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## Views and Opinions.

### Pain and Providence.

The sight of suffering in the world is to every sensitive mind an unpleasant fact. But while it is unpleasant to all, it presents the believer in Deity with a problem which creates also a moral objection to its presence. To the Atheist, pain is a natural fact, and his task is to understand it, as he has to understand all other natural facts. The Theist has not only to understand its place in the world, but to justify its presence. For, on his theory, pain is a *designed* thing. It was instituted for a purpose. He must show that the end justifies the means adopted. This he has always been trying to do, but without success. The number and variety of the apologies are alone proof of their inadequacy. They all break down on the fact that if there be a God, he himself must have created the conditions that made the presence of pain inevitable. Pain thus becomes cruelty, the deliberate infliction of pain by a conscious being who might have achieved his purpose by other means. For a being who creates the conditions, clearly cannot escape responsibility by pleading that the conditions prevent things being different from what they are. The world is God's world, and he must take responsibility for it.

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### The Purpose of Pain.

Professor Ray Lankester is, we imagine, one of that fairly numerous and peculiarly British group, an Atheist who prefers to call himself by some other name, to which less popular hostility is shown. All the same, it is puzzling to see the purpose for which he contributes a couple of articles to that new journal, *John O'London's Weekly*, on "Is Nature Cruel?" From the Freethinker's point of view the question is absurd, and Professor Lankester is quite in order in saying that we can only speak of Nature as cruel so long as we believe it to be the expression of an intelligent being. But that makes the more puzzling, why he should immediately talk of pain in the animal world as being "a beneficent guide" "in the great scheme of the universe." That is about as misleading as language can well be, and one can imagine the avidity with which the Theist will seize upon such statements. One might ask of Professor Lankester how on earth he knows that there is a "scheme," working itself out in the universe? If there is a scheme, and as a scheme implies all that calling Nature *cruel* implies, what is the value of the previous

caution that Nature must not be called cruel, because that would imply a mind behind Nature? If there is a scheme, and if Nature is beneficent, then the mind behind Nature is admitted. Professor Lankester should know quite well that he has no more warranty for speaking of a "scheme" in Nature than he has for speaking of a "plan" or a "design." To science, Nature presents nothing but processes, all else is our own contribution. To a scientific audience, such language as that noted would be innocuous; to a popular audience, such as that addressed, it can only mislead.

### Is Pain Helpful?

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Professor Lankester's reasons for thinking that pain performs a useful function in Nature are curious. Substantially, these are the reasons of the ordinary Goddite, no worse, and no better. First, "pain is a protection to animals, an automatic warning to avoid self-destruction and danger." But when all allowances have been made for those cases in which the feeling of pain leads an animal to draw away from things that would involve its destruction, what of the very large class of cases in which there is either no warning possible or no pain felt until the danger is well developed, or where the approaching danger actually produces an effect on its victim that hastens its consummation? Of the first class, we may ask Sir Ray Lankester to point out what amount of warning is there in the case of contagious diseases? Or, in the case of consumption, where the disease is usually well advanced before the discomfort drives the patient to seek medical advice? Of the second, what amount of warning is there in the case of virulent poisons? Of the third class, one may take the effects of extreme cold. Here the effect is not to warn against the approaching danger; indeed, when extreme cold has reached the point of becoming a real danger, its effect is to act as an anæsthetic. It induces a desire to sleep, and a man is seized with an overpowering desire to slumber at the very moment when his life depends on wakefulness and activity. And to this example one may add the class of cases in which the near approach of a carnivorous animal throws its prey into a state of palsy that makes its destruction certain. One might also instance the loss of nerve in both man and animals at a time when salvation depends upon its maintenance. And we should really like to know the beneficent side of, say, corns or toothache.

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### Pain and Progress.

The second reason why Sir Ray Lankester believes pain plays a "beneficent" part is that—

the pain of animals and man (is) small compared with the splendour and beneficence which increasingly appertain to human life.....the ultimate evolution from living matter of conscious, reasoning, progressive, adventurous man is in itself so great a good as to vastly outweigh the relatively small accompanying pain.

Those who are familiar with Theistic apologies will recognize this as an old friend. It has done duty in the

Christian world since the time of Paley, and is all over the once famous, but now defunct, "Bridgewater" lectures. And it might be admissible as an argument if the animal that suffered the pain reaped the benefit. But that, as we all know, is not the case. Professor Lankester justifies the process because the individual benefits. Yes, but what individual? Thousands of generations of animals suffer and die, and, we assume, that man reaps the benefit. Thousands of generations of men live and die, and it is assumed that, say, myself and Sir Ray Lankester reap the benefit. Maybe, but what of all these generations of animals and men that have gone before? By what right are they selected for the sacrifice? It is idle to reply that this is actually what takes place. That is beside the point. What Sir Ray has set himself to do—quite gratuitously—is to give a *moral* justification of the process. And that simply cannot be done. You cannot apply an intelligible moral calculus to the universe. Pain and suffering are here, and there is no reason why any Freethinker, or any scientific man, should feel himself called on to provide a justification for their existence. All we are called on to do is to make the best we can of existing conditions. Coming from an avowed Theist, the apology offered by Sir Ray Lankester would have been in its proper setting, coming whence it did, it strikes one as an interesting illustration of the way in which superstition crops up in the most unexpected quarters.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The God-Eating Sacrament.

### V.

#### ITS NON-CHRISTIAN ORIGIN.

THE argument has hitherto been based on the assumption that the modern orthodox theory as to the dates and genuineness of the Pauline first Epistle to the Corinthians and the Synoptic Gospels is correct. From these documents as they stand, when exegetically examined, the inference is inescapable that the Lord's Supper, as a Christian ordinance, was instituted by Paul, not by Jesus, though, for obvious reasons, Paul ascribed its institution to his Master. I am fully aware that Van Manen, for example, held that all the Pauline Epistles are forgeries of the second century, say, of the years 130-140. Thomas Whittaker, an ardent disciple of the eminent Dutch critic, in his *Origins of Christianity*, maintains that First Corinthians is a work of the second century, but reluctantly admits that there is abundant external evidence of its "existence" at a date which cannot be placed later than 140. Curiously enough, Mr. Whittaker states that the *Apology* of Aristides, written possibly as early as 125, shows acquaintance with the Pauline writings, especially with the Epistle to the Romans. In the year 139, Marcion made a handsome donation of money to the Church at Rome, and Marcion is known to have been a great student of the Pauline Epistles, and to have undertaken to restore the true text of them. During the last quarter of the first century, Ignatius was bishop of Antioch, and he is believed to have written letters in which he refers to the Epistles of Paul. According to Eusebius, Ignatius suffered martyrdom in the year 109, and it is possible that his alleged letters were written during the first nine years of the second century. It is also asserted that in Clement of Rome's Epistle to the Corinthians, sent about 95, there are at least thirty passages which clearly imply his intimate knowledge of the Pauline Epistles. But no reliance can legitimately be placed on any writings attributed to either Ignatius or Clement, because

many scholars regard them as spurious. What is fairly certain is that in the year 140 Marcion issued an expurgated edition of the Pauline Epistles, which clearly proves that at that time those Epistles were not only in existence and well known, but that already there were variant editions of them.

Now, so far as the argument concerning the origin of the Lord's Supper is concerned, it is wholly immaterial when or by whom 1 Corinthians was written. Even if we were to pronounce the man Paul a mere myth, it would not alter the fact that there are New Testament documents entitled Pauline Epistles, whoever may have been the author or authors, and that there is a Pauline style, as distinguished from Petrine or Johannine. Beyond all dispute, there was a Pauline theology which differed fundamentally from the Judaic or Jerusalem theology; and it is equally incontrovertible that the Eucharist could not have originated in a Church in which the doctrine of the Atonement had no place. Granting that the famous passage about the institution of the rite in 1 Cor. xi. is an interpolation, as Mr. J. M. Robertson avers, the fact remains that the rite is an integral part of the Pauline theology, and is altogether as out of place in the Synoptical Gospels as it would have been meaningless in the Jerusalem Church. There is, therefore, no escape from the conclusion that the Lord's Supper is in every respect a Pauline institution, congruous to that theological system and to no other.

Now comes a most pertinent question, is the Lord's Supper a Pauline invention, a new thing under the sun, or did Paul (or a group of men who worked and wrote in that name) adopt and adapt an institution already in use in the Pagan world? Paul claims, or is represented as claiming, that he was informed in a vision that Jesus had instituted it on the night of his betrayal, and that he introduced it into the Corinthian Church solely on that account. We know, however, that Paul made predictions "by the word of the Lord" which were falsified by the event. Speaking of the Second Coming in 1 Thessalonians iv. he assured his readers that it would come to pass in their own lifetime:—

We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Up to the present history has given the direct lie to that "word of the Lord." To-day, after nineteen centuries, the faithful are still anxiously waiting for the long-delayed second coming of their Lord. In Gal. i. 11, 12 Paul says:—

I make known to you, brethren, as touching the Gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.

As a matter of fact his Gospel came to him from the Pagan world, from the mystery religions which dominated the Greco-Roman communities at the commencement of our era, and the avenue along which it travelled was the Hellenized mind of such men as the Apostle Paul. Paul was a wholesale borrower and adapter. The revelation of Jesus Christ was as illusory as the word of the Lord, and by both Christendom has been largely misled to this day. The truth cannot be disguised that in no sense whatever was the substance of the Pauline Gospel original. Documents of pre-Christian dates have been found which contain all particulars about an eternal Divine Mediator, Son of God, who, of his own free-will,

descended to earth, lived and died for man, rose again, and then rejoined his Father in heaven. "If we look close," says Professor Bousset, "the result emerges with great clearness, that the figure of the Redeemer as such did not wait for Christianity to force its way into the religion of Gnosis, but was already present there under various forms." Professor Gilbert Murray well says:—

The Gnostics are still commonly thought of as a body of Christian heretics. In reality there were Gnostic sects scattered over the Hellenistic world before Christianity as well as after. They must have been established in Antioch and probably in Tarsus well before the days of Paul and Apollos. Their Saviour, like the Jewish Messiah, was established in men's minds before the Saviour of the Christians. He occurs notably in two pre-Christian documents, discovered by the keen analysis and profound learning of Dr. Reitzenstein: the Poimandres revelation printed in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and the sermon of the Naassenes in Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, which is combined with Attis-worship (*Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 143).

Paul found, ready to his hands, in his native town, a Gospel of salvation through faith in a risen Redeemer. "It has been proved from linguistic evidence," says Preserved Smith, "that Paul was saturated in the current conceptions of the mystery religions." Then he adds that prominent among such conceptions "was that of the eaten body of the Saviour-God, who in human form should live, suffer a violent death, and rise again." Describing the origin of the Eucharist, the same divine observes:—

The idea and form of this institution were suggested by Paul, who conceived them in a vision, on the model of the Pagan mysteries. In fact, as soon as any institution was established, firmly or otherwise, it was fathered on Christ, or at least on the Apostles (*The Monist*, May, 1918).

That there was a Pagan rite corresponding to the Lord's Supper is demonstrated by the contemptuous references to it found in the writings of the Christian Fathers. Justin Martyr, born in the year 100, was well versed in the philosophies of his time, and is distinguished as one of the earliest Christian apologists. And yet, in telling the story of the Holy Communion as he had learned it in the *Memoirs of the Apostles*, which he possessed, he says: "Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done." Tertullian, another apologist, who flourished in the latter half of the second century, said of Christianity that it would endure as long as the Roman Empire, and that the duration of the Empire would be coeval with that of the world. He could not find words sufficiently strong and mordant in which to denounce the Pagans and their Gods. As Milman says, every sentence of his *Apology* "breathes scorn, defiance, menace." Reminded that so many of the doctrines taught by Christians were to be found in Paganism, this Father retorted thus: "Whence is it, then, that you have all this, so like us, in the poets and philosophers? The reason simply is, that they have taken from our religion." Again: "If they maintain their sacred mysteries to have sprung from their own minds, in that case ours will be reflections of what are later than themselves, which by the nature of things is impossible." Once more, blinded by prejudice, he swears that the Devil, "by the mystic rites of his idols vies with even the most essential things of the sacraments of God."

Let us now return to the traditional Paul, from whom, probably, both Justin Martyr and Tertullian took their cue. He recognized the existence of an institution, in full operation, at Corinth, which closely resembled the Lord's Supper established there by himself. So similar were the two that even his own converts were in danger

of assuming that the one was practically as good as the other. He warned them, however, that the Pagan rite was morally degrading in that it signified fellowship with evil spirits. He said: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils." What we see here, at its lowest and worst, is the Christian incapacity to exercise even common fairness in the treatment of a non-Christian religion. The Greek word translated here "devils" never means "devils" in classical literature, but is one of several terms for "gods," "deities," "ghosts." Of course, to Paul, as an ambassador of the Cross, the very Gods of the Pagans were evil spirits, veritable devils, and so they have been regarded by Christians from his day to ours, their own Deity alone being pronounced ideally noble and good.

Meantime, the noteworthy point is the outward similarity between the Pagan and Christian rites. To Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and other Fathers, they were identical, and their only explanation of the identity was that the Devil had, for once, stolen a march upon the Lord, which was no explanation at all. And yet an entirely natural and satisfactory explanation is within our reach, which, when fully discovered and clearly stated, undermines completely every form of supernaturalism.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Under Many Flags.

Who shall forbid a wise scepticism?—Emerson.

A mind for ever

Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone.

—Wordsworth.

THE appearance of Mrs. Annie Besant at the Trades Union Congress must have caused many of the older Freethinkers a pang of regret, for her secession from the Freethought Movement a generation ago was a loss. For fifteen stormy years this gifted woman was in the forefront of the battle for liberty, and those of us who were then young regarded her much as the ardent Royalists of France esteemed Marie Antoinette. In those far-off days women speakers were uncommon on Freethought platforms, and Mrs. Besant was a rare and accomplished orator. Moreover, she was thoroughly educated, though she carried her weight of learning gracefully. Matriculating at London University, she took the Bachelor of Science degree, with honours, in 1882. She translated Jules Soury's *Religion of Israel* and *Jesus of the Gospels*, and Dr. Buchner's works. As a debater and orator, she had few equals, and some of the foremost women speakers on Temperance and other platforms seemed commonplace in comparison. Thrust into leadership, she was forced into journalism by the accident of her position, but, even in the narrow way of propaganda, she, like Charles Bradlaugh, found time to encourage genius. He, it will be recalled, introduced that shy genius, James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, to a critical public; whilst she published Bernard Shaw's novels, long before that brilliant genius had stormed the bastions of success.

It is one of life's little ironies, that whereas Mrs. Besant has been regarded by the public as a leader, she has in reality been as much a disciple as any of the rank and file. Moreover, she has sat at the feet of so many teachers, such as Dr. Pusey, Dean Stanley, Charles Volsey, Moncure Conway, Thomas Scott, Charles Bradlaugh, Madame Blavatsky, the Fabians, and "the Wise Men of the East"—to mention a few names that can be recalled readily. And, after thus boxing the compass of

opinion, she finds numbers of well-dressed and apparently educated people, who regard her as an oracle, and who wait upon her lightest word.

What is the secret of her hold on people? The explanation lies, we think, in her gift of oratory, which is very remarkable. How vividly do her speeches come through the mist of the years! When she was at the meridian of her power, she was easily first among the lady speakers. There was none like her. When she chanted, in a voice as sweet as a silver bell, the Galilean's requiem, or retold in awed accents the awful story of Giordano Bruno, the audiences cheered themselves hoarse in their admiration of her consummate oratory. At her farewell address in the old Hall of Science, after fifteen years' devoted service to Secularism, she made a most moving speech. Some of her audience actually broke down, and men were not ashamed to be seen in tears. For, in those far-off days, Mrs. Besant was one of the most fascinating and impressive speakers it was possible to listen to.

It was nearly half a century ago that Mrs. Besant discovered her gift of speech. She was then the young wife of a Church of England minister, the Rev. Frank Besant, brother to the famous novelist. One day, being alone in the church, where she had gone to play the organ, the idea seized her of mounting the pulpit, and delivering an address to the empty benches. "I knew of a verity," she wrote afterwards, "that the gift of speech was mine, and that if ever—and then it seemed so impossible!—if ever the chance came to me of public work, this power of melodious utterance should at least win hearing of any message I had to bring."

Her golden tongue has won a hearing for so many causes; but the fact emerges that her best and most lasting work was done for militant Freethought. In estimating her career, this part of her past looms very boldly, and overshadows the smaller interests that succeeded. Paradoxical as it may seem, this rare and gifted high-priestess of a latter-day superstition seems fated to pass through life and to leave no lasting vestige save that memorable time when she gave fifteen years of her splendid power to the cause of Secularism.

MIMNERMUS.

## Divine Impotence.

THE longer God lives the more useless he becomes. Many years ago when a few millions of his chosen people were in bondage to the Egyptians, it was not necessary for them to fight to liberate themselves. All that was needed was for God to plague their taskmasters with frogs, and lice, and disease till they were glad enough to get rid of their slaves; and when these fleeing slaves came to the Red Sea they needed no ships to carry them over. God just blew the water on one side and they walked through the gap. And when they were marching through a desert without food, and where no new clothing was obtainable, God sent them food from heaven every day, and made their clothing everlasting, but he cannot do any of those things now. Many of his poor children are now in bondage to his rich children, many of his elect are starving, and the clothing of all of them wears out very rapidly, but he does nothing to help them.

When his ancient children wanted to destroy a walled city, a few of them walked round it seven times blowing horns, and the walls of the city very kindly fell down. God could not now bring this about, although his elect have by no means lost the knack of blowing their own horns.

There was once a certain widow who was starving, and when God heard of it he provided her with a magic

meal-barrel and oil-jar that were never empty. There are now several millions of his dear children who are sadly in need of such magic vessels, but God cannot supply them. Once when a king sent some soldiers to arrest Elijah, God burnt them up with fire from heaven; and God also sent an angel to open the prison doors for St. Peter, and saved Jonah when he was thrown overboard. God cannot do any such things nowadays. If a policeman goes after one of God's children now he will have to look after himself, and if he gets into prison a smart lawyer or, better still, some friend with a political "pull," will be more useful to him than God, and if he should be thrown overboard he will certainly have to swim for it.

The time was when God would do almost anything for the clergy. All they had to do was to excommunicate a man and God would make things most uncomfortable for him. God is still very useful to the clergy, but nothing like so useful as he once was. For example, God is utterly useless to them when they try to tackle such a man as the late Professor Huxley.

I am not now trying to show that there is no God, but only that the character and conduct of God have changed very much, that, whereas, he was once very useful to his elect, he is now almost entirely worthless to them; he neither helps them nor worries their enemies. And this very marked change in the character and conduct of God is largely due, so far as his elect are concerned, to the few clergy who allow themselves to think; such parsons, for instance, as the Bishop of Hereford. It is, of course, true that back of these parsons are Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, and the scientists generally, but the masses of the spiritually elect are not so much swayed by the great secular thinkers as by their own heretical clergy.

It is these parsons with loose views who have played the mischief with God who might possibly be as active as ever otherwise, and not as deaf, dumb, and useless as he now is. For example, in the monastery run by the late Father Ignatius, God was much as he used to be. He produced visions and worked miracles just as of old, though I have not heard of his killing anybody, nor did he keep the meal-barrel full all the time—the elect had to do that themselves. But out in the world we all have to take care of ourselves just as if there were no God. When we want food, and clothing, and shelter, it does not do a bit of good to pray for them, we have to work for them, unless, indeed, we are lucky enough to be one of God's pets who are privileged to live on other people's wages. When the sun beat down on Jonah's head God caused a gourd to grow up at once to shade him; and when Elijah was hungry ravens brought him food, but it is not so with us, even if we are God's own chosen ones. In fact, some of his elect have a harder time than some Freethinkers. Of course, it is all very well for God to make the sun shine and the rain fall on the just and the unjust alike, but to allow Christians to starve while Infidels have plenty does not seem exactly right, and, according to these modern, Freethinking parsons, God is unable to prevent it, and, furthermore, he does not care. What sort of a God is he who cannot answer your prayer unless you work for what you ask for?

When I was a boy I heard a man tell at a prayer-meeting that when he was penniless he prayed for help, and, on rising from his knees, he was "moved" to go to his front door, and on the doorstep shining in the moonlight he found two bright half-crowns. If God put those half-crowns there no doubt he was useful, but is the chance worth the trouble?

When these Freethinking parsons speak of God, they do not mean any person or anything in particular. They

only mean a mysterious Something-or-other which they think keeps things going. They call whatever they do mean "God" because they don't know exactly what they mean, and God is a good old-fashioned word which most people like to hear. But whatever this modern God may be, he is of no use to anybody. He cannot stay the hurricane, flood, pestilence, or war; he cannot set free the slave; he cannot save an innocent man from the gallows; he cannot release the many crimeless persons who are languishing in prison; he cannot purify politics or sweeten society; he cannot enforce what are said to be his own laws; he cannot keep holy what is said to be his own day; he cannot enlighten the ignorant, enrich the poor, reward the kind, or punish the cruel; he cannot say a word or do a thing to make this sad world brighter, to make life more worth living; he is of no more use to men and women in their personal affairs than if he did not exist.

This modern God is entirely synonymous with what is called Nature, and when you sum up the facts of Nature for every one that betokens intelligence, there is one that indicates lunacy, for every one that betokens kindness there is one that indicates cruelty, so that all ignorant men in making up their religions have inevitably created for themselves both gods and devils. The leading thinkers in the Church to-day are teaching the worship of a God who can do absolutely nothing, and with no more intelligence than is shown in the mechanical movements of matter which now issue in sunshine and now in storm; now in calm and now in earthquake; now in health and now in disease; now in beauty and now in monstrosity; now in sanity and now in lunacy; now in nursing and now in murder; now in life and now in death.

These Freethinking parsons are doing good work in breaking down the people's faith in the old barbarian Jehovah, but it is well to bear in mind that the rickety abstraction they call God is no sort of a substitute for the definite and vigorous Jehovah, and is as worthless for all practical purposes as no God at all. For you cannot worship a being who cannot separate himself from phenomena long enough for you to tell the difference between him and what is not he; you cannot serve a God who cannot tell you what he wants you to do; you cannot be grateful to a God who cannot do one single thing that is helpful to you in time of need.

It need hardly be said that the manlike God whom many persons fancy they serve and worship, is a scientific impossibility; but it is worth while to point out that the utterly indefinable God of the modern theologians is not only a scientific but an emotional impossibility.

The clergy at first gave to the world a God whom the scientists have dethroned as unworthy of attention, and they are now giving us one as filmy as a cloud, and as useless as a pump without a handle.

G. O. WARREN.

When children succumb to inhospitable conditions of life in this world, religion offers consolation in the assurance that God has called these little ones to join the angelic hosts around his throne; if they live to grow up to continued deprivation, religion exhorts them to be content "in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call" them, thus throwing all the responsibility for the world's misery upon an unknown creator, just as the Mormons are said to justify their peculiar institution by the theory that innumerable souls are waiting to be born that they may glorify God and enjoy him forever, and therefore it is well-pleasing to him for human beings to furnish these spirits with mortal bodies as rapidly as possible.—*Elizabeth E. Evans.*

## Acid Drops.

Rev. Dr. Stalker, Professor of Church History, Aberdeen, says that the reason why the Church was so ineffective during the War was that the best men were away at the War. We should not have thought so, but in that case the Army ought to have grown very pious. Perhaps Dr. Stalker will now explain why it is that so many of the soldiers lost their religion during the War? It is quite evident that it would have been better had these leading clergymen stayed at home. The soldiers would not have missed them.

Dr. Stalker says there was a time when Atheistic suggestions were rising in every mind, and it was all the more to be desired that "there should be such a manifest overthrow of the unrighteous and such a glorious coronation of the righteous cause as to arrest universal attention." And he cites a London Judge who said that what struck him was that "the words of Christ stood more firmly than ever, their truth shining in the glare of events." Presumably, he was thinking of "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." And Britain's 800,000 square miles of new territory is a clear example of that. Or, perhaps he saw in our Army of seven millions an illustration of how to turn one cheek when the other is smitten. We should like the name of that judge. The facile division of the righteous on the one side—meaning all the enemy, and the righteous on the other side—meaning all the Allies, is quite charming. And the implication that God kept the War going in order to kill the "Atheistic suggestions that kept rising," puts the finishing touch to as fine a piece of pious humbug as we have seen for some time.

"Alpha Beta," in the *Yorkshire Observer*, says that "the Church has fought vested interests with courage and endurance." We presume that the £270,000 which the Church of England takes in mining royalties from coal is a case in point. Certainly the Church fought other vested interests to get this revenue, and it shows its endurance in sticking to the cash. And the burden of so much wealth must be a grievous one for a Christian Church to bear. We feel very sympathetic.

A picture by Vandyck of Christ as a baby fetched £1,800 at Sotheby's Sale Rooms. According to the Gospels, Jesus was sold, when a man, for thirty pieces of silver.

"Conditions in the other world are remarkably like our own," sagely remarks Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In which case, as Voltaire said: "let us hope that fleas will be self-supporting."

Journalists must often smile at the beautiful nonsense they palm off upon an unsuspecting public. Here is a gem from a leading article in a London daily paper: "The whole fabric of organized Christianity is threatened not so much by scepticism and materialism as by the lack of Christian charity within the Churches."

The tercentenary of the *Mayflower's* famous voyage is being made much of by Free Church writers. Maybe, Non-conformists have reason to admire the Pilgrim Fathers, but there is another view of the matter. Ingersoll said it would have been better for Massachusetts if the Plymouth rock had landed on the Pilgrims rather than that the Pilgrims should have landed on the rock.

Old Froissart remarked caustically that the English took their pleasures sadly. It seems as if the remark was true to-day. Acton Town Council has voted the munificent sum of £150 for providing Sunday music in the local park. We wonder whether it will take the form of a gramophone.

Some one wrote in the *Church Times* that "The whole world consists of creatures which have been given to man for his use." On this Mr. Stephen Coleridge, who believes in a God, writes:—

I do not think that the Tsetse-fly or the man eating tiger were given to man by Almighty God for his use. Almighty

God inspires the Tsetse-fly with an unfortunate desire to spread disease with its proboscis, or whatever it uses for the purpose, and the tiger derives an unpleasant appetite for human flesh from the same source. Yet it would be unreasonable to assume that man was given to the Tsetse-fly and to the tiger for their use

Now, why unreasonable? If God made the tiger with a taste for human flesh, what is there unreasonable in assuming that he made the human flesh to satisfy the appetite? It would have been stupidly brutal to give an animal an appetite for a food it was never intended to have. Mr. Coleridge would be well advised to revise his theistic ideas. For no one can maintain an absurd position without making ridiculous statements.

Dean Inge is one of the ablest and subtlest thinkers in the Anglican Church, and he has the courage of his conviction. The press ridicules him, flings the proverbial bricks at his head, characterizing him as "gloomy," "dismal," "pessimistic," simply because he dares to face the facts, which the majority of the clergy never do. We do not share his opinions, but we hold him in high esteem for his honesty, sincerity, and fearlessness. And is it not true, as he avers, that "it is hardly possible to paint the prospects of civilization in too dark colours"? Is it not incontrovertible that, in the form in which it has hitherto existed, "the age of industrialism, which began about 150 years ago, has received its deathblow"?

The Dean is "quite unable to predict what will be the effect (of the present unrest) upon the Christian religion." He thinks "it is probable that there will be a revival of religion, as there usually is in times of trouble." He may be right; but is he not aware that the ultimate consequence of every revival hitherto has been a weakening of the hold of religion upon the public mind? It has always been a temporary revival of an essentially dying concern.

We noticed last week the police court case in which it was reported that when a man applied to the Salvation Army for work he was offered paper-sorting at 1s. per day. A correspondent of the *Trade World* writes in the issue for July 12: "This, of course, is nothing new, as the Salvation Army have made this kind of labour exploiting a practice for the past twenty years, and, on the other hand, obtained waste free under the guise of charity, though they do not scruple to bid over any merchant or dealer at the houses he clears. That they can well afford to do so is obvious." The methods of the Salvation Army have been exposed again and again, but the game still goes on. We wonder that Trades Unions are so silent on the matter. If it were a trader paying less than Union rates there would be an outcry. But all seem afraid where religion is in question.

Field-Marshal, Sir Douglas Haig, stated the other day that the only hope of securing the permanent peace of the world lies in the Christian religion. If that is true, our poor old world is doomed to be the theatre of endless wars, because, during the last two thousand years, Christianity, so far from making war impossible, has, either directly or indirectly, fostered the warlike spirit, as well as inspired and engineered many of the bloodiest wars on record.

The Archdeacon of Hampstead explained that he has always been a most uncompromising advocate of keeping women in their proper place. Why should the clergy be so jealous? Is it because the holy men wear petticoats themselves?

The Archdeacon of London blessed the bells at St. Clement Danes Church recently. A little time ago the clergy were offering prayers for rain. Quite a busy time reviving the mummeries of the Middle Ages.

Trust in God is supposed to be an infallible cure against suicide. A verdict of suicide was returned at the inquest on the Rev. A. C. H. Hall, Vicar of Turnditch, who shot himself.

That department of the Civil Service known as the Church of England has been trying hard to strengthen its position. The House of Lords has carried the "Church Enabling Bill" which seeks to remove the ecclesiastics further from the light of public opinion.

The Rev. W. Field, of Portsmouth, a former Army Chaplain, who censored thousands of soldiers' letters during the War, says that the correspondence of the English troops was "wretched," and adds, "Germany would be filled with disgust at the educational system. It is a national reflection that we must remove." In the same paper which reports this item of news it is stated that the Huntingdon Educational Authority pays some teachers less than ten shillings a week, and a number less than one pound a week. Doubtless, the Huntingdon Educational Authority is composed of good Christians.

Someone ought to organize the religious lying about the Soviet rule in Russia. When the Russian Church was disestablished we were told that all religious worship was suppressed, and blood-curdling pictures were drawn of the brutal way in which the Bolsheviks were suppressing Church services. Now, we see from the *Church Times* of July 18 that Bishop Bury has quite a different tale to tell. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Anglican and Foreign Church Society, he said that the Society's agent in Moscow, Mr. North, was very highly esteemed by the Bolsheviks, and that although his Church had been raided for securities and valuables which had been stored there, these had later on been returned, and the Church was regaining its hold on the people. And this in Moscow! A city where we were solemnly assured all religious worship had been brutally suppressed! Why, we were at a meeting in the Caxton Hall only a few weeks ago when the Bishop of Birmingham, from the chair, solemnly assured those present that religious worship was forbidden under Bolshevik rule. It is too bad of the *Church Times* to give the game away in this manner.

What absurdities are penned by orthodox writers in defence of their opinions! Writing of Mrs. Annie Besant, in the pages of a literary contemporary, a pious penpusher refers to "her famous association with Charles Bradlaugh" as being "accidental, and a passing phase." Mrs. Besant's association with Bradlaugh and the Freethought Party lasted fifteen years, and no period of her long life was more strenuous, or more effective.

A correspondent writes suggesting that one way in which "Peace day" might have been celebrated would have been for the principal clerics to have assembled in Hyde Park and have made public confession before the people. They should have confessed that they had failed to secure peace, that the brotherhood of man had been made impossible through the hatred fostered by the Churches, that the massacres of the Bible had encouraged the warlike spirit, and had frustrated the real purpose of education in their desire to capture the children in the interests of the Churches. Our correspondent suggests that the meeting might close with a selection read from Shelley's *Queen Mab*. That is quite a nice programme, but it implies rather more feeling for facts than the average clergyman possesses.

Who is responsible for a serious blunder in connection with the Peace parade of the 19th? All sections of the Army were represented, as was only proper. But who was responsible for the omission of a detachment of Army chaplains? The Bishop of London said that only those brought up in Church schools stood the moral strain of the War well. Other clerics have assured us that it was God who gave us the victory, and the nation has been solemnly called to Church to testify to the same truth. So we feel that the clergy ought to have been represented in the procession. When the French, American, British, and other soldiers had passed, there ought to have been a detachment of parsons bearing a banner with the inscription: "The men who really won the War." To praise the Lord for giving us the victory, and to praise the soldiers for winning the War, looks as though we are fooling either the Lord or the Army.

### To Correspondents.

R. NORTON.—Professor Elie Metchnikoff was a Russian, of partly Jewish descent, and an Atheist. He was one of the greatest of micro-biologists during the past fifty years. He was the author of numerous works, but the one that would probably suit you best would be his *Nature of Man*. A cheap edition was issued at, we think, 7s. 6d.

T. ELMES.—Pleased to learn that your newsagent has secured several new readers through displaying this paper. The more readers we get the better.

N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Miss E. Thornton, 10s.

T. SHARP.—Obliged for cutting. One can do almost anything with impunity so long as one works under the guide of religion. And the swindle of religious philanthropy is the easiest of all games to work.

In response to our enquiry on behalf of a reader as to a good book on the Russian Greek Church, a correspondent advises *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, by A. Fortescue, published by Washbourne.

MARY LESTER.—Is not the notion of a Woman's Column in a paper just a little derogatory to women? It usually means writing about cooking, dresses, and the like, with the assumption that these are the only things women will take an interest in. Now, we do really believe in sexual equality, and for that reason we are not in a hurry to label one part of the *Freethinker* "For Women Only." In the best sense of the word, we hope that the *Freethinker* is a woman's paper. And we know that we have women amongst our warmest supporters. We should like more woman writers, but we cannot order them. We can only welcome them when they turn up. We write for neither men nor women specifically, but for both.

R. NISBET.—Pleased you think the last few numbers of the *Freethinker* among the best that have appeared. We do our best to keep the level high.

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### Sugar Plums.

Owing to the strike on the North Eastern Railway, we were unable to dispatch our weekly parcel of papers to the Newcastle-on-Tyne district. We are now able to send on the parcels to the distributing agents, but Tyneside readers will understand why the issue for July 20 was not forthcoming. Presumably they will be able to get the missing number through their customary channels, but if any difficulty is experienced, we shall be pleased if they will write us direct.

We publish this week a new booklet by Mr. Cohen, entitled *Creed and Character: the Influence of Religion on Racial Life*. When so much is being said about the biological and racial value of religious beliefs, a treatise such as this one is certain to prove both useful and enlightening. The

myth of the biological value of the Jewish religion is dealt with in a special chapter, and the case of Spain offers a first class proof of the way in which Christianity, if left uncontrolled, makes for the ruin of a nation. The booklet is well printed, and neatly bound in a coloured wrapper. The published price is 7d., postage 1½d. extra. This is practically pre-War price, despite the fact that the cost of production is more than double what it was.

The house in which Thomas Paine lived in New York during parts of 1808 and 1809 is still standing, but was in danger of demolition. We see from the *Truthseeker* that this danger has now been averted through the action of Mr. J. B. Cuneo, who has secured the house on a three years' lease. Perhaps by the end of that time some wealthy American admirer of Paine may see his way to purchase the building, and so preserve it from destruction. We hope to be able to make an interesting announcement concerning Paine to our own readers before long.

Like all other advanced papers, the *Truthseeker* has had a hard time, and we see that some of its readers are taking a hint offered by one of our own correspondents some time ago concerning the *Freethinker*. This was for provincial readers to take advantage of the cheap rates of local papers and insert small advertisements at their own expense. We hope the *Truthseeker* will fall in with the suggestion. It is quite a good one.

Readers will find in another column a new translation of one of Voltaire's essays which we think has not before appeared in English—certainly there has been none since the eighteenth century, when quite a number of Voltaire's works were translated. We believe, from the appreciation with which our re-issue of Voltaire's *Dictionary* has been received, that the translation will be read with pleasure. Other of Voltaire's short stories will appear from time to time. The translations will be by Mr. George Underwood.

A pleasant tribute to the sympathetic kindness of George Eliot is gratefully recorded by Sir Charles Walston (Waldstein) in his rather wooden contribution to the subject of moral reconstruction. Like many people, she was, no doubt, amiable enough in personal intercourse, and in certain moods might even suffer fools gladly, but we are inclined to think that if she had had occasion to review a screed-like "Aristodemocracy" in the *Westminster*, Sir Charles would have been blistered with the critical vitriol she reserved for inept and ineffective work. However this is what he remembers of her:—

I had come to England as a very young man from a continuous stay of over three years at several German Universities, speaking and reading nothing but German, and dwelling exclusively in an atmosphere of German thought, and had seriously impaired the spontaneity of expression in my native tongue. I shall never forget how, when in this disconcerting position among my elders and intellectual superiors, I ventured haltingly and blunderingly to express my own opinions, she would come to my rescue, and, with delicate tact, suffused with kindness and with penetrative intellectual sympathy, and with her mellow voice and mellifluous though precise diction, would give perfect, lucid form to my own involved thoughts—leaving me with increased self-confidence, almost proud of the pertinence and importance of my own remarks.

Of the pertinence and importance of her remarks, Sir Charles seems never to have been sceptical. What he has always lacked is the ability to express his ideas with clearness and in order. The interpretative assistance of George Eliot may have clarified them at the moment, but we are pretty certain that they began to thicken the moment her influence was withdrawn.

We received a request the other day from the New York Public Library asking if we would supply them with copies of the *Freethinker* weekly. We readily agreed, and have no objection to supplying other public institutions that do not already take the paper.

## The Old Testament.

### I.

#### PRIMITIVE RECORDS.

IN these days, even those divines who uphold the divine inspiration and absolute truth of the New Testament commonly prefer to waive similar claims on behalf of the Old. Here and there, among the more brainless of the clergy, or in isolated parts of the country, one still finds people who regard the whole Bible as one book, "the word of God," and every text from it as equally authoritative and infallible. The general trend, however, is to class the first ten chapters of Genesis, anyhow, as an "allegory," and to represent the rest of the Old Testament as depicting the growth of religion from a rudimentary and barbaric form to the perfect article.

The real fact, however, is that we find in the Old Testament, not the development of an enlightened form of religion from an unenlightened, but the conquest and supersession of a savage tribal cult, comparable to that of savages everywhere, by a totally different principle, viz., Puritanical Monotheism, the precursor of later Judaism and of Islam. Not many, even of those who admit this, realize the extreme crudity and savagery of the religious conceptions in the early parts of the Old Testament. Much of their crudity has been carefully edited away by the compilers of the books as they now stand; but much has been allowed to remain, as we shall see.

The earliest stratum of Old Testament literature, of which long continuous portions survive, is that strand of narrative known to the critics as "J." Every student knows that the historical books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Kings, are compilations from various distinct sources. This is evident even to those ignorant of Hebrew, if the creative narrative of Genesis i.-ii. is examined. It will be perceived that these are not one, but two narratives—one reaching from the beginning of the book to verse 4 of chapter ii. (this verse has been edited to dovetail the two sources) and the other proceeding from verse 4 on. The first-named narrative relates the successive stages of the creation, beginning with heaven and earth and ending with man, in stiff, crabbed, and precise language, marked by certain recurring phrases almost amounting to mannerisms ("And God said," "and it was so," "after its kind," "be fruitful and multiply," "herb yielding seed," and so forth). The deity in this narrative is simply called "God." The second story, in chapter ii. 4-end, gives a totally different account, in which man is made immediately after earth and heaven, and *before* the plants and animals. The style of this second narrative is not at all stiff, but graphic and flowing; and the deity is always referred to in it as "the God Yahweh" (mistranslated "the Lord God" in our Bibles). These two sources, with others which enter later, persist side by side down to the Book of Joshua. The stiff, formal source is called by critics "P," or the Priests' Book, and need concern us no further at present. The other one is called "J," because of the use of the name Jahveh or Yahweh from the beginning. It may be dated with fair certainty in the ninth century B.C.

The theology of "J" is very different from Monotheism as we conceive it. Its Yahweh is a man, vastly magnified in power, but with the human weaknesses of jealousy, spite, and ill-temper. He walks in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day (Gen. iii. 8); turns out Adam and Eve to prevent them from becoming immortal like himself (iii. 22); scatters the builders of the tower of Babel out of obvious fear of what they may do next (xi. 6); visits Abraham, in company with two

fellow-travellers, and has dinner with him (xviii. 1-8); wrestles with Jacob, and wins by a foul (xxxii. 24-30); unaccountably tries to kill Moses (Ex. iv. 24); and so on. To the same order of thought, though possibly not to the same writer, belong the passages in the later history which represent Yahweh as slaughtering people for looking into his box (1 Sam. vi. 19), or even for helping to steady it (2 Sam. vi. 6-7). In these parts of the Old Testament, Yahweh is simply a fierce and irresistible warrior-chief, invaluable as an ally in war, but most uncomfortable as a constant associate.

But crude as this idea is, there are abundant signs that it developed out of yet cruder and more brutal superstitions. Yahweh was originally, it is clear, worshipped with human sacrifices. The episode of Jephthah's daughter (Judges xi. 30-40), which the narrator relates without a single word of censure or hint that such an event was in any way unusual, is an instance. So is the story in 2 Sam. xxi., where David, during a famine, has seven of Saul's family "hanged before Yahweh" at harvest-time, evidently in order to improve the next crop. In Exodus xiii. 12-13, we read that the firstborn, both of animals and of human beings, are Yahweh's: the firstborn of animals are to be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb, or else to be killed; the firstborn son of a family is to be redeemed. This points to an earlier practice of killing *all* firstborn, human and animal, to propitiate Yahweh.

The national deity of Israel, therefore, was not a whit superior in this respect to Molech, Chemosh, and other Semitic tribal gods. Indeed, he very clearly began as simply one of them. There are traces in "J" of an early conception of Yahweh, not as *the god par excellence*, but as a member of a polytheistic pantheon. When, after Adam has eaten the forbidden fruit, Yahweh says, "Behold, the man is become as one of *us*, to know good and evil"; when he says of Babel: "Go to, let *us* go down, and there confound their language," the plural pronoun implies the presence of other gods. When Abraham is visited by three strangers, one of whom proves to be Yahweh, who are the other two? In the narrative as it stands, they are ostensibly "angels," or mere attendants of the god. But the three are first introduced without any suggestion that one is greater than the other two. It is plain that Abraham's guests, in the original story, were three gods, and that two of them were reduced to "angels" in the interests of a later Monotheism. The theory of some Christian commentators, that these passages refer to the three persons of the Trinity, may be noted as an amusing instance of the lengths to which apologists will go!

Theology, however, is not the main concern of writers of this early school. Their chief purpose is to tell the story of their country and people. The deity figures, naturally, in the creation narrative, and in the stories of the patriarchs, or eponymous founders of the race, who are considered as privileged personages on easy terms with divinity. But the prevailing spirit of these histories is secular. "J" relates the adventures of the patriarchs without idealizing them, or representing them as anything but men with their full share of weakness, meanness, and cowardice. When we come to historical times, we find the narratives of Saul's and David's reigns very little taken up with religion, but concerned chiefly with David's adventures as an outlaw, and his victorious wars, and growing tyranny and sensuality, after his accession to the throne. The impression we get of the period is that of a set of savage desert tribes penetrating and settling down in Palestine, living there under rudimentary forms of government, practising a cruel and superstitious religion at local shrines under the guidance of an hereditary caste of medicine-men, and in time



coalescing, under pressure of disaster in war, into a typical Oriental kingdom ruled by typical Oriental tyrants. After two or three generations, the kingdom falls to pieces through successful revolt, and the fragments (Israel and Judah) after a century or two more, come within the orbit of the great empire of Assyria and lose their independence.

Judaism, as we know it, and consequently also its offshoots, Christianity and Islam, owe their origin to the "prophets." We meet with "prophets" first in 1 Sam. x. 5-13, where they appear as a class of eccentrics, who go about in bands, ranting and playing pipes and tambourines. Like all insane or half-witted people in the East, they enjoyed a certain consideration, but it was not considered respectable to join them. (The question, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" proves this—the meaning being, "Fancy a respectable, solid member of society behaving like that!") The name "prophet," in its original sense, has nothing to do with foretelling the future; in 1 Sam. ix. 9, the professional foreteller, or "seer," is distinguished from the ranter or "prophet," though the two were later confused.

In the later period of the kingdom, however, we find the prophets developing from a scattered class of eccentrics into a powerful religious and political party. The cause of this is to be sought in the social evolution of the country. The course of time had developed deep antagonisms and conflicts between rich and poor, court and people, priests and laity. The poorer Israelitish peasant resented the encroachments of his rich neighbours; the masses resented the luxury and oppression of the kings; the laity resented the impositions and extortions of the priesthood. The prophets began to take part in the fray, naturally on the side of the classes from whom they mostly sprang. They became a sect, Puritanical and aggressive, with leaders, literature, and martyrology of their own. The half-legendary figures of Elijah and Elisha, whatever may be their historical basis, roughly represent the typical prophet of the ninth century B.C., opposing and bearding the court, flouting the official worship, and occasionally engineering a successful revolution.

ROBERT ARCH.

## The Science of the Ultra-Material.

### IV.

(Continued from p. 356.)

A FINAL question remains to be considered, and a possible misconception guarded against. In the first place it may be asked, Why should a process of evolution from stable to unstable equilibrium take place at all? While a fall from instability to stable equilibrium may be inevitable, and might thus be logically admitted, it is by no means obvious how, after a condition of stable equilibrium has been reached, there can be initiated the reverse process of a rise from this condition to instability again. Indeed, the second process seems to stand in direct opposition to the first, both physically and logically.

The first reply to this objection is that, whether or not we can understand the cause of the process, there is no doubt that it does take place. All material evolution, from elementary atoms, through chemical compounds and colloidal substances, to protoplasm and psychoplasm does undoubtedly manifest a progressive advance from stable to unstable equilibrium. And as to its explanation, we must remember that the energy equilibria of matter are not absolutely but only relatively stable. A material atom of even the most stable constitution is not something inert and passive, wherein kinetic energy

has ceased, but a reservoir of immense potentiality in which kinetic energy has been temporarily locked up. Indeed, some physicists now believe that all matter, whether simple or compound, dissociates itself spontaneously—that is, that matter in whatever form is to some extent, though in most cases to an inconceivably slight extent, radio-active. Thus, even if we were to presume the possible existence of a material universe of one elementary substance only, where no chemical combinations could ever take place to initiate the breakdown of equilibrium, this inherent tendency to dissociation by a process of radio-activity would eventually achieve the rise from stable equilibrium to complete instability. For there is no such condition as rest in Nature. The movement of substance is universal, eternal, and inevitable, and every mode of existence is but a mode in which this primordial energy passes from the kinetic to the potential form, and *vice versa*.

Secondly, it may be asked, if evolution be interpreted as a fall from instability to stable equilibrium, followed by a rise from stable equilibrium to instability again in the extremely unstable equilibria of sentient protoplasm, this must imply that the end of the evolutionary cycle is of like nature with its beginning. And if the state of instability at the end of the cycle be associated with Mind, should we not conclude that the state of instability at its beginning is associated with Mind also? In fact, does not this view of the evolutionary process give support to the Spiritualism of religious systems, and the idealism of the numerous philosophies, which see in the processes of the material world a manifestation of a spiritual world, and find the origin of the universe in a Divine intelligence?

This conclusion, plausible though it may appear at first sight, is totally unwarranted as it rests on a misconception of the premises. The end of the evolutionary process is *not* of like nature with its beginning, but on the contrary the two are sharply contrasted. The instability associated with Mind is conditioned by a fall from equilibrium—a breakdown of a pre-existing equilibrium; while the instability of the primordial energy is a condition prior to all equilibrium—a state from which equilibrium develops. The evolution of Mind takes place by and through the progressive changes in the equilibria of Matter—it is a phase of material, not of proto-material, evolution. The energy functions of sentient protoplasm are functions directly dependent on the energy functions of matter, and the fact that Mind is never known to us apart from Matter finds its explanation in the obvious truism that there cannot be a *breakdown of equilibrium* unless a state of equilibrium exists to undergo that breakdown.

Hence, though matter can no longer be regarded as an ultimate reality, and though Mind and Matter must both be regarded as functions of energy, yet Matter is the primary function and Mind the secondary function. Matter, therefore, holds the priority over Mind in the evolutionary order, and stands towards Mind in the relation of cause to effect, the underlying nexus between them being the energy of which both are functions. This is the only position which "Materialism" can now scientifically take up, and in this position it must ever remain unassailable.

### EQUILIBRIUM AND NATURAL LAW.

The kinetic theory of matter suggests some considerations of the utmost importance regarding those causal sequences collectively called the Laws of Nature, which, under the new aspect furnished by this theory, may be defined as the necessary and invariable functions or activities manifested by the different orders of energy equilibrium.

Such considerations are of great interest at the present time, as it is undeniable that of recent years certain philosophers and a few mystically minded scientists, openly abandoning all further attempts at a unification of natural law, are seeking refuge in what is known as Neo-vitalism—which is nothing more than the old vitalism in a new dress. According to the apostles of this cult, the laws of life and mind can never be expressed in terms of the laws of matter and force, and we must therefore conclude that the former contain something totally different from, and of a higher order, than the latter. Hence they suggest that for life and mind to have become evolved some new Principle of Vitality or Mentality must have entered into matter and given rise to an order of phenomena transcending the physical order and incapable of ever being affiliated with it.

We have now to see what the kinetic theory of matter—which some of these philosophers cite in support of their Neo-vitalism—has to say on this subject. We shall find reason for concluding that though the premise above stated contains a partial truth—viz., that the laws of life and mind cannot be *directly* affiliated to those of matter—the inference drawn from it is quite unwarranted, and that, so far from necessitating a belief in the duality of natural law, the kinetic theory of matter affords ground for a wider, deeper, and more complete unification of natural law. For if matter itself be not a fundamental or ultimate existence, but only a form, and that not a permanent form, of energy equilibrium, the laws of matter cannot be regarded as fundamental either; and thus a failure to assimilate the laws of life and mind to those of matter does not demand the assumption of a new fundamental law, but merely throws the unification further back, and necessitates the search for a wider and more comprehensive law embracing both sets of phenomena.

A. E. MADDOCK.

(To be continued.)

## Pages from Voltaire.

### AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION.

LUCIAN, ERASMUS, RABELAIS.

Scene: *The Elysion Fields.*

SOME while ago Lucian made the acquaintance of Erasmus, notwithstanding his distaste for everything that arrived from the confines of Germany. It was an idea of his that no Greek ought to lower himself by conversing with a Batavian; but as this particular Batavian appeared an amusing and sociable sort of dead fellow he waived his objections, and they exchanged ideas and opinions.

*Lucian.*—So you practised the same profession in your barbarous country as I did in the most civilized country in the world; you held up all things to ridicule.

*Erasmus.*—Alas! no; that was certainly my desire. It would have been the greatest of consolations for me, a poor theologian; but I was not in your position; I could not take the same liberties.

*Lucian.*—You surprise me: men rather like a general indictment of their ineptitudes and fatuities, provided you fasten them on to no one in particular; every one then applies to his neighbours his own ridiculous qualities, and all men laugh at the expense of the others. Was it not then the same with your contemporaries?

*Erasmus.*—There was an enormous difference between the stupid people of your time and of mine. You had to deal only with the gods that you put on the stage, and with philosophers who had even less credit than the gods; but I was surrounded by fanatics. I had to be very

careful if I did not want to be burnt by the one or assassinated by the others.

*Lucian.*—How could you laugh with such an alternative before you?

*Erasmus.*—I can assure you that I seldom laughed; I passed for being far more amusing than I really was. People thought me light-hearted and witty because at that time every one was depressed. Their minds were occupied with crude ideas that induced a sombre melancholy. Every one who thought that a body could be in two places at once was ready to cut the throat of a man who would explain the same thing in a different manner. What was worse was that a man of my way of thinking, a man who could not accept either party, was regarded as a monster.

*Lucian.*—What outlandish creatures your barbarians must have been! In my time the Goths and Mesogoths were more polite and more reasonable. And what, may I ask, was your profession in your detestable country?

*Erasmus.*—I was a Dutch monk.

*Lucian.*—A monk! What sort of profession is that?

*Erasmus.*—It is that of having no profession, of swearing by an inviolable oath to be useless to the human race, to be ridiculous and a slave, and to live at the expense of others.

*Lucian.*—What a scandalous profession! How could you with your wit choose a state of existence that dishonours human nature? Putting on one side your living at the expense of others; how would you renounce your common sense and liberty?

*Erasmus.*—I was a mere child, and I had neither father nor mother. I allowed myself to be led away by the beggars who were seeking to increase their numbers.

*Lucian.*—What! are there many men of that sort?

*Erasmus.*—In Europe there were some six or seven hundred thousand.

*Lucian.*—You amaze me! The world has become much more stupid and barbarous since I left it. Horace told us that the world was going from worse to worse:

*Progeniem vitiosiore.*

*Erasmus.*—My consolation is that, in my time, men had mounted to the last rung in the ladder of madness. They must come down again, and there will be some that will at last regain a little of the common sense they had lost.

*Lucian.*—I doubt it very much. Tell me, if you don't mind, what were the outstanding follies of your time?

*Erasmus.*—I have here a list that I always carry with me; you may read it.

*Lucian.*—It's a very long one. (*Lucian reads and bursts out laughing; Rabelais enters.*)

*Rabelais.*—Gentlemen, when men are laughing I never feel myself out of place; what were you laughing at?

*Lucian and Erasmus.*—Absurdities.

*Rabelais.*—Is that so, then I'm your man.

*Lucian to Erasmus.*—Who is this eccentric person?

*Erasmus.*—He is a man who was more courageous than I, and more amusing; but he was only a priest, and could take more liberty than a monk.

*Lucian to Rabelais.*—Did you vow, like Erasmus here, to live at the expense of other people?

*Rabelais.*—In a double sense, for I was both a priest and a physician. I was born with a large bump of wisdom. I became as learned as Erasmus; and seeing how wisdom and science commonly ended either in the hospital or on the gallows, and with the knowledge that even this semi-amusing Erasmus was sometimes persecuted, I took it into my head to be more of a madman than all my countrymen put together. I wrote a big book of equivocal cock-and-bull stories, chock-full of indecencies, in which I ridiculed all superstitions, all

ceremonies, all that my country revered, all conditions, from that of the king and that of the supreme pontiff to that of the doctor of theology, who is the last of all. I dedicated my book to a cardinal, I provoked the laughter even of those who despised me.

*Lucian.*—What is a Cardinal, Erasmus?

*Erasmus.*—He is a priest in a red robe, who has an income of a hundred thousand crowns for doing nothing at all.

*Lucian.*—You will at least admit that these Cardinals were reasonable. It seems to me that all your countrymen were not such madmen as you would have me believe.

*Erasmus.*—With Master Rabelais' permission I will put in a word. The Cardinals had their own form of madness—that of dominating, and as it is much easier to tyrannize over fools than over rational human beings, they wanted to make short work of reason the moment it gave signs of raising its head. Master Rabelais, as you see, imitated the first Brutus, who pretended to be mad, to escape the suspicion and tyranny of the Tarquins.

*Lucian.*—All you have said confirms me in my opinion that it was better to live in my time than in yours. The Cardinals of whom you are speaking were the masters of the whole world, since they commanded the madmen.

*Rabelais.*—Not so; there was an old madman in the midst of them.

*Lucian.*—What was he called?

*Rabelais.*—A *papegaut*. The insanity of this man lay in his giving out that he was infallible, and the master of all temporal rulers; he had said this so often, repeated it so often, and proclaimed it by his monks, that in the end all Europe believed it.

*Lucian.*—Ah, how greatly you have the advantage over us in mere insanity! The stories about Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, which I was never tired of ridiculing, were quite respectable in comparison with the cock-and-bull legends with which your age was infatuated. I cannot understand how you were able to succeed in ridiculing, with safety, people who ought to fear ridicule even more than treason. For we do not scoff at our masters with impunity; believe me, I was wise enough not to say a single word about the Roman Emperors. What are you telling me; your nation worshipped a *papegaut*? You heap all imaginable ridicule on this *papegaut*, and your nation suffered you to do so. It must have been very patient.

*Rabelais.*—You must allow me to give you an idea of what my nation was. It was made up of ignorance, superstition, cruelty, stupidity, and malevolent division. It began by hanging and roasting all those who spoke seriously against the *papegauts* and Cardinals. My native country, that of the Welch, was deluged in blood; but while the executions were going on the nation danced, sang, laughed, got drunk, and made love. I took my compatriots on their weak side; I talked about drinking, I revelled in obscenity; and under this mask I could say whatever I had a mind to. Men of intelligence understood my method and knew what I wanted to say; grosser minds were contented with the flavour of the obscenities. Far from being persecuted, I was loved by everyone.

*Lucian.*—You make me quite curious to see your book. Have you got a copy in your pocket? And you, Erasmus, will you not lend me your amusing volumes?

(Here Erasmus and Rabelais present their work to Lucian, who reads a passage here and there; and, while he reads, the two philosophers talk.)

*Rabelais to Erasmus.*—I have read your books, though you have not read mine, because I came here a little later than you. You were, perhaps, just a little too reserved in your ridicule, and I a little too daring in mine; but at

this moment we both think the same. As for me, I laugh when I see a doctor arrive in this land of ours.

*Erasmus.*—And I do but pity him. I say: "Here is an unhappy man who all his life has been wearying himself with self-deception, and who will gain nothing here by getting rid of his errors."

*Rabelais.*—What are you saying? Is it a small thing to be undeceived?

*Erasmus.*—It is certainly a small thing when you can no longer deceive others. The great pleasure is to point out the way to our friends who have gone astray, but the dead need no direction from any of us.

Erasmus and Rabelais went on arguing for a long time. Lucian returned to them when he had read the chapter on the *Torcheeul's* (*Gargantua*, chap. xiii.), and a few pages of the *Praise of Folly*. Afterwards they happened to meet Swift and the four of them went to supper together.

Englished by GEO. UNDERWOOD.

## 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.): No Service.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Band Stand): 6.15, Mrs. Rosetti, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 6, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, A Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S. 3.15, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "The Cost of Christianity"; and Mr. R. Norman.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): Mr. Edmund Burke, 3.15, "The Saviours of Humanity"; 6, "The Essence of Freethought and Secularism."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. T. J. Thurlow, A Lecture.

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### COUNTRY.

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