursing one of his sore throats, which he begged us to ask God not to make too much of a punishment to him. He knew it was all for his good, and that was why he asked them to join in prayer for his recovery, not only from his sore throat, but also from wickedness and sin which afflicted them all. We could join him in the prayers but not in the holiday. (That is my remark, not his.) The poor locum-tenens was left in my cell to complete his own introduction. I pitied the poor man. He had heard of me. He was naturally timid. I suppose he dreaded some blasphemous attack on God, and some worse attack on him. Being allowed some books by that time, I had Flaubert's Salamambo (a magnificent book in the original). By a not unnatural mistake he took the book in his hand, and with a bland, innocent face he said, "Italian?" I hadn't the heart to contradict him, so I let it go at that. He looked pleased, though I don't know what it was about. I don't suppose his salary was much. It is not often the fate of a locum-tenens to build up colossal fortunes. I only need to mention one other substitute for the grand original of Holloway Prison. He was an old gentleman with a bald head and a staring face, calculated to frighten anyone outside a church. He shortened the Sunday morning service apparently to leave plenty of time for the sermon, which I thought would never end, until nature came to our relief by fairly breaking him down. The fun of his case was that when he began his sermon it was in this way, at the top of his voice: "When the philosopher observes zoophyte formations on the tops of mountains"—the prisoners' eyes started out of their heads. What would he say next? To most of them it was Dutch already. However, it ended, and some of the audience enjoyed it and wished to hear "the old boy" again.

* * *

I haven't had much opportunity of traffic with chaplains since I told Canon Horsley, in a Humanitarian League Meeting at St. Martin's Town Hall, that he knew nothing about prison life. He replied that he had been a prison chaplain for ever so many years. I answered that was nothing to the point. He lived on the wrong side of the prison-door. He saw, so to speak, from outside. I had seen it inside. I had lived it. The reverend gentleman seemed a good deal annoyed, but the audience loudly agreed with me.

* * *

But I must come back to what I wanted to say. There has been a discussion in some of the newspapers about Army chaplains, and there seems to be a paucity of these gentlemen, which I should

never have expected. According to the *Church Times*, "large bodies of troops" have been spiritually attended to by "young gentlemen who are incompetent to manage a boys' Bible-class." This a frank confession. I should be sorry to dispute it; but it nearly breaks the heart of Commissioner D. C. Lamb, of the Salvation Army. He suggests a remedy for this lack of Army chaplains by proposing that, in place of these incompetent men of God, "General Booth could furnish some hundreds of young women." I should imagine that this change would be much appreciated, but it is a ticklish subject for a Freethinker to discuss, however it may please the taste of Commissioner Lamb.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

The Glasgow Secularists commenced their winter work on Sunday last in the most gratifying way. Mr. Cohen had two fine audiences—afternoon and evening, and his lectures were followed with close interest and appreciation. The meetings were in the nature of an experiment, as the Committee of the Glasgow Society appear to have been in some doubt as to whether the distraction of the War would not seriously interfere with Freethought propaganda. Fortunately, this was not the case; the work will now be carried on, we hope, with the old-time vigor.

For ourselves we are not in the least surprised at the result of the Glasgow meetings. The War has undoubtedly introduced a more serious note into the mental life of the country, and this cannot but make for our benefit. We hope that other Branches and Societies in the country will take advantage of this note while they may. There have been many difficulties in the way of conducting Freethought propaganda since the War commenced, but want of audiences is not among them. In fact, wherever meetings have been held, whether indoors or outdoors, improved audiences have been almost invariably reported.

We have several times referred to the injustice inflicted on Freethinkers in the Army and Navy through compulsory attendance at religious service. We are the more pleased to record the experience of another correspondent who informs us that he put in a written application to the Commanding Officer to be excused from religious service, and it was granted. This is good news, but on the other hand, we have had many letters from soldiers and sailors who have applied, and who have had their applications refused. The fault lies in the fact that by the Army Regulations no soldier can claim exemption. Our correspondent appears to have been dealing with an officer who was free from religious bigotry. Others, and the majority, are not so fortunate. What is needed is a complete revision of the regulations in this direction.

Whenever a new religion springs up—and that is a by no means infrequent occurrence—the advocates of the old one immediately raise the cry that the real object of the new creed is money. We do not say they are always wrong—although we believe they often are; but such acuteness makes us a little suspicious. It looks as though the key to the purpose of the new-comer is realised through a knowledge of their own purpose in life. After all, it is the rogue who is most ready to suspect others of roguery.

Of course, cash does explain a great deal of the world's religious activity. Priests, from the savage medicine-man onward, have a notoriously keen eye for their own interest; and taking them on the whole, they are the best off of all classes. If they are not so wealthy as some in other walks of life, they have none of their anxieties and sense of insecurity. And when one reads of the poverty of the clergy, this mainly results from their difficulty of "keeping up a position" suitable to their order—as though it was part of the order of Nature that the "superiority" of the clergy should have a tangible existence before the eyes of other people. Look, again, at the fight of the clergy over endowments. Nearly all the trouble over the Welsh Church Bill is due to its attacking the wealth of the Church. Nearly everything else is a mere cover for this. Money does not create a religion, but it is indisputable that money often keeps it going. Poor religions—that is, those that never acquire wealth—have a curious habit of disappearing; while in defence of wealthy ones there are always plenty who will

fight to the last ditch, and will demand compensation when they are forced to vacate that.

Suppose Freethought possessed a mere fraction of the wealth at the service of religion? Of course, this would not make it, in itself, more valuable; but what a different appearance it would take on in the eyes of the world! Many of those who will not look at it now, or look at it only to sneer, would discover that it was at least "respectable" enough to deserve considerate examination. The lower class of Christian advocates confess this much by their taunts that Freethought possesses no elaborate buildings or large institutions. The better placed advocates confess it by their looking on Freethought as vulgar, or "bad form." And the essence of both charges is that Freethought is financially poor. Freethought to-day does not lack intellectual justification; what it lacks in the eyes of the world is a social position, and in Christian countries social position is very largely dependent upon money. Have that, and the pious world will forgive almost anything. Be without it, and Christian piety sees in it a sure evidence of unworthiness.

One never knows what may happen. A correspondent writes—we presume he is a new acquaintance of the *Freethinker*—that he found a copy of this paper in a Liverpool to Leeds express, "and much enjoyed reading the same." From his taking the trouble to write us, we may infer that this stray copy has secured us at least one new reader. Perhaps others of our readers who do not file their copies will follow the example of the one who left this copy in a railway carriage. As we said before, one never knows what may happen, and our difficulty is to get the paper known. We are pretty sure of keeping readers once we get them.

It is surprising that Christians do not recognise how much of their comments upon current affairs go to form an indictment of Christianity and Christian influence. Here, for instance, is the editor of that pious publication, the *Hibbert Journal*, who says:—

"Consider only one among the multitude of causes which produced the present crisis—I mean the enormous amount of deliberate lying which went on in certain places high and low. Had not the liars done their deadly work the War would never have taken place; and, even now, would cease automatically if all the newspapers, orators, professors, statesmen, Kaisers, and other users of language in Europe were to speak the truth consistently for a week on end. No brief exercise of veracity is no extravagant demand to make of a group of civilised nations which for many centuries have been pursuing moral excellence, or at least evolving morally, under the guidance of Christian teachers, Greek philosophers, and Gothic metaphysicians. Alas! there is not the faintest chance that the demand will be satisfied—a sad comment on the moral attainments of the human race."

Wholesale lying, with "not the faintest chance" of their improving. We do not think the outlook is quite so black as Professor Jacks would have us believe. But what a comment on the ethical value of Christian influences!

We hope that Professor Jacks includes—under "users of language"—the clerical fraternity; for they stand more in need of the advice than any other class. More than any other class in Europe, they have set the example of "lying for the greater glory of God," and there is small wonder that the unveracity habitually associated with religious life should have infected all walks of life. If only the clergy told the truth about their own religion, it would be enough to initiate a revolution of far-reaching importance and significance. But we can say of this, as Professor Jacks says of statesmen and kings: "Alas! there is not the faintest chance that the demand will be satisfied."

The following, from the *Financial News*, strikes us as a first-rate specimen of British Christianity. Although it dates from the eighteenth century, it is quite applicable to-day. It is the prayer of an investor, compiled by a perfectly religious man for his own use:—

"O Lord, Thon knowest I have nine houses in the City of London and likewise that I have lately purchased an estate in fee simple in the County of Essex. Lord, I beseech Thee to preserve the two counties of Essex and Middlesex from fires and earthquakes: and as I have a mortgage in Hertfordshire, I beg Thee likewise to have an eye of compassion on that county.....O Lord, enable the Bank to answer all their bills, and make all my debtors good men. Lord, keep our Funds from sinking: and, if it be Thy will, let there be no sinking fund. Amen."

We need only add that the *Financial News* guarantees its genuineness.

The Ethics of St. Paul.

It is common for Christian apologists, when hard pressed in defending the historical character of the articles of their creed, to fall back on the assertion that, whatever may be its historical basis, at any rate the ethics of Christianity are loftier than those of any other religion or system that has appeared in the world, and that consequently, in order to preserve these ethics from disintegration, the dogmas of theology should at least be respected, if not accepted, by enlightened people. It is the object of the present article, by examining Christianity at its fountain-head, to demonstrate the rottenness of the ethics which it presupposes, and therefore the untenability of this position.

The greater part of the dogmas of orthodox Christianity are derived directly from the writings of Paul, and this writer may be correctly regarded as the real founder of Christianity. To understand this, it is only necessary to bear in mind that few of the characteristic doctrines of Christianity—certainly not, for example, the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ, or the doctrine of the plan of salvation as set forth by Paul—can be found in the strata of the New Testament, which are of Jewish-Christian origin. The Gospel of Mark, for instance, the Epistle of James, and the Book of Revelation, exhibit hardly any other features than those which are common to Christianity and to Mohammedanism. This, taken in conjunction with Paul's emphatic assertion that he derived his doctrines not "from man," but from "revelation" personal to himself, fully justifies us in looking on him as the actual, historical founder of what we know as Christianity.

Of the actual genesis of St. Paul's opinions we know only what we can glean from his own accounts; but we must not take the story of his miraculous and instantaneous conversion, given in the Acts, as carrying any high degree of authority. We understand from Paul's own statements that he was a Pharisee, *i. e.*, he was brought up to believe in the divine origin of the Jewish law, as set forth in the Pentateuch, and in the coming advent of the Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the apportionment of everlasting happiness or torment to all men, according to their observance or otherwise of the standard of ethics laid down in the Jewish law.

There is reason to believe that Paul's revolt against the last-named article of the Pharisaic creed (for he never ceased to accept the rest) was gradual rather than sudden (as commonly reported). His account of his difficulties in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter vii., suggests that he had never been really satisfied with the Judaism in which he had been educated. While fully accepting the divine origin of the Jewish law, and the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, he was troubled with the difficulty of seeing how anyone could escape from future misery, if the escape was conditional on the immaculate observance of the multifarious commands given in the Pentateuch. In his own words, "the commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death.....For that which I do I know not; for what I would, that do I practise; but what I shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

Paul was far too deeply sunk in the superstitions of his race and age to escape from his trouble by the road of Freethought. If he had said, in the words of Omar Khayyam, to the God of his imagination—

"O thou, who man of baser earth didst make,
And who, with Eden, didst devise the snake,
For all the sin, wherewith the face of man
Is blackened, man's forgiveness give—and take!"

Paul had refused to believe longer in such a divine monster, he would have found the correct answer to his difficulties. But, though it is just conceivable that a Jew of the first century might have hit on

the solution which seems so obvious to us, it is doubtless unfair to blame Paul for not having been so fortunate.

He was therefore, as he thought, faced with the problem of how to compass his personal salvation in the world to come; in other words, how successfully to run the gauntlet of a jealous and revengeful Yahweh. There were in that day many existing cults which professed by various "mysteries," or secret ceremonies and purifications, to free the initiated from guilt and secure their eternal happiness. But these were all of heathen origin, and no good Jew would have dared to have anything to do with them. What Paul wanted, then, was a "mystery" which could offer to him and his fellow-Jews the salvation, apart from the law, which, as he considered, the heathen "mysteries" offered fraudulently to others.

When Paul first came across the followers of Jesus the Nazarene, they appeared to him, as to other Pharisees, to be an obnoxious sect of heretics and enemies of society, and he joined in the attempt to exterminate them by force. It appears later to have struck him, in the course of his broodings, that the story of the resurrection of Jesus might form the basis of the "mystery" religion for which he was seeking. He claims himself to have been started, or confirmed, in this conviction by a vision of the "risen" Jesus himself; and it is perfectly possible that his mind, unstrung to some degree by the morbid fears and imaginings above described, actually gave rise to such a vision—whether under an attack of sunstroke on the road to Damascus, or in an epileptic fit, or otherwise, is immaterial, as well as uncertain. Be this as it may, it is significant that, when struck by his new idea, Paul made no attempt whatever to get into touch with the Nazarene community, or to see how his conception accorded with theirs. He tells us that "when it was the good pleasure of God.....to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia." Clearly, the doctrine that resulted from these meditations had, if nothing else, the distinction of being the exclusive and patented product of the brain of Paul himself.

Without entering on the task of describing the spread of Paul's new doctrine in Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece, and the struggle between it and the primitive Nazarene doctrine of the twelve apostles, which occupied the next twenty years or thereabouts, we will proceed to examine the substance of this teaching, as set forth especially in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. This epistle is a comprehensive summary of his doctrine, written about twenty years after his conversion, and may not, of course, exactly represent what he taught at the beginning of that period. We have, however, no earlier summary of his principles to go upon, and must take the Epistle to the Romans as the best extant statement of what we may call "Paulinism," or so-called Bible Christianity, as it has come down to the orthodox Protestant Churches of to-day. (The Catholic Church diluted this creed with so many concessions to popular, and even pagan, tendencies of succeeding periods, that it requires criticism on other lines, though nearly all that can be said against Paulinism can also be said against Catholicism.)

Paul opens his epistle by a tirade against pagan society, which was probably common ground to him and to his former friends, the Pharisees. In it he announces the "wrath of God" against the existing world on account of its vices and shortcomings, but principally because of idolatry, which he regards as the cause of all the rest. He has evidently no notion of the grotesque unfairness of denouncing the wrath of God against men simply for following the form of worship that seemed natural to them. He makes the absurd suggestion that they could have avoided it if they had chosen:—

"For the invisible things of him [God] since the

creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

It is obvious to-day that so far from "the invisible things of God" being "clearly seen through the things that are made," the cruelty and waste of nature are the greatest imaginable obstacles to any rational belief in God. There is, in fact, no evidence of divine providence in nature, and there was no more of it in the days of paganism than there is now. Consequently, Paul was talking immoral nonsense when he treated the failure of pagans to perceive the truth of Monotheism as if it were a damnable crime.

The rest of the first chapter is simply an endeavor to represent the vices and crimes which prevailed in sections of pagan society (and which still prevail to-day, in spite of the pretensions of Christianity) as if they were the result of Polytheism. Paul has not a word for the virtues of philosophers like Socrates, or of statesmen like Pericles and Julius Cæsar. He sees only the dirty side of the picture, and proceeds unfairly to impute the blemishes he describes to all pagans. On this foundation of libellous abuse, he builds the contention (chapter ii. 1-16) that the entire pagan world is doomed to destruction in "the day of wrath," when "wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish," will overtake all who have infringed the moral law. The absurdity of a presumably omnipotent God venting his spite in this way on beings who have only acted according to the nature he implanted in them does not occur to Paul. His God is an "old gentleman of uncertain temper," as Mr. H. G. Wells has it, constructed out of the savage and immoral mythology which Paul had been brought up to believe in as the divine "law."

The next section of the epistle, in which Paul contends that the Jews, by failing to observe their own law, had incurred the same condemnation as the pagans, need not detain us (chapters ii. 17—iii. 20). We pass on to the *pièce de résistance* of his theology—the chapters in which he sets forth belief in Jesus Christ as the one means of escape from damnation for both Jew and Gentile. According to Paul, God, after comprehensively condemning all the human race to hell-fire for the reasons above-mentioned, was graciously pleased, in Paul's own time, to offer a free pardon, so to speak, to anyone who would believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and in his resurrection from the dead. This is the famous dogma of "justification by faith"—which might be more aptly described as spiritual blackmail. Paul affects to prove his doctrine by a whole chapter of pettifogging nonsense derived from the story of Abraham, which, as Abraham is now known to have been an entirely legendary individual, is not worth the attention of reasonable men, except as illustrating the utter impossibility of ascribing any authority to the New Testament when once the Old is discredited. Apart from this, the whole doctrine of vicarious justification is so utterly immoral and degrading that it should be regarded as carrying an irreparable stigma on the mental condition of the man who believes it.

Let us see some of the depths to which this Pharisee carries his abject and servile superstition. According to him, "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin." That is, of course, our poor old friend Adam. Paul—and not only Paul, but all orthodox Christians after him down to the middle of the nineteenth century, and many even later—believed that because Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, the delightful God Yahweh condemned all his posterity, not only to die, but to suffer everlasting tortures. As the "first Adam" by his petty offence incurred damnation for all his descendants, so Paul holds that the "second Adam,"

i.e., Jesus Christ, by dying on the cross, secured pardon from God—not for all men, but for the comparatively few who would believe in him. Not content with imputing to his God such a capricious and atrocious ordinance, Paul even tries to maintain that it is liberal and generous. He says, in a verse which is continually in the mouths of canting evangelists, "The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." In other words, when we are punished by God, it is only what we deserve; but when we are rewarded, we ought to be grateful. Paul does not see the irony in ascribing generosity to a God who has admittedly punished many for the offence of one, simply on the strength of his having later determined to reward a smaller number for the merits of another. In the whole Pauline "plan of salvation" there is nothing worthy of the name of morality to be discerned, but simply the caprices of an imaginary Oriental despot of the stamp of Xerxes or Timur. Small wonder that the record of the representatives of this theology, in their day of power, teems with burnings for heresy and witchcraft, rackings, disembowelings, massacres of all sexes and ages, and every kind of cruelty, corruption, and knavery.

The culminating atrocity of this creed is reached when Paul adds—as logically he was, indeed, compelled to add—that God foreknew and foreordained from all eternity the salvation of some, and the damnation of the rest. Some imagine that the inhuman doctrine of "predestination" was the invention of Calvin. It was nothing of the sort. It is set down, in unequivocal language, in the Epistle to the Romans; and those who accept Paul's authority, whether Catholics or Protestants, are logically committed to it. All that Calvin did was to strip away the qualifications and concessions to common prejudice with which the Middle Ages had tempered the doctrine, and to proclaim it in its naked hideousness. This is what Paul says:—

"We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, those he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Romans viii. 28-30).

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth."

"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will? Nay but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why dost thou make me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles?" (Romans ix. 14-24).

Can anything be more revolting than this conception of divine justice? or can anything which could be present such a conception as morally admirable? The sophism about the potter and the pots is brazen. Obviously the right of the potter over the clay is unlimited, because clay has no feelings. But if clay were endowed with flesh, blood, and nerves, and could feel pleasure and pain, obviously it would have a right to say to the potter, "Why didst thou make me thus?" How far above this filthy abysmal craven superstition is the noble protest of Omar Khayyam.

"Listen again. One Evening at the Close
Of Ramadan, ere the better moon arose,
In that old Potter's Shop I stood alone,
With the Clay Population round in Rows.
And, strange to tell, among that Earthen Lot
Some could articulate, while others not:
And suddenly one more impatient cried—
'Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?'
Then said another—'Surely not in vain
My Substance from the common Earth was ta'en,
That He who subtly wrought me into Shape
Should stamp me back to common Earth again.'
Another said—'Why, ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in Joy;
Shall He that made the Vessel in pure Love
And Fancy, in an after Rage destroy!'
None answer'd this; but after Silence spake
A vessel of a more ungainly make:
'They sneer at me for leaning all awry;
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?'"

"Why doth he still find fault? For who with-
standeth his will?" The question occurred to both
Paul and Omar. Both seem to have seen that it
could not be answered logically on a basis of Theism.
But whereas Paul attempted to turn it aside with
the brutal insolence of his "Who art thou that
darest speak against God?" Omar, a true philosopher and
not a Rabbinical special pleader, saw the only
solution to be Atheism.
Common sense will conclude from this examination
that, if it were true that Paul's conversion could
only be accounted for by a miracle, it was a miracle
scarcely worth the trouble of performing. If the
operation of divine grace resulted in the production
of such a theology as that found in the Epistle to
the Romans, so much the worse for divine grace.

ROBERT ARCH.

(To be concluded.)

The House of Mystery.

WITHOUT—
Truth locked out.
Within—
Lies and hidden sin.
Rigid timbered forms
Seating,
Crouching human forms
Bleating;
Dismally praying
To the Unknown;
Tamely obeying
The holy gown;
Symbol of hypocrisy,
Friend of autocracy,
And the effeminate lace
Of the deadly, placid face
Of the priestocracy.
High-sounding platitudes
To the blinded,
Praying multitudes;
Shackle-minded
Are here droned
Out; detoned
Monotonously;
Hypnotisingly,
In the House of Mystery.
The air,
That life of the heathful,
Sweet-smelling,
Dare
Not enter the mournful,
Holy dwelling;
To where
Love has vanished.
Nay; love is banished
With the air.
And the life-light,
The sun's radiance, cannot peer
Through the colored, angelic windows,
Where super-ignorance mows
The fruit of the blight
That come from the harvest of fear.
Light and air
Are where
Love and life and freshness are free,
And know the gloom
Of the holy room
In the House of Mystery.

C. B. W.

The Soliloquy of the Rev. Binks.

THE Rev. Binks was opening a parcel in his study. Care-
fully he folded the brown paper ("always useful, dear
friend!") and deftly rolled up the string. On the desk
was a box of biscuits. "This is really most satisfactory,"
he murmured, "the ordinary bread is really of no utility at
all, and simply cannot be sacramental. Unleavened bread is
needful and, really, ordinary bread deprived of yeast is most
unpalatable, even when aerated." Almost reverently he
undid the flaps of the carton box, disclosing six virginal
rows of thin wafers, each row wrapped in thin tissue paper.
"These wafers," he continued, "are guaranteed absolutely
free from yeast. Unfortunately, they are made for Jews
of the strict type; but, providentially, are known as Passover
biscuits. St. Paul bade us do all things decently and in
order, not like they do it at St. Jude's," he added almost
fiercely, his usually benevolent, round face suddenly darken-
ing. He hardly thought at the moment that his last remark
was an interpolation. With due solemnity he opened one of
the packets and drew forth a wafer. He was pleased with
it. It was all it should be. He even went so far as to nibble
a bit. "Plain, crisp, and in no way interesting," he thought;
"most satisfactory, no more ordinary bread for me." He
conjured up the vision of the congregation, pleased with
the innovation; even the people's warden raising no objec-
tion, when suddenly his eye fell on the other side of the
wafer, on which were imprinted two letters, P and H.

"P and H," he almost groaned, "how unfortunate! It
would not matter so much were it only Jacob. After
all, he was a Biblical character, but.....Even P alone would
pass. P is a symbolical letter, but H! Could I explain that
it meant Purgatory and Hell? No; hardly. The congrega-
tion swallow a great deal, even those knobs of bread,
but.....They know those initials too well, and those who
are wavering might think it strange that the Blessed
Presence should be stamped in such a way. Even I myself
feel that in such circumstances the great mystery might
conceivably.....Get thee behind me, Satan!.....Surely there
is some way out of such a difficulty."

The troubled cleric rummaged in his pocket and dis-
covered an unhappy-looking pocket-knife. After picking off
the lozenges that adhered to it, he opened the big blade,
the smaller, alas! having been broken long since. Seating
himself, he wiped the dirt off the blade on to the blotting-
pad and began—

Two hours later a weary but happy man went up to bed
and slept the sleep of one who has done his duty, for thirty
of those sixty wafers lay deprived of those horrid initials.
He had operated skilfully and well, and would scrape the
others to-morrow.

E. G.

Correspondence.

MR. W. W. STRICKLAND AND SOCIALISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—War is not a gentle thing, and need not be too gently
damned by all humane and thinking men. I fully endorse
the fierce and burning logic of your contributor on the question
of this War. But when he says, "The Socialists, with their
usual stupid incoherency, have discovered the panacea. It
is the nation armed," etc., I am inclined to differ with such
sledge-hammer sentiment. Who are the Socialists? Is
Socialism comprehended in and by Messrs. Blatchford and
Thomson and kidney? Are there no others? And are all
guilty of "stupid incoherency"? Our B.A. knows they
are not. In the majority of Socialists I have known the
white heat of passion for pacifism and progress has burned
clear and strong and constant. Their methods may have
been, and may be still, immature; but the mind must
find its way through many avenues, however devious and
obscure. There is no royal road—save perhaps through
Trin. Coll., Cam. I do not ask you, Sir, to defend Socialism.
It is off your beat. I only ask for it "utter and exact
justice." Only? I am a member of a Socialist Club in
an obscure neighborhood. I am not a full-blown Socialist.
Half a loaf is better than no bread, and the half-way house
is better than the stagnant hell of everlasting piety. We
have Sunday meetings—and are not the clergy pleased!
We have already stirred our bucolic neighborhood to its
poisonous depths. The "patriots" and the pious are thirst-
ing for our blood. We have only spoken of the moral and
economic aspects of the War; but stupid, indignant, in-
genious, yes, and *ingenious* patrio-piety has twisted our
words into meaning a menace to the State. At this moment
the controversy is raging. The "stupid incoherency" lies
not with the Socialist alone—who is in most cases also, and
believed by the enemy to be, an Atheist.

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