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Views and Opinions.

Christians and the World-War.

Christmas, 1914, saw the principal Christian nations of Europe at war—with the clergy singing their old refrain of Christianity as the religion of peace and universal brotherhood. Christmas, 1915, saw the same nations at war—with others added—and the clergy harping on the same old theme. And Christmas, 1916, finds the War still in progress, with the clergy still at it. Wars may rage and nations may fall, but the Christian cant of brotherhood continues undiminished. Christians preached it with their hands on each other's throats. They have dwelt on it amid Smithfield fires, Bartholomew massacres, and Inquisitorial tortures. The stake, the rack, the dungeon, the thumbscrew, have given it concrete expression, and it would indeed be strange if the mere fact of some nine or ten Christian nations at war could silence a preaching which has persisted for so long. Universal brotherhood and high explosive shells! The Somme, Verdun, Gallipoli, as the practical outcome of sixteen centuries of Christian domination and the preaching of Christian love! If the insanity of the second Adventists became a reality and Christ returned again, he might be offered the post of Minister of Munitions—that is, if he was not clapped into prison as a conscientious objector. * * *

Christian Cant.

Of all forms of cant the worst is that of religion. And of all religious cant there is none so bad as the Christian variety. "Peace on earth and good will to men" is the Christian message. There can never be peace on earth while Christianity is powerful. There will never be good will to all men until Christianity disappears. The tendency of all religion is to divide; it separates men into groups in terms of belief; it makes a difference of belief fundamental in determining their mutual relationships. And to this division Christianity adds a sectarian hatred such as is equalled by few other religions, and is surpassed by none. In Germany the great fomentors of hatred towards this country are

the Christian clergy. In this country the clergy play precisely the same part. In a country more lavish in its protestations of piety than any other, it is almost an offence to speak of a German as a human being, and an actual offence to work for peace along any other line than that of a complete military subjugation of the enemy. Sixteen centuries of Christian rule and teaching have provided us with a number of Christian nations who can unite upon no other single question save that of making war, and who can find no other method than that of settling their differences. We agree with those who say that you cannot parley with a wild beast, and that when it is making for your throat, its destruction is the condition of self-preservation. We only beg to submit that the wild beasts who are threatening the security of civilization are the products of Christian rule, the result of many centuries of Christian training and teaching. * * *

The Christian Myth.

Of all impostures the world has ever known there are none greater than Christianity. It begins with the attempt to base the Christian myth upon the actual existence of a Jewish peasant—miraculously born and miraculously raised from the dead. Students of comparative mythology know what an imposture this is. They know that Christmas is not a Christian festival at all, and that it no more connotes the birth-date of an historic Jesus than it does the birth-date of an historic Bacchus, Mithra, Horus, or any one of the other numerous saviour deities of antiquity. The twenty-fifth of December was the date fixed for the birth of all these gods, and for plain reasons. They were symbolic of certain astronomical and vegetative phenomena which have formed the groundwork of a religious ritual all over the world. Whether Jesus Christ was a sun god, or a god of vegetation, or a combination of the two, cannot alter this fact. To put the matter in a nutshell—Christ is Christian only in the sense that he forms the figure-head of the Christian Church. Christmas is a Christian festival only in the sense that it is upheld by the Christian Church. In a wider and truer sense, both belong to a world-wide mythology, the explanation of which is to be found in the symbolizing of the procreative powers of nature—itsself a development of the animistic tendencies of the primitive human mind. * * *

The Cant of Goodwill.

"Peace on earth and goodwill to men"! The mockery of it! When and where has it been manifested? If we assume that Christianity began with the birth of Jesus some nineteen hundred and sixteen, or twenty years ago (there is doubt about the date, as there may well be, since it was not fixed until nearly five hundred years after his alleged death), then Christmas Day becomes the anniversary of the greatest disaster that has ever overtaken the world. It meant the death of the ancient civilization. For a thousand years Christianity rode roughshod over the learning, the science, and the culture of antiquity. This might have been forgiven

had it possessed an art or a culture of its own. But it had none. Literature was replaced by monkish legends, social life by religious exercises, medical science by miracle cures, the conception of this life as an end in itself by that of the world as a halting-place on a long pilgrimage, during which man showed his greatness by ignoring its beauties and trampling on its pleasures. The period of Christianity's ascendancy stands as so much time lost to the world's progress. It is a blank over which the progressive tendencies of the Renaissance reached to affiliate with the suppressed life of pre-Christian times. And for the last five hundred years the story of European progress has been largely the story of an attempt, more or less successful, to throw off the paralysing control of the Christian Church. First directed against the Catholic Church, then against this or that section of the Protestant Church, then against the general influence of Christianity itself. But always there has been the recognition—more or less conscious as enlightenment was more or less complete—that organized Christianity must be kept firmly in check if progress was to be permanent and its results conserved.

* * *

Organization for War—or Peace.

Let it be noted also that not alone is the peace of the world threatened and broken by Christian nations; it is also Christian nations that show themselves impotent for effective organization for anything but warfare. Richard Jefferies said that the most extraordinary spectacle to him was that, after so many centuries, humanity had not yet learned to organize itself for its own comfort. Truly extraordinary; but the explanation largely lies in the fact that man has spent so much of his energy in perpetuating superstition and in cherishing the evils it has produced. Christianity has never taught that mankind was to organize itself for any social end whatever. Such an ideal would have been little less than heresy. It has organized men and women for the defence of the Church. It has co-operated zealously to organize for actual warfare. In this respect the Churches of to-day are true to their tradition. And one may note that even while they have been active in recruiting for the War, and foremost in fanning that hatred upon which warfare thrives, they have been silent upon the exploitation of the people by those who have seized upon the War as an opportunity for private gain. Had the Churches stood, generation after generation, as witnesses to the inhumanity, the barbarity, and even the immorality of war, no one can doubt that by this time a European war would have been an impossibility. Had they stood apart, as ethical teachers, from active participation in this War, they could not have shown their impotency for good less decisively than they have done, and they might have escaped much of the contempt they have earned. I do not know when the world will rid itself of the mania of militarism or the craze of Christianity. But I am convinced that the day which sees the extinction of the one will not greatly antedate the disappearance of the other.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Desecration of a Great Festival.

CHRISTMAS is with us once more, but Christmas is not now what it was in days of yore. It has almost entirely changed its character, and it is not a change for the better. Once it celebrated a great natural fact, but now only an empty fable in the guise of fact. Some features of the former celebration still persist in the latter. The fact remains in all its pristine glory, and renews itself

every year, while the fable is obviously a superstitious relic, interesting only on that score, but in no sense whatever useful. The fact is absolutely undeniable. For six months the sun has been steadily deserting us, getting farther and farther away; but on Christmas Day he begins his return journey, with spring and summer in his wings. It is naturally a time for rejoicing, to "play and make good cheer." As Shakespeare puts it:—

Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the holly;

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly;

Then, heigh-ho, the holly!

This life is most jolly.

The fable, on the other hand, bears no recognizable relation to any fact whatever. Among mankind, virgins do not become mothers and retain their virginity, while God-men are purely mythical. The story of the Incarnation of the Son of God is fictitious from beginning to end. That multitudes regard it as wholly historical proves nothing except their own extreme credulity. We know from history that nothing is easier than to believe a lie to be truth. There are millions of people to-day who accept the Christian God-man as an actual reality, who not only believe in him, but pay him the daily homage of lip-service. Little do many of those who participate in the religious ceremonies of this season imagine that they are abetting and condoning a palpable falsehood, which, in every religion but the Christian, we are all agreed in acknowledging to be such.

Here then we have, side by side, fact and fiction, truth and falsehood; and, of course, fact is older than fiction, and truth than falsehood, with the result that the fiction obscures the fact and the falsehood overlays the truth. As is well known, Christmas is a festival of the Christian Church, in memory of the birth of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, however, the date of the birth of Jesus Christ is irrecoverably lost among a huge mass of unrecorded events. Whether he was born in spring, summer, autumn, or winter, no one can tell; all we know being that, as God-man, he was never born at all. Several dates were tried, but none had any permanency until December 25 was fixed upon. Why was the winter solstice chosen as the final date? Chrysostom answers thus:—

On this day the birthday of Christ was lately fixed at Rome, in order that while the Heathens were occupied in their profane ceremonies the Christians might perform their holy rites undisturbed. But they call this day "the birthday of the Invincible One (Mithra)." Who is so invincible as the Lord that overthrew and vanquished Death? Or because they style it the "Birthday of the Sun." He is the Sun of Righteousness, of whom Malachi saith, "Upon you, fearful ones, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings."

Thus Chrysostom as well as admits that Christ was not born on Christmas Day, but that this date was selected to allow the Christians to commemorate their Divine Saviour's birth in quietness and peace. Occupied with the rites of their own festival, the Pagans would not be so likely to take note of what the disciples of the Galilean were doing. Another motive operated in the choice of this date, namely, the desire to discourage, if not the determination to put an end to, the profane and corrupt Saturnalian festival. Naturally, to the fanatical Christians of the first few centuries everything Pagan was an abomination, and no language was scathing enough to denounce it. In their estimation nothing could be more wicked and godless than the rejoicings to which the whole population gave itself up during the holidays in honour of Saturn and the sun. But was their estimate accurate? Numerous were the laws of the Saturnalia, of which Lucian supplies us with a list in his *Saturnalian*

Tracts. Among them were the following:—

Servants and freemen, poor and rich, are on a footing of equality.

To be angry, to be in ill humour, to utter threatening words, is forbid to all without distinction.

Let the rich call to mind that one or other of their friends may find it inconvenient to pay his house-rent, or defray other current expenses; these let them pay for him; and to such ends let them inquire after the circumstances of their friends, in order to discover what each is most in need of.

On the other hand, let the receivers abstain from all dissatisfaction, and accept the donation, whatever it be, with gratitude (*Lucian's Works*, vol i., pp. 545, 6).

On the subject of presents generally the laws were exceedingly sensible:—

Let not a jug of wine, a hare, nor a fat hen, pass for a Saturnalian present, much less let any turn the laudable ancient usage into jest by making ridiculous presents.

Let the compliment with which presents are accompanied be as short and modest as possible, refraining from all expressions that might be disagreeable to the receiver, and without vaunting the value of the donation.

To cut jokes upon one another is free to everyone, provided they are not injurious.

Let such as are inclined to dice, throw for nuts; whoever has played for money, let him the following day have nothing to eat.

Let all portions of meat be equal; let not the waiters favour anyone more than another. Let them be prompt in their duty, and not present anyone at pleasure with a dish, or without being asked for it, or set before one person a large, another a small portion; before this a knuckle, and that a hog's cheek; but let in all things a perfect equality have place.

Let all drink the same wine; and let the rich plead neither head-ache, nor stomach-ache, as a pretence for being served with better wine than the rest. (On the whole subject see *Ibid*, vol. i., pp. 537-563.)

Such were the lines along which the Saturnalian festival was conducted in Pagan Rome, and it puzzles us to see where the profanities and indecencies came in. Doubtless, excesses of various kinds often crept in, but has there ever been a Christmas celebrated in Christendom that can honestly be said to have been free from such drawbacks? Have we not all witnessed with our own eyes scenes that were a disgrace to humanity? Besides, is it not incontrovertible that the very customs and practices, on account of which the Church Fathers condemned the Saturnalia, were later admitted as prominent features into the Christian festival, and retained their prominence for many centuries? Christianity has always been a specially syncretic religion, borrowing wholesale from all available sources. The mistletoe, for example, had been sacred among the Druids for many ages before Christianity was heard of, in whose estimation it was a seed which preserved vegetative life, carrying it over from the old year to the new. It has now lost its original and highly imaginative significance, and become a sort of emblem of freedom, under which, at the end of the year, promiscuous kissing is permissible. The Christmas tree is of a non-Christian origin, and so are hot cross buns, the decking of doors with garlands or flowers, vessel-cupping, drinking from the wassail bowl, and many other things. The Christmas chapters in Irving's immortal *Sketch Book* show clearly how largely Pagan customs figured in the celebration of Christmas just a hundred years ago in England. Listen to Prynne, the double Puritan:—

If we compare our Bacchanalian Christmases and New Year's Tides with these Saturnalia and Feasts of Janus, we shall find such near affinity between them, both in regard of time and in their manner of solemnizing (both of them being spent in revelling, epicurism, wantonness, idleness, dancing, drinking, stage plays, masques, and

carnal pomp and jollity), that we must needs conclude the one to be but the very ape or issue of the other.

That is perfectly true. At heart, Christianity has always been, and still is, an enemy of pleasure. Its only permissible joy is in the Lord, or in the Holy Ghost. The pleasures of the flesh she frowns upon. At Christmas, Christians are expected to rejoice alone in the realization of the advent of a supernatural Being into this natural world of sin and grief, all other rejoicing being more or less of the Devil.

The God Saturn, in whose honour the Saturnalia were held, is no more even within the limits of human credulity; and Christ the Lord, in whose memory Christmas is solemnized, is in the process of disappearing from the faith of men and women; but the winter solstice never fails. Even the bloodiest war on record cannot hold it back even for a second. And what is true of the season is also true of human nature. Progress now halts on palsied feet, but it has a future. Even as early as February the thrush begins her song, at the heart of which is "the rapture of the forward view."

J. T. LLOYD.

A Christmas Cracker for Christians

On looking out of the window this morning, I noticed my neighbours were more drunk than usual, and I remembered it was the birthday of their Redeemer.—*Thos. Carlyle*

THE convivial features of Christmas Day, which is supposed by Christians to be the birthday of the "Man of Sorrows," have been noted frequently to the discomfort of the clergy and their followers. For it is one of life's little ironies that the birthday of the "Prince of Peace" was fixed in December from the urgent necessity of fighting Pagan rituals. Like all human institutions, the Christian Churches and their feast-days have had to contend in open warfare for survival. The festivals of Pagan Rome were as numerous as plums in a pudding. The public holidays were so frequent that the emperors, especially Marcus Aurelius, found it necessary to curtail them. It was to counteract the attractions which these Pagan holidays exercised over the people that the leaders of the Christian Churches sanctioned and incorporated some of these feasts.

Thus it is that "God's birthday" is associated with feasting and merriment. Why God, who is described as eternal, should have a birthday, is a matter for Christians to settle among themselves. Non-Christians regard Christ as a purely mythical personage, like all the other saviours and sun-gods of antiquity, who were generally born miraculously of virgin mothers, and whose careers, like that of Jesus, were marked with marvels. Whether there was a man called Jesus, who lived and taught in Galilee, is a matter of microscopic importance. Christians worship the figure in the Gospels, and not the Galilean carpenter, and have done so for centuries.

"God's birthday" was not kept regularly until many generations after the supposed date of the birth of Christ. When first observed, it was held on varying dates. The precise time of Christ's birth, like that of James de la Pluche, was "wropt in mystery," but it was not in December, even according to the legends. Why, then, do Christians observe Christmas Day on December 25? The answer plucks the heart out of the Christian superstition.

It was in competition with the feast of Saturnalia, one of the chief Roman festivals, that Christmas Day had its date fixed in December. The anniversary of Saturn and his wife was held from December 17 to 20, and the Emperor Caligula generously added a fifth day of re-

joining. On these five festal days of old Rome, the schools were closed, no punishment was inflicted, the toga was replaced by undress garment, distinctions of rank were laid aside, servants sat at table with their employers, and all classes exchanged gifts. The propensity of converts from Paganism to cling to custom, proved invincible. If the apostates were to be retained in the new religion, it became necessary to incorporate the old under the mask of the new. The struggle for survival has also incorporated other features. In the far-off centuries, white-robed Druids cut the sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle, and chanted their hymns to the frosty air. These features were absorbed also, and the mistletoe and carol-singing still play their minor, if amusing, parts in the celebration.

Nor is this all, for irony is everywhere interwoven in this celebration of the birthday of a man-god who never lived. "Peace and goodwill amongst men" proclaim tens of thousands of pulpits, and the clergy also bless regimental colours, and pray for the troops of contending European armies. The nations which profess to worship the "Prince of Peace" are in the stronger grip of Mars, the god of war. From the Elbe to the Spree, from the Seine to the Neva, Europe is a shambles, ankle-deep in human blood. The countrymen of Moliere are cutting the throats of the countrymen of Goethe, and the compatriots of Kossuth are disembowelling the brothers of Tolstoi. The women of Europe, "like Niobe, all tears," are mourning their dead fathers, husbands, and sons; and whole nations, professedly Christian, are engaged in wholesale killing. The death-moans of hundreds of thousands are drowned in the Te Deums of the victors, and the survivors are blessed in the name of the "Prince of Peace."

To such a pass, after so many centuries of the Christian superstition, has the Western world come. Milton's hymn on "The Nativity of Christ" reads like the bitterest mockery:—

Nor war, nor battle's sound
Was heard the world around,
The idle spear and shield were high up hung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
The kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

It reads like a beautiful fairy-tale. "Peace and goodwill" must wait till another year; and the present celebration of "God's birthday" must make serious men and women think. The Christmas festival itself, with all its hypocritical professions, is largely pretence and make-believe. It is the paradox of paradoxes that the woeful welter of a tragic contest is going on in almost every corner of a world that professes to worship a God who commanded his followers not to kill and to obey his commands of non-resistance and forgiveness. The Merry Birthday of the Man of Sorrows is an organized hypocrisy, a fitting celebration of an event that never happened.

MIMNERMUS.

The Son of a Ghost.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.—*The Apostles' Creed.*

If a revival preacher were to go about in this age, pretending to be the Messiah, he would in all probability end his days in a lunatic asylum. It is very unlikely that a peripatetic Messiah would found a powerful sect, that a vast literature would accumulate around his memory, or that his devotees would gradually repudiate his human parentage and assert his

entrance into the world by a supernatural process of generation. Great changes have taken place since the beginning of the Christian era. Superstition still exists, but it is less gross and active. Sporadic miracles still occur in the most benighted parts of Catholic countries, but to the majority of Catholics, and nearly the whole of Protestants, a miracle is a thing of the past. The order of Nature, once so frequently broken, is now invariable. Faith turns its face to antiquity, and reads its charter in the dubious records of ignorant and credulous ages.

No man in his senses would believe that a child was born last week, or last year, without a father; but many men, who in other respects are rational, believe that such a prodigy once existed, and are perfectly ready to regard those who are sceptical on this point as heretics and blasphemers, deserving of punishment in this world and everlasting torture in the next. At this time of the year they are accustomed to think of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Holy Ghost. They hear sermons on the Nativity. They stimulate a faith which is possibly waning. They do not re-examine the grounds of their faith; they simply hear the old story retold, and go away convinced that what is related with such confidence *must* be true. For the moment they have no doubt about it. Jesus Christ *was* born of the Virgin Mary, and his other parent *was* the Holy Ghost.

Now the Holy Ghost is only a ghost, and that such a shadowy personage should beget a lusty boy is enough to stagger the stoutest credulity. "If God had not said it," wrote old Donne, "I would never have believed it." And if God *did* say it we have something to go upon. Jesus Christ himself, in the whole of the Gospels, never so much as alludes to his supernatural birth. Nor was it suspected by his countrymen, who regarded him as an ordinary carpenter, with several brothers and sisters. Even the Apostles were ignorant of it, if we are to rely upon the Acts. Joseph and Mary give us no first-hand testimony. Everything is related in the third person by the Evangelists. And who are *they*? Not a man on the face of the earth is able to answer this question. God only knows (at least, no one else does) where, when, and by whom the Four Gospels were written. This much is certain, and admitted by every scholar, that the Gospels, as we have them, did not come from the pens of Jesus Christ's apostles. Earlier documents may have existed, and probably did, but we know not their actual contents; yet judging from St. Paul's Epistles, they could hardly have contained a tithe of the miraculous stuff which the Church preserved as the "Life of Christ."

Orthodox Christians are fond of declaring that the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ was predicted by the prophet Isaiah. "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," the prophet says, according to the Authorized Version. The word *Almah*, however, does not mean a virgin, but a young woman; and thus it cannot have the slightest reference to the "Virgin Birth of Christ." Besides, it is evident that Isaiah saw personally to the fulfilment of his own prophecy. He did not leave it to other men or future ages.

What is the real evidence that Jesus Christ was born without a human father? The presumption is in favour of any baby having two earthly parents, and evidence to the contrary must be as strong as the alleged fact is extraordinary.

Mark and John—that is, the Second and Fourth Gospels—say nothing whatever about the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, and their silence seems to balance the loquacity of Matthew and Luke, who do not pretend to be giving first-hand testimony. Luke, indeed, avows in his preamble, that he is only putting into a literary form what had been "handed down," and Matthew might have made exactly the same confession.

From the very nature of the case, all who first promulgated the story of Jesus Christ's father being a ghost, if they did not invent it themselves, must have taken it on trust from Jesus, or Joseph, or Mary. Jesus never uttered a word on the subject. It may be argued that he told his Apostles privately; but how, on this theory, can we account for the silence of John?

Joseph is said to have been engaged to Mary, and to have been shocked by her premature maternal appearance; indeed he resolved to break the engagement. Supposing this to be true, it may prove that Joseph was *not* the prospective baby's father, but it cannot prove who *was* its father. It is said that Joseph was subsequently satisfied. But *how* was he satisfied? An angel appeared to him in a dream, and told him that the baby was the offspring of the Holy Ghost; a personage, by the way, with whom Joseph, like every other Jew of that time, was totally unacquainted; so that, instead of allaying his apprehensions, it would only have increased his perplexity. In any case, the celestial visitor appeared to Joseph in a dream; consequently, the story itself is but a dream.

A man finds his sweetheart in the state in which "ladies love to be who love their lords"—before she *has* a lord. He knows he is not the cause of the phenomenon; he is puzzled and grieved; and he resolves to leave her to the other gentleman. But he goes to bed and dreams that her condition is miraculous; he wakes up satisfied and marries her. All this is very interesting and proves him to be a very good-natured man. But it proves nothing else. His evidence would be absolutely worthless in any court of law.

Mary, of course, knew the father of the child. But she did not tell Joseph; she let him find it out in a dream. Neither, to our knowledge, did she tell anyone else. On one occasion, when Mary, Jesus, and Joseph were all three together, she spoke to Jesus of Joseph as "thy father." Now, this should be sufficient for a person of common intelligence and common decency. Mary's authority is quite good enough. Her word ought to settle the question.

Luke tells us, without telling us who informed *him*, that the angel Gabriel, who visited Mary as the herald of the third person of the Trinity, said to her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." Now, these "overshadowings" are familiar to the students of ancient history and mythology. A priest sometimes induced a pretty woman to spend the night in a temple, on the pretence that the god was in love with her; and it is conceivable, of course, though we should be sorry to assert it, that Mary was a victim of a similar imposition. In other cases, the deity actually took a physical form; witness the multitudinous amours of the gods of the ancient pantheon. One wonders, therefore, whether the incarnation of the Holy Ghost was a preliminary to the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The story of a son of a ghost will stand no chance in the world to-day. It is an inheritance from ignorant and superstitious times. Mary's "misfortune" was a posthumous libel. According to the Gospels themselves, the Jews believed that Jesus Christ (if he ever existed) was born in lawful wedlock. When the dogma of his divinity was established, the story of his being the son of a ghost was devised to support it; and as *avatars* or incarnations of deity in the form of men were universally credited, both the story and the dogma gained a ready acceptance, and ministered to the success of the Christian faith. The time was bound to come, however, when men would be sensible enough to see that the birth of Jesus Christ, without a human father, was only

half a miracle. To complete the miracle he should have been born without a mother.

(Late) G. W. FOOTE.

Science as the Servitor of Man.

IV.

(Continued from p. 806.)

THE multitudinous purposes for which glass is employed render it an invaluable adjunct to civilized life. Various legends relate to its original discovery within the historical period, but probably primitive forms of glass were utilized by man in times of which no records remain. Pliny, in his *Natural History*, attributes this important discovery to Phœnician merchants who were driven by a storm to land on the shores of Syria. They placed their culinary vessels on soda, which formed the cargo of their ship, and they noted that the heat of their fires caused the soda to fuse with the surrounding sand, thus producing glass. Tyre and Sidon were early famous for their glass, as for so many other choice commodities, but there is abundant evidence that the ancient Egyptians were long previously masters of the glass-maker's art. The rival claims of Syria and Egypt as the birthplace of the industry are, however, by weighty authorities considered to be so evenly balanced that the problem remains unsolved. In any case, the most ancient known specimens of glass are Egyptian.

The importance of glass for windows, table and decorative uses, scientific apparatus, and for domestic and industrial purposes, it is impossible to overrate. And in modern days glass has been transformed in a manner truly remarkable by the hand of the contemporary chemist. Science has shown that through change in its composition, the properties of this material may be modified to a wonderful degree. Recent chemistry has given us the power to construct appliances such as telescopes, microscopes, prisms, and lenses of the most delicate qualities, which have contributed to social service, as well as to an increased acquaintance with the marvels of an infinite and eternal universe.

As all are aware, substances may manifest themselves in at least three states—the solid, liquid, and gaseous; and this truth is clearly illustrated by the three conditions presented by that indispensable compound water, in its three forms of ice, water, and steam; these different states of the same substance being determined by changes of temperature.

In studying the transformation of liquids into solids, it is well to remember that in the subject now under review, a crystalline solid, and not an amorphous solid, is meant. With a crystalline body its constituent particles are arranged in a definite geometrical manner, much as we observe them in an ordinary rock crystal, or any other similar substance. In amorphous bodies, on the other hand, their structural arrangements are, naturally, indefinite in outline. Again, when a crystalline substance is heated to a given temperature—its melting point—it passes from the solid to the liquid state; whereas an amorphous solid, like butter or a candle in very hot weather, gradually loses its rigidity, and, quite unlike crystalline bodies, possesses no definite melting point.

It is an invariable law that when any crystalline substance is heated, it melts immediately its melting point is reached. No instance of its inability to liquefy in such circumstances has ever been encountered. But, if the liquid be refrigerated, it is a common experience to find that the temperature may be reduced even below the normal freezing point, or under that of the melting point of a solid without the production of the solid

state. For instance, it is possible, with proper care, to cool water below its freezing point without the formation of ice, and substances which thus remain liquid at a temperature under their usual freezing point are considered as supercooled. It seems surprising that these supercooled liquids—

appear to be quite stable—they can, apparently, be kept for any length of time unchanged—provided that all traces of the solid form are rigidly excluded. If, however, even a minute trace, even the ten thousand-millionth part of a grain—a particle which might dance in the mote of a sunbeam—is brought into contact with the supercooled liquid, the state of apparent equilibrium is upset, separation of the crystalline solid form begins, and the process goes on until all the liquid has passed into solid.

It is also interesting that at its inception, the process of crystallization is not general throughout the liquid. Those portions of the liquid in contact with the solid first assume the crystalline state, and this activity slowly extends until it embraces the whole supercooled liquid. Nor is the rate of crystallization uniform; it varies with the nature of the substance, and also with its freedom from foreign ingredients. It also depends on the degree of supercooling to which the liquid has been subjected. The further the temperature of such a liquid falls below its ordinary freezing point the greater the velocity of its solidification, once this begins. But another factor supervenes to modify this natural law. The rate at which a chemical change occurs depends upon the temperature. The higher the temperature, the more violent the change, while the changes become slower and slower as the temperature declines. This law likewise governs the phenomena of crystallization. When, in a supercooled liquid, crystallization sets in, two conflicting forces affect the rate of crystallization. At the outset, the influences of supercooling predominate, and the more supercooled the liquid, the faster the rate of crystallization. But there is a limit to this, for the lessening of the temperature at a given point counterbalances the consequences of the supercooling, with the result that the progress of crystallization no longer increases as the temperature falls, and now begins to wane. Obviously, then, there is a stated temperature and degree of supercooling which represents the maximum velocity of crystallization. Beyond this point crystallization proceeds with ever increasing slowness, until it is reduced to zero. When this position is reached, the supercooled liquid cannot crystallize, even when placed in contact with a crystalline substance.

The foregoing phenomena are illustrated by the common substance quartz or silica. This material is familiar both in sea-sand and as an impurity in granite. It is used in the preparation of ornamental stones, and in its pure, colourless state it is termed rock-crystal. It is utilized in the production of optical instruments of several kinds, including spectacle glasses.

The melting point of quartz is 3,000 degrees F., at which temperature it is reduced to a colourless liquid, which, after a fairly rapid cooling, appears as a transparent material, resembling ordinary glass. This is the world-famous quartz glass, which possesses the highly useful property of expanding or contracting to a very slight extent with variation in temperature. Entirely unlike ordinary glass, it may be suddenly heated or cooled without danger of fracture. Quartz glass may be made red-hot and then plunged into very cold water. When icy cold it can be placed in a blowpipe flame. Still more strange, "a wire enclosed within a tube of quartz glass may be heated to a bright, red heat by means of an electric current while the tube is immersed in cold water, and the quartz glass remains

in all cases uncracked." Such a substance is, naturally, of extreme value in various industrial processes.

Glass of the ordinary character is of a different composition to quartz glass. It is not a single substance, but is composed of a mixture of substances. Grains of sea-sand are practically pure silica, and when silica is fused with soda (sodium carbonate), the silica displaces the carbonic acid contained in the carbonate, and a compound of sodium silicate is formed. This compound arises from heating, and when cooled it solidifies to a glassy substance called "water glass," from the fact that it dissolves in water. By melting potash with quartz a similar material is produced. But, when instead of fusing sand with soda or potash only, other ingredients, such as lime or oxide of lead, are added, silicate substances are obtained which harden into glass which is not soluble in water, and this is the ordinary glass of commerce. As we have intimated, glass is composed of several different materials, and by varying the nature and the relative amounts of the constituents employed, glass of the most dissimilar character may be manufactured. Every description of glass, however, contains either potash or soda in its composition.

The essential substance of window glass, tumblers, jugs, decanters, and similar articles of domestic use, consists of a blending of the silicates of lime and soda, while the metal aluminium frequently enters to a slight extent into the composition. The general excellence of the glass greatly depends on the quality of the materials used in its manufacture. Choice sands, most suitable to the glass artificer, abound in several parts of England, and in minor measure in France and Belgium. But the British sands supply the chief ingredients to the glass industry. These fine white sands, well mixed with sulphate of soda or sodium carbonate and chalk, are reduced to the melting point in fire-clay vessels highly heated in furnaces. The molten material is somewhat turbid at first, but when the carbonic acid gas has escaped from it, a transparent liquid remains. The commodities required are then obtained, either by pouring the liquid glass into moulds or by blowing. The glass-blower introduces a quantity of molten glass into a long metal tube, in which various hollow articles are formed, while moulds are used both for shaping articles and for impressing patterns on their surface.

As the well-known authorities, Dr. W. Rosenhain and Mr. H. J. Powell, state:—

The fluidity of glass at a high temperature renders possible the processes of ladelling, pouring, casting, and stirring. A mass of glass in the viscous state can be rolled with an iron roller like dough; can be rendered hollow by the pressure of human breath or by compressed air; can be forced by air pressure, or by a mechanically driven plunger, to take the shape and impression of a mould; and can be almost indefinitely extended as solid rod or as hollow tube. So extensible is viscous glass that it can be drawn out into a filament sufficiently fine and elastic to be woven into a fabric.

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

We do a great injustice to Iscariot in thinking him wicked above all common wickedness. He was only a common money lover, and, like all money lovers, didn't understand Christ—couldn't make out the worth of him or the meaning of him. He didn't want him to be killed. He was horror-struck when he found that Christ would be killed; threw his money away instantly, and hanged himself. How many of our present money-seekers, think you, would have the grace to hang themselves, whoever was killed?

—John Ruskin.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Bottomley besides discovering God—for the duration of the War, maybe—is making other discoveries in connection with religion. In a note on the death of Mr. W. J. Ramsey, he remarks, "Bishops and National Missions apart, there can be no question that the days of militant Materialism are dead and gone for ever." Now, we are quite ready to believe that the Government waits for a lead, and the nation for advice from Mr. Bottomley in relation to the War, but we can assure him that when he turns to either science or philosophy, he is just a little out of his depth. If Mr. Bottomley were acquainted with the literature of the subject, he would know that more books in defence of "Materialism" have been issued by our large publishing houses during the past ten years than at any other like period. The truth is that Materialism is only *apparently* less militant because it has become a more settled characteristic of scientific and philosophic thought. Mr. Bottomley is just a little too ready to echo some of the platitudes of the pulpit.

The Lord Mayor of Sheffield has made a discovery. Opening a Church Bazaar the other day, he said, "Science had told us there was no death; that man passed into a higher state of life, in which he could communicate with those left behind." We beg to assure the Lord Mayor that "science" does nothing of the kind. Everything a scientific man may believe is not science. Science is organized knowledge based upon verifiable facts, and we have yet to learn that this is true of any theory of individual immortality. Under any form the belief in an after life remains what it always has been—a highly questionable hypothesis framed to explain experiences that may yield to an altogether different explanation. This was the case when primitive man lived his belief in another life, an experience of dreams and the like. It is that to-day in the case of table-rapping and other alleged communications from another world.

Mr. Thomas Hardy, the world-famous novelist, points out that the present European War is inferior in humanity, honour, and chivalry to the Napoleonic campaigns. He might have added that the present struggle resembles the ferocious habits of Old Testament times.

Parish magazines are full of delightful, if unconscious, humour. In the Christ Church, Highbury, Magazine the Vicar announces that "There will be a full moon, and the church will be kept warm throughout the three days" of the National Mission services. In the days of faith the clergy told the public that they would be "kept warm" in the next world—if they stayed away from church.

Rev. John Meek Clark, of Weybridge, Surrey, departed this life with the burden of having left an estate value of £130,000. Among the bequests were four dozen of old port each to several of his friends.

In a Foreword to a clergyman's jeremiad on the falling birth-rate, the Bishop of Birmingham says that before the War "most people were content to allow the gradual depopulation of the world to go on." The fact is, of course, that the world's population, and the white portion of it especially, was still increasing with dangerous rapidity, and that the United Kingdom alone was adding well over a thousand a day to the earth's inhabitants. But to speak of the falling birth-rate as a diminishing population is a favourite *suggestio falsi* of Christian writers on the subject.

A little while ago Bishop Weldon was complaining that the present-day clergy were not intellectual enough. Judging from a report of an address delivered by him to the Christian Evidence Society on December 11, we should say that he is striving to demonstrate the justice of his complaint. The War does not prove the failure of Christianity because "It is not Christianity that has forged the instruments of war. It is your science that is proving itself a curse."

But the instruments of war are really a minor matter. Whether men fight with clubs or with high explosive shells makes no difference—except in the destruction caused. And as, in either case, each is trying to destroy the other—and as many of the other as he can—the distinction is not vital. The real point is, that Christianity, in spite of its world-wide and century-old power, has not succeeded in making war repugnant to civilized mankind. And in that respect the failure of Christianity is clear and indisputable.

"What we want," concluded Bishop Weldon, "is leadership, and the only leadership which will be of much value is the collective leadership of the Episcopate." That is letting the cat out of the bag with a vengeance. But much as we have receded during the War, we do not think that civilization in this country has yet sunk low enough for the people to place themselves under the control of the bishops. We do not know what may happen if the War keeps on long enough, but we have not come to that point yet.

"More Imperial Blasphemy over Bucharest" was the *Daily Chronicle's* heading to a note on the Kaiser thanking God for the German advance in Roumania. We do not know why it is "blasphemy"; it strikes us as sheer stupidity. And in that kind of stupidity we could supply some choice samples from this side of the North Sea. The more sensible plan would be to leave God out of it altogether.

The Bishop of Birmingham is very pleased at the erection of street shrines. He is still more pleased when there is a religious emblem on them. And very ingeniously he adds, "That is to me their greatest advantage." We do not doubt this for a moment. And if a soap, or pill, or cocoa manufacturer, who could get an advertisement of *his* business on these lines, he could say with equal sincerity, "That is to me their greatest advantage."

"Out in France," says the Bishop, "I have often seen our soldiers salute the figure of the crucified as they see it by the roadside." We have heard of these religious-stricken soldiers before, but, somehow, it is only the Bishop and some of the chaplains who see them. They are never seen by the vulgar eye of the layman. Which is one of the mysteries of godliness.

A London evening paper pleads for a "commonsense Christmas." This is a hard saying for the clergy, for they celebrate the birthday of a person who never lived.

Pleading for the Clergy Fund, the Bishop of Southwark said there were twenty livings in the diocese with stipends of less than £200 a year, and seventy-five more under £300. Probably these parsons would not earn more on the open market.

The coal supply of the world is causing the gravest anxiety. Maybe there will be jubilation in the place so often mentioned in sermons.

At Eton College 150 schoolboys were confirmed by the Bishop of Oxford. This ought to give a fillip to the overdue revival of religion.

Miss Clara M Codd has been telling the readers of the *Forfar and Strathfounore Advertiser* about "The Other Side of Death." There is something highly suggestive about the lady's name in such a connection.

The clergy of the City of Hamburg have been discussing "The Simplification of Religion After the War." We feel they have started at the wrong end. It is the simplification of the people they should aim at. Get the people simple enough, and you may have your religion as abstruse as you please.

The Synod of the Prussian Protestant State Church has issued a circular to all Lutheran pastors in the country, ordering them to denounce Germany's enemies as Satan's allies. What Atheists these Germans are!

Quite recently, we cited from an official German document to the effect that no Atheist or Agnostic could be permitted to hold any rank in the German Army. In a recent issue of the *New Age* we are glad to see Dr. Oscar Levy bringing further evidence to the same end. Dr. Levy writes in reply to Mr. G. K. Chesterton's assertion of the utter absence of religion in military and official Germany, and cites the following official letter from a German newspaper:—

From the Ministry of War.

Great Headquarters, November 29, 1915.

Nr. 566/15.

The Minister of War begs to acknowledge the receipt of your honour's letter, and wishes to inform you (the letter is addressed to a German M.P.) that a thorough inquiry with regard to the complaint of Herr Professor Dr. U. has been made, and that it has given the following results:—

The sons of Herr Professor Dr. U. have left the church of the country ("die Landeskirche") and have given themselves out as being without any religion ("konfessionslos.") They therefore do not belong any more to any religious body whatsoever, and can thus not be promoted to be officers, neither in the Regular Army, nor in the Reserve, nor in the Army Medical Corps.

The Minister of War begs to state that the promotion to the state of officers in the Reserve—if they are otherwise thought fit for the position—is not, according to the declarations of his predecessors given before the Reichstag on March 19, 1909, and February 10, 1910, dependent upon the membership of any special church, but candidates must belong to some sort of religious body; if they declare themselves to be "konfessionslos" (without religion), they are by this fact excluded from promotion.

The Minister of War is obliged to uphold this decision, for just the present serious times have proved once more how deeply religion is rooted in our people; as a matter of fact, many of those who had previously become somewhat negligent in their religious professions have now returned to the creed of their fathers. If we would now make concessions in this direction, we would not be understood by the people, whose religious sentiment has experienced, and that amongst all classes, such a marked revival.

The Minister of War can further not allow officers to be outside the acknowledged religious bodies for this reason that religion is a necessity in the military education of the private, who has to be informed about the significance of his oath and about all those duties that depend upon it.

(Signed) WILD VON HOHENBORN.

This should be enough for anyone; but, in the existing orgy of credulity, we haven't much faith in its being strong enough to stop the lies which religious writers find so profitable.

"Viator," in his article in the *Church Times* for December 8, says that three years ago the English people did not believe in God, that in current legislation and current jurisprudence there is a complete denial of the Divine law and will, and that "our science, in all its branches, leaves God out of count." "Viator" cherishes no doubt whatever on the subject, but positively declares that "the English mind, reflected in popular science, does not believe in God." This ready writer is, no doubt, quite right in his estimate of the English attitude to religion, in which case it inevitably follows that no revival of religion is going on in our land.

Naturally, "Viator" thinks that this general state of unbelief is most deplorable. Whether he is a clergyman or a layman, he is evidently a Christian. According to him, one result of unbelief is that "our current morality is but a clear and definite assertion of the right of a man to do what seems to him good." What, then, is wrong with current morality? Are Christians in the habit of doing what does not seem to them good? Surely, it pleases the true man, whether he has a religion or not, to devote himself to the service of his fellow-beings. Perhaps the noblest and most perfect system of morality the world has ever seen is the Buddhist, and, as all students are aware, it is essentially an Atheistic system.

"Tay Pay" O'Connor is the new Chairman of the British Board of Film Censors, and starts off with a number of good—even pious—resolutions. He is convinced that the cinema "ought to show nothing which the Sunday-school child could not see with interest"—so that we at least know the new

Censor's standard of perfection. If a film does not interest the "Sunday-school child," it must be suppressed; and one can picture "Tay Pay" waiting for the verdict of his "Sunday-school child" before he decides whether a film is permissible or not. As a second source of assistance, Mr. O'Connor says that, if he is doubtful about any film, he will not hesitate to "call into counsel leaders of religious or intellectual thought." (Does Mr. O'Connor imply that religious thought is not intellectual?) Anyway, with the Sunday-school child and, say, F. B. Meyer or the Bishop of London supervising films, we shall be quite well protected. It looks as though any amusement lacking in the pictures will be provided by the Censor.

In the ages of faith, mince-pies were shaped to resemble the manger in which Christ was supposed to be born. Christians still eat the mince-pies, but, apparently, they have some doubts about the manger.

Sir George Alexander, the famous actor, says "happy parsons do more good than those who go about with depressed looks." Unfortunately, there are so few jolly disciples of the Man of Sorrows.

At Ballinruan Catholic Church a man had his throat cut during the elevation of the Host. At the trial only one witness came forward, although the judge remarked that numbers of people must have observed the act. This is another proof of the restraining powers of the Christian religion.

A Christmas Carol.

HARK! the Christian nations sing,
Maxim guns are just the thing.
They so catch the other love,
Each sends t'other up above.

Hark! the Christian nations sing,
Maxim guns are just the thing.

Joyful all ye nations rise.
Blow each other to the skies.
And while doing so proclaim,
All are brothers just the same.

Hark! the Christian nations sing,
Maxim guns are just the thing.

"Maxims" may, perchance, reveal,
Blessings peace would but conceal.
You may do the will of heaven,
When you fire a four-point-seven.

Hark! the Christian nations sing,
Maxim guns are just the thing.

Bullets right or wrong decide!
God can every bullet guide.
That's why all the parsons sing,
Maxim guns are just the thing.

Hark! the Christian nations sing,
Maxim guns are just the thing.

"God with us" the Germans cry;
"God with us" says each Ally.
God lets either win or loose,
Leaving each his gun to choose.

Hark! the Christian nations sing,
Maxim guns are just the thing.

Lasting peace they will proclaim,
Who superior guns obtain.
Man will have to do the lot,
God will never fire a shot.

Hark! the Christian nations sing,
Maxim guns are just the thing.

When the battle has been won,
By the far superior gun;
If the parson dares to say,
Faith and prayer won the day;
Let united nations sing,
Guns and men have done the thing.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 14, Nottingham; January 28, Swansea; February 4, Abertillery; March 11 Birmingham; March 18, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 31, Abertilly. January 14, Leicester.

S. L.—The only difference we have ever been able to detect between the Freethinker and the Christian in the presence of death is a greater degree of fear on the part of the Christian.

T. C.—You say "many of your readers are wondering what is doing with regard to the Bowman Bequest litigation." We can only reply that we have said nothing about it because there is nothing new to say. An Appeal to the House of Lords has been lodged by the other side, and the matter is now taking the usual course. There is nothing to do but wait until the case comes on for hearing, which will, we think, be very soon.

F. REN.—We are obliged for verses, but regret we are unable to use them.

STUDENT.—The fault we have to find with nearly all text-books on Psychology is that they are too "atomistic" in character. The human mind is ultimately an individualized expression of social life, and to study it without constant reference to the social medium is to go astray. Glad you found our *Determinism* so helpful. It would have been very easy to have written a bigger book, and had we known less of the subject we might have done so.

C. BERTRAM.—Thanks for paper, which has proved useful. A genuine æsthetic will always prove of value to ethics, indeed, we question whether one can ever reach its highest expression without the other.

H. J. HEPPWORTH (Johannesburg).—We are sending your letter along, as requested.

W. MOORE.—We quite appreciate all you say, but we took up the work with our eyes open and with a full sense of all the responsibilities it involved. As for "worries," we are not given to worrying, and difficulties exist only to be overcome. Naturally, we share your hope that all *interested* readers of the *Freethinker* will help on the Sustentation Fund; but we are quite ready to take it that all are doing their best, and we know that people have many calls in these times, and many find their incomes seriously curtailed.

H. SILVERSTEIN.—Thanks. Your note gave us the first information we had on the matter.

M. BARNARD.—We are rewarded in your finding our work a stimulus to efforts on your own part.

W. J. M.—Thanks for good wishes. The poster was sent as directed. It must have gone astray; so we are having another one forwarded.

W. ARNOTT.—We see the journal named only irregularly, but will get the issue to which you refer. Your opinion of the reverend gentleman agrees with our own.

C. M. (Cardiff).—Mr. Cohen would be quite pleased to visit Cardiff if suitable arrangements could be made. Please introduce yourself to him at the Swansea meeting, if you come. Particulars will be published in due course.

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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

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.

At the last moment it has been found impossible to secure a hall at Chesterfield for January 7, for Mr. Cohen's meeting. The local bigots appear to have got their own way on this occasion, but their defeat may be only deferred. Attempts are being made to secure a hall for a later date.

This question of halls is the most serious difficulty that faces us at present, so far as propaganda is concerned. There is no difficulty in getting audiences, if one can secure a place to house them. May we ask our friends in towns and cities *everywhere* to help us in the matter? The help we need is information as to where halls may be obtained, rent position, seating capacity, etc. We will look after the rest.

Mr. Eden Phillpotts writes with reference to last week's *Freethinker* :—

Congratulations on the present issue. I do think we shall have to go back to the supernatural, and credit you with the power to work miracles. To have Cohen, Arch, Lloyd, "Mimmermus," and Gould all in one number, and all at their best, for two "browns," is glorious. But how do you do it? Largely, I suspect, thanks to the loyalty and enthusiasm of this splendid group of writers. I take off my hat to them.

Mr. A. W. Davis, in forwarding cheque towards the Sustentation Fund, writes: "I have been a reader since 1888, and think it has never been a better paper than now; and as you are proud of your lady readers, it may interest you to know that my wife also holds this opinion." We are delighted to hear it. The future of Freethought lies with the creation of freethinking families. The Freethought that stops short of that is only half complete.

The older readers of the *Freethinker* will regret to learn that Mr. W. P. Ball has been confined to his bed with an attack of congestion of the lungs. Mr. Ball was once a regular contributor to this paper, and when delicate health forced him to desist from sustained literary work he "did his bit" by supplying us with a regular and useful weekly batch of newspaper cuttings. The Freethought cause has no more steadfast friend than Mr. Ball, and we sincerely hope that he will soon be about again.

Apropos of our comment (*Freethinker*, Nov. 3) on the Salvation Army's appeal for funds for the purpose of emigrating "war widows," a correspondent writes us from the United States :—

I have been reading over the issue of November 5 of the *Freethinker*, and, to my amazement, have just found out another of the infamous schemes of the Salvation Army. Just think, a beg to the tune of \$1,000,000, for what they think is the emancipation of the War widows and their children.

Salvation, or spiritual deliverance, is supposed to be free, but in looking over my ledger account during the time which my Christian friends were working upon my emotional powers (not reasoning powers), I find, that for value received, Salvation is the most expensive item.

So that crowd is going to use the Continent for their outlandish plan. Let me cite a few instances of their commendable (?) work. My sister at one time thought it was up to her to save the world, so she joined the Salvation Army, staying in same until she reached the rank of Captain. After they used the best years of her life, without remuneration for services rendered. She realized what she was up against. Talk about Tammany Hall or the late Boss Tweed being grafters, why, they don't stand a look in with headquarters of the Salvation Army. In our neighbouring town of Asbiry Park they drove a Captain to the insane asylum with their continual call for money.

A correspondent calls our attention to the fact that a mistake was made in numbering Mr. Mann's articles. No. V, appeared in the issue for Nov. 26, and No. VI. should have

appeared in Dec. 3. By some error this was marked VII. Our readers will please note the correction.

A string of queer prophecies was reeled off by Professor Meyer, an astrologer, in a lecture to the Young Men's Christian Association in New York. The prophet foresees an accident to Mr. Roosevelt; an unlucky time for Wilson; a great naval battle; a final German victory; and other uncanny things. Let us hope that the astrologer is as wrong as most of the Bible prophets.

£193,330 has been subscribed by Burma Buddhists as a war-gift, and the donors ask that the money may be devoted to hospital ships, field hospitals, and other purposes unconnected with the taking of life. Evidently, Buddhists have more sensitive consciences than Christians.

At Westminster, London, a female crystal-gazer was fined £60 for fortune-telling. There are 50,000 clergymen in this country who tell people where they will spend eternity, but they are never molested.

Our Sustentation Fund.

THE object of this Fund is to make good the loss on the *Freethinker*—entirely due to increased cost of materials, etc.—from October, 1915, to October, 1916, and to provide against the inevitable further losses during the continuation of the War. This Fund will close on January 14.

LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Previously acknowledged, £221 9s. 6d.—Owen Scott, 3s. Mrs. C. Shepherd, 2s. 6d.; Theodore W. Key, 10s.; A Friend, £2 2s.; A. W. Davis, £1 1s.; W. Moore, 10s.; M. Barnard, 5s.; T. Hertz, 2s.; W. Dodd, 10s.; J. Hopkins, 2s. 3d.; M. Deas, 5s. *Per Miss Vance*—Montagu Young, £1 1s.; Ernest, 2s. 6d.

Pagan and Christian Morality.

IX.

(Continued from p. 790.)

The writings of Laotse and Confucius, the popular literature of Buddhism, the fragments of old Egyptian law, the didactic poetry of Islam, contain a great wealth of moral wisdom, and treasures of the noblest ethical sentiment which the Christian Occident likes to regard as its own exclusive property. Especially the ancients, whose civilization, in spite of much opposition, is still the basis of our civilization, furnish us with a series of the most beautiful moral types and ideals, and these we find, beside many valuable features of Christian ethics, other no less valuable gems which we seek for in vain in the old Christian morality, and which were not recognized until Christianity came into contact with the Teutonic nations of northern Europe.—*Professor Jodl, Pamphlet on "Morality, Religion, and Schools."*

People who talk about the comforts of belief appear to forget its discomforts; they ignore the fact that the Christianity of the Churches is something more than faith in the ideal personality of Jesus, which they create for themselves, plus so much as can be carried into practice, without disorganizing civil society, of the maxims of the Sermon on the Mount.

Trip in morals or in doctrine (especially in doctrine), without due repentance or retraction, or fail to get properly baptized before you die, and a *plebiscite* of the Christians of Europe, if they were true to their creeds, would affirm your everlasting damnation by an immense majority.—*Professor T. H. Huxley, "Essays on Controverted Questions,"* p. 359.

Those best acquainted with the Chinese and their literature are highest in their praise of the teachings of

Confucius. Mr. R. F. Johnston, who acted as magistrate at Wei-Hai-Wei, and who has written one of the best books on China published for many years, emphatically declares that: "If China thinks, or Europe persuades her into the belief, that her backward position among the great Powers of the world is due to Confucianism, she will be doing a great wrong to the memory of one of her greatest sons, and a greater wrong to herself."¹ This was in reply to the missionary Griffis, who declared that "Confucius cut the tap-root of all true progress," and, therefore, was responsible for China's arrested development. "It is to be hoped," says Mr. Johnston, further, "for the sake of China that many centuries will elapse before Confucianism as a moral force, as a guide of life, fades away from the hearts and minds of the people" (p. 302).

Sir Robert Hart, the famous Inspector-General of Chinese Maritime Customs, who held that position for more than forty years, and knew the Chinese as intimately as any European can, was of the same opinion. Mr. Douglas Storey, in his book *To-Morrow in the East*, after observing that "No European knows so much of China and the hidden things of its mysterious inner life as the Inspector-General," tells us that he was "a profound believer in the value of the Confucian philosophy as an educator of Chinese minds," and adds:—

As Sir Robert himself told me, he advised the retention of the ancient ethical training for the four literary degrees according to the custom in China for over two thousand years, and then the addition to this curriculum of a fifth and final degree in Western science. He argued that by such means the best brains of the land would be instructed in the high moral precepts which are the theme of Chinese classics, and would at the conclusion of the course be in a fit state to imbibe and to profit by the teachings of modern science. "Train your youth in the classics," he said; "instruct them in the philosophy of Confucius, and then, when their moral education is complete, let them turn to the lessons of modern thought and knowledge. In such way you will possess a well-built fire laid beneath a chimney which will ensure complete combustion."²

This testimony is all the more remarkable as Sir Robert Hart was not an "infidel"—as Christians charitably label all those who differ from themselves in religion—and Confucius taught a system of natural morality, without belief in God, a future life, or any supernatural sanctions whatever.

An equally high morality was taught by Buddha in India, six hundred years before Christ, and his adherents number to-day over 500,000,000, about one-third of the human race, and 100,000,000 more than the followers of Christ.

Buddha also taught morality without belief in God or the supernatural. "It may sound somewhat startling," says a popular *Encyclopædia*, "to assert that one-third of mankind is Atheist, and it cannot be denied that Buddha is to-day worshipped and prayed to by multitudes of his followers, but the truth is that Buddha himself never claimed to be more than a man, and taught that a man's future was solely in his own keeping."³

What is the use of the clergy pretending, as they do, that without belief in God, men cannot lead a moral life? They can; they do. The criminal statistics of India, China, and Japan are far lower than those of England, or of Europe generally.

Take the single instance of war. After nearly nineteen hundred years of Christianity, the burden of armaments had become so increasingly oppressive—

¹ R. F. Johnston, *Lion and Dragon in Northern China*, p. 307.

² Douglas Storey, *To-Morrow in the East*, pp. 188-9.

³ *Everyman Encyclopædia*, article "Buddha," vol. iii., p. 97.

absorbing, as it did, a large part of the population and revenues of the respective countries—that a Conference was held at the Hague to discuss the question of a limitation of armaments and the possibility of settling disputes by means of reason and arbitration. Let it be noted that the Hague Conference was not brought about by the Christian Churches; it was entirely political and secular. But, as Mr. George Lynch has pointed out in *The War of the Civilizations*, "It is not surprising that the Chinese civilization, so much older than ours, arrived at this Hague Conference hundreds, if not thousands, of years ago; and that civilization relegated the occupation of the fighting man to that position in the scale of things which he should naturally occupy" (p. 221).

We should like to see a missionary, under the bland and scrutinizing gaze of an educated Chinese, trying to explain the horrors prevailing among the Christian nations on the Continent of Europe to-day.

We shall soon be hearing all the nauseous Christmas cant and twaddle about the Prince of Peace. Against this coming flood of rant and falsity we place one solid fact. The aggressiveness of the Christian Powers forced Japan—at enormous cost and titanic exertion—to arm herself with modern weapons of warfare, purely in self-defence. And until she had done so, and showed her power on land and sea, she was looked upon, in spite of her fine arts, as a barbarous and uncivilized nation. Not until she had won respect by force of arms was she admitted upon an equal footing to the councils of the nations. It is the same Christian nations who have been trying for years to force the peace-loving Chinese into the blood-soaked path of militarism. We hope that the horrors they see enacted on the battlefields of Europe will confirm them in their aversion to the military spirit in all its forms.

The life of Jesus is held up to us as an example; we are told to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Christians challenge us to find a character of such moral elevation in the history of the world. We accept the challenge.

Jesus gives no good example to be followed in domestic life; his treatment of his mother and brothers was most uncouth, not to say barbarous. He gave no example to husband and father, for he never married; and if we tramped about the country "without visible means of support," we should soon be in the workhouse or the gaol. It has been said that the real test of a man is prosperity. Jesus gave no example to the ruler or governor; he never wielded power; if he had done, we have seen how he would have treated his enemies.

Now, we have the life of a Pagan who set an example in all these phases of life; one who held a power for good or evil which in extent and privilege cannot be matched by any individual in the world to-day. We speak of the great Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

In the book of the *Thoughts*, or meditations, of Marcus Aurelius, written down at odd moments for his own private use, we have a real gospel suitable for all mankind, in all ages and under all conditions, uncontaminated by the breath of the supernatural. Even some of the most pious Christians have bowed before this peerless flower of Pagan Rome.

Mr. George Long, who has made the best translation of the *Thoughts*, says of an Italian version published in 1675 by a cardinal: "A man illustrious in the Church, the Cardinal Francis Barberini the elder, nephew of Pope Urban VIII., occupied the last years of his life in translating into his native language the thoughts of the Roman emperor, in order to diffuse among the faithful the fertilizing and vivifying seeds. He dedicated this translation to his soul, to make it, as he says in his energetic style, redder than his purple at the sight of the

virtues of this Gentile."¹ That pious hero, General Gordon, generally depicted Bible in hand, was in the habit of giving copies to his friends.

Lecky, the historian, says of this greatest of all emperors:—

He had embraced the fortifying philosophy of Zeno in its best form, and that philosophy made him perhaps as nearly a perfectly virtuous man as has ever appeared upon our world. Tried by the chequered events of a reign of nineteen years, presiding over a society that was profoundly corrupt, and over a city that was notorious for its licence, the perfection of his character awed even calumny to silence, and the spontaneous sentiment of his people proclaimed him rather a god than a man. Very few men have ever lived concerning whose inner life we can speak so confidently. His "*Meditations*," which form one of the most impressive, form also one of the truest books in the whole range of religious literature. They consist of rude fragmentary notes without literary skill or arrangement, written for the most part in hasty, broken, and sometimes almost unintelligible sentences amid the turmoil of a camp, and recording, in accents of the most penetrating sincerity, the struggles, doubts, and aims of a soul of which, to employ one of his own images, it may be truly said that it possessed the purity of a star, which needs no veil to hide its nakedness. The undisputed master of the whole civilized world, he set before him as models such men as Thrasea and Helvidius, as Cato and Brutus, and he made it his aim to realize the conception of a free State in which all citizens are equal, and of a royalty which makes it its first duty to respect the liberty of the subject. His life was passed in unremitting activity. For nearly twelve years he was absent with the armies in the distant provinces of the empire; and although his political capacity has been much and perhaps justly questioned, it is impossible to deny the unwearied zeal with which he discharged the duties of his great position.

When Lecky declares that the "*Meditations*," or *Thoughts*, form one of "the most impressive" and "also one of the truest books in the whole range of religious literature," he of course places it above the Gospels—as indeed it is, far and away. But we deny that it should be classed as religious literature. It is inspired by the breath of humanity; it is philosophic, moral, ethical, but not religious—unless you define religion, as Matthew Arnold did, as "Morality touched with emotion."

(To be concluded.)

W. MANN.

The Rag and Straw God.

"Tom" was by nationality a Bhutanese, by occupation he was cook to the right section of the 22nd Mountain Battery, stationed at Katapahar. And within a radius of three miles from Katapahar was the extent of Tom's knowledge of the earth. Certainly, he knew that white and brown soldiers came to Katapahar from somewhere; but, though the soldiers were real enough, the places they came from had, for him, a misty existence. On occasion, he would discuss with other Bhutanese the coming and going and the character of the white soldiers. That would happen on winter nights at festive gatherings in his native village of Ghoom. The sweetish, deceptive liquor, brewed from a kind of red seed, in portions of the trunks of bamboo, soon broke down the natural taciturnity of the assembled indulgers; and the first topic, usually, was the white man and his ways. All were agreed, and several commented fiercely upon the fact, that some of the white men took far too much notice of the Bhutanese women. But then they had to admit that some of the Bhutanese women rather encouraged

¹ Long, *The Thoughts of the Emperor M. Aurelius Antoninus*, p. 25.

the attention shown them. And another matter that exercised the minds of these dull-witted Bhutanese was the why and wherefore of the missionaries. These missionaries were a continual mystery to them. They were also a constant irritation. Why did these missionaries strive to turn them away from their religion? Why did they come, with their contemptible native converts, into the Bhutanese bazaars, singing Bhutanese words foolishly, and singing them in the musical fashion of the white man, which fashion they did not like? Were any of these missionaries better than their own monks? Were they even as good? Their monks did, at times, sit by the wayside and turn a praying-wheel; but never did they accost a white man and ask him to forsake his religion. Presently, the native liquor would stir their minds to look in another direction, making them turn from white men and missionaries and talk of the evil spirits which were in the valleys and on the mountain tops, in the thunderstorms and the rain, in the mountain mist and the mountain-torrent, in the cemetery, and even near their rudely built huts. One would relate, with much detail as to the locality on the mountain road, how, when carrying a load of wood to Ghoom, he was suddenly surrounded by thick mist that stole rapidly up from the valley. He had plodded on in the belief that he was going in the right direction, because he seemed to be following the rise of the road in its winding along the hillsides, and yet, when he could see clearly again, he found himself almost back at his starting-point. It might have been worse, he remarked, for the evil spirit could have made him walk over the side of the road, to be dashed to death on the rocks hundreds of feet below. A story was told of the frightful behaviour of a Bhutanese, who was supposed to be the son of one of these evil spirits, and who, at last, met his death in the midst of a terrible thunderstorm. Other stories of a similar nature would be recounted until, when Tom and his convivial friends made their way to their respective homes or shanties, they were in a state very close to panic.

As a matter of fact, Tom and his fellow-countrymen, taking their mental development into consideration, could not be otherwise than very superstitious and credulous. Men in a primitive state of culture see mystery and something to dread in all their surroundings, especially among mountains. And what a contrast there is between the foaming plunge of the mountain torrent and the placid flow of the lowland stream. The very heavens seem higher above the hills than above the plains. How different seem the clouds in the hills from what they seem over flat country; and what immensity is expressed in the Himalayas by the summits of the snowy range, which tower three and four miles high, and extend for hundreds of leagues.

And it happened one day that Tom came down from the military bungalows in a state of great excitement. At first his wife thought that he had been drinking, he was so incoherent; but when he explained that he was going with the white soldiers, who were going to fight black men many days' journey away, she at once began lamenting, and wondering what would become of her. Tom set her mind at ease by telling her he would send her so much of his pay, at short intervals, while he was absent; then went to discuss the news with his male friends.

"I shall ride in the fire-carriage to Silliguri, where the ground is flat," said Tom.

"Silliguri," grunted an old man; "that's not far to travel. I've walked there in one day, between the rising and setting of the sun."

"But I go far beyond Silliguri," continued Tom; "the sergeant-sahib says it is a day's journey in the

fire-carriage from Silliguri to the great river. And after the great river is crossed, the fire-carriage will carry us and run through four days before we get to the place of the fighting."

Tom's listeners were amazed. They knew that the fire-carriage could travel very fast; the distance it would go in four days was too much for their understanding. They took leave of him, exhorting him the while to beware of the evil spirits he would be sure to meet.

At last came the day of departure. The gun-mules had been sent by road to Silliguri on the previous day, while the guns, shells, cartridges, and heavy stores had been dispatched by the narrow-gauge mountain railway which runs between Darjeeling and Silliguri. And now Tom, with his assistant Wassoo, found himself seated in an open truck among camp kettles and other impedimenta. Tom felt that he was embarking on a tremendous adventure, and he was wearing a charm to enable him to withstand the evil influences he might come in contact with in the unknown country ahead.

Ghoom was out of sight and miles behind, and the mountain train continued steadily running to lower and lower levels, here curving midway round the huge bulk of an outstanding height, here going straight and easily for several miles along the hillsides, and there zigzagging down nearer and nearer to the plains. Soon wild, luxuriant jungle was reached, and the air became very warm. Birds of brilliant plumage flitted among the trees, and occasionally a jackal rushed into the undergrowth as the train approached. The exhaust of the locomotive sounded like a rapid succession of crashes among the trees. Then Silliguri came into sight across an open stretch of grass land.

Tom did not care for the change of temperature. After the coolness of Ghoom, the heat of Silliguri displeased him very much. He perspired even more than did the European soldiery; and his discomfort was increased by the added heat of his cooking-fires. He prayed for nightfall, but darkness did not help very much to lower the temperature. The myriads of fireflies, however, made a wonderful sight as they danced their sparkling, mazy flight above grass and bush and swampy ground. From the jungle came the yelping and howling of jackals, and several times a cheetah gave mouth to its shrill, fierce cry. There was a distant, continuous croaking of frogs, and the sultry air was swarming with flying insects such as hornets, mosquitoes, beetles, and moths, all of which crowded towards any point of artificial light. There was a smell of vegetation in the air, of tree and bush, with occasional waftings of burning wood from native cooking-fires.

Two days later took place the all-night journey on the Government metre-gauge railway to Maniharighat, on the banks of the Ganges. Here Tom had another new experience, that of crossing India's mighty river on board a river-steamer. He and Wassoo were in an exclamatory frame of mind all the time. They would never forget the chug-chug of the engines and the great expanse of swirling, yellow water. They tried to compare the great river with the torrents of their native hills, but felt themselves at a loss in the attempt; though they were sure their torrents possessed something which was quite lacking in the river. The disembarkation at Sahibgunge, on the other side of the river, afforded them more matter for wonder. And they became so wearied with the seeing of so many unheard-of things that they were glad to get to sleep in the train that was to take them to the north-west border.

At sunrise Tom woke and looked out from the covered-in truck in which he and Wassoo and the other Bhutanese cooks were mixed up with the camp cooking utensils. The view he got was most unpleasant for his

eyes. It was an altogether flat country, with not the least evidence of a hill. In the far distance there was jungle, but the intervening land was in cultivation. And it was hot, much too hot for a hillman. Presently a big station was reached, whereat a halt of nearly an hour was made. In this halt the gun-mules were given water, and tea was brewed for the Europeans. Before the start was made, a bucket of water containing a large piece of ice was placed in every compartment. Then again the train sped on its way to the north-west.

At last Khasalagar, the then furthest point on that part of the frontier, was attained, and detraining took place immediately. The time was afternoon, the air was sultry and very dusty, and the road adjacent to the railway station was crowded with mule-carts, pack-mules, and camels. A neighbouring low range of hills caused Tom to feel homesick. In a few hours all the impedimenta of the mountain battery was sorted out and loaded on the mules' backs; then came the march to the rest-camp. By this time night had arrived, and with it came a cool breeze from the neighbouring heights. A dusty, winding road led from Khasalagar Station to the River Indus, over which had been fixed a bridge of boats, and this bridge of boats caused Tom both wonderment and fear. Indeed, the bridge was a great novelty for many of the European soldiers. Tom and Wassoo stepped on the creaking, swaying, dimly lighted bridge in a very doubtful manner, and regarded with fearful eyes the dull-gleaming, rushing, gurgling, bubbling water that showed through the seams in the plank roadway. The opposite bank gained, the rest-camp was but a short distance away; and finding that the *bheesti* was waiting with water he had-drawn from the Indus, Tom set to work to make tea for the right section. However, Tom's efforts met with no thanks at all. The Indus water was so full of suspensory mud that, even when boiled, it still retained such a large quantity of sediment that tea or coffee made with it were almost indistinguishable.

The marches to Fort Lockhart were now made, and nothing very important happened to Tom until Maidan was captured and occupied. There sniping took place day and night. One day a bullet went through one of Tom's camp kettles, whereupon Tom became much exercised in mind. He cogitated for nearly twenty-four hours over that bullet. The result became visible the next day. It was something that resembled both a teddy bear and a golliwog doll. The soldiers were facetious about it. "Is it a new cook, Tom?" said one. Tom looked shocked at what he regarded a sacrilegious question. "Sahib," he replied, "it is the god who will protect me from the bullets of the *budmashes*." So day by day that crude bundle of rags, paint, and straw was set facing the direction of the enemy, and to its influence was attributed the fact that none of the Bhutanese cooks suffered either sickness or wounds during the rest of the campaign. And to this day it occupies a position of honour and sanctity in Tom's tumbledown shanty in the Himalayan village of Ghoom. JAMES H. WATERS.

Correspondence.

"FORCED LABOUR" IN SOUTH AFRICA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In forwarding a small contribution towards your Sustentation Fund, I take the liberty of referring to a par in "Acid Drops" in your issue of October 8.

An extract is given from the report of a general meeting of the Vereeniging Estates, Ltd., and you have drawn attention to an apparent indication that forced labour is used in South Africa. Please correct this when opportunity offers.

The conditions of native labour recruiting here are set out in legislative enactments, and regulations framed thereunder. Under these, certain people are "licensed" to act as labour agents and to recruit "boys" for work at the mines.

The natives who are so recruited are called "join boys," as they join on for work with the Companies' representatives in the districts they live in, and are forwarded by those representatives at the expense of their employers.

Distinguished from these are the natives who proceed at their own expense to the scene of labour and there volunteer to work for the mines they choose. These are said to be "voluntary recruits," and the reference in the report under notice simply conveys to those who understand, that the conditions prevailing at the mines dealt with have become so popular that they require no inducement by the labour agents to go there.

The whole principle is too complicated to allow of full details being given, but I may assure you that there is not the remotest resemblance to compulsion in the matter whatever.

I am too jealous for the correctness of your paragraphs to allow this item to pass unchallenged.

With every good wish for the continuance of your most satisfactory conduct of the *Freethinker*.

Eastern Pondoland, South Africa.

THEO. W. KEY.

Christmas.

AT Christmas Eve, when midnight's twelve rang out,
The gilded church was filled for solemn Mass
By worshippers who willed the hour to pass
Within the Sacred Presence. How devout
Seemed all the simple people round about
The Atheist, who watched them through a glass
Darkly. Yes; there I sat, coldly alas!
Robed in the gloom of deep Satanic doubt.

Once I was like the foolish people here,
But reason fought, and freed my dungeoned mind;
Many I thank for joy that I am free.
Bow, sing, and pray, poor souls, I shall not sneer
Search for your God and Christ until you find;
I'm going home, a happy Pharisee.

H. V. S.

Obituary.

Two Secular burials within three weeks is surely something of a record, at least in the provinces. The first—Isabella, wife of Mr. J. G. Crozier—was interred, in the presence of a large gathering of relatives and friends, at the Mere Knolls Cemetery, Fulwell. Mrs. Crozier, her husband, and also her father (Mr. Proctor) have been for many years loyal and useful supporters of the Movement locally. On Thursday, the remains of Mr. James William Chambers, aged 69, were laid to rest in Sunderland Cemetery. In both cases Mr. S. M. Peacock, Vice-President N. S. S., gave an impressive reading of a Burial Service from Mr. Gould's book.—R. C. (South Shields).

We regret to record the sudden death, at the age of 50, on December 13, of Laura, wife of an old and esteemed member, Frederick Shaller. Although the deceased lady had not been actively concerned in our propaganda for some years, she was the first woman to sell our literature in Hyde Park, where her genial and kindly disposition made her many friends. Mr. Shaller and his son, who shares his parents' convictions, have the sympathy of a large circle of Freethinkers in the metropolis generally and Hyde Park in particular, where Mr. Shaller has worked assiduously for the cause of Freethought for upwards of thirty years. The cremation took place at Golder's Green on December 19, when a Secular Burial Service was read by Mr. J. T. Lloyd.—E. M. VANCE.

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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.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S.—Lectures temporarily suspended.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.—Lectures temporarily suspended.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.—Lectures temporarily suspended.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.—Lectures temporarily suspended.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Kells and Dales, "Christ is Born"; 6.30, Messrs. Beale and Kells.

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