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Views and Opinions.

Thomas Paine and the League of Nations.

"One hundred and twenty-nine years ago Thomas Paine—"Paine the Pioneer" he was fittingly called by G. W. Foote—said that if France, England, and America could form an alliance, other countries would soon fall into line, and a "Pacific Republic" be established which might put an end to the era of war. Paine was not actually the first to propose such an international Court of Appeal, but he was the first to make his appeal direct to the *people* of the world. That was really Paine's great and unforgivable offence. He wrote on behalf of the people, and he appealed to the people. Had his heresies, religious and political, been published in expensive volumes, and written in a style addressed only to the cultured few, much would have been forgiven him. But to say to the *people*, the Bible was a sham, and the Church the paid policeman of vested interests; to say that monarchy was an anachronism when it was not worse; to say that war was insanity and the oppression of one nation by another a crime; to say all this, and to say it in such a way that everyone who read could understand, that was the unforgivable offence. And it has been the unpardonable sin of Freethought ever since. It sees humanity, not as a conglomeration of inevitably warring elements; it sees it as a whole, in which the vital interests of each part, whatever ignorance and avarice may say to the contrary, is bound up with the interests of the whole.

Time's Whirligig.

Between the date of the publication of the *Rights of Man* and ourselves there stretches over a century and a quarter. Wars have not ceased; they have become progressively more costly and more brutal. Alliances between nations have at their best been made as a means of evading war, and at their worst as a method of waging it. To-day, if Paine could revisit Paris, he would find a gathering of delegates from all parts of the world engaged in discussing this same project of a League of Nations—an idea that only avarice, greed, and suspicion prevent being put into operation. He would have found as the mouthpiece of that idea the head of a Republic that Paine himself played no small part in establishing, and whose Declaration of Independence was partly drafted by his own hand. Thomas

Paine is not thought of in connection with the League of Nations, and the newspapers seldom mention his name. It would not do; and the world is habitually careless of, when not deliberately cruel to, its pioneers. Instead of recognition, we find it chronicled that President Wilson is a member of a Church; that the idea is the fruit of Christian teaching; that organized Christianity is making its influence felt at last. And this of a world that, like a drunkard promising temperance the morning after a heavy debauch, has been driven to the idea of a League of Nations from sheer reaction against a four years' orgy of blood and brutality, and against which no single Church in Christendom has raised an effective word of protest.

The Logic of Facts. * * *

In point of numbers, the peoples of Europe are overwhelmingly Christian. In point of public display, there is no other public institution that presents such a display of buildings to the eye as does organized Christianity—unless it be the public-house. Naturally, then, if the Christians of the world had been averse to war, the four years' horror we have passed through could never have occurred. It is useless drugging our minds with the phrase "a just War." What Paine said of religions applies to wars. If every nation is left to judge of its own war there is no war that is wrong; if they are to judge of each other's wars there is no war that is right. Broadly, the world that sees a war has made that war. If a people has the Government it deserves, a world has the wars it creates. Wars are made in times of peace, for it is in times of peace that deeds are done, passions created, and principles taught that have no logical ultimate but in war. And, therefore, the Churches cannot escape their full share of the responsibility for the European War. For whatever else the Church is it is a teaching institution; that is its chief, almost its sole function. The character of the teaching is beside the point for the moment. The function of the Church is to teach. It has been exercising that function for many centuries. The value of its teaching is seen in nearly twenty-five millions killed and wounded in four years fighting in Christian Europe. * * *

The Failure of the Churches.

Some time ago Viscount Bryce sarcastically remarked to those who were advocating a League of Nations that the nucleus for such an organization already existed in the Christian Church. Certainly the Christian Church exists in every European country, and exerts great power in each. But for what is it powerful? Can anyone point to a single movement of a humanitarian character that has ever been forced upon the nations by the Christian Church? The Churches cannot combine for even sectarian ends; the only operative League of Nations ever formed by the Christian Church was the Crusades, and the object of that was not to end war but to make war. And in this War the only unity displayed by the Christian Churches was of anything but a humanitarian character. When Belgium

was devastated, when the *Lusitania* was sunk, our newspapers quoted yards of approval from the German clergy. When the blockade set up by the Allies meant the slow starvation of enemy women and children our own clergy rejoiced with the most thoughtless and the most careless. To judge from the sermons delivered, the talk of "moral uplift," of the high qualities developed by the War, etc., one would have imagined it to be a general blessing instead of a colossal disaster. The Churches had not even intelligence enough to perceive—certainly they had neither the courage nor the honesty to say—that war with its cheapening of life, its coarseness and brutality, its appeal to hatred and cruelty, its familiarizing the minds of men with brute force as the ultimate arbiter in human affairs, was certain to bring its aftermath of social demoralization. We are now reaping the fruits of four years of War, and the Churches have demonstrated their complete sterility as centres of intellectual guidance or of moral inspiration

The Churches and the League.

There can be created a real League of Nations if there is existent determination, moral courage, and imagination. But its creation will mean giving as well as taking—or rather it means giving up what is intrinsically worthless in order to secure what is permanently valuable. If a League of Nations means to guarantee to certain of the "Great Powers" in perpetuity worldwide possessions—with possible additions—then its inefficiency is guaranteed. The present inequality of the division, with the growth of independence among subject-peoples, will assure that. But if its ideal is an association of self-governing peoples, whose greatness is to be estimated and recognized, not in terms of trade or armed force, but in terms of the type of men and women produced, then its growing value is assured. But to secure the dominance of this latter ideal the theoretic control of the moral education of the world must be taken out of the hands of the Churches. For the peculiar evil of the situation is that the Churches usurp in the minds of millions a function they are unfit to perform. The Churches do not moralize, they demoralize; they distort and pervert, lending their assistance to whatever interest it pays them to promote. The disestablishment of religion in the State is urgent, but the disestablishment of religion in the minds of the people is more urgent still. Nearly two millenniums of Christian dominance has left the world as it is. A single century with the principles of Freethought dominating the minds of the people could hardly fail to show what the world might become and ought to be.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Baseless Assumptions.

IV.

FIVE of Professor Hough's articles on "Fundamental Issues" have now appeared in the *Christian Commonwealth*, the fifth for February 5, with the sub-title, "A Personal World." They are supposed to present us with the latest and freshest Christian apologetic; but their chief peculiarity, so far, is that they consist of a series of unverified assumptions. The existence of the supernatural, God, and Free-will is taken for granted, and its denial described as the sure harbinger of all sorts of dire consequences. Several little stories, real or imaginary, are ingeniously related, in each of which belief is portrayed as gloriously triumphant. The assumption on which the Professor lays the strongest emphasis is that touching the Freedom of the Will. This figures conspicuously in every article, and is the sole topic of

the fifth; but the curious thing is that not once are we given a definition of Freedom. We are told of a tourist who visited Madame Tussaud's Gallery in London, and who afterwards referred to his experience as follows:—

When I first entered I thought there were crowds of people all about me. I soon found that there were not many visitors. Most of the people were only wax.

Very conveniently, this tourist described that experience to a pessimistic friend, who answered thus:—

I have found life like that. I began with intense enthusiasm. I believed that there were real people everywhere. Soon I found that there were no people at all; they were all wax. And I too was wax. It makes the world a dull grey when a man makes such a discovery. But at least he knows that he has faced the facts.

To this a keen student of philosophy, who was providentially at hand, made this sagacious reply:—

But if you are only wax, how could you ever find it out? And how can wax be proud of its intellectual honesty?

Surely, the tourist, the pessimistic friend, and the student of philosophy, despite his keenness, were alike incapable of understanding the word Determinism, and the very fact that Dr. Hough quotes their utterances proves that he shares their incapacity. His very first question, which to him is the question of questions, is unphilosophical and unscientific. He asks: "Do we really live in a personal world? Or are we automata, living in a mechanical world where there is no personality anywhere?" As a matter of fact, we do not really live in a personal world; but we do live in a world chock full of personalities. We are living in a mechanical world of which we form a vital part, and are, in the true sense, fully as mechanical as the other parts, though the mechanism here is much more refined and complicated than, perhaps, anywhere else. Dr. Hough's allusion to Germany as an impersonal nation is, in our judgment, utterly unworthy of him. Where Germany falls short is not in ignoring personality, but in cherishing an exaggerated conceit of the German type of personality as compared with other types, or in claiming for it a predominant position in the world. Why should a divine avail himself of every possible opportunity to widen the breach already existing between Germany and her Allies and the rest of the civilized world? Germany's list of shortcomings is long enough, in all conscience, without adding another to it which lacks reality. As a matter of fact, we do not know of one Rationalist or Freethinker either in Germany or elsewhere, who holds an impersonal conception of human life. Determinists are firm believers in personality.

Does Professor Hough regard personality as simply another term for lawlessness? Defining man as a volitional being, does he thereby place him beyond the law of cause and effect? Every day during the War we consulted with absorbing interest the so-called casualty list as it came out in the newspapers; but casualties are things which science does not recognize at all. Chance is merely a popular, inexact, entirely unscientific word, used only as a cover for ignorance. Whatever comes to pass, under existing conditions, is characterized by absolute necessity. It is not by accident that one man is a drunkard and another sober. In the former, the craving for alcohol exercises complete dominion, and he will inevitably go down to a drunkard's grave unless this craving is destroyed by the development within him of a more powerful motive. This is the scientific view on the subject, and it is also the view held and advocated by the most distinguished thinkers in the Christian Church, such as Augustine, Aquinas, and Jonathan

Edwards. Has Dr. Hough ever really studied his fellow-countryman's masterly treatise, entitled *Freedom of Will*, the central principle laid down in which is that philosophical necessity belongs to the very nature of the will, and that it possesses no such freedom as the Professor describes in his articles? If he had done so, he could not have asserted that if we look squarely at the Determinist conception of life it becomes evident that there is "inevitable wreckage everywhere" as the result of acting upon it, or that it "cuts the root of ethics, and banishes the sense of personal responsibility." Such statements are abysmally reckless as well as radically false. Referring to a novel constructed, it appears, on Determinist lines, the Professor says:—

The whole story comes in brief to this. A certain sensitive and responsive character grew up in an environment where nobody believed in personality. The people were highly trustworthy and respectable. Though they believed that they were machines in a mechanical world, they kept the moral law as if they believed in its sanctions and its responsibilities. The character about whom the analysis centres, however, saw no reason for living under the control of sanctions which had been completely discredited. So when somebody got in the way, it seemed an easy thing to use a bit of poison and end the life which had become an obstacle. In a world where responsibility was only a name what possible reason was there to have any other guide than the exigencies of the situation? Morality in the old sense had simply ceased to exist. It is a simple statement of fact that you cannot maintain the ethical sanctions in a world where everybody ceases to believe in personality.

No world has ever existed where responsibility was only a name, and there has been no instance of the "inevitable wreckage" depicted by the Professor. The truth is that the sense of responsibility is an essential factor in social life, and logically presupposes Determinism. That is to say, a man would not be conscious of any indebtedness or accountability to society if he were a free agent in the theological sense, because free agency, in that sense, would, of necessity, produce the consciousness of irresponsibility. Free or uncaused actions could not legitimately be regarded as possessing any moral value, nor could they enjoy the privilege of being responses to the claims of society. To be responsible, accountable, answerable, or amenable to the community is to be subject to the law of causation, responsible conduct being the answer deliberately given to the social demand. It is true that a Determinist may commit murder, but it is an indisputable fact that the overwhelming majority of murderers in all ages have been believers in God and Free-will though they acted as if they were not. Believing themselves to be free agents, they were impelled to crime by the overmastering motive of hatred or cupidity. In other words, under the conditions obtaining murder was their only possible deed. Their sense of responsibility gave way to the stronger passion of hostility to those whom they believed to be obstacles to the realization of some anti-social ambition. No one can act against his character, be it good or bad; but character itself is a responsible factor. This point is well put by Mr. C. Cohen in his *Determinism or Free-Will?* (p. 72):—

When the law, or society, calls a man to account for something he has done it does not deny that had he possessed a different character he would have acted differently. It does not assert that at the time of doing he could have helped doing what he did. Both are admitted. But inasmuch as that character may be modified by social opinion or social coercion, inasmuch as it will respond to certain influences brought to bear upon it, it is a responsible character, and so may be held responsible for its actions.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Lady with a Lamp.

Take life at the right angle.—*Matilda Betham-Edwards.*

THE world knows little of some of its worthiest men and women. There died a month ago at the age of eighty-two a woman who had rendered notable service to two of the foremost nations of the world, and her passing was hardly noticed by the contemporary press. By the death of Matilda Betham-Edwards France lost her best English interpreter, and this country lost one of its most useful citizens. Her life-work was in promoting friendly relations between these two great countries. For this she was honoured by the French Government, which, in 1891, conferred on her the rare distinction of *Officier de l'Instruction Publique de France*, and Lord Fitzmaurice, writing from the War Office in 1907, said: "We have done all we can to promote *entente cordiale*, but those who like yourself have laboured for the same object in the field of literature have really done more than the politicians, because you have prepared the ground."

This tribute was richly deserved, for she had done yeomen service in promoting good will between the two countries. During her literary career Miss Betham-Edwards wrote no less than fourteen different works on France and French life, the finest being *France of To-day* 1892-4, a survey of remarkable breadth and information. It deals with the industries, education, religion, the position of woman, and other important subjects, and is packed with first-hand knowledge. So complete was her acquaintance with that country that she was entrusted with the editorship of Murray's *Handbook to France*, a standard work of reference.

Miss Betham-Edwards had "ink in her blood." She came of the family of Arthur Young, the great economist and traveller; and her mother, Barbara Betham, the friend of Mary Lamb, was a niece of Sir William Betham, the antiquarian. She herself lived to be the *doyenne* of English novelists, for she wrote her first book at nineteen, and the pen was still in her hand in her eighty-second year. Her novel, *The Lord of the Harvest*, was honoured by inclusion in *The World's Classics*, the only story in that series by a then-living author, and *The White House by the Sea*, her first novel, has enjoyed over sixty years of popularity, and is still a live book.

During her later years, Miss Betham-Edwards resided in a pretty villa at Hastings, not a great distance away from Coventry Patmore's house, and the abode of Mark Rutherford. Here she held her modest court, and among her most celebrated visitors were Henry James and Frederic Harrison. In this cosy corner house she used to recall her reminiscences of George Eliot and other notable "intellectuals." For she numbered many famous Freethinkers, both French and English, among her personal friends, and this lends extraordinary interest to her lively book of *Reminiscences*.

A Freethinker herself, her close knowledge of French politics made her an uncompromising Anti-Clerical, and she regarded religion in this country with amused tolerance. She was a woman of even temperament, and of ripe judgment. Asked, when old, the secret of joyful living, she replied, "To take life at the right angle, and not to wish for the impossible." It explains her Secularistic philosophy in a sentence.

Englishmen are always more ready to admire France than to understand her. Perhaps this is not surprising. There is no country more ready than France to admit foreigners to friendship, and yet to guard her own intimacy. Matilda Betham-Edwards was one of the few Englishwomen who were admitted to that inner circle. She knew France as a Frenchwoman knows her, and there is hardly any aspect of French life that she leaves

untouched in her many valuable books; and in so many cases she corrects current misapprehensions. Nobody can read these volumes without finding that he has come closer to the French mind and to a better understanding of that great country, which has ever been the standard-bearer of Liberty. Matilda Betham-Edwards was a lady with a lamp whose beams dispelled our insular ignorance. It was a most weighty service she rendered. For the Brotherhood of Man can only come through the friendship of the nations.

MIMNERMUS.

Thomas L. M'Cready.

SOME of the writings of this remarkable man came under my notice many years ago, when I was stationed at Halifax, Nova Scotia; and as they will be quite unknown to most English Freethinkers, I have made the following few extracts, in order to give them some notion of the beauty and power of his work.

M'Cready was born in 1846, and worked in early life as a sailor before the mast. Then he married and settled down on a small farm in Virginia, contributing articles to the New York reform weeklies, as what he termed "missionary" work.

John Jacob Astor died in 1890, and the newspapers were full of praise for the great millionaire ground landlord, on whom M'Cready commented as follows:—

His life appears to have been almost that of a human oyster, quietly assimilating the good things that came his way and storing up succulence for some other to enjoy after his decease. He went to the war in 1861, and served as a colonel on the staff, his vast wealth making it manifestly improper that he should shoulder a rifle and take his chances in the fighting line like more ordinary men; but except for this intermission of partial activity, he seems to have spent his life in vibrating between his office on Wall Street and Trinity Church, picking up alternately pelf and piety. He came into the world in 1822, bringing nothing with him. He probably never produced so much as a bushel of wheat, or a pair of shoes, while he remained here. He went out of the world in 1890, in the full hope of a blessed resurrection through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, and leaving \$200,000,000 worth of power to appropriate the fruit of other men's toil behind him. While he lived he depended on the gratuitous labour of other men for his food, shelter, clothing, opera box, and other incidentals; and when he died he depended on the gratuitous labour of the Man of Calvary to make things straight for him with God Almighty and provide him with a harp and wings. In the picturesque language spoken by many of those who died that he might live, he had a soft thing all through. Had he taken his mortgages and title deeds with him when he went away, the world would have been better off. He probably would have done so if he could. His reception into heaven by the author of the Sermon on the Mount would be an interesting function to behold.

Yet the newspapers tell us that his life was one long round of good deeds. He did not assimilate quite *all* the wealth that drifted to him on the social current. He permitted some other men to build an Astor library on some land that "belonged" to him. He allowed others to build an Astor hospital on some other land "belonging" to him. He hired—with other men's wages—artificers to build a reredos in Trinity Church. I am not quite sure what a reredos is, but it seems to be something efficient for salvation—perhaps a kind of needle's eye—and the one Mr. Astor's tenants paid for cost \$250,000. And he was exceedingly generous—with other people's wages—to the Children's Aid Society. In his benefactions he was the Single Tax personified, taking toll of men for the privilege of using land, and then distributing it in the shape of libraries and hospitals. The

same thing might have been done at much less expense by a drop-a-nickle-in-the-slot machine.

So much as a sample of M'Cready's humour; and now see how deftly he applies the lesson of such a life:—

Men like Mr. Astor are still blind to the glorious possibilities of a life of freedom; but they have a vague consciousness of duties unperformed, of injustice that must somehow be remedied, which finds expression in deeds of charity and public benefactions. The social problem is in the air. Millions of men, differing widely as to what ought to be done, are united in the conviction that *something* must be done. The Land Lords and the landless are drawing closer and closer together. When the latter are ready to assert their rights the former will be well-nigh ready to concede them. Who can say how soon that day may come? Men develop rapidly in this age of steam, of electricity, of fearless thought and swift interweaving of ideas.

See how marvellously we are working out the problem of our destiny; with what majesty of calm the harmony of Nature asserts itself and compels us, almost in our own despite, to rise from the lower plane of superstition to the higher level of perfect freedom. Man learns to conquer the universe, to produce wealth with ever-diminishing effort, to harness Nature's forces and make them do his bidding. But, like Dead Sea apples, his wealth turns to ashes in his mouth and yields him no satisfaction, though he longs for it with constant intensity. For with wealth comes poverty, hand in hand, making the poor to suffer and the rich to go in fear. We oppress it, but it will not down; we throw a mantle of poetry and superstition round it, but its naked hideousness will not be concealed. Day by day, it grows and swells, an awful spectre, repulsive, threatening, terrifying. We must dig down into the root of things and find its cause; there is no possibility of peace for us unless we do. And digging thus we lay bare superstition after superstition, which shrivel and die as the light falls upon them. The divine right of Kings has gone; the divine right of Land Lords is going fast; the divine right of Money Lords is withering; and still the digging goes on more earnestly than ever, new thousands joining in it every day. But think you this digging would have ever been begun had it not been for the unbearable woes of poverty? So, from the longing for enjoyment comes the force that is lifting man into freedom.

M'Cready was as sound and acute in his economic reasoning as he was brilliant in his ethical teaching. Dealing with the orthodox explanation of interest as the just reward of saving, he says:—

When I save \$1,000 I can only do it by compelling some other man or men to do just \$1,000 worth less work than they otherwise would have done. Maybe you never thought of that. But it is worth thinking of, and it is unmistakably true. I produce \$1,000 worth of wealth which I put into the world's general stock. If I take other things in exchange for it, I give employment to A B and C at making those things. But if I refuse to take anything, and lend out my money at interest, it is clear that A B and C will have just so much less work to do, and the world at large will be just so much the poorer. Get that fact fixed in your mind and you will see that by my saving and lending at interest I have been sowing idleness yet reaping the fruits of industry. What wonder that when this mortgaging has gone on for a few years and the victims are compelled to endure not only the fleecing of the Land Lords but the robbery of the usurers as well, the whole community should faint under the burden, and a general bankruptcy ensue? We talk of commercial crises, and wonder whence they come. The wonder would be if they should fail to come.

And, again:—

He would be a bold man, indeed, who should attempt to name a limit to the possibilities of wealth

production. Let men be free—give them free access to the raw material of the universe and allow them to freely exchange their products, through the agency of their own mutual banks, and there is absolutely no limit to the wealth they might enjoy. But to save wealth is beyond human power, for the inexorable laws of nature forbid it. When once any process of production is completed, the product *must* be consumed. Man may consume it if he will; but if he does not nature will do it for him. From a Brooklyn Bridge to a loaf of bread, this law holds good. The thing produced may be either consumed or wasted; it cannot possibly be saved. You can save money, which is merely a title to wealth, but you cannot save wealth.

To a correspondent who was defending the usurer under the specious plea that capital employs labour M'Cready answered as follows:—

So you think that capital employs labour. Did you ever hear of a man hiring himself out to a spade? Labour produces capital and uses it. Capital produces nothing, and, therefore, earns nothing. We call men capitalists either because they have got possession of a quantity of wealth produced by labour, or because they have in their possession certain pieces of paper giving them the privilege of calling on labourers to surrender a portion of their earnings. But, economically speaking, there are no such men as capitalists. There are labourers, and there is the raw material of the earth, and so far as the production of wealth is concerned there is absolutely nothing else. Whoever gets any wealth except as the wages of his labour, must get it as a gift or steal it.

M'Cready was an optimist. He believed that he might live to see the overthrow of the infamous monopolies of banking and land. In behalf of this grand achievement his work was all too brief, but it was so well done that where he left off many others have taken it up. And whether or not we live to see the great emancipation, there is but one thing to do, we must think, and speak, and write, and work, to bring it about. Whether we live to enjoy the harvest of the seeds we sow is of small consequence. Some generation will enjoy that harvest, for men will not always be so foolish as to allow millions to starve when there is land enough and to spare for all, and in that day M'Cready's name should shine.

On his sudden death in 1890 from asthma, at the early age of forty-four, an admirer wrote these beautiful lines to his memory:—

A heart that throbbed for human kind;
 Red blood that thrilled for love of man—
 While crystal thoughts from a clear mind
 Shot beacon flashes o'er life's span.
 He tried to ease the back of toil
 To loose the chains of tyranny,
 To lend to Ignorance his light
 And wake Earth's slaves to liberty.

G. O. WARREN.

PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE.

.....At the same time, the necessity of a broad and general view of the world remains; and to meet this need philosophy parts company with special inquiry. It is true, the two are often found united in gigantic personalities. But as a rule their ways diverge more and more widely from each other. And if the estrangement of philosophy from science can reach a point where data unworthy of the nursery are not deemed too scanty as foundations of the world, on the other hand the thorough-paced specialist may go to the extreme of rejecting point-blank the possibility of a broader view, or at least of deeming it superfluous, forgetful of Voltaire's apothegm, nowhere more applicable than here, *Le superflu — chose tres necessaire*—Ernst Mach, "Popular Lectures."

Acid Drops.

Why is the trail of theology so conspicuous in the press of this country? Throughout the War, accounts of damaged churches and alleged "miracles" occupied almost as much print as stories of battles. In peace time the same pleasing phenomenon manifests itself. Referring to the question of strikes, a leading London paper breaks out, "There was probably a strike at Babel," and some folk "would almost certainly trace the descent of the modern Labour agitator straight to the serpent in Eden." This editor ought to realize that all his readers are not patients in a lunatic asylum.

The Bishop of London's wail on behalf of the starving clergy, particularly the "rural dean" who fed his family on sixpence-halfpenny per meal, has caused many kind hearts to beat sympathetically behind snowy shirtfronts. It appears, however, that the dear clergy endure worse horrors. An advertisement in a daily newspaper runs as follows: "Is it neurasthenia? My little book will help you. Price 1s. 6d. Vicar —, —." What a position for one of the Lord's Anointed!

The Bishop of Oxford and other greedy Anglicans, not content with occupying churches which were once Roman Catholic, now want to grab the mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople, with a view to restoring it, they say, to Christian worship. In the course of his explanation of the project, Mr. Athelstan Riley referred to the Fifth Crusade, and said he thought they must regard that Crusade with the deepest shame. He went on to describe the elevating influence of Christianity by saying:—

When the hosts of Christendom turned aside from the conquest of the Holy Land and engaged upon the siege of Constantinople, and when they took Constantinople, they went to the great church and placed an abandoned woman on the patriarchal throne, profaned the Church in the most horrible way, and "laid their hands on gold and silver and precious vessels in such quantity that they could not be numbered." Could it be wondered at that since that terrible day—and it was Easter Day—the Eastern had never really trusted Western Christendom: and it was the duty of Western Christendom to redeem that foul blot.

Of course, there can be no wonder that East does not trust West, nor that sensible people do not trust either.

The Bishop of Oxford seconding the motion for restoration said they demanded that the ending of the dismal Turkish tyranny should be marked by the surrender to its proper object of the greatest Church of Christendom, and went on to say, in a spirit of pure brotherhood, we suppose, that St. Sophia was a symbol of Mohammedanism, and Mohammedanism has yet to recognize that it was going to be reversed.

In the *Daily Telegraph* of February 3, Mr. M. H. Ispahani, of 21 Mincing Lane, E.C., 3, evidently a Mohammedan, protests against the proposal of the Bishop and the militant tone and language of it; he goes on to make an historical reference which is interesting reading, at any rate, for those who are beginning to doubt some of the fairy tales about the everlasting goodness and uplift of Christianity. He says:—

We have no desire to refer to past wrongs and injustice, but when ecclesiastical dignitaries and others urge the restoration to Christianity of Saint Sophia and Constantinople, it is permissible to ask, is Christianity prepared to restore to the Moslems Cordova and Granada, and those mosques and sacred places in Andulasia from which they were driven out by the Christians of Spain, and which were turned into churches or stables? The Moslems had held Spain 800 years; introduced culture and civilization in a land which had been ruined by Gothic barbarities; when, as a Christian writer says: "In an ill-omened hour the Cross supplanted the Crescent on the towers of Granada" in 1499—what happened is a commonplace of history. The Inquisition was established, Moslems and Jews were tortured and burnt at the stake, their women and children forcibly taken from them, they were

treated as slaves; and this persecution lasted for over a century until the Moors were finally expelled from Spain—which had become their home with as much right as England had become the home of its Norman conquerors, up to within the present generation. Contrast this treatment with the religious tolerance of the Moslem conquerors of Constantinople. Has Christianity nothing to answer for?

Mr. Edward Clodd has also written to the press to protest against this proposal on the ground that it will, if carried into effect, lead to the inevitable quarrellings between the various members of the happy family of Christians; and further that it will, with danger to the stability of the Empire, offend the susceptibilities of the millions of Mohammedans who are now contented members of the community. How is it that this offensive spirit is never absent from the councils of these bigots? It is not so long ago that our Christian Government, when its Armies reached Khartoum, flung the remains of the Mahdi out of their resting-place.

A new book bears the delightful title, *The Christian Religion in the Study and the Street*. The latter variety sometimes takes the form of a leather-lunged speaker, a few lady friends, and an harmonium.

St. Narbert's Catholic Church, Spalding, was broken into, and three offertory boxes rifled. The "saint" must have been deep in his devotions.

Pious folk do their best to bring about a revival of religion. In Poplar a movement is on foot to promote the closing of shops on Sunday, public-houses excepted.

Christians may boast of their reliance on Providence, but they do not like to take any risks. Removed for safety during the air-raids, the stained-glass windows at Canterbury Cathedral have now been replaced.

The Rev. G. A. Studdert Kennedy says: "The Bible is in one way the saddest book in the world." The reverend gentleman ought to read Ingersoll's *Some Mistakes of Moses*.

The Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Darwen, has banned dancing in his parish. Evidently, the vicar would have disapproved of King David dancing before the Ark. And David was "a man after God's own heart."

Providence cares no more for churches than for ordinary buildings. In Western Flanders alone 144 churches were destroyed or partially ruined during the War.

This is the way the Rev. Landulph Smith, Chaplain at Hertford Workhouse records events:—

Several of the old people have passed away; they are as well attended to as ever, but seem mostly happy and contented.

One can guess at what Mr. Smith means; and, presumably, it is something different from what he says.

Jesus told his followers they were not to resist evil. Likewise that they were to turn one cheek when the other was smitten. A few folk—Christian conscientious objectors—thought Jesus meant what he said, and that other Christians would support them. But they were mistaken, and some have had to pay the price of their blunder. A member of the Salvation Army, Daniel Huxtep, we see has been imprisoned for two years and six months for refusing to serve in the Army. He has now been sentenced to another twelve months' hard labour. Presumably, by the time he is dead, it may dawn on the minds of some that this man really has a conscientious objection to military service, and is entitled to the protection guaranteed him by Act of Parliament. Daniel

Huxtep's case is not the only one, and without endorsing the views of these men, whether they be Christian or non-Christian, we do not hesitate to say that their repeated and continued imprisonment is a gross outrage on justice and common sense. It would be better to shoot them off-hand. That, however, would require courage.

The Church Army authorities have quaint ideas of employment. An advertisement for women workers states that "salaried posts are guaranteed to successful candidates after training, and provision is made for sickness and old age." We are not quite clear whether the candidates get their salary or the Old Age Pension first.

A Mr. Wilson, speaking at the City Temple, said there were no lifebelts in Noah's Ark. If there had been any, they would have proved of little use. An elephant and a flea require such different sizes in belts.

During the War we were assured constantly that Churches and other "sacred" things were protected by a benevolent Providence, who seemed anything but benevolent regarding human life. This care of sacred articles is not always manifested. A mediæval church font, which has been used as a horse-trough, has been discovered at Kimbolton, Hunts.

According to the *Herald* of February 8, five boys, ranging from seventeen years and eight months to nineteen years and one month, have been sent from the Army in France to Wandsworth Prison, each sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. We do not know what their offence is, and do not care. There is no offence possible that could warrant the cold-blooded barbarity of such a sentence on boys under twenty years of age. If the story is correct the matter should be raised in Parliament at once.

The clergy of Islington Parish Church ask for 6,000 shillings for its War memorial. It ought to commemorate the exemption of the clergy from military service.

"The real nineteenth century was just a bloody shambles," says the Rev. G. A. Studdert Kennedy. Dear, Dear! There was not much evidence of this in bishops' palaces and comfortable vicarages.

Mr. Arthur Mee, writing in *Lloyd's Sunday News*, expresses astonishment that "from end to end of England you will find a multitude of people who believe the world is ending." This sort of nonsense must follow so long as the Bible is kept in the schools.

"If the bleak spirit of Voltaire still haunts our world he must be having an agreeable time," writes solemnly the editor of the *Daily News*. The editor has forgotten all his theology. If Christianity be true, Voltaire is not having an agreeable time. He is grilling in a place which is so seldom mentioned in pious circles nowadays.

Thoughts of a Widow.

Is there not, in Thy ways, a path
To Peace that hath not aftermath
Of aching hearts—a tortured bleeding calm?
If infinite be all Thou touch,
What need was there to teach us such?
How did we doubt? And why need Thou a balm?
It easier were to understand
Almighty power in fairer land;
Almighty love in calm eternal day.
If Life be Thine, why have we Death?
What need to pray with tortured breath?
Nay, God! what is Thy power when pain's Thy
way?
WM. TELFER KIRK.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 23, South Shields; February 26, Coventry; March 2, Swansea; March 16, Leicester; March 23, Manchester; March 30, Leeds.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 23, Manchester; March 2, Maesteg; March 9, Ferndale; March 16, Pontycymmer.

G. H. MURPHY.—We hope to be in Belfast some time during March. But it will have to be a mid-week visit.

W. ALLAN.—We have not seen Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*. Thanks for reference to it. There seems some interesting matter therein, from what you say.

W. T. KIRK.—Thanks. Shall appear.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: R. A. D. F., 15 6d.

HUGH WILLIAMS.—What you call an "authentic account" of the last days of Paine is well known, and is sheer fabrication. The story in *Life and Gospel Labours of Stephen Grellet* is based upon a tale told by Mary Hinsdale. It was not told until ten years after Paine's death, and after many attempts had been made to bribe evidence of the same character; and the one who published the story, Charles Collins, admitted that he had doubts of its truth, and said it was believed that Mary Hinsdale indulged in opiates. No one now credits the tale.

W. WILMER.—Thanks for what you are doing on behalf of helping our circulation. Letters useful. Next week.

G. BOSWORTH.—Very pleased to know you are home, and still hope to hear from you when convenient.

COSMO-THEIST.—Crowded out this week.

R. PARKER.—Not at present, but may be included in a volume of literary essays.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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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.

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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 of marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Sugar Plums.

There was a very crowded hall on the occasion of Mr. Cohen's debate with the Rev. J. Towns at Abertillery on Monday last. The hall which held over a thousand was packed to its utmost capacity, and the debate was followed with the closest attention and the keenest appreciation. All friends were convinced that the discussion would mean a permanent accession to Freethought in the district. Mr. Cohen also held two good meetings on the Sunday at Blaina and Abertillery. At Blaina the hall was well filled, and at Abertillery crowded out. South Wales is still moving.

Next Sunday, February 23, Mr. Cohen lectures twice, afternoon and evening, in the Victoria Hall, Fowler Street, South Shields. There will be a short programme of instrumental music before the evening lecture, and a good rally of Tyneside Freethinkers is expected. Those who feel disposed to help in making the meetings known should write Mr. R. Chapman, 6 Wenlock Road, Somerside, South Shields.

Six free popular Discussions on "Problems of Democracy," to be opened by well-known people, have been arranged at South Place Institute, South Place, Moorgate

Street, E.C., on Tuesday evenings, February 25 to April 1, at 7.30, and a syllabus containing points to think over in advance, can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Mr. G. W. Goodall, 8 Aberdeen Court, Highbury, N. 5. The first Discussion will be opened by Mr. J. A. Hobson, M.A., on "What is Democracy?"

Mr. Harry Snell lectures at the Repertory Theatre, Station Street, Birmingham, on Sunday evening, at 7 o'clock. His subject is "President Wilson: The Moralist in Politics." We hope there will be a crowded attendance on such an interesting occasion. Mr. Snell's eloquence is well known.

William Michael Rossetti, who died last week at the great age of eighty-nine, was the second son of Gabriele Rossetti, an Italian patriot, poet, and scholar, who came as an exile to England, and was appointed Professor of the Italian Language and Literature at King's College, London. His elder brother was Dante Rossetti (1828-82) who left the impression of his genius on literature and painting; his sister, Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), in whom the pure flame of lyrical beauty irradiated poetry which was too often overweighted with the pessimism of the Christian outlook. W. M. Rossetti's cast of mind was rather critical than creative. In art he strove to keep the Pre-Raphaelite within the bounds of right reason. In literature he was a good guide, with an unacademic appreciation of new movements in poetry. He was one of the first to see the greatness of Whitman, and it was he who introduced Swinburne to the poetry of Baudelaire, who the French reading public are just beginning to find out, was a man of genius. His painstaking work on Shelley did much to assist us to a readable text of a poet who had suffered much at the hand of careless editors.

What will, perhaps, commend Rossetti most to our readers is his uncompromising Freethought, his unwavering democratic principles. He once wrote to Mr. H. S. Salt that he shared the philosophic and political opinions of James Thomson, and we know well enough what they were. In his own circle he did not a little to arouse an interest in Thomson's poetry, and certainly, a part of the success of *The City of Dreadful Night*, was due to Rossetti's critical championship. He himself wrote verse (his translation of Dante in blank verse is not so well known as it ought to be) publishing two little books of *Democratic Sonnets* as late as 1907. Most of these were written early in the 'eighties. They express his love of democracy, his scorn of political chicanery, his hatred of tyranny, his contempt for the mendacity and subterfuge underlying all priestcraft. There is plenty of fundamental brain-work, but the emotional temperature is not high enough to fuse the form and substance. We quote what we think Rossetti's one unqualified success as a poet. It is his sonnet to the French-German Jew, Heine:—

The most delicious master of the lash,
Most intricate in choice sympathy,
Sweetest in love-lilt, and in irony
Consummate, as the opposed perceptions clash,
And leave a tingling silence; born to abash
The priest and acolyte, and half to free
The ponderous German mind with augury
Of coming storm and sunshine when the crash
Of lightning-hearted France shall penetrate
The air which kingly and professors breathe:
Heine, the clarion of all brains which seethe
With bright revolt and swift iconoclasm;
Unvanquished martyr of his eight years' spasm
French German Jew, immortal reprobate.

Owing to Mr. Cohen's prolonged absence from London last week-end, a number of communications remain unnoticed until our next issue.

Religion and Life.

BY DR. E. LYTTTELTON.

SIR,—Last time I drew attention to certain facts connected with what we call spiritual life, and promised to consider how far they militated against the belief in a God of infinite power and love.

But *en passant* you will allow me to mention a perplexity due to the reading of newspapers not many mornings ago. Your crusade against religion, both Theism and Christianity, I take to be inspired by a belief that if mankind flung their religions away things would be happier: men and women would be freer: the world would be a better place. We Christians think not; partly because we cannot see nourishment in a negative creed, and also because so soon as you become positive you become—such is our view—unconsciously Theistic. But a more pertinent test would be to look at evidence of Atheism leading, not to an improvement of the world, but to the reverse. Now, a few days ago I stumbled upon the report of a special correspondent of the *Times* in Russia; in which he states that Trotsky is living in luxury amid ghastly destitution in Moscow, travelling in special trains in the most sumptuous comfort. Along with this we have two pictures. “Trotsky’s fiends” hanging men head downward from trees and flaying them alive. In Petrograd, meantime, Trotsky has organized compulsory lessons on the non-existence of a Divine Being.

These facts seem to demand an explanation. When people urge that Christians have done some blackguard things, we answer that it is because they are violating their own professed principles. But this genial Trotsky shows that he closely connects his own religious principles—not their perversion—with conduct which you and I, I presume, would agree in thinking highly undesirable. But these religious principles of his are yours; they are simply Atheism. If you think these principles favourable to conduct which will improve society, either you must flatly disagree with Trotsky in his hope of their effect, or you must approve of his brutality. If, as I should assume, you disagree with him, what grounds can you furnish us with for believing that you are right and he is wrong? For at first sight to an outsider it looks as if he was preaching Atheism as a help to license; and that is just what, to a Christian, it seems likely to be. Thus, in his view of the effect of Atheism, Trotsky is at one with us: the difference between us is what we think of as blackguardly he appears to think praiseworthy.

Would you tell us where your difference with him comes in?

Now for my main subject. Is a belief in a God of Infinite Love and Infinite Power rendered absurd by the facts of experience? There are various considerations which greatly modify the intellectual and even moral objections to the belief; but there is only one fact which appeals with equal force to the heart and to the head. It is that the Creator of the Universe died for us. No sooner do we read the familiar words than our hearts perhaps feel the appeal readily, but our minds say the statement is unintelligible: inconceivable, impossible; and some would add, useless and ineffective.

A word on both objections. Let me remark first that my object in writing on this theme at all is not to make apprehension of Christian doctrine easy—nothing could do that—but to clear out of the way one or two *a priori* objections which deter people from *trying* to apprehend it.

Take for instance the whole group of difficulties roughly lumped together under the word “impossible”: there are many minds to which that word occurs more

and more frequently in proportion as they consider the real meaning of the proposition, in the bearing of the alleged fact. For the vastness of the improbability of it often grows on the mind *after* patient reflection; in contrast with the unreflecting acquiescence of many “believers,” who, like a young chorister repeating the Creed, let the statement rest idle and unexplained on their minds. Now, this sceptical verdict, which seems to be the utterance of our mature, trained judgment, is, in reality, wholly unscientific; that is to say, it is a pronouncement on a set of facts which are not given, and about which we only know that they may be true facts, and if they are, and ever come to be known, they will make our mature, trained judgments for the most part look very foolish. For we ought to be able to see that the facts necessary for forming a judgment not only are not given, but from the nature of the case cannot be given, nor even conceived of with any distinctness at all.

God has created a world now full of misery: can this be the work of a loving Being who is also all powerful? Certainly not, if the view of the situation which we are able to take can be supposed for a moment to be anything like complete. But we ought to be able to see that it is not only incomplete but barely entitled to be described as rudimentary. If we once realize this proposition then our common sense will tell us that to judge such an action as the creation of the world is a supremely ridiculous and presumptuous thing to do.

Perhaps you would admit that against the proposition that the world was created, *i.e.*, made out of nothing, no rag of what is called evidence can be brought (except perhaps by those eccentric people who say that it does not exist at all. We may leave them out), because here the world is, and if it was made out of nothing an action took place which it is wholly beyond our power to conceive, except in a very tentative and partial fashion by its results. It is manifestly and confessedly a transcendent action if it ever happened at all; and by transcendent we mean unintelligible in every respect except as to its results in space and time, and incomprehensible at first. It is an unrelated, isolated, manifestation of a higher order of life than ours. But if this is true we talk nonsense when we speak of it as probable or improbable, for those words imply that we understand the fact in question *in relation to other facts known previously*. But this event is unrelated, and the only scientific verdict to be pronounced upon it *at first* is that whatever may be subsequently gathered from experience there is and cannot be any evidence against it.

Sooner or later we must borrow the human child as our illustration. Suppose one of them hears for the first time that his father has jumped a five-barred gate out hunting, how does he receive the fact? With a mild surprise, perhaps, but with no disposition to deny it on the ground that it transcended his previous experience, or that he would be unable to do the same with or without a hunter. As regards prejudice against any information concerning a life higher than his own, yet related to it—I mean adult life: a healthy-minded child is incapable of any such thing. Unless he is something of a monster his little mind is a *tabula rasa* on the subject; truth impresses itself on it without let or hindrance, and with each new truth his horizon grows wider and his knowledge of the larger life towards which he is growing is corroborated or confirmed.

Well, you might say, so much for the Power shown. But where is the Love?

My rejoinder is that if we learn to refrain from pronouncing upon the impossibility of creation we should also learn to refrain from judging its motive. There is no ray of evidence against the assertion that one object of creation was to produce *strong, free-willed* men. There

may have been countless other motives of which we can and do form conceptions, and against the existence of which no evidence can be brought. If so, we cannot judge whether the vast cost in unhappiness is worth the result, because we don't know what the result will be.

More of this point anon.

The Birth and Development of Gods.

IV.

(Continued from p. 73.)

THE apotheosis of ancestral ghosts is not special to uncultured peoples. As among primitive tribes the traditions of powerful chiefs or medicine men are treasured long after the memory of the minor departed has passed away, so with the superior races, the spirits of celebrated personages are longest remembered by the community. The lesser shades although venerated and propitiated on the domestic hearth, tend to shrink into mere household, or at most, local divinities, while the mightier ghosts of the great develop into the leading deities of the community.

With a people so highly civilized as the Chinese, ancestor worship comprises the principal part of their religion. In Pagan antiquity the worship of the dead remained a universal custom with the mass of the population until the native divinities were displaced by the triumph of the Church. Men everywhere paint themselves in their gods, and as the community waxes in wealth and power, and the petty chief is transformed into the potent king, the contemporary ruler's magnificence is attributed in religious thought in even greater degree to his long-defunct predecessor. Thus the deified ghost of some insignificant chief who happened to be the reputed ancestor of the ruler of a subsequently successful state is endowed in his spiritual dwelling-place with all the pomp and circumstance of quite recent earthly origin. Or, as one authority puts it: "The supposed power of the gods in each pantheon has regularly increased in proportion to the increased power of kings and emperors."

To the contemporary metaphysical sacerdotalist whose divinity has been attenuated to "the consistency of the shadow of smoke" the suggestion that all the gods have been elaborated from rude ancestral spirits is naturally repugnant. But, to the vast majority of mankind, both past and present, whether savage or civilized, the deity is invariably a concrete creature. The highly idealized divinities of the later periods of Egypt, Assyria, Judæa, and even those of modern Europe, all apparently owe their inception to the belief in the shade or ghost of the departed. However refined our concepts of the supernatural, the underlying basis of each and all is contained in man's terror and propitiation of the dead.

Those who are concerned at any cost to sustain the validity of contemporary creeds, anxiously allege that albeit ancestor worship may account for the religious ideas of savage and barbaric races, yet no Semitic or Indo-European stock has ever possessed an ancestral theology. In the light of the fact that many of the heroes and divinities of classic antiquity are obviously the deified ghosts of the dead, this contention becomes amazing. Ancestral cults were as common in primitive Greece as in ancient Peru at the time of the Spanish conquest, while the Romans habitually sacrificed not merely to the spirits of the recently dead, but to the shades of their long-departed relatives. The old

Greek monarchs of the East had their sacred altars, and the emblem of divinity was stamped upon their coins. The Roman emperors were adored as divinities, and their statues were worshipped by the populace.

In ancient and modern India the ghosts of the dead were, and are to this moment, supplicated and conciliated by the natives. In sober truth the Hindu pantheon is perpetually increasing its huge company of gods as the days roll by. Sir Alfred Lyall, who closely studied these occurrences in India was driven to conclude that all the popular departmental deities were really the ghosts of notorious characters whose apotheosis dated from some striking circumstance that attended their life or death. One wild tribe with a weakness for highway robbery worships a defunct bandit. Some who have gained a reputation during life for great sanctity are raised after death to the rank of gods. In Berar alone hundreds of shrines have been recently dedicated to these mushroom deities, while others have already been honoured by the erection of temples devoted to their service. Miracles are quite ordinary features at the shrines of celebrated ascetics, and the surviving relatives who attend them reap a rich harvest from the offerings of the faithful. In his *Asiatic Studies* Sir Alfred Lyall thus traces the development of the deity:—

In the course of a very few years, as the recollection of the man's personality becomes misty, his origin grows mysterious, his career takes a legendary hue, his birth and death become both supernatural in the next generation, the names of the elder gods get introduced into the story, and so the marvellous tradition works itself into a myth until nothing but a personal incarnation can account for such a series of prodigies. The man was an Avatar of Vishnu or Siva; his supreme apotheosis is now complete, and the Brahmins feel warranted in providing for him a niche in the orthodox pantheon.

It is also worth recording of the late King Edward, when as Prince of Wales he visited India, that his name was sung by the Hindu poets as an incarnation of the divine creator.

When we survey the legendary stories of the Egyptian gods in their later stages of growth, we are confronted with a maze of conflicting beliefs. Yet, when we peer beneath the surface, the fact emerges that the mighty Nile divinity, Osiris, had risen triumphant over a multitude of lesser deities in the course of the centuries which witnessed the consolidation of the Egyptian monarchy. And there is little doubt that the supreme god Osiris was originally a leading man. The intricate web of later Egyptian religion has been chiefly spun out of totemic observances and the worship and propitiation of the human dead. Save in China, there seems no country in which the influence of ancestral spirits has exercised a power so potent in shaping religion as in ancient Egypt. In that mysterious land the tomb, with its embalmed remains of the departed, is everywhere in evidence.

The rich rites and ceremonies of the palmy period of old Nile civilization, the massive monuments and ornate sepulchres of Egypt's prime, were evolved from the rudest memorials. The elaborate social and sacred observances of later times depicted in Egyptian art are absent in the remains of earlier ages. Primitive religion was relatively simple. As Loftie noted, "The oldest sculptures show us no acts of adoration or sacrifice except those of worship at the shrine of a deceased ancestor or relative." And despite all the transformations wrought during the protracted period embraced by Egypt's history, the worship of the mummy remained the predominant motive of the pious population until the end. The grave was regarded as the earthly residence of the dead. Ceremonies were celebrated in the

mortuary chapels by the priests and relatives of the departed, in which the mummified corpse's virtues were proclaimed while gifts were presented for the benefit of the ghost. Cakes and wine, flesh and fruit, were among these offerings of the quick to the dead. From the primitive sacrifice and worship of family and village ancestors, the prayers and praise of subsequent centuries addressed to the mighty national divinities were gradually evolved.

All the dead, from the meanest to the most opulent and exalted, were carefully embalmed, and the splendour of their sepulchres varied with their social standing. Magnificent monuments attest the deeds of successful conquering kings. This unwearied devotion to the memory of the dead—this ancestor worship—appears to have been bound up with the conviction that the mummied corpse was still a living and conscious creature who retained its interest in the busy transactions of the mundane world of living humanity.

Osiris towers above all the other deities of the great Egyptian Pantheon. He is the Zeus or Jupiter of Old Nile. The myths concerning him are multitudinous. As the theology of Egypt developed, Osiris became the judge of the dead and the ruler of the ghostly realm, while to him the most earnest entreaties were addressed. In the later aspects of Egyptian religion, countless myths which associate Osiris with Isis and Horus, Amen and Ra, the sun-god, are met with. But these and other accretions woven around the deity of the dead by the embellishments of the priests, artists, and scribes, were the products of later ages. For when we pierce the veil of myth and legend, the form and features of a departed ruler become visible.

Many are the centuries embraced by the evolution of the ghost of a dead chief of Abydos to that of the semi-solar divinity of the historical period. Like all other powerful States, the Egyptian Empire was evolved from the most humble beginnings. In traditional times, in the days before Menes, the first monarch who ruled over a united Upper and Lower Egypt, it was said that a dynasty of gods governed the various districts of the kingdom. These were obviously petty chiefs or rulers of local places who were afterwards promoted to the position of gods. Among these divine minor kings was Osiris, who governed a village community at Thinis, near Abydos, where a great mound still passes for the god's grave. On the monuments Osiris is invariably depicted as a mummy. He wears the head-dress of a king, and carries in his hands the emblems of royal authority. As Grant Allen states in his *Evolution of the Idea of God* :—

Not only, however, is Osiris represented as a king and a mummy, but we are expressly told by Plutarch (or at least by the authors of the tract *De Osiride*, which bears his name) that the tomb of Osiris existed at Abydos, and that the richest and most powerful of the Egyptians were desirous of being buried in the adjacent cemetery, in order that they might lie in the same grave as the great god of their country. All this is perfectly comprehensible and natural if we suppose that a Thinite dynasty first conquered the whole of Egypt; that it extended the worship of its own local ancestor-god over the entire country; and that in time, when this worship had assumed national importance, the local god became the chief figure in the common pantheon.

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

Notes From Ireland.

So a new star is blazing, and its blaze is wonderful because strange, beautiful because undefiled. Yes, the fringe of the mantle of Freethought is touching us at last, and its touch is like unto the soft caress of a maiden's sympathy.

Freethought is the loveliest blossom in the intellectual world: we most heartily congratulate Belfast on its being the first, within the boundaries of this little isle, to perceive the exquisiteness of its fragrance, the exceeding beauty of its petals. For the men of the north have again snatched the reins and are driving furiously. But geographical position is no proper criterion of nationality. New movements, to be national, must be sown by men, themselves plucked from the current of national prejudice. Now, Ireland is pre-eminently Catholic; the ugliest sear on her soul is the deep ulcerous channel made by Roman celebrities with the golden ingots filched from the empty pockets of poverty and wrought into confessionals, idols, and other soul-destroying machinery of salvation. Consequently, while admitting that the crown is on the summit, we—and all Irish Freethinkers are bound to concur in this—can scarcely recognize the new Branch of the N.S.S. as distinctly savouring of the soil unless at least fifty *per cent.* of its members happen to be ex-communicants of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. I wouldn't mind betting a thousand pounds to a gooseberry that this is not so.

We southerners are not a bit of good. There we've gone and shown ourselves incapable of taking a lead. But it's not our fault. The colossal magnitude of the enemy is too much for us. We are only so many pinpricks in the rich fat of his oily carcase. Only consider what we are up against! The mind of every pious Catholic—ninety *per cent.* are pious—is about as original as a hen's and so very small that two would fit into an acorn.

But we're coming on. In my newsagent's the other day: "The *Freethinker*." I called, looking as much a Freethinker as I could.

"Not in yet."

"That's the paper I'm wanting meself," exclaimed a man in the shop at the time; "I must have it. Can't take me breakfast without it. Except it, all your literature can go to blazes."

So you see there are at least two Freethinkers in Dublin. Oh, yes, we're coming on. We should easily have a Dublin Branch of the N.S.S. within the next seventy-five years.

The Allies won the War because of the Catholicity of General Foch.

I have just seen emerging from a butcher's shop a couple of nuns bearing between them a basket of bones. Poor things! poor tongueless creatures! I wonder how your eyes withhold the torrent of your tears! How piercing must be the agony of your loneliness in the stillness of the night! Poor bleeding souls, how vainly do ye turn the fair garden of life into a chasm of suffering! There is no man to chronicle your pain; there is no man to mourn your death; there is no man to plant even a poppy upon your grave. Yet in this tiny isle your sisters are numbered in their tens of thousands! Alas, that so small a land should nurture so much suffering and despair!

DESMOND FITZROY.

Correspondence.

ATLANTIS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Every schoolboy should know that Atlantis is a fabulous place.—*Freethinker*, p. 58.

SIR,—In the *English Mechanic*, March 2 and 9, 1917, appears a lecture given by M. Pierre Termiea to the Institut Oceanographique. He shews that in Miocene times a very large island, almost a continent, occupied mid-Atlantic about lat. 20 to lat. 40. During the Pliocene it was broken up into islands, a few of which remain (as the Azores): but 900 kilometers N. of the Azores the ocean bed consists of sharp craggy rocks of glassy lava, whose structure shows it solidified in the air. It is therefore almost certain that this was land within 5,000 or 10,000 years.—C. HARPUR.

[The possibility of land having existed where the fabled Atlantis is said to have been seems beside the point. The fable relates to the kind of civilization that is said to have then existed.—ED.]

RELIGION AND SAVAGES.

SIR,—Dr. Lyttelton lays great stress upon the fact that people so vastly different as Bushmen, Mandarins, Laps, etc., all equally accept the Christology when set before them. As he says: "The outstanding fact is that his moral character attracts a large proportion of men and women of all races under heaven," adding: "So far as I know, it is the only thing that does."

And he infers from this that what so attracts is the doctrinal presentation of Christ.

I would therefore beg Dr. Lyttelton's reply to the following question?—

Supposing precisely the same teaching and example were brought to the notice of the said races, not by others, their manifest immeasurable superiors in all that civilization implies, but by men as inferior to them as they must needs recognize themselves in comparison with those that bring the message, would the same results ensue? For, if not, it follows that a part at least of their success is in nowise due to the message but the quality of the messengers.

Suppose, again, that the same message were brought by a race of savages to a highly civilized but heathen race; what then?

As an instance, take the case of the Arab in Morocco, standing as it were between the imaginary extremes. I have it from a friend, whose evidence emanates at first hand from more than one missionary centre there.....the total result of missionary effort in Morocco, as one might expect, is *nil*.

How is it, that the greater the ignorance, the more successful the teaching, and *vice versa*? And how is it, that with regard to all that commends itself to reason, the very opposite is the case?

W. M.

IS THERE A "GOD," AND IS THERE ANY PURPOSE IN THE UNIVERSE?

SIR,—Might I be allowed to say a few words on this subject, not as "a scientist," but as a Freethinker and a humble worker in the Secular Movement?

Mr. Watters seems to me to touch the Secular principles vitally. He asserts that the lives and happiness of the whole

human race depends upon how it decides this question. I would hasten to dispute this; it is enough for us that we are alive together. Secularism knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; its guide is reason and knowledge. He claims that we have heretofore "omitted to consider causation." Has not natural causation always been the Secularists' case against theological assumptions? My chief point is that Mr. Watters has not helped us any further forward. His assertions that there is a "Power" or "God" behind things, and that there is a "purpose"—a "mighty purpose"—in the universe, leaves us just where we were, although the subject may have been approached in a scientific and philosophic spirit.

I do not wish to dispute that this subject has in the past baffled the wits of mankind; this has been humanity's misfortune. I would say that this subject is only, at the most, interesting. A contemplation of the universe, according to my poor abilities, does not reveal to me any evidence of "Power"—of course, I mean such as is capable of sustaining a purpose. I think there is a world of enlightenment in a quatrain of the Old Persian:—

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to "It" for help—for it
As impotently moves as you or I.

I hope we all welcome cheerfully the opinions that may be expressed in the *Freethinker*, but I would suggest that Mr. Watters has once more brought home to us the difficulties of our propaganda. Lucretius has reminded us how reason alone can save us from the "empty tenours" of religion and death. The main plank of Secularism is that happiness is independent of any particular conclusion on ultimate questions which are beyond the bounds of knowledge. Christianity can appeal to the most ignorant; in fact, it might be said: "the more ignorant the better." The message of Secularism may not be so easy of dissemination but it might at least be based upon the ordinary facts of life, and be capable of appreciation by people who are not necessarily scientists and philosophers.

J. FOTHERGILL.

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NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, F. G. Bowers, "Scientific Spiritualism." Open Debate.

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SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Joseph McCabe, "The Socialist State in Queensland."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

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