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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Religion and the National Crisis.—The Editor</i>	205
<i>The Christ-Myth.—J. T. Lloyd</i>	206
<i>Francis Thompson.—Mimnermus</i>	207
<i>Obiter Dicta.—William Repton</i>	208
<i>Mr. Maskelyne and the Spirits.—W. Mann</i>	211
<i>The Sons of God.—G. W. Foote</i>	213
<i>The Tenement and the Towers.—Le Miserable</i>	213
<i>Taste.—Ignotus</i>	214
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### Religion and the National Crisis.

However grave the situation may be, at home or abroad, nothing seems strong enough to stop the tomfoolery of the Churches. At the beginning of the year we had the stupendous farce of another day of national prayer—under royal patronage. This was followed by an immediate series of disasters—a week's list of which we supplied at the time. A few days ago we had the opening of the new German offensive, which has certainly exposed this country to a graver danger than has threatened it for some time—if not graver than has ever before faced it. German and British have officially appealed to the same God for help, and, judging by results, he has favoured the former. If the German Armies have not done more, if their success has not been more pronounced, the credit must be placed to the obstinate courage, the determination, and the sacrifice of the men of the Allied Forces. They have done what "the God of Righteousness" has failed to do. And if we have to offer prayers of thankfulness to anyone, it should be to them.

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### Prayers for Victory.

For Easter week another orgy of prayer was advised—or ordered—by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Free Churches have endorsed the suggestion. We are to rely upon the Lord, we are to "pray to him for victory." Does anyone seriously believe that a week of prayer will have the least effect on the issue? Is the general confidence—a confidence which we share—that horrible as the slaughter now is, and however regrettable the forcing back of the Allied lines may be, victory for Germany is a practical impossibility, is that confidence based upon the help of God, or upon a calm survey of the quantity and quality of the opposing forces? Everyone knows the truth. We do not, in taking stock of the Allied resources, take their prayers or God's help into account. We count men, money, munitions, courage, resolution—everything but religion. The Archbishop of Canterbury says we are to pray "that the blood of our dearest and most honoured shall not have been spilt in vain." But the real question for the Archbishop to answer is, why this innocent blood shall have been spilt at all? God's justice is not vindicated by using innocent blood as a cement for building a better social structure. That is an impeachment of his care. A God who so

manages a world that the innocent suffer—even though their descendants benefit—and in which the guilty flourish—even though their descendants are punished—is revolting to every sane notion of right and wrong.

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### Man Power and the Clergy.

Meanwhile, it is clear that the German offensive means a fresh demand upon the resources of the nation. Peace is farther off than ever while one side is pursuing what appears a victorious career. But we observe that there are two sources of help that still remain untapped. The first is the application of the Military Service Act to the clergy. It is little short of a scandal that while military service is demanded from all others, a whole class should be declared exempt. If we were really savages, and believed that the exhibitions of a priest in public, or the uttering of magical incantations by a medicine man had a direct effect on the fortunes of war, then we could appreciate the exemption of the clergy. But no one really believes this. The Trades Union Congress, which represents the organized labour of the country, actually called for the conscription of the clergy. Their exemption is no more than a piece of political jobbery. It was, probably, thought that this close corporation was too powerful for attack, and their exemption was a reminder to those who are apt to underestimate the organized power of the British priesthood. But now we see that Parliament is to reconsider the whole question of the nation's man-power. And we suggest that now is the time for this question to be reopened. Men are called upon to serve, so are women. Why not make the same call upon Sydney Smith's famous third sex? Those who preach war can have no rational objection to practising it.

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### Why are the Clergy Exempt?

About a year ago the Archbishop of Canterbury informed the House of Convocation that the clergy were exempt because "to them had been assigned a great responsibility in the nation's life at all times, and never more so than at such a time as this." What is this responsibility? The Archbishop was wise enough not to be precise. He was content to say that they have a great responsibility. Can anyone say what it is? If it is to keep the world at peace they are obviously unfitted for that task. It cannot be to improve the mental health of the nation; no more fatal influence than theirs can be cited. Every church admits this—of all other churches. It cannot be to keep people morally healthy, for the growth of morality is dependent upon the working of a number of factors not one of which can be properly described as religious. And the morality of a people is usually lowest when and where the rule of the clergy is strongest. It is a sheer insult to the national intelligence to say that an only son, or the head of a family, or the owner of a business that cannot exist without his control, all these can be spared, but that a mentally half-emasculated priesthood, many without even family responsibilities, cannot be taken without risk to the country's welfare.

### Tax the Churches.

The other source of help is a financial one. The Government is urging upon everyone the need of the most rigorous economy. Money for the conduct of the War is urgently needed, and fresh taxation, in one form or another, is being imposed. But there is one untaxed source—always a gross anomaly, and now a positive injustice. Churches and chapels, with their annexes, are still free from taxation. Even a hospital cannot demand exemption. A church may. Why not place churches on the same level as all other property? As it stands, this exemption is a Government subsidy in disguise, since others have to make good the default of the Churches. Everybody else is called upon to pay the rates and taxes which the Churches should themselves pay. And as the Government is urging us to economize in every other direction, why should it not urge us to economize on religion—at least, during the War? Why should we still send out of the country millions annually on so gross an imposture as Foreign Missions? The Japanese, the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Jews—abroad and at home—will manage quite well without these missions, at least, until the end of the War. Let us save money, by all means. And let the Government urge this upon the religious members of the community.

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### Treat the Clergy as Citizens.

We agree with those who say that the country is passing through a prolonged and acute crisis. We also agree with those who say that this War will be quite unproductive of good, as against a mountain of admitted evil, unless we learn to take a fresh valuation of all our ideas and institutions. And surely religion is one of the things that call for a fresh valuation. From the dawn of history human society has had fastened upon it a priesthood, which represents one of the greatest parasitic classes known. It is non-productive in the fullest sense of the term. Its record is one of folly tending to crime, and of crime resulting from folly. In a time of peace it can do nothing to stop the emergence of war; in a time of war it can do nothing to hasten the return of peace. Surely it is time that the Government and the people of a civilized country took this class at its proper value. At a time when all are called upon for service, when the nation is called upon for fresh endeavours and renewed sacrifices, is there any valid reason why the clergy and their churches should continue exempt from obligations which fall upon all other citizens?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Christ-Myth.

ALL Christians admit that never was a revival of religion more urgently needed than it is at the present moment; a few declare that it is already at the door; and one or two fanatics assure us that it has even commenced in some parts of the country, and is destined to win the people back to Christ and his Church. When an unbeliever visits churches and chapels up and down the land, his report of what he hears and sees differs considerably from what the representatives of the various schools of professing Christians imagine they both hear and see. Of a coming revival he certainly discerns no sign whatsoever. He listens intently, but can hear no wind of promise shaking the tops of the proverbial mulberry-trees. Generally speaking, churches and chapels are being gradually deserted everywhere. Of course, there are exceptions. Oratory still draws overflowing crowds to any place of worship. Popular preachers never lack full congregations; but it is they who attract,

not the Gospel which they preach. It is they who are appreciated by the multitudes, not the message of salvation through faith in the finished work of Christ. The same message from the lips of an ambassador whom Nature has not endowed with an eloquent tongue sends the handful who attend to sleep. Of the truth of this statement we were furnished with an apt illustration, the other Sunday morning, at a large Wesleyan Church in a well-known provincial town, with a population of over two hundred thousand. This commodious building, seated for at least eight hundred people, was attended by less than fifty, several of whom fell fast asleep under the sermon, not because the sermon was in any sense a poor one, but simply because the preacher displayed no oratorical gifts whatever. From a theological and homiletical point of view, the discourse was equal in matter and composition to any ever delivered by such a master of assemblies as Dr. Campbell Morgan. The text was, "Christ in you" (Col. i. 27), in the exposition of which the preacher showed a more than average measure of ingenuity and insight, but he never once got into grips with his forty odd hearers. There was not one note in his voice that vibrated with feeling; he never even touched a single heart present, much less played with quickening effect upon its keys. As an intellectual performance the service was of a high order, as services go; but as nobody ever dreams of visiting a place of worship for an intellectual treat, but always in the hope of being moved, stirred, tickled, or intoxicated emotionally, the service under consideration was a total failure.

Now, the fact of supreme importance, in this connection, is that the Christian Gospel does not, and never did, possess the omnipotent attractiveness attributed to it by its professional champions, and that it lacks winsomeness simply because it is not true. "Christ in you" is a theological hypothesis, a mystical conception, based upon a purely metaphysical assumption, which is founded upon no fact whatever. Christ is what the divines call a thranthropic person, neither wholly God nor yet wholly man, but an incredible mixture of both. Until about two thousand years ago no such being had ever existed, the real significance of the Incarnation being that a new species of personality appeared in the world. The great modern exponent of this doctrine was the late Professor Shedd, of Union Theological Seminary, New York; but it is substantially the view of Christ held by all orthodox theologians everywhere. They usually speak of him as the God-man, whose mission in the flesh was to make legally possible a reconciliation between the offended Deity and mankind. No doubt this view of Christ and his work is germinally present in the Pauline and Petrine Epistles and, to a certain extent, in the Four Gospels. His work was through suffering to become the Captain of Salvation, to become the propitiation for human sin, and so to abolish the enmity between God and man. In him there were two natures united in a new person: the Divine nature, so that he could represent God to man; and human nature, that he might represent man to God. In other words, he was a super-natural being in whom two natures, the one infinite and the other finite, met and kissed each other, and who, in consequence, became, by his death, a mediator between God and man, reconciling them to each other. In him God can justify the guilty and save the sinful, and in him man enters into loving fellowship with Heaven. The great motto of the Christian religion, therefore, is "In Christ." Without Christ mankind are doomed to perish for ever, but in Christ is salvation, full and free. To be in Christ by faith is the sole condition of acceptance with Heaven and of endless bliss therein. But the curious thing is, that in some inexplicable sense these three, God, Christ, and believing man, are in one another. Christ is repre-

sented as saying, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me," and as praying for his disciples "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Now, the first and never ending duty of believers is to eat Christ, so that he may be in them the secret and principle of their life, as well as their hope of glory.

Such, in substance, was the Gospel preached at the above-mentioned Wesleyan Church on a recent Sunday morning, and such, no doubt, was the Gospel promulgated in most churches during the Easter holidays a week ago; but it is an essentially lying Gospel, because Christ is a wholly fictitious character, who never existed except in the imagination of those who profess him. As portrayed in the Four Gospels he is an utterly impossible being—quite as impossible as Osiris, Adonis, Attis, or Mithra, on whom he is largely modelled. These documents pretend to be biographical sketches; but the truth is, as pointed out by Professor Gilbert Murray, that the supposed history contained in them will not bear critical examination. Intensely interesting they are from a mythological point of view; but to treat them as historical is to show the blindest credulity. Take, for example, the story of the Incarnation as related in the first and third Gospels, and you will find yourselves in the region of sheer mythology. Besides, nothing can be clearer than that the Virgin Birth was never even dreamt of by the original writers of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, in which Jesus is invariably treated as the son of Joseph and Mary. His genealogy as given in both respects the line of Joseph, which would be ridiculous on the supposition that Joseph was not his father. It was by his parents that the child Jesus was taken to the temple "to do for him after the custom of the law"; and after listening to Simeon's glowing predictions as to his future career, "Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him," not even his mother having indulged in any wild dreams concerning him. We read that "his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover"; and when, at twelve years of age he gave them the slip on the return journey, and they found him, after long and anxious search, "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions," his mother rebuked him, saying: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." At that time Mary had no idea that she had given birth to a God-man, who would be known as the Saviour of the world. Then the silence of Mark and John indicates that the supernatural conception was an afterthought, while even the Apostle Paul declares that the Redeemer was "born under the law." One apologist explains all this away thus:—

In speech which was not designed to be formally dogmatic it was the most natural thing in the world to place Joseph along with Mary under the parental category, since he fulfilled parental offices toward Jesus, and in the common view was undoubtedly taken as his father. Whatever may have been the conviction of Mary, it was in the nature of the case next to impossible that belief in the extraordinary distinction of her child should gain real lodgment in the minds of neighbours and acquaintances generally in advance of an extraordinary history of the child. Inevitably he would be referred to as the carpenter's son, and the evangelist in admitting a like form of words was only adopting an accommodation which it was much easier to admit than to exclude,

As a matter of fact, what we see in both the Gospels and the Epistles is Christ in the making, and not by any means the completed portrait. Paul's Christ had

no history, and no body of teaching attributed to him, his death and resurrection being the only points of essential importance. In the Gospels, Paul's Christ is given an alleged history which led up to the atoning death and life-giving resurrection. By-and-bye it dawned upon the authors or editors of two of the Gospels that a life ending so magnificently and so fruitfully ought to be represented as beginning in a fashion correspondingly glorious and impressive, and the Virgin Birth, taken over from Gentile mythology was introduced. The construction of the Christ with whom we are familiar to-day was a task that occupied many centuries. The Gospels are semi-metaphysical novelettes, while the Epistles are, for the most part, replete with metaphysical dreams and fabulous riddles.

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

### Francis Thompson.

That same gentle spirit from whose pen  
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow.

—Spenser.

It is the part of a wise man to have preferences, but no exclusions.—*Voltaire*.

AMID thousands of obscure and unloved graves at Kensal Green Cemetery is one with the touching inscription, "Look for me in the nurseries of heaven." This is the last resting-place of the unfortunate Francis Thompson, who was buried there a decade ago. He was then almost unknown, and during his lifetime he had suffered the hardships of lonely poverty to a degree not surpassed by any of the most unfortunate poets of the world. He had sounded the gamut of misery and privation. Many nights he slept upon the Thames Embankment, and under carts in Covent Garden Market. He hawked matches in the Strand, and was a bookseller's porter, staggering through London streets with a heavy sack upon his back. When he was carried to his grave, only a few intimate friends, who had looked after him for the last sad months of his life, were present to mourn. Now Thompson is placed by all good judges in the ranks of poets of genius, and the proud garland of laurel decorates his tomb which was denied to the living man.

It is possible to overrate and to underestimate Francis Thompson's merits; but no one would contend that he was other than a genuine and unmistakable poet. A very unequal writer, he sometimes soared to the pure ether of the great singers, and at other times fell to the lower slopes of Parnassus. He had, indeed, his faults; but against them must be placed his unbalanced, imaginative, reckless nature. There can hardly be a sadder story than his in the whole history of literature, though Chatterton, Villon, Poe, James Thomson, and Paul Verlaine are among them. To be at once a genius and a drudge, to live in direst poverty and to die of a lingering disease, is as melancholy a lot as can be imagined. Nor would he deserve less pity if we denied his genius. His faults, whatever they may have been, injured himself alone; but genius he most certainly had.

Thompson is a poet's poet, like Blake, Rossetti, Keats, and Shelley. His kinship with these singers is far nearer than to Crashaw and the ecclesiastical mystics. Assuredly, he calls for a meed of praise equal to that accorded to Maeterlinck, D'Annunzio, Rostand, and other continental writers for whom so many British altars have flamed in worship. Thompson's genius was Oriental, exuberant in colour, waven with rich and strange textures. His poetry was mainly a splendid rhetoric, imaginative and passionate, as if the moods went by robed in imperial purple in a great procession.

His masterpiece, "The Hound of Heaven," is molten white with passion. Listen to these lines, in which the alchemy of the poet's genius transmutes the dross of theology into the fine gold of poetry:—

I dimly guess what time in mists confounds ;  
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds  
From the hid battlements of eternity,  
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then  
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again ;  
But not ere him who summoneth  
I first have seen, enwound  
With glooming robes purpleal, cypress crowned ;  
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.

Now hear the sonorous and stately valediction which concludes his "Anthem of Earth":—

Now, mortal, son-like,  
I thou hast suckled, mother, I at last  
Shall sustentant be to thee. Here I untrammel,  
Here I pluck loose the body's cerementing,  
And break the tomb of life; here I shake off  
The bur of the world, man's congregation shun,  
And to the antique order of the dead  
I take the tongueless vow; my cell is set  
Here in thy bosom; my little trouble is ended  
In a little peace.

How fine, too, is his charming vision of the woman sleeping in the child, like a dainty dryad hiding among the lush leaves of early summer:—

Thou whose young sex is yet but in thy soul,  
As, hoarded in the vine,  
Hang the gold skins of undelirious wine,  
As air sleeps, till it toss its limbs in breeze.

The closing stanza of *Daisy* is dangerously near perfection:—

She went her unremembering way ;  
She went, and left in me  
The pang of all the partings gone,  
And partings yet to be.

There used to be a tradition in common literary circles that poets cannot write good prose. It was a ridiculous theory. To look at the prose of Byron, Coleridge, Meredith, Shelley, and Wordsworth, is to perceive its absurdity. Shakespeare wrote wonderful prose, as in *Hamlet*. The critics who affect to look down upon Thompson's prose are scribblers who are hardly entitled to look down on anything. Francis Thompson was a Catholic, and Shelley was an Atheist. Hundreds of men have written on Shelley, but Thompson's essay is, far and away, the finest ever written. This is what Francis Thompson says of the *Prometheus Unbound*:—

It is unquestionably the greatest and most prodigal exhibition of Shelley's powers, this amazing lyric world, where immortal clarities sigh past in the perfumes of the blossoms, populate the breathings of the breeze, throng and twinkle in the leaves that twirl upon the bough; where the very grass is all a-rustle with lovely spirit-things; and a weeping mist of music fills the air. The final scenes especially are such a Bacchic reel and rout and revelry of beauty as leaves one staggered and giddy; poetry is spilt like wine, music runs to drunken waste. The choruses sweep down the wind, tirelessly, flight after flight, till the breathless soul almost cries for respite from the unrolling splendors.

A noble and true passage on Shelley's wondrous imagination is the following:—

For astounding figurative opulence he yields only to Shakespeare, and even to Shakespeare not in absolute fecundity but in range of images. The sources of his figurative wealth are specialised, while the sources of Shakespeare's are universal. It would have been as conscious an effort for him to speak without figure as it is for most men to speak with figure. Suspended in the dripping well of his imagination the commonest object becomes encrusted with imagery.

What a superb tribute from one poet to another! And, remember, the tribute came from a Catholic poet

to the Atheist singer. Literature, like music, is wider than opinion, broader than dogma, as limitless as the humanity to which it appeals. At the height of the Bradlaugh struggle, where Gladstone passionately addressed his speech on the Oaths Bill to a hushed and expectant House of Commons, he quoted some perfect lines from the old Roman Freethinker, Lucretius, as daring an Iconoclast as Bradlaugh himself. The majesty of the quotation was its justification. Gladstone's brain and taste persisted in being independent of his heart, like the French soldier who fought in the present War, and who, when killed, was found to have in his pocket a well-thumbed copy of Heine's poems. Catholic though he was, Francis Thompson deserves a few words of praise in a Freethought paper. He never did weak or puling work in prose or verse. Although he waged an unequal war against fate, he was at least a happy soldier. When his turn came, he yielded up his broken, but not dishonoured, sword with a brave and humble heart.

MIMNERMUS.

### Obiter Dicta.

It was nearing the end of the month of February. A few shy primroses were peeping out of the early green in the woods. The calendines had appeared also, like golden stars. Blackthorn trees were in flower, and the birds had begun to sing at six o'clock in the morning. If one counted the number in any flock of birds, it was invariably even. The cock chaffinch was arrayed in all his glory of conquest; goldfinches were to be seen busily picking away at the dried thistleheads of last year. The hedge-sparrow could be heard singing his lively but short song, and any thoughtful person could look at the ruddy gold of dawn over the sea, and wonder: Was there ever such a spring as this? Was there ever such a spring as this in the year 1918, the present dispensation, when humanity seemed to be suffering from the result of a second Tower of Babel? Whether we hear it or not, Spring will sing her eternal song. The enchanting indifference of Nature fascinates, and sometimes repels.

It is not often that any valuable reading matter reaches a camp hut. We forget what matter of importance it was on which we were engaged when we came across a copy of *Longman's Magazine*, dated December, 1891. Our eye at once lighted upon an article in it by Richard Jefferies. It was entitled "The Coming of Summer," written in his glorious style of light and colour and harmony, and we took ourselves to a hillside to sit in the sun and read it for a second time. For a little while we were carried away on the wings of fancy; far, far away from the chatter and bluster of a world where ideals are weighted and thrown in the bottomless pit of ignorance.

As one witnesses the progress of the press from peacetime inanity to war-time stupidity and asinine levity, it is natural to surmise that oblivion will be its reward. The press will drag down humanity with it if Fate does not intervene in the destiny of mankind. Nietzsche was right in his splendid pronouncement when he said, "We despise the culture from newspaper reading." If the influence of newspaper propaganda be real, then mankind is on the wrong path; if the influence is nugatory, then there is a chance of mankind being saved. Idealists are once again faced with a new superstition—the superstition of the printed word. There are fakirs and high priests in the new religion; there are only a few honest men—and Richard Jefferies was one of the latter. His writings are examples of good taste, and thus far they claim a place in eternity. Some witty Frenchman said that words are given us to conceal our thoughts. If that be cynically true, then we imagine that the thought at the back of newspaper words must be in a very bad way. If we move out of the greenhouse atmosphere of the Frenchman into the open air of Richard Jefferies, we find that he uses words to express his thoughts; and in this respect he writes as a man who brings his best to the service of mankind. The world is now groaning for the lies and half-truths of the past; with clean hands and a good conscience, Free-

thinkers can say this charge does not lie at their door. Christianity and Capitalism, with their tremendous reserves of power, may now share their joint responsibility in the mess, which could not be worse if the power had been in the hands of navvies or dustmen. With our ears filled with the braying of asses (of noble birth and otherwise), let us retire and listen to the liquid, honey-sweet words of Richard Jefferies. He writes:—

A June rose. Something caught my eye on the top of the high hawthorn edge beside the Brighton Road one evening as it was growing dusk, and on looking again there was a spray of briar in flower, two roses in flower and out of reach, and one spray of three growing buds. So it is ever with the June rose. It is found unexpectedly, and when you are not looking for it. It is a gift, not a discovery, or anything earned—a gift like love and happiness.

We will match that passage with anything seeing the light of print since August, 1914.

Harry, my friend and kindred spirit, was with me on the hillside. In the distance we could see some sheep and lambs in an enclosure. The plaintive bleat of the lambs followed by the answer of the mothers called to my pessimism. "If mankind was articulate, we should hear it make a similar sound." "May be," replied Harry, looking across the sea, "if we could listen to the earth we should hear it groaning." We both lapsed into silence. Then, like sunshine and shadow (for your pessimist does not always live in gloom) I ventured. Won't it be grand when people will pass by that spot and say: "there was once a camp here!" "Yes," he replied, "the place will be covered with rich green grass, and we may be asleep." Children may pluck flowers where only thorns exist now." We got up and moved away towards our place of brief habitation.

Many readers may remember a series of articles, entitled "At the Sign of the Ship," written by Andrew Lang. In this copy of *Longman's Magazine* there is an interesting dialogue held in Elysium. Gathered together are the poet Gray, Sterne, Miss Austen, Thackeray, Sir Walter Scott, and Mrs. Hannah More, and there is flippant discourse between Sterne and Gray about French novels, with the inevitable rejoinders from the two ladies who seemed gravely concerned about the Rabelaisian parson. Sterne remembers, after preaching a sermon on the Prodigal Son, how a charming widow, with an eye, with an ankle——. At this point he is brought to order by Miss Austen. Mrs. Hannah More is made to say something on the nature of vinegar.

In the light of Mr. John Galsworthy's refusal of a title, it may be interesting to know what Andrew Lang wrote in 1891. He says: "As to being made knights and baronets, who on earth wants to be called 'Sir' of men? Mayors, and brewers, and that kind of people, are welcome to these distinctions.....Praise we all like.....but titles we don't want, titles are exploded.....rather would I be commended by the little boys of the bookstalls." Is there not the ring of honest common sense in that? The heavens are now speaking as they have never spoken before that it shall go hard with shams, flim-flam, artificiality, and hypocrisy. The curtain covering the make-believe of centuries is now rent in twain. Reality, like a fierce March wind, is roaring about convention, custom, and everything which has grown diseased by the aid of lies. Soon we shall have plain speaking, for facts are *above* words, and not, as our slapdash journalists would have us believe, *below* them. The order in sequence is: (a) facts (or realities), (b) words, and (c) understanding or perception. Our modern inkfishes make words come first, and they, and all they stand for will go down like rotten trees before the gale, without a single tear being shed on their departure. They dealt in the corruption of Christianity and Capitalism, and their dissolution shall prove the noble truth of Euripides: "No lie ever grows old."

WILLIAM REPTON.

### Topsy-Turvy.

WELL, said the Thinker, when he saw the mass  
Of Black-coats batt'ning on the corpse of Christ,  
"Of old, Christ rode in triumph on an ass,  
And now, behold, the asses ride on Christ."

G. H. B.

### Acid Drops.

The Devonport Coroner, at an inquest of a child at Devonport, said ninety per cent. of the children born during the past three months were males. He regarded this as an interesting fact, showing how Providence was making up for losses in the War. That is very thoughtful of "Providence"; but, as usual, not thoughtful enough. To be of the greatest use, these children should have been born full grown. As it is, it will be twenty years before they are of much use to the community—either as parents or as soldiers. They will certainly be of no use during the present War. And if "Providence" can deliberately bring people into the world, why the deuce can't it prevent people being taken out? The mystery of "Providence" gets greater. So does the stupidity of some officials.

That hero of a hundred tea-fights, the Bishop of London, who loves to strut around in khaki, has a serious rival in Bishop Russell Wakefield, who has been bidding for popularity by attending a boxing exhibition, and extolling "the noble art of self-defence." According to the press, Brother Wakefield was formerly "very useful with the gloves." It is enough to make the Bishop of London "weep like anything."

The Rev. T. W. Pym, a Church of England Army Chaplain, says "no average professing once-a-year communicant of the Church of England could hold his own for five minutes against any average mildly intelligent and even intellectual Agnostic."

Mr. Herbert Skimpole describes Mr. Bernard Shaw's personal appearance as "half Mephistopheles, half Christ." Perhaps this explains why Mr. Shaw announced his Atheism at a Shelley Society meeting, and years later he preached, with acceptance, at the City Temple.

Unconscious humour lurks in unexpected places. The Rev. E. Milner-White, an Army Chaplain, says that soldiers are ignorant of pious habits, and "we had usually to give notice that each communicant must not drain the whole chalice." And "communion port" used to be one shilling and threepence a bottle.

Speaking at a Health Conference, Lord Rhondda said that nearly 200,000 children's lives had been lost during the past four years, and there were now a million weak and defective children in the schools. What a commentary on the popular hymn, "There's a friend of little children, up above the bright, blue sky"!

The late Rev. J. J. Griffin, of Cheltenham, left estate to the value of £40,560. If the Bible is true, he has forfeited his chance of walking the golden streets of heaven.

The Rev. Clarence Ladron, an American Baptist minister, has been sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment for opposing militarism, and refusing the use of his church for recruiting meetings. When he emerges from prison, he should understand that the divine command: "Thou shalt not kill," is only to be understood in the Pickwickian sense.

The pansy was chosen as a souvenir for raising funds for the Young Women's Christian Association's "Women's Day." Doubtless the female Christians were unaware that the pansy is an emblem of Freethought.

Canon Cooper, the vicar of Filey, proposes to take a vote of his congregation on the question of the frequency of collections. If the folk in the pews respond in the negative the Canon will have to bombard the Throne of Grace.

Lady Edward Churchill has been fined £5 at Windsor for using a motor-car to attend church. Perhaps the lady will use the same methods of travelling as were used by the Founder of Christianity when he entered Jerusalem.

In a City shop window a notice is displayed: "If you are down in the mouth, cheep up. Jonah came out all right." Quite a "fishy" remark.

Lord Hugh Cecil, M.P. for Oxford University, declares that God is the "Architect of Hell." Presumably the deity is also the employer of the stokers. What an ironic comment on the culture of the oldest English University!

A religious objection was one of the grounds on which a divorce was refused to a Portsmouth Roman Catholic. The petitioner had refrained from taking proceedings on account of his religious opinions, and the judge said that in consequence of his religious objections his wife had gone on, and had become the mother of three illegitimate children. He must now take the consequence of his religious objections.

The Bishop of London declares that "we do not know what privation means." Unhappily, we are not all bachelors with £200 weekly income.

Among the recent wills and bequests is that of Mr. Adam, who left £99,563. This is not the gentleman who cultivated vegetables in the Garden of Eden.

A daily paper says that the Bishop of London recommends a book of devotion to his diocese every Lent. Presumably, the book is to be sold, not lent.

Bishop Welldon has been writing on Marriage and Divorce in a Sunday paper, and he says: "The State must legislate upon marriage not only for Christians, but for citizens who are not Christians." Some of the Bishop's colleagues might make a note of this remark.

Although the clergy are exempted from military service, they like to boast of their acquaintance with war. Speaking at the Royal Society of Arts, the Archbishop of Canterbury said he had worn a gas helmet when he visited Ypres. Let us hope he will not wear that helmet in the pulpit.

Pious folk often contradict one another, and in a recent issue of a daily paper a fine example was printed. Dr. Alexander Irvine described London as a "city of God," and the Bishop of Chelmsford was reported in another column as referring to the great East End, with its hard-working population of a million, drawing shameful wages.

Perhaps the acme of stupidity—to say nothing of brutality—in the War was reached on Good Friday, when the long-range German gun fired on Paris, hitting a church, and killing and wounding 165 persons. The uselessness of such a gun from the point of view of military sanity is plain. One cannot aim at any particular thing, it can only be trained on a large and fixed target. On behalf of even aeroplane raids it might be argued that the bombs are aimed at a military objective. But this gun aims at nothing but sheer terrorism of the civilian population. That it fell on a church is a mere accident. In Hyde Park 10,000 Christians were holding an intercession service for God's help and protection. What that is worth the wrecking of the Paris church shows. God does nothing. The malignity of German militarism is matched by the stupidity of our animated praying-machines.

Perhaps Mr. Bottomley, who believed that the power of God upheld the Virgin of Albert, or the Bishop of London, who believes that God guarded from destruction the figure of Jesus in churches in Flanders, will explain why God could not guard his poor worshippers in church on Good Friday. And perhaps those who believed—particularly Mr. Harold Begbie—that clouds of angels guarded our soldiers at Mons, will explain what has become of the angelic army. Why could it not operate to stem this German offensive? Has it been disbanded? Or was it formed for three years only, and not "for the duration"?

Quite naturally, the shelling of the church aroused much indignation in Paris. Speaking in the Chamber, M. Jeanbon, leader of the Left, said:—

We unbelievers join our indignant protests against the crimes of the false believers who mingle blood with their prayers.

The two opening words were quite French in their directness and honesty. We fancy our own Socialists would have been more inclined to talk of the spirit of "true Christianity," or similar cant. Not because they believe more than M. Jeanbon, but because they are less outspoken and less direct in their thinking.

The number of women parsons is increasing constantly. Mrs. A. W. Constable, of Owendene, Halifax, has been appointed pastor to a Congregational Church at Sheffield, this being the first appointment of its kind in Yorkshire.

Defenders of the Design Argument will note with pleasure that a lamb has been born at Welton, Lincolnshire, with five legs. This means an extra leg of mutton in these hard times.

Mr. H. Fielding Hall says: "The base idea of every religion, Christian or other, is that nature and humanity are evil, and that life is not worth living." Apparently, the base of religion is a base idea.

The Roman Catholic Church is attempting a "great push" on its own account, and has published in a number of newspapers, at full advertisement rates, a public manifesto by Cardinal Bourne. The cost of this advertisement must have run into hundreds of pounds. Does this desire for extended publicity imply that the Church Catholic is feeling the effects of the World-War?

An advertisement of a mammoth cinema film states that there are "some Dantesque scenes of souls in purgatory." Curiously, the film is entitled "Civilization."

A new book bears the arresting title, *The Church in the Furnace*, and is written by seventeen Army Chaplains. The volume suggests the topsy-turvy condition of present-day Christianity; for, usually, the Church consigns outsiders to "the furnace."

Piety to order is a fearful and a wonderful thing. A cinema poster, during Holy Week, announced that the programme would include "Nearer, My God to Thee, in five acts, and many other sparkling comedies."

"Palestine To-Day" is the title of an article in a daily paper. Superstitious Christians are more interested in Palestine of two thousand years ago.

"Londoners seem more afraid of Sundays than of air-raids," says Father Bernard Vaughan. Perhaps the Cockneys dislike the poison-gas of the pulpits.

How exclusive the clergy are! The Bishop of Chelmsford says that in East Ham, with a population of over 80,000, there are only six clergy. There may be only six parsons of the Government religion, but what of the Free Church ministers and fancy religionists?

Speaking at the Kingsway Hall, London, Dr. Selbie declared that "war is not a Christian thing." Perhaps he can explain why Christian ministers consecrate regimental colours and "christen" battleships.

A newspaper paragraph states that old bones are valuable and must be saved. Priests know the value of old bones better than rag and bone dealers, especially when the relics are advertised as belonging to any saint in the calendar.

### C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

April 14, Liverpool; April 21, Goldthorpe; May 5, Abertillery.

### To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—April 7, Liverpool; April 28, Nuneaton.

"BONNIE DUNDEE."—Have sent on your card.

R. N.—Pleased to hear from you. Thanks, we are keeping well, and all things considered, we need to.

C. RUDGE.—You are mistaken. We have never advocated "peace at any price," nor have we ever asserted that all war is unjustifiable. We believe that all *offensive* wars are, but there may easily be occasions where a people are compelled to resist force by force. What we have asserted is the inconclusiveness of force. Force against force can only prove that one is greater than the other, it cannot prove anything else. But the right of defence against oppression seems to us undeniable.

MR. A. J. MARRIOTT thinks we have undervalued the power of the press in forming public opinion, seeing that so many papers are under one control, and so manage to refuse all opposition the right of a reply. We do not see that this conflicts with what we said, which was that the general tone and character of the public mind could not be placed to the credit of the press—certainly not wholly.

W. WALDEN.—We are greatly obliged to you for getting this paper into the Institute you name. That nearly always means new readers and a wider influence. Your experience with the "Padre" is interesting.

H. RIGBY writes to thank Mr. Underwood for having introduced to him G. H. Lewes' book on the Spanish Drama. He has since received a copy of the work.

W. J.—That Swinburne's "form" is marred by his "matter" is wholly a question of personal idiosyncrasy. The treatment of dead Freethinkers by living Christians is scarcely on all fours with Swinburne's attitude towards "God" and "Christ." To him these were myths.

E. SCHOFIELD.—See "Sugar Plum."

C. F. J.—Received, and shall appear as early as possible.

E. B.—Thanks for useful batch of cuttings.

J. HIGGINS.—We daresay you are right in your judgment of the man and the case. But we do not know enough of the circumstances to make any comment.

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*The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*

*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. 4 by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.*

*Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*

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

*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, 3s. 8d.*

### Sugar Plums.

Owing to the holidays and the Editor's absence from London, a number of letters, paragraphs, and one or two replies to the letter of "Ignotus" in our last issue are held over until next week.

Mr. Cohen's meetings at Pontycymmer last Sunday were a great success. They were the first Freethought meetings

held in the place, but they will not be the last. The day was a wild one of rain and wind, but, notwithstanding the weather, many were present from the surrounding districts: The large hall was well filled in the afternoon, and crowded out in the evening. The lectures were heard with attention and appreciation. A Branch of the N. S. S. is in course of formation, as is also another at Maestig—a neighbouring place. South Wales is very much alive.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (April 7) at Liverpool, in the Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street, at 3 and 7 o'clock. There have been no special lectures at Liverpool lately, owing to difficulties in obtaining a suitable hall. The week following Mr. Cohen lectures twice in the same place.

Now that we are working with a restricted space, we must economize wherever possible. Will all N. S. S. Branch Secretaries please send their reports of meetings, etc., direct to Miss Vance as early as possible after the meetings? These can then be summarized and published whenever convenient or advisable.

The Swansea Branch of the N. S. S. has arranged for a lecture from the Rev. A. W. Wandle, of that town, on "Some Ideals of Christianity." The lecture will be delivered to-day (April 7) in the Docker's Hall at 3 o'clock.

The *Daily Express* reports an attack by "infidel dogs" in a church in the Hudson Bay country. It appears that the native Christians had built a church of whalebone, and packs of dogs were so starved, they ate the whole of the structure. Christians eat their God inside the church. Dogs from without eat the structure itself. But why "infidel dogs"? They may have been quite orthodox in their opinions.

### Mr. Maskelyne and the Spirits.

THE late Mr. J. N. Maskelyne was a thorn in the side of the Spiritualists. It was largely owing to his public exhibition of the frauds of the mediums that the physical phenomena of Spiritualism fell into disrepute, and has been abandoned, except in very private circles.

I have to thank Mr. E. Smedley, of Hucknall Tor-kard, for allowing me to see, and use, several interesting letters he received from Mr. Maskelyne dealing with this subject.

But before dealing with the letters, it will be as well to understand Mr. Maskelyne's mode of operation: Several others beside Mr. Maskelyne have exposed fraudulent mediums—notably Sir Ray Lankester and Sir Bryan Donkin, among others, in this country, and Truesdell and Dr. Hodgson in America. But Mr. Maskelyne was the only one who reduced the exposure of Spiritualism to a business.

Mr. Maskelyne's method was to attend the mediums' seances until he saw how the tricks were performed, and then practise them at home until he was perfect. Then he would advertise that he would perform the spiritualistic marvels in public at his conjuring performances, which he did so perfectly that the Spiritualists' papers declared that Mr. Maskelyne himself was a great medium and received help from the spirits, in spite of his declaration that everything was done by natural means.

There is no recorded case of Mr. Maskelyne's ever getting up at a Spiritual seance and exposing the fraud. He makes no claim to have done so in his book, *Modern Spiritualism*; and if he had done so, he could hardly

have failed to mention it there. Nevertheless, it is often stated in the Press that Mr. Maskelyne exposed the Davenport Brothers. The facts are these.

The Davenport Brothers were two mediums who came to England from America in September, 1864. They created an extraordinary sensation by their performances in London. They had a wooden cabinet—not unlike a wardrobe—with a board at each end for a seat. The brothers seated themselves facing one another, and members of the audience were invited to come and bind them to the seat as securely as they knew how. After this had been done, a guitar, a violin, a tambourine, a trumpet, and two handbells were placed in the middle of the cabinet, apparently out of their reach. The doors of the cabinet were then closed; immediately the bolts were heard to rattle into their sockets, and shortly afterwards the musical instruments were heard in full blast. There is no doubt that the Davenport Brothers operated the bolts with the mouth; and thus making themselves secure from interruption, they freed themselves from the ropes before the audience had recovered from their surprise at hearing the bolts shot.

However, they came to grief at Liverpool, where two gentlemen appeared on the stage with the secret of a new knot known as the "Tom Fool" knot, which they proceeded to apply to the wrists of the brothers. The brothers protested, and ordered their manager to cut the ropes, which he did, inflicting at the same time a small cut, which the brothers declared was due to the tightness of the ropes. The performance broke up in disorder, and they afterwards had such a bad reception in other towns, where the news had preceded them, that they were glad to leave the country.

Mr. Maskelyne's account of his part in the Davenport exposure is, that when the Brothers were performing at Cheltenham, the accidental fall of a curtain during their performance enabled him to see enough to explain the mysteries performed in the cabinet. But he did not get up and expose them; he kept his own counsel, and some months later reproduced their performance in public at the Crystal Palace.

In the same way he helped in the exposure of the notorious "Dr." Slade. He visited Slade's performances until he discovered his method of slate-writing; and when Slade was caught in the act of trickery by Sir Ray Lankester, who prosecuted him for fraud, Mr. Maskelyne gave evidence in the witness-box, showing how the supposed spirit-writing was done. Mr. Maskelyne declared that it took him six weeks' hard work to perfect himself in Slade's tricks; but he considered the Davenport Brothers were the cleverest of all the mediums he had to do with.

Many of our readers will remember the law case of Colley *v.* Maskelyne, in April, 1907. Archdeacon Colley was a crank of the first water. At his church at Stockton, Warwickshire, he actually had himself clothed in a shroud and laid in his coffin for his parishioners to gaze upon!

In 1874, Colley became a great friend of the American medium, Monck—Dr. Monck, as he called himself. This Monck was a vicious scoundrel, and in 1876, while Colley—who had been appointed chaplain to H.M.S. *Malabar*—was out in India, Monck, who was giving spiritualistic demonstrations at two guineas a time, was caught in the act of fraud at Huddersfield, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment as a rogue and vagabond. Notwithstanding this crushing exposure, Colley, upon his return from India, resumed his intimacy with Monck, and in 1905 he published a pamphlet, entitled *Phenomena: Bewildering, Psychological*. Its publication led to correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph*, including a letter from Mr. Maskelyne on April 17, 1906.

Archdeacon Colley replied in a private letter, challenging Mr. Maskelyne to reproduce Monck's phenomena, and offering to pay £1,000 if he succeeded. Mr. Maskelyne accepted the challenge. Colley attended the performance at St. George's Hall on October 9, 1906, and denied that Maskelyne had given a replica of Monck's performance.

He also resented the statements contained in a pamphlet, called *The History of a Thousand Pounds Challenge*, which Maskelyne distributed to the audience. In this it was asserted that the Rev. Thomas Colley was not an Archdeacon, and had obtained a nomination for that position under Bishop Colenso by false pretences. This statement formed the basis of the alleged libel, and Maskelyne, for his part, counterclaimed £1,000 as the winner of the challenge.<sup>1</sup>

In the result the Archdeacon won small damages on the technical ground that he undoubtedly had the right to use the title of Archdeacon. Mr. Maskelyne was non-suited in his claim for the £1,000 on the ground that he had not completely reproduced Monck's phenomena, which consisted in the production of a materialized human form from his own body and then reabsorbing it. Mr. Maskelyne succeeded in producing the human form from his body but did not reabsorb it.

After the trial Mr. Maskelyne sent a notice to Colley to say that he was prepared at a future performance to reabsorb the form he produced, but Colley hastily sent a special messenger to withdraw the £1,000 challenge.

In *The History of a Thousand Pounds Challenge* Mr. Maskelyne gives particulars of the exposure and conviction of Monk for fraud. In a demonstration at Huddersfield an amateur conjurer, a Mr. H. B. Lodge, at the conclusion promised Monck £50 if, after allowing himself to be searched, a musical-box and other apparatus were not found upon him. Monck refused to be searched, and, rushing at Lodge, attempted to strike him in the face. He then bolted upstairs to his bedroom, having locked the door, he escaped with the aid of sheets from the window. The door was forced, says Mr. Maskelyne, and—

an examination of Monck's luggage revealed the fact that two large boxes and a full-sized travelling bath were filled with tricky apparatus, including spirit hands, spirit masks, a large quantity of gauzy material, a spirit bird, apparatus for floating tambourines, bells, spirit names, spirit lamps, and a number of incriminating documents. Mr. Lodge took possession of these articles with the intention of giving public exposures of Spiritualism. The police, however, took the matter out of his hands, and prosecuted Monck. The trial lasted three days, and Monck was sentenced to three months' imprisonment, the maximum penalty.

What influenced the magistrates in inflicting so severe a punishment were the incriminating documents, which included disgustingly immoral letters from both married and single women, with whom Monck had intrigues under the cloak of Spiritualism and the convenience of dark seances. In this respect Monck was but a fair specimen of professional mediums, as a body, both men and women. I have had good reason to know that they are immoral and blasphemous in the extreme, yet spiritualistic cranks would have us believe that these wretches are specially endowed by the Almighty with the power to raise the spirits of the dead and create through their vile bodies living entities of our loved ones who have "crossed the bar." The idea is revolting.

And yet at the Colley trial the distinguished naturalist, Wallace, gave evidence of his whole-hearted belief in this vile scoundrel.

(To be concluded.)

W. MANN.

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Ivor Tuckett's *The Evidence for the Supernatural* (1911), p. 286.



## The Sons of God.

The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair.—*Gen. vi. 8.*

ACCORDING to the first book of the Bible, the earth fell into a very wicked condition in the days of the patriarchs. God made everything good, but the Devil turned everything bad; and in the end the Lord put the whole concern into liquidation. It was a case of universal bankruptcy. All that was saved out of the catastrophe was a consignment of eight human beings and an unknown number of elephants, crocodiles, horses, pigs, dogs, cats, and fleas.

Among other enormities of the antediluvian world was the fondness shown by the sons of God for the daughters of men. That fondness has continued ever since. The deluge itself could not wash out the amatory feelings with which the pious males regard those fair creatures who were once supposed to be the Devil's chief agents on earth. Even to this day it is a fact that courtship goes on with remarkable briskness in religious circles. Churches and chapels are places of harmless assignation, and how many matches are made in Sunday-schools, where Alfred and Angelina meet to teach the Scriptures and flirt. As for the clergy, who are peculiarly the sons of God, they are notorious for their partiality to the sex. They purr about the ladies like black tom-cats. Some of them are adepts in the art of rolling one eye heavenwards and letting the other languish on the fair faces of the daughters of men. It is also noticeable that the Protestant clericals marry often and early, and generally beget a numerous progeny; while the Catholic priest who, being strictly celibate, *never* adds to the population, "mashes" the ladies through the confessional, worming out all their secrets, and making them as pliable as wax in his holy hands. Too often the professional son of God is a chartered libertine, whose amours are carried on under a veil of sanctity. What else, indeed, could be expected when a lot of lusty young fellows, in the prime of life, forswear marriage, take vows of chastity, and undertake to stem the current of their natures by such feeble dams as prayers and hymns?

Who the original "sons of God" were is a moot point. God only knows, and he has not told us. But Jewish and Christian divines have advanced many theories. According to some the sons of God were the offspring of Seth, who was born in holy succession to righteous Abel, while the daughters of men were the offspring of wicked Cain. Among the Oriental Christians it is said that the children of Seth tried to regain Paradise by living in great austerity on Mount Hermon, but they soon tired of their laborious days and cheerless nights, and cast sheep's-eyes on the daughters of Cain, whose beauty was equal to their father's wickedness. Marriages followed, and the Devil triumphed again.

According to the Cabbalists, two angels, Aza and Azael, complained to God at the creation of man. God answered, "You, O angels, if you were in the lower world, you too would sin." They descended on earth, and directly they saw the ladies they forgot heaven. They married and exchanged the hallelujahs of the celestial chorus for the tender tones of loving women and the sweet prattle of little children. Having sinned, or, to use the vile language of religion, "polluted themselves with women," they became clothed with flesh. On trying to regain Paradise they failed, and were cast back on the mountains, where they continued to beget giants and devils.

"There were giants in the earth in those days," says Scripture. Of course there were. Every barbarous people has similar legends of primitive ages. The translators of our Revised Version are ashamed of these mythical personages as being too suggestive of Jack and the Beanstalk, so they have substituted Anakim for giants. In other words, they have shirked the duty of translators, and left the nonsense veiled under the original word.

The Mohammedans say that not only giants, but also Jins, were born of the sons of God, who married the daughters of men. The Jins soon had the world in their power. They ruled everywhere, and built colossal works, including the pyramids.

Of the giants the most remarkable was Og. He was taller than the last Yankee story, for at the Deluge he stopped the windows of heaven with his hands, or the water would have risen over his head. The Talmud says that he saved himself by swimming close to the ark in company with the rhinoceros. The water there happened to be cold, while all the rest was boiling hot; and thus Og was saved while all the other giants perished. According to another story, Og climbed on the roof of the ark, and when Noah tried to dislodge him, he swore that he would become the patriarch's slave. Noah at once clinched the bargain, and food was passed through a hole for the giant every day.

When we look into them we find the myths of the Bible wonderfully like the myths of other systems. The Giants are similar to the Titans, and the union of divine males with human females is similar to the amours of Jupiter, Apollo, Neptune and Mars with the women of old. In this matter there is nothing new under the sun. Every fresh myth is only the recasting of an ancient fable, born of ignorance and imagination.

Let it finally be noted that this old Genesiac story of the angelic husbands of earthly women gives us a poor idea of the felicity of heaven. In that unknown region, as Jesus Christ informed his disciples, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage; that is, no males, no females, no courting, no loving, no children, and no home. Men cease to be men and women cease to be women. Every body is of the neuter gender. Or else all the angels are gentlemen, without a lady amongst them. Perhaps the latter view is preferable, as it harmonizes with the Bible, in which the angels are always *he's*. In that case heaven would be, to say the least, rather a dull place. No whispering in the moonlight, no clasped hands under the throbbing stars. Not even a kiss under the misletoe. Oh, what must it be to be there! No wonder the sons of God wandered from their cheerless Paradise, visited this lower world, and saw the daughters of men that they were fair.

(The late) G. W. FOOTE.

## The Tenement and the Towers.

A HUMAN DOCUMENT.

THE curtain of night was slowly withdrawn from grey sea and dun wintry landscape. The tall grey tenement stood out with prison-like grimness, silent, almost sinister in the cloud-filtered light of smiling morn. No one was about. The beauty of the morning and the Sabbath calm were, as yet, unprofaned. But by way of contrast with the serene exterior, within was noise and confusion enough. The Tenement children were awake and in nondescript deshabelle rolling, fighting, shouting on the floor of the kitchen bedroom. Mater, with her attention distracted between a crying baby and a tardy fire, had her share of the morning duties. Robbed of a precious hour of Sunday sleep by his band of wakeful brigands, a careworn pater somewhat ruefully surveys the scene, and strives in vain to quieten his clamorous brood. He is merely answered by brave merry shouts of "Daddy" this and "Daddy" that. Running his fingers through his unkempt locks, Daddy responds feebly, and all the while absurdly his mind keeps reverting to Mrs. Hemans's "Stately homes of England," "Cottage homes," etc., and wonders if this sweet-voiced lady ever sewed on a button or dressed the kids in the morning. In a happier, more heroic mood, he would have hummed over that exquisite old plantation melody—

The young folks roll on the little cabin floor,  
All merry all happy and bright;  
By-m-by hard times comes a knockin' at the door,  
My old Kentucky home good-night.

The mother was excusably tart after a week of constant toil and worry, and the children came in for many a sharp rebuke, which they heeded as much as the idle wind. Little garments and other *debris* of domestic life lay about in confusion.

Feebly, yet palpably, impelled by a conscience worn somewhat thin in the sordid struggle for existence, Pater would fain have risen and helped to clothe his boys, but shrank

from the formidable task of disentanglement and due apportionment of the "duds." This was left to the miracle-worker. Only the woman's patient and practised hand might assort the miscellaneous mysteries and clothe the children in contentment's happy rays! It was thus, at any rate, the feeble Pater quieted his conscience. And yet the poor chap was not without some wit and industry. He had great theories of household management—in his bachelor days! So has everybody—in his bachelor days!

This morning he wondered how those theories had fallen through.....Other things, too, were more sternly troubling what was left of a brilliant intellect—rent and taxes were overdue, and smaller expenses loomed gigantically over a meagre and depleted exchequer. The gamins on the floor held his wistful eye and wrung his heart, concentrating in their innocent irresponsible presence all the pathos and love of the human heart. How was the few loaves and fishes of his weekly earning to be multiplied in this non-miraculous age? He would go forth and consider the matter yet again. Sweet was the breath of morn as he emerged from the grey block of many dwellers. An Englishman's house is his castle, but Brown, Jones, and Robinson share the noble pile. Past many similar blocks, he took his way, with hives as busy as his own. It is largely an "artificial" man that finds fullness of life in towns and cities. The natural man craves for the fields and freedom. As driven sheep, for instance, gathered from their native hills, from the great peace of the wilderness, to endure long road marches will climb instinctively each little hillock by the wayside and nibble at the sweet herbage as they are allowed by shepherd Destiny and his dog, so Pater, dumbly driven as the silly sheep, but, now and then, would fain escape to the wilderness. He was discontented, ashamed of his own and the stupidity or indifference of his class, and yet in his scarred breast was noblest yearning for higher things, and perhaps infinite capacity for virtue and happiness. He was sad at times. Sometimes in despair. Nothing so surely restores lost proportion as solitary converse with nature herself—the just and gentle, serious and sublime, smiling, whispering, frowning fearful, muttering thundering, all-commanding mother of us all; she who must be obeyed; the constant, the impartial, the inexorable, the non-arbitrary, but the best-beloved. In such filial, faithful communion the healthy passions, long quiescent, reassert their stimulus, and the soothed mind perceives its need and shapes its purposes.

As a boy, Pater remembered he was happy and eager, with wide blue, steady eyes, wistful, apprehensive, humane, joyous as kittens and puppies are, dwelling in a large optimism as in the azure atmosphere; singing, shouting in the woods; blythe as the birds, graceful as the bending spray, lithe and strong as sapling oak; but the bludgeonings of chance and fate, the long immurement in a brick-and-mortar world (albeit a *chosen* world), the long, unvarying hours of toil, and perhaps that gravitation we call sin, had made him timid in the wilds, and almost afraid to enter the wood, where the "pampered menials" of some little lord of earth might drive him from its grateful shade. But at length, saying "They can't hang me," he leapt the wall, and found himself—at home. Glorious! Soft, dry footing in the bleached grass and rustling leaf; long grass stems, untrampled and erect, glistening in the morning light, and gleaming afar down every glade like glittering ranks of fairy hosts welcoming back the long-lost heir to his domain. There is a pleasure in the pathless woods; there is an inspiration; the eye sees visions and the soul has a revelation. Pater saw the truth with great suddenness and unequivocal certainty. He saw what quicker-sighted men had seen before him—that there were but two kinds of people in the world, the Haves and the Have-nots; that the latter were *not* the blessed.....

Beyond the wood was a noble expanse of lawn surrounding the massive towers of a mansion, sequestered and serene. Pater's well-read mind and vivid imagination could picture the interior, and appreciate the comfort and glory of "high life." He was not envious. He merely knew for the first time the vast social gulf that separates even the moderately rich from the average poor—as far away as Paris is. Yes, the Towers are distant from the Tenement as Heaven is from both. He knew, also, with the utmost certainty—Pater was terribly definite at times—that the denizens of the Towers

were not primarily superior to the dwellers in the Tenement, but only that "Fortune in men had some small difference made." Out of a common heredity, environment works the miracle; and these people become godlike and feel like gods, and, indeed, must look down upon the aproned cobbler and grimed collier as very inferior persons indeed; which for the time, as articles of *vertu*, they certainly are.

Seeing and thinking these things, Pater felt he was standing on the boundary line between two worlds: on this hand the world of clockwork, hand-to-mouth wage-slavery, with its stupefying, stultifying round; on the other the world of the free-born, the upright, the patrician souls to whom life is life, and not mere vegetation—a thing of beauty and a joy for ever; noble, deep-breathed beings. Sonorous voice of man; silvern, sweetly modulated tones of woman; all the glorious music and texture of the life refined—that alone constitute man's pre-eminence over beast, and justify Hamlet's apostrophe.

The very dogs in such environment are separated from the curs of the canine world by a chasm as wide as that dividing the human spheres.....Pater starts suddenly. There is a rustling in the brown leaves, a sniffing and pattering in the silent wood. Soon two pairs of bright doggie eyes are gazing at him through the herbage—smiling, careless, magnanimous, friendly eyes—and two tails wag behind, almost in apology. Pater, on his part, uneasy in the company of nobility, would fain have apologized for his intrusion. And yet the poor *gentle* man might have met all mankind on footings of equality; for had he not sounded all the chords of life—seen all, heard all, felt all, owned all? *Owned?* you say; where, then, was *his* estate? Even yours, my lord; it is the Estate of Man. And so Pater said, "God dog! fine fellow! Ha, ha, old chap!" And the dogs understood him, every word, wagged their tails, and trotted off again, and he heard them pattering in the distant leaves.....Pater rose and re-climbed the wall, and, turning homeward, wondered rather sadly what was life worth to him. On the Tenement stairs joy and warmth filled his heart again. Aloft a voice cried "Daddy!" and in a moment he had folded in his arms his little Pater's son!

LE MISERABLE.

### Taste.

REFINEMENT and restraint of feeling are nowhere and at no time insisted on as essentials in the Christian scheme of social ethics. On the contrary, they are frequently condemned, and people are warned that æsthetic allurements are a danger to their immortal souls. These facts should be brought before bawling advocates of the Christian Faith who insolently (and falsely) claim that Christianity has protected learning and advanced knowledge.

We are justified in our assertion that coarseness of taste is compatible with the profoundest piety, and with the most strenuous Christian activity can be proved from broad facts. The Salvation Army has within recent years received well-advertised recognition from the most influential quarters. One of the most run-after Christian orators of to-day is Billy Sunday, an ex-pugilist. Even clergymen who would not like to be thought vulgar, but who are keenly desirous of meeting all classes of men on their own level, exclaim in the heat of their enthusiasm that Christianity is the greatest gamble in the world! Everything is done on the part of those out "to win souls" to make admission to the Christian fold easy and attractive. Churches and chapels have week-night "tea services" in various centres for sailors and soldiers, and pious touts may be observed buttonholing passing Service men, and "compelling them to come in." The text upon which up-to-date Christian drummers exhaust most of their energies is this: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

We venture to say that a person's tastes is, in 999 cases out of 1,000, a reliable index to his moral standard. We do not associate Billingsgate with thought at a high elevation. Do not let us be misunderstood. We are not stigmatizing even gross vulgarity, which prevails among certain ignorant sections of the people (rich and poor), as a *crime*. Unconscious vulgarity is as common, perhaps, as unconscious

humour. The ignorant, vulgar man is not, as a rule, class-conscious—or self-conscious, if it comes to that. He is what he is by reason of his parentage, surroundings, associates, and want of upbringing. Such a man is not to be sneered at, blamed, or condemned for his vulgarity. It is *not* vulgarity—to him. But he is to be classified—and anyone who knows better is not doing him or his kind a service by going to the other extreme of praising, encouraging, and even copying, his coarse vulgarisms. And we do claim that we are justified in stigmatizing the “educated” Christians who adopt such methods as being guilty of the most anti-social conduct. We have heard of Parliamentary candidates, sprigs of the aristocracy, going round amongst labourers, garbed like themselves, and smoking short clay pipes. And we have heard of intelligent labourers who were capable of being insulted by such a proceeding. But they did not make their resentment vocal. They had enough sense and restraint to understand that silent contempt was the best policy.

Lack of taste is every day exhibited in the impudent noisiness of the religious tout and gadger. They are, in this War, having the time of their lives; and the orthodox press gives plenty of laudatory notices. What strikes one as the leading feature of such people (after their noses) is their hopeless incapacity to discriminate. But that is always what distinguishes coarse and vulgar minds. The headlong and violent blatancy of their processes causes blurring; the finer sensibilities and perceptions of the brain are atrophied, and differentiation and distinction become impossible. Even approximately accurate classification is beyond them wholly.

Lack of taste is always to be found combined with lack of true knowledge. The mental activities of the many are directed not to the acquisition of true knowledge and of the equipment or *desire* to beautify life, but to the development of that animal cunning necessary to self-preservation, self-protection, and self-aggrandisement as a weapon to be used against a world of potential competitors, each of which is busy acquiring the same “education” for himself. To such an anarchy has the teachings of Christianity reduced us! The Victorians had their faults. Some of them treated the poor like beasts, and, naturally, the poor multiplied as beasts. But are some of our modern Georgians any better? And are they helping matters by encouraging the idea that a bestial state of life is to be prized?

The stock-in-trade of the pre-War political and religious bluffer—“honey, money, soap, and butter”—is, happily, in the minds of many in all ranks of society coming to be despised. The assertiveness of the individual mind is the herald of the doom of supernaturalism. The independence of the individual mind is that doom accomplished, and the collapse of all the organized hypocrisis of hundreds of years. But progress from intellectual bondage to intellectual freedom should never be represented—as religious touts represent justification by faith to be—as the work of a moment, painless and easy. Things worth keeping are never found without assiduous effort and toil: mental freedom is one of them.

IGNOTUS.

### “To Cambria Enslaved.”

(Y gwir yn erbyn y byd.—The truth against the world).

Thy spirit flamed in bygone years. O land  
Of wind-swept mountain-crag and headlong flood!  
For thee great leaders shed their patriot blood,  
Nor deemed it dear the price they paid. The hand  
Of tyrant hatred crushed thy just demand  
For peaceful cult of muse in leisure's hour,  
Frowned on thy zeal for wisdom's ancient dower.  
Fast linked with feudal might, the priestly band,  
Suspicious, saw thine aspiration's goal,  
Dazzled thine eyes with sight of mystic wine,  
With many a fairy tale of Palestine  
Thy simple heart beguiled; shall mitre, stole,  
Or bigot's frown put out the light divine?  
Flame forth once more: win freedom for thy soul.

D. V. T.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7, Mr. F. A. Davies, “A Visit to the Western Front.”

#### OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Swasey, Dales, and Shaller.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Operetta, “The Wishing Cap.” Performed by children of the Secular Sunday-school. Silver Collection.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, “Secularism and Social Reforms”; 7, “God and the War.”

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall.): 6.30, Annual Meeting of Members for Election of Officers, etc.

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Mr. C. H. Chandler, “Men and Scenes in France.”

#### OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Jail Square): 5, R. Ogilvie, “An Atheist's Reply to Cardinal Bourne.”

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