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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>The Bible in the Schools.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	385
<i>The Futility of Supernatural Belief.—J. T. Lloyd</i> . . . . .	386
<i>The Lesson of Louth.—Mimmermus</i> . . . . .	388
<i>Science and the Occult.—W. Mann</i> . . . . .	389
<i>The Shadow of the Cross.—H. C. Mellor</i> . . . . .	390
<i>Pages from Voltaire.—George Underwood</i> . . . . .	394
<i>The Fourth Age.—William Repton</i> . . . . .	395
<i>Man and Morals.—C. C.</i> . . . . .	397
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### The Bible in the Schools.

It is quite unnecessary for a Freethinker writing for Freethinkers to stress the value of the services rendered by Professor Huxley to his generation in the cause of science. No man did more to make science attractive to the "man in the street," so far as he could be induced to take an interest in it. But when that has been said, it remains true that Huxley exemplified in many ways the well-marked tendency of British publicists to "hedge" when it comes to making a definite break with religious beliefs, with its alternative of identification with a really definite form of Freethought. This tendency was seen in his coinage of the word "Agnosticism" (a quite needless labour, since "Atheism" was already in the field, and was being championed at the time by Bradlaugh), the only real purpose of which appeared to be to mark him off from those who were bearing the brunt of the attack from organized religion. It was seen also in his curious fencing over the miraculous, and also in his dealing with the Bible in the schools. This latter question is likely soon to emerge as a matter for political discussion, and comment on it is challenged by the publication of a Life by Huxley's son, the appearance of which was noted in our last issue. With a devotion quite excusable in the son of so illustrious a father, Dr. Huxley restates Professor Huxley's reasons for retaining the Bible in the schools, but he is annoyed at the Religious Tract Society publishing his father's eulogy of the Bible as an aid to raising money. The truth is that, in our opinion, the logic of the situation rests with the Religious Tract Society, and their action should be a warning to public men to refrain from going out of their way to praise forms of belief that are already established and are not in need of assistance. A little greater readiness to point out to the public the good features of movements that are struggling for existence would be much more in the general interest.

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### A Lost Opportunity.

Huxley's well-used panegyric—the religious world saw to that—of the Bible was published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1870, and is reprinted in the third volume of his collected works. It is, again, a curious thing that one of the best attacks made on religion in

the schools, by Lord Morley, has *not* been reissued in his collected works, while this wholly indefensible plea by Huxley for the retention of the Bible in schools is given whatever immortality reproduction can confer upon it. Our readers will remember that 1870 marks the passing of the Elementary Education Act, when for the first time the Government undertook the full responsibility of seeing that the children of the country were given the beginnings of an education. Quite naturally, the Church was averse to education being taken from their control, but were equally desirous that in such circumstances the children should be given a sound religious education. Anything else could wait. Now, it is extremely probable that in 1870 the country was nearer adopting a policy of Secular Education in the schools than it had ever been before or has been since. It was generally expected that if religion was set up in the schools it would be the religion of the State Church. The expectation was reasonable, since only English politicians could be expected to combine that mixture of nonsense and hypocrisy which says that while the State Church preached the true religion, the Government was willing to teach in the schools something different. Nonconformists, who by their professions were committed to the policy of the non-interference of the State in the matter of religion, were also prepared for Secular Education. This might have become an accomplished fact but for the suggestion of the famous "compromise," which amounted to teaching a form of religion that suited nearly all Christians, and never bothered about the opinions of non-Christians. The country was thus divided into two camps. On one side stood the majority—made up of Churchmen, and those Nonconformists who were ready to sell themselves for any advantage the State could offer—and on the other side the few Nonconformists who remained true to principle, a few Churchmen who objected to the State teaching the mongrel form of religion decided on, and the body of Freethinkers. This last formed the party of Secular Education. And with a man of Professor Huxley's opinions it seemed clear as to which party he *ought* to have joined. What he did surprised many at the time, and it has surprised many since.

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### Compromise or Surrender?

Professor Huxley was a candidate at the first School Board election. A little while before the election he wrote an article for the *Contemporary Review* on "The School Boards: What They Can Do, and What They May Do." The article would not have appeared until after the elections, but the editor sent some passages from it to the papers, and among them those on the Bible. In order to understand Huxley's position as he himself stated it, it will be necessary to quote at length. There are, he says, two parties, the advocates of secular and of religious education:—

And both parties seem to me to be not only hopelessly wrong but in such a position that if either succeeded completely, it would discover before many years were

over that it had made a great mistake and done serious evil to the cause of education.....My belief is that, no human being, and no society composed of human beings, ever did, or ever will, come to much, unless their conduct was governed and guided by the love of some ethical ideal.....And if I were compelled to choose for one of my own children between a school in which real religious instruction was given, and one without it, I should prefer the former, even though the child might have to take a good deal of theology with it.

In explaining and justifying his father's position Dr. Huxley says that to him religion meant "the love of some ethical ideal to govern and guide conduct." And, again, that he believed "the principle of strict secularism in State education, was sound and must ultimately prevail, while Professor Huxley, in a letter dated 1894, says that the compromise was agreed to for the sake of "giving the rudiments of a decent education to several generations of people." But if the reader will glance at the quotation given above he will see that the two positions are not reconcilable. In 1870 Huxley's condemnation of the "secular" plan was absolute. There was the distinct prophecy that if the "secular" party triumphed they would discover before many years that they had done serious evil to the cause of education. We all know that the exact reverse has been the case, and that a straight fight in 1870, with a refusal to compromise, would have prevented nearly two generations of sordid squabbling and educational obstruction. The two positions were quite irreconcilable, and Dr. Huxley would have been well advised to let it go at that. Professor Huxley, in 1870, declared emphatically that both parties in the dispute were "hopelessly in the wrong," and it is impossible to reconcile so definite a statement with the claim made twenty-four years later that he was accepting a compromise "in respect of certain matters about which the contending parties were absolutely irreconcilable." It was, as John Morley pointed out, not a compromise at all. It was surrendering the position to the enemy.

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That "Blessed" Word.

The distinction which Professor Huxley draws between religion and theology, the definition of religion as consisting in "its unchanging essence" of "love of some ethical ideal," and the assertion that Secularists have so far misunderstood their own position as to "Demand the abolition of all religious teaching when they only want to be free of theology," are among the things that one expects from a Christian Evidence platform rather than from a man of Professor Huxley's calibre. Has a religion ever existed without a theology? Can one think of a religion existing and being reduced to practice without a theology? And if religion consists in the "love of some ethical ideal," is not the formulation of the ethical ideal a theology? Two or three simple questions are enough to destroy the glamour of such verbal juggling. The definition of religion is quite false, and no one should have realized its falsity better than Professor Huxley. Will any responsible person argue seriously to-day that the religion of savages is motivated by the love of some ethical ideal? It is a commonplace amongst anthropologists to-day that religion has in its beginnings no moral element at all; that it only arises later when the social forces come into play and modify religious conceptions in terms of the existing ethical development. One wonders what would have happened to a student who had come before Huxley and had defined man as a being who lived in brick houses. And yet it would not have been wider of the truth than is the definition of religion as devotion to some ethical ideal, because in these later days people have become ashamed of the real essence of religion and are clinging to its accidents. It is really

this kind of thing that in this country robs the attack on religion of a great deal of its force, and often heartens the enemy while disheartening one's friends. What is the use of, in these times, attacking supernaturalism, while professing a belief in some undefined mystical religion, of which we all the time hint that the people we are attacking are the custodians? Religion roots itself in supernaturalism. Retain that and you are warranted in claiming to have a religion. Reject that and your profession of religion is a product of sheer sentimentalism, or of confused thinking, or a convenient concession to an enemy to whom no quarter should be given. The expression "real religious instruction" is, when used in connection with the subject Huxley was discussing, pure verbiage. If such teaching as the existence and the providence of God does not come under the heading of "theological dogmas which their tender age prevents them from understanding," then language has lost its meaning for certainly one adult.

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We will deal with Professor Huxley's praise of the Bible next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Futility of Supernatural Belief.

THE Right Rev. J. O. Feetham, D.D., Bishop of North Queensland, recently preached a sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral, on "Our Need of the Supernatural." His lordship is a superlatively emotional divine, with very little if any sense of the value of evidence, and certainly with no logical skill whatever. His chief characteristics as a divine are credulity and the love of mystery. Sir William Hamilton says: "That implicit credulity is the mark of a feeble mind will not be disputed." Whether that is true of the Bishop or not, there is no doubt but that the right reverend gentleman revels in the realm of Christian mysteries. The discourse opens, however, with the admission that men "shrink from that which involves an appeal to the mysterious, to the unseen," and long unspeakably for a life based on plain common sense. In Australia, as well as in Great Britain, the great prevailing cry of men is to be allowed to live and move and have their being within the limits of the natural. They are represented as saying to the clergy: "Don't ask us to venture into the supernatural world." This is described as "a very common sort of request made to the clergy." The Bishop adds:—

It is often made to me in Australia by those who are, so to speak, masters of Israel, men of high position, very likely with responsibilities, anxious to secure the best possible control of the world's industry and to get over the serious social problems that beset them. "Give us good, plain, straightforward, simple religion that we can all understand, good, downright rules of conduct that we can all follow.

On one point the Bishop is perfectly right. In no generally accepted meaning of the term can there be a plain, commonsense religion, for religion is, in its very nature, a supernatural concern. It begins and ends with God and his relations with the world. Of course, the people of whom the Bishop speaks are nearly all more or less nearly or remotely connected with the Church, with whom religious traditions still count, and to whom the parson still seems the most competent person to deal with such matters. The tens of thousands who have entirely discarded supernatural belief never appeal to the clergy for guidance, or any other form of help. Such people, among whom are scientists, men of letters, lawyers, doctors, and here and there a clergyman—such

people, if they were to approach the ordinary orthodox divine, could not make their position intelligible to him. The votaries of supernatural faith cannot understand the champions of natural knowledge.

But how does the Bishop meet those countless multitudes who are repelled by the supernatural? He does not even attempt to meet them; he merely points them to the Holy Trinity as being in itself the adequate solution of every problem. Here we find the primitive medicine man *redivivus* with a vengeance. To those who are unutterably sick and tired of the supernatural the biggest possible dose of it is recommended as their only infallible cure. "If we first gaze upon the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit," he tells us, "we shall then be able to attempt the duties of human life, we shall then begin to understand what is the meaning of God's ordering of this world, of your life and mine, and of mankind all around us." Then he depicts the astronomer as he investigates with his ever-increasingly powerful telescope and photographic apparatus, and makes more and more wonderful discoveries in the unfathomable depth of glory thus revealed to him; and this happy experience of the astronomer he utilizes as a poor illustration of how "we are permitted to gaze further and further into the sublime depths of God's glorious being, and to learn more and more what he is in relation to ourselves, and to mankind, and all the world, and to accept with all our hearts the supernatural, to accept the miraculous, to seek for works of power that go beyond man's understanding." The biggest dullard alive can see that there is not the remotest analogy between the work of the astronomer and that of the theologian. The former proceeds on strictly scientific lines, while the latter has nothing to guide him but his own imagination and that of his fore-runners in the same field of fiction. And yet his lordship warns us that if we refuse to gaze upon the ineffable glory of the Holy Trinity "we shall be overcome with the burden of human life, we shall be lost in confusion."

The Bishop is aware that there are those who cavil at and deride the sublime doctrine of the Trinity, but from the serene heights of his credulity he can afford to smile complacently at their futile behaviour. Why, according to him, the doctrine of the Trinity is a philosophical necessity. The Trinity forms a perfect society, and is the pattern of what all other societies ought to be. In Mr. Bradley's philosophy, however, there is no Trinity, but only the impersonal Absolute. In Dean Inge's theology the Trinity is simply a speculative conception, of which there is no trace in the Bible, although there are expressions in it upon which a speculative Church could and did fruitfully work. The work soon developed into a ferocious and long-continued warfare. It was the Trinitarian Controversy that rent the Church in twain, and the rent remains unrepaired to this day. It was the hottest, bitterest, and most ravaging dispute in which the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus were ever involved, and it is not over yet. A prominent British Trinitarian divine has repeatedly declared that he could not join hands in any form of Christian work with a Unitarian, at which determination, knowing the history of the strife, one is not in the least surprised. The truth is that this doctrine has been the bone of contention in the Church throughout the centuries. And yet it is in this contentious dogma that Dr. Feetham discerns the supreme and only hope of the world. He says:—

Look at our social problems. Look at the vast difficulties of industry to-day; look at the confusion that perplexes every part of the world. There is no answer to all this difficulty, there is no hope of getting out of it,

unless we find it in the being of God himself. And there, thanks be to God, we do find it because we know that in the very essence of the Divine Being there exist three coequal persons. There is within the very life of the Godhead a perfect society, upon which the life of man is more and more to be modelled. Human life is to reflect more and more completely as the ages go on the wonder of the Divine life. And the Church is here to bring about that marvellous effect. And she must draw copiously upon the supernatural powers that are extended to her, or else her task is vain.

That is a fine bit of high-sounding but utterly drum-empty rhetoric. It has been heard a million times before, and has never meant anything, and it may be heard a million times again with precisely the same result. It reminds us of Shakespeare's *Henry IV.*, First Part, Act III., scene 1, when Hotspur, Worcester, Mortimer, and Glendower meet in a room in the Archdeacon's house at Bangor. In a dialogue between Glendower and Hotspur the following occurs:—

*Glend.* I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

*Hot.* Why, so can I; or so can any man;  
But will they come when you do call for them?

*Glend.* Why I can teach thee, cousin, to command  
The Devil.

*Hot.* And I can teach thee, coz, to shame the Devil  
By telling truth: tell truth and shame the Devil.  
If thou have power to raise him, bring him hither,  
And I'll be sworn, I have power to shame him hence.  
O, while you live, tell truth, and shame the Devil.

All through the ages the divines have claimed that they could draw copiously upon the supernatural, and they have deafened the heavens with their loud and passionate appeals, but no supernatural powers have been at work in human life in consequence. Enormously heavy cheques have been written out and duly signed on earth, but not one of them has been honoured at the bank of heaven. Why, not even the existence of such a bank has ever been demonstrated. To the credulous nothing is easier than to "seek the miraculous presence of Christ at our altars"; but there is no evidence that it has ever been found there except as an emotional hallucination. Equally easy is it to "demand of God the miraculous conversion of those who seem to be dull or obstinate or unwilling to believe"; but there is not a single instance on record of a conversion that was not brought about by purely natural or human means. There is nothing about a revival that is in the least degree miraculous, as the psychological examination of the phenomenon has abundantly shown.

Bishop Feetham cannot be ignorant of the fact that the belief in the supernatural, particularly in the Holy Trinity, has never acted as a unifying factor in society. Rather has it been the direct cause of endless divisions, antagonisms, persecutions, burnings, and beheadings. Whether God exists or not, or whatever his intentions may be, there is no escape from the fact that the belief in him has given rise to innumerable dissensions, bickerings, animosities, and has often completely destroyed the sentiments of comradeship, love, and mutual service. Is it not incontrovertible that all the parties to the Great War fought in his name and for his honour, and slaughtered some eight millions of his children, whose lives ought to have been precious in his sight? If it is true, as the Bishop states, that "it is God who maketh men to be of one mind in a house, in a city, in a village, in an empire, in the world," then the only conceivable conclusion to which we can come is that God is the most gigantic and tragic failure in the Universe; and nowhere is the failure more conspicuous than in the Churches that bear his name. If a Bishop has the courage to preach from a Nonconformist pulpit, or a prominent Free Church divine accepts an invitation to occupy a Cathedral pulpit, for months before and after

such an event pulpit and press throughout the land vie with each other in its denunciation; and yet all Christians everywhere and of every name profess to love one another fervently in the Lord Jesus Christ.

One does not wonder that, with such a believer in and advocate of the supernatural and miraculous as one of the chief of their religious guides, the Australians "object to voices that invoke miraculous powers," and emphatically disapprove of such frequent "excursions into the realms of mystery we cannot understand at all." But, after all, the Bishop, while exalting supernatural faith, and calling for perpetual miracles of grace, may be unconsciously but effectively hastening the advent of Reason, justice, love and commonsense in this as yet dark world of ours.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Lesson of Louth.

The miraculous has become the absurd, the impossible. Gods and phantoms have been driven from the earth and sky. We are living in a natural world.—*Robert Ingersoll.*

TWENTY-TWO people were killed, and eight hundred people were rendered homeless by a cloudburst at the little town of Louth, in Lincolnshire. At the inquest the jury found that the deaths were due to suffocation by drowning caused by the flooding of the town, and the flooding was caused by rainfall. Journalists have a trick of blowing hot and cold at will; but they seldom exhibit this talent to such advantage as they did in commenting on this awful occurrence. On the Sunday morning practically every paper published as much Christianity as the editor thought his readers expected. The following day the catastrophe at Louth required comment. Faced with grim facts, the journalists at once forgot their piety, and the men who had been writing of the Divine Fatherhood, and of the manifold blessings of the Christian superstition, became as irreligious as the most militant Freethinkers. The "Lord's Prayer" no longer had any existence to them, and the pious platitudes of the "Sermon on the Mount" had become of less importance than the snows of yesteryear. Instead, the leading articles were filled with references to the blind forces of Nature and the riddle of the universe.

Nor, in the circumstances, was this very surprising. Journalists are not priests, and such awful facts as the Louth flood must make thoughtful men pause in reciting the Christian shibboleths. Few, we imagine, felt inclined to refer to a Heavenly Father at the moment when the conception implied that he was devouring his children. Their hands would be less inclined than usual to go up to "that inverted bowl we call the sky." Gentle Jesus had been transformed into the deity of the ancient Jews, who destroyed men, women, and children at pleasure.

Such horrors as this cloudburst are hard to reconcile with any consolatory scheme of religion. The imposing optimism of the Christian superstition is broken as are the homes of the victims of the Louth disaster. Vain must attempts at pious consolation seem at a time as this, and sheer verbosity the assumed assurances concerning a Heavenly Father and his tender care for his little ones. Such fictions are only plausible in sweet summer months, when, before the pleased gaze of comfortable clergymen on their long vacations, the panorama of continental scenery unfolds itself against a background of infinite blue.

And, mark you, who hears the pathetic cry of humanity in anguish? Is it the thorn-crowned Christ with his thousands of angels, or the Divine Mother with her cohorts of cherubim, who come to the succour of

the miserable survivors? Not at all! Mankind is left to its own resources, and it is to the ready sympathy of other men and women that the unhappy victims of the disaster have to turn in their bitterest hour of sorrow and disaster.

Such a spectacle brings home to everyone the growth and change of ideas. The old religious notions still survive in the pulpits, and in bills of lading, where the liability of the shipowner for the safety of the cargo is declared to be voided by "the act of God or the King's enemies," both these parties being joined together as dangerous and destructive, and of incalculable malignity. Before the age of science, in the days of Faith, people regarded all special occurrences as acts of God. If a man died in his bed, he died from natural causes; but if he died suddenly from heart disease, or from a stroke of lightning, he died by act of Providence. Sunrise and sunset, things that happened daily, were considered the ordinary course of Nature; but a blight or drought, a pestilence, or an earthquake, were particular visitations of the Almighty.

The usual priestly refuge from the dilemma caused by such an occurrence as the Louth disaster is that the whole matter is a "mystery," which will be cleared up in the "next world." Thousands of years after the undertaker has done with us we shall be enlightened. Then we shall understand that all the misfortunes and miseries of the world are parts of one divine plan of love and happiness. We shall look back on our old sorrows and see that they were joys in disguise. We shall remember our gout, our rheumatism, our troubles to keep our children clothed and fed, and see that we were full of pleasure while we thought we were suffering and knew that we were swearing. It will all come right in the wash. At least the dear clergy say so, and they ought to know, for they take millions of money every year on the supposition that they do, and they all profess to be very friendly with God and his family.

All this heavenly illumination is reserved for the sweet by-and-bye. So the clergy declare. To us this pious language rouses no movement except amazement. It sounds like "the horns of elfland faintly blowing." We realize that this baby-talk is meant for other ears than ours, and is but an echo from the far-off days of ignorance and bigotry. We shrink from believing that the Louth disaster was the work of any deity. We prefer to believe that the town of Louth happened to stand in the path of the storm, which, like other natural forces, acted under necessity, without moral or immoral intention. Some folk may call this a cheerless philosophy, but we think it better than the view expressed by the blinded Gloucester in the tragedy of *King Lear*:—

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;  
They kill us for their sport.

MIMNERMUS.

Why, when no honest man will deny in private that every ultimate problem is wrapped in the profoundest mystery, do honest men proclaim in pulpits that unhesitating certainty is the duty of the most foolish and ignorant? Is it not a spectacle to make the angels laugh? We are a company of ignorant beings, feeling our way through mists and darkness, learning only by incessantly-repeated blunders, obtaining a glimmering of truth by falling into every conceivable error, dimly discerning light enough for our daily needs, but hopelessly differing whenever we attempt to describe the ultimate origin or end of our paths; and yet, when one of us ventures to declare that we don't know the map of the universe as well as the map of our infinitesimal parish, he is hooted, reviled, and perhaps told he will be damned to all eternity for his faithlessness.—*Sir Leslie Stephen, "An Agnostic's Apology."*

## Science and the Occult.

The great thing to remember is that the mind of man cannot be enlightened permanently by merely teaching him to reject some particular set of superstitions. There is an infinite supply of other superstitions always at hand; and the mind that has not trained itself to the discipline of reasonableness and honesty—will, as soon as its devils are cast out, proceed to fill itself with their relations. — *Professor Gilbert Murray, "Hellenistic Philosophy," the "Hibbert Journal," October, 1910.*

IN previous articles the present writer has shown that all the greatest Spiritualist mediums have, at one time or another, been convicted of fraud. Some of my critics have charged me with believing that all Spiritualism is fraudulent. This is not the case; no sensible person would accuse Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, or Sir Conan Doyle, of fraud.

There are, doubtless, people who are not paid mediums, who believe that they have communications from spirits by automatic writing, the ouija board, planchette, and other means; but modern psychology gives a quite rational explanation of the abnormal state of mind which produces such belief. It is this sturdy youngster psychology—the study of the mind—that will give the death-stab to Spiritualism, Mysticism, and all other forms of the Occult.

"But how do you account for it," we are continually being asked, "that so many clever, and some eminent, men, have been deluded, if, as you say, these things are not the work of spirits?" It is this question we shall now endeavour to answer.

There is an old saying which asserts that "seeing is believing," and the less a person knows, the more heartily he will put faith in it. Nearly everyone believes that they are competent to judge of what takes place at a Spiritualistic *seance*. In fact, they would be highly indignant if anyone suggested they were not. Jones, or Brown, might be imposed upon, but themselves never; they are too wide awake for that. Yet it is safe to say that there is not one person in a thousand competent, physically and mentally, to judge of what takes place at such a meeting. As a matter of fact, the same person cannot see through the tricks of an ordinary conjurer, performed in the full glare of the footlights, let alone what takes place at a dark *seance*. As Professor Jastrow remarked, "such claimants are about as competent to form a trustworthy opinion on such a subject as they are to pronounce upon the genuineness of a Syriac manuscript."<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer, our greatest philosopher, with all his unrivalled intellectual powers, declared "I would not trust my own conclusions were I to take part in a *seance* or in kindred testing of alleged abnormal manifestations. I am so wanting in quick observation of people's doings, feelings, intentions, etc., that I should be easily deluded."<sup>2</sup>

Professor Munsterberg—the exposé of Eusapia Palladino—did not see through one of Eusapia's tricks, although he sat next to her and watched her closely. When, at Eusapia's command, the spirit came and touched him on the hip, and then on the arm, and finally pulled his sleeve at the elbow, he says, "I plainly felt the thumb and fingers. It was most uncanny."<sup>3</sup> If the Professor had not arranged to have a man concealed behind Eusapia, who seized her foot—the toes of which she could use like fingers, and which she used to pull the Professor's sleeve—he would have been completely mystified, and unable to explain the marvels he had witnessed. Which leads him to the conclusion that

scientists like himself are "entirely unfit for such an investigation"; and, as he further remarks, the public labour under the delusion that "a scientist is especially adapted to carrying on such an inquiry, and if a great scholar becomes convinced of the genuineness of the performance, the public looks on that as a strong argument. I am inclined to think that scholars are especially poor witnesses in such a case." For, as he points out, the scientist in his laboratory has not the slightest fear that Nature will play tricks or resort to fraud, and his collaborators are as reliable, as far as goodwill and honesty are concerned, as himself. "The scientist lives in the certainty that everyone who enters the temple of Science considers truth the highest god-head. And now he, with his bland *naivete* and his training in blind confidence, is again and again called to make inquiries which would demand a detective and a prestidigitator. Moreover, the best scientific work in one field is not the slightest guarantee for good observation in another field. It is often remarkable to what a degree a man who is a great scholar in one division may be not only ignorant, but uneducated in his attitude, silly in his judgment, and foolish in his conclusions in fields which lie outside of his interests."<sup>1</sup>

The Professor considers that the lawyer, who is always on the lookout; the doctor, who has to examine the statements of hysterical patients to get at the truth; the politician, who is sceptical; the journalist, who does not believe anything, are all preferable, in these investigations, to the man of science.

It is generally taken for granted that we all perceive what is going on around us in the same way, and gather the same impressions. But do we? We often see in police-court cases one set of witnesses directly contradict another set as to what occurred in a street collision. But it is not always due to false witness; for the witnesses may be, and generally are, passers-by, who have nothing to gain or lose in the matter. For instance, the man with long sight will see it differently from the man with short sight; the man who saw it from the back of one car would see it differently from the man who saw it from the other end of the street; and they would probably differ in some points from those who witnessed it from opposite sides. Then, again, those who heard the version of the driver of the one car—who, of course, would describe the affair with a view to exonerating himself—would be inclined to alter the picture a little to make it agree with his version; and, of course, the same would happen to those who heard the other driver's description. This latter cause of diversion comes under the heading of "Suggestion," the most prolific of all causes of error.

Professor Munsterberg describes an experiment he made with his students to test their powers of observation. He stood at his desk and asked them to describe accurately everything he was going to do between two agreed signals. As soon as the signal was given, he raised with one hand a small revolving wheel with a colour disc, making it revolve and change colour. Keeping his eyes eagerly fixed on the wheel, he then, with the other hand, took a pencil from his pocket and wrote something at the desk. He then took out his watch and laid it upon the desk, and finally took from his pocket a silver cigarette case, opened it, took out a cigarette, closed it with a loud snap, returned it to his pocket, and then gave the ending signal.

In the result, eighteen per cent. of the students had not noticed anything at all of what was being done with the hand not holding the revolving wheel. The mere fact that the Professor seemed to give all his attention

<sup>1</sup> Jastrow, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Duncan, *Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*, p. 372.

<sup>3</sup> Hugo Munsterberg, *Problems of To-day*, p. 142.

<sup>1</sup> Munsterberg, *Problems of To-day*, pp. 121-122.

to the wheel prevented them from seeing what was being done with the other hand. This is another form of suggestion, the form practised by the conjurer, who gets his audience to concentrate their attention upon some unimportant details, or distracts their attention by his "patter," while he quietly manipulates the trick unnoticed.

Mr. Abbott, in his book *Behind the Scenes with the Mediums*, relates that once a conjurer remarked to him, "If I can only get your attention intently, an elephant can pass behind me and you will not see it" (p. 115). Professor Munsterberg reports a lady medium, famous for her slate tricks, as making exactly the same remark. "She asserted that as soon as she succeeded in turning the attention of her client to the slate in her hand, he would not notice if an elephant should pass behind her through the room."<sup>1</sup> The plain fact is, the attention can only be concentrated on one thing at a time.

W. MANN.

### The Shadow of the Cross.

Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and  
our forefathers trod,  
Though these that were Gods are dead, and though being dead art  
a God,  
Though before thee the crowned Cytherean be fallen, and hidden  
her head,  
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to  
thee dead. —Swinburne's "Hymn to Proserpine."

For Christ twice dead is dead indeed.

—Le Gallienne, "The Second Crucifixion."

THAT night when the cloudless heavens were lighted by another star, and in Bethlehem a mother bore a child, to whose cradle fabled kings and sages journeyed to prostrate themselves before divinity new born as man, the Aztec bowed himself before another mother and another child. He, too, worshipped motherhood, and peace, and the love of man for men, and the bright glory of the Southern Cross burned above the dimness of the templed plains.

But, in after years, when worshippers of the Bethlehemite reached a new world, the older Mother and her Child were trampled in the dust, and the blood of their devotees was spilled upon their images by the followers of one who had preached Goodwill to All Men. So it has been throughout the ages: one by one the tenets of the Creed of Christ have been relinquished by the Christians. What once were facts are now interpreted as metaphor; what once were pillars of belief are now but allegories which different fancies have interpreted into innumerable fantasies.

Once money-changers were driven from the temples, but now the "keepers of the temples" have become money-grabbers, and he who feeds the ravens has left his servants upon earth to organize themselves into trades unions to get the sustenance necessary to enable them to continue to invoke the Father-in-Heaven to give them their daily bread. What a fall was there, my countrymen! But so common are these fallings-off, these changes in the unchangeable, that we fail to appreciate them in their highest ridiculousness. Christianity is a religion of contradictions. There was a time, once, long ago, when I was young and untainted by the heresy of using my reason, when I, the result of a Calvinistic education, saw, open-eyed with amazement, for the first time images of the Madonna and Child worshipped by the believers in the First Commandment. But the wonder has died away. Nothing in Christianity can amaze me more. I am *blase* to their incredible metamorphosings.

<sup>1</sup> Munsterberg, *Psychology and Crime*, p. 30.

Ancient Greece and her gods are gone; dead, slain by the scorn of Christian Iconoclasts. The noblest fashionings of the hand of man are now but to be seen in museums or studied in catalogues. The scorn that was poured upon them by the votaries of the Nazarene did well its deadly work; but the time has come, and the scorn shall come down on the scorers. And now in the place of these noble works, those visions of what could be, the Christian has but tawdry, bejewelled ikons to whom to turn. These and the wooden heads of worm-eaten apostles have taken the place of the "unrealizable Reality." But the day shall come when they that are blind shall see; the day when the scales shall fall off the eyes of the multitude. Woe in these days to those who have arrogated to themselves the dispensing of spiritual benefits. That day will be our Day, the day of reckoning, when the last god shall be buried in the grave which his priests shall dig. Then shall be the rebirth of earth, the regeneration of man, and the cross that flung its shadow as a sombre doom across the world shall be no more. The requiem of God and the pæan of man shall be sung together in one earth-shaking chorus.

H! C. MELLOR.

### Acid Drops.

The new Bishop of Bradford is not very optimistic as to the outlook for religion. Addressing a meeting at the Clayton Parish Church he said that when they recognized the growing power of Secularism and the decreasing numbers in their Sunday-schools, it made them anxious to keep on their schools, and it was necessary for them to keep these so that they could say to the Minister of Education that unless "we have facilities to enter into board schools as well as our own," they would keep on the dual system. That is, the schools are to be used as a means of bargaining with the Minister of Education, so that the Churches may have a greater hold on education than they have at present. It is seldom that one has a more open expression of the real aim of the Churches.

If the country had a Government that one could either respect or trust to act honestly, the reply to such a threat would be simple. The Government would then say, "It is not our business to teach religion, but it is our business to see that every child has the beginnings of a decent education. It is our business to provide school accommodation for every child in the country, and we will do so. The sects may do as they will with their schools. That is no concern of ours. It is our task to provide schooling for every child, and we will make that a first charge on the wealth of the country." If the Government had the courage to do this they could laugh at the efforts of the Churches. The talk of the cost is contemptible. While they can find money to fit airmen out with dress swords, refit the Army with new red cloth at £4 per yard, spend four times on Army and Navy that was being spent in pre-War days, and waste money right and left, it is contemptible to sacrifice the education of the coming generation in order to save expense. Now, if it were a question of another war we would spend in a single week more than all the "voluntary" schools are worth, and boast of our ability to go on doing it indefinitely.

The "starving" clergy manage to find a few pence now and again. The ceremony of enthroning the Archbishop of Wales took place at St. Asaph Cathedral in the presence of a remarkable gathering of "poor" people. The King was represented by Prince Arthur of Connaught, and three Archbishops and several Bishops were present. A nice family gathering. Let us prey.

The late Canon Alexander Blunt, of Winchester, left estate of the value of £21,334, and the Rev. D. Williams, of Llanwnda, left £7,235. These brothers-in-the-Lord are

not now strolling along the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, but have gone to another place.

A dark and deadly deed has been made public by the *Church Times*. It seems that during the enthronement ceremonies of the new Archbishop of Wales, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd George were present at a Communion Service, and, in the "quietude of the early morning hour," partook of the "Holy Communion." Our flesh begins to creep, for we remember that the Communion is some sort of a cannibalistic service in disguise, and, as the *Church Times* points out, Mr. Lloyd George is a Particular Baptist and Mrs. Lloyd George a Calvinistic Methodist. Evidently Mr. Lloyd George is not quite so particular as the name implies, and the "distress" of the *Church Times* may be unnecessary. After all, we don't think it will make much difference whether this very Particular Baptist joins in the cannibalistic ceremony or leaves it to the other people who are not so particular. But what a sight for the intelligent student of a century hence!

Reviewing a book written by a local minister, the Rev. A. D. Belden, the *Southend Standard* quotes the reverend gentleman as saying "to such a being (as God), considered as mere power, it were a little thing to kick over our wicked little human world as a man kicks an ant-hill out of his way." This charming conception of a "wicked" world and a still more "wicked" god is penned by a Christian gentleman who imagines himself civilized.

A Sheffield man, named Arnold Malabar, has embraced the Buddhist religion, and has been initiated as a novice at Ceylon. He intends to return to England to spread Buddhist ideas. There should be much joy in British missionary circles.

The Egyptian newspapers publish the text of a prayer sent by the Cairo Committee of the Egyptian Delegation in Paris to be offered in mosques and churches in Egypt. It asks the Almighty through Christ, Mahommed, and Moses to help national aspirations. The supplication would have been more complete had it contained the name of Mumbo Jumbo.

The new criminal, says the *Church Times*, is a product of the War. But we were under the impression, gained from the religious press and others, that the Army—our Army, of course—was chock full of lofty ethical ideals and religious fervour. And now to be told that it has produced a new criminal is a little startling. Can it be that war does demoralize after all? And not merely demoralize the other side, but our own side as well! Of course, we always knew that it was the enemy who was demoralized; but ourselves! For was it not part of the official news, and also part of the instruction that was given us by the tame scientists during the War, that British human nature was totally unlike German human nature, and conditions that demoralized them actually improved us! And now we have got to unlearn all that we were taught.

Rev. J. J. Wilson, of Angel Meadows, Manchester, says it is utterly impossible for profiteers to get to heaven. We are content to take his word, and we are sure that the profiteers are content to take the risk. But a correspondent informs us that Mr. Wilson has accepted a "call" to another church which represents an advance on his present salary. We are afraid there is a worldly spirit abroad.

Mr. Lloyd George addressed a meeting of the Welsh Congregational Union at Pwllheli on June 9, and, perhaps feeling that he was on his native heath, threw caution to the winds, and plainly announced that the Churches were the main instrument for keeping the people in order. The Churches alone can save the country from "Bolshevism"—which is now the name for everything the Government does not want, just as before the War ended it was Prussianism, and before that it was Socialism, or Secularism, or infidelity. So Mr. Lloyd George says it is to the Churches that we must look

to allay the spirit of discontent. Well, we have never ceased to warn all interested in real progress that the main function of the Churches was to see that vested interests did not suffer, and we hope that presently it will dawn upon those who are at present allowing themselves to be dragged along at the heels of a lot of ex-Sunday-school teachers, who have their mouths filled with nonsense about "true religion," genuine Christianity, and the like. The sooner reformers make up their minds to shut out all this cant, the better.

The Registrar-General's Report shows that, during 1918, deaths from the influenza epidemic were nearly 200,000. "He doeth all things well!"

Sweet are the uses of advertisement. On the London District Railway large posters bear the inscription: "Christ is Coming—a Fact." What quaint ideas of "facts" some Christians have!

Gipsy Smith has been permitted to preach in the Savoy Chapel. The regular minister said the Church needed him. We do not doubt it. The Church needs all the help it can get; but it will need more than it can get to pull it out of its present difficulties.

The Dean and Chapter of Carlisle are offering for sale, says the *Times* of May 25, 2,000 acres of agricultural land in Cumberland, with fishing rights in the River Eden. Thus we see that the meek have inherited the earth—and are getting rid of it while the market is favourable.

In a new publication, entitled *The Torch*, issued from Church House, Westminster, there is a touching appeal to men to "get into the Church, whose founder was a working man." Judging by the sacred pages of Scripture, Christ made more speeches than he did chairs and tables. But, it must be remembered, the dear clergy also get their living with their mouths.

"We live in an age of non-churchgoers," says Mr. Ronald Jones, President of the British Unitarian Association. And, as Brother Jones believes in one God instead of three, he represents the residuary legatee of revealed religion.

Whenever a catastrophe occurs someone is certain to rush in with the old explanation of why God permits it, and it is done with such an air of originality that new-comers are apt to think that it has only just been thought of. In the *Christian World* for June 10, the Rev. F. Y. Leggat offers us the old, old, explanation of why God permits catastrophes. It seems bad, but after all good comes from it. It excites our sympathy. It provokes pity, and thus the curse is turned into a blessing. So one must imagine God looking down on England and saying to himself, "These people lack sympathy, how can I encourage it?" And after due cogitation he hits on a plan. He floods a town, kills a number of people who may have been very sympathetic in order to develop the sympathies of those who are left. And that without asking the consent of the drowned. If that is so, all we can say is that a God of that kind is worthy of his apologist, and the apologist is worthy of the God. They meet on a common level of unapproachable stupidity. And we suppose the Rev. F. Y. Leggat will argue—or should if he were logical enough—that when the Germans overran Belgium they were really benefactors since they developed the sympathies of other people. Or if not, why not? What is the distinction between God at Louth and the German in Belgium?

Or if the first apology is not satisfactory Mr. Leggat obligingly provides you with an alternative one. He says we read of a woman being run down by a motor lorry, and we do not see that the same question arises on that as at Louth. And the lesson is that we must learn better. Nature is all of a piece. Quite so. But how does it let God out? The only moral we can see is that God is as careless over the life of an old woman in the London streets as he is over the lives of a number of babies at Louth. Or that "God"

is as much a bogey in the one case as in the other? We wonder which of the morals Mr. Leggat would like us to draw?

We see that St. Francis' Church, Glasgow, has been reopened, and an important part of the evening ceremony was the exhibition and kissing of a relic of the patron saint. We hope that the relic has been well washed with good carbolic soap. The paper from which we take the item of news does not say what part of the saint's anatomy is preserved in Glasgow.

The House of Commons, says Lord Fisher, in a letter to the *Times*, still "wends its servile way," and passes unheeded the protests "against clothing the army in red and gold..... The so-called Labour leaders have not a touch of Parnell and Bradlaugh in them. They are all snobs and carpet matters." Lord Fisher is not the only one who regrets that a Bradlaugh is not at present in the House of Commons, so that the country might have the benefit of hearing the voice of a man—one of the rarest of experiences now, as ever.

A proposal to increase the wages of janitors in the employ of the Glasgow education authority from £3 to £3 6s. was opposed by the Rev. David McQueen, who said that, compared with other classes of workmen, the janitors must think they are in paradise. Considering the value of 66s. to-day, it is evident that the Rev. McQueen's notions of paradise are not very extravagant. It is to be hoped that he is equally modest when considering his own income. But we have our doubts.

There has been a prolonged drought in New South Wales, and 7,000,000 sheep, 400,000 cattle, and 72,000 horses have died in consequence. That is the way Providence helps the world along with the food shortage. If a man had been responsible, the world would have been in little doubt as to how to describe his character. The Christian goes on his knees and thanks God for his mercies! What a creed!

The Glasgow United Free Presbytery is up in arms against the Sunday bands that are permitted in the parks. There are often about 20,000 people present, and the churches don't like it. The chairman of a meeting called at the Bath Street Church said that they did not complain at the unfair competition with the Churches, but the bands were "working ill, and would more and more work ill, to the soul of the community." Well, there is a good remedy for those who do not like the Sunday bands—let them stay away. We are quite certain from what we know of many of the Christians in Glasgow that they cannot afford to expose themselves to any influence that is likely to make them worse than they are. They are already near the limit. But there are many other people in Glasgow of a more robust type, and we feel sure that they can listen to a good band without being filled with the desire to go and commit robbery and murder. But we are not fearful of the twenty thousand attendants. The Church attendants, we agree, must avoid becoming worse than they are.

A Baptist chapel at Harlesden has added a new heating apparatus as a War-memorial to their church members who died on active service. This is a warm memorial to their fellow-believers.

Doubtless fortified by faith, the "starving" clergy make a brave stand against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Two Scotch ministers, the Revs. J. Anderson and James Logie, have reached their hundredth birthday. These are probably the slowest cases of "starvation" on record.

The late Rev. J. S. Barrass, Rector of St. Lawrence Jewry, was referred to in some obituary notices as the "Chaplain of Fleet Street," on account of his association with the services at St. Bride's Church. The piety of the Press Gang is the most unique thing of its kind in Christendom. It seldom extends beyond the writing of an article for the press.

One of our readers, who has been a patient in a Newcastle hospital, tells us that while there a parson came along and delivered tracts to those awaiting operations. He forwards us a specimen of one of these, and it has on its cover the cheerful title *Free Pass to Heaven*. Quite a cheerful sort of a thing to give to men and women awaiting an operation! But if these people had wit enough to see the humour and impudence of their conduct, they would have wit enough not to make such asses of themselves. All the same, we wonder that people in public institutions submit to these impertinent ministrations.

It will interest our readers to know that the land upon which the Cricklewood Aerodrome is built belonged to the Church of England. The owners have just been awarded £31,320 for it. They claimed—being patriots, and determined to get their bit—£43,575. But how are the clergy to advise the people to give their all to the country when it is in need if the means are not provided them to do it? And the Church feels quite sure there will be no levy on capital. For those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder, and it is clear that when God moved the people and the nation to give to the Church, that union was affected by God and comes within the ban.

The following is from the *Times* of June 4:—

Sir A. Mond, First Commissioner of Works (Swansea, W., C.L.), asked by Sir M. Conway (English Universities, C.U.) whether it was within the power of the Ancient Monuments Commission to schedule some of the more important of the churches in the City of London now threatened with destruction at the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities, replied in the negative. Sir M. Conway.—Is it within the knowledge of the right hon. gentleman that some time ago this House voted a million sterling towards the cost of building churches in the City of London for the purpose of making London visibly a Christian city? (Laughter.) The Speaker.—To answer that question some inquiry will be needed. (Renewed laughter.)

## Occupation for Holiday Time.

FROM new readers at home and abroad we are constantly hearing that they were unaware of the existence of the *Freethinker* until "the other day." The information is unflattering and undesirable.

We cannot all command success, but most of us can deserve it. We cannot compel every person of liberal frame of mind to subscribe to the *Freethinker*, but we can, with the help of our readers, see that most of them have the chance to do so. All that is required is for each one to make it a point of introducing the paper to a likely person. The paper itself will do the rest; and if it cannot, nothing else can.

The world of to-day is full of potential subscribers; our task is to get hold of them. It is here we are dependent on the help of our friends. We have no large funds for advertising; we depend upon personal canvass. And there is no form of advertising more effective when it is well done.

In the early period of war, our readers helped to overcome the difficulties that were facing us by the help they gave in securing a substantial advance in our circulation. The difficulties fronting us to-day are as great as ever. As the rest of the world has to deal with the race between wages and prices, so our difficulty is to solve the problem of balancing income with the cost of production. At present the latter is increasing faster than the former, and we are asking the help of those interested to redress the balance.

It can be done if those interested will take a hand in the game. There are plenty of new readers waiting; all we need do is to secure them. We suggest it as a useful occupation during the holiday season.



## SPECIAL.

Until the end of June, and in order to bring the "Freethinker" into contact with a larger number of people, we are prepared to send this paper for thirteen weeks, post free, for 2s. 9d., on receiving names and addresses from any of our present subscribers. Subscribers are not limited to sending one address; they may send as many as they please. This offer applies only to those who are already subscribers, and is part of a general advertising scheme, having for its object the creation of a larger circulation and a more extended sphere of service. New readers who receive the paper for thirteen weeks are not likely to drop it afterwards.

## To Correspondents.

P. ALLOT.—Shall appear. Thanks.

R. J. CLERK, AUTOLYCUS, AND OTHERS.—The Editor desires to return thanks for cuttings sent. They are always useful.

H. MARTIN.—We cannot hold ourselves responsible for the exactitude of every statement in every pamphlet published from this office. The statement that Appendicitis results from the presence of a foreign body in the appendix is not correct. It used to be made by writers of weight, but it has now been known for years that nothing of the kind occurs. The fallacy of observation is illustrated by some people having seen the said "foreign" bodies. The irritant appears to be a deposit from within, not an intruder from without.

S. COBURN.—We are not sure that we have your name correctly, but it will be near enough for recognition. The story of Charles Darwin expressing regret at having written *The Descent of Man* is one of those religious lies that would impose only on fools. Needless to say, the family of Darwin know nothing of it.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—E. J. Rose, 5s.

P. ROBINSON.—Thanks. Shall appear, but cannot promise a date. Choked with copy at present.

E. T. KERR AND A. J. MARRIOTT.—Sorry that demands upon our space prevent any further discussion on the subject of "Kindness or Force?"

T. RAWLINSON.—Doesn't it ever strike you that the cry of militant Freethought being "vulgar" is an example of something that is set going by Christians, which timid heretics encourage because in separating themselves from the "vulgar" Freethinkers they fancy they are shielding themselves from attack? But we are neither alarmed nor depressed. Our message and the *Freethinker* are there to speak for themselves. If they are not enough, we know of nothing else that will be.

C. J. EDWARDS.—Pleased to hear from one so recently converted to Freethought. Hope to hear of your activity in the Movement. There is room and need for all.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Should have been pleased to have been with you. But we must keep our nose to the grindstone at present.

MR. G. STEWART writes to say that he would be glad to form one of a party to visit the British Museum for the purpose named by Mr. Collins in our last issue. The only thing is to find someone willing and able to act as guide.

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

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

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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 by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*

*The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.*

## Sugar Plums.

When the N. S. S. Conference met at Birmingham, Mr. H. Irving, of Barnsley, brought over his photographic apparatus, and "took" the assembled delegates and members outside the Repertory Theatre, in which building the Conference sat. Another photograph was taken of the smaller group that visited Stratford-on-Avon. The portrait of each group makes a fine sepia-toned picture mounted on a card 11in. by 8in., and we can safely say that the work is well done. They are obtainable at the price of 2s. 3d., which includes postage, and orders should be sent to Mr. Irving, 48 Sheffield Road, Barnsley, Yorks. All profits will be handed over by Mr. Irving to the N. S. S. Benevolent Fund. The portrait makes a pleasant reminiscence of a very pleasant Conference.

The *British Weekly* considers that all the newspapers will be forced to double their prices in the near future, owing to the price of paper and the rise in wages. In America the paper shortage is so acute that some newspapers are discontinuing their supply to Canadian subscribers. And there is a continued death-roll of papers. We are pleased to say that we feel fairly assured of our own supply, but the price is beyond our control. However, there is no likelihood of the *Freethinker* putting up a death notice. We have taken the care to look a little ahead, and so are prepared for the worst.

We have now added the Birmingham Central Library to the number of public institutions to which we are sending the *Freethinker* weekly. They are, of course, supplied free. There should not be a public institution in Britain in which the paper is not shown. We hope that our friends will see to it.

Mr. J. Partridge writes:—

Nearly forty members of the Birmingham Branch, with a few friends, enjoyed a pic-nic on the Beacon Hill, Rubery last Sunday. It was an ideal outing, the weather and the surroundings being perfect. Mrs. and Mr. Terry, with an admirable fit-up, provided tea on the top of the Hill, and to them, and Messrs. Pitt & Collier, the success of the occasion was greatly due.

Pleased to hear of so successful a gathering.

Many of our readers will remember the articles written in these columns some years ago by Mr. A. D. Maclaren, of Sydney. We are glad to say that Mr. Maclaren is now in London, after spending some years in Germany—fifteen months of which were passed in an internment camp—and is as keenly interested as ever in Freethought. Last Sunday he lectured to a large and interested audience in Regent's Park, and will deliver another address from the same spot this evening (June 20), at 6.30. We hope that North London friends will do their best to see that there is a good audience. From all we hear, they will not regret the time spent.

The consciousness of this great truth [of advancing science] weighs like a nightmare, I believe, upon many of the best minds of these days. They watch what they conceive to be the progress of materialism, in such fear and powerless anger as a savage feels, when, during an eclipse, the great shadow creeps over the face of the sun. The advancing tide of matter threatens to drown their souls; the tightening grasp of law impedes their freedom; they are alarmed lest man's moral nature be debased by the increase of his wisdom.—Thomas H. Huxley, "On the Physical Basis of Life."

## Pages from Voltaire.

## COUNT BOULAINVILLIER'S DINNER PARTY.

## THIRD CONVERSATION. AFTER DINNER.

*Couet.*—This is excellent coffee, my dear lady; it is pure Mokha.

*The Countess.*—Yes, indeed; it comes from the country of the good Mussulman. Is it not a pity?

*Couet.*—Putting jokes on one side, you must agree with me that religion is necessary for men.

*The Count.*—Yes, undoubtedly, and God has given them one that is divine and eternal, and graven in the hearts of all men; it was, according to you, the religion of Enoch and Noah and Abraham; it is that which has been preserved in Chinese literature for four thousand years. Worship of a Supreme Being, love of justice, and hatred of wrongdoing.

*The Countess.*—Is it possible that men could discard so pure and holy a religion for the abominable sects that have overrun the earth?

*Mr. Freret.*—In the matter of religion, my dear lady, we have gone about our business in a way diametrically opposite to that in which we have proceeded in regard to clothing, living, and food. We began with caves, huts, the skins of wild animals, and acorns; we went on to bread, health-giving meats, clothes of cotton and silk, clean and commodious houses; but, in what concerns religion, we have returned to the acorns, the skins, and the caves.

*Couet.*—It would be difficult to get you out of it. The Christian religion is everywhere incorporated in the State, and, from the Pope to the humblest monk, each erects on that institution his throne or his kitchen. As I have already remarked, men are not rational enough to be contented with a pure religion, a religion worthy of a divine Being.

*The Countess.*—You think not; you admit that this was their religion in the time of your Enoch, your Noah, and your Abraham. Why is it not possible to be as rational now as then?

*Couet.*—Let me be quite candid about it: in those days there were no canons with fat prebends, no abbots with incomes of a million francs, or popes with their sixteen or eighteen millions. To get back these possessions would mean wars as sanguinary as there have ever been.

*The Count.*—Although I have been a soldier, I would never make war on priests and women; I would never try to establish truth by murder, as your religionists have established error; but I do wish that the truth should enlighten the minority of men, and that they themselves should be more gentle and happier, that the vulgar should cease to be superstitious, that the Church should have in horror the crime of persecution.

*Couet.*—Let me try to explain what I mean. In my opinion it is wrong to free foolish people from chains to which they are accustomed. You would very likely be stoned by the Paris populace if, in a rainy season, you prevented them from carrying through the streets the pretended bones of St. Genevive, which are supposed to bring fine weather.

*Mr. Freret.*—I give no credit at all to your contention; reason has already made so much progress that for the last few years the pretended bones of that saint and those of Marcellus have not been carried through the Paris streets. In my opinion it is very easy to uproot by degrees all the superstitions which have brutalized us. We no longer believe in witches, or cure diseases by exorcism; and although it is said that your Jesus sent his apostles to cast out devils,<sup>1</sup> no priest among us

has been so mad or so foolish as to boast of this power; the relics of Saint Francis have become ridiculous, and those of Saint Ignatius will one day, perhaps, be dragged through the mud with the Jesuits themselves. It is true that we leave to the Pope the Duchy of Ferrara, which he usurped, the domains ravished with sword and poison by Cæsar Borgia, which were returned to the Church of Rome, although he never laboured on her account. We leave Rome to the Pope, because we have no wish to see the Emperor make off with it. We are willing still to pay *annates*;<sup>1</sup> although it is a shameful absurdity and obvious simony, we do not make a noise about so trifling a subsidy. Slaves to custom, men cannot break all at once a bad bargain made three centuries ago. But when the Popes have the insolence to send, as formerly, their legates *a latere* to impose tithes on the people, to excommunicate kings, to place an interdict on their kingdoms, and to give their crowns to others, you will see how we will receive a legate *a latere*: I should be much surprised if the Parliament of Paris or Aix did not hang him.

*The Count.*—You will observe how these shameful practices have shaken us together. Look for a moment at the richest part of Switzerland; at the seven united Provinces, quite as powerful as Spain; at Great Britain, whose maritime strength permits her to hold her own against the collective forces of all the other nations; look at the whole of North Germany and Scandinavia, the inexhaustible sources of military strength. You will find that all these people have gone far on the road of reason. The blood of every hydra's head has fertilized their fields; the abolition of monasticism has peopled and enriched their States; we can certainly do in France what has been done elsewhere; and thereby France would be more populous and more wealthy.

*Couet.*—Ah well! when you have shaken off the monkish vermin, when ridiculous relics have vanished, when you no longer pay to the Bishop of Rome a shameful tribute; when consubstantiality, and the procession of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son, and transubstantiation, have become contemptible dogmas; when these mysteries remain hidden in the *Summa* of Aquinas, when theologians are reduced to silence, you will still be Christians; you will wish in vain to go further, but you will never reach your end. A religion of philosophers is not made for men.

*Mr. Freret.*—

Est quoddam prodire tenus, si non data ultra.<sup>2</sup>

Let me remind you, in the words of Horace, that your physician will never give you the eyes of a lynx; but there is no reason why you should not let him remove a film from them. We are groaning under the burden of a hundredweight of chains; let us allow someone to strike off three-fourths of them. The word *Christian* has prevailed, and it will remain; but little by little we shall come to worship a God without any foreign admixture, without giving him either a mother, or a son, or a putative father; without saying that he died the death of a criminal; without believing that we can make gods out of flour; in fact, without that mass of superstitions which places a civilized people below a race of savages. The pure worship of the Supreme Being is to-day coming to be the religion of all good men; and in a little while it will reach down to the healthier part of the common people.

*Couet.*—But are you not afraid that unbelief, which, I see is making immense progress, may prove fatal to the

<sup>1</sup> Primitiæ, or *first-fruits*—the first year's revenue of a living, which sum the incumbent was obliged to pay into the Papal treasury.

<sup>2</sup> Horace, *Epistolæ*, lib. i., 1, 32. "It is in our power to advance to a certain point, if it is not permitted us to go further."

<sup>1</sup> Matthew x. i.

people when it reaches them, that it will lead to crime? Men are subjected to cruel passions and terrible misfortunes; they need a curb to hold them back, an illusion to comfort them.

*Mr. Freret.*—The rational worship of a just God, who punishes and who rewards, would undoubtedly make for the happiness of society; but when this salutary knowledge of deity is disfigured by absurd falsehoods and dangerous superstitions, the remedy becomes a poison, and what ought to frighten men away from crime in reality encourages it. A wicked man whose passions are strong, but whose mind is weak, is often enough invited to iniquity by the pardon promised him by the priests, "Although thy transgressions may be many and scandalous confess thy sins to me, and they will be all washed away through the merits of a man who was crucified in Judea, many years ago. Yea, even if thou committest new crimes."

Is that not leading us into temptation, a smoothing of the path of wickedness? Do we not know that Brinvilliers went to confession after each crime she committed? And did not Louis XI. do the same? Like us, the ancients had their confession and absolution, but they were not absolved so that they might commit a second crime. They never pardoned the parricides. We have taken all we have from the Greeks and Romans, and we have spoilt all we have taken.

Their hell was beside the point, I admit, but our devils are more ridiculous than their furies. These furies were not themselves damned, they were regarded as the executioners, not as the victims of a divine vengeance. To be at once hangmen and hanged, to burn and to be burnt, like our devils, is an absurd contradiction, worthy of us, and so much the more absurd, since the fall of the angels, the very basis of Christianity, is to be found neither in Genesis nor in the Gospels. It is an old fable of the Brahmins. In short, sir, everyone to-day smiles at your notion of hell because it is ridiculous; but no one would laugh at a rewarding and revenging God.

*The Count.*—It appears to me that Mr. Freret has shown us conclusively how religion has a restraining action on bad manners. I will try to prove that a pure religion is infinitely more consoling than yours.

No doubt, you will tell me that the illusions of devout minds are comforting, I agree with you; your madhouses will support your contention. But how great the mental torture when such minds become enlightened! In what agonies of doubt and despair do certain men live out their wretched days! You yourself have had these facts before your eyes. You have talked to me about them; the cloister for them is a house of repentance; but, for men especially, it is a house of discord and enviousness. Monks are voluntary galley-slaves that fight while they pull together at the oars; I make an exception of a very small number that are truly penitent or useless; but is it really possible that God should have placed man and woman on this earth to live out their existence in dungeons, separated from each other for ever? Is this the goal of human nature? Most people curse your monks; I pity them. The greater part of them have, from childhood, sacrificed their liberty for ever; and eighty out of every hundred of them wither up in an atmosphere of spiritual dryness. Where is, then, the profound consolation which your religion offers to men? A priest with a valuable living is consoled, but by his worldly goods, not by his faith. If he enjoys a certain amount of happiness, it is by violating the rules of his order. He is happy only as a man of the world, not as a member of the Church. A father of a family, level-headed, a lover of his country, is the recipient of divine favours a thousand times more palpable.

What is more, all that you can say in favour of the

merits of your monks, I can say more rationally of dervishes, marabouts, fakirs, or bonzes. Their penances are a hundred times more rigorous, their austerities more appalling, yet their fastings, their loading of the body with iron chains are nothing in comparison with the suffering of a young Hindu widow who is cremated alive with the body of her husband in the foolish hope of living together in another world.

Boast, then, no more of the pains and consolations which your religion brings to men. You must agree that it does not come near in any way to the rational worship which a good family circle renders to the Supreme Being without superstition. Put on one side your convent-cells, your contradictory and useless mysteries, the object of universal derision; preach God and morality and I can assure you that there will be on earth more goodness and more happiness.

*The Countess.*—I agree with you most emphatically.

*Mr. Freret.*—And so do I.

*Count.*—Ah! well; since there is no reason why you should not know my private opinion, I may assure you that I have come to pretty much the same conclusion.

*Englisbed by* GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

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## The Fourth Age.

### IX.

#### *Conclusion.*

THESE nine tales are simply an elaboration of a single idea; as far as the Christian God was concerned, I managed without him. There are many other Gods more just, more rational, more sensible. There are ideals that demand more from me than bell-clanging and solemnity, or something that compels me in the face of human calamity to take refuge in the phrase that "all is for the best." The European War was wrought by human hands and human brains, and the mind is only further befuddled by the introduction of Mumbo-Jumbo. To pray to Him for victory is the exploitation of ignorance—the worst kind of exploitation—and our priests, in this matter, are degrees lower than the sellers of pills and quack-medicines. To pray to him for victory whilst, at the same time, others were drastically applying the blockade, raising the age limit, and increasing the amount of projectiles thrown at the enemy—ah, shades of Machiavelli! the harmonious blending of action compels admiration—from the superficial. Christian love—iron, bullets, gas-shells, bayonets. Let us not forget that Christian love was just as busy from the other side, and the United States of Europe without it, may be a reality where it is now only a dream. To realize it Christianity must be thrust out of all affairs that require intelligence, integrity, and decency. English, German, French, Italian, all national Christianities, must be excluded; the skulls and bones of the dead in this War are a hideous monument to its futility. Mr. Robert Dell, one of the few journalists with convictions that are not his employers, has an illuminating passage in his book, *My Second Country (France)*. He writes: "The conviction is growing among the men of France that have been through the War that war is the inevitable result of certain social and economic conditions, and, that what nineteen centuries of Christianity have failed to do may be done by economic changes." Christianity is one of the forces that aim to keep things as they are. A rotten economic system giving security to a few is propped up by this ten-faced tribe of non-producers of material things or passable ethics.

We finally "dug in" at Hendicourt. Our cook had chosen a site for the cook-house near to six dead German horses. The days were hot, with slight breezes, and a shell or two in the dead carcasses added a further touch—of realism to our life. When two of us were on duty in the trenches, a man in the "Leicesters" coming back from leave told us that the people in England seemed resigned to the War going on for ever. A greengrocer, named Charlie Tree, then called a Tommy (thanks to Mr. Blatchford and

other gallant *writers* for the press) was my particular friend. We were nearly "put out" whilst repairing wire in a field. One of our aeroplanes overhead was being fired at by the enemy, and we were getting the benefit underneath. We were both on our knees, and our prayers would have paralysed a Billingsgate priest.

Near to us was a graveyard; in it English, French, and German dead slept peacefully together. Shells had smashed granite and marble tombstones, and one big family grave was blown open, revealing a babe's coffin with the lid broken showing what was once one of Blake's little ones who are sent on earth to bear the beams of love.

My nerves at this time began to give way; in my mind, with Hamlet, I had decided that what was to come would come. One calm evening we had a terrific aerial attack; our roof was made of the material used for making rabbit-hutches waterproof. A soldier's thanks for the enemy 'planes departure after dropping their load, and we cut the cards for duty. I was on first—ten to twelve. About half-past ten a furious fire was opened on our position. "Five-nines," gas-shells, and high velocity shells made the place a pandemonium. With the exception of one line to the officer's mess, all our communications were cut. The violent concussion from one shell sent the telephone and myself sprawling on the ground. Gas was about—there was gas in nearly every shell sent over. Our Major, knowing that we were getting knocked about, called up on the telephone. He was told that all communications with head-quarters and other batteries were cut. "Well, Repton," he said, "I should like you to get in touch with "C" Battery, but, mind you, no Victoria Cross stunts." With gas-masks on Charlie Tree and myself went to find the break. We traced it to between No. 4 and No. 5 gun; a shell had dropped right on the double line, blowing the other two ends yards away. To find those I had to remove my mask and soon afterwards a five-nine blew the wheel off No. 1 gun, setting fire to the camouflage and the charges. We returned to our hut. The next morning I could not open my eyes. It may not be of particular interest at this point to mention that I had had a presentiment in the past that I should be blinded.

Up to the time that I left my battery I had *managed without this abstraction called God*. The Major's words quoted above were worth more to me than any thoughts of this Christian convenient nothing above. What man could resist such a command so tactfully presented? And on going out to obey it, I thought only of two people—my wife and daughter.

To Rouen, Trouville, Le Havre, to be patched up, I eventually rejoined my Battery a few days after the Armistice. Near Bourlon Wood several of my old pals had been killed. Sadness and sorrow to lose them so near the finish; but we all felt that a horrible weight had been lifted off our shoulders. Rough men, human even under the stress of war, expanded with gentleness and kindness. On the way up, at Achiet-le-Grand Reinforcement Camp, I remember the cook, as black as a chimney-sweep, although he made nothing but stew, with prospective joy in view, used to sing or howl himself to sleep with a song, one of the lines being, "I'm going back to the scenes of my childhood." At the same place I saw a prisoner, with Armistice latitude, hurrying along with a rusty sword. "What are you going to do with that?" I asked. "Stick it on that bloke's grave," he replied. Rough graves were scattered about in the field; some had on them a tunic, a gas mask, or a rifle. Sentimental, you may say—incongruous—at a longer perspective, silly. A *Times* reviewer, with what object I leave the reader to guess, quotes the following, which he calls Hindenburg's "sentimental view," from *Out of My Life*, by Marschall von Hindenburg:—

A severely wounded German private far nearer death than life raised his stiffening arm and groaned to his bearer who was bending over him "Mutter, Mutter." The English ear understood the German sound. The Tommy knelt down by the side of the grenadier, stroked his cold hand, and said, "Mother, yes; Mother is here."

An American in the next bed to me in hospital told me how a boy prisoner, aged about seventeen, had cried to him to be spared. The boy had bound up the American's bleeding leg, and had told him that he was the last of six brothers

—the other five were all dead. In broken English he asked to be spared so that he might comfort his mother. The American had great trouble in preventing the youth from molestation coming down the line, but he succeeded in getting him safely on the way to one of the hideous barbed wire cages. Our knight of the pen mentioned above has yet to learn the difference between the "sentimental vein" and humanity. By the time he has done this the *Times* and all its commercial *Literary Supplements* will be generally recognized as suitable material for fishmongers, and its little gutter brother, the *Daily Mail*, will take its rightful place with *Comic Cuts* as a purveyor of political fiction.

One wonders how these pure, unspotted patriots can bring themselves to advertise German books; perhaps they have been hypnotized by the Albert Memorial, or perhaps it is—bread and butter. And the end of the War finds you cadging for money for War memorials. War memorials! they are in hospital wards, in lunatic asylums, and in graveyards. They are in the hearts of widows and fatherless children and 50,000 of your ignoble breed, specially fitted and ordained for heaven, were exempted. Had you no faith in your Father? Would not his hand have spared you a clout on the head from a rifle butt, or a prod from the business end of a bayonet? Would not his hand have guided the shrieking shell away from your holy bodies? O ye of little faith! Would not the very lice have refused to nibble your precious skins? Would not the ravens have fed you? Your choice was the safety of the recruiting platform. If you were Men, you would have left the Church; if you were women, you would have dropped tears of warm compassion; as you were Priests, like your God, you did nothing.

If Christianity has emerged from the War utterly discredited, what shall we say of Spiritualism? The crucifixion of one man in Palestine has been an excuse for the former; the crucifixion of millions appears to have brought the latter into prominence. The credentials of both are bloody, and no serious man can consider these claims from the slaughter-house. Let them both away to implore their Gods and Spirits to produce butter, sugar, clothes—to build houses in the many square miles of the Somme district—to build them at home, and a speedy belief shall follow their efforts.

In bidding farewell to this series—now no longer in my mind, but public property, to be judged and criticised—I must say that much that is unprintable has been withheld. Realism does not illuminate—it only depicts; the writer, with Sterne before him, does not write all nor think all, but leaves the matter to be shared amicably by both reader and writer. There are streaks of grey in my hair, and I am just half way through the threescore years and ten; my godless Odyssey at the heel of Mars has increased my faith in the preponderance of good among human beings, and, with more sincerity than can be put in the written word, I conclude with Edward Carpenter's affirmation to life:—

If I am not level with the lowest I am nothing; and if I did not know for a certainty that the craziest sot in the village is my equal, and were not proud to have him walk with me as my friend, I would not write another word—for in this is my strength.

To religious Tyrants and exalted Idiots:—You have thrust me and millions down lower than animals; if we ask you what for, your mouths are full of ashes. But in our down-going we have gathered something within us that you wish was not there; to be humble and lowly before our betters—on YOUR valuation—all that modesty has been shelled out of us. One man died to save the world, say you! Millions were killed for less.

WILLIAM REPTON.

There is enough theological sense in Rabelais to blast all the bloated bishops and bell-clanging vicars in England, to reduce them to fine malodorous powder, yet as no multitude is paid annually to spread Rabelais or Bayle or Voltaire, the obscurity of the populace is undiminished, the same wheezes work age in and age out; Chaucer's pardoner, the party who plays with peas and shells at the country fairs, and the makers of currency are still with us.

—Ezra Pound, "New Age."

### Man and Morals.

MR. J. M. ROBERTSON divides his recent work on *A Short History of Morals* (Watts & Co.; 18s. net) into three parts. The first, after a short discussion of the ethics of life and opinion, and a very useful section on the meaning of terms, consists of an account of what may be called ethics in the making. It deals with the rise of morals in the world of primitive humanity, with its roots in the life of animals. The second part, which embraces nearly three-fourths of the work, is made up of sketches of the various systems of morality, beginning with the Greeks and ending with Schopenhauer. The concluding chapter contains a brief sketch of "subsisting ethical issues." Incidentally, a great many topical issues are touched upon, as might be expected from a writer of Mr. Robertson's versatility and outstanding ability, some of which hardly lend greater force to the work, as, for examples, the comments on the Central Empires and the late War, which are a little out of place in a work of this kind. It does not, for example, seem very profitable discussing whether Austria and Germany have a proper "consciousness of guilt" for the waging of the War, seeing that such a conviction has never yet oppressed any nation in any war in which they have been engaged. The "Bias of Patriotism" is not peculiar to Germany, and apologists for war are never wanting in any country. And while that is so, the number of the apologists does not appear to be a very important matter.

So far as we are concerned, we should have been content to sacrifice some of the second part of the work in favour of an enlargement of the first and concluding portions. This, not because the larger portion lacks interest, but because in our opinion the other parts of the work are the more important, and we know of no one who is better able to deal with the science and art of morality than is Mr. Robertson. It is with the origin and nature of morality that the ordinary individual is concerned. He does not care very much for the various opinions of a number of other people; what he is more concerned with is "What are the facts of the subject?" and he wants these placed before him free from ambiguity. He needs to know what all the discussion is about, not what a number of other people have thought it was all about. The trees need clearing in order that we may see the wood, and the man who will do this without overloading his pages with the opinions of scores of other writers will perform a much-needed service to his day and generation. Mr. Robertson might reply that he is writing a history of morals, and the reply would be a just one. But it is precisely because he deals with the origin and development of morals in so suggestive a manner that we regret he did not make his work a natural history of morals. But we must, we suppose, be thankful for what we get. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and a writer who is worth reading must be permitted to write as the spirit prompts, not as a publisher orders. When a book is written to order it stands little chance of the public ordering it to read.

Mr. Robertson's sketch of the beginnings of morality is well done, although there is, as we have said, not enough of it. So far as human morality is concerned, the beginning is naturally found in the reciprocal claims and needs of members of the group. But there are two things here that will raise a query in the minds of some readers. One is whether the author has not overstressed the warlike tendency of primitive mankind, the other the basis of the sex hostility (we use the phrase with reservations) that meets us in the history of man. Generally it is assumed that primitive life was passed in a state of tribal warfare, but that seems to be a tradition that has been accepted without adequate scrutiny. Man certainly becomes a warlike animal, and the currency of the phrase "struggle for existence" has tended to encourage it. But there is evidence that primitive mankind was much more peaceful than is usually supposed, and there is nothing against the reasonableness of the hypothesis that warfare is something that mankind may have grown into, and no less an authority than Sir James Frazer suggests that the belief in a future life is a cause that might have operated in this manner.

One is more inclined to quarrel with the statement that

the "Woman question" begins at the stage where man desires to set up a home, presumably in the need, if the settled home was to be established, to break woman in from the life of physical movement to which she had, hypothetically, been accustomed. It is hard to think of a time when man so deliberately set about the building up of a stationery home that there should be needed any special breaking in. On the contrary, it would rather seem that the need would be to break man from the nomadic habit, and that in this the influence of women would be seen. And as to the "subjection" of women, that appears to be a civilized reading of the situation. Women among savages do not suffer subjection so much, as they are subject to a different treatment which is in turn due to the superstitious fears and beliefs that cluster round the sexual nature of women. Travellers are too ready to read into savage life our conception of things and so succeed in misleading many.

Mr. Robertson traces in a very interesting manner the variations of the principle of utility among the different schools of writers, but it is to be regretted that fuller justice was not done to Spencer in this matter. For Spencer's contribution to the doctrine of utilitarianism was a very real one. In the hands of Mill it was little more than an empirical generalization, and presented in a manner that left room for criticism. Spencer gave to the principle a sound basis in both biology and psychology, which, while calling for a restatement of the principle, yet made that restatement much stronger. So, also, one may note the absence of adequate reference to the work done by American workers in the field of psychology, much of which strongly supports Spencer's conclusions. Attention might here be given to the new Behaviouristic school of writers. Their influence is a decidedly helpful one.

One other word of criticism. Mr. Robertson says that "rightly regarded, intuition is seen to be the progressive register of the whole moral process." If by that is meant that the moral progress achieved becomes registered in the nervous structure of man in such a way that he responds, in virtue of that modification, in a particular manner, then, so far as we are aware, there is no evidence that can be given to prove it. The moral progress achieved is inherited in the social structure, in its institutions, and customs, which operate on the individual from the time of his birth onward. That, it appears to us, is the only way in which "Intuition" can be said to operate. It is the experience of the race, stored up in institutional forms, of which the individual reaps the benefit. But, so far as either biology or psychology can help us here, the old sense of the word "intuition" is quite without meaning when applied to ethics.

Although what we have said has been mainly of a critical nature, it would be misleading to close these notes without expressing our warm appreciation of *A Short History of Morals*. In reading it, and with the thought of Mr. Robertson's many other works in mind, one cannot forbear a sense of wonder at an output that is at once so varied in the range of subjects dealt with, and which maintains so high a level of excellence. Many writers handle a number of subjects, but there are few who can be said to master them all. Of Mr. Robertson it may be fairly said that on all the subjects on which he writes he handles them with distinction, and, best of all, with suggestiveness. The *Short History of Morals* is a work that no Freethinker who wishes to master the subject can afford to miss, and on a subject on which so much has been written that in itself is high praise. One may close with the hope that the work is only a prelude to a further study of a natural history of morality from the same pen. The work is needed.

C. C.

There is a great difference between theological and scientific controversy. Theologians are proverbially vituperative: because it is a question of veracity: the truth of their views, their moral perceptions, their intellectual acumen. There exists no test but argument on which they can fall back. If argument fails, all fails. But the man of science stands calmly on the facts of the universe. He is based upon reality. All the opposition and controversy in the world cannot alter facts, nor prevent the facts being manifest at last. He can be calm because he is a witness for the Truth.

—Frederick W. Robertson.

## Correspondence.

## "THE JESUS MYTH."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In spite of the opinions that Jesus is held to be a myth, there is sufficient *intrinsic* evidence in the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth to warrant the conclusion that the Evangelists were biographers who recorded what they saw happen, and, apart from miracles of birth and life, that they have recorded a true history of a personality who lived and died about the period recorded. I have made a study during thirty-five years of what, in the absence of a better name, we may call "Clairaudience." Like Mahomet, Luther, Savonarola, George Fox, Bunyan, Cowper, Jeanne d'Arc, and others, Jesus, in the narrative, is a clairaudient. That it is illogical to interpret the nature of such apparently objective or cosmic communications we must admit and dangerous to construct the character of the senders from the subject-matter sent, although there is a great tendency to do so. It is twenty years ago since I studied Jesus as a clairaudient, and convinced myself that the harmony of cause and effect was in the narrative, when shorn of its monstrosities, and that stigmata, environment, heredity, early suggestions, deep and prolonged introversion of moral fitness, the anxiety with respect to fact and fitness, the deep questioning: "Am I thy Son?" the response: "thou art my Son," and at the end the disillusioned clairaudient on the cross with his sad cry ringing through the centuries, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" all were there. Such was my personal finding as a special investigator of clairaudient phenomena. But a greater investigator than myself has entered the field, a medical pathologist who has devoted seven years to the study of Jesus, and published his important arguments in four volumes, *La Folie de Jesus*, and this work ten years ago made a great impression on the Catholic countries of Europe. The author of this work is Dr. Binet-Sangle, and his finding is not easily upset, although for strong reasons it will be shelved. Just as circumstantial evidence is often sufficient in a court of law to hang a murderer, so is the circumstantial evidence here established, whereby we are convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is an historical personage who did live, suffered, and died, as is described by his biographers, otherwise by the evangelists. He was an honest man who thought the world was under condemnation, and who died for that world.

I have read the first volume of Dr. Binet-Sangle's important work, indeed translated it, and have made the nature of the book known to many public audiences. I advise Mr. E. Egerton Stafford to read this book, and I think that he, and your readers who do so, will be convinced that the history of Jesus has all the intrinsic characters which make us certain that the narrative is distorted but in the main true. Whether he shall be placed in the list of Theomaniacs of the variety known as Cotard's, I deliberately leave to the specialists and their classification.

J. B. S.

## W. J.'s "QUESTIONS."

SIR,—Allow me to acknowledge Dr. Lyttelton's letter in your issue of May 16, and to express my regret that he missed the point of mine by concentrating on what I did not say, nor dream of implying—that all modern Theists are ignoramuses. But if I have to face the fact that plenty of them are intellectual, Dr. Lyttelton has to face the fact that religion did not *begin* with them, but with primitive savages, and the question arising is—how is the modern defence of it justified? He has also to face the question of the reliability of convictions, and the correct diagnosis of mental states, in the unanswered article he is going to look up—p. 69, ch. xvii, and particularly the explanation of religious experience in paragraph 4; and the question arising is—how are we to distinguish truth from mistake?

W. JAMESON.

For faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast  
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last.

—Moore.

## 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. 2): 11, S. K. Ratcliffe, "The Next Religion, and Some of Its Prophets."

## OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. W. H. Thresh, "A Search for a Soul."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.30, A. J. Maclaren, "Jesus and the Modern Life."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6.30, Mr. E. Burke will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. H. White, "The Impossibility of Being Christian."

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Samuels; 3.15, Messrs. Dales, Baker, and Ratcliffe. Every Wednesday, 6.30, Messrs. Hyatt and Sabin.

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30.

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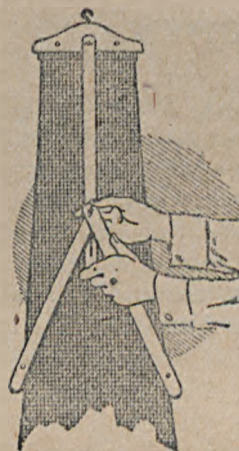
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