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Views and Opinions.

The Reformer and the Herd.

Ordinarily we live in a crowd. That is one of the conditions of man's development. By himself a man is not a man, only a rough sketch, a mere outline of the finished article. To be complete he must live with others. And he must be with others, not in the sense that a number of separate stones are together in a heap, but rather in the sense in which the constituents of a chemical compound make a specialized and individualized whole. In the story of animal evolution the formation of the herd was one of the most pregnant of facts. But in the higher stages of animal life it carries, along with its tremendous advantages, a number of disadvantages. For the paradox of group life is that it must strive to be at once both conservative and progressive. Man must live with the group, and must, therefore, share in the common mental life, yielding, at the same time, some deference to its coercive power. But to benefit the group he must be strong enough to think, and sometimes to act, apart from it. And at that point trouble commences. For there is a certain fascination in numbers against which only the few are proof. To most the fact that an opinion is held by the majority endows it with an overpowering authority. The fact that it is held by only a few is enough to make them keep it at arms' length. The first thought of the average man or woman when brought up against a new idea is, How many accept it? They are like politicians preparing an election manifesto where probable voting strength determines the character of the ideas that are to be set forth. If a few accept it, then it must be approached cautiously. If it is an unfashionable few, then the safest plan is to damn it outright and off-hand. It will prove that you are "Practical," that is, that you are unable to see an inch in front of your nose, that you possess "sturdy commonsense," that is, you will not stand to lose anything for so idiotic a thing as an opinion, that you are neither a dreamer nor an idealist, that is, you are a good all-round, self-seeking kind of a fool.

* * *

The Benefits of Adversity.

So when a gentleman friend said to me the other day that the Freethought Party was a small one, I fancy I surprised him by cordially agreeing with him, and also

when I opined that if it became a large one it would probably have outlived its usefulness. Yet that was, I hold, a sound historical generalization. The primary benefit of a minority is that it possesses relatively fewer fools and knaves. The minority, because it is the minority, number for the most part those in active intellectual revolt against established ideas. The majority, because it is the majority, includes all who are satisfied with things as they are, and includes, therefore, all who have failed to think at all on the matter, but accept things as they are for no better reason than that they are there. The majority is a heavy-weight, but it is a dead-weight. The minority is at least a living force. And, strange as it may appear, the minority always conquers in the end. All the great triumphs which the world has witnessed are so many triumphs of minorities. The Reformation, the Factory Acts, the Education Act were all works of a minority. A minority animated by clear and sound ideas can only be destroyed by one thing, and that is its own success. For by that a minority becomes a majority and is so exposed to the bombardment of a body similar to its old self. Thus a movement stimulates life, not in proportion to its size, but in relation to its vigour, its clearness of ideas, and purity of doctrine. It is true that every movement aims at success, but it is also true that every movement is nearest defeat at the moment of victory. It is not that victory is gained by adulterating the purity of the teaching, so much as when conquest arrives compromise sets in, and to hold the crowd, much of what has been fought for is given up. And there is the important fact, already noted, that the struggle for existence which a despised opinion is compelled to make exercises a kind of selection. It attracts only the strong, the courageous, the comparatively incorruptible. It makes no appeal to the cowardly, the self-seeking, or the time-serving. But to the successful movement all flock; the average, by sheer force of numbers, gets its way, impresses itself on the whole, and if that whole is higher than the one it displaces, it still bears the same relative position to the solitary thinker who is "blazing the trail." Looked at rightly, the golden age of movements is never in the future, but always in the past. The lot of the reformer—the real reformer—is always to work for complete success but never to attain it. That is one reason why those who are reformers in their youth are so often found to be conservatives in their old age. It is not because they have forsaken their early ideas; it is because they have witnessed the triumph of their old ideas and have not advanced to the point of acquiring new ones.

* * *

The Importance of the Minority.

All reforms are born of a minority; that is part of the glory of belonging to it. One may go further, and say that reforms are really born of a minority of one; they are taken up by the keen brained few, and if they are lucky they see their ideas spread to the many, and then they can watch them being corrupted and robbed of much of their value. That is really what one who understands evolution, instead of merely talking about it, would expect. The whole principle of

Darwinism rests upon the supreme importance of the minority. It is an odd variation here and there, a pitiful minority of one, that may form the starting point of a new variety, and ultimately present the world with a new species. Nature's variations are of necessity with the few; when they become common they have done their work, and a new variation must appear before a fresh move can be made. In psychology and sociology the principle remains the same. A new idea is as strictly a variation, and the individual to whom it comes is as strictly a "sport" as anything that occurs in the world of biology. And it is subject to precisely the same dangers. It may occur in an environment that will not permit it to reproduce its kind, it may be swamped by inter-crossing, it may be crushed by the irruption of an antagonistic species. But so far as it can establish itself it becomes the starting point of a new theory or of a new social order. All improvements, all reforms, have commenced in this way. The benefits to society have been conferred by the few, and society has crucified them as an expression of its gratitude. And this also is unavoidable. In the nature of the case, society must be organized for the average character, not for the exceptional one. At the worst, the exceptional character has a disruptive influence, and at the best a disquieting one. And in the interests of its own peace, society is urged to suppress the very type through which it benefits most. One may put it that society lives on the usual, but flourishes on the exception. When the reformer is dead, society may erect a heavy monument upon his grave, but whether that is because by that time his ideas have become part of the established order, or because it wishes to place difficulties in the way of his rising again, may be left an open question.

* * *

A Question of Variation.

Wonder is very often expressed that the children of Freethinkers and of reformers do not always follow in the footsteps of their parents. But while those of us who are both parents and heretics would like to see our children follow the same path as ourselves, and travel farther along it, there is no real necessity why it should be so. As I have just said, the reformer is in the nature of a "sport," he is a variation from the normal type. That is the fact which gives him value, and explains why it is so difficult for him to survive. But in the nature of the case, the variation is the exception. One does not get a generation of "sports;" if one did they would not be variations, they would belong to the normal type. To put the case specifically, the Freethinker is one who in virtue of some peculiarity of natural endowment is able to withstand (a) the pressure of established ideas to the extent of rejecting them, and (b) the pressure of the social environment to the extent of defying its censures. But there is no reasonable justification for even expecting that the peculiarity of endowment which made the parent able to resist these influences *must* be present in his children. It may be, but it may not be, and the odds are in favour of its absence. And in its absence they will show the same susceptibility to accepted ideas and to social pressure as do the children of other people, modified only to the extent to which home influences may affect them.

* * *

Our Need of Courage.

We are back again with the problem of the average character, and that explains why there is a reversion to the normal type in the case of so many of the children of reformers, and also why it is that when the opinions of the reformer become the property of the average mind the tendency is for them to become corrupted. This is simply that the power to stand out against the dual influences of established ideas and social pressure is possessed only by the comparative

few. There may be many who can stand out against the first, but there are few who can withstand the second. When the weakness of established ideas is apparent, the usual method is either to remain silent concerning them, or to seek cover by the invention of a number of half-way phrases which shall disguise the fact of their non-acceptance. Personally, I have no hesitation in saying that a very large proportion of our public men have no more belief in a God and in a future life than I have. But how few of them ever say so! On the contrary, they will take part in public religious services, they will refrain from saying a word that will enlighten the general public as to their real opinions, and they continue passive, if not active supporters of the current religion. And where the leading men are silent, one can expect little more from the rest of the people. They will naturally continue to measure the value of an opinion by the public honour paid it, or the number who do it reverence. And today that is, perhaps, the greatest danger that Freethought has to face. It has nothing to dread from its avowed enemies. It has nothing to fear from the sincere religionist. Its danger lies more in the camp of those who should be its friends, those who are afraid that an open avowal of definite Freethought should sacrifice some little social advantage for themselves or their family. It is only what one would expect; the ordinary man is merely a member of the herd, with all its unreasoning fear of solitary action. And the mere fact of his not believing in the Virgin Birth and in the Resurrection is not enough to destroy that quality. Now, as ever, what is needed is greater mental and moral courage. It is these qualities alone which lift a man or woman above the level of the crowd, and mark him or her as one of the real pioneers of progress.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Light of the World.

EPHAPHANY is one of the chief festivals of the Christian Church, kept on the sixth day of January. The word is derived from the Greek and means, literally, "a showing forth," and the day is set apart in commemoration of the alleged manifestation of Jesus Christ to the world as the Son of God. As one might have expected, this alleged manifestation has been variously interpreted by different sections of the Church. The festival originated in the East and was there commemorative of both the birth and the baptism of Jesus, two events supposed to be separated by thirty years. It was the baptism, of course, that loomed the larger in the celebration, when the Holy Ghost was said to have descended and rested on Jesus in the form of a dove, and a voice to have come out of heaven, crying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." That was naturally interpreted as being a manifestation of the Deity of Jesus Christ. The result was that Epiphany became the chief day for the baptizing of candidates for Church membership. On this day was consecrated the water in the font, bottles of which were taken home by the saints and carefully preserved till the return of that day the following year. In the East Epiphany began to be observed in the fourth century. From the East the festival passed into the West, probably in the next century; but in the West it commemorated, not the baptism of Jesus, but the legendary visit of the Magi, guided by an impossible star, to worship the virgin born Babe lying in the manger. In consequence of this legendary event the English Common Prayer Book describes the Epiphany as the "manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles." Like the date of his birth, the date of the showing forth of Jesus was artificially "fixed" by the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries; and such is the case with all

the dates relating to his story, even as supplied in the Four Gospels themselves.

Now, Canon Barnes, Sc.D., on January 6 preached in Westminster Abbey a remarkable discourse on the subject of Epiphany, in which he combines the rituals of the Eastern and Western Churches as symbolizing the full revelation of God in and by Jesus. He says:—

All the occasions associated with the memory of this day are but separate illustrations of the truth that Jesus is the Light of the World. And so, on the Day of Light, as it is popularly called in the Near East, a thousand candles burn to typify the myriad ways in which Christ gave and gives light to mankind. And one other thought: as baptism is the initial sacrament of the Christian life, the first step, as it were, along the path that is illumined by the power and glory of Christ, so the early Fathers sometimes spoke of baptism as "the washing of illumination," and thus Epiphany became, and still remains, one of the three great days on which baptism takes place in the Eastern Church.

Canon Barnes frankly admits that "the quaint symbolism" of that passage "is but the curious lore of the ecclesiastical antiquarian," and yet, curiously enough, whilst admitting that at his baptism the Holy Ghost did not descend upon Jesus in bodily form as a dove, and that no supernatural voice acclaimed him God's beloved Son, the reverend gentleman is convinced that what the Evangelists set down as actual events were, in reality, but revelations to Jesus himself alone, "happenings in the spiritual world translated by him in terms of sight and sound to explain to his disciples a truth which it was important for them to grasp." Thus the Canon represents Jesus as the greatest egotist of all the ages. The disciples, instead of finding out for themselves that their Master stood in a grandly unique relation to the Supreme Being, were informed that he did so by himself. It was not an inference which they were impelled to draw from what they experienced and witnessed, but a declaration made to them by him whom they followed, which was really incomprehensible to them. The Canon's exegesis is far-fetched and doubtful, to say the least; but it may be correct. It all depends, of course, upon whom the "he" in Mark i. 10 stands for. But this is immaterial to the argument. If Jesus was the only begotten Son of God it was no doubt his right, if not duty, to assert himself as such; but was he?

The second "showing forth" occurred at Cana of Galilee. As the records stand, the first sign of the Divinity of Jesus was supernaturally given by heaven at his baptism, but the second came from himself at a marriage feast which he and his disciples attended. What was his own first sign or miracle? The turning of water into wine in the twinkling of an eye. That looks laughably like a Chinese or Indian conjuring trick. Canon Barnes says that "there is no *a priori* impossibility in such a miracle." Assuming, for mere argument's sake, its possibility, do you not think that it was of such a trifling, useless character as to be perfectly appalling? From "Pussyfoot" Johnson's point of view, it was a positively wicked miracle, utterly unworthy of the God-man. The reverend gentleman suggests that Christians "need not be angry with those who would regard this particular miracle as an allegory, who would see in it a symbol of the power of Christ to gladden men as with wine at a marriage feast, or a symbol of his power to sanctify all human relations." The Canon speaks here, not as a doctor of science, nor yet as a literary critic, but as a docile evangelical divine, prepared to accept as true the complete contents of the Four Gospels. He is a thorough-going, uncompromizing supernaturalist, though knowing well that science has already totally discredited several supernatural beliefs formerly held as essential and indispensable elements of the Christian Faith.

On one occasion two celebrated Scotch divines, Dr. Chalmers and Edward Irving, went up to Highgate to see Coleridge. The great man, who was the finest talker of his age, treated them to a long, metaphysical, and most eloquent monologue. It was a sermon to a congregation of two. When it came to an end, and they were once more in the open air, Chalmers exclaimed, "It was all mist, all mist." "True," answered Irving, "but I love the mist." In that respect, Canon Barnes is an out and out Irvingite. He, too, buries himself in the mists of superstition and credulity. He closes his sermon, a full report of which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for January 19, with a pious recital of instances of "many who during the years of the war, under the anguish of hope or fear or loss, were led to search for light as never before." He possesses private information, he tells us, that to not a few came the supernatural light of the Epiphany, "a new and splendid manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God." We have no wish to challenge the accuracy of his report. It is doubtless true that the experiences they had during the war has led not a few to seek and find emotional refuge in the freely offered consolations of supernaturalism; but the reverend gentleman forgets, or does not know, that there is a far greater number of people whose Christian faith was killed outright by the war, and who now look for light, not from any undiscovered region beyond the stars, but from a rational and unprejudiced study of the grim realities of the present world, that light which inspires and guides all who find it to take an active and intelligent part in the honest attempt to solve the serious and difficult political, social, and economic problems with which we are all confronted. To live "in a more than humanly intimate communion with God," may lift individuals of a certain temperament out of and beyond themselves in an orgy of ecstatic rapture, but it does not necessarily convert them into social reformers. They are dreaming of some spiritual land to which their imagination forces them to go. What is Jesus, the Light of the World, doing just now for the Empire upon which the sun never goes down? He has had his chance for nigh two thousand years, and he has utterly failed to avail himself of it. On the one hand is ill-gotten wealth indulging in luxurious waste, on the other are a million people out of work, many of them actually starving, and all suffering keenly from want. Can we look at unhappy Ireland, with its horrible murders and more terrible reprisals, and not realize how hypocritical and hollow is the claim of supernaturalism to be the infallible remedy for the crushing evils of the world? And yet men like Canon Barnes seem to be quite serene and contented, perhaps often repeating poor Pippa's crazy line:—

Gods' in his heaven
All's well with the world.

To us, the fact that at the moment all is wrong with the world proves conclusively that there is no God in the heavens. After all, the world as it is to-day is the supreme argument for Atheism, and it ought to serve as an irresistible appeal to all alike to devote their entire resources to the noble but arduous task of setting a world so sadly out of joint gloriously right. It is the only task that is worthy of us. It was a cowardly, weak, inefficient, dawdling supernaturalist, half realizing but wholly dreading the duty laid upon him, who said:—

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right.

J. T. LLOYD.

As to the book called the Bible, it is blasphemy to call it the word of God. It is a book of lies and contradictions, and a history of bad times and bad men. There are but a few good characters in the whole book.—*Thomas Paine*.

The Merriest of Missionaries.

Reverend sirs,
For you there's rosemary and rue.
—SHAKESPEARE, *Winter's Tale*.

COLONEL INGERSOLL'S *Mistakes of Moses* is a Freethought classic, and it is as amusing as a novel. I remember, during the great war, in an irresponsible moment giving a copy to a North-country soldier who was a patient in a military hospital. It led to no end of trouble, for the patient laughed so much and so often that his fellow-patients wanted to know what he was amused at. And they, too, read it, and arguments arose, and heated discussion, which was closed by the awful majesty of the matron, who confiscated the gallant Colonel's masterpiece.

Such vitality in a book is a sure test of merit, for it is rare indeed that controversial matter is endowed so richly as to survive the purposes of the moment. Nor is Ingersoll's popularity to be wondered at. A master of what the grave Milton calls the "dazzling fence," his retorts and repartees are among the finest things of their kind since Voltaire challenged the best brains of Europe. Ingersoll was happy in his written jests; but he was even happier in his conversation. Men seldom talk as brilliantly as they write, but the Colonel was an exception. A volume might be compiled of his witty sayings, not as invented or recorded in his study, but as expressed in society; not as they grew in secret like flowers, the blooming of which all admire, but as they flashed out like sparks from flint and steel in intellectual interplay. Ingersoll's epigrams and jests are as good as anything of their kind in the language. Beside them, Rogers and Sam Foote pale their fires. In comparison, rare old Doctor Johnson seems somewhat heavy. Had Robert Ingersoll been orthodox, he would have been hailed as one of the foremost talkers and humourists of his time.

How good the Colonel's jests are! When a friend, finding a complete set of Voltaire's works in his library, said: "Pray, sir, what did this cost you?" Ingersoll replied: "I believe it cost me the Governorship of Illinois." Speaking of a hot-headed and sanguine acquaintance, he said, "Show him an egg, and instantly the air is full of feathers."

Ingersoll could be personal when the occasion justified. A woman evangelist once described him as an "infidel dog." He asked how she would like to have him compare her with the same animal, only changing the sex. When the Colonel lectured in San Francisco, a minister named Kalloch assailed his reputation. Ingersoll said: "The Rev. Mr. Kalloch has attacked my moral character. To show how forbearing I can be, I will say nothing about his." As the saintly Kalloch had been mixed up in a tropical divorce case, the thrust was a deep one.

When Ingersoll first met George Foote he was desirous of paying the English Freethought leader a compliment. At dinner Foote declined the oysters, and the Colonel said, smilingly, "Not like oysters, Foote! That's the only fault I can find in you." How excellent, too, was Ingersoll's witty description of a bank-note: "A greenback is no more money than a menu is a dinner."

One of his best stories was that of an excitable Irishman, who was boasting of the condition of his native country. "We have got 100,000 armed men ready to march at a moment's notice." "But," objected the other man, "Why don't they march?" "Why?" retorted the Irishman, "the police won't let them."

A young woman gave Ingersoll a nosegay, and thinking to catch him, asked innocently, "Who made these flowers?" Colonel Bob looked blandly at her, and said, "The same, my dear friend, that made the poison of the ivy and the asp." A libeller stated that

Ingersoll's only son had gone mad through novel-reading, and died in an asylum. The Colonel's reply was worthy of Mark Twain:—

My only son was not a great novel-reader.
He did not go mad.
He was not sent to an asylum.
He did not die.
I never had a son.

When Ingersoll was on his first visit to the Pacific coast he was shown the depth of the Comstock mines. As he came out he remarked: "If there's a hotter place than this, I'll join some church." While he had his office in Washington, lightning struck and burned a church in the same terrace. The Colonel said: "An offended deity may have intended that bolt for my office, but what marksmanship!" Referring to the high character of Robert Collyer, he said: "Had such men as Robert Collyer and John Stuart Mill been present at the burning of Servetus, they would have extinguished the flames with their tears. Had the Chicago presbytery been there, they would have quietly turned their backs, solemnly divided their coat-tails, and enjoyed the blaze."

Ingersoll debated with Gladstone and Cardinal Manning. The English statesman taunted Ingersoll with riding a horse without a bridle, with letting his ideas run away with him. The Colonel retorted, crushingly, that this was better than "riding a dead horse in a reverential calm." In another discussion, a clergyman said, sarcastically, that Ingersoll thought he could have suggested improvements to the Creator. "Just so," breezily replied the Colonel. "I would have suggested that good health should have been as catching as disease." A business man once asked Ingersoll to allow his name to be associated with a brand of cigars. Replying to a request for a motto, the Colonel said, "Let us smoke in this world—not in the next."

The best of the Colonel is to be found in *The Mistakes of Moses*. There are scores of delicious pages of pure fun. Theology is the driest of dry subjects, but Ingersoll's geyser of humour shoots up a column of refreshment on every page. At his best, he is inimitable, as in his good-natured banter of the creation story: "Just imagine the Almighty with Adam's rib in his hand, trying to make up His mind whether to start the world with a blonde or a brunette." Observe, there is always method in the Colonel's merriment. He was the smiling cavalier, charging down the wind at the hosts of superstition. MIMNERMUS.

The Origin of Christianity.

III.

(Continued from page 54.)

In the fifth century Christianity had conquered paganism, and paganism had infected Christianity. The Church was now victorious and corrupt. The rites of the pantheon had passed into her worship, the subtleties of the Academy into her creed. *Macaulay, Critical and Historical Essay*, 1883; p. 392.

DR. EDWARD CARPENTER, in his recently published work on *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, speaking of the rites enacted in the Mysteries of Dionysus, and of "Orphism—a great wave of religious reform which swept over Greece and South Italy in the sixth century B.C.—" cites Professor Gilbert Murray, the Oxford professor of Greek, as saying:—

A curious relic of primitive superstition and cruelty remained firmly imbedded in Orphism, a doctrine irrational and unintelligible, and for that very reason wrapped in the deepest and most sacred mystery: a belief in the sacrifice of Dionysus himself, and the purification of man by his blood. The Orphic congregations of later times, in their most holy gatherings, solemnly partook of the blood of a Bull, which was by a mystery the blood of Dionysus—Zagreus

himself, the Bull of God, slain in sacrifice for the purification of man.¹

Just as in the Churches to-day the bread and wine are, "by a mystery" changed into the flesh and blood of the Christian Saviour. This doctrine of a Saviour God was known to the Babylonians thousands of years before Christ. Hugo Radau, the American Assyriologist, who writes not as a Secularist or Agnostic, but as an earnest Christian, in the preface to his book *Bel, The Christ of Ancient Times* (p. 4) observes:—

In issuing these pages it is my hope that the prospective readers will see in the Christian religion, as I do, the glorious culmination of the wisdom and faith of ages past. The "Light that lightens the world" said of himself, "Before Abraham was, I was." He was and existed, and was worshipped as "Son of the God of Heaven and Earth" under various names as early as 7000 B.C., when the monotheistic trinitarian religion of Babylonia was systematized.

Radau goes on to show that the Babylonian God, Marduk—whose other title of Bel means Lord, or the Lord—was a Saviour God. He says:—

Marduk is the god of light—and Christ is the "light of the world," he was, therefore, made to have been born on the 25th of December—the festival of light—when the days begin to lengthen again and thus save the world from falling into utter darkness. Marduk was the light as a "life-giving principle," he died, and was in the grave during three double months, but rose again in the spring, on the first of Nisan, when he acquired new life, new strength, new power, and entered into a wedlock with mother earth, his wife, *i.e.*, with Tsarpanitum or Ishtar. Christ, too, died, and was put into the grave, where he was for three days, but had to rise again on Easter—the festival of Ishtar (p. 49).

In a footnote Radau says: "Easter and Ishtar are one and the same word."

After the resurrection, says Radau:—

Christ as well as Marduk after having overcome the powers of darkness, and thus shown that they have power over life and death, take upon themselves, instantly, the functions of the *highest judge*, by "determining the fates." But not only this is their reward: Marduk was made the highest god and called *En-lil of the gods*, thus practically put at the head of all the other gods, so also Christ—he was seated "on the right hand of God."²

Mr. L. W. King, of the British Museum, says of Marduk: "We find him appearing before his father Ea in the character of Mediator and intercessor on behalf of men."³

Mr. St. Chad Boscawen, also an official connected with the antiquities in the British Museum, says of Marduk—which he translates Merodach, for it is the same god:—"Merodach appears as the Mediator between God and man, and as the healer of Sickness and Sin," and "The position occupied by Ea (his father) in the classical religious texts approaches very near to that of Jehovah in the Biblical narrative."⁴

Mr. Boscawen also reveals that the doctrine of the Fall in the Garden of Eden and the redemption by a Saviour was known to the Babylonians thousands of years before Christ. The third tablet of the Creation series records:—

The command was established in the garden of the God.
The Asnan (fruit) they ate, they broke in two,
Its stalk they destroyed:
The sweet juice which injures the body.
Great is their sin. Themselves they exalted.
To Merodach, their redeemer, he appointed their fate.

Commenting upon this, Mr. Boscawen observes: "It

is almost impossible not to see in this fragment the pith of the story of the Fall, while the last line at once brings Merodach before us as the one who would defeat the tempter and restore the fallen."⁵

Another very popular god of the Babylonians was Tammuz—known to the Greeks under the name of Adonis as his companion Ishtar became known as Aphrodite—Mr. Theo. G. Pinches, the Assyriologist, gives a translation of a lament for the death of Tammuz, which he says, "present to us at first hand what the Babylonians of the oldest times believed concerning the myth of Adonis and Aphrodite," he places it "earlier than 3800 years before Christ." It is as follows:—

Shepherd, lord Tammuz husband of Istar,
Lord of Hades, lord of the Shepherd's abode;
Seed which in the furrow has not drunk the water,
Its stalk in the desert has not brought forth flower,
Branch which in its bed has not been planted,
Branch whose root has been removed;
Grain which in the furrow has not drunk water.⁶

The remainder is wanting, but enough has been recovered for us to see that Tammuz was known as the "Lord," and the good "Shepherd"; he is also the "Branch," a name frequently applied by the Hebrew prophets to the coming Messiah. Like Christ, he is also cut off by an untimely death, descends into hell, and rises from the dead. Mr. Pinches also gives a translation of a lament for Tammuz upon his descent into Hades, which alludes "to the rising of the Lord."⁷ Mr. Boscawen tells us that: "The legend of the descent of Istar is in reality a species of miracle play, which was part of the liturgy of the great festival of the mourning for the dead Tammuz, so universal throughout the East."⁸

The miracle play of the descent of Christ into Hell, so popular throughout the Middle Ages, was no doubt a continuation of this pagan play, with Christ for the hero. From Babylonia this myth spread far and wide. Professor Sayce says of the worship of Tammuz: "It was a myth which was the common property of the whole Canaanitish race. Even within the courts of the Temple of Solomon, in a chamber where the elders of Judah sat, surrounded by the images of their totems upon the walls, Ezekiel (Ezekiel viii. 14), saw the women weeping for Tammuz."⁹

So that this myth, already 3000 years old, was still being celebrated, and that in Solomon's temple, the very head and centre of the Jewish worship.

Sir James Frazer says:—

At Byblus the death of Adonis (the Greek name for Tammuz) was annually mourned with weeping, wailing, and beating of the breast; but next day he was believed to come to life again and ascend up to heaven in the presence of his worshippers. This celebration appears to have taken place in spring, for its date was determined by the discolouration of the river Adonis, and this has been observed by modern travellers to occur in spring. At that season the red earth washed down from the mountains by the rains tinges the water of the river and even the sea for a great way with a blood-red hue, and the crimson stain was believed to be the blood of Adonis, annually wounded to death on Mount Lebanon.¹⁰

This colouring of the waters, says Sir James, has been observed by travellers at the end of March, which would closely correspond to our Easter, when Christ is said to have suffered, to have been mourned by women, and, like Tammuz before him, "to come to life again and ascend up to heaven in the presence of his worshippers." W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

¹ Gilbert Murray. Notes to his translation of the *Bacchæ* of Euripides.

² Radau, *Bel, The Christ of Ancient Times*, p. 52.

³ L. W. King, *Babylonian Religion and Mythology*, 1899; p. 207.

⁴ Boscawen, *The Bible and the Monuments*, 1895; p. 47.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁶ *Knowledge*, March, 1895.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Boscawen, *The Bible and the Monuments*, p. 163.

⁹ Sayce, *Contemporary Review*, September, 1883.

¹⁰ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Vol. I., p. 280.

At "The Court."

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

IN A discussion on the use of poison gas a contributor, not unknown to the readers of this paper, makes the assertion that, "the soul of a people that sinks to habitual use of poison gas would not be worth preserving." We cannot quarrel with the rightness of this view, and every time that we see the above play we cannot help reflecting that it is much too good for us. We have fallen from grace, or it may be the height of Shakespeare's genius is so lofty that our eyes are strained in viewing this projection of a dream world on the stage. In our ideal Republic only quarrels about happiness would be permitted. We have seen before to-day two sturdy young soldiers quarrel and fight over a worthless piece of metal called a cap badge; we have also witnessed unmoved a fight between two brawny miners, the *casus belli* being nothing more than the dark and mysterious meaning contained in the remark "strong words from a weak stomach." The world has seen nations in arms, and he would be a clever person to exactly define what it was about, and then complete the miracle by telling us if we had achieved it. And, whilst we move in the mud of modernity, whilst physical force is glorified, whilst cynicism neither eases the heart nor gratifies the mind, we are compelled to admit that the quarrels in a "Midsummer Night's Dream" are on a higher plane of thought than that reached by a statesman's nose, or any newspaper reader or publisher who imagined that the world would end as a consequence of no news for three days. In stating that this play is too good for us, we do not imply that it should not be produced. On the contrary we would favour the idea of a simultaneous production of it in every city, town, and village, on the ground that we do not get our deserts.

You will remember reader, that with a child there is no "to-morrow"; it is always "now" that silences us with icy logic. Thus, in the early stages of life, happiness pushes away prospective joys for what appears to be the surer joys of the present. The two pairs of lovers are in a fine frenzy for the happiness of "now"; their actions are dominated by the present. In the land of elves and fairies time has become obscured, and the utter detachment of mortals and immortals brushes away time, leaving us with the star dust of the present. The quarrels in both worlds are quarrels about happiness. In this eminently sane and respectable world of ours, it is generally oil, coal, or corn that make men murder each other, with the prime movers well in the background out of danger. They, with their jargon of finance, pull the strings after a few tame missionaries have irrigated foreign soil with talk of God, and the blessings of civilization. Cheerily, my hearties, cheerily; when we have buried this image in man's likeness there remain other superstitions almost as deadly.

The mind that created the "Midsummer Night's Dream" had it been actively used in creating a God would have made a better one than that commonly accepted by those who are careful to have lightning conductors on their places of worship. The translation of Bottom is on a higher plane of creation than the "Gadarene Swine" affair or the cursing of the barren fig tree. The roguishness of Puck with the lovers transcends the pillar of salt incident in the same degree that the moral in the Golden Ass of Apuleius transcends the parable of the Prodigal Son. The biblical tales are human, all too human, and lack the hall mark of genius. Viewed in the light of a primitive people attempting to tell stories, they are passable—as passable as some of our cheap novels whose coloured covers are their only recommendation—bibles turned inside out as it were. Can any creative artist be religious—

in the Christian sense? Let us test our questions on this play. For a few hours the dramatist here has created a world infinitely better than the real one we know so well. He has not set in it the Tree of Knowledge; he knew in the third act that:—

Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill.

He knew that in the fifth act Oberon would breathe a benediction never uttered by—but comparisons are odious—read the Gospel of St. Matthew. The creative artist challenges the Christian God. By his imagination he creates a fairer earth than that facing the fabled pair turned out of Eden; fairies and elves, bright creatures of idealism, creatures of a sweeter world than the saints' heaven; rude mechanicals to make us laugh at their actions but not their sincerity; comparisons are exasperating, but we would cheerfully exchange this world for that. In the transaction we should not care to know whether Shakespeare rested on the seventh day or spent it in tracing a connection between broody hens and brown eggs.

We have hardly anything but praise for the company at "The Court" Theatre. The scenery does not take a premier place in the production, and there are no live rabbits on the stage. Miss Audrey Caarten is inclined to overdo her part as Helena, but this rather throws in high relief the excellent Hermia of Miss Leah Bateman. Mr. Alfred Clarke as Bottom acts his part with an intensity and sincerity that should acquit his profession of the charge of decadence, and by a study of his facial movements we are convinced that he is living and thinking—as the Weaver. Miss Mary Grey as Oberon sings better than she speaks; if she would modulate her voice in the spoken lines this would add to the genuine pleasure of a production that has successfully aimed at a high standard. Mr. Miles Malleson as Quince is a character of beauty and a joy for ever; he reminds us, in his rendering, of people who interpret the Bible literally, and would believe that Pharaoh's army crossed the Red Sea because chariot wheels had been found in the home of cochineal. But the "Dream" without Mendelssohn's music is like tea sweetened with honey—very nice—but not quite the same taste as sugar. The rebuke of Philostrate by Theseus when he says:—

For never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it

is the voice of genuine aristocracy, and a saying that might be attributed to Buddha for its breadth of view; our thanks to the company for three hours respite from a world in its present state. When Eden was forsaken, He knew—He knew—and did nothing. We should be proud of our dream world creators.

WILLIAM REPTON.

"Asleep In Jesus."

(*Naïveté of a bereaved mother.*)

Ah, yes, Sir! I suppose you're right;
It's wrong of me to feel it so—and yet,
Sir, if you knew how morning, noon and night,
I keep on working, trying to forget
My little boy.

Oh, Sir, you're very kind.
I, I want to say something before you leave.
You must remember my distress of mind
If I'm too sinful. Sir, I can't believe
That with my boy God acted for the best,
Why, he was growing up so strong—but there!
He's taken from me now, and gone to rest
With angel-children in God's Heaven, where
He'll be much happier.

Oh, all you're nice
Remarks are very well, but if the soul survives
Our death, and there's such joy in paradise—
Why don't all Christian people end their lives?

R. J. R.

Song to Sappho.

HAIL to thee, lover of the sweetest Muse—
 Beloved of the Nine!
 Thou child of the old world when she was young;
 Dear dawn-lit wanderer among
 The early dews;
 In solitude, my only shrine,
 I come to worship thee, O Sappho the divine.
 Familiar beauty that delighted thee
 In thy fair southern isle
 Long, long ago, we children of an earth
 Grown older far, and giving birth
 More wearily
 Are still enchanted by; and smile
 On lovely ageless things that curved thy lips erewhile.
 Ah! still the apples ripen on the bough;
 And still the drover's feet
 Trample the hyacinths upon the hills;
 Still night, the shepherdess, fulfils
 Her task that thou
 So magically told; still bleat
 The sucking lambs; still rose and violet are sweet.
 And life is passionate and cruel still,
 Poet, in whose high song
 Love's agony and ecstasy sublime
 The icy waves of worldly time
 Can never chill;
 For they to the inspired throng
 Of deathless poems, till earth herself be dead, belong.
 Upon the altar of my heart I pour
 My gratitude and praise;
 And give, for all the joy thou art to me,
 A small song to the memory
 That I adore;
 And in my loving fingers raise
 Wild flowers to thine, O Sappho of the golden days.

ADELAIDE PHILLPOTTS.

Acid Drops.

The *Church Times* quotes Professor A. E. Taylor as saying "There is in the world to-day what there, perhaps, never was before—an atheistic philosophy which is not intellectually negligible." Worse still, the *Church Times* laments on its own account "The supporters of this philosophy are gaining the ear of our thinking young men." Well, so far as we know, the Atheistic philosophy was never negligible intellectually; all that happened was that the educators of the public were able to persuade those who looked to them for guidance that it was so. And now that is no longer easy. Putting off the fatal day of reckoning by adopting half-way terms—reverend Agnosticism, etc., etc.—is not now so easy. "Thinking young men" are having the real issue brought home to them. They see that the real choice lies between a logical Atheism and any form of Theism. Whether a man is a Christian Theist or some other form of Theist does not matter very much. From the standpoint of a reasoned Freethought he had better be a Christian Theist than one who holds to some nebulous form of Theism, which is as intellectually silly without being so courageously definite. Atheism is coming to its own in the world of thought, and those who have fought a straight fight will reap their reward.

Even worse remains behind, for the *Church Times* goes on to strengthen the dose by declaring that not only the intellectual but also the man in the street is well on his way to the rejection of Christianity. The case seems pretty hopeless—from the point of view of the *Church Times*. For ourselves, we see another proof of the telling nature of the attack carried on year after year by the fighting Freethinkers. Commonsense must tell in the long run. "We are faced," goes on the leader writer, "with a real and a living danger." Well, we do not mind helping anyone in trouble, and we will give the *Church Times* half a page of our space to advertise its wares if it will give us the same space to advertise ours. We are quite ready to risk having our young men converted to Christianity.

Providence counts the hairs of our heads, and watches the fall of sparrows, but is careless of human life. No fewer than 51,326 road accidents took place in the United Kingdom last year, 2,628 being fatal.

The editors are making headlines concerning a Mrs. Mary Collins who died, aged 118, at Doon, County Limerick. At that tender age the good, old Bible patriarchs were trundling hoops and playing marbles.

Mr. Justice Bailhache, who recently injured his right eye, addressed the North Finchley Brotherhood on "Vision." It seems almost a case of the one-eyed man being king among the blind.

A West-end parson, the Rev. G. D. Castledon, has produced the pantomime of "Aladdin" at his church, St. Andrew's, West Kensington. The congregation has the comfort that the pantomime is as true as the Gospels.

Christians are really funny people. They do not mean to be so, but the fact remains. They will attempt to prove that their religion makes them love their enemies by trying to break their opponents' necks. They will prove that Christianity develops patience, under affliction, by breaking up a meeting with which they do not agree. And we have just come across a paragraph in the *Leeds Mercury* which quite solemnly chronicles the remarkable fact that at Rawdon, Nonconformists and Episcopalians are holding united services for one week only. And the humour of the situation is quite missed. The paper is so surprised at two bodies of Christians worshipping in the same building without there being a free fight. It should have headed the paragraph "Modern Miracles."

What the war-profiteer's wife called "the dreadful peace" appears to be rather costly. In 1914 when the German menace was overshadowing Europe the cost of the British Army was twenty-eight millions. Now that there is no one to fight, the cost of the Army is one hundred and sixty-five millions. "Blessed are the peacemakers."

The Master of Balliol College, Oxford, described collegiate life as "the despotism of the superannuated tempered by the epigrams of the young." This is not a bad description of the University which expelled the poet Shelley and "canonised" General Booth the First.

Our pastors and masters! The Rev. A. L. Panchand, rector of Throcking, Herts, was fined £10 for stealing articles from a shop.

Bishop Taylor Smith, Chaplain-General to the Forces, who is a bachelor, has been airing his views on woman and matrimony. "My own view of matrimony," he says, would be that I would say to the woman of my choice, "I have such love and confidence in you that I hand over my body and soul for you to take care of." What beautiful nonsense! As keeper of the Bishop's "soul," the selected lady should have a light task.

The Rev. J. J. Whitehouse, vicar of St. John's, South-end-on-Sea, speaking of Militarism, declared that the only alternative was the religion of Christ. The reverend gentleman forgets that the world has had Christ's religion for nearly twenty centuries, and that almost all regimental flags and battleships have been blessed by the priests of that religion.

Some old bones have been found in the Cathedral of St. David's, Pembrokeshire, and the Rector of Stratford St. Mary writes to the *Manchester Guardian* stating that they are the bones of St. David himself, and asking for £100 in order to keep them on exhibition in the church. The Rector does not know that they are St. David's bones, but any excuse is good enough if it will help to keep superstition alive. He explains that being in the church they have belonged to someone of importance, they may be St. David's, and with a few more "may bes" the Rector

launches his appeal. And we are living in what the showman would describe as "the so-called twentieth century!" And the Rector thinks he is civilized. And the *Manchester Guardian* wastes a half column of its space on the matter! Is it to be wondered that we have wars, and that the *Daily Mail* has a million readers?

Canon Barnes, preaching at Westminster Abbey, poked fun at the spiritualistic conception of a hereafter with spiritual clothes and even cigars. But the idea is no more funny than the Christian ideas of golden streets and golden harps, or of the Red-Hot-Poker Department.

A popular Sunday diversion in Chelsea is feeding the gulls on the Embankment. Another popular London diversion is gulling the pious in churches and chapels.

The Bradford City Council proposed to erect in the Cartwright Memorial Hall a statuary group, "Humanity overcoming War." The group depicts the figure of woman grasping by the throat the goddess of war. The proposal to erect the statue has been opposed by a number of prominent clergymen, including the Bishop of Bradford, on the ground that the design is unchristian in sentiment. We wonder what the Bishop would consider Christian sentiment in this connection? Perhaps the answer is contained in a correspondence that is going on in the *Daily News* concerning the placing of a German mortar outside Holy Trinity Church, Kingsway. That is not quite so emphatic as the guns that were placed inside St. Paul's during a service, but it will do. And we really think that the Churches, which had so much to do with the perpetuation of the conditions that brought about the war, have a clear right to some of the trophies now that the war is over.

For our own part we suggest that a monument which showed the true Christian sentiment to war would symbolize the preaching of the clergy to fan the war fever, and the lies they told to keep it going. No one worked harder than the clergy to father the flapdoodle and the deliberate falsehoods set going by the government propaganda committees. It was the clergy who told us of the splendid moral uplift created by the war, when from the very moment the war started there was going on a wholesale game of grab, and everyone appeared to be exhausting their energies in "holding up" the community as much as possible. They fathered all the suppressions of news that might have exerted a humanizing influence on the course of events, and the circulations of what Sir Phillip Gibbs well called "the obscene lies" of the war mongers. And they had nothing to say against a peace treaty that has doomed thousands of children all over the Continent to starvation. For that is what modern war has come to—the starvation of women and children and the aged in order to bring the strong to submission. The clergy should have been the first to point out that war in these days is the most loathsome, the most brutal, and the most cowardly of occupations. They were foremost in surrounding it with a halo of virtue and decreeing its pursuit to be a religious duty.

The editor of the *Daily News* was unwise enough to waste space on the following from a correspondent: "If man ascended from the ape, why are there so many apes left?" We wonder what chapel that correspondent attends, and whether the editor published it as a sample of the intense ignorance abroad? No answer was given to the question. May we suggest that it is probable that some far seeing ape, realizing what a great many of his descendants would be like, thought the change hardly worth the making. Who was the liar who said that man was a reasonable being?

As a rule parsons object to the title of "medicine-man," but the Rev. S. Jones, of Penmaen, Colwyn, N. Wales, is advertising a "chronic Bronchitis and Asthma" cure. Christians who profess to believe in the value of prayer will, probably, forget "the Lord" and try the "Lord's anointed."

The Rev. Vale Owen no longer enjoys a monopoly of "spirit talks." He has now a rival in the person of the Rev. C. D. Thomas, a Wesleyan parson, of Bromley. The newcomer states that his "spirit communications" are found among the births, marriages, deaths, and small advertisements in a daily paper. If this be so, it affords an explanation of the luridness of the "agony column."

The late Rev. W. H. Stone, Prebendary of Wells Cathedral and Rector of Sevenoaks, left £14,823. We fear that his future address will not be in the "upper circles."

We have said over and over again that the one thing that helps to keep religion alive is the want of a keen sense of humour on the part of the majority of people. We find an example of this in the *Glasgow Herald* for January 17. Professor Kerr had been giving a course of popular lectures on evolution. After the lectures he held a special meeting in order to answer questions. One of the questions he declined to answer because he said it involved a reference to religion. From that we gather that Professor Kerr could not answer without giving religion away, as we do not suppose he would have declined answering otherwise. And he added that if we saw a cripple coming along the road with a crutch we should not kick his crutch away. For that reason he would say nothing against religion. The reply was delicious, and the humour of it lay in the fact that Professor Kerr did not see the obvious application of the illustration.

It was Heine who said that if he could get out of doors on crutches he would go to Church. And when a friend expressed surprise, replied, "Where else should a man go on crutches but to Church?" Perhaps Professor Kerr had Heine in mind, but had overlooked the satire. And Heine was quite right. Christianity is a religion for cripples—moral cripples and mental cripples. And it operates so as to prevent a man ever getting rid of his crutches. For the Churches live by the manufacture and by the sale of them. And it does its level best to see that men and women never make the attempt to walk unaided. And what a comment on the mental quality of Professor Kerr's lectures! He would not reply to a question for fear his answer might knock away the religious crutch from under someone. How can his audience feel sure that he has not suppressed some of the truth about evolution for the same reason? Professor Kerr himself suggests doubts as to his own straightforwardness.

Mr. W. P. Livingstone, who has just returned from Africa, has been addressing a Glasgow audience on the subject of Missions. He thought Africa was the country most worth while Christians devoting their attention to at present, because Africa "was a child." We quite admit that Christianity is more likely to get on with people whose minds are in an infantile stage than with others whose intellect is more mature. Mr. Livingstone thoughtfully added that Africa was a tremendous potential market, commercially. That, we fancy, would appeal more powerfully to his Glasgow audience.

It is the plums of a profession that attracts people, even though many are doomed never to pluck them. And when all is said and done about the "poor clergy," it is the fact that there are always possibilities that bring men into the profession in the first place. In a recent issue of *Truth* we find attention called to some of these clerical "plums." The rectory of Wraxall has been in the Vaughan family since 1801, and is worth £1,500 a year, with an excellent residence. About thirty years ago Richard Vaughan made a huge fortune as a brewer and left £40,000 to provide an endowment for the rectory of Wraxall, and £600 a year to pay for the curate of Failand, near Wraxall. Sir H. M. FitzHerbert has presented a Mr. Moss to the rectory of Warsop, with Snookhole, Notts, value £1,000 a year. A new vicar of Christ Church, Clifton, has been appointed at £500 a year with house. The Bishop of Chichester has presented Mr. Hutton to the living of Pevensy, worth £700 a year with residence. There are plenty of encouraging jobs going in the spiritual labour market, and these always give the labourers ground for hope.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

WITH this issue of the *Freethinker* the Sustentation Fund is brought to a triumphant close. The whole of the sum aimed at has been subscribed—the few outstanding promises are certain to be redeemed within a few days—and there is a few pounds to spare. It has been a record subscription, raised in a record time, and I desire to thank warmly all who have so generously helped to the end reached. "Thank you" is all I can say. The rest must be taken for granted.

The fund completely wipes out the deficit for last year, and it leaves behind a sum that will, I feel confident, be enough to enable us to face the recurring deficits until such time as the paper will meet all expenses attendant upon its production. And it is something to be able to face the next year or so with that assurance before one.

One old friend of the paper, Mr. E. Pinder, writes that "it is a great achievement and should set the standard for future appeals." I appreciate the sentiment, but I sincerely hope that there will be no future appeals, and there will not be if I can avoid it. Up to the present it has been unavoidable. We have passed through the most trying time the paper has ever experienced, but we have weathered the storm by working together. Could I have avoided appealing for financial help I would have done so, but it was impossible. What I could do to avoid it I did. Unfortunately, I could make no monetary contribution to the paper, but I contributed what I could by going without. I have taken from the *Freethinker* less than a mechanic's wages, and have done the work of two men all through in order to make the loss as small as possible. And I would cheerfully have gone without altogether, but I have no other source of income than that which I derive from my pen and my lectures, and there are no ravens about to provide the Freethought worker with sustenance. One day things will, I hope, be easier. Meanwhile we must all do the best we can.

Now that the Fund is out of the way we should give as much attention as is possible to increasing the circulation of the *Freethinker*. A little advertising will be attempted, but in the main we shall have to rely upon the efforts of readers all over the country. And there is no reason why the paper should not have easily twice the circulation it has. There are plenty of people ready to buy it if only it is brought to their notice.

I may here mention one other matter. It will be remembered that in the *Freethinker* for October 3, 1920, I stated that as a means of cutting down expenses we had installed a Linotype machine at an expenditure of about £1,100. This amount had been raised from various friends in the shape of a loan. It was quite a good move, and it brings us nearer the point of making income balance expenditure. One of the friends who lent us £50 to pay for the machine has, to show his appreciation of the success of the Fund, now returned his acknowledgment of the loan, and has thus reduced the debt on the machine by that amount. He does not desire his name to be mentioned, but that amount of publicity is his due.

And now I conclude by once again thanking all who have helped so generously and so cheerfully during the trying five years through which we have passed. Many papers have been quite unable to weather the storm, and some very familiar ones have ceased to appear. But the gallant old *Freethinker* is still pursuing its work, and even the increase in its price—from twopence to threepence—is less than has been the case with any paper of its class. What it has done is only a guarantee of what it will continue to do in the future. There is no other paper in the country, I think, which has so warm a place in the affections of its readers, and I think I may say, in those of its writers also. It

is a labour of love with all. It represents loyal service in a great cause, and so long as it retains the affection of its friends it will face the future without misgivings. The need for a paper such as the *Freethinker* is now greater than ever. For it is not by appeals to party shibboleths and sectarian passions that the world will realize happiness and well being. That can only be done by bringing a sane and balanced judgment to the consideration of human affairs. And I do not think the *Freethinker* has ever failed to do that.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged, £892 10s. 2d. Mrs. C. M. Renton (second subscription), £10; Mrs. S. M. Peacock, £2; R. C. Proctor, £1; National Secular Society, £25; Collette Jones, £5; J. D. (second subscription), £1; J. Davies, £10; "Atheist" (per Sec. Manchester Branch N. S. S.), £1; A. J. Fincken, £5; Mrs. R. Robinson, 10s.; R. Robinson, 10s.; A. Davis, £2 2s.; E. Whitehorn, £2 2s.; S. West, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Hudson, £1; C. Bridger, 2s. 6d.; J. Stott 2s. 6d.; A New Reader, 5s.; A. L., 2s. 6d.; R. Wilson, £5.

	£.	s.	d.
Total	964	9	2
Promises (unpaid)	55	1	0
Grand Total	1019	10	2

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 30, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

- A. THOUMINE.—Thanks, but the stories have appeared before.
- E. H.—The clergyman to whom you gave a copy of Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism* may be quite right in saying that he could easily reply to every criticism of Theism that is advanced therein. But why not invite him to do so. We should certainly be interested in seeing what he had to say.
- MR. R. PROCTOR writes:—"Clarity of thought was never more needed than at the present time, and all friends of Labour should support the *Freethinker*, otherwise Labour will never understand the Douglas Scheme mentioned by Frances Prewett.
- J. MOLYNEUX.—Mr. F. J. Gould has two books on the subject, published by Watts and Co., that would probably suit you. They are priced at 1s. 6d. each.
- F. W. LLOYD.—There is no intention of at present reprinting the articles.
- T. OWEN.—Thanks for cutting. As you say, the rector's letter reads as though it had come straight out of the 12th century, but then most sincere Christians belong to somewhere about that period. Otherwise, how the deuce could they believe in their religion! We have pleasant recollections of our visit to you.
- P. A. KELLAR.—The paper is just unadulterated rubbish. It is curious how this type of ignorant Christism should flourish so vigorously in the United States. And some seem to find this country a happy hunting ground for their efforts. We do not think much good will be done by entering into a discussion with such people. Their case is really pathological.
- R. ROBINSON.—We are pleased to have the appreciation of yourself and wife for what we have been able to do during the past five years. But we could have done very little without the loyal support that has been given us by *Freethinker* readers.
- N. SHARP.—We think you may safely ignore any book that assures you the doctrine of evolution has been proved to be wrong, and that the Bible is the one truthful explanation of the world. There are few Christians, we should say, quite

so ignorant as to take up that position. All modern biology is based on evolution.

G. O. W.—Received. Will return as soon as read.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4, and not to the Editor.

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

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

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

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

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

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (January 30) in the City Hall Saloon, Glasgow, at 12 and 6.30. The entrance will be by the Candleriggs. We have no doubt there will be large meetings, and we should not be sorry to learn that Freethinkers were not able to find standing room on account of the large number of Christians present.

We are pleased to hear that there was an improved audience at the Friars Hall on Sunday evening last to listen to the second of Mr. Thresh's lectures on "Evolution." To-day (January 30) the lecturer will be Mr. A. D. McLaren, who will speak on "Eight Years in Germany during Peace and War." Mr. McLaren is the author of a book on the same subject, which is, we believe, now in its second edition, and is some guarantee that he has something to say worth listening to. We hope that London Freethinkers will see that the Hall is well filled.

Next week a new course of lectures will be commenced with an address from Mr. Cohen on "The Physiology of Faith." It is hoped that the lecture slips will be ready in the course of a few days, and those who can assist in their distribution would oblige by sending a card to Miss Vance at the N. S. S. offices. With the help of our friends, and in the absence of any other advertisement, the hall should be crowded to the doors.

Will all those who have sent in orders for the bound volume of the *Freethinker* for 1920 please note that the orders will be discharged so soon as the volumes are delivered from the binders. The price of the volume, bound in cloth, with title page and index is 18s., postage 1s. Covers for binding, with title page and index, 3s. 6d.

Although arranged at short notice the Social organized by the N. S. S. Executive at South Place Institute on January 18 was quite successful. There was a good gathering of Freethinkers, including quite a number of young people, who appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves. The vocal part of the evening's programme was admirably carried out, and the only break in the programme was a few remarks by Mr. Cohen and the interval for refreshments. We should like to see these gatherings become a regular feature during the winter season.

The *Barnsley Chronicle* contains a brief report of Mr. Cohen's recent lectures in the town and duly notes the large audience in the afternoon and the crowded hall in the evening. We daresay that one day editors will awaken to the fact that there is a considerable Freethought public

in the country. When they do so, papers will be more ready than they are at present to devote space to reports of our meetings. And that awakening will be hastened if local Freethinkers will do what they can to let the papers know that they are alive. There is a too great a readiness to submit to the boycott, instead of fighting it.

The *Democrat* has a column review of Mr. Thorn's *Richard Jefferies*, in the course of which it remarks that it should revive interest in Jefferies' writings, and says that the booklet is one that should be permanently kept in a handy place for reading.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Lloyd closed the meetings of the Manchester Branch with two interesting lectures on Sunday last before good audiences. Mr. Broadhead gave some excellent songs while the audiences were settling down, and Mr. Hoffmann presided at the piano. The Branch hopes to announce its new meeting place soon.

A few days ago we received information from one of our readers to the effect that Mr. J. W. Gott had been charged at Birmingham with publishing "obscene and blasphemous literature." On enquiry, we found this to be correct. The case came before the Stipendiary magistrate on January 21, and was remitted to the Sessions in March next. There is, therefore, ample time for the N. S. S. Executive to acquire exact information on the matter and decide on its course of action. Naturally, we are loath to say more until the Executive has met. No official information has been received by the Society, but all may rest assured that everything will be done that can and ought to be done to defeat any attempt to put the shameful blasphemy laws in operation.

A Sociological Study of Religion.

IV.

(Continued from page 59.)

AND so, in primitive communities, religion becomes closely associated with every social activity. Thus, Major Leonard, describes religion on the Lower Niger as intermingled with the whole social system of the tribes under his view. It supplies the principle on which their law is dispensed and morality adjudicated. The entire organization of their common life is so interwoven with it that they cannot get away from it. Like the Hindus, "they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously, and sin religiously."¹

In West Africa, Miss Kingsley also noted the close connection between religion and life.—

To get through day or night a man must be right in the religious point of view; he must be on working terms with the great world of spirits round him. In spite of much make-believe the secret societies in which men are enlisted under solemn oaths, are recognized as important moral agencies. The Ukuku, recently described by Dr. Nassau, could settle tribal quarrels, and proclaim or enforce peace, when no individual chief or king could end the strife. Such organizations regulate marriage laws, the duties of parents and children, the privileges of eldership, the

¹ "The English Government in India," says Bagelot, *Physics and Politics*. "has in many cases made new and great works of irrigation, of which no ancient Indian government ever thought; and it has generally left it to the native community to say what share each man of the village should have in the water; and the village authorities have accordingly laid down a series of most minute rules about it....The peculiarity is that in no case do these rules 'purport to emanate from the personal authority of their author or authors, which rests on grounds of reason not on grounds of innocence and sanctity; nor do they assume to be dictated by a sense of equity; there is always, I am assured, a sort of fiction under which some customs as to the distribution of water are supposed to have emanated from a remote antiquity, although, in fact, no such artificial supply had ever been so much as thought of.'"

recognition of age and worth. The entry into them lies through the rites of religion.

Religious sentiment is also invoked to give a stability and an awfulness to governing agencies when we pass from savagery to barbarism or early civilization. The Peruvian Sun and Moon, Ynti and Quilla, were the ancestors of the Incas; the Mikado was the child of the sun-goddess; the Pharaoh was divine (as the adder carved on the brow of statues to the Egyptian kings proves); and some of the Roman emperors were deified after death.² Later, of course, the divine ruler or heavenly descended monarch, gave place to the "king by grace of God," or "divinely-appointed ruler," and it required several revolutions before the divine right of kings idea became unpopular with monarchs.

Among the Teutonic peoples the kings were expected to secure the fertility of the crops. The prevalence of famine among the Swedes has been sometimes attributed to the king's remissness in performing the necessary sacrificial function, and more than one monarch was put to death for his neglect of duty. The Burgundians were not quite so drastic, merely deposing the monarchs that failed to secure fertility of crops.

Professor Breasted, (*Ancient Times*), says of the Sumerian city States,—

Around the temple and its mount were grouped the store-houses and business offices of the temple..... Here ruled a wealthy priesthood. Assisted by a group of scribes, they rented and cared for the temple lands and property. The king or ruler of the town at their head was really also a priest, called a "patesi." His temple duties kept him about as busy as did the task of ruling the community outside of the temple walls.

This identification of sacerdotalism and political structure is repeated again and again in various cultures all over the world. The idea of the divinity of the monarch was common in the oriental civilizations; as already stated, the Egyptian king was regarded as a deity; and the idea was introduced, or rather re-introduced into Europe by Alexander the Great. When, after the rise of the Christian Church, the Western Empire was overthrown by barbarian invaders, the Catholic Church converted and ruled them.

Gradually.....the Church began to undertake the duties which the Roman government had previously performed and which our governments perform to-day, such as keeping order, the management of public education, the trial of lawsuits, etc. There were no well-organized states in Western Europe for many centuries after the final destruction of the Roman Empire. The authority of the various barbarian kings was seldom sufficient to keep their realms in order.....Under these circumstances it naturally fell to the Church to keep order, when it could, by either threats or persuasion; to see that contracts were kept, the wills of the dead carried out, and marriage obligations observed. It took the defenceless widow and orphan under its protection and dispensed charity; it promoted education at a time when few laymen, however rich and noble, were able even to read. These conditions serve to explain why the Church was finally able so greatly to extend the powers which it had enjoyed under the Roman Empire, and why it undertook duties which seem to us to belong to the State rather

² In the midst of his Persian campaigns, whilst there was still a formidable Persian army undefeated, Alexander "the Great" marched with a small following far out into the Sahara Desert to the oasis shrine of Amon (one of the Egyptian deities). "Here in the vast solitude Alexander entered the holy place alone. No one knew what took place there; but when he issued again he was greeted by the high priest of the temple as the son of Zeus-Amon. Alexander took good care that all Greece should hear of this remarkable occurrence.....These measures of Alexander were not the efforts of a weak mind to gratify a vanity so drunk with power that it could be satisfied only with superhuman honours. They were carefully devised political measures dictated by State policy and systematically developed step by step for years." (Breasted, *Ancient Times*.)

than to a religious organization. (*Mediæval and Modern Times*, by Professor Robinson.)

Later, Gregory, who may be said to have founded the temporal power of the popes, not only had to govern the city of Rome, but had also to keep the Lombards out of central Italy.

In the 12th and 13th centuries the Mediæval Church was at the height of its power. Says Professor Robinson,—

It is clear, moreover, that the Mediæval Church was not merely a religious body as Churches are to-day. Of course, it maintained places of worship, conducted devotional exercises, and cultivated the religious life, but it did far more. It was, in a way, a *State*, for it had an elaborate system of law, and its own courts, in which it tried many cases which are now settled in our ordinary courts. One may get some idea of the business of the Church courts from the fact that the Church claimed the right to try all cases in which a clergyman was involved, or anyone connected with the Church or under its special protection, such as monks, students, crusaders, widows, orphans, and the helpless. Then all cases where the rites of the Church, or its prohibitions, were involved came ordinarily before the Church courts, as, for example, those concerning marriage, wills, sworn contracts, usury, sorcery, heresy, and so forth. The Church even had its prisons, to which it might sentence prisoners for life.

The Church not only performed the functions of a State, it had the organization of a State. Unlike the Protestant ministers of to-day, all churchmen and religious associations of mediæval Europe were under one supreme head, the pope, who made laws for all and controlled every Church officer, wherever he might be.....The whole Church had one official language, Latin.....The Mediæval Church may, therefore, properly be called a monarchy in its government. (*Mediæval and Modern Times*, Robinson.)³

And when one further considers that the Mediæval Church undertook the tasks of poor relief and education, that it provided sanctuary, and so assisted in the administration of justice, that the monasteries and religious houses served as hostleries to travellers, and that it preserved such little learning as was known to the savants of the Dark Ages, Roger, Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, Abelard, and Albertus Magnus, all being churchmen), it is not surprising that the Catholic Church in that period rose to a height of power that perhaps no other sacerdotal system has ever arrived at in a quasi-civilization.

Among the Mohammedans the relations between political and religious institutions is even closer, the Caliph being both temporal ruler and religious head of the Islamic faith.

W. H. MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.....And now the time in special is, by privilege, to write and speak what may help to further discussing of matters in agitation. The temple of Janus with his two controversial faces might now not insignificantly be set open. And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple: who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter.—*Milton, Arcopagica* (1644), *Arber's Reprint*, pp. 72-74.

Sincerity is the truth of the heart, and veracity the truth of the lips. What truth is to the mind, that is good to the will, that is, its most proper object.—*Isaac Watts, "Ontology."*

³ At the height of its power the Mediæval Church was also one of the greatest landowners, owing—it has been computed—one-third of the land in those countries where it was established.

How We Opened the Y.M.C.A. Institute.

I AM no Browning, but what I am going to say is more important than "How we brought the good news from Ghent to Aix," and does not rattle and clatter the teeth out of one's head as does the martial iteration of that immortal poem. I do not know how I came to be invited—or rather I do know—but my friends did not know the fundamental complexion of my intellectual convictions or they would as soon have thought of inviting the father of lies himself—to drive whom from our pious village was the aim and object of the new institute. The latter was formerly a schoolhouse, then a Liberal Club, now outpost of a not too liberal theology. Oh, I assure you the air was thick with pious platitude—and the light so good, the rooms so spacious, clean and sweet, the young men so handsome, the fresh giggling girls so pretty, the platform party so wise and beaming and benevolent, the tea was poor but the pastry was super-excellent, purveyed by a rich and portly member of the platform party. Some very secular recitations were done in magnificent style, and some secular songs were sung in superb manner, one of them a duet by a lady and gentleman, that fine old "Excelsior"—inspiring verse wedded to inspiring music vocalised by that gifted wedded pair! The Established Kirk minister opened these lively proceedings with a most doleful prayer. He never smiled before it, and he never smiled again. If all the dead in the kirkyard near by had stood up in their graves to listen the thing could not have been more gruesome and harrowing. The Lord was evidently very near, and very angry, and very hard to please; and yet this despiser of the flesh and frivolity had been quite festively wedded some three times in his holy career.

Out of gratitude for the honour conferred upon and the pleasure afforded me, I wrote an appreciative and mildly critical account of the affair, but even my friend the press man would have none of it, so I am sending the gist of it to that abandoned creature, the Editor of the *Freethinker*, for the delectation of his criminal readers. Anything is good enough for him—and them. These kindly college bred clergy and respectable laymen must be protected from the rude iconoclast, for the sacred idols of Christianity are precious and fragile; a breath would blow them over, and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not build them up again.

The loss of Christ is such that nothing can restore! I would not, either, be too frivolous and flippant regarding this great transition stage, when the individual mind here and there is, from its naturally inherent clarity and honesty, being forced to give up faiths it once held so dear, and that, whether true or not, may have been a source of comfort and inspiration. As G. L. Mackenzie said, I write not in scorn but in sorrow: for why, life, myriad million life, and the infinite unintelligibility of its psychological texture, is a solemn and serious and significant fact; appalling sometimes in the buzz and "dreadful activity" of its human swarm. And so I wrote somewhat as follows: One would like to be quite sincere and candid with regard to the speakers at this opening function. They seemed to reiterate all too insistently the name of Christ and his single sacrifice for the world. With all due reverence let it be said that this sort of thing, all important as it may seem to the speakers, can easily and is all too often overdone. Even as a policy it is a mistaken one. Surely in this alone ministers and their enthusiastic helpers are sadly lacking in the sense of proportion, which is really a lack of intelligence. Why, anyone, who is at all religiously inclined must feel stifled and surfeited, repelled rather than attracted by this cheapening, one might say vulgarizing of a sacred

name. Why should the self-denying sacrificial virtues of the Son of God, but who was, and wished to be, the lowly son of man; why should the merits of One who, from the very nature and originality of his life and calling, despised the trumpeting of fame, be served from fifty thousand pulpits and by as many lay orators with the eternal repetition of conventional adulation, such as is bestowed on some common earthly princeling, simply because he is a prince? After all, even were the martyrdom of Christ the world's supreme act of devoted immolation, there have been many acts of as splendid heroism, and these, not directly, in many cases not remotely, inspired by the Christian example, by men who were merely human and not divine, as Christ was said to be—which fact always, to my mind, places him above and beyond the tests of human misfortune and human heroism—this is, indeed, the weak spot in the Christian scheme of redemption. For the death of a god, as Thomas Paine would have said, is "out of nature" and beyond human sympathy, because beyond human experience. Familiarity, even with sacred things, breeds contempt; and to vary another aphorism: take care of the secular and the sacred will take care of itself. Let us practice more than we preach. Let us *live the life* as best we can according to our light and our strength. Above all, let our lay and cleric friends be more careful and sparing in their references to the Prince of the House of David lest they degrade rather than exalt the ideal they would hold up to the world in all its pure and simple beauty and goodness.

Much stress, and rightly, was laid on the four-fold aspect of the Y. M. C. A., *i.e.*, the spiritual, intellectual, social and physical aspects. Certainly, as an unconventional, free and easy yet decent and orderly social centre, devised on the widest human and religious lines, such an institution may form a much needed rendezvous for the youth of both sexes. The aim of the Y. M. C. A. would seem to be to widen the doors of the Church; to make the old and narrow way broad enough to accommodate all shades of opinion, the only conformity desired being decency of behaviour and a due care for personal and public welfare, etc. But perhaps in the mind of the invited scribe the wish was father to the thought, and the threshold under the Red Triangle not so wide as all that; nevertheless, here the ungodly and the unwashed can come and have a bath, or hear a lecture on Socialism or Literature, and while the Church element avoids "intellectual wrangles, than which few things are more unprofitable" (to the Church!) much comfort and enjoyment may be had here, some grain among the chaff, and at a small expense. There is always, of course, the uneasy suggestion of Meredith's "poisonous ivy" in the patronage of the local clergy—one might say the pasturage, for here each rev. gentleman is happy and hopeful on his native heath, and in his professional delusion—but even they can talk sense at times. The building itself was large and commodious, fresh and clean and brightly lit. Some trees outside had been cut down. What sacrilege! or would the leafy grove suggest too readily the pagan temple of Greece and Rome in comparison with our modern, meagre and prosaic faith? To me, any garden, however fine, looks tame and domestic, any house looks bare without the grateful shade and contact of waving boughs; in summer clothed in glorious leafage, in winter naked, writhing in the wind against the stormy skies—I may be superstitious too, but these form the ritual and vestments of my religion.

A. MILLAR.

Altar and throne formed a sinister conspiracy against the progress of humanity. We look back with horror at the things which so many champions of reason endured at the hands of blind, if not malignant, bearers of authority.—*J. B. Bury.*

Notes From Ireland.

Even if I get into Heaven—I am afraid I shall be a good while in Purgatory (here the audience, naturally enough, cried "No, no!")—I would hardly be happy there if I did not know that the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland was doing well.—*Cardinal Logue.*

The Torch, or to give it its other and more popular name, *The Catholic Truth Annual*, is a Catholic annual wherein are carefully recorded the many valuable suggestions and the more than many invaluable ideas put before the 1920 meetings of the Catholic Truth Society with a view to the yet further hardening of Ireland's already concrete Catholicity. It costs half-a-crown, but is well worth the money, for not only is it bulky and well produced but it contains a splendid art plate of our present holy father, Benedict XV. His holiness wears spectacles—rimless ones—and it is to them, no doubt, we may attribute, at least to some extent, the expression of spacious inanity that so distinguishes the man and lends to his otherwise somewhat skittish physiognomy an individuality as unique as it is unorthodox. His holiness is a little man with ten fat fingers, two of which are held up admonishingly and add considerably to the effect of the face and the rimless spectacles and the large figureless crucifix that reclines so gracefully at the beginning of the middle protuberance, a foot beneath the chin. Such is Benedict XV. to whom the C. T. S. is indebted for the apostolic benediction he so thoughtfully telegraphed on the occasion of the opening conference. I trust his holiness has imagination enough not to believe either in himself or his apostolic benediction.

Well, according to this record of the various lectures, the "green-gut" outlook (in the south of Ireland Catholics are known as "green-guts," Protestants as "blue-guts") in Ireland is not so very rosy at all. Guilds, leagues, councils, associations, committees by the dozen must be instituted at once if our many Roman Catholic shortcomings are to be set right. The cinema, newspapers, sacred art, and everything else even to the inclusion of women are dealt with and found wanting. Our writers and intellectual leaders are both un-Irish and un-Catholic. The Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, cries a Father Sheehy (without the least touch of sarcasm, mind), will have to see to it and produce an original Catholic Irish literature equal in power and imaginative intensity to the modern Catholic literature of infidel France. The same ignorant father has a lot of nasty little things to say about the Abbey Theatre movement, too. He wants more fun, frolic and melodrama on the stage and thinks that "the old plays were *virtue triumphed* and *villainy was overthrown*" (*italics* not mine) are much to be preferred, though to do him justice, he readily acknowledges that "he is not such a fool as to decry Shakespeare, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Robertson and others." How any person, even a Catholic priest, can have the impertinent audacity to dare so to speak of Shakespeare I don't know. It may be, of course, that the following singularly penetrative psychological flashes, culled from this father's paper, reveal an altitude of thought that cannot be more than a lot above Shakespeare:—

We have had Ibsen and his problems *thrown at our heads.* (*These italics* are mine.)

There has been too much fuss about "art for art's sake."

This very often means art for the devil's sake.

And to cap all:—

I suppose it is possible to be pure-minded and joyful at the same time.

The lecture of this priestly person evoked "loud applause."

Father MacCaffrey, the President of Maynooth College, has a paper on lay co-operation. This father, besides being a right reverend monsignor, is regarded, even by his brothers in holy orders, as an advanced thinker, a monsignor, in fact, of the most orchidaceous modernity (this phrase, though good, is not my own). His lecture is described as "thought provoking," which, indeed, it certainly is. He describes himself as "one of those who believed that if they scratched them deep enough there was no Socialist in Ireland." The right reverend monsignor had better borrow his pope's rimless spectacles,

reverse his collar, let his beard grow and attend any labour meeting in Ireland he may choose. Then perhaps his unwilling eyes will be opened to the fact that the apparent docility of many a thin-skinned Irishman is but skin deep, and that in his breast smoulders a dangerous passion for the beautiful and the true. I myself, some years ago, when on the look out only for something to be enthusiastic about, became a member of the Socialist Party of Ireland, and I found that not only were the leading lights of the then tiny party advocates of direct action, anarchial communism, and the Lord only knows what not, but at least three out of every four were Free-thinkers of the deepest dye. To be sure, the rank and file between them hadn't the weight of a fair intellect, but, then, of what rank and file can this not be said? Still, the Church will get many a blow from the workers of Ireland when the time comes, and the time, I sincerely trust, is not far off.

Another right reverend monsignor, Father Dunne, put his audience through a paper entitled "Some of our Shortcomings in Matters Liturgical." The paper, a brilliant one brimming with a want of wit, emphasizes the importance of Mass, High Mass, the Divine Office, and the cycle of sacred seasons, and is, in a way, a repetition of the old, old catechism in the old, old way. He speaks as though the Mass and the Sacraments were essential things—as if the crusty old God in the monstrance could have anything to do with the laughter of a child, the beauty in a young girl's face, or the despair in the eyes of a dying nun! Like his brother monsignors, he cannot long abstain from being ridiculous. He says, for instance:—

In private prayer, to which we devote too disproportionate a part of our religious life, we speak—I will not say with a Dublin accent (things are bad enough but not quite as bad as that!)—with an industrial accent and in merely human tones.

The insertion of the note of exclamation after the interjection in parenthesis is in the original, where, however, it is possibly a printer's error.

The Most Reverend Bishop of Clonfert, commenting upon the paper read by the last mentioned monsignor, declared that on the Continent, too, the shortcomings in matters liturgical were, in some ways, deplorable. He himself had attended High Mass in one of the largest and most fashionable churches in Paris and he found that the genuflections of the deacon and sub-deacon were totally wrong throughout. They had genuflected, not to the Tabernacle, but to the opposite wall. His lordship is to be commended for making so astonishingly acute an observation. The Lord God Himself, I'll be bound, failed to notice the error of the deacon and sub-deacon. All the same, my lord, the Lord God was good to those French courtiers, who, at High Mass in the presence of Louis XIV., turned their faces towards their king and their backs upon the altar.

The principal impression to be got from this annual as a whole is that, for her priests, Ireland is not yet Catholic enough. They are howling for many things—a Catholic Congress, Sacred Liturgy Centres, Prayer Book in Irish, a Catholic Art Society, a League of Catholic Irishwomen, a stricter Film Censorship, a Committee for the Translation of Foreign Masterpieces of Catholic Literature, a Children's Prayer Crusade, a Catholic Journalists' Institute. And so you see these priestly vermin want to crawl into everything. Very soon we shall find them diminishing the light of the sun on Good Friday and stuffing green gut into our Sunday sausages. And in return, what is the nation to get? Recommendations to prayer, that's all! Pray, pray, pray, we are told. And we pray, pray, pray, overlooking the fact that not one of our millions of prayers has ever yet, I am confident, penetrated through the wax that must be stuffing the Almighty's ears. The prayer stunt is still considered as efficacious as ever. The Archbishop of Tuam got a "Hear, hear" when he affirmed his belief in its efficacy. (At this affirmation, how the assembled right reverend monsignors must have grinned their sly old grins of Romal Catholic appreciation!) I calculate that from this little land; four hundred

miles long, one hundred and fifty broad; one hundred thousand million prayers ascend yearly to wander amid the more than one hundred thousand million stars. One hundred thousand million! Let us hope that the stars themselves are silent.

DESMOND FITZROY.

Correspondence.

CHRISTIANITY AND LIFE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have been in touch with Freethought off and on for thirty years. Your two correspondents, J. Breese and J. G. F., accept, I think, not in words but by inference the conclusion arrived at in my former letter. The last war, our present troubles in Ireland and India, likewise Russia are there because the Ethical Teaching of Jesus has not been followed, and Christians come under the same condemnation. The only cure is voluntary moral discipline, which most of us refuse to undergo, preferring the line of least resistance, and the demands of the flesh. The boxer, athlete, etc., have to undergo compulsory discipline; when men do this voluntarily by the million, then better days will be in store. Space forbids my answering in detail, and, therefore, let me take the broad issue which separates Christian Philosophy from Freethought Philosophy. I understand that Freethought Philosophy looks upon human Intelligence as the last word, the highest. Christian Philosophy believes there is a higher intelligence than man's. As there is no finality to human knowledge, as the scientific knowledge of one generation is refuted or modified by the scientific knowledge of a succeeding generation, as intelligent men arrive at different conclusions from the same data, how can we place implicit confidence in human intelligence. St. Paul says: "Let no man deceive himself if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise, for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." My knowledge of engineering is Nil, therefore, you would consider me a madman were I to go and criticize the men engaged upon, let us say, a huge suspension bridge. I presume you will agree that this, great as it is, is a mere toy compared to Creation, and yet Freethought Philosophy has not the slightest hesitation in criticizing the Creation. For instance, Mr. Cohen discourses learnedly and interestingly upon "Immortality," but if you come down to "bed-rock" you must admit that no man can furnish us with reliable and conclusive information on such a subject, simply because on such subjects man is merely a child; Freethought is equally dogmatic in stating "There is no God." If I were to limit my outlook on Life to my own intelligence, I should probably think as you do and should say: "God's work is a huge bundle of mistakes and misfits, a huge failure, but believing in a Higher Intelligence I suspend judgment as I cannot judge until I am in possession of all the evidence, and this side of the grave we have only half the evidence, may be less than half, and must, therefore, wait until we have gone 'West.'" Jesus said, "I came not to bring peace but a sword," knowing that man would not follow his teaching, and as a result, one long trail of blood through the generations that have gone. As it is impossible to express oneself fully by correspondence, I should be pleased if the Editor would kindly insert my address, along with my signature, so that my two opponents can write me, and if not too far apart, could arrange an interview.

EDWIN WORSNOP.

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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.

FRIARS HALL (236 Blackfriars Road) : 7, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Eight Years in Germany during Peace and War."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road) : 7.30, Councillor Isaacs, "Environment."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH, N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.) : 7.30, Debate: "That the Present Industrial System be Abolished." Affirmative, Mr. Percy Mim; Negative, Mr. A. Eagar.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9) : 7, Mr. E. Burke, "Science and Divine Providence."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2) : 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The Social Purpose of Education."

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