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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

| | Page. |
|--|-------|
| <i>The Moral Sense and a Future Life.—The Editor</i> - - - - - | 769 |
| <i>The Resurrection Myth.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - - | 770 |
| <i>Printers' Pie.—Mimmermus</i> - - - - - | 772 |
| <i>The Sin of Sacrifice.—Chester Keith</i> - - - - - | 773 |
| <i>The Myth Makers.—William Repton</i> - - - - - | 774 |
| <i>"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund</i> - - - - - | 777 |
| <i>The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ.—Gerald Massey</i> | 778 |
| <i>Official Labour, Unemployment, and C3 Clerical Schools.</i> | |
| <i>Mrs. Bridges Adams</i> - - - - - | 780 |
| <i>Writers and Readers.—George Underwood</i> - - - - - | 781 |
| <i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, etc.</i> | |

Views and Opinions.

The Moral Sense and a Future Life.¹

To one whose mind is not befogged with theology, man's moral sense is the product of intercourse with his environment. And as a consequence of this, if anyone wishes to understand its nature, one naturally turns to the world, social or material, that has produced it. But that common-sense method will never do for the theologian. It allows no room for fog and fantastic speculation; and it has the fatal merit of promoting clear thinking. The theologian, however, reverses the natural and logical order. Instead of testing the moral sense by the world of which it is the expression, and to which it is a form of adaptation, he proceeds to set up a number of claims on behalf of what he calls the moral sense, to judge the universe by them, and to praise or condemn it accordingly. It is one of these demands that I am about to examine. In a way it runs on all fours with the argument from the desire for progress, with which I dealt in the *Freethinker* for November 21. It asserts that the universe does not come up to man's moral expectations, and, as his moral sense is not satisfied here, there must be another world where it will receive gratification. That is putting the case very plainly, which is a very cruel form in which to put a religious claim, and it is ridiculous, which is inevitable, as it is a part of theology. The unilluminated intellect can see no reason why the universe should live up to our expectations in the matter of morality, any more than it does in the matter of the weather. Whether it does in the one case or in the other is a matter for examination. And one may hazard the suspicion that the universe will survive our disapproval, even as it appears to be unconcerned about our praise. In any case, the argument, coming from a believer, is curious. For, it will be noted, that, when the Freethinker doubts the existence of God, the reply of the Theist is to point to the wonderful and admirable manner in which the world is constructed. It is then the best of all possible worlds. When it is a question of a future life, the world is as bad as it can be; it is full of imperfections, so that there must be another in which to make up for the mistakes and blunders in this one. The world is perfect or imperfect, as the argu-

¹ Previous "Views and Opinions" on the subject of "Immortality" appeared in the *Freethinker* for October 24, 31, November 14 and 21.

ment is for God or for a future life. Even in his unreason the believer is seldom logical for long.

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Now, I do not intend to take the argument I wish to consider in the plain and brutal form in which I have cast it. I will take it as presented, not by a clergyman, who so seldom understands even his own case well enough to argue it intelligently, but will take it as given by one who deservedly stands high in British philosophical circles. In his *Humanism* Mr. F. S. C. Schiller says:—

Without immortality it is not possible to think of the world as a harmonious whole, or as a moral cosmos. To show this, one has not to appeal to anything more recondite than the fact that in our present phase of existence the moral life cannot be lived out to its completion, that it is not permitted to display its full fruitage of consequences for good and for evil. Whenever might triumphs over right; whenever the evildoers succeed, and the righteous perish; whenever goodness is trampled under foot, and wickedness is exalted to high places; nay, whenever the moral development of character is cut short and rendered vain by death—we are brought face to face with facts which constitute an indictment of cosmic justice, which are inconsistent with the conception of the world as a moral order. Unless, therefore, we can vindicate this order by explaining away the facts that would otherwise destroy it, we have to abandon the ethical judgment of the world of our experience as good and bad; we have to admit that the ideal of goodness is an illusion of which the scheme of things reckons not at all.

But to all this the reply is simple and complete. If the relations of human beings permit the application of the conception of goodness, then "the scheme of things" does permit the "ideal of goodness." And to complain that these human ideals are not applicable to the non-human or non-animal world is absurd. It is like complaining that the laws of chemical attraction do not apply to the world of political economy. The universe becomes a "harmonious whole" so soon as we can group its phenomena in an intelligible and orderly manner. But it does not follow that laws framed to cover certain restricted groups of phenomena must apply to phenomena as a whole. And the evil in the world is only an indictment of "cosmic" justice so long as we cling to the fetishistic conception of a god. There is nothing to shock the moral judgment so long as we understand the nature of morality and the sphere to which moral judgments properly apply. It is when we put a god behind or over nature that the whole thing becomes confusion, and is riddled with absurdity.

* * *

Conduct and Consequences.

We may take another form of the same argument from the late Dr. Martineau. In his elaborate *Study of Religion* he remarks:—

Were the problem surrendered to physics and metaphysics, it could never quit its state of suspense; there would be nothing to forbid the future; there would be nothing to promise it; and on such a question the intellectual balance would be tantamount to

practical negation. Not till we turn to the moral aspects of death do we meet with the presiding reasons which give the casting vote.

These "moral aspects" are thus described by Principal Caird in his Gifford lectures:—

The injustice or inequality seems the more flagrant when we see that it is the very goodness of the good to which their extra share of suffering, the very badness of the bad to which the immunity from suffering is often traceable. On the one hand, the very sensitiveness of conscience which characterizes the former, subjects them to inward pangs of self-reproach, to painful moral conflicts and struggles, to bitter distress for the sorrow and sin of the world, of which the latter know nothing; and, on the other hand, against these and other causes of suffering the vicious and morally indifferent are case-hardened by their moral sensibility.

The truth of this is undeniable; and, indeed, the indictment might be made much stronger. Nature takes the same apparent care in moulding the vicious character in such a way that its very viciousness protects it from pangs to which the sensitive one is exposed, as it does to fashioning the sensitive nature which the best of us admire. But that being so, admitting the obvious fact that the relation of conduct to consequence is not such as an enlightened moral sense would approve, in what way does that point to a continued existence beyond the grave? After all, the complaint is with reference to things as they are in this world, not a demand that they shall be differently arranged somewhere else. Why must imperfect justice here point to perfect justice elsewhere? If evil triumphs here, how does that prove that there must be an elsewhere where it is invariably vanquished? Even though we take the existence of God as the real, though unexpressed, basis of the belief in survival, we are as far as ever from any logical justification for it. For, on that theory, this is God's world, as well as the next. And if he could not or would not so arrange matters as to make the adjustment of action to consequence here morally justifiable, on what ground do we assume that he can or will arrange matters better elsewhere? Is it not suspiciously like framing a First Offenders' Act for the deity? This world is, apparently, God's first effort, and he could not be expected to make it all that it ought to have been. But he benefited from experience, and elsewhere he has made another world, where all the imperfections that characterize this one are avoided. That is all the argument amounts to. It is giving God Almighty an extra half-hour for repentance, another opportunity for reform. Man is far more thoughtful for his creator than his creator has been for him.

* * *

The Nature of Experience.

It is argued that this kind of a world was necessary as a school for character. Man's nature needed training by experience, as the older theologians used to put it, this life is a school of probation. But, in the first place, that experience can only be of value to a life that is to be lived amid conditions such as we have in this world. It could be of no conceivable use in a world where the conditions of existence were radically different. A man who contemplates swimming the Channel does not prepare for the task by spending his time in bed, nor does one who contemplates a prolonged fast practice feeding on an intensified scale. An argument which proceeds on the assumption that we must adjust ourselves to conditions as they are in order to qualify ourselves for conditions that are radically different is the very quintessence of illogicality. Besides, it is an actual fact that experience may degrade as well as elevate, may harmonize one's nature to evil conditions as easily as it may breed a feeling of resentment, and so make for an endeavour after better

things. Over-indulgence in alcohol does not excite a revolt against it, but tends rather to establish a craving for the stimulant and to reconcile the subject to the degradation which so often follows. The vicious and morally indifferent, as Dr. Caird says, become not only case-hardened in virtue of their viciousness, but they are protected from the annoyance and the pain to which the higher type of character is exposed. The bad man does not always, not perhaps even usually, consciously suffer from his badness, it is the good man who suffers from its contemplation. And continuance in an evil course has the natural tendency to reconcile one to it, and to make any other one seem almost impossible. In itself, experience has no moral value whatever. It is neither moral nor immoral; it is simply non-moral. Experience merely leads us to avoid the immediately painful, and to pursue the immediately pleasurable. But whether the immediately painful is good or bad entirely depends upon the subject. It may be a matter far from pleasant for a thief to avoid taking advantage of the opportunity of stealing; it would be equally uncomfortable for the naturally honest man to avail himself of the chance. Experience may as easily harden character in vice as it may strengthen it in virtue. We are really back at the old theistic dilemma. Either God could or could not have so arranged things that justice and right would have always prevailed this side the grave. If he had the will, but lacked the power, on what ground do we assume that he has more power elsewhere? If he possessed the power, but lacked the will, why should we assume that he will be differently inclined elsewhere? If we are to be ruled by evidence, and not by blind faith, we must judge the nature of deity by what we know of his works. And it is worse than idle, it is the very essence of stupidity, to take imperfection here as clear proof of perfection elsewhere.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

The Resurrection Myth.

THE belief that under certain circumstances the dead return to life is exceedingly ancient. At the bidding of a witch, for example, woods moved, mountains trembled, the ground groaned, and the dead rose from their graves. In all probability Euripides did not believe in the miraculous, but simply records the popular tradition. We read in the Gospels that when Jesus died, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised (Matt. xxvii., 51, 52). Curiously enough, Matthew is the only Evangelist who mentions the opening of the sepulchres and the raising of the saints. To say the very least, the Evangelists are not reliable historians. For instance, Matthew places the rending of the temple-veil, the earthquake, and the resurrection of the saints immediately after the decease of Jesus, whilst Luke (xxiii., 45) associates the veil-ripping with an eclipse of the sun, and represents them as occurring before the last cry from the cross, making no allusion to the earthquake and its consequences. Matthew's description of the earthquake and the consequent resurrection has, however, occasioned the commentators and apologists endless trouble. Professor David Smith devotes his "Correspondence Column" in the *British Weekly* for November 25 to a discussion of the problem raised by the statement in Mal. xxvii., 52. Dr. Smith says, in answer to a query:—

The passage involves a grave difficulty which was perceived long ago, and is discussed by St. Augustine in his hundred and sixty-fourth Epistle. The difficulty is this—that, according to St. Paul, our Lord was "the first-fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. xv.,

30), "the first-born from the dead"; yet here it is written that ere his resurrection, while his body still hung on the cross, many of the departed saints were raised.

The question is thus one of veracity between Paul and the Evangelist. Which of the two is telling the truth, or is there a plausible subterfuge by which it can be shown that they are both telling the truth? St. Augustine informs us that in his day there were two methods of evading the difficulty. One was to characterize the resurrection of the Saints as a temporary affair, like that of Lazarus. They were raised for a little while only, and would have to die a second time. They had not yet exchanged their vile, earthly bodies for the heavenly or spiritual ones. Dr. Smith objects to this interpretation on the exegetical ground that the word used in relation to them is "appeared"—"they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many." During the interval between their own resurrection and that of their Lord they remained invisible, and then became visible only by a spiritual manifestation. On this point Dr. Smith concludes thus:—

The passage, therefore, means that these saints were not merely resuscitated, but raised in incorruption, wearing no longer their earthly bodies, but the "heavenly body" which we shall wear when we are raised at the Last Day, invisible to the eye of sense.

The other evasive interpretation adopted by some is that the earthquake which shook the earth and split the rocks and rolled away the great stones which closed and covered the cavern sepulchres of the Jews was loud enough even to raise to life the dead saints in the surrounding neighbourhood, but who, for some reason, stayed in their open tombs for three days and three nights before coming "forth out of the tombs and appearing unto many."

Dr. Smith will have nothing to do with either evasion, after having given so full an account of them. Now comes the following illuminating passage:—

What is the solution? Observe that the passage is peculiar to the first Evangelist; and he was not the Apostle Matthew himself, but an unknown writer who edited the Apostle's version of the oral tradition of our Lord's sayings and doings.....The significant fact here is that the Apostolic Tradition ended with the Crucifixion, and thus the Synoptists, in recounting the transcendent consummation of the Resurrection, had no material to go upon beyond the reports which circulated among the believers.....It is an interpolated fragment of the rumours which flitted among the early Christians; and it is notorious how wild this sort of talk is apt to be.

Now the cat is out of the bag with a vengeance. According to Professor Smith, the Apostolic tradition is fairly reliable. For example, the true story of the end of the traitor Judas is presented in the Evangelic Tradition (cf. St. Matt. xxvii., 3-10). Judas had betrayed his Master with a kiss for thirty pieces of silver; but when he saw that his Master was condemned he bitterly regretted having done so. In desperation he rushed to the chief priests and elders to give them back their money, "Saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood." They answered, "What is that to us? See thou to it." Then he flung the money into the sanctuary, went away and hanged himself. With the money the authorities bought a field in which to bury strangers, and which came to be called "The Field of Blood." That is the Evangelic Tradition, which ends with the Crucifixion. Then our twentieth century apologist adds:—

Turn to the Book of Acts, and there you find, in a parenthesis which St. Luke inserts in Peter's speech (1., 18-20), the wild story which grew up among the Christians—how Judas, impenitent to the last, bought the field with his impious gain, and was stricken upon it with a horrible judgment. It was his own blood that earned it the ghastly name.

"It is notorious how wild this sort of talk is apt to be." Dr. Smith belongs to the category of the most evan-

gelical divines, and yet even he admits the legendary character of some portions of the Gospels and the Acts. We go further still, and deny the historicity of the Gospel Jesus altogether. That, however, is not the point as issue just now. Assuming, for argument's sake, the substantial accuracy of the so-called Apostolic tradition, on Dr. Smith's own showing that tradition does not cover the Resurrection narratives, and this observation applies to the resurrection of Jesus as well as to that of departed saints. Both stories began as rumours, whispered, at first with bated breath, from person to person; "and it is notorious how wild this sort of talk is apt to be." From the very first, some believed and others doubted. It was a belief that grew slowly. It is reported that the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto a mountain he had appointed them, and that "when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted." Did all the doubters ultimately become believers? Why is practically nothing known of the subsequent careers of the majority of those eleven? Were they mere nobodies, or did they continue to carry their doubts with them, and on this account, took no part in the work of evangelization? So far as direct evidence is concerned, there is no more ground for believing in the resurrection of Jesus than in that of Lazarus, or that of the buried saints at the crucifixion; and there never was a time when the doctrine of the Resurrection can be said to have been universally accepted, even by professing Christians. Paul himself tells us that even among his Corinthian converts there were those who asserted that there was no resurrection.

There are those in Christendom who still declare that a myth could never have held so many millions of people in bondage for so many centuries as the belief in the resurrection of Jesus has done; but that declaration is clearly rooted in ignorance and prejudice. The belief in witchcraft dominated the world for thousands of years, and countless myriads of witches were cruelly put to death in consequence. Witchcraft arose, as Lecky observes, from a vivid realization of Satanic presence acting on the imagination, and through the imagination afterwards on the reason. Nobody believes in witchcraft now. It was a form of superstition which growing intelligence eventually killed. With the witches, the Devil has almost as entirely vanished, who for ages was a source of unspeakable torment to the minds of men. He haunted Martin Luther all through his life, and it was only by throwing ink bottles at and missing him that he could get for a moment rid of the sense of his presence. One by one the Fables of the Above are taking their departure. As Dean Inge repeatedly reminds us, even the belief in the after-life is rapidly weakening, not only among the laity, but also among the clergy. Even the present bewildering unrest and upheaval is largely due to the gradual emergence of this world and life into the supreme place in the thought and concern of the generality of the people, and a consequent realization of the truth that the solution of this world-problem is the only thing that vitally matters.

J. T. LLOYD.

The law of the Church has created neither the purity nor the peace of domestic life. Back of all Churches is human affection. Back of all theologies is the love of the human heart. Back of all your priests and creeds is the adoration of the one woman by the one man, and of the one man by the one woman. Back of your faith is the fireside; back of your folly is the family, and back of all your holy mistakes and your sacred absurdities is the love of husband and wife, of parent and child.—R. G. Ingersoll.

The good old man, too eager in dispute,
Flew high; and, as his Christian fury rose,
Damn'd all for heretics who durst oppose.

—Dryden.

Printers' Pie.

Mind your p's and q's.—*Old Proverb.*

It is human to err.—*Old Proverb.*

Thunders of laughter, clearing air and heart.—*George Meredith.*

IN these troublous days of high prices, when the only thing which remains at pre-war figure is the charge of five pounds for stopping a train, it is well sometimes to turn to something that will bring a sense of relief. And, as the 'bus-driver was said to have taken his scant holidays riding on other men's 'buses, so a journalist may be pardoned for turning for a few minutes to the amusing experiences of his profession, especially with regard to printers' pie, proof-readers, and unconscious lapses into humour.

The proof-reader is the watch-dog of literature, and he is often the author's best friend. Perhaps the haste with which modern books and periodicals are produced is mainly responsible for the greater prevalence of the printer's error than in the old leisurely days of our grandparents. Of the proof-reader, too, it may be remarked that his strokes of humour owe much of their success to their surroundings. The flashes of fun are spread over pages of dullness, which enhance them, just as a dark night suits fireworks, or the atmosphere of the Houses of Parliament, or of a court of law, is propitious to a joke, however feeble.

Nobody but a good, professional reader can read proof-sheets properly. An educated and accurate man, he notices the misprints, corrects the grammar, and verifies the quotations. He is supposed to know such outlandish languages as Chinese, even if he gains his knowledge from the lids of tea-chests. Without a good proof-reader a book or paper goes forth in as slovenly a condition as Sairey Gamp in pursuit of her calling. An author, with his mind full of what he intends to say, and reading in print his own words, may, or may not, notice an error. This is especially the case with dates. We know very well that the illustrious Charles Bradlaugh died in 1891, but the journeyman printer does not know, and does not care. He prints the year 1391. The error of a single figure escapes our eyes until the statement is published, and then our language is like the Psalms attributed to King David, and proportionate to our distress. In extenuation, it may be urged, since even Shakespeare sometimes nodded, that the proof-reader may be excused if he occasionally takes a nap. But, on the other hand, it is to be remembered that, of all mistakes, a misprint is the most indelible. Other mishaps may possibly be retrieved, but the printer's pie proudly remains. Here are a few examples which show that unconscious humour is not the least laughable.

Years ago the Dore Gallery was one of the most popular show-places in London, and one of the favourite pictures was that entitled "Christ Leaving the Prætorium." A printer, who had been twisting the vine-leaves in his hair, in setting up a descriptive account of the gallery, stated that "the gem of the exhibition was the wonderful painting, "Christ Leaving the *Criterion*."

In a report of the Colley-Maskelyne libel case, Bishop Colenso, of Natal, appeared in all the glory of print as the Bishop of Colenso, an accidental reversal of the true relations between the bishop's name and the place called after him, which recalls the enthusiastic Imperialist, of foreign parentage, who thought it splendid that Lord Melbourne should have taken his title from an Australian city.

A proof-reader should know stock quotations. He should never have passed the following delightful improvement upon Milton's sonorous music:—

that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse and rigged with curses dark,
That junk that drowned that sacred head of thine.

In the following issue of the paper the justly infuriated editor said that when he saw the atrocity "we wished him a junk diet for a fortnight." The archaic language of the older poets provides many pitfalls. A country editor altered Shakespeare's "He smote the sledded Polack on the ice" into "He smote his leaded poleaxe on the ice." This was a better emendation than a painstaking Teutonic professor's correction of "Christy Minstrels" to "Minstrels of Jesus."

A philosophical journalist wrote a letter to the press, saying "there is truth in the converse" of a certain proposition, and he had the unalloyed joy of reading in cold print that "there is truth in the universe," but for that, he adds, he "would not like to vouch without further investigation." This was nearly as amusing as the case of a famous temperance orator, who lectured on "Fables, Ancient and Modern," and who referred frequently in his discourse to "old Æsop." His joy may be imagined when he found that in a newspaper report the words were rendered "old Allsopp" throughout.

In a printseller's catalogue we have seen Benjamin Franklin raised to the posthumous distinction as "President of the United States." Mistress Nell Gwynn, in the same informative publication was idealized as "a friend of King Charles the Second," although this does not describe accurately the lady who was "less than kin, and more than kind" to the soft-hearted and inflammable monarch. But this error is at least excusable. Even Walter Scott described Joan of Arc as "an unfortunate female."

Some "malaprops" must surely bring the author as well as the proof-reader into the dock together. Anthony Trollope makes one of his heroes come "whistling up the street with a cigar in his mouth." Even so splendid an artist as John Keats could, on occasion, perpetrate a good-sized bull:—

So the two brothers and their murdered man
Rode towards fair Florence.

Some modern versifiers consider that Tennyson could not have been a great poet because he was sober, so unlike themselves. He was, however, a very great artist in words, and he was not above taking good advice. Iphigenia, in *A Dream of Fair Women*, originally described her awful fate in the words:—

One drew a sharp knife through my tender throat,
Slowly, and nothing more.

"What more did the girl expect?" asked a saucy critic. Tennyson gave it up, and now we read:—

The bright death quivered at the victim's throat;
Touched, and I knew no more.

Browning was regarded, like the prophet Habakkuk, as "capable of anything." An author of repute quoted, in a daily paper, Browning's "Just for a handful of silver he left us." This appeared in public as "Just for a *handle* of silver he left us." The author complained to the editor, and explained that every schoolboy knew the quotation, and that "handle" was not sense. The answer was that the line was unknown, and that sense was not expected from Browning.

Enthusiastic golfers justify themselves by saying that their game can be played from morning till night, from January to December, from the schoolroom to the cemetery. The youth who loves books makes friends for life. To miss, however, the vagaries of "printer's pie" is to miss one of the really good things of the literary life.

MIMNERMUS.

I do not see, therefore, how we can easily avoid the obvious inference that Jahweh, the god of the Hebrews, who later became sublimated and etherealized into the God of Christianity, was, in his origin, nothing more nor less than the ancestral sacred stone of the people of Israel, however sculptured, and, perhaps, in the very last resort of all, the unhewn monumental pillar of some early Semitic sheikh or chieftain.—*Grant Allen.*

The Sin of Sacrifice.

The most fully developed side of the conception of sacrifice—the offering to the God of a peculiarly precious gift, representing a maximum of self-deprivation in the sacrificers.—*J. M. Robertson, "Pagan Christs."*

THE custom of sacrifice is so widespread, and dates so far back, that it is not wonderful it should have struck deep roots into human nature—so deep, indeed, as to be in many cases ineradicable by the keenest tools of rationalism. Be it understood that I do not here speak of self-denial, which is the altruistic impulse to procure benefit to others, even at one's own cost; but of sacrifice pure and simple, as defined above by Mr. Robertson. I propose to sketch briefly the development of this cult of sacrifice, and to show how it persists to this day in many minds which have no recognition of the source of their ideas. The God to whom sacrifice is made may be the most purely abstract conception of virtue or duty; the gift which is offered may be equally intangible; but the essential meaning of the practice remains unchanged.

Sacrifice was born of the savage's fear of the unknown powers with which he peopled the world, and his consequent efforts to propitiate and appease them. It was only natural that he should believe in the evil or hurtful intentions of these unknown powers, for man has always wrought his gods in his own image, morally as well as physically. Savage man, even more than civilized, must have judged others by himself: he could have had no other standard. Thus it occurred to him that if he could gratify these terrible unknowns by gifts of such things as he liked himself, they might be so far pleased as to refrain from doing him any harm. Around that simple nucleus has grown up the whole historic cult of sacrifice, in all its innumerable varieties.

What form the earliest offerings took it is now, of course, impossible to do more than conjecture; but the habits of contemporary primitives may give some guidance. Human sacrifice, though early, can hardly have been primordial, as not until the social organism had evolved some form of priesthood could the slayer have been protected against vengeance by the relatives of the victim. In accordance with this view, we find that among savages of the present day human sacrifice exists only where there is a well-established priesthood. Personal and unofficial sacrifices usually take the form of food, drink, or clothing, or, amongst pastoral people, of animals from the flock and herd. Only where slavery had come into being could a system of private human sacrifice grow up; and this we see clearly exemplified in ancient Mexico, where the ghastly practice rose to its most terrible height.

The reason for this limitation is clear, since sacrifice means essentially the giving up of something which belongs to the sacrificer. The community might—and did—sacrifice some of its members, but the private individual could not well sacrifice his fellow-creatures until he had become the owner of them. To this rule only one exception exists. A man could sacrifice his own children; and it is horrible to know that he frequently did. Child-sacrifice seems to have been common among the Semitic races, though unfortunately not peculiar to them; and the Old Testament affords clear evidence that such a practice was current among the early Hebrews. The prophet's indignant question, whether he should give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, points unmistakably to a recognised custom of doing that very thing; and there are numerous other indications.

But, though enthusiasts may carry out a pious custom to its logical conclusion, normal human nature will always tend to seek some mitigation of a practice that has become irksome; and human sacrifice must gradually have become very irksome to feelings that

had been softened and refined by the growth of civilization. Some other offering had to take the place of the human victim. Among the Semites, the rite of circumcision was probably such a substitute; it is impossible to explain otherwise the legend (Exod. iv., 24-26) of Zipporah's redemption of Moses by the circumcision of her son. More commonly animal victims were substituted, as has occurred frequently in historic times among barbaric tribes, under pressure from a higher civilization. The Passover was almost certainly a modification of some rite of human sacrifice, presumably that of the firstborn, with which the Exodus legend connects its institution, and to this day, among the stricter Jews, the practice has survived of sacrificing a white cock for each family on the Day of Atonement, the ritual followed bearing clear traces that the victim was originally human.

The mention of atonement brings us naturally to the peculiar or expiatory form of sacrifice. Doubtless, in its origin, it was merely a crude way of apologizing to an offended, and therefore dangerous, deity. In the Iliad, the Trojan dames endeavour to win over their enemy Athene by the present of the best robe in the city—an interesting touch, by the way, as showing that even the Goddess of Wisdom was not considered above a liking for fine clothes. But, as ethical ideas crept into religion, and the conception of sin developed, sacrifice assumed more and more an expiatory and penitential meaning. Under pressure of poverty, too, the material of the sacrifice was yet further modified. Among the Jews, as we know, those who could not afford a lamb might offer a "turtle-dove or two young pigeons"; and among the Greeks and Egyptians the poorer classes baked images of dough, and offered those.

Substitution having reached this pitch of symbolism, it is not difficult to understand the feeling among the more earnest and thoughtful minds that such offerings were unworthy of a deity, and that by the sacrifice of sins alone could the Divine Spirit be appeased. This conception, which is the chief theme of the later Hebrew prophets, and some of the nobler psalms, marked a great moral advance; but unhappily the matter did not stop there. As fear of the deity merged into gratitude, and thence into love, a mystical devotion grew up, which urged the worshipper to give the best he had to his God—to strip himself not only of his sins, but his pleasures. Inextricably mingled with this persisted the old idea that the greater costliness of the sacrifice meant its greater efficacy in procuring personal benefit. Even in the New Testament this selfish notion of sacrifice, this idea of throwing a sprat to catch a whale, is still in full force, as in the familiar saying about cutting off the foot or hand that causes stumbling: "It is good for thee to enter into life maimed rather than having thy two hands to go into hell" (Mark ix., 43). Nowadays, where the idea of immortality has died out, it is improvement of character that is supposed to be the beneficial result of sacrifice; but the fundamental principle is unaltered.

From these two threads was woven the Oriental doctrine of asceticism. Greatest stress is usually laid upon the renunciation of sex-pleasure; it was the one which appealed most strongly to the voluptuous Eastern temperament; and the purely artificial virtue of chastity was thus brought into prominence. It is Paul of Tarsus, or the writer of the epistles attributed to him, who is mainly responsible for the introduction of asceticism into Christianity; the Gospels contain scarcely a hint of it. But St. Paul (using the name for convenience' sake) admits that he had no inclination towards sex-pleasure, and seems to have disliked the thought that anyone should fulfil needs which he did not feel. Others since his day have harboured the same resentment; indeed, it lies at the root of most attempts at moral coercion.

Thus there grew up the notion that the bodily functions of sex are unclean and ignoble—a notion which has no foundation in reason or experience. The early Christian and mediæval ascetics did not limit their disapproval to the sex-function. They carried out the idea to its logical conclusion, and were consistent enough to ban all bodily functions whatever. Still influenced by the sacrificial conception, desirous by resigning worldly and carnal pleasures to please God and avoid eternal punishment, they sought to mortify or deaden all their senses, not one only. Of St. Bernard it is recorded that he kept such a guard over his eyes that on one occasion he travelled a whole day on the shores of a lake without becoming aware of its existence; and the lives of the saints are filled with accounts of their various mortifications—fasting, hair-shirts, self-scourging, and the like—by which they tried to stupefy their senses and “bring their bodies into subjection.”

Now modern culture knows the harmfulness of this sort of thing. You cannot stupefy the senses without stupefying the mind as well; and the converse, that to sharpen the senses is to sharpen the mind, is equally true. Modern education is conducted on this principle. The child's senses of touch and sight and hearing are stimulated by games and pictures and music before he is set to strictly mental learning. The more intelligent animals are those which have the more acute senses, or specially developed sense-organs, such as the elephant's trunk, or the ant's antennæ; and man himself owes his complex brain to the erect position assumed by his animal ancestors, and the consequent freedom of his hand to acquire subtlety of tactile perception.

Religious ideas die hard, however; and though we have tacitly dropped mortification of our other senses, there are some who still advocate it in the matter of sex. Male jealousy has probably helped to perpetuate false ideas of chastity; but nowadays it is women, with their innate conservatism and habit of religious sentiment, who are their chief supporters. All bodily functions must be exercised with due care and temperance; but that is not to prove them undesirable in themselves, or even unnecessary. The too-ardent athlete may over strain his heart and ruin his constitution; but the man who takes no physical exercise will be woody and undersized. Repression does as much harm as excess; but, so far as sex is concerned, its evils are not so obvious or so easily recognizable. The repressed sex emotion may turn to religion, art, hysteria, clairvoyance, and other neurotic conditions, or even worse forms of perversion; but some outlet it must have. To subdue one's feelings is not to subdue the consequences of having done so. Suicide, for instance, is far more common among the unmated, especially among single women between 45 and 50.

Not mortification or deadness, but vitality and power, should be the keynote of rational morality; and the idea that there is any beauty or nobility in sacrifice, apart from any special purpose of a particular sacrifice, must be rigorously banished. He who sacrifices his life for others is a hero; but he who does it for nothing is a fool. Sacrifice may sometimes be a regrettable necessity, like a surgical operation; but the former is no more to be admired for its own sake than the latter. Full and complete life can only be secured by the exercise of all functions, both bodily and mental; and to sacrifice even the smallest of them unnecessarily is a disaster and a sin against vitality. Fulfilment, and not sacrifice, must be our watchword; and so long as we recognize the right of others to an equal fulfilment, we shall be in little danger of the selfishness with which the sacrificers will probably charge us.

Let us clear our minds of savage survivals and inherited religious ideas, at least as much as we can. As one step thereto, let us recognize frankly that sacri-

fice is in itself as ugly and unwholesome as poverty, blindness, mental deficiency, or any other form of incompleteness or imperfection. The idea that sacrifice possesses any intrinsic beauty is a groundless superstition. Let us dismiss it to the disgrace it deserves, and seek in justly proportioned fulfilment of our whole nature that perfection which is not otherwise to be attained.

CHESTER KEITH.

The Myth Makers.

SOUTH-EAST LONDON in the neighbourhood of Waterloo Station is not exactly a paradise. One may walk up the side streets in this district, and wonder why missionaries are sent abroad. And one may walk up these human highways, and never want to read of Zola's realism again. Near those area railings is a group of dirty and half-clothed boys; one of the company has a roller skate strapped on his bare and grimy foot. In the road, more boys are lustily kicking a football about among the refuse on a highway thick with the consequence of horse traffic. The air is oppressive. A sea of white faces—many pinched with want—coarse remarks, and here and there a young girl's face bearing signs of beauty, like “a violet by a mossy stone, half hidden from the eye.”

The myth makers round the name of Christ have a very simple remedy for these manifestations of city life; needless to say it is as effective as striking an elephant with a feather. Although Christ came to save the world, slumdom is still lost. The Christian myth—grey and melancholy—veered downwards; it was a negation of this life, it was a creed of death, and suspect by its promise of a future life to compensate for this. Both physically and morally ineffective and useless in side streets, it is none the less a failure in the world, and Holman Hunt's bearded gentleman—soothing to the Christian conscience—substantiates Wilde's saying that “it is much more easy to have sympathy with suffering than it is to have sympathy with thought.” The Promethean myth was one of sympathy with thought—a myth worthy of its noble creators, and anti-Christian by its very grandeur of conception. The Greeks would seek to save the world by intellect; the Christians attempt salvation through the emotions, and the Dionysian conflict of intellect and emotion is now as much a reality as it ever was. What Freethinker would care to be found in the company of our modern emotion mongers—our demagogues, social and political, who thrive where intellect is missing? Divest Catholicism of its sensuous ritualism, and it falls to the ground; its followers exist on “feeling,” not understanding, just as the Salvation Army exists on noise instead of sense.

We made our way to the “Old Vic” to see “The Winter's Tale.” Shakespeare, another myth maker, taught nothing. This, one of his later comedies, reflects the glory of a mind rich in human experience, yet surveying the world as a vast stage. Little did we think that the Barbarians were so near when we settled down to be transported to another world.

Leontes' jealousy is the cause of suffering; the King is a good example of an English trait—that of acting first and thinking afterwards—or acting first, and afterwards finding reasons. The story in the play is of no consequence—it is Shakespeare's uncommon manner of treating it that distinguishes the genius from the storyteller.

We were following Time's speech, when the Barbarians announced themselves. In staccato and frenzied singing, we heard them through the open window at the back of the theatre. Two splendid generalities in one line:—

Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.

Is there no retreat from this pestilence we asked ourselves? Will you, by your nigger harmonies, drag me from Shakespeare's world to yours? Yea, at the very gates of a beautiful dream world, you will thrust your pale Galilean between me and a pleasant retreat from the realism of a world upside down, caused, not a little, by him and his family. "And my revenue is the silly cheat.....for the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it."

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying.

Pull devil, pull baker, it was a tug of war for our ears between Autolycus on the stage and vociferous Christians out in the road. The singing ceased; we could not hear distinctly the words of the speaker to his street audience; they *sounded* familiar enough, and the same silly verbiage has run like Tennyson's river—it could all be delivered by gramophone records, and lose none of its effectiveness. We make a present of this to the Christian movement as a means of cutting down expenses.

The jabbering of the Barbarians subsided. We have read and seen this play many times, but its beauty loses none of its charm. What many and gracious interpretations can be made of the dialogue between Polixenes and Perdita! A thousand ideas come crowding to the mind. Not a little of our love for this world is awakened by the smell of herbs and the colour and forms of flowers. Matter here for your mystic, your rationalist, your philosopher, your poet. Memory and perfume—who shall trace the subtle connection? Swift as lightning the perfume of a rose shall take you back in your life thirty or forty years. And one facet of Shakespeare's genius shall give you enough to meditate upon for twenty years—such is the power and mystery of genius partaking of eternity.

The Barbarians had departed; the impressive scene of the statue coming to life heralded forgiveness and a peaceful ending. We left the theatre and plunged into the pandemonium of a London thoroughfare—a violent awakening after our inhabitation of a dream world. We wondered whether our little street Arab had entered the gates of sleep—where all of us can have our heart's desire—his, perhaps, being two skates and a pair of boots.

Why doesn't Christ do something useful?—here's his chance.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

We never cease to marvel at the wonders of Christian love and Christian charity. The *Star* of November 25 provides us with the latest example. There has been going on at the Central Hall, Westminster, a sale of goods for the benefit of the Church Army. The officials have been troubled by a number of petty thefts, and the help of some detectives and policemen in plain clothes were obtained. Eventually a woman was caught. Then Prebendary Carlile, the head of the Church Army, set to work. A large audience was given an illustration in the beauty of Christian love and charity. The woman was kept in a room for about two hours, and then Prebendary Carlile announced that he had no desire that the woman should be branded as a thief. So the woman was brought forward, and, "with an escort of detectives, police officers, Church Army officials, and Prebendary Carlile himself, was marched through the huge crowd which attended the sale."

Anything more typically Christian in its inherent brutality and blatant hypocrisy we have not come across for a long time. And it is downright disgraceful that police officers and detectives should have lent themselves to so thoroughly disgraceful an affair. We have Prebendary Carlile securing all the advertisement he could by announcing that he did not wish to brand the woman as a thief—he would merely march her, on exhibition, through "a huge crowd." In the name of all that is sensible, what

was that but branding her as a thief, and in the most disgraceful of ways! Why, it would have been kinder to have allowed her to go before a magistrate in the ordinary way. He would at least have judged the case with an eye to all the circumstances, and without any desire publicly to exhibit the woman. And, having made an exhibition of the wretched woman before his huge crowd of Christians, the next step is to secure that publicity should be given to the affairs, and thus get the Church Army and Prebendary Carlile a good advertisement. Any decent man who wanted to avoid branding the woman as a criminal would have given her a talking to and sent the woman away quietly. But that is not the Christian way—certainly not as Prebendary Carlile understands it.

Imagine a parallel case. Imagine that a woman is caught in Selfridge's stealing something. That often occurs in large stores, and in many cases the person is reprimanded and sent away, in the hope that it will be a lesson to her. But suppose that the proprietors wrote out a large ticket and hung it round the woman's neck, explaining that they did not wish to prosecute the woman, they would merely exhibit her in their Oxford Street shop for a few hours, so that the public would have a good chance of admiring the generosity of the firm, and would be induced to purchase from them. That would be on all fours with the conduct of Prebendary Carlile. We do not say that he has not acted like a Christian; he has. And we have only to add that for refined brutality and consummate hypocrisy there is nothing on the face of the earth to equal Christianity in practice. For our own part we would prefer the company of the woman who was a thief than the Prebendary who marched her in the fashion he did through a crowd of his fellow-Christians.

Some of the leader-writers in the daily papers have been making merry over the recent Spiritualist slander case, with its horseback riding in the next world, and its complexion cures. And, of course, all these things are absurd, so ridiculous that one begins to appreciate the full value of the testimony given by great men as to the evidences for a future life and communication with the dead. Men and women who can swallow such things can swallow anything. But, all the same, we do not see that these leader-writers, who profess to be able to swallow the Christian conception of the future life, have any reason to poke fun at the Spiritualist. The only ground that we can see for their doing so is that they wish to maintain a monopoly of the absurd for their own creed.

The *Church Times* says of the Spiritualist libel case that if psychical research becomes only an attempt to get into touch with the departed the loss to mental science will be serious. We are afraid that the *Church Times* is ill-informed as to the actual work of the S.P.R. In practice it has seldom meant more than an outlet for people who have a more or less suppressed craving for the supernatural. And so far as our knowledge of the subject is concerned, the work of the S.P.R. has added no more to mental science, particularly to the study of morbid psychology, than is provided by any collection of cases. For it is to be observed that men such as Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Athur Conan Doyle, both of whom appear to be singularly ill-informed on this branch of science, fight their hardest to keep the phenomena of Spiritualism from being discussed as a problem of mental pathology, or of abnormal pathology. They almost insist that the "facts" of Spiritualism must be accepted as demonstrations of the activities of disembodied human beings, or denounced as absolute frauds. Thus obscurantism on the one side makes for obscurantism on the other. Those who know Spiritualism, instead of merely reading about it, and who approach a study of the subject armed with a knowledge of what has been done in the regions of experimental and abnormal psychology, are well aware of the direction in which the true explanation lies. And to that class of student, both the elaborate defences of, and many of the attacks on, Spiritualism are little better than exhibitions of laboriously acquired ignorance.

The truth is that any conception of a life the other side of the grave is absurd. There is nothing more ridiculous in people trying complexion cures in the next world than

there is in them standing round a throne singing hymns and playing harps. There is nothing more ridiculous in horses in the next world than there is in asses being there. On any ground there is many a horse or a dog that has a better claim to immortality than some human beings have. And we would, so far as our own tastes are concerned, far rather spend eternity in the company of some of the dogs we have known than in that of some of the men we know. But that is the worst of believers in a future life, they never consider, when they are clamouring to live again, the feelings of those other people who will have to live with them. And that is always the case. A ridiculous belief must lead to ridiculous consequences. And nothing could be more ridiculous than a belief in the continued existence of the mind after the body, of which it is the expression, is dead.

Rev. H. L. Warnesford, of Foxley, near Malmesbury, begs of his parishioners not to give all their Sunday to the public-house. "Come to the church first," he says, "and then go for your supper beer." That is very accommodating, and recalls the long partnership that has existed between the Church and the public-house. There has always been a friendly co-operation between the two, and the hours of Sunday opening for the two places of business have been so arranged that when one opened the other closed. The Vicar is only pleading for a continuation of that arrangement.

"Can a Man be a Christian in Business?" is the quaint title of an address by the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury. The reverend gentleman ought to know. Wesleyans do not run missions for their health.

Sidney Upton Grubb, an official of the Church of England Waifs' and Strays' Society, has been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for embezzling £1,559. As he must have been a Churchman, it does not say much for the restraining power of the Christian religion—Government brand.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is at it again. This time it is the photographs of some fairies and elves that were taken dancing round a little girl. Sir Arthur vouches for their genuineness. We suggest that someone has been practising upon his credulity in the matter. There seems no limit to what some people can swallow. Perhaps we may be permitted to offer a further suggestion. Christmas is approaching, and it would be a rare "scoop" if Sir Arthur could procure a spirit photograph of a genuine Santa Claus coming down a chimney armed with the traditional load of toys. These could be brought straight from the spirit world. Such a photograph would be very popular among children—of all ages.

A lively passage at arms has been going on between the *Star* and the Chairman of the West Ham Library Committee, Mr. M. Striemer, over the refusal of the latter to purchase copies of Mrs. Asquith's book for the municipal libraries. We are strongly opposed to anything in the shape of a censorship of publications by anyone or by any committee, but in this case we understand that the point at issue is not one of censorship, but that with a limited amount of money to expend the committee is bound to exercise some amount of discretion in its purchases, and it decided that the book was one for which there was no great demand in West Ham. If that is really the case we feel bound to congratulate the people of West Ham on their taste. Twenty-five shillings for a hotch-potch of vulgar gossip and empty tittle-tattle is rather a big price, to say nothing of the waste of time and bad taste involved in the reading. Naturally, the *Star* doesn't like the book not being brought, but, then, our daily papers live very largely on the tastes to which the reminiscences of Mrs. Asquith appeal.

We read most of the book as it appeared in one of the Sunday papers, and the reading only served to breed the conviction that the book was vulgar, in the real sense of the word, that it appealed to the vulgar tastes of sections of the "educated" and "upper" classes, and was re-

newed evidence of the flunkeyism of the public. It is a queer taste that can interest itself in what Sir This or Lord That said or did merely because it is someone with a title or someone who moves in high places. It is a manifestation of snobbishness, however one may disguise it. We question if there are twenty pages in the book of really serious writing which would interest anyone if they had been written by plain Mrs. Smith, and issued without a publisher's puffing. We cannot conceive any reasonable person being interested in whether Mrs. Asquith was taken in to dinner at a certain time by Lord Tomnoddy or by the local dustman. The whole thing, we repeat, is an illustration of the flunkeyism of the ordinary public. We can hardly think that West Ham is so far above the rest of Britain as to be above this kind of thing, but we should delight in finding out that we are wrong.

We recall one case in Mrs. Asquith's book that will illustrate what we have said. Travelling in a train, she met the late General Booth. After some conversation he invited her to go on her knees, and join him in prayer. This she did. Now, the whole psychological point in the story is that Mrs. Asquith is a Society woman, and Booth was a well-known religious enthusiast. But one wonders! Suppose that, instead of meeting General Booth in a first-class travelling compartment, with a retinue of secretaries and servants in another compartment, it had been an unknown and poor religious enthusiast who had asked Mrs. Asquith to go down on her knees and pray. Would she have done so? The probability is that she would have called an official, and asked for his removal on the ground of annoyance. In any case we should never have been told about it. It is an exhibition of that spirit of flunkeyism to which we have referred. For the flunkey is not merely the one who cringes, he is also the one who expects another to cringe. The king and the courtier fit each other as the upper and lower halves of a pair of scissors. In every case the spirit that demands and the spirit that gives are always complementary.

The American "Lord's Day Alliance," which embraces a number of the churches in the States, is entering on a campaign to stop all games and recreations on Sunday, and also to make it unlawful to motor for pleasure. It also aims at stopping all Sunday trading, delivery of letters, etc., and, as the *Daily Telegraph* says, to compel attendance at church through sheer ennui. All these things are to be prohibited by law, as the churches are under no delusion that if it is left to people to say whether they will go to church or stay away, they will follow the latter course. If Christians had their way, what a delightful place the world would be! We think they might legitimately say that in that case they would rob death of its sting, as there would be precious little left worth living for. It reminds one of Mark Twain's story of the violin player in the next room. "Before you came," said the man next door, "I used to be afraid to die. Now I can face death without fear—I am even anxious for it."

At the Sunday School Union's book shop, Ludgate Hill, a new humorous book is on show, entitled *Some Adventures of the Noah Family*. We may hope to see a comic Bible exposed to view in the near future.

At the Cenotaph ceremonies the Bishop of London was a prominent figure. His most conspicuous war services were standing on a gun-carriage in Trafalgar Square and delivering a recruiting speech, and preaching at a safe distance from the "front" in France.

Hitherto hunger-striking has been confined to such as have had something "agin" the Government. From the New York *Truthseeker* we see that it has been put to a new use. Rev. J. Woolridge, of Kentucky, vowed he would never eat again until his daughter became "converted." The young lady declared she would do nothing of the kind, and, after going without food for some time, her father received a message from God to discontinue his fast. What on earth the Lord wanted to interfere for, we can't imagine. He could have let the parson go through with his job, and made it up to him in the next world.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

THE purpose of this Fund is to meet the deficits caused by the present very heavy cost of paper and printing. The primary object was to raise the deficit incurred during the year ending October 1. A great many of the contributors, however, desired to make the Fund large enough to remove all financial anxiety for the immediate future, and to that end certain sums were promised if the total realized reached the amount of £1,000. As will be seen, this object is well on the way to accomplishment. The amount contributed is £596 4s. 8d., with £240 5s. promises, thus leaving £163 10s. 4d. to be subscribed if the promises are to be redeemed and the full amount subscribed. We are hoping to be able to name an early date for the closing of the Fund.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged, £572 os. 10d. M. T. S. (second subscription), £2; Mrs. E. Adams, £2; R. J. Clark, 5s.; J. M. Blandford, 4s. 4d.; A. E. Maddock, £2; D. D., 5s.; G. E. Webb, 17s. 6d.; "Anonymous," £5; W. Metcalfe, £1; T. A. Mathews, £4; Colledge Press, 5s.; A. C. Boers, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. Bullock (second subscription), 5s.; T. W. Arnott, 2s. 6d.; K. D'Oyley (per Mrs. Mapp), 10s.; J. H. English (third subscription), 10s.

Per J. Fothergill—J. Chapman, 2s. 6d.; E. Chapman, 2s. 6d.; R. Chapman, 2s. 6d.; D. Porteous, 2s. 6d.

Per G. Gerrard—A Cestrian, £2; J. C. Edwards, 5s.; Miss Tyrell, 2s. 6d.; A. F. T., 5s.; Mr. Mortimer, 4s.; G. Green, 2s. 6d.; W. Barron, 2s.; C. Baily, 3s. 6d.; G. Gerrard, £2.

Total, £596 4s. 8d.

PROMISED, provided the total sum raised reaches £1,000, including the amounts promised:—"Medical," £25; "In Memory of the late Sir Hiram Maxim," £50; Mr. J. B. Middleton, £10; "A Friend," £100; "Working Journalist," £3; X. Y. Z., £10; J. Morton, 10s.; R. Proctor, £1; National Secular Society, £25; F. Collins, 10s.; H. Black, £1 1s.; T. Sharpe, £1 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. S. Clowes, £1 1s.; J. Breese, £3; "Ex-Soldier," £1; A. Davis, £2 2s.; J. W. Hudson, £1; "Anonymous," £5.

Total promises, £240 5s.

To Correspondents.

R. J. CLARK.—A psycho-analyst would explain the frequency with which jokes about religion are now appearing in the general press as due to the fact that so many are suppressing the desire to laugh at religion, and are thus finding vent for their repressed feelings. And in this case we think it is very near the truth. Christian doctrines are supremely ridiculous, and people must find some compensation for their being compelled to keep a grave face when dealing with them.

IRVING LEVY (New York).—Thanks for cutting. Such are always useful.

W. J.—We could hardly deal with it unless we had a report of the sermon. We believe copies of the paper were sent. But we are not sanguine of results in that quarter.

J. CHAPPLE.—We should be very glad to see a Branch of the N. S. S. in Bristol. If we can help in any way we will do so. There are plenty of Freethinkers there if they can be brought together.

A. RUSSELL.—Article received all right. We hope to print soon, but, as usual, we are struggling with an overdose of "copy."

G. E. WEBB.—We are not without appreciation of the ability of Dean Inge. Indeed, we regard him as the one clergyman of to-day who, along with a measure of ability, possesses the courage to say things that are disagreeable to many of the orthodox. Thanks for good wishes, which we know we have to the full, and appreciate.

P. ROBINSON.—We are not surprised at some religious ghoul taking advantage of the funeral procession of the dead soldiers to distribute some of their particularly stupid tracts.

But with such an idiotic form of a stupid religion it would be next to a miracle if they behaved with either decency or sense.

H. MORNE.—Don't worry. We are quite prepared to take the will for the deed in your case. And there are plenty who can help if they will only do so. We understand only too well all that the war period has meant to many. We are, indeed, a fellow-sufferer. Not being a "working man"—we never work more than twelve or fourteen hours a day—we couldn't ask for more wages, and, not being in business, we couldn't bleed the public. So, like yourself, we have had to take in our waist-belt, and do the best we could.

T. A. MATHEWS.—Sorry you were unable to get to Fulham. Shall hope to meet you elsewhere in the near future. We believe those who have promised towards the £1,000 will soon be told the hour of redemption has arrived, and we know them well enough to feel sure they will be pleased at the news.

D. A. ARCHIBALD.—Next week. Please inform us if anything occurs.

GILBERT GERRARD.—Excellent! And, as you say, quite good for such a pious city as Chester. We are greatly obliged for your interest in the welfare of the paper. You will see that Mr. Cohen lectures in Liverpool on December 12. He will be glad to meet you all there.

W. METCALFE.—Pleased to hear from one of the old N.R. readers who appreciates the *Freethinker* so much. Hope to hear from you for a long while yet, and that you are in good health.

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

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All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

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Sugar Plums.

The meeting at the Fulham Town Hall on Sunday last was a complete success, and for that we have to thank the small band of enthusiasts who had charge of the proceedings. There appears to have been a deal of personal advertising effort, and it was pleasing to all concerned that the result repaid the efforts made. The Town Hall is a pretty and comfortable place for both audience and speaker, and those present appeared to thoroughly enjoy the lecture, and to quite appreciate the tasteful performance of Miss Harrison at the piano. A number of questions followed the lecture, the majority of which were quite in order and good tempered. It is expected that one consequence of the meeting will be the formation of a branch of the N. S. S., which will mean, we hope, more regular work. And there really ought to be an active Branch of the Society in that part of London. There are crowds of Freethinkers in the locality if they can only be brought together.

For some time the Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S. has found it a matter of great difficulty to rent suitable halls for its special lectures. At considerable expense the Concert Room of the St. George's Hall has been engaged for Mr. Cohen for the evening of December 5. There will only be one lecture, and we earnestly bespeak the help of Freethinkers in Liverpool and its vicinity to do what they can

to see that the meeting is sufficiently known. There are plenty of Freethinkers in the neighbourhood of Liverpool to say nothing of inquiring Christians—to crowd the hall to its utmost capacity.

A little while ago we printed the following paragraph in the "Acid Drop" column:—

The Rev. W. M. Tatham, vicar of Cantley, was fined at Doncaster for cruelty to geese which were crowded in a basket sent to market. The influence of the Holy Spirit is not traceable in this case.

We have now received the following letter from Mr. Tatham:—

DEAR SIR,—Not long ago an issue of your paper was sent to me anonymously. I could not imagine why, but at last I found the marked paragraph, which I enclose.

Naturally I do not agree with the general sentiments of your paper, but at the same time you have a right, of course, to your opinion. I think, however, before you print such a paragraph as you did about me that you should be fair enough to find out the facts.

These are the facts. I gave a lad working for me a large hamper to put some geese in which were to be taken to market. I was extremely busy that morning, but I particularly asked him, after they were packed, whether they had ample room, and he assured me they had. I quite allow, as I did in court, that it was careless of me to trust the lad, but I do not think that you can really accuse me of cruelty.

I only ask you to be fair.—Yours faithfully,

W. M. TATHAM.

We have no desire to be otherwise than fair. Our comment was based upon a newspaper paragraph, and we are sorry that the reporting led us to do Mr. Tatham an injustice.

We have received a letter from Dr. Lyttelton in reply to the criticisms passed on him in last week's issue, which, we regret, reaches us too late for insertion in the present issue. It will appear next week.

We are pleased to hear from Manchester that Mr. Rosetti had two good audiences at Manchester on Sunday last, and that his lectures were very highly appreciated. We are also glad to learn that the Birmingham plan of travelling round the city is having good results, Mr. Thresh having a very satisfactory audience to listen to his lecture on Sunday last.

Although Mr. J. M. Robertson has now withdrawn his activities from militant Freethought work, his old friends in the movement will be interested in learning that he was last week elected the President of the National Liberal Federation. We see from a few words in the *Star* that an attempt was made by some provincial papers to rouse prejudice against him on account of his Atheistic opinions—it is a pleasure to be able to record the fact that Mr. Robertson has never made any attempt to camouflage his convictions in that direction—but, as the election was unanimous, the attempt may be said to have completely failed. Mr. Robertson was always a fighter for principle, and the Liberal Federation will be none the worse for having a thinker of his calibre at its head.

From *Ross's Magazine* (Melbourne):—

Christianity and Slavery, by Chapman Cohen, is the best presentation of the facts yet issued. A chapter on Christianity and the Labour Movement is invaluable.

We are glad to say that the work is still selling steadily in this country.

Quite a number of our readers both in England and America have written to us casting doubt on a recent note which we inserted in connection with the erection of the Lincoln statue in Parliament Square. In this note we stated that the original draft of Lincoln's famous Gettysburg speech the words "under God" do not occur. Our immediate authority was a review of the *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, by Miss Rose Strunsky (Methuen), in our issue of December 13, 1914, written by Mr. H. G. Farmer.

We have now been supplied by the kindness of our indefatigable friend, Mr. G. E. Macdonald, editor of the *New York Truthseeker*, with a facsimile of the original draft in Lincoln's handwriting, as published by the *Chicago Daily News*, November 19, 1913. This interesting document we have decided to reproduce in a subsequent issue.

Friends in Glasgow and district will please note that Mr. W. H. Thresh lectures to-day (December 5) in the City Hall Saloon at 12 on "A Search for the Soul," and at 6.30 on "The Record of the Rocks, and its Bearing on Revelation." Mr. Thresh will also lecture at Falkirk on the evening of Monday, December 6, in the Co-operative Hall at 8 p.m. His subject there will be "From Savage to Shakespeare."

The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ.

III.

(Concluded from p. 758.)

[Older Freethinkers will well recall the slashing onslaught made on the Christian superstition by the late Gerald Massey. By arrangements with his daughter, who holds the copyright of his works, we purpose republishing at an early date the most striking of his anti-Christian essays. Meanwhile, we feel certain that our readers will appreciate having the opportunity of reading those portions of the essay on *The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ*. It will serve to whet their appetite for the complete work when it appears.]

THE Christian dispensation is believed to have been ushered in by the birth of a child, and the portrait of that child in the Roman Catacombs as the child of Mary is the youthful Sun-God in the Mummy Image of the child-king, the Egyptian Karast, or Christ. The alleged facts of our Lord's life as Jesus the Christ were equally the alleged facts of our Lord's life as the Horus of Egypt, whose very name signifies the Lord.

The Christian legends were first related of Horus the Messiah, the Solar Hero, the greatest hero that ever lived in the mind of man—not in the flesh—the only hero to whom the miracles were natural, because he was not human.

From beginning to end the history is not human but divine, and the divine is mythical. From the descent of the Holy Ghost to overshadow Mary, to the ascension of the risen Christ at the end of forty days, according to the drama of the pre-Christian Mysteries, the subject-matter, the characters, occurrences, events, acts, and sayings bear the impress of the mythical mould instead of the stamp of human history. Right through, the ideas which shape the history were pre-existent, and are identifiably pre-Christian; and so we see the strange sight to-day in Europe of 100,000,000 of Pagans masquerading as Christians.

Whether you believe it or not does not matter, the fatal fact remains that every trait and feature which go to make up the Christ as Divinity, and every event or circumstance taken to establish the human personality were pre-existent, and pre-applied to the Egyptian and Gnostic Christ, who never could become flesh. The Jesus Christ with female paps, who is the Alpha and Omega of Revelation, was the IU of Egypt, and the Iao of the Chaldeans. Jesus as the Lamb of God, and Ichthys the Fish, was Egyptian. Jesus as the Coming One; Jesus born of the Virgin Mother, who was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost; Jesus born of two mothers, both of whose names are Mary; Jesus born in the manger—at Christmas, and again at Easter; Jesus saluted by the three kings, or Magi; Jesus of the transfiguration on the Mount; Jesus whose symbol in the Catacombs is the eight-rayed Star—the Star of the East; Jesus as the eternal Child; Jesus as God the Father, re-born as his own Son; Jesus as the Child of twelve years; Jesus as the Anointed One of thirty years;

Jesus in his Baptism; Jesus walking on the Waters, or working his Miracles; Jesus as the Caster-out of demons; Jesus as a Substitute, who suffered in a vicarious atonement for sinful men; Jesus whose followers are the two brethren, the four fishers, the seven fishers, the twelve apostles, the seventy (or seventy-two in some texts) whose names were written in Heaven; Jesus who was administered to by seven women; Jesus in his bloody sweat; Jesus betrayed by Judas; Jesus as conqueror of the grave; Jesus the Resurrection and the Life; Jesus before Herod; in the Hades, and in his re-appearance to the women, and to the seven fishers; Jesus who was crucified both on the 14th and 15th of the month Nisan; Jesus who was also crucified in Egypt (as it is written in Revelation); Jesus as judge of the dead, with the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left, is Egyptian from first to last, in every phase, from the beginning to the end—

MAKE WHATSOEVER YOU CAN OF JEHO-SHUA BEN-PANDIRA.

In some of the ancient Egyptian Temples the Christian iconoclasts, when tired of hacking and hewing at the symbolic figures incised in the chambers of imagery, and defacing the most prominent features of the monuments, found they could not dig out the hieroglyphics, and took to covering them over with plaster or tempera; and this plaster, intended to hide the meaning and stop the mouth of the stone Word, has served to preserve the ancient writings, as fresh in hue and sharp in outline as when they were first cut and coloured.

In a similar manner the Temple of the ancient religion was invaded, and possession gradually gained by connivance of Roman power; and that enduring fortress, not built, but quarried out of the solid rock, was stuccoed all over the front, and made white awhile with its look of brand-newness, and re-opened under the sign of another name—that of the carnalized Christ. And all the time each nook and corner were darkly alive with the presence and the proofs of the earlier gods, and the pre-Christian origins, even though the hieroglyphics remained unread until the time of Champollion! But stucco is not for lasting wear, it cracks and crumbles; sloughs off and slinks away into its natal insignificance; the rock is the sole true foundation; the rock is the only record in which we can reach reality at last!

Wilkinson, the Egyptologist, has actually said of Osiris on earth:—"Some may be disposed to think that the Egyptians, being aware of the promises of the *real saviour*, had anticipated that event, regarding it as though it had already happened, and introduced that mystery into their religious system!" This is what obstetrists term a *false presentation*; a birth feet-foremost. We are also told by writers on the Catacombs, and the Christian Iconography, that this figure is Osiris, as a type of Christ. This is Pan, Apollo, Aristeus, as a type of Christ. This is Harpocrates, as a type of Christ. This is Mercury, but as a type of Christ; this is the devil (for Sut-Mercury was the devil), as a type of Christ; until long hearing of the facts reversed, perverted, and falsified, makes one feel as if under a nightmare which has lasted for eighteen centuries, knowing the Truth to have been buried alive and made dumb all that time; and believing that it has only to get voice and make itself heard to end the lying once for all, and bring down the curtain of oblivion at last upon the most pitiful drama of delusion ever witnessed on the human stage.

* * * *

The Christ is a popular lay-figure that never lived, and a lay-figure of Pagan origin; a lay-figure that was once the Ram, and afterwards the Fish; a lay-figure that in human form was the portrait and image of a dozen different gods. The imagery of the Catacombs shows that the types there represented are not the ideal

figures of the human reality! They are the sole reality for six or seven centuries after A.D. because they had been so in the centuries long before. There is no man upon the cross in the Catacombs of Rome for seven hundred years! The symbolism, the allegories, the figures, and types, brought on by the Gnostics, remained there just what they had been to the Romans, Greeks, Persians, and Egyptians. Yet, the dummy ideal of Paganism is supposed to have become doubly real as the God who was made flesh, to save mankind from the impossible "fall!" Remember that the primary foundation-stone for a history in the New Testament is dependent upon the Fall of Man being a fact in the Old; whereas it was only a fable, which had its own mythical and unhistorical meaning.

When we try over again that first step once taken in the dark, we find no foothold for us, because there was no stair. The Fall is absolutely non-historical, and, consequently, the first bit of standing-ground for an actual Christ, the redeemer, is missing in the very beginning. Anyone who set up, or was set up, for an historical Saviour from a non-historical Fall, could only be an historical impostor. But the Christ of the Gospels is not even that! He is in *no* sense an historical personage. It is impossible to establish the existence of an historical character, even as an impostor. For such a one the two witnesses—Astronomical Mythology and Gnosticism—completely prove an alibi for ever! From the first supposed catastrophe to the final one, the figures of the celestial allegory were ignorantly mistaken for matters of fact, and thus the orthodox Christolator is left at last to climb to heaven with one foot resting on the ground of a fall that is fictitious, and the other foot on the ground of a redemption that must be fallacious. It is a fraud founded on a fable!

Every time the Christian turns to the East to bow his obeisance to the Christ, it is a confession that the cult is Solar, the admission being all the more fatal because it is unconscious. Every picture of the Christ, with the halo of glory, and the accompanying Cross of the Equinox, proffers proof.

* * * *

The Christian religion is responsible for enthroning the cross of death in heaven, with a deity on it, doing public penance for a private failure in the commencement of creation. It has taught men to believe that the vilest spirit may be washed white, in the atoning blood of the purest, offered up as a bribe to an avenging God. It has divinized a figure of helpless human suffering, and a face of pitiful pain; as if there were naught but a great heartache at the core of all things; or the vast Infinite were but a veiled and sad-eyed sorrow that brings visibly to birth in the miseries of human life. But "in the old Pagan world men deified the beautiful, the glad;" as they will again, upon a loftier pedestal, when the fable of this fictitious fall of man, and false redemption by the cloud-begotten God, has passed away like a phantasm of the night, and men awake to learn that they are here to wage ceaseless war upon sordid suffering, remediable wrong, and preventable pain; here to put an end to them, not to apotheosize an effigy of Sorrow to be adored as a type of the Eternal. For the most beneficent is the most beautiful; the happiest are the healthiest; the most God-like is most glad. The Christian Cult has fanatically fought for its false theory, and waged incessant warfare against Nature and Evolution—Nature's intention made somewhat visible—and against some of the noblest instincts, during eighteen centuries. Seas of human blood have been spilt to keep the barque of Peter afloat. Earth has been honeycombed with the graves for the martyrs of Freethought. Heaven has been filled with a horror of great darkness in the name of God.

GERALD MASSEY.

Official Labour, Unemployment, and C3 Clerical Schools.

IN face of the growing unemployment in London, it is good news to see that the L.C.C. proposes to spend £3,000,000 on works of public utility, and of this, £300,000 on schools, part probably for new schools, and part in repairing those schools which, owing to the war, have fallen out of repair. No doubt other education authorities will take a similar step.

In the interests of tens of thousands of children, however, it must be borne in mind that education authorities have power to spend only on the fabric of such schools as are provided by the local education authorities. In the case of the non-provided or denominational schools, the denominational managers are under the statutory obligation to keep the schools in proper repair, while, as is well known, the rest of the expense of the denominational schools is met by local taxation in the form of rates, and Imperial taxation in the form of Government grants.

How far the wealthy, and therefore politically powerful, forces behind those schools, have been able to evade the statutory obligation, from which even the clerical education legislation of 1902 and 1903 (which destroyed the School Boards) could not free them, is shown by the disgraceful condition of many of those schools.

I am wondering what the Labour movement intends to do in the matter? While an increasing number of unemployed men are walking the streets, are tens of thousands of little children to continue to be "educated" in schools, in many cases not fit for the housing of dogs?

It may be pleaded that building material, timber, etc., is scarce and costly. There is abundance of timber in Russia. Have the high Tory clerical forces, responsible for the condition of the schools in question, been doing what they can to further the opening up of trade with Russia, so that the necessary timber might be forthcoming? And as to cost, are there not the great ecclesiastical endowments? Why do not Labour leaders take steps to show up those high Tory forces?

A few months ago I dealt in the *Freethinker* with the attitude of Labour to the scandalous proposals of Mr. Fisher, the Coalition Minister of Education, concerning the position of the denominational schools. I then drew attention to one of the proposals, by which the denominational schools were to be extended and repaired, *while remaining the property of the denominations*. I pointed out that official Labour had been silent on the proposals. *The silence has not yet been broken*, the only conclusion possible is, that official Labour is prepared to acquiesce in a policy which would meet the question of insanitary denominational schools in the way indicated by Mr. Fisher's proposals.

Will the Labour party on the L.C.C. demand that the Council, as the education authority for London, shall bring the necessary pressure to bear on the defaulting managers of the denominational schools? Will Dr. Haden Guest give a "lead," as a Socialist, as a medical man, and as one who does really care about the well-being of the children? Will Mr. Harry Snell, the Freethought lecturer, come forward at this juncture with a determined challenge to clericalism on the question of the condemned clerical schools in London? Will Miss Susan Lawrence speak out? She is admirably qualified to do so, for she served on the late London School Board from 1900-1904 as a pronounced Tory Clerical, and later as the nominee of her party on the Education Committee of the L.C.C. She is now a member of the I.L.P., and serves as a member of the Executive of the Labour Party. If only she *would*, she *could*, say much to enlighten the workers as to the "tricks" of the clerical Tory forces, which are ever on the alert to strengthen their grip on the workers' education. Miss Lawrence is a woman of high Univer-

sity attainments, and a discussion lecture by her on "The Condemned Clerical Schools of London: Their Causes and Their Cure," could not fail to be an intellectual treat, and add considerably to the knowledge regarding education politics of those fortunate enough to hear her. Knowing of her vast, first-hand knowledge of the subject, it has been a disappointment to me that, so far as I know, she has not made a pronouncement on the very important question of the Fisher proposals.

Will something be said on the question of the C3 clerical schools by members of the great Labour organizations which have heavily-rated headquarters in London, and are affiliated to the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress and also to the Labour Party, both of which organizations have heavily-rated headquarters in Eccleston Square? To miners living in remote colliery villages away from the main line, who may perchance read these lines, I would say that (if for no other reason), because the miners are heavy sole ratepayers in respect of their headquarters in Russell Square and part ratepayers through their affiliation to the Trades Union Congress and to the Labour Party in respect of the mansions in Eccleston Square, they have the right and the *duty* to come to the rescue of the children, who are being subjected to the degradation of being "educated" in the filthy, insanitary, condemned clerical schools in London. What I say of the miners' organization applies to other organizations also; I specifically mention the Miners' Federation because its democratic constitution enables the rank and file members the more easily to bring the necessary pressure on their leaders.

If London gives a lead on the question, it would most assuredly be followed by provincial districts.

Will some of the Labour organizations which subsidize the *Herald* try to induce Mr. George Lansbury to speak in his paper on behalf of the children concerned? I have tried to do so, and failed. But, then, Mr. Lansbury is an Anglican Catholic, and has expressed an unbounded admiration for the Clerical Coalitionist Minister of Education, and the *Herald* has not only been silent on the loathsome scandal of the condemned clerical schools, but also on the Fisher proposals, with Bishop Gore's "credal register," and the splitting up into theological camps the children in the people's schools—thus aiming a blow at that "Labour solidarity" which the *Herald* advocates.

Some of the young "extremists" in the Labour movement will perhaps say "Damn your palliatives—let us get on with the Revolution." I would reply that the best material for revolution will not come from those who have been "taught" in filthy, insanitary schools, whose "atmosphere" is, in addition, surcharged with the poison gas of clericalism and militarism.

To the "right," "sane" section, who might be inclined to say, "Wait until we have a Labour Government," I would reply that, having gone through much painful disillusionment with regard to the attitude of Labour "leaders" towards the children of the class to which for the most part they themselves once belonged, I now ask myself whether there is any reason to expect that a party, when in office, will not be likely to develop rather than reverse a policy to which, when in opposition, they acquiesced?

To those readers of the *Freethinker* who may not belong to the working-class movement, I would suggest that any having leisure and taste for research into the general question of popular education in Britain, might possibly find the question of "Official Labour and Clericalism" worthy of study. They would certainly find useful material for pigeon-holes, and possible some food for cynicism.

(Mrs.) BRIDGES ADAMS.

Writers and Readers.

RICHARD JEFFERIES, FREETHINKER AND NATURE-POET.

THE general acceptance of a man of letters at something near his true value is often a slow process. It may come to a writer, as it came to Mr. Hardy, at the end of a long career, when he is contented to do without it, or desires it only for some new and unexpected development of his talent or genius; or it may not come until long after he has passed away. The beauty and truth to which a man has devoted the whole of his life, and which he has put into his work, have often enough no meaning for his own age, although they may, and sometimes do, find responsive echoes in the hearts and minds of a later generation. Such was the fate of Richard Jefferies. Nearly forty years after his death we are beginning to recognise the value of the work of one of the most interesting personalities of the later Victorian period.

The curious reader, who turns from the work itself to the critical appreciation of it, will not be surprised to find that the academic historian is carefully unsympathetic. These gentlemen follow the lead of Henley, for whom Jefferies was a mere cataloguer of the common sights and sounds of the countryside, a writer who disappointed you by his lack of style, sequence of thought, and even of human interest. They praise the second-rate books, *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *The Amateur Poacher*, and tell us the later poetical essays, with their infusion of nature-mysticism, hide a good deal of sophistication under their appearance of simplicity, and that the perpetual straining towards something that is out of reach sets up the impression of insincerity in such a work as *The Story of My Heart*. The reader will therefore turn with relief to the unacademic critic, the man who has the courage to say what he thinks, and "milnerizes" Mr. Saintsbury and the consequences. He will find that only the independent critic will help him to see the real Jefferies. The most satisfying presentment of the nature-mystic and independent thinker is the brilliant study by a kindred spirit—the late Edward Thomas. We divine the joyous artistic nature of Jefferies, which, unfortunately, was too often overlaid by the cumbrous mentality of the day-labourer in the field of letters. The best all-round estimate of Jefferies' character is by an American student (*Richard Jefferies: étude d'une personnalité*. Paris. 1913). Some critics have brought out his mystical relation to nature, and have compared or contrasted him with Rousseau, Shelley, Wordsworth, Thoreau, and even with Zola. Others have insisted upon the value of his criticism, suggestions, and aspirations for modern civilization. Mr. C. F. G. Masterman commends him with inexpensively rhetorical unction to the study of his fellow-liberals, and Mr. H. S. Salt throws the dry light of his admirably emancipated intellect into the obscured corners of Jefferies' personality. At this opportune moment Mr. Arthur F. Thorn presents us with a revised and partly re-written edition of an earlier essay (*The Life-Worship of Richard Jefferies*. Pioneer Press. 1s. net). I take it that most of my readers admire the vivacity, the brightness, the alert intelligence shown in Mr. Thorn's occasional writing in this paper. My impression of him was that of a quick-witted journalist, with an extremely well-developed business bump, but his essay on Jefferies has helped me to correct my first impression. I hail in him a mystic of the first water, a spiritual brother of Traherne, Thoreau, and Edward Carpenter.

Richard Jefferies was born at Coate in Wiltshire on November 6, 1848. He appears to have inherited the meditative, humanly irresponsible cast of mind of his father, who had none of the instincts that make for success in farming. The spiritual atmosphere of his early days was one of poverty and pride. It was impossible for the advantages of a liberal education to come his way, and the mental balance, the suppleness, and self-criticism which it usually brings are noticeably absent in much of his work. He was observant, but extremely reticent, exquisitely sensitive to impressions, but unsympathetic in his relations to those around him, an omnivorous reader, and an ardent lover of open-air life. Farming having no great attraction for him, he turned to journalism, but was deficient in the hustling qualities which make for success. He

tried fiction, but could not get out of himself, or into his characters. Some letters to the *Times* on the conditions of the agricultural labourer revealed his true bent, although, of course, not that freedom of thought which was to characterize his later work. He began as an orthodox believer in the divine right of capital, in Church and State, and worked his way gradually, but surely, to a sort of Nietzschean individualism, by which he dissociated the accepted and cherished ideas of his time. For those to whom a Freethinking poetic mysticism is a stumbling block, *The Amateur Poacher* and such books will have the greater attraction, and a quite justifiable attraction, for these works have their place among the pleasant studies of the field-naturalist. The later essays and the incomparable *Story of My Heart* have a different spiritual texture. Here nature is used, not very consistently it must be admitted, as a symbol of human thought and aspiration. This cleavage between the conventional thinker, the mere cataloguer of common natural objects, and the emancipated critic was widened after 1881, when Jefferies came to live near London. It is curious to note that the lover of nature in its wild state was not really conscious of himself until he reacted to the seminal influence of city life. We are indebted to the town for the real Jefferies, a fact which I must commend to the meditation of Mr. Thorn and other sentimental worshippers of Our Lady of the Fields. It should also be noted that the last period of Jefferies' life (1881-1887) was one of acute bodily suffering. A congenitally hypersensitive nervous system was exacerbated by a cruelly painful disease—ulceration of the small intestine. And yet under these conditions, with poverty added, he did his best work by sheer triumph of mind over body.

Some of my readers may remember the alarming discovery made by a correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. This ingenuous young person had found out in 1891 that Jefferies had the temerity to express his ideas about religion, and had told the world in an obscure volume, *The Story of My Heart*, that there was not the least trace of a directing intelligence in human affairs. Naturally it was impertinence or impudence on the part of a mere prose-poet to have opinions of his own on matters which ought to be left to theologians and academic philosophers. But our ingenuous friend had not read Jefferies very closely when he ventured to suggest that the Atheism of the poet was the expression of a mind unhinged by a painful disease. I see no reason to distrust Jefferies' confession of his lifelong rejection of supernaturalism. He wrote in 1883, four years before his death:—

I have been obliged to write these things by an irresistible impulse which has worked in me since early youth. They have not been written for the sake of argument; still less for any thought of profit, rather, indeed, the reverse. They have been forced from me by earnestness of heart, and they express my most serious convictions. For seventeen years they have been lying in my mind, continually thought of and pondered over.

Jefferies' uncompromising Freethought, his nervously vivacious attack on orthodox beliefs—God, the soul, immortality, the discoveries of his old friend the Cave-man, as well as his notion of nature as anti- or ultra-human may owe something to the mental stimulus of an over-strained nervous system. But the point suggested was that his thinking was unstable, and it was claimed that this man of genius, "broken by disease, poverty-stricken, solitary, above all devoid of intellectual companionship," died listening with faith and love to the words contained in the Old Book. In such a state of collapse a Freethinker who has been brought up in an atmosphere of religion may play into the hands of loving and simple-minded relations, whose one desire is to produce a certain effect. Mr. H. S. Salt says:—

Herein is the simple explanation of the alleged conversion. He was very weak—so weak that he perhaps could not but yield outward acquiescence to the affectionate importunities of those around him, while still inwardly holding the views which, as he recently avowed, "expressed his most serious convictions." So long as he retained any slight measure of health and strength, so long as he was able, even at rare intervals, to enjoy that vital communion with nature on which his whole being depended, so long, in fact, as he was Richard Jefferies, and not a shattered wreck—he was a Freethinker. Even at the last he withdrew no syllable of his writings: he

saw no priest; he made no acceptance of any sort of dogma. His own published statements remain, and will remain, beyond dispute or question the authoritative expression of his life-creed.

What, we may now ask, is the "message" of Jefferies for modern civilization. In so far as we understand the claims of his admirers, Mr. Thorn and Mr. Salt, it is not very clearly defined, or indeed consistent. Jefferies, like Rousseau, preached a return to nature, and as is the manner of sentimentalists he exaggerated the blessings of country life. To listen to him you would think that all disease and vice are products of city life, and all health and virtue of a country life. Mr. Thorn phrases the paradox more energetically than does Jefferies. But when a man girds at cash values, commercial civilization, and suburban life, and talks vaguely of communion with nature, which, by the way, is anti-human according to Jefferies, when he tells us what we want is a new valuation of all things in terms of spirit, the sense of the universal, the cosmic consciousness, which seems to be only a big name for a wider sympathy with and deeper knowledge of life, when the interpreter of Jefferies tells us that "instinct is cosmic, it proceeds from the universal," and that what we ought to do is to get back to the animal and live a "saner and healthier life than civilized man," I confess that I am unable to suppress a smile of quiet humour. No, what men want to do is not to go back, but to go forward; we do not want to exchange reason for instinct; we do not expect to have the simple organism of an animal with the nervous system of the modern thinker. We do not want to try the experiment in eugenics once made in Sparta by the foolish Lykurgus, whose fantastic ideas, as Remy de Gourmont remarked, cost the country its intelligence, the men were as fine-limbed as racehorses, and the women walked about naked, draped only in their stupidity. Personally I have no quarrel with the "return to nature" idealists, such reactions are necessary when we have gone too far in artificiality. There is much in modern civilization that is unpleasant, and in our cities there are many things that hurt a sensitive mind and body. It would not be difficult to make out as good a case for the town as our rural enthusiasts have made out for the country. A friend of mine, a dweller in the country, a lover, too, of Jefferies, told me a day or so ago that the happiest hours of his life were spent in the reading-room of the British Museum. We who are unfortunate enough to possess the mere Western mind can make but a poor attempt to understand the mystic ecstasy, the soul thought, the cosmic consciousness of a Jefferies. That may be so, but at least we can appreciate his wonderful descriptions of nature, his sense of glowing rapture before the shrine of primal beauty, his ideal of a life that shall be larger and more abundant, his refreshing individualism, his bold rejection both of the dogmas of religion and of science. But, if I may be allowed to say it, there is one quality lacking in his spiritual make-up. He has no sense of humour. That is why he is not a genius, but an interesting personality. And a similar lack of humour is, no doubt, accountable for not a little of the unbalanced eulogy of his admirers.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

The Lamb.

A RECENT and interesting work by Dr. Wilfrid T. Grenfell shows a certain animus against the *Freethinker* and the Freethought movement. We forgive the author his ill-will in consideration of a very edifying narrative in connection with the Moravian mission among the Eskimos.

As the Eskimos had never seen a lamb or a sheep, either alive or in a picture, the Moravians substituted the *Kotik*, a white seal, for the phrase "Lamb of God." Dr. Grenfell mentioned this fact in a lecture delivered in England. An old lady in the audience must have felt that the good brethren were tampering unjustifiably with Holy Writ. Dr. Grenfell goes on to say:—

The following summer, from the parcels of clothing sent out to the Labrador, was extracted a dirty, distorted, and much-mangled, and wholly sorry-looking woolly toy lamb. Its *raison d'être* was a mystery until we read the legend carefully pinned to one dislocated leg, "Sent in order that the heathen may know better."—(*A Labrador Doctor*, pp. 129-130.)

We have seldom heard of a more striking proof of Christian zeal in the spread of scientific education.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 25.

The President (Mr. C. Cohen) in the chair. Also present:—Messrs. Neate, Moss, Rosetti, and Samuels, Miss Kough, Miss Pitcher, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

Monthly financial report presented and adopted.

New members were received for Birmingham, Greenside, Manchester, North London, and the Parent Society.

An application for permission to form a Branch at Greenside, Co. Durham, was granted, this being the outcome of the recent visit of Mr. Lloyd to the Tyneside, arranged by the South Shields Branch.

A further request for financial assistance was also received from South Shields, and it was resolved that a grant of £5 be made.

Three successful meetings were reported at Friars Hall, Blackfriars Road, and it was decided that application be made for a renewed hiring during January, and also a further application be made for a date at Stratford Town Hall.

The Secretary was instructed to arrange for a conversation at South Place Institute on or near January 18, and to report further at the next meeting, which it was agreed should not be held until after the Christmas holidays.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

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.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Baker, "Faith v. Reason—Which?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH, N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Councillor J. Selway, "Is Christianity a Failure?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9): 7, Mr. A. B. Moss, "The Man Who Took the Wrong Turning."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Dr. John Oakesmith, "The 'Alcestis' of Euripides."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford Engineers' Institute, 167 Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. H. Thurlow, Jun.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 6.30, Mr. Alfred Selater, "The Life Force."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Robert Dell, "Henri Barbusse—His Books and Ideas."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock): 6.30, District Propaganda; 7, Mr. J. Hannon, "Coral Reefs."

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. 2. *Bible and Tectotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *Advice to Parents*, Ingersoll. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 1s. per hundred, post free 1s. 2d. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

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