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Views and Opinions.

God.

In last week's *Freethinker* Dr. Lyttelton remarks that to say "There may be a God, but there is no evidence to show that there is; and if there is, there is no possibility of knowing him," is "unintelligible and contradictory." I have said so many times in these columns, and on that point we are in complete agreement. Unknowableness is not a property or quality of existence, and if there is anything unknowable, we can only prove it to be so by knowing nothing about it—not even that we know nothing about it. This, again, is a contradiction; but one can't help being contradictory when one gets into the region of the absurd. The fault committed by those who talk about "God" in the way condemned by Dr. Lyttelton is, I think, precisely the fault he himself commits. That fault lies in speaking of "God" as though it stood for some understood thing such as gravitation or natural selection. But "God" in the abstract stands for—what? To me, nothing. It is simply unintelligible. I no more know what is meant by "God," apart from particular gods, or defined conceptions of God, than I know what whiteness is apart from some object that is white. One can believe or disbelieve in the god of this or that tribe, or the god of this or that religion, as it is expounded in official creeds. Personally, I believe in none of these. More; I say unhesitatingly that, so far as they are defined and understood, they are pure myth. And I really think that Dr. Lyttelton agrees with me here—that is, if I have not misunderstood his repudiation of the gods in which other people believe, which he describes as "nonsense." If every god that the world has worshipped is a myth, if any god that man can conceive is false, what is meant by "God" used simply as an abstract term? Is it any better than the "unknowable" which we are rightly told is "unintelligible and contradictory"?

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The Decadence of Deity.

The progress of scientific thought is from the indefinite to the definite. The more a particular subject is investigated by science, the more precise and definite become the accepted formulæ. In religion, we have quite the opposite process. "God" commences as a definite concept; it proceeds to a vague abstraction that means either nothing or anything. The scientific student feels

himself baffled unless he is able to say definitely such-and-such is the case, and to submit a formula that will give birth to a definite conception. The religious student shrinks from a definite formula, and prides himself on producing something which he says baffles human mind to grasp intelligently. If Dr. Lyttelton will take the "God" of any primitive people he will find no abstract thing; no attempt to grasp the infinite; what he will find will be a perfectly clear and concrete deity built in the image of man himself. The indefinite deity comes later. He is born of the disintegrating effect of later knowledge on primitive ideas. Philosophy and criticism set to work. One by one the more intrusive human qualities are discarded, the less obvious ones are retained. The God who possessed mind and body becomes a God possessing mind and minus body—itself an impossible conception. Philosophical abstractions, such as "substance," get grafted on to the God-idea. Things originally give rise to names, afterwards names are taken as the equivalent of things. But throughout all, I am unable to see any other basis for the belief in God other than that born of the primitive savage—a belief which we know was based upon a mistaken interpretation of the facts. To me the God of philosophy, or of the most advanced Christian, is no more than the ghost of the God born of the fear-stricken ignorance of the savage. And I do not believe in ghosts.

* * *

Outgrowing God.

Dr. Lyttelton says that both of us have a theory concerning the world or nature. And I suppose that is true. To anyone who really thinks, a theory is almost indispensable. But when I said that not having to marry facts to a theory I was only concerned with their logical interpretation, while Dr. Lyttelton has to harmonize his facts with a special theory, I was proceeding on the assumption that he believed in a God before he examined the facts on which that belief is supposed to rest. If I am wrong in this I apologize, but it is certainly true of every other Theist I have met. And if the apology is unnecessary, then it follows that my theory succeeded an appreciation of the facts while his preceded it. And it surely needs little proof that facts examined in the light of a preconceived and strongly held theory are very likely to yield all they are expected to yield, while a theory which follows an appreciation of the facts and displaces a theory previously held, is far more likely to be nearer the truth. Let me say, in passing, that I did not for a moment believe that Dr. Lyttelton was asking questions with a view to scoring debating points. That is an interesting occupation for groundlings, but not for those who have attained maturity of years or of mind. I took it that he was desirous of finding out my real position, not because it was mine, but because in this matter I happen to represent others, and so proceeded to answer the questions put. And this leads me to add that the significance of the fact of so many being brought up to believe in Theism, with all kinds of social and other

inducements to continue believing, who yet reject it, is often ignored. Yet, surely, the evidential value of the rejection of Theism under such conditions is much greater than its retention, which, on the face of it, may be no more than persistence along a path marked out by tradition, early training, and love of ease. And we have further to bear in mind that the case of individuals is here only a representation of the world of thought. That tends more and more to the rejection of the Theistic idea. Dr. Lyttelton may reply that it is the rejection of a grosser form of Theism in favour of a purer form. In that case, I can only retort that the purification is by way of attenuation, and a continuation of the process threatens complete dissipation.

* * *

The Theory of God.

Naturally, I am at a loss as to the meaning of that "Christian doctrine of God," which Dr. Lyttelton says all who are not mad will accept, once it is understood. All I can say is, that I do reject all the Christian conceptions of God I have ever come across, and find that a great number of my fellow-rejectors call themselves Christians. So far as I am aware, there is no Christian doctrine of God, although there are doctrines of God held by Christians. Naturally, then, I ask Dr. Lyttelton for his conception of what is the Christian doctrine of God, and I await its exposition with considerable interest. But if I may be rash enough to hazard a guess, I fancy it will consist in an interpretation of certain things in terms of God, which, personally, I find myself quite able to explain, so far as our present knowledge admits of an explanation—without reference to God at all. To me, so far as "God" carries any meaning at all, it stands as an hypothesis intended to explain certain things. But what are the things explained by this hypothesis I have never been able to discover. So far as I can discern, it throws no light into dark places, it solves no problems, it unties no knots. Man is left to find his way through the world as best he can, and not a few of the troubles he encounters are bequeathed to him by his less enlightened ancestors. Among the greatest blunders made by unenlightened humanity, I cannot but place that of the belief in "God."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

An Avenging Deity.

THE Rev. R. J. Campbell, during his sensational ministry at the City Temple, London, fell from the grace of theological orthodoxy, a lapse into the causes and motives of which it would not now be profitable to pry. The whole affair is rapidly fading into a dim, distant memory. The short-lived aberration is remembered chiefly for the vehement attacks that were made upon certain portions of the Bible, for the bitter denunciation of various forms of supernaturalism indulged in, and by the notorious volume, entitled *The New Theology*, written in feverish haste, and extravagantly "boomed" when published, but now long since withdrawn from circulation. Our excuse for recalling that religiously exciting time is the fact that several sermons were preached and published in which the Old Theologians were angrily addressed as "Liars," and the ancient Hebrew Deity was fiercely condemned on account of the cruel, brutal conduct attributed to him. No Atheist ever employed terms more contemptuous, satirical, and flamboyant than those which habitually dropped from Mr. Campbell's lips when the New Theology campaign was at its height. To him then Jehovah was a hateful monster who could send bears out of a wood to slay forty-two harmless little children because they playfully

mocked a bald-headed prophet, who could deliberately visit Israel with a horrible pestilence which in a few hours killed seventy thousand men, or who could despatch an angel to cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of Assyria. There were many other counts, some of them considerably worse than those just mentioned, in the reverend gentleman's case against the God who figures so conspicuously in the historical books of the Old Testament. The New Theology campaign came to a speedy end, and the Churches of to-day, though much less prosperous in the main, are even more orthodox, than they have been for some years. At any rate, journals like the *British Weekly* champion the Old Theology with renewed zeal and energy, and seem to have entirely forgotten that such a movement as the Higher Criticism was ever on foot. In its issue of September 22, the *British Weekly* has its Correspondence Column graced by one of Professor David Smith's typically Old School articles. This article was written in response to "A.S.," who made the following request: "Will you please say what you regard as the precise force of our Lord's question in Luke xviii. 8: 'Howbeit when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'" Now, far be it from us to blame Dr. Smith for his orthodox views, or for his constant advocacy thereof. This journal has never shown any greater leaning or leniency towards the New Theology than towards the Old, for it is the sworn and uncompromising opponent of all theologies, of whatever age; but it may be admitted that if a man must be a theologian at all, he had better adhere to that which has naturally grown out of Biblical teachings. To this theology Dr. Smith is consistently and heroically loyal. He begins his article thus:—

The Son of Man is the Judge of men (cf. St. John v. 22, 27); and every historical *denouement* which vindicates the righteousness of God and confounds the insolence of human iniquity is a "Coming of the Son of Man." The constitution of the Universe is a moral order, and therefore every unrighteous thing is doomed. It may flourish long, but there is a canker at the heart of it, and soon or late it decays and falls.

That is an ingenious introduction to a series of most astounding statements, for every one of which there is ample Biblical authority. Dr. Smith offers a firm defence of the very Deity whom Mr. Campbell so furiously assailed; and this defence is rendered in the name and by the authority of the Saviour of the world. The moral order is "an inexorable law" which Jesus is said to have enunciated "in two picturesque epigrams." That is at once well put and exceedingly plausible. The Gospel Jesus did undoubtedly believe in the reality of such a law of the Universe, and that his Father was its author. Did he also realize that a recognition of that law carried with it an irrefutable argument against the absolute and invincible sovereignty of God? But let that pass for the moment. Jesus said: "Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." On that passage the Professor wisely makes no comment. The question that naturally arises is, Why should the human garden contain a single plant for which the Divine Gardener is not responsible? *Who* planted that which needs to be rooted up? *Who* made possible the existence of wicked people? Surely, the whole responsibility for an imperfect creation must lie at the door of its creator. It is only by having recourse to strange inventions of their own that theologians imagine they get over this insuperable difficulty. The second "picturesque epigram" is like unto the first: "Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Here, at any rate, we are in touch with a natural law that is in constant operation. Eastern

travellers require no formal demonstration of its existence. Wherever the carcase lies, thither the vultures unfailingly flock, and soon nothing remains but white bones. The following is Dr. Smith's application:—

This is a picture of the moral order. Iniquity is a rotting carcase; and wheresoever the carcase is, thither will God's vultures gather to their work. History is a long succession of examples. The aborigines of Canaan polluted the land with their nameless abominations; and the destruction of the Cities of the Plain was a premonition of the inevitable end. But it was only a premonition. God was patient, "long suffering and slow to anger," and he granted centuries of respite; and then when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, he let loose his vultures; Joshua and his army invaded the land and exterminated the foul breed. In turn Israel grew corrupt, and after centuries of warning and long-suffering the Roman eagles, the army of Titus, cleared away the carcase.

We are sorry to find the Professor in such a ferocious mood, and we are bound to add that he looks at history through shockingly coloured spectacles. Let us consult the records as they stand on the Biblical pages. Speaking generally, Dr. Smith's allusion to the aboriginal tribes of Palestine is as inaccurate as was his description of the Greeks, which appeared in the *British Weekly* several years ago, as a people who knew not the meaning of love as distinguished from lust. Students of Robertson-Smith's *Religion of the Semites* cannot possibly agree with the view that the original inhabitants were in any sense much, if at all, inferior to the invaders under Joshua. The truth is that Joshua's war of conquest in Palestine was, on its scale, quite as ruthless and brutal, and attended with as many atrocities as is the World-War now in progress. Take the siege of Jericho as a sample. The record says that "Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in." The account is largely legendary; but when the city fell, there was no mercy shown, no quarters given, no prisoners taken:—

They took the city, and they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword (Joshua vi. 21).

Nothing more horrible than that has been perpetrated by the Germans in Belgium or Serbia. All that lived in Jericho was utterly destroyed with one solitary exception—the entire family of Rahab, the notorious prostitute, was graciously spared, by the order of the general of the army (vi. 22, 23). The same doom befell Lachish, Eglon, Debir, and numerous other cities. The soldier of the Lord "smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining; as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the King thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her King" (x. 39).

The destruction of the cities of the plain is another sample. What geological disturbances may have occurred, in ancient times, in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, we do not know; but there is no doubt whatever as to the purely legendary character of the narrative in Genesis xviii. and xix.; and, in any case, absolutely nothing is known concerning a primitive population that may possibly have been destroyed by a volcanic or some other geological activity. Assuming the actuality of a catastrophe of that nature, it is sheer superstition to imagine that it took place in order to punish the inhabitants for their wickedness. The absurdity of Dr. Smith's theory reaches a farcical climax when he comes to the clearing away of the Jewish carcase by the Roman eagles. We hold no brief to defend the Jews whom the Professor seems to vilify whenever it suits his convenience; but we cannot refrain from saying

that on his own showing in multitudes of his *British Weekly* essays, the Jews at their very worst could not have been so low down in the moral scale as Pagan Greece and Rome must have been. He certainly forgets or deliberately ignores the fact that Rome perished long after it had suppressed Paganism and become a thoroughly Christianized State. His allusion to the French Revolution also is equally misleading. Does he not know that the Royalists—the Chouans as they were called in Brittany—fought against the Revolution with great heroism, because they regarded it as a movement against God and religion? We admit that France had suffered terribly from the oppression of her licentious and tyrannical kings and nobles, but to speak of the Revolution as "the red rush of God's avengers" is the very height of theological folly.

Dr. Smith loses himself completely whenever he refers to the present War. Exactly ten years ago Germany was described, by not a few leading evangelical divines in our land, as an exemplary Christian country; but this is how our war mad Professor now speaks of her:—

For a century Germany has been filling the cup of her iniquity, and now God is letting his vultures loose upon her and her accomplices.

Dr. Smith's avenging Deity is very fond of his vultures, and never tires of employing them. The work they perform is most horrible and disgusting, the very thought of which fills one with unspeakable loathing; and standing face to face with it, at its very worst, we humbly venture to ask, would it not have been an infinitely worthier action on the part of God, if God there be, to have entrusted his angels of light and grace, for the century mentioned, with the mission of preventing Germany from filling that cup of iniquity, and of inducing her rather to fill to the very brim the cup of kindness and brotherly love? *Does the Professor really believe that his Christ died utterly in vain for Germany?*

J. T. LLOYD.

Keeping Hell Alight.

If all religions but one are certainly wrong, what is the chance of one being certainly right?—G. W. Foote.

CHRISTIANS are not all selfish, but they have an extraordinary passion for monopoly with regard to their religion. To associate with them is like dining with a man who has all the pudding and two spoons. In the present War they have done their best to transform the battle-fields into mission fields, and still sigh, like Alexander, for more worlds to conquer. Bible Societies have distributed sufficient copies of the Scriptures to build a garden city; the British and Foreign Bible Society alone boasting openly of a distribution of forty million copies. Tracts by the hundred tons have been circulated. Hosts of athletic young clergymen are acting as Army chaplains, and are drawing officers' salaries; whilst their clerical colleagues at home are exempted from military service, and are free to further their propaganda there. Thousands of pious laymen and women hand out tea and tracts at a safe distance from the fighting lines. With the object of winning the troops to religion, the clerical pill has been well covered with sugar. Cinemas, concert parties, and even chorus ladies and comedians have been used as lures for the religion of the Man of Sorrows. There is, however, a fly in the ointment. Despite all these blandishments, the fighting men do not display any great anxiety for their eternal welfare. Even compulsory church parades, and the persuasive powers of leather-lunged evangelists, have failed to penetrate the cheerful stoicism of the troops.

Finding that their propaganda produced but barren results, Christians have sought to mend matters by attempting to boycott all literature antagonistic to their Faith. To this end letters have been published in the newspapers, all bearing a strong family likeness. Here is a specimen printed in a recent issue of the *Daily Mail* :—

ANTI-CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

Sir,—Several of the rationalist societies are making a great effort to circulate among our sailors and soldiers all kinds of anti-Christian literature.

In a recent letter a chaplain writes: "In every big military centre the reading rooms have been almost flooded with anti-Christian literature." These reading rooms, as we should expect, are not those of the Church Army or the Y.M.C.A., which are doing so much for the true welfare of our men both at home and at the front. Nor has the Camps Library been at fault.

But there are the regimental institutes and on board ship and at the naval ports the corresponding organisations for the men in their hours of leisure. These are not under the control of the chaplains.

Commanding officers are fully aware of the importance of maintaining a high spiritual and moral tone among their men. Is it too much to hope that the Board of Admiralty and the Army Council may see fit to take action in this matter and issue such instructions to the authorities concerned as will have the effect of safeguarding our men from the malign influences which are being brought to bear upon them?

Oxford.

C. F. NOLLOTH.

This is a characteristic letter, and it will be well to examine the literature which Christians consider will maintain "a high spiritual and moral tone among their men." One religious tract, of which 50,000 copies have been distributed, bears the title, *What is there after Death?* and it preaches a hell of literal fire. Here is a passage which shows how far religion is in harmony with civilization :—

I wonder if you die unsaved whether you will see your believing wife after death? She, afar off, and happy with her Saviour; and you with the curse of unforgiven sin upon you in hell. And some of your children are in heaven, and others are on their way. And when you die your Christless death, will you for a moment see afar off your little ones with the light of heaven on their faces, and the peace of God upon their heads? Oh! these eternal separations! Families broken up for all eternity. Some in light and some in darkness.

Another tract, issued by the Central Bible Truth Depot, and sold in quantities for distribution, bates no jot of this fiery damnation. It bears the title, *Is Death in Battle a Passport to Heaven?* and has an illustrated cover. This is how it ministers to the "high spiritual and moral tone" among the sailors and soldiers :—

It is only through Him (Christ) you can be saved. You may go over the top and make the great sacrifice, or perish in some naval scrap, but if you die without Christ as your personal Saviour, you will die without mercy and without hope, and everlasting hell must be your portion. It is only true kindness to tell you so.

These tracts, which are selected at random from a large collection, raises once more the question not only of the value of the "high spiritual and moral tone" of the Christian religion, but also of the conduct of Christians themselves. These tracts voice emphatically very different views to those apologetic and invertebrate views put forward by artful defenders of the Faith in their contests with Rationalists. In controversy it is the fashion for the champions of Orthodoxy to explain smilingly that, in attacking the barbaric doctrine of hell-fire, the intellectuals are but flogging a dead horse. That horse, however, has a distressing habit of resur-

recting, and that there is plenty of kick left in that ancient animal is demonstrated by the literature issued for the benefit of the fighting men, and also in that issued for the instruction of the unsuspecting young.

Away from the fighting lines the clergy are daily endeavouring to put back the clock of civilization. High Churchmen are as reactionary as Catholics and Salvationists. In a booklet, bearing the imprint of Mowbray & Co., and entitled *The Blessed Sacrament; Drawn from the Writings of the Saints*, the old barbaric views are stated with frank realism. This publication, it should be borne in mind, is used for young people who are preparing for their first communion, and these ideas are forced upon them at the most impressionable time of their lives. This is the kind of thing the clergy still teach privately, while, in public, they flatter the "intellectuals" by a pretended retreat :—

We have about us, or, to speak more truly, we are ourselves immortal souls. We are beings who have once been born, but who now can never die. We came out of nothing, but we cannot go into nothing again. O God forbid, the merciful great God forbid, we should pass into nothing! When they who have led lives of pleasure, of covetousness, of self-willed sin—where such, I say, come to be upon their death-beds, they may perhaps feel that awful, impossible wish that they could pass into nothing; for to be nothing were better than to be in the strong grip of Satan, and the intolerable heats of hell. Dying sinners may feel that their immortality is to be an unendingness of pain, of remorse, of despair; and the deadness and the dumbness of passing into nothing, though it surely would make even a dying sinner shudder, would be more bearable than to think of than the life in hell—the living in fire, the feeding on fire, the breathing fire, the being clothed in fire, the thirsting for cool water where all, all is fire—above, beneath, on this side, on that side, a far-stretching country of burning fire.

Rationalists who imagine that one of the oldest and most barbarous religious dogmas is losing its hold on the national mind because the clergy appear to be giving the old savage ideas faint support in their public utterances will do well to remember that, while the objectionable dogmas are still taught throughout the Christian world, the protests of the humanitarians are sought to be boycotted. Wherever the clergy retain their power they still preach a hell of literal fire. In the Great Republic of the West, Billy Sunday, and other cultured evangelists, flame the fires of hell over a continent. Roman Catholics everywhere have never damped a solitary spark of their fiery damnation. The Church of England, particularly the High Churchmen, who form sixty per cent. of that body, hold forth on brimstone; and the Salvation Army, which caters for the least-educated of the community, includes hell in its trademark, "Blood and Fire." It is worthy of the followers of a creed, who, outraging the spirit of the age, pray for rain, and that bullets may not hit our soldiers on the battlefield.

How small, mean, and contemptible such a creed as Christianity appears, after all, in comparison with a great Pagan religion like Buddhism. Were Gotama Buddha to reappear upon the earth and see great nations believing in hell, devils, and eternal torture, he would wonder what blight had fallen upon the human intellect after the lapse of twenty-five centuries. Hear what the wise old Pagan said, as rendered by Edwin Arnold :—

Pray not! the darkness will not brighten! Ask
Nought from the silence, for it cannot speak!
Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!
Ah! Brothers, Sisters! seek—

Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes;
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought,
Each man his prison makes.

MIMNERMUS.

Rationalism in Ireland.

FRIDAY evening last I was just about to dine when my maid handed me some very foul writings—genuine excrescences of the human mind. They were an old copy of the *Freethinker* and a couple of brochures superstitiously entitled *Religion and the Child* and *The Mother of God*, all conceived in the most malignant spirit. I am quite unable to understand how such dangerous explosives found their way into this obscure little village of Ballybacktown. At first I determined to burn the lot; but, after reflection, it appeared to me that others less impregnable than myself might have been recipients as well. In these circumstances, it behoves me, who am blued and starched and stiffened with the blood of Jesus Christ Our Lord, which copiously squirts from the daily sacrifice and the sevenfold prayer of the Breviary, to throttle the serpent of infidelity and preserve the souls of my parishioners from being blasted. One oration at next Sunday's oblation will be quite sufficient. But let me illustrate to you the absolute unassailability of the Rock of Saint Peter in Ireland.

The first article in the copy of the *Freethinker* dogmatically states that every civilized country in the world is growing steadily less religious. Dogmatism is the hall-mark of insanity and falsehood. Here it proclaims falsehood. For the sons and daughters of Ireland are, simultaneously, contemporaneously, and at one and the same time, the most enlightened, virtuous, and progressive, and withal the most religious, people of Christendom at the present day. For authority higher and more axiomatic than my own, see Plutarch's *Lives of the Saints*. Permit me to take another choice specimen of unspiritualism; this time from *Religion and the Child*: "The priest hovers round the cradle like a needy Chancellor of the Exchequer speculating on the taxable capacity of a developing industry." What do you think Irish mothers will think of that? All I have to do is to quote that single passage at the next women's confraternity; it will refute itself most beautifully. But the choicest of the lot is the suggestion in *The Mother of God* (written by a fellow the name of Foote; now dead, and probably not in heaven, I thank the Lord!) that the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ through the instrumentality of Gabriel, who is represented as having blown into the bosom of her shift, and the carbonic acid gas of his breath, reaching her womb, caused the conception! This is the divinest blasphemy, Good God! how ill hast thou fashioned England. But all Protestant peoples exhale the aroma of damnation, as the *Leader*, an Irish broad-minded political journal, pointed out some time ago. I think I now understand more clearly the reason of the terrible moral depravity of you in Britain. As well as being absolute, however, it is comparative. It is set directly against the awful chastity of the Irish people, whom, no doubt, you ridicule as being squashed by our thumb and the Pope's great toe. Do you expect such immoral writings will sow perversion? No, no, no! You have to reckon with us, the unquestioned spiritual guides, who have only to motion our tongue a little, a very little, and—what do you think? Why, of course, *your papers won't be read*. In Ireland, God has his back up against the wall, while we, his appointed seconds, stand ready by with towels, basins, water, etc., whereby we add direction and perpetuity to his energy. Subject to our Principal's approval, your reign in Ireland is immeasurably remote. Just as Nano Nagle's knees were found at her death to be inflamed and ulcerated as a result of her almost perpetual kneeling to Mary, Bridget, and God, so will the knuckles of Ireland's soul and the souls of her children be found to be inflamed and ulcerated with an antagonistic passion of terrible significance when the chariots of infidelity pierce the Catholic bodyguard of the Lord, and inflict defeat upon the rewarder of victory.

The gentle readers of this twelve-page-for-twopence journal, without doubt, sneer at us in their self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency! nurtured on stuff that must render their intellectual stomach like a peacock's! Absurd. Even granted, however, that we are unacquainted with the mechanism of the heavens; that we still regard the stars as candles, the moon as an oil-lamp, the sun as an incan-

descent burner. What then? Does it matter? there is no perfectability of knowledge. On the other hand, there is perfection within the wing of the Catholic Church. The only perfect thing in the whole world is the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. During its offering we are spellbound; if, as the Cure d'Ars so learnedly pointed out, we were to realize its sublimity we should die. Do secular scraps of art attain to such beauty?

One other point. We in Ireland are, in our consanguinity with God, bound by the fetters of the same Communion to each other. Politically it may seem otherwise. In this connection I may mention that at present a great number of shops are displaying a post-card depicting a dozen men rowing a boat against the threatening swell of conscription. The rowers represent the various labour and political parties in Ireland; they are all pulling well together—why? *because the man at the rudder is a bishop*. And so in everything. Enter any house you please; you are confronted with a cheap impression of the Holy Face. Look round when the Angelus is ringing; people are doffing their hats and blessing themselves. Stand outside a chapel; you will see men on bicycles, in trams, cars, etc., invariably raise their hats. Enter our foremost colleges; all are supplied with chapels; the bedrooms are not without their saintly effigies—oh, I could go on recounting our many pieties *ad infinitum*. There are not many Catholic Irish in hell, I'll be bound; and any there are have crosses over their hearts.

At the beginning I mentioned a maid. She is a girl of forty-six, such being a reasonable age of innocence according to the Canon law. I think it as well to mention this fact in view of the minds of the readers of this paper.

REV. R. G. INGERSOLL, P.P.

Acid Drops.

We are used to the police acting in many capacities, and some of them very useful ones, but when they set themselves up as art censors it is time to call a halt. The Chief Constable of Huddersfield summoned a shopkeeper the other day for exhibiting "obscene" prints for sale. These "obscene" prints turned out to be copies of famous pictures, many of them in London and provincial public galleries. In support of the prosecution it was said that a policeman heard some youths making "improper remarks" about the pictures. The magistrate properly dismissed the case. We suggest that such delicate-minded policemen should seek some other occupation. They can hardly avoid running the risk of having their susceptible ears offended in their present one.

The Bishop of London laments that some of his clergy have to resign their benefices because they cannot face the winter. They have, he says, struggled along on £300 a year, and can do so no longer. Poor things! All we can say is that we should consider ourselves very lucky if *our* job brought us in anything like £300 a year. But we shall face the winter undismayed, and have no intention of "chucking it." But, then, we are only a freethinking journalist and lecturer, not a follower of Jesus and a preacher of "Blessed be ye poor."

"Sobriety has brought about family happiness all over the country," says the Bishop of London. The bachelor bishop ought to an authority on "family happiness."

Premises at Aldershot are to be opened as an hostel for soldiers' wives by the ubiquitous Salvation Army. Presumably, at the usual charges.

Poor old Providence was so busy counting the hair's of people's heads, and watching the fall of the sparrows, that he overlooked the entry of thieves into a Chesterfield church. The annexationists made off with a haul of silver plate.

Some of the German generals are almost as pious as the home-grown variety. A daily paper quotes General von Liebert as saying: "Let us pray to Heaven that the winter

may be long and bitter, so that the opposition shall be robbed of the joy of waging war." What an excellent thing it is that prayer is not answered!

There is to be a new religious order for women called "The Order of Evangelist Women." It appears to be an attenuated copy of some of the Roman Catholic orders, and it may even be engineered by Catholics, for there is a deal of subterranean work being done by Roman Catholics just now. But it is a thousand pities that these women cannot find a better outlet for their energies than this apeing of mediæval folly.

The New York *Truthseeker* has a smart hit at the Catholics in the following: "There is considerable talk about the Pope's charities. The Pope receives more charity than he dispenses."

Christ said, "Swear not at all," but Christians swear habitually. The latest form of oath is one imposed on Civil Servants. Does it not lend point to the ironical remark that Christ was the only Christian?

The clergy have a keen eye for finance. When they go into the Army as chaplains they get officers' pay; but when they want laymen to help them, the boot is on the other leg. An advertisement, asking "Churchmen to do their bit," contains the careful statement, "Adequate allowances where necessary." No sum is mentioned, but let us hope it is on a more generous scale than that accorded to vergers, bell-ringers, choirboys, organ-blowers, church-cleaners, and other workers in the Lord's vineyard.

The bigots in Wolverhampton have scored a victory by preventing cinema houses being opened on Sunday. The Chief Constable said that there was need for some form of entertainment to take the young people off the streets, but the Sabbatarians, led by the Rev. J. H. Veal, had their way, and licences were granted only for such places as were opened for helping in the prosecution of the War. Thus, so long as a Sunday concert is held to carry on a war, the conscience of the Wolverhampton bigots approves. If it is intended to give an evening's entertainment, and with no thought of war, the Wolverhampton Christian conscience disapproves. Of all the fungoid moral growths the world possesses, commend us to the modern Christian conscience.

And now let us point out that the action of the Wolverhampton Mayor and magistrates is quite arbitrary. They have no power to grant a licence, or to refuse one, for any entertainment, admission to which is by money or by tickets sold by moneys. Anyone can apply for a summons against those concerts "licenced" by the magistrates. They are illegal. Their illegality is determined by Statute, and it is ridiculous to think that a peddling mayor and a few chapel-ridden J.P.'s can override a Statute. They can ignore it, and that is what usually occurs. But if the picture-house folk in Wolverhampton wish to test the matter, we advise them to take one of two courses—either apply for summonses against all places opened on Sunday, or open their own places and tell the mayor and the justices to do their best—or worst.

Harry Lauder, the comedian, is rapidly becoming a pillar of the Kirk. He has presented an organ to a Glasgow Church in memory of his son.

Hero-worship is a wonderful thing. £94 was paid at an auction in Peterborough for a letter written by Robert Burns. This sum of money paid to Burns during his life would have eased his anxieties and prolonged his life.

A newspaper headline: "Archangel Advance." It has nothing to do with the reappearance of the angels who mobilized at Mons.

James McGranahan, Moderator, writes to the *Belfast News Letter* that he has been much distressed on observing the amount of crops beaten down by heavy rains, and thinks there is urgent need for a day of prayer for more favourable weather, so that the harvest may be garnered. But if God controls the weather, what is the use of praying to him to alter his arrangements? Of course, one petitions a Cabinet Minister, but that is because we assume that he is acting in ignorance, and the purpose of the petition is to enlighten him. Is that what this Presbyterian Moderator means by his day of prayer? Are we to remind God Almighty that he is making a sad hash of the weather? If so, why not say as much honestly and boldly?

While on the subject of prayer, we note that the Bishop of London says it is remarkable that the Allied successes should have occurred after the Members of Parliament had marched to church to pray. Anyone but Bishop Ingram would have reflected that ever since the War opened all the Churches have been praying for victory. And on the opening day of this year there was a National Day of Prayer—followed by the German advance on Paris. Seeing that we have had a succession of days of prayer, it is pretty safe to say that peace will follow. One can always get an answer to prayers for peace or war, or rain or sunshine—if one waits long enough. But the Bishop of London is evidently determined to retain his reputation for stupidity.

The Temperance Council of the Christian Churches, which includes representatives of the Government and Fancy religions, is launching a new crusade against the use of alcohol, and there are no less than nine points in its programme. Not any of the nine deals with the use of "Communion port" in places of worship.

Writing on "Young Padres," a contributor to the *Daily Mail* declares that soldiers do not want young chaplains, and that people at home do not want them either. This is not a compliment to the hefty young parsons who are too proud to fight, and of whom there are many thousands in the country.

Bishop Mitchinson, who died recently at the age of eighty-five, was formerly Bishop of the Windward Isles. It is a pity that the rest of the Bench of Bishops cannot be shipped to the vacant See.

Religious folk have a way of understanding one another. Charged as an Army absentee, Frederick Cooting told the Bristol Bench that he did not belong to this country, but to a heavenly country where Jesus was; his sister maintained him, as it was God's will. The Christian Bench fined Cooting £2, and handed him over to a military escort. Before this, a Christian Tribunal refused the man exemption on the ground that his conscientious objection was not real.

Two massive crosses have been smashed to pieces in St. Mary's Churchyard, Slough. Providence seems powerless against robust Protestants.

"It has pleased the Almighty Disposer of events to grant increasing victory to the cause of right." This is how the *Daily Mail* preaches primitive superstition in the form of leading articles.

According to the *Daily News* of October 4, Judge Rentoul has called down the wrath of the City Corporation on his head for saying, among other things, "how much the clergy had drunk" at a dinner given by the Lord Mayor. We quite see that is a very awkward revelation. We wonder how much they did drink! And who were the clergy in question?

Some impose upon the world that they believe that which they do not; others more in number make themselves believe that they believe, not being able to penetrate into what it is to believe.—*Montaigne*.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 13, Swansea; October 27, Nuneaton.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 13, Maesteg; October 20, Southampton; November 3, Manchester; November 10, Sheffield; December 1, Swansea.
- W. H. HICKS.—Thanks for contribution to Fund. We are flattered by your thinking that "few could have undertaken what you have done and are doing." On that we can only repeat we have done our best. But the new rise in wages and in the price of paper looks as though it will prove the "last strain." It will be disappointing to have to alter the price of the *Freethinker* after having held out so long, but we can see that possibility coming nearer, unless a more promising outlook reveals itself during the next two or three months.
- J. W. D.—A most interesting communication, but we do not see how we can comment on it publicly without disclosing the whereabouts of our informant. We shall find it useful nevertheless.
- E. LANE.—Sorry we have no figures to hand on the matter. We presume Prison Chaplains are appointed by the Home Office.
- G. GROVE.—No doubt the text, "There was war in heaven," will prove pleasant reading to some of our khaki parsons. When the present War is over, they will then be able to sing "There is a happy land" with some amount of feeling.
- F. GRIFFITHS.—You say if the Freethinkers who attend your meetings were "strictly veracious," they would endorse your views. That strikes us as rather "tall." The Freethinkers might retort if you were less credulous and more critical, you would endorse theirs. We hope to visit Merthyr soon.
- J. H. B.—Thanks for reminder. Will use at an early date.
- L. CAMPBELL.—Presumably the book you refer to is Dadson's *Evolution and Religion*. The only way a copy could be obtained would be through some second-hand dealer. Yes, we are proud of the way in which our readers are supporting the paper.
- A. ATHERTON.—Your appreciative letter is encouraging reading. We do not suppose any of our present readers would object to an extra penny on the paper, but we desire to avoid, so long as is possible, any obstacle to our getting new ones. And they are coming along splendidly.
- MRS. M. RUPP.—We still think leisure is essential to well-being, but what is one to do? There is so much to be done, and these are not the times when one can get all the help obtainable under other conditions. So we must just peg away. We shall last long enough to see something done, and that is a consolation.
- H. ORGAN.—Pleased you find our present staff of writers so acceptable. We are also proud of them, and we have many more in reserve.
- NORTH LONDON READER.—Pleased to know you so much enjoyed the discussion between Mr. Palmer and Mr. Muir at the St. Pancras Reform Club. We are informed that these meetings now commence at 7.30. This evening the discussion is between Mr. A. Eager and Mr. Friedberg.
- 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.
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."
- 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, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

The Manchester Branch made a good start with its winter's work on Sunday last, and at the close of the afternoon lecture the Secretary reported the accession of five new members. Unfortunately, the parcel of literature ordered for the day was delayed in transit, and had not reached Manchester in time for the meetings. This was one of the consequences of the War. Letters and parcels arrive nowadays

any time, and anyhow. The Secretary, Mr. H. Black, of 446 Great Cheetham Street East, Higher Broughton, Salford, announced his intention to double the Branch membership, and we hope he will succeed. A pleasing feature of the meetings was the large number of ladies present, who followed the lectures with keenness and appreciation.

To-day (Oct. 13) Mr. Cohen pays another visit to South Wales, and lectures at Swansea. The meetings will be held in the Dockers' Hall; afternoon at 3, evening at 7 o'clock. Swansea was the starting point of the present South Wales campaign, and we have no doubt the audiences will be quite up to the usual excellent level.

"The Poisoning of Our Troops" is the heading to a letter in the *Church Times*. At first we thought it had to do with another "German atrocity," but, on reading the letter, we found the troops were being "poisoned" by Freethought literature. Thus a corporal writes from France:—

A lot of sceptical literature has been knocking about lately. I can't quite make out where it comes from, but the chance hold of it and pass it on. As a rule they are only to get something to read, and one can't be too careful of stories. The result is a lot of argument about the Bible and the Bible. One fellow told me that the Bible in Christianity had been picked up from the streets and put together by the Church to exploit the credulity of the people. Another told me it was proved there was no such person as Christ.

We feel awfully guilty, and wonder whether Dora has any application here. There is something about coming disaffection among the troops, and, curiously, nothing about poisoning them. So we must keep on our poisonous course. And if our readers send more soldiers' addresses we shall continue sending out our free parcels of "Poison" all warranted to kill—something.

Owing to delay in the post (the report did not reach this office until Wednesday morning) we were unable to report last week a gathering of the Newcastle Branch on "Bradlaugh Sunday." Mr. Martin Weatherburn, a sturdy old veteran of the Bradlaugh era, read a paper on "Charles Bradlaugh," which was much appreciated by both the older and newer members. We remember Mr. Weatherburn ourselves some twenty five years ago, when he was then an "old hand," and we are pleased to see him as interested as ever in the cause. A new member was made, who, being in the Navy, took away with him a supply of literature for the benefit of his comrades.

We have received a number of addresses of soldiers to which to send free copies of *Christianity and Slavery* (paid for by two of our readers), and these have been sent. But we have still copies available for this purpose.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (October 13) in the Gem Cinema Palace, Maesteg. We hope to hear that the hall is crowded both afternoon and evening. This Branch is putting its back into the work, and deserves all encouragement.

A meeting of the Glasgow Branch will be held in the Good Templars' Hall, 122 Ingram Street, to-day (Oct. 13), at 12 noon. The business is important, and a good attendance is requested.

Mr. F. E. Willis lectures at the Repertory Theatre to-day (October 13), at 7 p.m., on the subject of "The Theory of Immortality." We hope that Birmingham friends will make it a point of being present, and, if possible, bring a Christian with them.

We are asked to announce that the *Freethinker* and all Freethought literature can be obtained in Glasgow at the Herald League Rooms, 94 George Street, and at Jail Square, on Sundays. Glasgow readers are also asked to note that the *Freethinker* can now be obtained from the "Popular" newspaper in St. Enoch Square—a very central position.

As an example of what can be done, take the following. Our old friend, Mr. T. Robertson, writes:—

I induced a little shop, the busiest for its size in Glasgow, to take two dozen copies last week and display them. They were displayed to such purpose that they were sold out in little more than a day. I have ordered three dozen this week, and will go on increasing the order until it finds equilibrium.

That is the kind of letter that makes one face all difficulties with a cheerful face.

The Pioneer Press has been unable to discharge all the orders received for the editor's photograph owing to their being out of print. A fresh supply has now been received, but those who have already ordered will understand the cause of the delay.

We have in the Press, and hope to soon publish a small volume on *Woman and Christianity*, by Mr. Cohen, a companion work to his *Christianity and Slavery*. This will be followed by a new pamphlet from the pen of Mr. Mann, which will, we are sure, be welcome to our readers. We cannot give a date for their issue, as the shortage of labour is more acute than ever, and one can be certain only of disappointments. But we shall hurry them on as much as possible.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

THE purpose of this Fund was fully explained in our issue for September 1. It is essentially a War Fund, designed to meet a part of the very heavy extra expenses incurred by increase in the cost of paper, rise in wages, and extra cost of production generally. It is not anticipated that the need for financial help of this kind will continue beyond the War period, but under prevailing conditions help is inevitable. A consolatory and encouraging feature of the situation is the generosity and readiness with which that help has been given.

Sixth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £348 8s. 3d. W. Bailey, £1. D. Watt, 2s. 6d. J. G., 10s. F. Greyton, 10s. R. B. Harrison, 5s. Gamaliel Serviar, 2s. 3d. J. H. Gastrell, 10s. G. Scott, 10s. J. H. B. (Glasgow), £1. J. Hammond, £1. J. G. Newton, £1 1s. A. Beale, 5s. K. Palmer (Ipswich), 2s. G. Grove, 3s. R. Terroni, 12s. 6d. A. Atherton (second sub.), 4s. 9d. Sir Thomas Wentworth, £1. J. C. (Manchester), £2. Elsie Organ, 2s. A Socialist, 2s. Dogo, 5s. J. W. Lloyd (Portsmouth), £1. C. Heaton, 2s. 6d. A. W. B., £5. A. K. Kemp, 5s. C. F. Simpson, £1 1s. H. Wheate, 5s. Anti-Mythology, 10s. H. Silverstein, 10s. J. Capon, 5s. F. C., 5s. Blackburn, 3s. A. C. Bell, £2. R. Moore, 5s. T. S. Roberts, 2s. 6d. A. H. Deacon, 5s. G. West, 1s. W. Ambrose, 2s. A. Jones, 5s. "Leeds," 10s. A. Penny, 3s.

Per Secretary, Manchester Branch:—Mr. and Mrs. Mountain, 2s. 6d. Mr. W. H. Harrap, 5s. Mrs. Bayfield, 5s. Mr. D. Mapp, 5s. Mr. W. C. Maurice, £1. Mr. J. W. Shaw, 2s. Mr. Tom Taylor, 2s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. Bryan, 10s. Mr. J. Booth, 5s. "Manchester," 5s. Mr. and Mrs. Emery, 4s. "Unattached," 2s. 6d.

Per R. Chapman (South Shields):—J. Hanson, 2s. J. H. Carr, 5s. J. Fothergill, 2s. J. Richards, 2s. J. W. Arnett, 5s. J. W. F., 2s. 6d. J. Chapman, 2s. 6d. Total, £373 11s. 6d.

A three shilling Postal Order in the above list was received without name of sender. We have, therefore, gone by the postmark and acknowledged it under "Blackburn."

A Search for the Soul.

XIV.

(Continued from p. 525.)

FROM the somewhat misleading work, entitled *Man and the Universe*, I make two or three more extracts before consigning it to oblivion. In the first of these the writer, Sir Oliver Lodge, says:—

To suppose that we know and understand the universe, to suppose that we have grasped its main outlines, that we realize pretty completely not only what is in it, but the still more stupendous problem of what is not and cannot be in it—as do some of our gnostic (self styled "agnostic") friends—is a presumptuous exercise of limited intelligence, only possible to a certain very practical and useful order of brain, which has good solid work of a common-place kind to do in the world, and has been restricted in its outlook, let us say by Providence, in order that it may do that one thing and do it well (p. 102).

This choice sample of "high-falutin" is not very complimentary to Sir Oliver's friends whose work lies in other departments of science, but whose labours have not led them into the Christian or Spiritistic folds. With regard, however, to the problems as to what is in the Universe and what is not in it, Sir Oliver appears to have solved those problems himself. Not being an Agnostic "of limited intelligence," nor restricted by Providence in his outlook, he has settled the matter off-hand, once for all. In the first category he has placed Life (which he calls a Vital principle) and Mind, as together forming an immaterial entity called the soul, the latter being quite distinct from the brain and endowed with immortality. In the same category he has placed the brain as the material organ which carries out the behests of the soul and acts as its "servant"; but the brain as an organ that generates thought he has relegated to the second category—"what is *not* in the Universe." Having settled these matters to his own satisfaction, he may, perhaps, think it "presumptuous" that the justness of his classification should ever be called in question. But whether this be so or not, he certainly knows what organ must be employed to carry out such a purpose, for he speaks of "a certain very practical order of brain." This is an admission, though perhaps made inadvertently, that it is the cerebral organ which actually thinks, and simple common sense tells us that a phantom without material organs could not possibly do so. Sir Oliver says again:—

A purely spiritual agency may be active.....but the only evidence of its existence that can be adduced is the manifestation of that activity through matter..... Dreams, visions, thoughts, are enabled to enter our present consciousness solely by some action on, or action in, the brain.....It by no means follows that mind is itself dependent on matter, as we know it (pp. 160, 161).

Here we have such intangible things as impalpable moving pictures (assumed to have been generated by an imaginary indwelling Soul or Spirit) which are declared to possess the power of acting *on* or *in* the brain, and so entering our consciousness. One can conceive many kinds of abnormal things, but one cannot conceive a thought or an idea as having to act in some way upon the brain which produced it before it becomes known to the person to whom the brain belongs. A new or a definite thought, once it has arisen, may in a logical brain give rise to other thoughts; but the so-called "mind" is only a name for every kind of thought which arises from the action of the cerebral organ. One can

imagine vibrations of luminiferous ether, say from a picture hanging in a room, to impinge on the retina of the eye, be transmitted along the optic nerve to the visual sensorium of the brain, and there become known to consciousness as a reflection of the real picture; but no rational person can conceive an immaterial nonentity, even if called a "soul" or "spirit," as creating or originating a picture of anything whatever.

It is not at all suprising, then, that Sir Oliver says (p. 94): "We have no glimmering conception of the process by which mental activity operates on the matter of the brain." Of course we have not, and we never shall have; for "mental activity" can no more operate on the brain than the chimes of a clock can operate on the striking apparatus which produced them. Mental activity is but another name for the thoughts or ideas generated by the cerebral energy and the brain-cells, whose combined action gives rise to all the states of consciousness which collectively are called the Mind. The Dualistic statement that thoughts or ideas cannot enter our consciousness unless they first "interact" with the brain is really a tacit admission that these thoughts or ideas were brought into being by the cerebral organ itself.

Leaving Sir Oliver and his book, I turn once more to Dr. Maudsley's lectures on "Body and Mind." Speaking of the influence of the blood in the production of insanity, that eminent physiologist says:—

Poverty and vitiation of blood may certainly play a weighty part in producing mental, as they do in producing other nervous disorders. Lower the supply of blood to the brain below a certain level, and the power of thinking is abolished; the brain will then no more do mental work than a water-wheel will move the machinery of the mill when the water is lowered so as not to touch it.....If the state of the blood be vitiated by reason of some poison bred in the body, or introduced into it from without, the mental functions may be seriously deranged. We are able, indeed, by means of the drugs at our command, to perform all sorts of experiments on what is called the mind: we can suspend its action for a time by chloral or chloroform, we can exalt its functions by small doses of opium or moderate doses of alcohol; we can pervert them, producing an artificial delirium, by the administration of large enough doses of belladonna and Indian hemp. We can positively do more experimentally with the functions of the mind-centres in the brain than we can do with those of any other organ of the body. When these centres are exalted in consequence of a foreign substance introduced into the blood, it cannot be doubted that some physical effect is produced on the nerve-element, which is the condition of the increased activity.

To realize the full significance of the foregoing statements, we have but to assume for the moment that there is in the human organism a mental entity quite distinct from the brain. When opium or alcohol is taken, the stimulant passes from the stomach and intestine into the blood, and in the course of circulation enters the brain; the same is the case with belladonna and other drugs, which all produce well-known effects upon the cerebral organ. The point to be remembered, however, is that the blood does not, and cannot, come into contact with the mental entity, supposing such an entity to exist; for, not containing material blood vessels, the circulation cannot reach it; yet it is asserted by all Dualists that it is this mental entity—that is to say, the "mind"—which is affected by the drugs. As a simple matter of fact, the only organ acted upon is the brain; the mind, as already stated, being merely a collective name for the phenomena resulting from its various functions. Here we have a clear proof that the Soul or Mind, as an "entity," is purely imaginary.

In his work, *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, 1886, Dr. Maudsley says:—

One of the effects of opium is the pleasing state of exaltation of thought and feeling which it engenders.It seems to impart a genial vital warmth to the whole being, suffusing the mind with expansive sentiments, stimulating the imagination to ethereal flights, giving large and lofty sweep to the projects of the intellect, and even expanding the natural forms of thought.A still more acute sense of intense mental illumination is produced in some minds by the inhalation of nitrous oxide gas, commonly known as laughing gas. This stimulating effect was experienced by Sir Humphrey Davy, who, when he first inhaled it, was astonished at the apparent exaltation of his mental powers, whereby difficulties of thought seemed to vanish as by magic, and no subject seemed too difficult of comprehension.

Here the reference to the mind is, of course, to the brain and nerve-element. The nitrous oxide gas, mentioned in the last paragraph, entered the blood through the lungs, in which twofold organ the capillaries containing blood are separated from the air-cells by such thin and delicate walls that oxygen contained in the air within those cells passes into the blood, and waste matters in the blood pass into the air about to be exhaled. The process is the same in the case of chloroform, which produces temporary unconsciousness by stopping for a time the functioning of the brain. The poison gas now in use on the Western Front enters the blood in the same way.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be concluded.)

Intellectual Dishonesty.

MANY of us who either grew up as Freethinkers, or became so at an early period of our lives, have probably been puzzled by the spectacle of apparently clever people adhering to orthodox Christian dogmas which seem to us manifestly absurd. I do not refer to conscious hypocrisy, such as is shown by those who continue to profess religion, though they do not believe in it, for the sake of livelihood or advancement. That is common enough, and needs no explanation. But many of us must have been acquainted with persons of known integrity, perhaps relations or friends of our own, who were distinctly above the average intellectual level, and yet who accepted in the religious sphere, without apparent hesitation, contradictions and absurdities which they would have laughed at in any other department of life. In our youth, the spectacle of such people puzzles us, and may even lead us, if we are ultra-sceptical, to ask ourselves if possibly they are right and we are wrong after all, and if there is not perhaps some grand, final, conclusive reason for religious belief which we are too dense to see. As we grow a little older, we begin to find the real solution, which is nothing nearly so sensational.

Love of truth is not the only motive by which human beings are actuated; and in most of us it is not even the chief motive. All are gifted with a certain degree of curiosity, which awakens on appropriate occasions; but with most, those occasions are rare, and become rarer as life goes on, and as the motive of curiosity is stifled by the successful competition of other motives, such as love of ease, love of gain, and so forth. It follows that most people end by "minding their own business," in the narrowest sense, and accepting religion as they accept the Bank of England—as something not worth their attacking or defending; something which presumably has a reason, because it is there, and which only fools and fanatics excite themselves about. There remains that minority of the human race who are cursed with an incapacity for merely "minding their

own business"—the idealists, who cannot divest themselves of an interest in beauty, goodness, and truth. Here, at least, you might think would be found intellectual honesty. Not at all! It is precisely among idealists that the love of truth meets with its last and most insidious competitors. They are, on the one hand, Puritanism, and on the other, the artistic temperament.

By Puritanism I mean the intrusion of moral criteria into the non-moral sphere—the resort to conceptions of what *ought* to be to answer questions of what *is*. It is exemplified in the epigram of that otherwise most un-Puritan personage, Voltaire: "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him"; in Rousseau's proscription of Atheism as dangerous to the State; in Kant's insistence on the necessity of believing in God, free-will, and immortality as postulates of ethics, in spite of their admitted undemonstrability by pure reason. It is at the bottom of much modern opposition to Free-thought. It amounts to saying, "If there is no God, if all my actions are predetermined, and if death is the end of me, why should I behave well?" Those who use such arguments would probably be annoyed if one were to ask them if it was true that they only behaved well for the sake of future reward, or for fear of future punishment. To tell the truth, they are generally, when they reason thus, thinking not of their own conduct, but of other people's. *They*, no doubt, can be trusted to be virtuous for virtue's sake; but the other fellow round the corner? Their poorer neighbours? The ignorant working-classes? No, it really will not do to tell *them* there is no hell; you don't know what they will be up to! The attitude is one of unconscious Pharisaism.

Opposed in one sense to Puritanism, but in another sense allied with it against genuine Free-thought, is the artistic temperament. As Puritanism intrudes moral criteria, so this intrudes æsthetic criteria into the decision of questions of mere matter-of-fact. The artist, by the nature of his calling, is accustomed to regard only the surface, the appearance of things. Unless he is also more than an artist, that is what he will regard. The world for him is a colour-scheme, a pattern, a play of sounds; the interpretation of it is more or less indifferent. This is more particularly the case with that development of art called Impressionism, with its corollaries, Post-Impressionism and Futurism. It is the aim of this school to reproduce impressions, or appearances, in such a way as to suggest as little else as possible; if any reality is suggested, it is better that it should be as absurd, as remote from common sense, as it can be. This, at least, seems to be the maxim of the later exponents of this development. So long as the effect is picturesque, what does truth matter?

So long as the Post-Impressionist confines himself to painting pictures or producing other forms of art, he need not detain us. It is otherwise when we are offered a Post-Impressionist philosophy as a serious answer to Free-thought. This is, in effect, what Mr. G. K. Chesterton has done. To those who read his writings with an eye for their motive and meaning, it is evident that he suffers to excess from the artistic temperament. That, for one thing, is why Mr. Chesterton is chronically incapable of telling the truth about his opponents, whether in religion or politics. The world for him is primarily a picturesque pageant or spectacle. To explain it, or anything in it, rationally is to spoil the pageant. To seek to order it more rationally is equally to spoil the pageant. If you do either of these things, you are a spoil-sport, and he revenges himself by caricaturing you as a clown or a booby. Thomas Hardy is a "village atheist, brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." Reformers of all sorts are wealthy and corrupt

Jews, who aim at adding to the oppression of the poor, and taking away beer and battles and other amusements.

The disease from which Mr. Chesterton suffers is very well epitomized in one of his slighter works—the novel, *The Man who was Thursday*. This book exhibits the Post-Impressionist view of the world in an extreme form. Even the descriptions show it: sunset skies "full of feathers, and of feathers that almost brushed the face"; the Thames "like a stream of literal fire winding under the vast caverns of a subterranean country"; animals in the Zoo "like devils laughing and sneezing and blowing their devilish noses"—all this is the merest decadence. But there is more in it than this. The story as appears from its finish, is meant to be an allegory; and the point of the allegory, if words have any meaning is that God and the Devil are one and the same person, and that what we call evil was created on purpose that men might have the fun (as Mr. Chesterton thinks) of fighting and conflict. The world is full of suffering and agony, purposely staged by a God who eggs on the combatants to mutual slaughter; and Mr. Chesterton finds it very jolly.

I do not suppose he believes this, though it is what he seems to say in this book. He is probably enough of a sceptic at bottom to believe anything by an effort of will. Well, scepticism is all very well, and belief in some things is necessary if we are ever to act. If a man told me that he knew nothing at all, not even that two and two were four, I should call him over-modest. But if he told me that, though he knew nothing at all, yet, as he must believe something, he had decided to believe that two and two were five, I should put him down as a joker or a liar. Such is really the position of those who try to rear a superstructure of theology on a basis of scepticism.

Those only have complete intellectual honesty who are prepared to apply the same criteria of truth or falsehood to religious beliefs as they apply to their beliefs about everyday affairs. It is remarkable how few are prepared to do so.

ROBERT ARCH.

Correspondence.

MERCURY AND SALVARSAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was amazed to read in Mr. Palmer's article, "The Dark Diamonds of the Earth," the statement that mercury, as a treatment for venereal disease, "proves detrimental to the patient," and that therefore the German arsenical preparation, salvarsan, had been substituted as a "toxic substance which would be absorbed by the microbe, but not by the tissues of the sufferer from the disease." Mr. Palmer adds a reference to "this preparation, now available in Britain under the name of Kharsivan."

Now, apart from the fact that, salvarsan being a German secret, Kharsivan cannot possibly be described as the same thing, Mr. Palmer appears to have transferred the admitted element of danger from salvarsan to mercury. Many doctors fight shy of salvarsan, Kharsivan, and all the other imitations on account of their danger, and practically every member of the profession has now returned to the old mercury treatment. Where salvarsan is used, mercury is used as well, doubtless so that a smaller quantity of the more dangerous item may be used, and also because mercury is recognized as a far surer remedy, if slower. In fact, salvarsan only appears to clear up the symptoms suddenly and superficially, but to be able to effect no permanent cure.

Major J. E. Lane, a well-known syphilitic expert, after experience of several hundred cases, wrote to the *Lancet* on November 11, 1916, that he had decided to abandon the use of Kharsivan "for ever." He had experience of its causing

toxic symptoms and death. As to salvarsan itself, several hundred fatal cases have been recorded by Gaucher and Mentberger.

B. E. KIDD,

Secretary British Union for Abolition of Vivisection, 32 Charing Cross Road, S.W.

The Vanished Fairies.

In France the woods are green and gold,
The sun smiles on the hills,
And flowers open as of old
By little twinkling rills.
All birds sing sweetly in the dell—
And other things I cannot tell.

There are no fairies to be seen,
In bush, or brake, or field.
I've searched the land where'r I've been
But none have been revealed.
Through woods the rabbits run pell-mell—
And other things I cannot tell.

A fairy banquet I have found,
No fairies there I spied,
The tiny cups lay on the ground,
And dishes tossed aside,
I wonder what had there befel—
And other things I cannot tell.

Yet still I hope, a day will break
When they will all return,
And all will then their pleasure take
For which I'm sure they yearn.
Their song will ring out like a bell—
Of other things I cannot tell.

In France the woods are green and gold,
The sun smiles on the hills,
And flowers open as of old
By little twinkling rills
Come fairies soon, let music swell—
To drown the things I cannot tell.

WILLIAM REPTON.

OUR ORIENTAL BIBLE.

This oriental Bible is at utter variance with the vital beliefs, the political and social tendencies, and the ethical aspirations, of the present age. Science has destroyed its naive supernaturalism; reason has placed its personal God—the magnified, non-natural man—in his own niche in the world's Pantheon; philosophy has carried us far beyond its primitive conceptions of human society; our morality has outgrown its hardness and insularity, however we may still appreciate its finer ejaculations; even the most pious Christians, with the exception of a few "peculiar" people, only pay a hypocritical homage to its clearest injunctions; and the higher development of decency and propriety makes us turn from its crude expressions with a growing sense of disgust, while the progress of humanity fills us more and more with a loathing of its frightful wars and ruthless massacres, its tales of barbaric cruelty, and its crowning infamy of an everlasting hell.—G. W. Foote, "The Book of God."

Obituary.

Manchester Branch N.S.S.—It is with regret I have to announce the death of Mr. Richard Hollins, which took place, after only two days' illness, on September 28. He was with us on the previous Sunday Ramble, apparently in the best of health, and his death caused quite a shock to our members, amongst whom he was highly respected. His special request for a Secular Service was duly carried out at the Manchester Crematorium on Thursday, October 3.—H. BLACK, Hon. Sec.

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 PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Laurence Housman, "The Salt of the Earth."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): "Rationalists have everything to gain and nothing to lose from the Victory of the Socialist and Labour Movement." Affirmative, Percy Friedberg; Negative, A. Eagar.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval): 7.30, Adjourned General Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. F. E. Willis, "The Theory of Immortality."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Important Business.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, M. Camille Huysmans, "The International."

MAESTEG BRANCH N. S. S. (The Gem Cinema, Maesteg): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 2.30, "The Fight for Freedom"; 7, "The Value of the Bible in National Life."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, Mr. Stewart.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, Swansea): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "God and the State"; 7, "The New World and the Old Faith."

GENTLEMAN desires to spend a day or two in December with a Freethinking Family, in or near London, to avoid the usual Christian Orgies.—Reply, stating terms, to X. J. Z., c/o Editor, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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