

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN ■ ■ EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

Vol. XLI.—No. 27

SUNDAY, JULY 3, 1921.

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Politics and the Church.

I do not think that anyone who appreciates the make up of the average religious mind will doubt that Mr. Lloyd George is sincere in his profession of faith in Christianity. We know that he was brought up in the atmosphere of the chapel, religious phrases have not formed the smallest part of his oratorical armoury, and he has over and over again avowed his fondness for hymns. Nor does there seem anything in his own intellectual calibre that would tend to set him against Christianity. His political speeches, whatever may be their worth in certain directions, are without the slightest trace of a knowledge of history, or of science, or of literature, or of any of those subjects that go to make up what we call an educated intelligence. He shows no indication of his having emulated Mr. Balfour in a taste for philosophical studies, and his essentially opportunist cast of mind would well fit him for such a religion as Christianity. If, therefore, he is not a Christian, one can only say that he is a Christian lost in the making. Nature meant him for one—if one may be permitted to say that nature means anything. At any rate, I do not think that a number of the clergy who have been denouncing Mr. George because of the advice he recently gave the Churches are warranted in hinting that his attachment to Christianity is not genuine. I would as soon doubt Mr. Bottomley's sincerity when he professes to have found God as doubt that. When Mr. George advised the Churches that it was not their business to interfere in politics, except in such directions as he agreed with, he was only asking them not to play the part of political agitators for the sake of some temporary advantage, and to act up to the traditions of the Church. The business of the Church has always been to support the powers that be, and the Prime Minister is quite in order in reminding them that it is late in the day for them to attempt another policy.

* * *

The Churches and Their Duty.

Among the hostile critics of the Prime Minister is the Bishop of Chelmsford. He denies the right of Mr. George to so lecture the Churches, and says that they must interfere with politics "when the principles of Christianity which they hold are violated in the government of the nation." These be fine sounding

words, but what exactly do they mean? The Bishop specifically mentions Ireland and the miners as cases in point. But what are the Christian principles which the government outrages in their dealings with these matters and which the Bishop would like to see observed? There is the Christian principle of non-resistance, and while no government can be expected to practise that (I am sure that the Bishop never encouraged the government to do so during the war), no government has ever objected to the people over whom they ruled practising it. I am certain that the government and Mr. George would not have the least objection to the Irish and the miners doing so, and if the Bishop of Chelmsford could induce them to live up to New Testament teachings the government would be pleased to find him a job as Bishop without portfolio, if there is a post of that kind going. If the miners and the Irish would recognize that it is, as the New Testament advises, their duty to obey the powers that be, for they are ordained of God, and to resist them merits damnation, that workmen should obey their masters whether they are good or bad, and if they are bad there is the greater merit in obedience, and if the miners would only cease to take thought for the morrow and trust to God to clothe and feed them as he clothes the lilies of the fields and the birds of the air, Mr. George would be the last to say that the churches are not playing their proper part in life. I take it that Mr. George was only recalling the Churches to a sense of their duty, reminding them of what are the teachings of their own sacred book. And while I admit that it may be unwelcome to have this reminder just now, it is their teaching, and the Prime Minister may well like to see others act up to their professed opinions.

* * *

Has There Been a Divorce?

The Bishop of Chelmsford has a very curious notion of the historic relations of the Church and politics. Apparently, he has the opinion—or he hopes that others will not have sufficient knowledge of the facts to correct the assertion—that the Church has been divorced from politics, and that at some unnamed date, before that separation was effected, the world was much better off as a consequence of the union. What else is one to make of the statement as given by the *Westminster Gazette*, "Before they sanctioned the divorce of the Church from politics he wanted them to look at the world, the nation, and labour, and see what such divorce has brought about." That is a characteristically Christian dodge, since it quietly assumes that in consequence of the alliance of the State with Christianity the world was better off, and that all our present troubles are due to their separation. It is so Christian, and so suitable to the political platform that it might be used as a reason why the clergy should be permitted to enter Parliament. But one would like to know exactly what he means by it, for one may take it from two points of view. Labour is certainly very much better off than it was. Even its discontent is a sign of improvement, inconvenient and troublesome although that discontent may be. The groping after something better is a good thing, even

though the good thing is never achieved, aye, and even though it may be the wrong thing that is directly aimed at. And if it is meant that this improvement has been brought about as a result of the divorce of labour from the Church, then I should agree, for it is one of the plainest lessons that it is only in proportion to the extent to which the working classes have shaken themselves free from the control of the Church that their condition has improved. I agree that if the working classes had kept closely wedded to the Church we should have had none of our present industrial troubles. Neither should we have had trade unions, or the extension of the franchise, or votes for women, or general education. We should have had "peace," but it would have been the peace of despair, and the quietness of stagnation.

* * *

The People and the Churches.

If the Bishop does not mean this then I should deny that the Church has ever been divorced from politics. All that has happened is that its influence over the people has waned. If the Bishop only reads the *Freethinker*, which I daresay he does not, I would advise him to read that picture which Thackeray draws of the clergy in the reign of George the second, of Lady Yarmouth, one of the king's many mistresses, selling a bishopric for £5,000 (they were worth much more then than to-day), of crowds of clergy "rustling up the back stairs of the ladies of the court, stealthy clergy slipping purses into their laps," and of the general state of the country during the reign of the good Georges, and when these men died "of the lying eulogies, the blinking of disagreeable truths, the sickening flatteries, the simulated grief, the falsehoods and sycophancies—all uttered in the name of heaven and our State Churches." And some of these posts were well worth getting financially. A century since the two archbishops were getting between them £52,000 annually, twenty-four bishops drew £244,000, there were twenty-eight deans drawing a similar amount, and even though the curates were not paid at that rate, it was not for their posts that the would be dignitaries of the Church slipped their purses into the easy virtuous laps of the court "ladies." And meanwhile the "lower classes," who were not then divorced from the Church were sending their children into factories to work at the age of six and seven years of age, or their boys to climb chimneys, and thus get them maimed and diseased by another method, and their women into the pits to be harnessed, in a semi-nude condition, to trucks like so many cattle. Not that the Church was careless about them. Far otherwise. It took the greatest care that they should be taught the catechism and be brought up to "bear themselves reverently to their pastors and masters." If ever the Church earned its money it earned it then. And those who paid the clergy knew they were getting full value for their money.

* * *

The Inseparables.

But has there ever been a divorce between the Church and politics? Could there ever be one in reality? To answer these questions one need only think what has been the place of the Church in the world and what is the scope of its teaching. It has aimed at giving men and women a code that should regulate their lives from the cradle to the grave, and which should determine their destiny beyond. It has told them what was right and wrong, and has also told them what is to be their attitude towards governments and dignitaries. And from the time when Constantine the Great selected the infant Church and established it in a position of power, because, as Professor Seeley said, he found it the most suitable instrument for his own despotic purposes, the Christian Church

has been loyal to its employers. There is not a despotism that has existed in this or in any other country that has not been able to depend upon the Church for support. There is not a war in which we have engaged, whether it has been the plunder of Burmah, or China, or the financial enterprise of the Boer war that has not had the fervent support of the Church. There is not a form of social exploitation at home that has not been supported by the Churches. And how could it be otherwise when so much of their own revenues were derived from land, and mining royalties, and slum rents, etc.! And even when the support given by the Church was not direct, its indirect support was of no mean kind. It was surely something to have a Church placed in a position of authority which could impress upon a people the importance of attending to the next world, and how little anything mattered in connection with this. "Get right with God, that is the primary thing," said the clergy. "Let us get right with the Church and all else will follow," said the tyrant and the oppressor. The two sentiments were complementary. Without the one the other could not exist. It is the paralysing influence of religion that has helped to cement the power of the secular tyrant. It is the patronage of the secular tyrant that has made it worth while for the Church to act as it has acted. Nor will the two ever be long at variance. Mr. Lloyd George may, therefore, rest content that the Church will not for long maintain an attitude of revolt. Probably the attitude is even now only assumed. For new ideas are in the air, the giant of labour is stirring uneasily, and the Church is an old hand at sympathizing with movements as a preliminary to destroying them. It slavers over its intended victim as a snake does over its meal. But it never loses sight of where it intends the victim to land. So Mr. George may return to his hymns with a contented mind. We are only witnessing the latest phase of an old game. "The Church and Labour"! Or did someone say, The Wolf and the Lamb?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

History or Drama?

THE above is a tremendously important as well as intensely interesting question. Until lately the clergy would have been shocked by the merest suggestion of the presence of so worldly and vulgar a thing as drama in the Word of God. But this is a time of intellectual unrest and open scepticism, when the theologians, in a state of extreme desperation, flee to any plausible city of refuge. The *Church Times* for June 17 published a remarkable sermon by the Archdeacon of London, preached in St. Anne's Church, Soho, on Sunday, June 12, at the Annual Festival of the Actors' Church Union. It was a peculiar occasion, which presented a pleasing opportunity of expressing new and startling views. The text was Acts xxi. 10, 11: "And there came down a certain prophet named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle." Archdeacon Holmes cannot but know that such Christian scholars as Overbeck and Van Manen regard his text as an interpolation, and that others express the view that the prophecy cannot originally have been ascribed to Agabus, but must have been assigned to one of Philip's prophesying daughters, the mention of whom in verse 9 would otherwise have been exceedingly anomalous. In fine, does not the story bear the unmistakable marks of a pure legend? Surely, to treat the Bible as a collection of interesting dramas and

Christianity as an essentially dramatic religion is a most significant sign of the times, even though it is not quite clear what exactly is meant by the statement. To the archdeacon, at any rate, the alleged incident, as related, "is all intensely dramatic; it is drama pure and simple—and it is meant to be." Then he adds, in a more intelligible manner:—

The Bible is crammed full of drama from beginning to end—from the garden scene in Eden to the marriage Supper of the Lamb. For instance, we open the Old Testament and find at once what Mrs. Browning's poem calls *A Drama of Exile*, depicting the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise—an inspired drama with its talking serpent, and allegorical apple, and miracle working trees, and mystic gate, and scorching flame, and glittering sword, and *dramatis personæ*. It is all drama—of course, much, very much, more than drama, but drama. We open it again at the Song of Songs, that most perfect pastoral drama which Dr. Driver says was designed to be acted rather than read, and which sets the inspired standard for dramatic authorship and dramatic acting. And if we open our New Testament, we find the same human story, from the Bethlehem Tableau with its shepherds and angels and its ox and its ass, and Madonna and Child, to the dramatic Ascension on Olivet, fulfilling in living reality the old psalmists' magnificent drama of the opening gates and the everlasting doors, and the King of Glory.

It should not be forgotten that the sermon was preached before actors and actresses to whom the archdeacon was anxious to recommend Christianity on the ground of its highly dramatic character. He spoke with considerable mental reservation, guarding his ecclesiastical position by the qualifying remark: "It is all drama—of course, much, very much, more than drama, but drama." We ask, what more than drama is it? What more can it be? In reality, Mr. Holmes practically admits the truth of what Freethinkers have always been teaching. Mr. John M. Robertson's contention in his two great works, *Christianity and Mythology*, and *Pagan Christs*, is "that the Gospel story of the Last Supper, Passion, Betrayal, Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection is visibly a transcript of a mystery drama, and not originally a narrative, and that that drama is demonstrably (as historical demonstration goes) a symbolic modification of an original rite of human sacrifice, of which it preserves certain verifiable details." Several powerful thinkers, such as Tylor, Spencer, Grant Allen, and Frazer, have gathered such a vast store of all sorts of information bearing on the problem, that Mr. Robertson and others have succeeded, to a great extent, in establishing an intimate connection between the Christian mystery drama and older similar dramas. Indeed, it has been shown that the cults of Osiris, Attis, Adonis, Dionysus, and Jesus are most vitally related, and have all had a kindred origin. Even Mosheim, in his *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, published in 1755, points out (p. 72, s. 5) that the Christian mysteries were derived from those of Eleusis, a town not far from Athens:—

Among the Greeks and the people of the East, nothing was held more sacred than what were called the Mysteries. This circumstance led the Christians, in order to impart dignity to their religion, to say that they also had similar mysteries, or certain holy rites concealed from the vulgar; and they not only applied the terms used in the Pagan mysteries to the Christian institutions, particularly baptism and the Lord's Supper, but they gradually introduced also the rites which were designated by those terms.

Little did Mosheim dream that from his honest admission the only legitimate inference was that the two sets of mysteries had the same essential origin, the only differences between them being due to geographical and environmental conditions.

Now, to return to our modern Anglican Church

dignitary. The Ven. E. E. Holmes, B.D., after declaring that the Bible puts its *imprimatur* upon pure drama, proceeds as follows:—

And the Bible's *imprimatur* is the Church's *nihil obstat*. For the Church, which places the Bible as a *vade mecum* in the hands of her children, teaches those children by Bible methods. She, too, has her drama—a drama which, at least in England, was gradually developed from her own services.

The archdeacon may be right so far as England is concerned, but the probability is that the mystery drama was performed in the primitive Church, particularly at large centres of population. Hints to that effect are to be found in the New Testament itself, especially in Galatians iii. 1. Whether dramatic performances were continuous throughout the early centuries or not we cannot tell; but let us heed what the archdeacon said to the actors:—

We see it (that the Church, too, has her drama) in her mediæval mystery plays—plays, *i.e.*, taken from Scriptural subjects, and probably so called from their original place among the ceremonies of the Mass. We see it in her miracle plays—plays based on post-Scriptural subjects, such as the lives of Saints and Martyrs, and acted first in church and then in the open air, as at some sacred well, by the parish clerks at "Clerkenwell." We see it in the morality, or moral plays, plays depicting the struggle for the soul by the allegorical figures of Virtue and Vice, always appealing to true human nature, to human nature as God means it to be, by making Virtue triumph over Vice—an appeal which holds its own even to-day, for it is at least doubtful whether the most eminent and fascinating actor or actress could make a lasting success of a play in which Vice was finally victorious.

We need accompany Mr. Holmes no further. To him there is drama in all his own Church services and ceremonies, in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, and Marriage. In truth, the Church was founded on drama, and all her services are dramatic performances, the clergy being the actors. The archdeacon discerns a close relationship between the theatre stalls and the choir stalls, "such as those in our own St Paul's and Westminster Abbey." The theatre "gods," patrons of the gallery, "do they not take us back to the days of Pagan religion, when the ceilings of theatres were embellished with representations of mythological deities, so that those who sat beneath them were said to be amongst the Gods." ? Having been so outspoken throughout the discourse, Mr. Holmes logically arrives at the following conclusion:—

I am not straining the point, or advocating Bible plays upon the ordinary stage, but merely reminding you that Church and Stage, religion and acting, had common life, common words, common interests in their early days, and should have now.

We are in agreement with that conclusion, but to us it is incomplete until we also assume that the stage has had fully as religious an origin as the Church. In ancient Greece people went to the theatre as an act of worship to the god Dionysus, just as to-day people go to church as an act of worship to the Christian Deity. In ancient Egypt the sufferings, death and resurrection of Osiris were enacted every year in a strange mystery play at Abydos. To witness that play was an act of worship; and by faithful and long continued worship the worshipper became transformed into the image of the God, saying, according to the *Book of the Dead*: "I clasp the sycamore tree, I myself am joined unto the sycamore tree, and its arms are opened unto me graciously," or "I have become a divine being by the side of the birth chamber of Osiris; I am brought forth with him, I renew my youth." Paul represents the worship of the Christian God as producing the identical effect. "I have been crucified with Christ," he says; "yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in

me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." In each of these three great religions, the Egyptian, Greek, and Christian, there is a mystery play in which the God is pictured as suffering, dying, and rising again for the salvation of the people, union with whom in his sufferings, death, and resurrection yields joy unspeakable and full of glory. Now, our contention is that each of these three religions is equally as true, or equally as false as the other two. We admit frankly that intense belief in any of them often affords a rich harvest of emotional bliss; but so does the taking of a powerful drug, but in neither case is the bliss wholesome. It is degrading rather than elevating to the nature. The joy of worship has the same effect upon the feelings as the joy of intoxication has upon the body. Emotional exaltation is beneficial only when it results from high and noble thinking. Lucretius knew this, and so did Shelley and Keats and Meredith by a most happy experience; and the same peace and contentment are within the reach of all, in their respective degrees, who resolve to live and serve by the rule of enlightened Reason.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Living Master of Literature.

Care I for the limb, the thews, the stature, bulk, and big assemblance of a man? Give me the spirit, Master Shallow.

—Shakespeare.

Your termes, your colours, and your figures,
Keep them in store, till so ye be indite
High Style, as when that men to kings write.

—Chaucer.

ONE hundred and six representative younger writers presented a birthday address of congratulation, together with a copy of the first edition of Keats's *Lamia*, to Mr. Thomas Hardy on his eighty-first birthday. It was happily done, for the veteran is the greatest living writer using the English language. After his early years of struggle, it is pleasant to think of the calm Indian summer of his age. Hailed everywhere as a master, he has had honours heaped upon him, from the tributes of contemporary authors to University degrees and the Order of Merit.

Mr. Hardy's present enviable position has been won after years of labour. His first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, bears date as far back as the "seventies" of the last century. Since that time his reputation has been steadily on the increase until he occupies the proud position of being able to dispense with praise or blame. From *Far from the Madding Crowd* to *Jude the Obscure*, his splendid range of novels compels attention. The characters, too, from Bathsheba to Sue Bridehead, seem taken from real life. The heroine, as in *Two on a Tower*, who woos a lover younger than herself, is frequent in these novels and in real experience. She is almost ignored by the circulating library writers, whose many books proclaim their industry rather than their ability. The women in Hardy's pages are not invariably charming, but they are very feminine, and their moods and whims are depicted by a master-hand. In his knowledge of "the concrete unknowable," Hardy is as wide and as true as Shakespeare, and as modern as Meredith. He is no less successful with his men; witness Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*; Dr. Fitzpiers in *The Woodlanders*; Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; Angel Clare in *Tess*; or the hero in *Jude the Obscure*.

Over his works Mr. Hardy has sown broadcast the most delightful, ironical humour. Not one of his rustics, of his working-class folk, but has a special originality, a native pleasantry, and a cast of drollery. Few writers have strewed over their works such

abundant irony. In one of the greatest of his novels, *The Return of the Native*, the chapter in which he introduces the characters bears the heading, "Humanity appears on the scene hand in hand with trouble." In his masterpiece, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the dramatic effect of the tragedy is heightened by the grim comment:—

"Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Æschylean phrase, has ended his sport with Tess.

A master of the lash, Hardy is as fertile as Heine, as detached as Gibbon, as acidulated as Renan. Dubbed pessimist, there is no lack of comedy in his novels. *The Hand of Ethelberta*, that most whimsical story, is full of humour. *The Laodicean* is inspired with the highest comedy. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, written in his sunniest mood, is saturated with the comic spirit. From the opening description of Gabriel Oak's smile to the ringing down of the curtain, it is a joy to anyone who possesses taste and perception enough to discriminate between a Molièresque humour and a riotous Charlie Chaplin farce.

Mr. Hardy is no less successful as a short-story writer. Indeed, his mastery is unchallengeable. If *Wessex Tales* and *Life's Little Ironies* had been written by a Continental artist, they would have been acclaimed to the skies. They are as perfect as anything by Daudet or Maupassant, and reveal far more delicate and faultless work than any of the Russian or Scandinavian writers.

What shapes arise as you recall Mr. Hardy's finest work? Not sawdust dolls, not shadows, but full-blooded creations moving in a living world, instinct with the fire of life. Where in all contemporary literature is there nobler work than the poignant scene of the bridal night in *Tess*; or that other showing the dying Jude and the choristers; or the quiet figure of the bereaved girl in the closing scene of *The Woodlanders*, as wonderful a piece of art as Millet's painting of the Angelus? In these is struck the consummate tragic note, as in the old Æschylus and our own Shakespeare. They wring the heart like personal experience. For they are life sublimed by passing through an imagination of uncommon force.

The attentive reader cannot fail to note the essential Secularism in these admirable novels and stories. Even in the earlier books, amid their picturesque colour, their delightful atmosphere, their delicious pastoral scents and sounds, we find a frank and free Paganism. As the author advances in reputation, and grows in intellectual power, the note deepens, until, in *Tess*, it grows into a cry of defiance, and, finally, in *Jude the Obscure*, a great sob of pain.

It is a further proof of Mr. Hardy's many-sided genius that he has also achieved success in poetry, no less than in prose. As he gets older he turns more and more readily to the muses, and writes with all the zest and enthusiasm of a young poet beginning his career instead of a veteran who has enriched the literature of Europe with masterpieces for two generations. His poetic masterpiece, *The Dynasts*, alone would have made the reputation of a lesser man. And, be it noted, his poetry has the same intellectual outlook as his prose. Humanity is limned against a remorseless background:—

Meanwhile the winds and rains,
And earth's old glooms and pains,
Are still the same, and Death and glad life neighbours
nigh.

It is enough to-day to hope that Thomas Hardy may long remain our living Master of Literature. For, as his brother writers remind him in the birthday address, he has always written in the high style, and he has crowned a great prose with a noble poetry. By his genius he has added a wondrous chamber to the house beautiful of art.

MIMNERMUS.

The Myth of Jesus.

The Christian religion was not founded on a man but on a divinity; that is, a mythical character. So far from being derived from the model man, the typical Christ was made up from the features of various Gods, after a fashion somewhat like those "pictorial averages" portrayed by Mr. Galton in which the traits of several persons are photographed and fused in a portrait of a dozen different persons, merged into one that is not anybody, and as fast as the composite Christ falls to pieces, each feature is claimed, each character is gathered up by the original owner, as with the grasp of gravitation. It is not I that deny the divinity of Jesus the Christ, I assert it! He never was, and never could be, any other than a divinity; that is, a character non-human, and entirely mythical, who had been the pagan divinity of various pagan myths, that had been pagan during thousands of years before our Era.—Gerald Massey, "The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ," p. 9.

We often hear it said that the story of Jesus is so beautiful and so realistic that it is impossible to believe that it is only a work of fiction, an invention no better than a fairy tale. But the fact that a story reads realistic is no proof that the story really happened, it merely proves the art of the story-teller. What story could be more realistic than the story of *Robinson Crusoe*, by Daniel Defoe. None of our modern novelists can approach Defoe in realism, and few can hold the attention more absorbingly, it will rejoice the youth of coming generations until printing and reading cease to be, yet Defoe spun the whole story out of his own brain. No one would have the slightest hesitation in accepting the story of *Robinson Crusoe* as a genuine historical narrative if they were not informed of the true facts of the case. As a boy the present writer firmly believed in Defoe's story, and when informed that it was a work of imagination, thought that somehow his informant must be mistaken.

Take, again, the case of William Tell, the Swiss patriot. Everybody is familiar with the story of the father, with an arrow, shooting the apple from his son's head to regain his freedom, and most people believe it really happened, yet it is a pure myth, and the only piece of Swiss history with which most people are acquainted never happened. It used to be taught in the Swiss state schools, but we know now that it is only a fairy tale, because it has been traced back to other countries and other heroes long before the time when Tell is said to have lived. The Swiss government itself has recognized the legendary character of the story and has removed it from the school history books.

Moreover, it is not claimed that some person or persons entered into a conspiracy to invent the story of Jesus and foist it upon the world as a genuine history. Religions do not arise in that way. The Gospels are a growth; they remind one of the lead trees of our young days, which we made by putting branches of wire in a bottle and filling up with a mixture of water and sugar of lead—if I remember rightly—which crystalizing on the wire produced the effect of a beautiful mineral tree. In like manner the story of Jesus has grown by process of accretion. As we have seen in previous articles, all the main incidents of the Gospel story of Jesus had been told of mythical gods of the past; our concern now is with the nucleus around which this mass of myth crystallized. Is the Jesus of the Gospels an historical character or a pure myth?

In undertaking an investigation of this kind most of us are heavily handicapped at the start. The great majority of us are taught during the earliest and most impressionable period of life to believe implicitly and unquestioningly that Jesus Christ lived upon the earth and experienced all the things recorded in the Gospels under penalty of punishment in a future life if we depart from this belief. In addition, we are taught to

look up to Jesus as the ideal character, the most perfect man of all the myriads born upon this planet. This view of Jesus continues with most people for the rest of their lives, a subject much too sacred to be subjected to the criticism and reasoning applied to worldly subjects, to say nothing of the risk of future punishment if you do not arrive at orthodox conclusions. If *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Arabian Nights* were taught under similar conditions, they, too, would be believed, and apologists would be found to explain away the incredible and miraculous elements in those stories just the same as they do with the contents of the Gospels.

The early or primitive age of Christianity is always represented by apologists of that faith as being the golden age of Christianity, an age of innocence, of pure faith, when heresy was unknown, of pure morals when all Christians lived together in love and charity. There was no such age, it is as much a myth as the fabled island of Atlantis, or Utopia. From the very commencement Christianity abounded with heresy and immorality. We need not go outside the New Testament for the proof. In the Epistles, which were written before the Gospels, Paul himself complains of those who preach "another gospel," and "pervert the gospel of Christ"; he exhorts his followers that even if "an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 6-9). Even the Apostles were divided, for when Peter came to Antioch, says Paul, "I withstood him to the face" (Gal. ii. 11). He complains, "everyone of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ" (1 Cor. i. 12). And again, "there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions" (1 Cor. iii. 3). That they "go to law one with another" (1 Cor. vi. 7). Of "drunkenness at the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. xi. 21).

The Rev. Baring-Gould says: "English Churchmen have long gazed with love on the primitive Church as the ideal of Christian perfection." But now, he proceeds, "criticism has put a lens to our eyes, and discloses to us on the shining, remote face of primitive Christianity rents and craters undreamt of in our old simplicity."¹

Further on the same writer observes:—

The converts of St. Paul, in their eagerness to manifest their emancipation from the Law, rolled up ceremonial and moral restrictions in one bundle and flung both clean away.

The Corinthians, to show their freedom under the Gospel, boasted their licence to commit incest "such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles" (1 Cor. v. 2). Nicolas, a hot Pauline, and his followers "rushed headlong into fornication without shame" (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 29) he had the effrontery to produce his wife and offer her for promiscuous insult before the assembled apostles; the later Pauline Christians went further.²

But it is not so much the morality of the first Christians that concerns us at present as their heresies. As the learned and acute author of *Primitive Church History* remarks:—

Christianity came into the world amidst a whirlwind of heresy, insubordination, schism, and controversy. It may be, but we do not know, that there was a time when the original founder of Christianity, whoever he was, had not any followers. If so, then, there was a time when the whole Christian Church was of one mind. Of course, to this time we cannot assign any certain date, and it is quite possible that it may not have had any existence. And unless it can be shown that there has been such a time, these controversies prove that there never was in the Church any universally received account of Jesus

¹ Rev. Baring-Gould, *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, pp. 6-7.

² Rev. Baring-Gould, *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, p. 26.

Christ: the idea of him was a myth from the beginning.³

Another glaring contradiction lies in the fact that although Paul is one of the earliest preachers of Christianity outside of Palestine, yet everywhere he meets with communities of Christians already in existence. In Antioch, in Ephesus, in Corinth, in Athens, in Thessaly, in Galatia, in Rome itself. The fact is that Christianity first saw the light in these cities among the Hellenized Jews who had, more or less, loosed themselves from the bonds of the Jewish temple and the Jewish Law. That is why the writers of the Epistles are so little concerned with Jerusalem. The adoption of Jerusalem as the cradle of the faith was a later invention. If we wish to find the origin of Christianity we must seek for it among the so-called heresies of early Christianity.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

Buddhism and the God-Idea.

BUDDHISM is often described as an Atheistic religion. Some people deny its right to be called a religion at all because it does not rely upon "divine" revelation or inspiration. But the word religion is derived from the Latin *religo*—to bind together, so that anything which affords a common bond for a common end may be called a religion.

The attitude of Buddhism towards the god-idea and the "gods" is, perhaps, unique. Whilst not denying the existence of beings other than man, on "planes" of being other than earth, Buddhism has no special regard for them. The gods referred to in the Buddhist (Pali) writings are those of the Hindus, and their only purpose there is to point a moral or to adorn a tale, merely as popular and familiar illustrations at the time and place. The gods are regarded as well-meaning, but rather stupid. Our old friend Yahveh falls into the same category, though we cannot be sure whether he is well-meaning. At any rate, he is not nearly so estimable as some of the gods of the Higher Brahmaloeka (the heaven-world of Brahma). When the missionaries bring out this old reprobate for the admiration of the benighted heathen they, who have heard about so many other gods, know exactly where to place him.

Buddhism is the one religion in the world that deserves the consideration of the Freethinker, for the reason that it does not ask anyone to believe anything, but to test all views by reason, experience and common-sense.

A certain man came to the Buddha and said: "Every priest extols his belief as the only true one, and condemns that of others as false. I am worried by doubts. I do not know whom to believe."

The Buddha answered: "Thy doubts are well founded: listen well to my words. Do not believe anything on mere hearsay: do not believe traditions because they are old and have been handed down through many generations; do not believe anything on account of rumours, or because people talk a great deal about it; do not believe simply because the written testimony of some ancient sage is shown to thee; never believe anything because presumption is in its favour, or because the custom of many years leads thee to regard it as true; do not believe anything on the mere authority of thy teachers or priests. Whatever, according to thine own experience, and after thorough investigation, agrees with thy reason, and is conducive to thine own welfare and to that of other living beings, that accept as truth and shape thy life accordingly."

This is the true Buddhist attitude of mind towards all things in heaven and earth.

A host of questions will now be hurled at my devoted head by those who have read books written on Buddhism by non-Buddhists. My reply is: Forget them. Most of the books written upon Buddhism in English are not worth the paper they are printed on.

A host of other questions will be projected by those who have travelled in Buddhist countries. Forget all that also. There are many beliefs held by those who profess and call themselves Buddhists in the East which do not belong to Buddhism at all.

Buddhism does not take the trouble to deny these beliefs about gods, devas (angels), nats (nature spirits), and so forth. It says, in effect: Well, what about them? If they exist, they are beings. That is to say, they are limited in time and space. They have their arising, passing away, and re-arising, just as man has.

If a man thinks that the worship of a god, or the propitiation of "spirits" does him any good, let him get on with it. But they are more likely to be a nuisance than otherwise. He would be better advised if he would stand on his own feet and rely upon himself. Such adventitious aids may be all very well for feeble and undeveloped minds, just as crutches are for cripples. But it is far better for a man to cultivate self-reliance and let the "gods" look after their own affairs.

Respect and reverence for the memory of a great teacher, such as the Buddha, paid in a rational manner, is another matter. But prayers and sacrifices to gods, or saints, or "spirits," are just so much waste of time and energy which would be better employed in more useful ways.

Buddhism has regard to humanity, not to deity. It teaches that, whilst man is on earth, his interest should be here and now. The "hereafter" can very well be left until we get there—if we do—wherever it may be. Buddhism has no concern with "the beginning of things," because no answer to that question is attainable by the finite human mind. Nor is there any teaching about "creation."

But we do know that whatever is, or whatever happens, is the result of causes. Every man, at any given moment, is the exact result of his past causation, and this causation is to be found within himself. We are what we have made ourselves. Never mind about the conundrums of heredity. What was the cause of that heredity? Looking back over our past life, and considering the present result, we shall (if we think clearly enough, and if memory serves) realize that we are what we are as the result of our own doings, of our own thoughts and words and deeds. What we shall be will be the result partly of what we have done in the past and partly of what we are doing now. Whatever we think, or say, or do, produces its exact reflex upon ourselves, and shapes what we call our character and our disposition. It is the same with the mind as with the body. Practice makes more or less perfect in the exercise of both. Many a man of weakly constitution has become robust as the result of proper physical exercise. It is the same with the mind. Of course, there are persons hopelessly diseased and deformed from birth, just as there are mental imbeciles. But the cripple and the cretin both have their causation for being what they are, going back to before this particular life. This question must wait for discussion in the next article.

But, in any case, the "gods" have nothing to do with it.

E. UPASAKA.

We talk of religion. Let us talk of truth; for that which is not truth is not worthy the name of religion.—Thomas Paine.

³ L'Estrange, *Primitive Church History*, pp. 32-33.

Acid Drops.

It seems almost impossible to cure some people of the cant that the world has never seen Christianity, but that it must have it if it is to realize social salvation. Thus, Mr. Gerald Gould, who writes for the *Daily Herald*, remarks in the course of an article on Mr. H. G. Wells:—

It would be a good idea, as I know you will agree, to give Christianity a trial. You do, indeed, speak.....as if Christianity had exercised a wide influence on human history. I know this view is popularly held, but I have never been able to understand it. I have never heard of any considerable body of men who have ever seriously thought of trying Christianity. And yet if we do not try it what is all our education going to lead to.

Now if that is the measure of the intellectual ability that is guiding the labour movement, there is small wonder that it so often finds itself so ineffective. For there is nothing here better or stronger than the ordinary theologian fighting for what he conceives to be that religious nightmare "genuine Christianity." It is the type of intellect that in the seventeenth century set the members of the House of Commons fighting over points of doctrine when they should have been attending to their proper business. It is responsible for all the quarrels of the Christian sects, and is as likely to bring anything really worth having to the working classes of this country as is a discussion of the habitability of Mars.

The only reason that Mr. Gould has for denying that Christianity has exerted an influence on history is that he does not agree with the forms of Christianity that history has known, and that, we repeat, is not the spirit of the historical student, but of the religious bigot impressed with the sense of his own religious convictions. All the curious sects with which history is acquainted were equally certain of the genuineness of their interpretation, and the larger and more powerful Churches had the same conviction. And, after all, the command to obey without question the commands of the established powers, whether they be good or bad, is part of Christian teaching. It was not really so much in their social and ethical teaching that the Churches departed from the New Testament as it was in many of the doctrines they elaborated. They were not departing from the spirit of Christianity in teaching that the slave had no right to revolt, that this life was of small account, that poverty was a blessing, and meekness the cardinal virtue. And if they did not live up to it, nor did the world, the fault really lay in attempting to apply to social life teachings that could only be applicable to a selected few leading the life of Eastern religious ascetics.

But does that do away with the nonsense of talking of Christianity never being tried. Christianity is, after all, anybody's Christianity, for it is all a matter of interpretation. When two men, or a dozen, take up the new Testament and each draws therefrom a different lesson, it is mere sectarian arrogance for each to accuse the other of not having the "true" doctrine of salvation. What is true Christianity has never been agreed upon yet and never will be, and the Church's trouble came chiefly from its attempt to try and force an agreement where, apart from force, no agreement was possible. And we defy Mr. Gould to give a definition of Christianity that will not merely fail to satisfy Christians, but it will fail to satisfy even those of his own party who, like himself, prefer vague religious yearnings, couched in nebulous language, to clear and definite expressions that may land him in trouble with those of the dear clergy who are coquetting with the Labour movement—which movement ought to offer up a daily prayer—"From all parsons and parson-kins, Good Lord deliver us."

Christian civilization is a fearful and a wonderful thing and a sidelight comes from Aldershot. During the hearing of a number of education summonses, it was stated that one case was of parents who had nineteen children, twelve of whom were dependent. Lack of bread and boots were the causes of non-attendance, some of the children

having to wait for others to come home before they could wear boots. The Bench wisely refused to inflict a fine, saying bread was more important than education.

At a Margate church a recent collection included one farthing, 204 halfpennies, and 550 pennies. A cinema proprietor would have apoplexy if confronted with such a balance-sheet.

Defenders of the Benevolent Design Argument will find food for thought in the fact that over 3,000 rats have been destroyed by the East Kent rat exterminator since the beginning of the year. "He doeth all things well."

There are one hundred more army chaplains than there were before the war. Sir John Rees asked in the House of Commons whether the Army needed praying for more now than before the war? but was told that they were necessary. We wonder what for. Is it to tell the men to turn one cheek when the other was smitten? We feel quite sure that there is no demand for them on the part of the men, and it would not be bad if the government made a start in economising by cutting down the number of parsons. But once an official always an official seems the rule of this government; and even when an office is abandoned the staff is nearly all taken on in some other department. And the clergy are never backward when there are jobs about.

During the war among the many promises made was that the question of Church parade should be gone into, and there was a veiled hint that it might be abolished. Since the war ended we have heard nothing of that. It has been lost among the scraps of paper which had written on them so many other promises that were made. Surely it is time that the government had the decency to treat soldiers as grown ups, and refrained from marching them to church by order. There is no doubt whatever that if the soldiers had their choice in the matter Church parades would abolish themselves. Outside the Army the attempt to make men religious by regulation has long since been given up. The Army would be none the worse if the same policy were adopted with it.

From the *Co-operative News* we learn that at a Labour demonstration in Manchester on June 4 one of the banners carried in the procession bore as a motto the lines,—

Shake your chains to earth like dew,
Ye are many, they are few.

At a time when clerics of all denominations find so much in common between the ideals of Christianity and Labour, we congratulate the organization which went to Shelley's "Men of England" for its motto, which is entirely at variance with the principle of turning the other cheek to the smiter. The Labour movement in England to-day is not conspicuous for its readiness to give credit for pioneer service to great Freethinkers, to men like Paine, Shelley, Owen, Godwin, Place, and a host of others. It is so much more respectable to enlist in the cause "Jesus, the divine democrat."

The late Rev. H. H. Winwood, of Bath, left £61,509; the late Rev. J. de la Bere, of Hove, Sussex, left £20,617. They have both gone to the dreadful place they used to preach about. This is because they disregarded their Master's instruction, and laid up for themselves treasure on earth.

Good music and singing are all very well, but suppose someone attended and found they were still teaching the same old doctrines that did duty in the Middle Ages—the doctrine of the Fall and the Atonement by the blood of Christ—with a devil still lurking about seeking whom he might devour, and wrote a letter of protest, would the good pastor recognize that he was still asleep in these matters? We doubt it.

The Rochester Diocesan Conference has passed a resolution urging that the question of Sunday games should be

reconsidered by the Church. Since Sunday recreation has been advocated for generations by Freethinkers, the Rochester church people cannot be said to be in a very violent hurry.

A new novel bears the arresting title of *Satan*. Let us hope it is devilish good.

The Rev. S. Norton, president of the Primitive Methodist Conference, says that the reason why Churches did not make converts was that there was nobody to convert. They were coddling saints instead of converting sinners. If this be true, it means the beginning of the end of Primitive Methodism.

Mr. Norman Angell says that if two hundred eminent men could only be got to say publicly what they are now saying privately about the general situation the state of Europe would rapidly improve. We quite agree with him, and it applies to more things than politics. It applies, above all, to such a thing as religion. There are large numbers of prominent men in this country who have no more faith in the current religion than we have. But they either do not say so publicly, or they say it in such a way as to make their saying of small value. Privately, it is not so difficult to get them to express their opinions on religion and on the influence of the Churches, but when it comes to public life then we have all sorts of hypocrisies practised for the sake of appearances. If the number of eminent men and women in this country who do not believe in Christianity had but the moral courage to say so quite openly and without reservation, the position of Christianity in this country would be gone for ever.

Outside a large Chapel in a main road in Peckham, the following announcement appears.

Some unsolicited Testimonials.

A Visitor writes: "The Brightest services I have attended for twenty years. I used to be a oncer, but now I attend twice on Sundays. The singing and music are splendid. I enjoyed them very much. The Church is really, really waking up!"

The editors of newspapers and the periodical press do not often throw flowers at Freethinkers. It is with pleasure that we notice that the *Daily Graphic* recently referred to the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson as "a writer of international fame," and that *John o'London's Weekly* complimented Sir E. Ray Lankester on his being one of the foremost of living scientists.

The Bishop of Norwich, who is a bachelor, has been airing his ideas concerning "flashy girls." A celibate ecclesiastic should be a good judge of such a subject.

We have received from the Inter-Racial Rights Association a lengthy account of "outrages" committed by Greek soldiers on the Turks against whom they are fighting. The charges include rape and other outrages on women, besides the murder of civilians, the cutting off of ears, etc., which are among the usual amenities where religion and warfare get mixed up together. We are not in the least surprised at receiving the account, war was always bad enough, it has now become a contest in sheer brutality with all engaged in it. One by one the denounced brutalities of one war become the recognized and legitimate features of the next, and the people at large are not yet civilized enough to say to their rulers that the game must be stopped and the method of settling disputes by the insensate plan of killing one of the disputants, and trusting to another one to take it up, put an end to.

The *Guardian* (June 24), quoting some details from the *Freie Kirchenstimmen*, throws some instructive light on the position of the Roman Catholic Church in parts of Europe. In the new republic, Czecho-Slovakia, the secessions from the Church shown by last year's census number about one million, being a sixth of the Catholic

population. These seceders go in varying proportion to the new National Church, Protestantism and to no religion. The Roman Catholic clergymen who have seceded number 171, of whom 110 have entered secular callings. In German-Austria secessions are also reported. In the diocese of Salzburg alone they numbered more than 70 in the first two months of the present year.

This revolt against Rome and her authority in what used to constitute a considerable part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire deserves notice. It shows the very close association of despotism and superstition. The Habsburgs and their satellites were among the most oppressive enemies of human freedom in the whole of Europe. They were the historic foes of free thought and free institutions, and their chief instrument in giving effect to their oppression was the Roman Catholic Church. All over Europe the changed political conditions have vastly reduced ecclesiastical authority. The so-called Catholic Revival in England is something of a novelty just now; but to those who are listening to its appeal we commend the above facts. After all, "the wounds of reason" are nothing to the wounds of superstition.

The *Guardian* publishes a sermon on "Religion in the University," by Rev. G. B. Allen, B.D., of Oxford. The preacher admits that at present "external indications are hardly encouraging" to churchmen. "To a casual observer at least they would certainly seem to point to a decay of faith." Surely, an intelligent reading of the daily press, and what it records of the official Church and her dignitaries, would never produce this conviction.

The *Evening Standard* (June 22) publishes a condensed report of an address to the clergy by the Bishop of St. Albans, in which it is frankly but pathetically declared that "modern civilization" is turning a deaf ear to Christianity. If this is true, could anything be more hypocritical than the maintenance of Christianity as the official religion? The Bible in State schools, official Church attendances by mayors and councillors, church property exempt from taxation, parliament opened with prayer, renewed efforts to make Sunday a close preserve for the Church—all these indications are "external" enough to satisfy the most exacting. But there is no vital sap within to respond to the "externals."

The late Rev. T. W. Lee, for nearly fifty years vicar of Leafeld, Oxfordshire, left £13,528. It is a fine example of clerical poverty.

The vicar of Teddington considers that some of the "Hymns, Ancient and Modern" are not above criticism, especially with regard to literary form. If the reverend gentleman reads the letterpress with more attention he may discover that the ideas expressed in the hymns are quite unsuited to a civilized country. They savour too much of Bongo Bongo Land.

You.

- YOU can help us by introducing the *Freethinker* to your friends and acquaintances.
- YOU can help us by inducing your newsagent to display a copy in his window or paper-rack.
- YOU can help by leaving your copy, when read, in train, or tram, or 'bus.
- YOU can help by taking an extra copy and posting it to a likely subscriber.
- YOU can help by sending us the name and address of anyone whom you think would care to receive a copy.
- YOU can help in other ways, which your own ingenuity will suggest, to make the *Freethinker* a greater power in the land, and a more potent factor in the cause of enlightenment and progress.

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. W. MALCOLMSON.—Received and shall appear at an early date.

T. ROBERTS.—Pleased to hear of the success of Mr. Whitehead's lectures. It is quite inexcusable to bowdlerize Ingersoll. We could tell you what the missing passages are if you would indicate where your own copy stops.

A. G. STENHOUSE.—It is, as you say, a delicate situation, and we hardly know what to say in the matter. Perhaps the best way is to approach the question from the point of view of the child, who is, after all, the principal party concerned. Has a parent the right to give to a child teachings as quite true, which he or she must admit may be wrong? In such a case is it not carrying out one's duty to a child more intelligently to train the child to use its capacity in the best way, leaving it to select whatever it pleases in the shape of speculative ideas when it is old enough to do so? To act otherwise seems like taking advantage of the child's helplessness. Some forbearance must, of course, be shown on both sides.

J. HALLWELL.—We could not advise you as to the best means of disposing of the painting of Paine without seeing the picture. We have no objection to advertising the picture in the *Freethinker* if you desire it.

G. P.—Sorry, we cannot insert the advertisement you send. Times are so bad that if we did so we should have scores of similar advertisements sent, and as we should have to stop them in the end we might as well do so at the beginning.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—A. C. Boers (Cheribon), 2s. 3d.

SEPT.—Thanks for calling our attention to the matter. But the paper leaves here at the same time as usual. Perhaps the delay is due to alterations in the train service owing to the coal dispute.

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.

One of our friends who is anxious to help the *Freethinker* has made himself responsible for the cost of a good advertisement of the *Freethinker* in the *Thanet Gazette*. He and others will be glad to learn that we have had a number of applications for specimen copies of the paper as a consequence of the advertisement, and that is certain to mean new subscribers. Another friend in America has also adopted the same plan with the *Salt Lake Telegram*. We shall expect good results from that also. We thank both of them.

This is an excellent way of helping the paper, and the help comes at a time when we can well do with it. As everyone knows, the publishing business is now in a

worse state than it has been for many years. The state of trade, with the enormous number of unemployed, has reduced people's expenditure on books and pamphlets to a minimum, and for the first time since the death of Mr. Foote we have to record declining sales. We have no doubt but that the decline will be temporary only, but all the same we have to face it while it lasts, and when one has to face a decline, however small, with a business that is always being run at a loss, it does not make for ease of mind. The situation is not without its encouraging features, and one is that the decline in business has not been anything like what one might have expected from the state of the country. And things must brighten again one day.

Mr. Whitehead's tour in South Wales continues to yield very satisfactory results, and it is likely that he will pay the district another visit before the season is over. This may or may not follow the visit that is already on. But we should like our friends all over the country to seriously do what they can to make the experiment quite successful. The experiment of sending round a lecturer for an open-air campaign is not a cheap one, and we wish to see every possible use made of Mr. Whitehead while he is available. Provided the experiment receives the proper support there is no reason why it should not be extended and with more than one speaker. There is plenty to be done before the conversion of Britain is complete.

Just as we are going to press we learn that arrangements have been made for Mr. Whitehead to visit Leeds. He will lecture there for a week, beginning Monday, July 4. Northern friends please note.

The Birmingham Branch is holding its annual picnic to-day (July 3). Members and friends are invited to meet at the tram terminus near Dudley Station at 11.30. The picnic is to be at Kinner, but members are left to suit themselves in getting from Birmingham to Dudley. Tea is to be at the Café Royal, Kinner, at 4 o'clock. Price 1s 4d.

The following passage from a speech of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's in the House of Commons on the freedom of the Press is well worth noting to-day. "Give me," he said, "a corrupt House of Lords, give me a venal House of Commons, give me a tyrannical Prince, give me a truckling Court, but give me an unfettered Press, and I will defy them to encroach a hair's breadth upon the liberties of England." That is a sentiment we have often expressed, and for that reason have felt the more the many fetters that have been placed on the Press of late years. Nowadays, when papers are so much the slave of the advertiser, when combines own whole groups of papers, and the particular "stunt" that is worked off on a credulous public is dictated by the ambitions of a single man, and when papers are bought up if they happen to show signs of independence, the Press is free only in name. Legal attempts to fetter the Press may be easily defeated, it is the other and more sinister method that is really powerful. And it is the eclipse of the Press that paves the way for so much of the evil that is being done to-day.

The Bride of Christ Goes on Strike.

The following is translated from the Czech newspaper the *Havlicek* by M. Hins in *La Pensée*.

"A REVOLUTION has just broken out in the Convent of the Sisters of the Order of St. Charles Borromeo at Prague. The sisters have forwarded to Kordatchof, Archbishop of Prague, a memorandum which formulates the following requirements: the abrogation of obsolete rules; reduction of the working day to eight hours; the establishment of a council of the sisters with the right to control the interior economy of the convent; liberty of elections of the community; suppression of the censorship of letters; abolition of the authorized uniform; better food; right to leave the cloister and to have a fixed pecuniary indemnity assured to them."

Even the nuns are chipping in!

J. L.

Three Phases: Or, What Is, Was, and May Be.

I.

UNLESS Fortune has smiled on you, locality is a post to which you are tied by the rope of necessity. Rich men and beggars are democrats in the sense that both may move about the country with a freedom denied to others. However, travel or stay at home, we cannot get away from ourselves and others, and, whoever was the author of the saying that the Kingdom of Heaven is within you, uttered words of wisdom and universal free thought—and incidentally pricked the bubble of bathos in the home for little children above the bright blue skies.

The Elephant and Castle is a place of refreshment surrounded by tram lines. The name itself is used to describe a well-known part of the Metropolis. In this South-East district of London there is tragedy, comedy and no home for the design argument in its beneficent and generally accepted sense. Here it was that Spurgeon preached Hell Fire; it was utterly superfluous. It was gratuitous insult to any condemned to live in the mean streets that lie about leading to nowhere. We have no statistics of the result of Spurgeon's efforts, but Hell Fire, having no existence except in the brain of one born several centuries too late, would be hardly any change from the present life. Sincerity is not everything; threats of hell cannot change environment. The hands of men have built the confused jumble of big and little houses cheek by jowl with stables, garages, and warehouses—the whole not as lovely as a shark's teeth, or the proboscis of the Tsetse-Fly. It is impossible and at the same time offensive patronage to pity the dwellers in this gentile ghetto; one can only stand in wonderment and admiration for them. In narrow streets horizons are made by housetops; in the New Forest, on Surrey Hills, in North Cornwall, in the Lake District, or on the Yorkshire moors, or in a meadow of buttercups and lady's smocks, anywhere, the beauty of earth enables us to say "one thing at a time." Of what avail are prayers in Churches to slum owning landlords? Intellectual bankruptcy lies at the back of the twaddle contained in the line about the home for little children. The line itself is an indictment of the subtlety called Christianity. We could respect the subtlety of truth, but the subtlety of Christianity is like a spider's web marked by the dead bodies of flies.

Here in the hideous environment of the Elephant and Castle the shadows of men, women, and children pass and repass, and God knew that the ugly and squalid houses surrounded by thundering traffic would, one day, encumber the earth in the name of civilization. He knew this when the guilty pair were forced from the paradise of Eden. On this hot afternoon a small boy is pushing the wheels of a perambulator backwards and forwards over a herring's head thrown into the street. A pack of shrieking urchins are jumping round a dusty little frog hopping on the pavement. A woman doomed to bearing children is frightened by this little creature snatched from some country pond. A cat flies in terror from a piece of paper blown by the wind. It scrambles up a post and digs its claws into the wood. This juxtaposition of the human and animal kingdom. This aimlessness. This scheme of things divine.

II.

Four hundred years before Christ, if your imagination will carry you to Athens, you will see a little ugly man. He is disputatious. His pulpit is wherever man would argue with him; it is not six feet above con-

tradiction. His subjects are truth, virtue, and justice, and a knowledge of consequences. In his 70th year we should see him, after having peeled life of illusions, in the same way that one may peel an onion until there is nothing left. This little ugly man is condemned to die and taken to prison. His friends have arranged for his escape, but he refuses his liberty—he will drink the cup of poison and submit to the law of Athens. There is no record of a request to let the cup pass from him. Blind fool! what tempted him to meddle with such subjects as truth, virtue, and justice?

III.

It was in the year 1941, twenty years after the break up of a newspaper civilization. Christianity had been divorced from the State, and the repeated failure of action to conform with speech had banished all trust in any people who spoke of the next world. The black and yellow races had rejected all the old European values; the United States of Europe had at last taken its rightful place as the Head of the World, but not until it had dropped the barbaric weapons of gun-powder and gin. Cleverness was not regarded as any qualification for a statesman. Power, which had been centralized into a few hands, such as financiers, who controlled governments, who controlled newspapers, who controlled the community, this power had been scattered, or diffused, to small representative bodies. Anyone afflicted with lust of power was treated for a disease, and they, as a sign of being cured, wandered about, saying, "What wise man desires power?" The Churches had suffered the greatest purgation of all. With temporal things they had no connection; with spiritual affairs they still continued to be interested among a small and decreasing membership. Many people had left the Churches, as a readjustment of society rendered it unnecessary to belong to these bodies in order to get trade, contracts, and other business. Many also had seen that it was possible to live a spiritual life outside any church; nay, what was spirituality but a contraction of desires? The deciding factor in the downfall of the Church was brought about by two Q's. A small body of men had energetically advocated "Quality not Quantity." The yellow races had seen the idea quickly; all the world knew more about physiology than dead languages. All the world saw the folly of obeying commands made to a nomadic tribe two thousand years B.C., and this, with the transference of power from the hands of financiers, hit the Churches in a most vital part. They had to stand on their merits.

If you stood on Holborn Viaduct and looked towards the south you would see smiling fields, with cottages that seemed to be a natural part of the landscape. On a hill you would see the figure of a white elephant with a castle on its back; the white elephant was a symbol of progress for twenty-five per cent. The figure has no eyes but has a stomach as big as the dome of St. Paul's. It was erected in memory of a civilization that clothed its children in garments that you would not buy for a penny, and its ships carried away cotton and woollen clothes to foreign countries.

And if, reader, you agree with Hegel that thinking is divine service, and that the destiny of mankind is something that must not be reckoned in terms of twenty-five per cent., your children shall dwell in the land where bastard progress propelled by the greed of a few shall be no more. In the land shall they dwell where the croak of the priest will be as the croak of a raven, in the land where the fragments of beauty shall be gathered together, where life shall be a gift instead of a curse, where your children shall find,

No enemy,
But winter and rough weather.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Whin Blossom.

OH to be in England, now that April's here, sighed the poet, and certainly, in this North country the scene, in early Summer or late Spring, is beautiful beyond description. The great transformation scene is being enacted while we gaze and wonder and adore. Slowly, tentatively, as it were, the multitudinous leaves are putting forth, a thousand shapes with but a single plan. Sprays of tenderest, sweetest green are smiling in the dark surrounding, and background, of hedge and copse, in still ravines, over rocky channels and their tinkling streams. The arch of the grey bridge is tufted with grass and shrub and yellow dandelion above the amber pool, forming a sweet grotto of infinite delight. The watercourses curve and wind in treeless fields of virgin green. There are primroses on the banks, daisies, pink and white, on the lawns, and the sweetly modest wild violet raises its blue eye in unassuming piety to the sun from the hedgerow's shade. The hedge itself is thickening fast, beguiling the fancy of the saddest traveller on foot or wheel. Even if there is "nought beyond, oh earth," is it not good to be alive, to be in Scotland now that May is come? The earth is fertile and beautiful as ever, constant, conservative and liberal, in this contrast nought but man is vile, and not all men, not even the majority, but a pushful few, who, to be dressed in a little brief authority, have scrambled into the seats of power from whence they rule the world—not because they are fitted to rule, indeed, but because they were best fitted to win through in the modern vulgar scramble for place and power—because they were shallow but strong persons, energetic but ignorant, dazzled by the prizes of a petty ambition, by the hollow and pretentious eminence, the impertinent and contemptible domination of the bully born and bred—self seekers to a man, opportunists to the last—consciously moral and exalted people, unconsciously immoral, dealers in force and fraud, subterfuge and compromise, sham, hypocrisy, and humbug—in all that goes to form the average politician, all resulting in the state of things the world has lately suffered from, and is suffering still,

All for the glory of a king,
Or some such useless abstract thing.

We may call it revolution if we will, but rational, humane, enlightened men—who I believe are in the majority, even in this mad world—must at last get those war makers by the gorge, and say: "We are tired of your heroics, this must end them."

All of which is a digression, but the excusable obsession of every human being who feels and reasons and reflects, who takes the longer, which is always the shorter, truer view, who is no longer one of those fatalistic fools who learn nothing and forget nothing, of whom it was said:—

No one looks backward, onward still he goes,
Nor e'er looks forward further than his nose.

One turns, then, from "this miserable scene of governments" to the nature they have outraged so often, but which is virgin still, smiling from her thousand altars, in the woodland dim, by hermit streams, on lonely hilltops, in bud and blade and flower and bower, in skylines solemn and serene, in the glassy dome, and dazzling god of day. For nature is immortal, and when the last savage has taken his last long rest the immortal maiden will be there to enwreath his dust with garlands of the Spring. Nature calls us from those cruder contemplations; in England now, in Scotland now, her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace, inexorable also in her order and necessity; but in the long slow evolution, and adaptation, of human and lower animal life, the fittest

environment for all; calling to us in this annual resurrection by a thousand reflexes and sensations; so sweet and seductive her syren song we deem the exaltation not of earth but of some far and fabled sphere, and credit savage creed and faith with a magic which is nature's very own. Take music alone, of which the great political novel writer, Disraeli, in an impressive passage said:—

O music! miraculous art, that makes the poet's skill a jest, revealing to the soul inexpressible feelings by the aid of inexplicable sounds! A blast of thy trumpet, and millions rush forward to die; a peal of thy organ, and uncounted millions sink down to pray.

Surely the doubtful outcome of the divine art! To rush forth—to murder, or to pray! Thus have we been acted upon in the past, even by influences as "divine" as music—but devilish as divine. The human chords, receptive and responsive to an ancient and invisible touch, are, in the passage of the ages, ever more intensely strung, and more and more spontaneously respond, are finely touched, indeed, but not always to fine issues. Not airs from heaven, or blasts from hell, but simply the old, old earth music thrilling in the habituated and expectant nerve cells of the human race.

What a magnificent achievement to begin life with, say, three halfpence, become a master soap-boiler, or other captain of industry, finishing up at last in the supreme glory of the flags and floor of Westminster, making feeble but fashionable jokes, and flabby conventional speeches—interminable, perhaps, but not eternal—sunning him at leisure in the outer courts, in self-satisfied, well-fed, well-bred, oleaginous content, a member of the finest club, of the greatest empire the world has ever seen!

The introspect, in recent memory and immediate anticipation, in sorry past and uneasy forboding, is not of the happiest sort, but the outer scene, as we wheel across country from the coast of Ayr to the Mauchline land of Burns, is, as we have said, beautiful beyond description and fills the mind with hope and joy to the exclusion for the moment of every shadow cast by every lingering folly and savage atavism. Near and far, the display of whin blossom, this season, is simply phenomenal in its rich deep green and gold—an autumn ripeness of the budding spring—rolling upon the eye on hill and bank and hedgerow, gleaming more brightly golden in the sun, charming the senses everywhere, charming the eye and checking the breath with its beauties far and near, more compelling than Wordsworth's dancing daffodils. Indeed, sirs and madams, your lake countries are but ordinary, your England tame and domestic, compared with robust and rugged Scotland clad in the golden glory of its ragged whin!

This is intensive, this is boastful writing, we are patriots, but pacifists, my fellow wheelman and I. He keeps close beside me, admiring the landscape, and telling me queer and caustic stories about our own neighbours that would have pleased any Freethinker among you, and would even have made a Christian smile against himself.

Climbing a long sylvan brae from Kilmarnock, with the modernized Mossgeil farm of Burns on our right, we passed the fine castellated memorial (with its cottage home) on the eminence, with its magnificent view of Galloway and Ayr, and entered the idyllic red sandstone clachan of Mauchline. A native "Saint of Rationalism," Mr. William McFarlane, we found was away from home holidaying in the Galloway hills, so we had to make the best of our own uninspired investigations, entering first the auld kirkyard, the scene of

the immortal Holy Fair. Here is a very new church for a very old gospel, and inside it a list in brass of the ministers who "laboured" here. Half way down the catalogue we see the name of "William Auld, M.A., 1742-1791," a holy man, and otherwise "damned to everlasting fame." In a far corner of the churchyard, opposite the "Castle" of Gavin Hamilton, and where Burns and Jean were married, is a wide table-slab over the grave of Daddy Auld. Holy Willie (William Smith, Sarsion Clark) rests South of the Church under an oblong nameless slab:—

Ha! there he is, as sure's a gun,
Puir silly body see him;
Nae wunner he's as black's the grun'
Observe wha's stannin' wi' him!
Your brunstane devilship, I see,
Has got him there before ye;
But hand your nine-tail cat a wee
Till ance ye've heard my story.

Near that of the worthy clerk is the railed in grave of lawyer Hamilton. Against his wishes a black lettered plaque now tells who rests below, in beloved, imperishable dust; but so far Gavin has raised no objections; certainly he was ever a magnanimous lawyer! Within another railing lies the two year old twin daughter of the poet, Elizabeth Riddel Burns. Eastward from here is the tomb of a Covenanter, wounded at the battle of Ann's Burn (where the burn was no one could tell us: a small affray, likely, but, no doubt, bloody enough), and who died in the little prison close by, still existing, if for a happier use, to-day. Just over the wall from this is the narrow wynd containing the small upstairs apartment where Burns and Jean Armour, after their hurried wedding, "took up hoose." What poignant particulars are these! What humility of grandeur! All this, and much more, redolent in the air and mould and crumbling stones, the old and new masonry of Mauchline; in that Ayrshire whin blossom, offspring of that very whin Burns had often gazed upon, and gloried in, from the uplands of Mossgeil. All that this very human being touched became immortal; because mother Nature at the first had touched him to fine issues, disguising him in hodden grey, at humble tasks, finding thus her true interpreter, exhibiting at last that elect spirit to a dull and stupid world; laughing, in that unmalignant, mocking way of hers, at those who worshipped Burns, now Burns was dead; but accompanied now by that immortal spirit of the Bard, that haunts with her those hills and dales and woods and streams, those classic monuments and auld clay biggans; that spirit that exalted even her, making her mortality also immortal. Surely Freethinkers should be proud of Burns, who, religious or not, was the *largest* of Freethinkers, who not only made Scotland great, but who exalted man universal—not by knowledge, not by religion, not by learning's dull despair, but by his mere natural human spirit, in original breadth and depth, simplicity and strength the first, perhaps the last of his kind.

And to think of this one man breaking clods with clodhoppers, never daring to even dream of being a legislator at Westminster!—that House, at the time, oblivious of his existence, as it is oblivious of him still! nor even dreaming that he, poor "Rabbie Burns," was being numbered high up among "The unacknowledged legislators of the world!"

ANDREW MILLAR.

The great Confutse, whom we call Confucius, is often placed among the ancient legislators—among the founders of religion; but this is a mistake. Confucius is very modern; he lived only six hundred and fifty years before our era. He never instituted any doctrine, any rite. He neither called himself inspired nor a prophet; he only united in one body the ancient laws of morality.—*Voltaire*.

Correspondence.

THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Judging by Mr. Cutner's last reply I am in a bad way. My latest "effusion" with its "delightful Evangelical meekness and Apostolic exhortation," coupled with the "crass stupidity" he seems inclined to credit me with, ought, I suppose, to be taken as indications of his superior knowledge and my corresponding ignorance of the subject under dispute. But may I, with that same "meekness," inform him that I daresay I know his side of the question as well as himself, and sufficient of the Biblical side to add to his present stock of knowledge? But he fancies he has "clearly proved" something and quotes Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech* to prove me wrong on Matt. xxviii. 1. But, really, it is against himself, for this translation is just as faulty as the A.V. on this verse. To begin with, the Doctor avoids a great difficulty by omitting the word "towards" from his translation, and by doing so takes great liberty with the text. In other words, it becomes a *commentary* with inconvenient words dropped out and biased views substituted in their place. I will prove this presently. But let us look closely into the Doctor's "After the Sabbath, in the early dawn....." and put it into a little more "modern speech." After Saturday, in the early dawn of Sunday. Now, I ask, would Mr. Cutner, if he wanted to mention an occurrence that happened on, say Monday, mention Sunday to emphasize that he means Monday? Or, if it happened on Thursday would he say, "After Wednesday at sunrise on Thursday," and so forth? Of course he would not. *Neither would Matthew*. If the two women came at dawn on the first day he would have said so, just as the other Gospels do in their references to what occurred on that day, stating the time in terms understood by those then living. And so to give the hour as near as could be Matthew says, "In the end of the Sabbath as it began to draw on (not dawn) towards (not on) the first day. In other words, it was near the close of one day and the commencement of another. Now, I will prove Dr. Weymouth's translation is biased. Will Mr. Cutner note the following quotations from it and compare them with any other translation he can lay hands on. In Matt. xxvii. 63 the Doctor says, "After two days, etc., other versions, "After three days"; on Matt. xii. 40 he says, "For as Jonah was three days in the sea-monster's belly," other versions give, "Three days and three nights," quite a different thing. On Mark viii. 11 he says, "After two days rise to life," other versions, "After three days," and on John xx. 26, he says, "A week later," other versions, "After eight days." Thus we see Dr. Weymouth makes "three" into "two" where it suits him, and eight days into a week. I do not know how long Mr. Cutner has had Dr. Weymouth's translation, but I found out these discrepancies in about half an hour. And cannot he perceive why this is done with verses bearing on the subject we are discussing? I suspect he can.

With reference to the different persons who visited the tomb. I have previously shown there were six successive visits to the tomb, and in the first three Mary Magdalene had a part. In Matt. xxviii. 1 she was with the other Mary; in John xx. 1 she came alone, and in verse 3 she returns with Peter and John. She was not in the succeeding visits by the women of Luke and Mark and here is the proof. In John xx. 18 we see she had gone to tell the disciples she had seen the Lord. As this took time she could not have been with the women of Luke who came at deep twilight, so she was not guilty of "crass stupidity" in coming with them to anoint the body of Christ whom she had for the second time seen alive. Matt. xxviii. 9 is the first and John xx. 14 the second. The first was away from the tomb, the second at the tomb. Mr. Cutner will want to ask some questions on this, but I have the answers ready.

Referring to the women of Mark. Mary did not accompany them either, for had she been present when the query was raised, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" she would have informed them forthwith it was already rolled away, that she had seen it done "in the end of the Sabbath" by an angel, that she had also seen the Lord, and that there was no need for them to meet at the tomb at all. So there is no "crass stupidity" here either, and

Mr. Cutner has yet to prove "the hopeless ignorance" of the Gospel writers, but he must be careful while endeavouring to do so he does not display some on his own account. It says in the Proverbs "He that answereth a matter *before* he heareth it, it is shame and folly unto him." "He that is first in his own cause *seemeth* just, but his neighbour cometh and *searcheth* him."

"UNORTHODOX."

DR. LYTTTELTON'S CHALLENGE.

SIR,—Why all this reference back to other names, other places, and people's writings in an effort to prove Christianity lies? One has only to look at present day life to dispel from our brain the idea of a loving father.

Imagine a father with several sons. Two of them hate each other through a misunderstanding; one awaits the other in a dark place to injure or kill; the father watches it all, sees his son raise the glittering knife, watches it descend, hears the heartbroken sob of the dying son as his life's blood gushes out. The father turns away to hide the smile of his cruel mouth. Yesterday it was German, English, French, etc. To-day it is English, Irish, Pole. To-morrow—?

If such a person were to exist and I read my paper one day, and, as so often happens, there was an account of a little girl, of say ten years or less, having been raped by some cur, and knew that a being existed who could have prevented it happening, then I should hate that being with all the hatred my nature was capable of feeling. With the present state of the world, to defend the idea of the existence of a loving father to me seems little short of sarcasm. Perhaps Dr. Lyttelton will give some instances of his god's goodness. One generally possesses a god for one's personal benefit, if not, then the need for a god has passed.

ARTHUR WILLIAMS.

SIR,—Dr. Lyttelton's letter in your issue of the 19th inst. is an interesting example of how a theological mind unconsciously reveals the bias due to its training, and also how that bias colours facts to give them a religious interpretation. He asserts that vehemence of language in the *Freethinker* "reveals unconsciously the writer's Theism"; this also is an assumption unwarrantable because it proves too much. Will Dr. Lyttelton agree that when clergymen vehemently denounce Atheism they "reveal unconsciously" their belief in the Atheistic position?

Dr. Lyttelton also says that believers in the non-existent are "harmless folk" whom we do not denounce, but that "we do denounce believers in a doctrine we are trying to oust from our minds *and cannot*" (*italics mine*). This assertion cuts both ways, even assuming it to be a valid argument; it has the additional disadvantage for Dr. Lyttelton that the claim of "harmlessness" simply is not true.

The non-existent, *when it is the subject of belief*, breeds ideas; ideas influence conduct. Let me give one illustration. If a priest in England *to-day* burnt a woman to death for alleged witchcraft, he would either be hung or treated as a criminal lunatic, this despite his priesthood. Why? The answer is that theological witchcraft is an example of belief in the non-existent. Were the believers who burnt to death thousands of poor old women harmless?

Freethinkers believe to-day that all belief in the non-existent is harmful to the welfare of humanity, hence their efforts to explode such beliefs. Dr. Lyttelton's references to the belief in hell are typical of a certain type of high minded ecclesiastic whose better nature revolts against the crudities inherent in phases of their creed. Freethinkers, at grave personal risk, for many many years denounced the revolting barbarism of the Christian hell. I congratulate Dr. Lyttelton on frankly calling it "a monstrous perversion of truth"; I regret, however, that he appears to imply that Calvin was largely responsible: Dr. Lyttelton *must* know that the doctrine was taught by thousands of priests and implicitly believed as definite Bible Christianity. *The texts are still in the Bible.* Dr. Lyttelton has subtlety of mind.

Finally, I note that Dr. Lyttelton asserts "there is nothing in Scripture which teaches that a change of mind after death is impossible."

It may be a source of consolation to the many prominent clerics who lament the growth of Freethought that Freethinkers may change their minds when they are dead.

No Freethinker will begrudge them such consolation.

I was once told I should die a Roman Catholic! Well, old age sometimes means senile decay; in such a case, however, I am no prophet.

W. KING.

SIR,—I used "mythical" in the sense of "non-existent," and invite Dr. Lyttelton again to say how he would challenge those of us who think Jesus never existed, and who think the universe must always have existed.

I beg to protest against the unfairness to Mr. Arch on this latter point. Dr. Lyttelton wrongly assumed that we all take that view of the universe which he calls "stark lunacy," and when he discovers that the reason for taking his view two is that we don't assume the universe had a beginning to know, he refuses to "chop logic," though the logomachy was all on his side in his comments on Mr. Arch's perfectly plain letter, and though Mr. Arch answered the question put to *him*. And as to grounds of agreement, both agree that there never was a time when there was nothing, and that view three is "stark lunacy."

W. JAMESON.

"THE UNDERWORLD."

SIR,—Your correspondent's claim to ordinary common-sense is not borne out by his letter. As the possessor of extraordinarily uncommon-sense, I never bandy words with one who has not the wit to follow the trend of a simple article; but when a clumsy, uncouth larrikin climbs through the ropes, hits a well trained heavy-weight a "low down" wallop, at the same time accusing the ring-craft expert of dirty tactics, there is but one course open. So A. Langley will have to go through it.

Everything he says is irrelevant. Here's an example: "I do not know whether J. Effel is an author or a French knitting champion: perhaps he is a cross between the two. I would classify him as a candidate for the conductorship of a Jazz Band if I were pressed on the point."

Now, whether I am a performing flea trainer or a *marchand des marrons* (I just put that in to fool you, A. Langley) of the "thirty years ago" variety matters nothing to the point.

I love abuse, if done artistically, and I haven't the faintest objection to being called ignorant, but when A. Langley says I have as little knowledge of my subject as most egotists, which is clearly shown, I say exactly the same thing as I do of the wise utterances of the gifted miner in the *Underworld*, "Produce the proofs."

In what part of my criticism of Mr. Welsh's book do I display ignorance? Am I ignorant about the knitting, am I ignorant of the grass-market, the nine and a half months' labour difficulties of Mysic, her fevers, her pedestrianism at such a time and in such weather?

Do I display ignorance of good writing when I quote a few specimens of the miner poet's art? Now, if I were to say, "I don't know whether A. Langley is a pork butcher or a gravedigger that would be on his level of irrelevancy and rudeness, and if I added, "He evidently has as little knowledge of grammar as most persons of "limited power of observation," that would be mere assertion. However, when I quote his first few words, "To avoid J. Effel *from*....." enough is said on that point.

Mind you I have psychology—A. Langley doesn't *really* think himself small-beer—this limited ordinary common-sense plea is mere working class Uriah Heep swank. When A. Langley cannot put sentences together without egregious blunders, he can hardly be a judge of literary style when he cannot give me the courtesy of "Mr.," when he is even ignorant of the spelling of the author's name (I wish the compositor hadn't altered the rest of A. Langley's spelling) he ought to remain outside the discussion.

To use an expression Comrade A. Langley will know, I am "class conscious" and to discuss further with him would be derogatory to my dignity as a man of intelligence.

Just a word about "the speeches that did the trick." In my book, *The Nonconformist*, my hero, Johnny Macfie, spouts at meetings. I don't tell readers about his great wisdom or how he drew tears from his hearers' eyeballs, or softened their hearts or their heads, or swayed them or moved them or touched them (no ambiguity meant), I give the talk and readers may judge for themselves. When Bernard Shaw tells me John Tanner is top-hole in high-brow writing he follows that up by hand-

ing out "The Revolutionists' Handbook by John Tanner," and that is incontrovertible evidence of intellectual power.

If Mr. Welsh, or Mr. Jenkins, or anyone else has anything to say in defence of my criticism of the *Underworld* or of my literary style, I will be delighted. My half-crown will not then have been spent in vain.

J. EFFEL.

[Several letters are held over till next week.—Editor.]

Freethought in South Wales.

THE concluding meeting of the eight held in Swansea on the Sunday surpassed in size, enthusiasm, and sales of literature any of the others. We had an immense crowd in spite of the competition of many other meetings. The numerous questions were dealt with, the usual platform opponent routed, I was consigned to Hell by a very excited follower of the loving Jesus, and another lady wanted to hasten my departure with the aid of a knife, whilst many other people demanded a return visit at an early date. The life of a Freethought propagandist is a very mixed one and curses and blessings fall alike on a hide which, fortunately, is of exceeding thickness!

I commenced in the Rhondda Valley on the Monday at Treherbert. Had three most excellent meetings and then on the Thursday (my night off) took a busman's holiday by conducting a set debate on Religion and Science with a budding aspirant for pulpit honours who somehow had managed to win a degree. He had a most weird idea of science, but resolutely refused to accept the Bible as an authoritative basis for Christianity. He waved his mind about like a signal of distress, and I shot facts and arguments at him to which he offered the feeblest reply, whilst the packed room followed with the closest attention every word of the debate. He made some members! B.A. degrees are picked up very easily, I have decided, after this experience.

The meeting next evening, in spite of our being chivvied from our advertised pitch, was naturally a bumper. Questions by the dozen, quibbles by the score from another aspirant for theological fame, and a sale of thirty shillings' worth of literature to a poverty-stricken crowd of miners were some of the features testifying to the interest displayed. Saturday evening found us in the local Workmen's Club speaking on Religion: the enemy of Labour. A most attentive audience here rewarded my efforts. We finished with two meetings on the Sunday indoors, the evening one being really magnificent.

The net results of the eight meetings in Rhondda Valley were, immense enthusiasm, eight new members, in addition to enquiries, over £6 10s. in literature sales, after twelve weeks without wages, increased interest in and respect for our cause on the part of the orthodox, and another debate to come off between comrade Bennett and a local theologian.

The heroes of this week were Messrs. Bennett, Mainwaring and Davies the secretary who assisted at the whole of the eight meetings.

GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, Ltd.

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

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Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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 post card.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Maurice Mowbrey, A Lecture; and Social.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Joseph McCabe, "Modern Priestcraft."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. W. H. Thresh, "The Struggles and Triumph of Reason."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park): 6, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Christianity and Progress."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6.15, Mr. E. Burke, Lectures.

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