SHAKESPEARE CENTENARY NUMBER.

The FREETHINKER

Founded 1881 by G.W. Foote. Edited by Chapman Cohen.

Vol. XXXVI.—No. 17 Sunday April 23, 1916 Price Twopence

SHAKESPEARE AND JESUS.

—:o:—

BY CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Twenty-third of April is the date of three anniversaries. It is the day of St. George, the patron Saint of England, it is Easter Sunday, the Resurrection Day of one-third of the Christian Godhead, and it is the death-day of William Shakespeare. There are, of course, other notable anniversaries—Cervantes', for instance—but we are concerned now with these three as having a peculiar interest for English people. Shakespeare because he *was* an Englishman, St. George because he was adopted by Englishmen, and Jesus because there is a sneaking conviction with a great many British believers that he is peculiarly concerned with the people of this country. It is true that he was not born in Britain, but that may be set down as one of the several indiscretions that attended his birth.

It cannot be said that England was fortunate in the choice of its patron Saint. St. George was most probably—although the statement has been disputed—the George who was Bishop of Cappadocia in the fourth century. He was a general, all-round sort of a scoundrel, who Gibbon says "disregarded the laws of religion, of justice, of humanity." Before becoming Archbishop, he was a contractor of bacon for the Army, was detected in swindling, and fled to escape arrest. Eventually imprisoned under Constantine for his offences, he was dragged from thence by an enraged people and murdered. But his crimes did not prevent his assuming the rank of a saint and a martyr, and, to again quote Gibbon, "The infamous George of Cappadocia has been transformed into the renowned St. George of England, the patron of Arms, Chivalry, and of the Garter." And April 23 is St. George's Day. It is also the anniversary of Shakespeare's death! An alteration should be made forthwith.

Our information about Jesus Christ is more voluminous than that about St. George, but less trustworthy. When we deal with him we are not moving in the region of history, but in that of myth. All the events of his life—from the miraculous birth to the equally miraculous resurrection—demonstrate this. Historical characters are not born *without* fathers, although it is not without analogy that the father should be unknown. They do not pass through life amid a succession of miracles, and they do not rise from the dead—except poetically. The greatest of historical characters once dead remains dead. He does not confound sense and outrage probability by permitting his corpse to wander about the public streets. The coincidence of the date of Shakespeare's death with the celebration of Christ's resurrection proves the myth. For three hundred years the date of the anniversary of Shakespeare's death has remained the same. That of the resurrection varies from year to year. It has nothing to do with an historical occurrence. It is dependent upon the movements of the sun and the moon. It is moonshine and romance.

Enough, however, of this. The world to-day honours the name of William Shakespeare. So, too, we are assured, does the world reverence the name of Jesus Christ. And, in a sense, we admit that this is true. But in what sense? In the case of Shakespeare the reverence is mutual, spontaneous, and genuinely universal. In the case of Jesus it is artificial, cultivated, and marked by vehement dissent—even by opposition. By sheer force of intrinsic merit Shakespeare has gained his throne of universal dominion, which he holds unchallenged and unchallengable. The sovereignty of Jesus—whatever be its value—is due, certainly to a very large extent, to his name being the shibboleth of a powerful organization, with thousands of agents engaged, generation after generation, in establishing his reign and suppressing all efforts at competition. The idea of a society for the purpose of advertising Shakespeare is almost inconceivable; but let the Churches cease to advertise Jesus Christ, let the record of his life and teachings remain before the world solely upon their intrinsic merit, and what of the sovereignty of Jesus would be left in two or three generations?

Putting prejudice and inherited sentiments on one side, what comparison does the teacher of Galilee hold to him of Stratford-on-Avon? Take all that is said to have fallen from the lips of the New Testament Jesus as genuine, and what have we? A handful of bald generalizations, all of them commonplaces long before he is said to have uttered them, some of them of so impracticable a nature that his followers have always spent part of their time in explaining away their clear meaning, and all of them implying a view of nature and of man the world is rapidly outgrowing. Compare that output with the creations of Shakespeare, with that profound insight into human nature which was able to take the characters of prince and pauper, Jew and Christian, ancient and modern, and so place them before the world that we forget the accidental circumstances of birth or colour, or creed, or nationality, in the play of human feeling and intellect that makes the whole world one. The passion of Othello and the philosophy of Hamlet are as far removed from the *capacity* of the New Testament Jesus as is his view of the structure of the universe from the teachings of modern science.

If I may step on one side from my main path to illustrate what has just been said, the illustration may be found in two of Shakepeare's characters—Julius

Cæsar and Shylock. Of the first, I do not think it is generally recognized that Shakespeare was the first of the moderns to discern the real Cæsar under the misrepresentations created by his enemies. Of the second, one need only compare the Shylock of *The Merchant of Venice* with the Jew of Marlowe or other contemporary writers. Theirs was the Jew of popular tradition, as far removed from reality as the stage Irishman. In Shakespeare we get, for the first time, the Jew with all the pride of race and of intellect, filled with a burning hatred and contempt for the historic enemy of his race. If Shakespeare had said in so many words "Here is the Jew that Christian bigotry and cruelty has fashioned," it could hardly be plainer than it is to the discerning student. None other than Shakespeare could have made the despised Jew the most commanding figure in the play, and at the same time brought out the worst side of both Jew and Christian in connection with religious belief.

Most marvellous of all, Shakespeare had no Jews around him to serve as studies. Neither, for that, had he Moors to serve the same purpose for Othello. Nor is there any reason for assuming that he possessed what we should call, nowadays, historical scholarship such as would have enabled a lesser man to correct misrepresentations in the case of Cæsar. It was sheer genius that enabled him to grasp the fact that human nature, whether in old Rome or contemporary England, whether in Jew or Gentile, is the same. Given the situation and identical causes, they produce identical results. That is the lesson of Shakespeare's greatest plays.

To return to our main theme—Shakespeare and Jesus. With Jesus the supernatural, now wholly discredited, is everything. Remove that and nothing remains of any substantial or personal value. To him the supernatural is essential. It is the foundation of his teaching, the sign-manual of his authority. With Shakespeare, the supernatural is nothing. It is true he uses the supernatural in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Julius Cæsar*, but it is never vital, and never is it allowed to usurp the place of natural causation either in the play of motive or in nature. At most he uses it only to illustrate his theme, and one may assume that it was mainly introduced for this purpose and for the benefit of his audience.

For the striking thing about Shakespeare is the small attention paid by him to religion. Of sympathy with religion he shows little or none. His religious characters are not more impressive, at their best, than are others; and his villains have their mouths full of pious phrases. When we seem to get nearest to Shakespeare himself, in the numberless philosophical reflections on life and man, we find little or no flavour of theology. Never do we get a hint that the solution is to be found in that direction. In the Poems, which are held by some to be largely autobiographical, the only immortality indicated is that in which all true poets may expect to share. His principal characters, such as Hamlet, Lear, Romeo, Antony, Brutus, etc., die as though convinced that "the rest is silence." So hopeless is the task of finding a definite theology in Shakespeare, that religious apologists are driven to talk of the "deep religious spirit" of the plays, when all they mean is their ethical import.

At the side of the wisdom displayed by Shakespeare, the Jesus of the New Testament is a mere child. Compare the view of life expressed by the one, with its infantile grouping of men into good and bad, goats and sheep, its promise of arbitrary reward for good done, punishment for lack of belief, and its complete absence of a sense of moral causation with what we find in Shakespeare's plays! He knew better than to follow that line. His best men have their weaknesses—noble elements that may themselves become factors in their undoing, as in the case of Othello. His worst men have their strands of goodness. His men and women are human; they drain their cup, sweet or bitter; they are not always triumphant because they are good, neither are they always vanquished because they are bad. Shakespeare has no theology; and, consequently, he never preaches. He is content to trace the intricate play of motive and circumstance, and leave the reader free to draw what moral he will—or can.

The claims of Jesus rest on his being a god. The glory and greatness of Shakespeare is that he was a man. And, character for character, the man is greater than the god. Because of his divinity, multitudes of people, we are told, have blessed the name of Jesus; but, alas! the blessings have, as their counterpart, the equally great multitude to whom the name of Jesus has meant suffering, and horror, and bloodshed. For centuries the world grew grey at the approach of the Galilean; the rack, the stake, and the prison were used in his name and to consummate his rule. No such dark cloud has accompanied the career of the "gentle" Shakespeare. No man, or woman, or child has ever had cause to shrink from his name, none have found it possible to use it as a cloak or excuse for tyranny or cruelty. The god has ruled by the exclusion of light and liberty. The man has conquered by the gracious humanity of his message. Man and god they stand on the day of their anniversary; and even the figure of the man grows greater as that of the god declines. And in this may well stand as symbolic of that age-long process which, by banishing the gods and their influence, leaves the purer and stronger the humanity which gave them birth.

Shakespeare and the Supernatural.

By J. T. Lloyd.

As soon as the drama ceased to be religious the Church lost touch with it and erelong became its enemy. The theatre and the sanctuary were originally identical, and when a difference arose the motive for attending the one was the same as for attending the other, attendance at either being an act of worship. Glance at the theatre on the south side of the Acropolis, at Athens as it was twenty-five centuries ago, and you will find that the whole of the front row of seats was permanently reserved for certain State officials, all of whom were priests of the various chief Gods. Prior to Shakespeare's day the English drama was of an exclusively sacred character. First came the mysteries, then the miracle-plays, and lastly the moralities, all of which were celebrated in churches, or in temporary booths, or even barns. It was during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the sixteenth century, that the transition from the moralities to the regular drama took place. This transformation was accomplished in consequence of the revival of ancient Greek and Roman learning, which necessarily resulted in a radical change in the spirit of the times. A secularizing process was going on everywhere when Shakespeare appeared on the scene. He was a child of the renascence. When he was born in 1564, Spenser was twelve years old, Bacon three, Greene two or three, while Marlowe and he were of the same age. These, with others such as Nash, Peele, and Kyd, were poets and playwrights, the creators of the modern English drama. They were unconventional and free, "in revolt against the usages and religion of their day, 'Atheists' n general repute, 'holding Moses for a juggler,' haunting

the brothel and the alehouse, and dying starved or in tavern brawls." Only a portion of that general description applies to Shakespeare. There is no evidence whatever that he frequented gay-houses or was ever involved in tavern brawls, though there is good reason for believing that he was of an eminently sociable and convivial disposition. But that he shared the scepticism of the literary circles in which he turned is morally certain, though there is no direct proof of it. Green says:—

> It is hard, indeed, to say whether he had any religious belief or no. The religious phrases which are thinly scattered over his works are little more than expressions of distant and imaginative reverence. But on the deeper grounds of religious faith his silence is significant. He is silent, and the doubt of Hamlet deepens his silence, about the after-world. (*A Short History of the English People*, p. 436).

As already stated, when the drama became secular the Church broke with it and assumed an attitude of determined hostility towards it. Shakespeare, being the greatest of Elizabethan dramatists, if not the greatest of all dramatists in the world's history, was naturally singled out as the object of the bitterest invectives and the most unscrupulous attacks. He had the misfortune of flourishing in a period of transition from the age of the renascence to that of Puritanism, from the sane and serene outlook upon life enjoyed by the intelligent Freethinker to that of hardening lugubriousness and darkening despondency voluntarily indulged in by the Puritan. As Green puts it, "the Bible was superseding Plutarch," with the inevitable result that gladsomeness of mind and ebulliency of heart vanished from life. Well, to people whose natural joy of life was thus repressed, who had no delight in laughter and music and dancing, Shakespeare was bound to be an abomination. He was intolerably coarse and obscene, "the, in truth, Corypheus of profanation." His obscenities were such as to furnish "the most striking evidence of his total moral depravity." Of course, he was a vulgar Atheist and blasphemer, whose works ought to be forcibly suppressed; and so in the year 1642 all theatres in England were closed. Thus, as the scholarly Gervinus observes, "austerely religious, Puritanic zeal, conquered at length in its long struggle with the profane stage, and tolerated no longer its unhallowed works." Very naturally Milton occupied the first place in the estimation of the Puritans, and even to-day there are those who regard him as the greatest English poet. But the ban upon Shakespeare did not survive the Commonwealth, though the religious prejudice against both him and the stage has not quite died out even now. There are clergymen of various denominations who still rave against theatre-going, dancing, and works of fiction, amongst which they rank Shakespeare's plays; but, happily, such blind bigots are few and far between. The present theological tendency is to claim the Stratford bard as one of the chief teachers of religion. The late Bishop Stubbs, for example, in his *The Christ of English Poetry*, says that "whatever may have been Shakespeare's relations with the official religion of his day, religion in its deepest sense is never absent from his world"; but this statement is altogether too vague to be taken seriously. Gervinus, the famous Shakespearean commentator, gives that opinion the direct lie:—

> Just as Bacon banished religion from science, so did Shakespeare from art; and when the former complained that the teachers of religion were against natural philosophy, they were equally against the stage. From Bacon's example, it seems clear that Shakespeare left religious matters unnoticed on the same grounds as himself, and took the path of morality in worldly things, in both this has been equally misconstrued, and Le Maistre has proved Bacon's lack of Christianity, as Birch has done that of Shakespeare (*Shakespeare Commentaries*, p. 886).

Shakespeare does not recognize the supernatural in any shape or form. He makes no appeal to it, nor does he represent his characters as deriving any aid therefrom, though some of them vainly resort to prayer. His treatment of magic and witchcraft shows clearly that he did not believe in them. His witches are three in number, corresponding to the three Fates of Greece and Rome; but there is nothing supernatural about them at all. In *Macbeth* they are simply "the false images" of ambition. The temptation to murder the king and mount the throne was already working in Macbeth's mind before he saw them the first time. In the words of Gervinus, "they are simply the embodiment of inward temptation"; "but this temptation is sensibly awakened in him because the plans of his royal ambition have long been slumbering in his soul. Within himself dwell the spirits of evil which allure him with the delusions of his aspiring mind." The ghosts which frighten Richard III. are but the outward shadows of his fears, created by his guilty imagination. Hamlet believed in ghosts, and imagined that he saw them; but what his father's ghost told him was what he had already been telling himself. It would be the very height of folly to infer from this that Shakespeare believed in ghosts, or believed that one really appeared to Hamlet.

There are expressions in *Hamlet* which many look upon as expressions of the poet's own belief. One that is often quoted is as follows:—

> Let us know,
> Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
> When our deep plots do pall; and that should teach us,
> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough hew them how we will.

Hamlet was endowed with exceptional intellectual power but he lacked the will to make practical use of it. He delayed from day to day to do what he felt to be his duty, namely, to kill the king who had murdered his father. His conduct towards Ophelia drove her to suicide. The guilty king lived on, and said his prayers with great fervour. Hamlet played the coward all the while. His deeds were never premeditated. He stabbed Polonius behind the arras on the impulse of the moment, and it was in the same way that he at last killed his own and his father's murderer. All his acts were rashly done, while his deep plots were never carried out. And it was on this insecure ground that he believed his ends were shaped by a divinity. That is, he threw the responsibility both for what he did and for what he neglected to do upon God. Again, it is maintained that Shakespeare believed in immortality because he represents Hamlet as saying that he would have sought relief in suicide—

> But that the dread of something after death—
> The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
> No traveller returns—puzzles the will.

It was a stroke of genius to call the world to come, in which most people believed, "an undiscovered country," concerning which, of course, nobody possessed a single scrap of knowledge. Of death the poet says:—

> This sensible warm motion to become a kneaded clod,
> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot.

In *The Tempest*, Prospero, who is supposed to be Shakespeare himself after his retirement, exclaims:—

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

In *Cymbeline* there is an exquisitely lovely song, in which death is treated as the end of individual life:—

> Golden lads and girls all must,
> As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Hamlet enters a room in the castle, after he has slain Polonius, and the following conversation takes place:—

King: Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?
Hamlet: At supper.
King: At supper! Where?
Hamlet: Not where he eats, but where he is eaten; a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.

The only conclusion to which we can reasonably come is that Shakespeare left the supernatural untouched because he did not believe in it. Supernatural soliciting is by him shown to be fruitless, and even detrimental to man's highest interests, as well as useless. In *The Tempest*, the last play he ever composed, he presents man as "master of his fate and of the world," the spirits of the earth and of the air being but his servants, always waiting to do his bidding.

The Irreligion of Shakespeare.

By Mimnermus.

This King Shakespeare, does he not shine in crowned sovereignty over us all.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
—*Matthew Arnold.*

O lived the Master now to paint us man.
—*George Meredith.*

Shakespeare was in the genuine sense, that is in the best and highest and widest meaning of the term, a Freethinker.
—*Swinburne.*

The Shakespeare Tercentenary commemorates the greatness of the Englishman of whom not only England but the whole civilized world is the inheritor. For William Shakespeare is the supreme genius in literature. Compared with him Homer nods and Dante stutters. England's noblest intellectual son, there is nothing new to be said of his genius. The cultured world has acknowledged it for many generations. The wide vocabulary of eulogy has been used in praising his work. There is one point, which, though recognized by many of his ablest critics, has not been brought into sufficient prominence. Shakespeare was a Freethinker, a great moralist he is generally admitted to be, but the popular idea associates morality with the orthodoxy of the moment.

There have been many guesses, founded mainly on prejudice, concerning the speculative belief of Shakespeare. Credulity has represented him as an evangelical Christian; a churchman of the type of James I.; as a Protestant bigot; as a Spiritualist; and as a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Shakespearean commentators are adepts in bringing startling meanings out of a Shakespeare text, as a conjurer brings eggs and sausages from an empty hat. These attempts, however, to prove Shakespeare a bigot or a crank leave the unbiassed reader gasping.

Mary Arden, Shakespeare's mother, came of a Catholic family. The presumption is that she was herself a Catholic, but there is no evidence. Shakespeare's father is not so doubtful. He was a member of the Stratford-on-Avon Corporation during Elizabeth's reign, and he must have conformed to the Protestant faith. Therefore, it seems that young Shakespeare was brought up under a probably Catholic mother, and a father who was a professing Protestant. Shakespeare was not brought up as a Catholic. He was so ignorant of Catholic ritual that he makes Juliet ask the friar if she shall come "at evening mass," and no Romanist could have made this mistake. *King John*, obviously, is not the work of a Papist. The purport of *Love's Labour Lost* is to show the uselessness of vows. The Duke in *Measure for Measure*, playing the part of a friar preparing a criminal for death, gives Claudio consolation. Not a word of Christian doctrine, not a syllable of sacrificial salvation, and sacramental forgiveness, is introduced, and the omission is most significant. Moreover, Shakespeare's poems and plays are full of eloquent passages directed against the celibate ideal. In a wonderful line in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he pictured the sisterhood of the cloister—

Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.

Elsewhere he refers to something being as fit "as the nun's lips to the friar's mouth," and other significant passages might be quoted.

What is equally important is that Shakespeare was no Puritan, no conventional Reformation Protestant. Indeed, he seems to say with Mercutio, "a plague on both your houses." He never hesitates to make his puppets jest at Biblical subjects, or to treat with irreverence the most sacred features of the Christian faith. No really religious man could have penned the flippant blasphemies of Sir John Falstaff. Listen! "In the state of innocency Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in a state of villainy." His comrade, Bardolph's face reminds him of hell-fire and Dives that lived in purple. His face is also like the Devil's kitchen where he does nothing but roast malt worms. Then, how Sir John ridicules hell-fire: "I think the Devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that is in me should set hell on fire." When the old knight dies, trusty Bardolph exclaims, "would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or hell"; and Mrs. Quickly replies "He's not in hell; he's in Arthur's bosom," substituting, with subtle sarcasm, the legendary English hero for the mythical Jewish one. King Richard the second compares himself to Christ. He has "three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas." Jesus, "in twelve found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none." In *Twelfth Night*, where Oliviar says of her brother, "I know his soul is in heaven, fool," like a sword-thrust comes the answer, "The more fool you, madonna, to mourn for your brother being in heaven." In *Henry VI.*, the Royal Hunchback flippantly says, "You shall sup with Jesus Christ to-night." The Duchess of Gloster remarks:—

Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in thy face.

Not contented with iconoclasm, Shakespeare explains miracles:—

No natural exhalation in the sky,
No scope of Nature, no distempered day,
No common wind, no customed event;
But they will pluck away his natural cause,
And call them meteors, prodigies and signs,
Abortives, presages, and tongues of heaven.

Helena in *All's Well*, says:—

Our remedies oft in themselves do lie
Which we ascribe to heaven.

Elsewhere, Shakespeare writes with more vehemence:—

In religion
What damned error but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text.

And *Timon of Athens* tells us, sardonically, that gold "will knit and break religions."

Shakespeare's views of death amply prove his heterodoxy. The dying words of Hamlet—

The rest is silence,

and the speech of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, silencing Claudio's fears of death—

Thy best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provokest,
Yet grossly fearest
Thy death, which is no more.

Prince Hamlet, having conversed with his father's spirit "piping hot from purgatory," speaks of death as the

bourne from which no traveller returns. In *The Tempest*, Prospero says :—

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

Take *King Lear*, the tragedy "too deep for tears," touching the roots of human nature. The whole play is an impeachment of Providence, and Gloster sums up in the touching lines :—

> As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods ;
> They kill us for their sport.

The note of defiance is apparent when Miranda views the shipwreck :—

> Had I been any god of power, I would
> Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er
> It should the good ship so have swallowed, and
> The freighting souls within her.

Macduff, when he hears of the murder of his children, breaks out: "Did heaven look on, and would not take their part ?"

Had we only Shakespeare's plays to refer to, it were sufficient to prove Shakespeare's heresies. Fortunately, we have another source from which his views may be drawn. The plays are aloof from godly Geneva or Catholic Rome, and are full of the same wisdom and philosophy which characterizes the writings of Montaigne or Giordano Bruno. In the sonnets, however, Shakespeare "unlocks his heart." Throughout the whole series, in which the eternal subjects of love and destiny are treated with fullness, allusions to the Christian mythology are absent. Orthodox dogmas are thrown to the winds, and the only god mentioned is Eros. Old Omar Khayyam, the Voltaire of Persia, might have chanted sonnet XXIX. :—

> When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
> I all alone beweep my outcast state,
> And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
> And look upon myself and curse my fate.

Who but a Freethinker could have written "deaf" before "heaven"? It is in the very spirit of Omar. No other immortality is suggested but that through offspring.

> And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence,
> Save breed to brave him when he takes thee hence.

The scepticism of Shakespeare can be gleaned from his works. There is a breadth, freedom, and liberality in his writings, as in his nature. Rationalism dictated his noblest thoughts and richest fancies, and whenever his mighty genius soars the highest it reaches altitudes beyond the stereotyped thought of orthodoxy, as in the suggestive lines :—

> Nature is made better by no mean
> But Nature makes that mean.

In the front rank of the Freethinkers we unhesitatingly place Shakespeare. Regarded in this light, a renewed interest will be found in those masterpieces which have been the wonder and the despair of the centuries. In his masterpieces, Shakespeare deals with the deepest issues of life and conduct, but he does not point to the Cross as a solution. In an age when religious wars and schisms were convulsing Europe, and in England where Catholicism was engaged in a life and death struggle with Protestantism, it is remarkable that Shakespeare turned his back on Christianity. He took the beliefs of superstitions around him as materials for his work. Ghosts, fairies, witches, gods and goddesses, the mythology of the ancients, and the *dramatis personæ* of the Christian religion, are but the machinery for appealing to the popular sentiment. When they have served their purpose, they appear no more. The permanent direction of his mind was Secularistic. As year by year one great drama succeeded another in unbroken series, his scepticism deepened. His poetry, the attractive garb in which he clothed his wisdom, moved inevitably with the march of his mind. In his ample pictures of life we can discern his settled Secularistic convictions on those momentous questions which knock loudly for answer at every thoughtful mind. It is well, for his splendid and puissant genius is the interpreter of "the soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

Shakespeare's Day.

By G. W. Foote.

The twenty-third of April is the death-day, and also apparently the birthday, of the greatest genius that ever illuminated and adorned the world. And this loftiest of the sons of men was also the mightiest apostle of reason ; for it was he who consummated the drama by bringing human life under the absolute sway of moral causation. "Shakespeare was," as Mr. Swinburne says, "in the genuine sense—that is, in the best and highest and widest meaning of the term—a Freethinker." Our late great poet justly calls attention to the magnificent soliloquy which is always eliminated from the stage version of *Hamlet*. In that wonderful piece of writing there is a passage which Mr. Swinburne had chiefly in mind in calling Shakespeare a Freethinker. At a time when reason was trodden under foot by Catholic and Protestant alike, the Master uttered his plea on its behalf :—

> Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and god-like reason
> To fust in us unus'd.

The "he" in this passage is nothing. It is conventional. The reality of the passage is a challenge to the suppressors of what lifts man above the beast.

Let it also be noted in passing that the same epithet of "godlike" is applied to reason in Hamlet's immortal panegyric on man :—"in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god." And let it further be noted that the panegyric ends by calling man "the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals." It was universally believed in that age that man was a fallen angel. Shakespeare in one swift but all-inclusive phrase placed man in his proper position ; the position which Darwin fortified and rendered impregnable.

Shakespeare is the incommensurable man. Browning once remarked with what ease Shakespeare took the throne of poetry while "the rest of us" toiled up the steps. There is no one like him. One poet has this quality, and another has that, but Shakespeare has *all* qualities, and all in the highest degree. That is the crowning marvel of his marvellous genius. Nature brought all her gifts to his cradle. She was in a mood of reckless generosity. "Shakespeare," as Emerson said, "is as much out of the category of eminent authors, as he is out of the crowd. A good reader can, in a sort, nestle into Plato's brain and think from thence ; but not into Shakespeare's. We are still out of doors." Let me quote again from the same admirable critic. "He is wise," Emerson says, "without emphasis or assertion ; he is strong as nature is strong, who lifts the land into mountain slopes without effort, and by the same rule as she floats a bubble in the air, and likes as well to do the one as the other."

"The first page I read of Shakespeare," said Goethe, "made me his for life ; and when I had read through a single play I was as one who had been born blind upon whom sight had suddenly been bestowed by a miraculous touch." Flaubert, in his correspondence, is always fine in his references to Shakespeare. That immense genius,

he once said, overwhelms me. Victor Hugo, in that splendid rhapsody which is entitled *Concerning Shakespeare*, by way of introducing his son's translation of the plays into French, exhausted language in celebrating the poet whose incontestible greatness he recognized. Here is one passage among many:—

> Inordinate force, exquisite charm, epic ferocity, pity, creative faculty, gaiety (that lofty gaiety unintelligible to narrow understandings), sarcasm (the cutting lash for the wicked), sidereal grandeur, microscopic tenuity, a universe of poetry, with its zenith and its nadir, the vast whole, the profound detail,—nothing is wanting in this mind. One feels, on approaching the work of this man, a vast wind blowing off the shores of a world. The irradiation of genius on every side—such is Shakespeare."

"Virility always, inspiration everywhere," said Hugo—with a characteristic but almost unquotable reference to stallions and jack-mules. In my own humble way I noticed Shakespeare's "inspiration" when I addressed an Open Letter on Inspiration to the Rev. R. F. Horton many years ago. I told him that it was highly improbable that the Bible would hold its real or supposed place at the top of our literature. Poets, thinkers, and moralists, I told him, as lofty as any of antiquity, had been amongst us, who only required age to mellow their golden reputations:—

> One of them, the mightiest in the roll of fame, the magisterial genius of this planet, lived, died, and was buried in our own England. Upon his brow sits the shadow of thought beyond the scope of the bards of Israel; his eye has depth within depth, until the beholder is lost in its profundity; every passion trembles on his mobile lips; and in the corners of his mouth there lurk the subtle sprites of wit and humour—a wit as nimble as the lightning, a humour as sweet and impartial as the sunshine. His very language is divine, speaking every note from the whisper of love to the tempest of wrath, from the mother's lullaby to the hero's challenge, from the soft flutings of sylvan peace to the thunder-roll of battle and death. Let the poets and prophets of Israel approach. The mighty palace of his genius shall find them all an appropriate apartment, leaving a host of chambers to spare, in some of which the decorations are too lovely for their stern regard.

The Bible in English is used in the Christian Churches, but the English Bible exists in the writings of William Shakespeare. We might even call it the Bible of Humanity, if it be true, as Emerson said, that Shakespeare is "the poet of the human race."

One of the finest tributes to Shakespeare since the days of Lamb and Coleridge and Landor is Matthew Arnold's sonnet:—

> Others abide our question. Thou art free.
> We ask and ask—thou smilest and art still,
> Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
> Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
> Planting his stedfast footsteps in the sea,
> Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling place,
> Spares but the cloudy border of his base
> To the foil'd searching of mortality;
> And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
> Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honor'd, self-secure,
> Didst tread on earth unguessed at.—Better so!
> All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
> All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
> Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Perhaps the noble image of "the loftiest hill" was suggested by Goldsmith's beautiful lines, but it must be admitted that Arnold endowed it with fresh power and significance in this masterly application to Shakespeare.

There is a delightful and original image in the first of George Meredith's two sonnets on the spirit of Shakespeare:—

> The greatest knew thee, Mother Earth; unsoured
> He knew thy sons. He probed from hell to hell
> Of human passions, but of love deflowered
> His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.
> Thence came the honeyed corner at his lips,
> The conquering smile wherein his spirit sails
> Calm as the God who the white sea-wave whips,
> Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,
> Close mirrors of us: thence had he the laugh
> We feel is thine: broad as ten thousand beeves
> At pasture!

The rest of the sonnet may be omitted in order to leave that striking picture fresh in the reader's mind. Of course, he must suppose the sunlight to be falling on those ten thousand backs. How true then the simile is of Shakespeare's kind, rich, wholesome laugh. Nothing sour or bitter in it, but altogether worthy of the great humorist who was also a great philosopher; worthy of him who dropped out of his infinite treasury of reflection such sweet truths as "conscience is born of love" and "beauty lives with kindness."

Freethinkers, to whom Shakespeare specially belongs, if we regard him in any other way than as belonging to all humanity, will rejoice that the Master is reverenced in all countries, that the world's best writers have celebrated his genius, that he is becoming more and more an object of profound and careful study, that hundreds of the ablest men in every land join in the work out of pure love, that whole libraries are gathering about his mighty name, and that interest in him increases as interest in the Christian Bible diminishes.

Women above all should reverence Shakespeare. He is the best friend they ever had. He elevates them as much as the Bible degrades them. It was Shelley who thought the highest tribute he could pay to a good and beautiful friend was to liken her to "one of Shakespeare's women." The expression has become common since. The greatest of poets drew so many lovely pictures of women that we may be sure of his own lofty graciousness. His lovely women were pure but human; not saints, not spouses of Christ, but fit mates for his best men. The loved and honoured wife and mother was Shakespeare's ideal. And it may be that he learnt much of it from the woman with the beautiful name who was his mother. Fancy that child on that woman's knees!

Shakespeare's Wisdom of Life.

By Geo. Underwood.

I had intended to set down a column or so of random reflections on Shakespeare's philosophy of life. But I found, after a more or less careful examination, that it was as difficult to show that the greatest of dramatists had a philosophical or closely reasoned conception of human existence, as it was to show that he had any particular religious faith. Indeed, a case might very well be made out for his Freethought in matters of faith, and his philosophy, or what he had of it, was seemingly the humanistic opportunism of the Renascence, with its tendency to a good-natured, tolerant, and wise scepticism, with its profound distrust of reason as the sole criterion of truth. Says Sir Walter Raleigh, in a fine passage of what is by a long way the best short critical study of the poet:—

> When Shakespeare grappled with the ultimate problems of life he had the help of no talisman or magic script. Doctrine, theory, metaphysic, morals—how should these help a man at the last encounter? Men forge themselves these weapons, and glory in them, only to find them an encumbrance at the hour of need. Shakespeare's many allusions to philosophy and reason show how little he trusted them. It is the foolish Master Slender and the satirical Benedick who profess that their love is governed by reason.....Where pain and sorrow

come, reason is powerless, good counsel turns to passion, and philosophy is put to shame:—

> I pray thee, peace! I will be flesh and blood;
> For there was never yet Philosopher
> Who could endure the toothache patiently,
> However they have writ the style of God
> And made a push at chance and sufferance.

It is therefore vain to seek in the plays for a philosophy and doctrine which may be extracted and set out in brief. Shakespeare's philosophy was the philosophy of the shepherd Corin; he knew that the more one sickens, the worse at ease he is, that the property of rain is to wet, and of fire to burn. King Lear, when he came by the same knowledge, saw through the flatteries and deceits on which he had been fed. "They told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof." All doctrines and theories concerning the place of man in the universe, and the origin of evil, are a poor and partial business compared with that dazzling vision of the pitiful estate of humanity which is revealed by Tragedy.

If any attempt to define Shakespeare's philosophy and religion is but a poor and partial business, an assertion I am not disposed to challenge, the like objection cannot be brought to an appreciation of Shakespeare's wisdom of life. It is the privilege of the dramatist to teach without seeming to teach. He has merely to say what he has seen with the vividness of genius, the value of his teaching depending upon the largeness of his vision. The teaching of Shakespeare is perhaps the surest of all influences proceeding from modern literature. It is pre-eminently lofty, profound, and broad. It is firmly based on realism, on a knowledge of the facts of human life and character as they really are. It is based also on idealism, on an imaginative and passionate conception of life as it might be, and exists in the mind of the past. But idealism in Shakespeare, in the dramatic poet *par excellence*, is in the end controlled by realism, by a joyful acceptance of things as they exist. Yet it will be noticed that, remembering it may be his own idealistic errors, he deals gently with the idealist, as gently as Cervantes did with his Don Quixote. Brutus in the play is the noblest Roman of them all, in spite of his incapacity to see and grasp the facts of the world. Shakespeare is a realist in the sense that nothing escapes him; he takes in the whole of life, the coarse and the base, as well as the pure, heroic, and radiant. It is precisely this broad humanism which constitutes his immense value as a teacher of the wisdom of life. If he is severe, it is to show his profound dislike of all spurious sentiment, of all rhetorical emotionalism.

"The conscience of mankind," says Dr. Martineau, "refuses to believe in the ultimate impunity of guilt, and looks upon the flying criminal as one taking a circuit to his doom." This expresses briefly the teaching we get from the plays of Shakespeare. The innocent and righteous may seem to be losers in the game of life, but the guilty can never in the long run be the winners. Which of us would choose to be Macbeth on his throne rather than Duncan lying in his blood? The dramatist strengthens our faith in the province of ethics. But he does not try to exhibit better morals than are taught by nature. He puts his moral platitudes into the mouths of crafty fools like Polonius, or self-indulgent kings like Richard II. When he wants to make us fall in love with goodness he creates for us men or women who exhibit the quality not on their lips but in their lives. Briefly, the two immensely important lessons we have to learn from the plays is accuracy and tolerance. It is difficult to see how anyone can be really accurate in Shakespeare's way without being tolerant. His "accuracy is not that of the pedant, as Dowden well says, "an accuracy of fixed lines, but the mobile accuracy of the dramatist, a swift and unerroneous transition from point to point of sympathy. Half of the intolerance and injustice of the world arises from an inability to conceive, or at least to enter into and enjoy, other types of character than our own; an inability to understand with rapidity and exactness the postures of intellect and the emotional attitudes of our fellows."

The Floral Loves of Shakespeare.

By T. F. Palmer.

In a period of peace the tercentenary of the death of the greatest literary genius our planet has ever produced would have been celebrated on a vast and imposing scale throughout England, America, and Germany. Let us trust that in 1932, the centenary of the illustrious Goethe, the world will be free from those barbaric struggles which have made a slaughter-house of European civilization.

In the titanic achievement represented by the poems and dramas of Hamlet's creator almost every feature of human life is touched with a master's hand. The calm paths of peace, the heroism and horror of war, pride, passion, love, envy, devotion, jealousy, ingratitude, vacillation, cunning and headstrong ambition, hypocrisy, self-sacrifice—all these, with countless other studies of man's glory and shame, are presented as from a mountain top by a serene cosmic intellect. It is indeed difficult to pluck out the heart of the poet's mystery. Although we are conscious of the presence of a tremendous personality, anything beyond a dim adumbration of the man's intense power constantly eludes our most patient seeking.

Shakespeare's botanical lore is strongly suggestive of his Warwickshire birth and upbringing. Not that he was familiar with the flora of the countryside alone. He knew the London gardens also, and all his references to the vegetable world proclaim his close and affectionate observation of our globe's green mantle. But the plants of his native Warwickshire were his first and last love. And as Dowden has said:—

> The country round Stratford presents the perfection of quiet English scenery; it is remarkable for its wealth of lovely wild flowers, for its deep meadows on each side of the tranquil Avon, and for its rich and sweet woodlands.

In Shakespeare the blooms and boughs are never introduced unnecessarily. They always form a natural part of the poet's pictures of wild woodland, scented bank or perfumed garden. Yet while he notes innumerable flowers, some very well-known blossoms escape remembrance. The chaste snowdrop, the forget-me-not, the delicate lily of the valley, and even the glaring foxglove remain unmentioned. And not because the poet does not know them, but because they form no true part of the picture he presents.

Much astonishment has been aroused by the fact that Shakespeare makes no certain mention of tobacco. There is one famous passage in *Othello* which, did not the tragic circumstances in which the words were uttered forbid the interpretation, might be held to refer to St. Nicotine. Doubtless to those who appreciate the soothing qualities of the weed this reference appears quite appropriate, and this was realized some years since by a celebrated tobacco firm when advertising its choice brands of the plant. These are the lines:—

> O thou weed,
> Who art so lovely fair, and smell'st so sweet,
> That the sense aches at thee.

But American and Asiatic weeds away! Let us turn to the indigenous flora Shakespeare so fondly described. In his *Winter's Tale* the blossoms breathe the unsurpass-

able beauty of the budding spring in the inimitable passage:—

O Proserpina,
For the flowers now that, frighted, thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength.

The roses, damasked, red and white, are prime favourites with the master, and there are more references in his works to these splendid flowers than to any other. The writer knows of seventy such allusions, but there are probably over a hundred references to the rose. In the Sonnets, Venus and Adonais, and Lucrece, there are several rose pictures. From such abundance it is difficult to make a selection, but the two most powerful passages are possibly to be found in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and in *Othello*. The latter says:—

When I have pluck'd the rose
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs must wither: I'll smell it on the tree.

In the former, the annexed lines appear to betray the Shakespearean touch:—

Emilia: Of all flowers
Methinks a rose is best.
Woman: Why, gentle madam?
Emilia: It is the very emblem of a maid
For when the west wind courts her gently,
How modestly she blows, and paints the sun
With her chaste blushes! When the north winds near her,
Rude and impatient, then, like chastity,
She locks her beauties in her bud again,
And leaves him to false briers.

The close attendant of the rose, the thorn, is frequently employed as a simile in the plays. An excellent example of this is found in Ophelia's retort to Laertes' homily:—

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
Whilst like a puffed and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own rede.

In Hamlet, again, when the sour-faced prelate disdains to profane the service of the dead by granting full religious burial to the drowned Ophelia, the vernal violet is used to heighten the eloquent outburst of her brother:—

Lay her in the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh,
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

In Henry V. the nodding violet is employed to illustrate the limitations of class distinctions:—

I think the king is but a man, as I am, the
Violet smells to him as it doth to me.

Once more, it serves to remind mortals of the inexorable flight of time and the sad satiety of love:—

A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent; sweet, not lasting.
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.

The pansy, the poppy, the primrose, the oxlip, the daffodil or narcissus, are all mentioned by the master. Cheerful indeed are the lines:—

When Daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh! the doxy o'er the dale,
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year.

A volume would be required to little more than enumerate the representatives of the botanical kingdom referred to by Shakespeare. The noble oak, the graceful ash, the trembling aspen, the flowers and the fruits of the apple, cherry, pear, and plum, the golden grain that the gods sent not for the rich men only, hot lavender and the green leek, the watery reeds and rushes, the purgative rhubarb, the waving sedges, unwholesome weeds and precious garden blooms, sweet strawberries, weeping willows, rough thistles and hateful docks, all these, and many hundreds more, display the poet's understanding study of all evolving Nature.

Misguided men have spent their lives in "proving" that the wisest of the human race was Bacon, or that he was at least a lawyer. Others have striven to show that he was an astronomer, a physician, a soldier, a mariner, and among other quite incredible things, a divine! Perhaps he was a botanist. In a sense, he was. Denmark's sad prince meditated on a skull; and, doubtless, Hamlet's creator mused and conjectured concerning the mysteries and marvels of floral life, much as he surveyed with imperial glance all the other problems he encountered in the world he so generously enriched with the outpouring of his matchless mind.

Acid Drops.

By the time this issue of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of the majority of its readers, Christians will be celebrating what they are pleased to call the Christian festival of Easter. And they will also be demonstrating that there is nothing Christian about it—not even the name. For that is derived from an old Scandinavian divinity, Eostre. It is not the celebration of the rising of a person from the grave, but a rejoicing at the resurrection of the earth from the long sleep of winter. As part of a system of nature-worship, it is understandable. Rationalized, it would be poetical. Treated in the Christian way, as the anniversary of an historical event, it is contemptible.

Consider the incongruity of calling the Friday before Easter Sunday *Good* Friday! Of course, it is understandable on the lines above indicated. There is something good about spring, and about the knowledge that the chill and gloomy winter has gone. But what is there good about it from a Christian standpoint? If Christianity be true, man achieved his supreme villainy on that day by killing his God. It is the anniversary of the murder of Jesus by the ancient Jews. And yet Christians on that day betray no sorow; they go about, they enjoy themselves—sometimes not too wisely—and they behave as though it were the anniversary of a wedding rather than that of a murder. They look back upon the agony of Calvary, and they call its anniversary "Good Friday." A day that brought financial ruin to numbers of Christians on the Stock Exchange is still called "Black Monday." But when they think of Calvary, they call it "Good Friday"! Truly Christian human nature is a wonderful thing. One sympathizes with the old lady who, hearing the story for the first time, remarked, "Well, it happened a long time ago; let's hope it's not true."

All the symbolism connected with Easter proves its origin. What relation to the death of a Galilean peasant have Easter eggs and hot cross buns? And when we reflect that the egg has always been used as a symbol of fertility, we no longer wonder. The Jews used eggs at their Passover, and use them still. The Pagans also gave to each other at this season of the year eggs that were painted various colours, and children played with them in old Rome as they play with them in modern England. And the Christian, not to be behindhand, has his Easter eggs. Fundamentally it is all the same. Nature is bursting into full life at this season, as the chicken breaks its shell to achieve a fuller life.

And Hot Cross Buns? What have they to do with an historical Jesus?—assuming his existence. Nothing at all; but they have a deal to do with Christian and other mythology. Cake-eating is little more than god-eating. It is a survival of the practice of actually killing and eating the god. Later, the god is eaten symbolically. In the same way the Cross became the symbol of Jesus, as it was the symbol of numerous gods before him.

Mr. C. Cohen's Engagements.

April 30, South Place Institute.

To Correspondents.

G. W. Foote Memorial Fund.—Mr. G. Pearce (Brisbane), £1.

Country Freethinker.—We agree with you as to the importance of members of Tribunals assuming that only religious people may have conscientious scruples in the matter of warfare. We are afraid this form of impertinence will continue until Freethinkers show themselves sufficiently active to *command* the respect of those whom a mere accident has placed in a position of authority.

C. S.—What else can we expect of men like Father Vaughan?

W. H. Hunt.—Sorry we had not space to deal with your inquiry this week. This week, also, the articles on Shakespeare demand all available space. Will print what you need in our next issue.

Y.—We sincerely trust that your opinion as to the harmlessness of an enlarged military establishment in this country, after the War, is a sound one, and will be justified by results. For the present we incline to the view that your opinion is much more "Utopian" than our own.

G. F. Ryston.—It is not, we believe compulsory; but we understand that considerable pressure is brought to bear. Of course, if all church parades in the Army were voluntary, they would soon be discontinued for lack of attendants. That is the chief reason why they are compulsory.

Postman.—Your suggestion that a record should be kept of all the utterances by clergymen on the War is a good one, and such a record would be useful after the War. We have done something towards this in our "Acid Drops" column, but it is, of course, a long way from being complete.

We have been unable to make use of a number of the cuttings sent this week, owing to the space being needed for the Shakespeare articles. We thank, none the less, those who have sent, and some of the cuttings will keep very well until our next issue.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business 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.

Sugar Plums.

In spite of drizzling rain, Mr. Cohen had two good meetings on Sunday last at Abertillery. Next Sunday (April 30) Mr. Cohen lectures at South Place Institute, on "Freethought, Religion, and War." We hope that London Freethinkers will do their best to see that the hall is crowded. This can be done easily enough if everybody interested lends a hand, and the subject is important enough to warrant this being done. The second lecture will be delivered on May 7 by Mr. Lloyd.

The *Stirling Observer* republishes in full Mr. Cohen's recent notes on "Science and National Life." We hope that the republication will be productive of good. It will, at all events reach a new, and we trust acceptable, audience.

We have been compelled to cut down the quantity of paragraphs in this week's issue, but we think our readers will readily forgive that. It is the first time in the history of the *Freethinker* that a whole issue has been devoted to Shakespeare, and now it has been done, we feel inclined to pride ourselves upon the performance. This may be pure conceit, although we hope not. If this idea of a special issue of the *Freethinker* is acceptable, we will follow it with others as the occasion arises.

We have had—in view of the increased demand—a larger number printed of this week's issue than is usual. Personally, we think it a capital issue for distribution, and in that we hope many readers will show their practical agreement. We have also advertised this Shakespeare Number in several outside papers. This is rather expensive work, but we think it will prove in the long run a profitable expenditure.

Next Sunday (April 30) Mr. Lloyd lectures at Liverpool. It is some time since Mr. Lloyd visited that city, and we know that many of his friends there are looking forward to his visit with pleasurable anticipation. Tickets for the meetings—afternoon and evening—may be obtained from Mr. W. McKelvie, of 21 Glebe Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool. We hope that both meetings will be crowded.

Most of the London Branches of the N. S. S. do not commence their open-air work before the first Sunday in May. Finsbury Park, Regent's Park, North London, and Camberwell commence on that date—May 7. The West Ham Branch has, however, decided to commence a week earlier—April 30. The meetings are held outside Maryland Point Station every Sunday evening at 6.45. The speaker for the opening date is Mr. Davidson. The secretary of the Branch, Mr. R. Rosetti, of 17 Garbutt Road, Upminster, will be pleased to hear from anyone desirous of becoming a member of the Branch or of assisting it in its work in any manner.

A small library is accumulating on the subject of the Mons Angels. Since the original exposure in the *Freethinker*, books, pamphlets, and articles in periodicals have multiplied enormously, and one of the latest defences of the Angels comes from the Theosophists, and is entitled *Angels, Saints, and Bowmen of Mons*. The author has a very open mind on the subject, and appears uncertain whether the "apparitions" were "saints, angels," or "dead soldiers." The plain, unvarnished fact that Mr. Arthur Machen invented the story is totally ignored.

In a review of a new novel by M. Paul Bourget, the *Daily Mail* says the novelist "contrasts with great clearness the barrenness of the scientist's remarkably logical ides of death and the warmth and comfort of the soldier's faith," the soldier being "a pure exponent of the Christian faith." We presume that the Christians get the "comfort," and the non-Christians the "warmth" in the next world.

The Shakespeare Tercentenary will be celebrated in London County Council schools, and teachers will be supplied with a prayer suitable for the occasion, and a Bible reading. Let us hope the pious teachers will not retail any of Jack Falstaff's impious jokes.

The Vicar of Portsea is a cleric who has thought fit to don the white shirt and let out a little of the truth. Lecturing at Bow Church, Cheapside, he said that "in spite of all their parochial visiting and athletic clubs they had failed to win to the service of God the manhood of the nation. The Church had failed in the matter of corporate intercession, and only a handful attended services of intercession. They had failed in the matter of the drink traffic. They had failed to assuage industrial strife. If only they had shown their indignation against the sweater and the rack landlord as they had fought against those who sought to interfere with their Church schools or endowments, they might have been able to appeal for industrial peace in the time of crisis." With so many admitted failures we suggest to the Vicar of Portsea that he should come out of it, and spend his energies in some more useful and more promising department of life.

The Dean and Shakespeare.

By F. J. Gould.

Drury Lane, afterwards illustrious for its theatre, and the orange-girl, Nell Gwynne, ran past Drury House. A young maiden of the Drury family having died, a poet —himself born in London City—thus immortalized her blush in the course of a long elegy,—

> .....Her pure and eloquent blood
> Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
> That one might almost say her body thought.

The poet was John Donne, born of Roman Catholic parents before Elizabeth had reigned twenty years; a thoughtful and passionate observer of men and manners, who discarded Papistry, and, in one of his *Satires*, said rationalistically,—

> .....Doubt wisely. In strange way
> To stand inquiring right is not to stray.
> To sleep or run away *is*.

Donne had been to Oxford University, and dabbled in law; he travelled in Europe, he mixed with courtiers; and, secretary to the aristocratic owner of York House, Strand (who knows not Inigo Jones's gateway to the House?) he courted his master's daughter, and married her in a sort of elopement, and they had twelve children.

A really notable poet, and author of warm, sensuous, audacious lyrics and bridal odes, he lived a restless and varied life, and counted among his friends such men as Ben Jonson the dramatist and Izaak Walton the literary and genial angler. Mr. Emund Gosse, who has a sure taste for distinguished poetry, has written the *Life and Letters of Donne*, a book which richly pictures the poet's career in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles the First. So far as we know, Donne and Shakespeare never met, and never communicated, though we may suppose that Shakespeare, strolling along the Strand, might sometimes have encountered the numerous family of Donne babies out for a run in St. Martin's Fields.

When the amatory fires burned low, John Donne began to glow with theology, and is classed to-day as an expert in that so-called Queen of the Sciences. A poem beginning "Farewell, you gilded follies" showed the sort of change he went through. In 1615, he was ordained, and preached at Paddington. In 1616, a few months after Shakespeare's death, Donne was attracting the lawyers of Lincoln's Inn by his evangelical and fervent sermons. King James and his more or less pious Court enjoyed Donne, who in due time was appointed Dean of St. Paul's, and, till his death in 1631, was the chief pulpit orator of the age. The man whose love-songs were to be imitated by Herrick, Suckling, and Crashaw, was now a messenger of the Protestant Gospel. To merchants going out to Virginia he appealed on behalf of the Red Indians,—

> Oh, if you could once bring a catechism to be as good ware among them as a bugle (bead), as a knife, as a hatchet!

Even as late as the Nineteenth Century, if we only accept Fenimore Cooper's Indians as a good sample, the catechism was scarcely a popular manual on the prairie.

For many years, and perhaps even to-day in certain remote circles of clerical life, Donne's theological works were, or are, still appreciated. Turning over the pages, one finds long meditations on God, Trinity, Repentance, and the rest. Of the Bible, the Dean says:—

> As much as Paradise exceeded all the places of the earth, do the Scriptures of God exceed Paradise. Knowledge and life grows upon every tree in this Paradise, upon every word in the book, because upon every tree here, upon every word, grows Christ himself.

What is life?

> All our life is a passing bell.

Another answer to the same question Donne throws into verse:—

> Alas, poor joys! But poorer man, whose trust
> Seems richly placed in sublimed dust,
> For such are clothes and beauty, which, though gay,
> Are at the best but a sublimed clay.

What is man?

> Sin hath not only a place, but a palace, a throne; not only a being, but a dominion even in our best actions.

What is reason?

> This light of reason,—this poor stuff!

This is how the Dean prays:—

> Oh, eternal God, look down from thy throne to thy footstool; look from thy blessed company of saints and angels to us, by our own faults made more wretched and contemptible than the worms which shall eat us.

And so on through hundreds of pages of self-abasement, tears, and other-worldliness.

Not long before he died, the Dean caused himself to be wrapped in a shroud, and, while propped up, he insisted on having his portrait painted. Engravings of this death's-head picture were popular in Puritan England. Donne's statue, which adorned old St. Paul's church, escaped the Great Fire in 1666, and may be seen to-day by admiring Londoners in Wren's cathedral. They who pause before it may profitably reflect on the singular double current which he and Shakespeare represented in our national life and thought. These two poets both felt the impulse of the buoyant humanism of the Renascence which gave us Michael Angelo, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Montaigne. John Donne was too weak to carry the burden of this powerful message to civilization. At his strongest, he wrote only love poems. Then he faltered, lost faith in man, centred all his trust in God, and taught the depressed and anæmic gospel which lingered on to the days of Moody and Sankey, and which is dying in convulsions in 1916 on the lap of Billy Sunday.

The humanism of his fellow-citizen, Shakespeare, not only survives, but is the spirit of our age, despite the tragic difficulties of our military and economic wars. Never having travelled as Donne had, he yet saw infinitely more of reality, both in the far-spread scene of history, and in the depths of his own and humanity's heart. Death and terror were closer to his view than Donne's. But while he could say:—

> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all that it inherit, shall dissolve.....
> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.....

he could cheerfully exclaim:—

> Let me play the fool;
> With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
> And let my liver rather heat with wine
> Than my heart fill with mortifying groans,
> Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
> Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?

Or (we might add in a footnote) like the Dean of St. Paul's in a shroud.

He can melt his manly men to tears. If the Dean of St. Paul's wants tears, he can watch Coriolanus' eyes moisten at the prayer of his grey-haired mother. But when Aufidius mocks at the "boy of tears," there is a rush of flame in Coriolanus' retort,—

> Measureless liar! thou hast made my heart
> Too great for what contains it.....

which expresses a pride and self-respect that are but curiosities to the Puritan mind. Nevertheless, Aufidius can understand, and, as his dead enemy is borne off the stage, he concludes, "Yet he shall have a noble memory."

Donne's women can blush prettily, as Miss Drury did, and, for the rest, their functions, while very attractive to

Donne, are somewhat restricted. Shakespeare's women sparkle with all those attractions on which Donne concentrates, and they involve a whole universe of creative splendour beyond that world of kisses. Cordelia's kiss is charged with a mighty passion which surges far beyond the bounds of chamber-love,—

> O my dear father! Restoration hang
> Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
> Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
> Have in thy reverence made!
> .....O! look upon me, sir,
> And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.
> No, sir, you must not kneel.

Mad Lear loves her; and all the sane world loves her for ever.

Now these men and women are symbols of the whole human republic, so far as it could be open to the view of Shakespeare. From his own England he drew them, naturally and opulently, and he arrays before us a crowd, homely or stately, hail-fellow or austere, of English kings and princesses in tapestried palace or tented field, English vagabonds and jolly Falstaffs, English soldiers and merry wives. For his fine sense of what is best and most honourable and most good-humoured in England, we who are in the present hour of test proving the national mettle, return him most cordial thanks.

> We must be free, or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakespeare spake.

But he compassed a very much wider circle of battle and wooing, plotting and counter-plotting, cruelty and pity, squalor of mean souls and glory of the generous. In Rome, in Greece, in Egypt, in Verona, in Denmark, in Mantua, he leads us in and out of the ever-changing throng. We hear the knock at the door of Macbeth's castle, and we listen to the conversation of merchants in Venice. In a wood near Athens we encounter fairies (or shall we say we encounter the lovable follies of mankind?) in our Midsummer Night's Dream; and on an uncharted island hear Ariel sing and Caliban mutter, and we know all the time the song and the muttering are but echoes of the "human heart by which we live." Alas for Caliban, and alas for John Donne in the shroud!

If our poet could write to-day, the "great globe itself" would offer him all its treasure. He would tell of the "battles, sieges, fortunes," and "moving incidents" of Japanese Samurai, or the knightly Mahrattas of India; and perchance evolve romance from the convicts of Botany Bay, say, or the rebellious patriots of Brazil or Bolivia, or Abraham Lincoln of Kentucky, or the strikers of Colorado, or the women of our war-scourged Europe. Never a play would he create but would deepen our love, faith, and hope for humanity.

But the poets of that Dawn which will ere long break over the volcanic ruin of Europe will give us the epic that we need, for Shakespeare has shown them the way.

The Religion of Shakespeare's Clowns.

By Arthur B. Moss.

It is a singular, but significant fact that Shakespeare makes nearly all his heroes, philosophers, and his clowns and jesters religious. Hamlet, one of the Master's greatest creations, was a philosopher of the first water, and understood humanity with "a learned spirit." He could discourse most eloquently on any subject; instruct the actors in their art; and declaim most passionately the finest lines of his own soliloquies.

But though he was a philosopher, he was not without the passionate fire of the lover.

When he stood at the graveside of the fair Ophelia, he was prepared to outdo Laertes in anything, to show his love for the dear girl of his heart. He says:—

> Hamlet: Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
> Until my eyelids will no longer wag.
> Queen: O, my son! What theme?
> Hamlet: I lov'd Ophelia; forty thousand brothers
> Could not, with their quantity of love,
> Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?
> King: O, he is mad—Laertes——
> Queen: For love of God, forbear him.
> Hamlet: Zounds, show me what thou'lt do;
> Woul't weep, woul't fight, woul't fast, woul't tear thyself,
> Woul't drink up Esil, eat a crocodile?
> I'll do it. Dost thou come here to whine?
> To outface me with leaping in her grave?
> Be buried quick with her, and so will I;
> And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
> Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
> Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
> Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, and thou'lt mouth;
> I'll rant as well as thou.

And this passionate lover could turn from such a theme to discuss with Horatio the question of the indestructibility of matter and force. Taking the skull of Yorick from the 1st clown (or gravedigger), Hamlet says to Horatio:—

> Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion in the earth?
> Horatio: E'en so.
> Hamlet: And smelt so, pah!
> Horatio: E'en so, my Lord.
> Hamlet: To what base uses we may return, Horatio. Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole?
> Horatio: 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.
> Hamlet: No faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it. As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returned to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam. And why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer barrel?
>
> Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
> O, that the earth, which kept the world in awe,
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw.

But if we turn from the philosophy of Hamlet to the way in which the great poet makes sly digs at the absurdities of the Christian faith, we have only to glance for a moment at the dialogue of the two clowns (or gravediggers) in the churchyard scene for evidence:—

> 1st Clown: Is she to be buried in Christian burial, that wilfully seeks her own salvation?
> 2nd Clown: I tell thee, she is; therefore, make her grave straight. The Crowners hath set on her, and finds it Christian burial.
> 1st Clown: How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?
> 2nd Clown: Why, 'tis found so.
> 1st Clown: It must be *se offendendo;* it cannot be else. For here lies the point: If I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act; and an act hath three branches; it is, to act, to do, and to perform; Argal, she drowned herself wittingly.
> 2nd Clown: Nay, but hear you, Goodman Delver.
> 1st Clown: Give me leave. Here lies the water; good; here stands the man; good. If the man go to the water and drown himself, it is will he, nill he, he goes; mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself; Argal, he, that is not guilty of his own death, shortens not his own life.
> 2nd Clown: But is this law?
> 1st Clown: Ay, marry is't; crowners quest law.

2nd Clown: Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of Christian burial.

1st Clown: Why, there thou say'st; and the more pity; that great folks shall have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave makers; they hold up Adam's profession.

2nd Clown: Was he a gentleman?

1st Clown: He was the first that ever bore arms.

2nd Clown: Why, he had none.

1st Clown: What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digged. Could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee. If thou answerest me not to the purpose confess thyself.

2nd Clown: Go to.

1st Clown: What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

2nd Clown: The gallows maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

1st Clown: I like thy wit well, in good faith; the gallows does well. But how does it well? It does well to those that do ill; now thou doest ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the Church, Argal; the gallows may do well to thee. To't again; come.

2nd Clown: Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?

1st Clown: Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

2nd Clown: Marry, now I can tell.

1st Clown: To't.

2nd Clown: Mass, I cannot tell.

1st Clown: Cudgel thy brains no more about it; for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and when you are asked this question next, say a grave maker; the houses he makes last till doomsday (*Hamlet*. Act V.).

It will be observed that the gravediggers are quite orthodox in their views, and the first clown is far more witty than the average Christian of to-day.

Another example of the way in which Shakespeare ridicules the Christian superstition is given in one of the dialogues between Touchstone, the jester, and a shepherd in *As You Like It*:—

Touchstone: Wast ever at Court, Shepherd?

Corin: No; truly.

Touchstone: Then thou art damn'd.

Corin: Nay, I hope——

Touchstone: Truly thou art damn'd; like an ill-roasted egg, all on one side.

Corin: For not being at Court? Your reason?

Touchstone: Why, if thou never wast at Court, thou never saw'st good manners; if thou never saw'st good manners, then thy manners must be wicked; and wickedness is sin, and sin is damnation. Thou art in a parlous state, Shepherd.

Which is about as good logic as that of the ordinary Christian controversialist when he argues with a Freethinker. Shakespeare is constantly laughing at the Christian idea of Hell. He calls it "the everlasting bonfire," and as Jack Falstaff says of himself: "I think that the Devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that is in me should set hell on fire; he would never else cross me thus" (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act V., Scene iv.).

The Porter (or Doorkeeper) in *Macbeth*, after King Duncan has been murdered by Macbeth, is awakened by a heavy knocking at the gate. The Porter exclaims:—

> Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter at hell-gate he should have old turning the key. (Knocking.) Who's there, in the name of Belzebub? (Further knocking.) Who's there, i' the other devil's name? Faith, he's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator! (Knocking.) Knock, knock, knock. Who's there? Faith, he's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose. Come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose. (Knocking.) Knock, knock. Never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further; I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire (*Macbeth*, Act II., Scene iii.).

This porter seems to have been a very profane rascal to have occupied the position of gate-keeper in Macbeth's castle in Scotland. He certainly would have shocked "the unco' guid" among the Scottish folk of the Elizabethan age.

Who but a Freethinker could have written such startling profanity? Some critics say that you cannot determine what views on religion, or any other subject, a dramatic author may himself entertain by what he makes his characters say. But you can read between the lines, and any man of sense can make a shrewd guess. I have discussed the question of Shakespeare's views on religion with several distinguished actors, and they have all agreed that he was unquestionably a Freethinker. And it is in this fact that the Freethinker rejoices to-day that the greatest poet of all the ages—the greatest dramatist—the greatest student of human nature, was himself free from the curse of superstition, and open to present all aspects of human life, in the light of a free and untrammelled intellect, to the wondering gaze of an enlightened humanity.

Earth's Greatest Son.

By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll.

William Shakespeare was the greatest genius of our world. He left to us the richest legacy of all the dead—the treasures of the rarest soul that ever lived and loved and wrought of words the statues, pictures, robes, and gems of thought.

. . . . .

There was nothing within the range of human thought, within the horizon of intellectual effort, that he did not touch. He knew the brain and heart of man—the theories, customs, superstitions, hopes, fears, hatreds, vices, and virtues of the human race.

He knew the thrills and ecstasies of love, the savage joys of hatred and revenge. He heard the hiss of envy's snakes and watched the eagles of ambition soar. There was no hope that did not put its star above his head—no fear he had not felt—no joy that had not shed its sunshine on his face. He experienced the emotions of mankind. He was the intellectual spendthrift of the world. He gave with the generosity, the extravagance, of madness.

Read one play, and you are impressed with the idea that the wealth of the brain of a god has been exhausted—that there are no comparisons, no more passions to be expressed, no more definitions, no more philosophy, beauty, or sublimity to be put in words—and yet the next play opens as fresh as the dewy gates of another day.

The outstretched wings of his imagination filled the sky. He was the intellectual crown o' the earth.

. . . . .

Of all writers Shakespeare is the most impersonal. He speaks through others, and the others seem to speak

for themselves. The didactic is lost in the dramatic. He does not use the stage as a pulpit to enforce some maxim. He is as reticent as nature.

He idealizes the common and transfigures all he touches—but he does not preach. He was interested in men and things as they were. He did not seek to change them—but to pourtray. He was nature's mirror, and in that mirror nature saw herself.

. . . . . .

He had the observant eyes that really see, the ears that really hear, the brain that retains all pictures, all thoughts, logic as unerring as light, the imagination that supplies defects and builds the perfect from a fragment. And these faculties, these aptitudes, working together, account for what he did.

He exceeded all the sons of men in the splendour of his imagination. To him the whole world paid tribute, and nature poured her treasures at his feet. In him all races lived again, and even those to be were pictured in his brain.

He was a man of imagination—that is to say, of genius; and having seen a leaf, and a drop of water, he could construct the forests, the rivers, and the seas—and in his presence all the cataracts would fall and foam, the mists rise, the clouds form and float.

If Shakespeare knew one fact, he knew its kindred and its neighbours. Looking at a coat of mail, he instantly imagined the society, the conditions, that produced it and what it, in turn, produced. He saw the castle, the moat, the drawbridge, the lady in the tower, and the knightly lover spurring across the plain. He saw the bold baron and the rude retainer, the trampled serf, and all the glory and the grief of feudal life.

He lived the life of all.

He was a citizen of Athens in the days of Pericles. He listened to the eager eloquence of the great orators, and sat upon the cliffs, and with the tragic poet heard "the multitudinous laughter of the sea." He saw Socrates thrust the spear of question through the shield and heart of falsehood. He was present when the great man drank hemlock, and met the night of death, tranquil as a star meets morning. He listened to the peripatetic philosophers, and was unpuzzled by the sophists. He watched Phidias as he chiselled shapeless stone to forms of love and awe.

He lived by the mysterious Nile, amidst the vast and monstrous. He knew the very thought that wrought the form and features of the Sphinx. He heard great Memnon's morning song when marble lips were smitten by the sun. He laid him down with the embalmed and waiting dead, and felt within their dust the expectation of another life, mingled with cold and suffocating doubts—the children born of long delay.

He walked the ways of mighty Rome, and saw great Cæsar with his legions in the field. He stood with vast and motley throngs and watched the triumphs given to victorious men, followed by uncrowned kings, the captured hosts, and all the spoils of ruthless war. He heard the shout that shook the Coliseum's roofless walls, when from the reeling gladiator's hand the short sword fell, while from his bosom gushed the stream of wasted life.

He lived the life of savage men. He trod the forests' silent depths, and in the desperate game of life or death he matched his thought against the instinct of the beast.

He knew all crimes and all regrets, all virtues and their rich rewards. He was victim and victor, pursuer and pursued, outcast and king. He heard the applause and curses of the world, and on his heart had fallen all the nights and noons of failure and success.

He knew the unspoken thoughts, the dumb desires, the wants and ways of beasts. He felt the crouching tiger's thrill, the terror of the ambushed prey, and with the eagles he had shared the ecstasy of flight and poise and swoop, and he had lain with sluggish serpents on the barren rocks uncoiling slowly in the heat of noon.

He sat beneath the bo-tree's contemplative shade, wrapped in Buddha's mighty thought, and dreamed all dreams that light, the alchemist, has wrought from dust and dew, and stored within the slumbrous poppy's subtle blood.

He knelt with awe and dread at every shrine—he offered every sacrifice, and every prayer—felt the consolation and the shuddering fear—mocked and worshipped all the gods—enjoyed all heavens, and felt the pangs of every hell.

He lived all lives, and through his blood and brain there crept the shadow and the chill of every death, and his soul, like Mazeppa, was lashed naked to the wild horse of every fear and love and hate.

The imagination had a stage in Shakespeare's brain, whereon were set all scenes that lie between the morn of laughter and the night of tears, and where his players bodied forth the false and true, the joys and griefs, the careless shallows, and the tragic deeps of universal life.

From Shakespeare's brain their poured a Niagara of gems spanned by fancy's seven-hued arch. He was as many-sided as clouds are many-formed. To him giving was hoarding—sowing was harvest—and waste itself the source of wealth. Within his marvellous mind were the fruits of all thought past, the seeds of all to be. As a a drop of dew contains the image of the earth and sky, so all there is of life was mirrored forth in Shakespeare's brain.

Shakespeare was an intellectual ocean, whose waves touched all the shores of thought; within which were all the tides and waves of destiny and will; over which swept all the storms of fate, ambition, and revenge; upon which fell the gloom and darkness of despair and death and all the sunlight of content and love, and within which was the inverted sky lit with the eternal stars—an intellectual ocean—towards which all rivers ran, and from which now the isles and continents of thought receive their dew and rain.

Shakespeare.

By Algernon Charles Swinburne.

There is one book in the world of which it might be affirmed and argued, without fear of derision from any but the supreme and crowning fools among the foolishest of mankind, that it would be better for the world to lose all others and keep this one than to lose this and keep all other treasures bequeathed by human genius to all that we can conceive of eternity—to all that we can imagine of immortality. That book is best known, and best described for all of us, simply by the simple English name of its author. The word Shakespeare connotes more than any other man's name that ever was written or spoken upon earth. The bearer of that name was the one supreme creator of men who ever arose among mortals to show them and to leave with them an all but innumerable race of evident and indisputable immortals. No child of man and woman was too high or too low for his perfect apprehension and appreciation. Of good and evil, in all their subtlest and sublimest forms of thought and action and revelation, he knew more than ever it has been given to any other man to know. All this incomparable birthright might conceivably have been bestowed on a man from whom the birthright of song had by equitable compensation been absolutely withheld. But except upon the greatest of lyric and prophetic poets it has never been bestowed in ampler or more entrancing measure.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

Outdoor.

Hyde Park: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.30, Messrs. Kells and Dales, "The Resurrection"; 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Shaller, and Kennedy.

West Ham Branch N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station); 6.45, Mr. Davidson, a Lecture.

Special Sunday Evening Lectures

AT

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE,

SOUTH PLACE, MOORGATE STREET, E.C. (within five minutes' of Liverpool Street.)

SUNDAY APRIL 30, at 6.30:

Mr. C. COHEN,

"Freethought, Religion, and the War."

SUNDAY, MAY 7, at 6.30:

Mr. J. T. LLOYD, "Heroes of Our Faith."

Admission Free. Collection. Doors open at 6 o'clock.

Pamphlets by G. W. FOOTE.

	s.	d.
BIBLE AND BEER. 40 pp. ... ... post ½d.	0	1
WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM? 32 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
ROME OR ATHEISM? 32 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
JOHN MORLEY AS A FREETHINKER. 16 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
MRS. BESANT'S THEOSOPHY. 16 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
MY RESURRECTION. 16 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
THE NEW CAGLIOSTRO. 16 pp.... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER. 32 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
THE PASSING OF JESUS. 24 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
DARWIN ON GOD. 64 pp. ... ... ,, 1d.	0	2
THE SIGN OF THE CROSS. 48 pp. ... ,, 1½d.	0	3
HALL OF SCIENCE LIBEL CASE. 58 pp. ,, 1d.	0	3
CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM? 120 pp. ,, 1½d.	0	4
THEISM OR ATHEISM? 92 pp. ... ... ,, 1½d.	0	6
BIBLE HANDBOOK. 162 pp. Cloth ... ,, 2d.	1	0

Pamphlets by COL. INGERSOLL.

	s.	d.
A CHRISTIAN CATECHISM. 48 pp. ... post 1d.	0	2
WOODEN GOD. 16 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
CRIMES AGAINST CRIMINALS. 29 pp.... ,, ½d.	0	1
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. 24 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
MISTAKES OF MOSES. Pioneer Pamphlet, No. 3. 32 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
COMING CIVILIZATION. 30 pp.... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
DO I BLASPHEME? 28 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
THE DEVIL. 48 pp. ... ... ,, 1d.	0	2
ERNEST RENAN. 16 pp.... ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. 16 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE. 28 pp.... ... ... ,, ½d		1
MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. 16 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
THE GODS. An Oration. 47 pp. ... ... ,, 1d.	0	1
LIVE TOPICS. 16 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
MYTH AND MIRACLE. 14 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED? 39 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
ABRAHAM LINCOLN. An Oration. 30 pp. ,, ½d.	0	1
VOLTAIRE. An Oration. 32 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
ROME OR REASON. 48 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
LIMITS OF TOLERATION. 29 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY. 16 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
SUPERSTITION. 48 pp. ... ... ,, 1d.	0	2
SOCIAL SALVATION. 16 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
DEFENCE OF FREETHOUGHT. 60 pp.... ,, ½d.	0	2
WHY I AM AN AGNOSTIC. 23 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1

Other Freethought Pamphlets.

	s.	d.
REFUTATION OF DEISM, by P. B. Shelley. 32 pp. ... ... post ½d.	0	1
UTILITARIANISM, by J. Bentham. 32 pp... ,, ½d.	0	1
PAGAN MYTHOLOGY, by Lord Bacon. 60 pp. ,, 1½d.	0.	3
ESSAY ON SUICIDE, by D. Hume. 16 pp. ,, ½d.	0	1
MORTALITY OF SOUL, by D. Hume. 16 pp. ,, ½d.	0	1
MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA, by M. Maugasarian. 16 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
CODE OF NATURE, by Diderot and Holbach. 16 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
FREEWILL AND NECESSITY, Anthony Collins. 82 pp.... ... ... ,, 1d.	0	3
ESSENCE OF RELIGION, by L. Feuerbach. 82 pp. ... ... Nett. ,, 1d.	0	6
LIBERTY AND NECESSITY, by D. Hume. 32 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.		1
FROM CHRISTIAN PULPIT TO SECULAR PLATFORM, by J. T. Lloyd. 64 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0	1
WAS CHRIST CRUCIFIED? by A. Bierbower. 16 pp. ... ... ,, ½d.	0	1
BIRTH OF CHRIST, by D. F. Strauss. 34 pp. ,, 1d.	0	3
IS IMMORTALITY A FACT? by C. Watts. 34 pp. ... ... ,, 1d.	0	1

About 1d. in the 1s. should be added on Foreign and Colonial orders.

The Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Printed and Published by The Pioneer Press (G. W. Foote and Co., Ltd.), *61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.* 1,815