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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Human Nature.

The other day I received a not unusual form of communication from a Christian reader. The letter was a lengthy one and I do not propose quoting from it verbatim. I can summarize its somewhat rambling substance much more effectively in a few sentences. This is that we who are attacking Christianity do not quite realize all our actions involve. Whether Christianity be true or false it does serve as the dynamic—delightful word that—for many millions of lives, and is the source of some of the noblest of actions. Men and women all over the world are induced to give their lives in the service of the Christian ideal, and to rob them of that would be to rob them of all that makes life worth the living. And in a world so distracted as ours it is unwise, even if it be not positively wrong, to do anything that will weaken human endeavour or impoverish the quality of human action. And so we are solemnly warned that we run a grave risk in trying to weaken the faith of men and women in something that they believe to be good and noble. Even though Christianity were false, it does hold up a noble ideal, one that the world would be worse for losing, and which it cannot be the worse for having. This is quite an old criticism of Freethinking activities, but the fact of its constant repetition proves that to the believer, even with a certain amount of the old doctrinal attachment weakened, it still appeals with considerable force.

* * *

The Voyage of the "Quest."

Now I will commence with calling the attention of my correspondent to a very recent incident. A few weeks ago a small ship, the "Quest," left London for its long voyage to the Antarctic. Its departure signified nothing of a party or sectarian character. It carried with it the good wishes of all and the ill-will of none. Everyone wished it a prosperous voyage and a speedy return. It went forth on no essentially national mission, but on one that appeals to the whole of civilized mankind, and whatever good results may come from the voyage of the "Quest" will belong less to a nation than to the race. It has no religious mission, and, therefore, it can do nothing to keep alive those sectarian feelings from the existence of which so much suffering has resulted. It set sail in the name of science, and science knows nothing of sect, creed, or

nationality. It is *clean* throughout, and in a world which is at present suffering so much from individual and national rascality masquerading in the form of virtue, that is something for which we should all be thankful. Everyone wishes the commander and his crew success, and even though they do not succeed, even though some of these brave fellows leave their bones amid the arctic snows, that will be nothing new in the history of exploration. Nor does anyone imagine that this regrettable event would deter others from renewed endeavour in the same direction. Rather will it act as an incentive for fresh enterprise. What one has attempted others will again attempt, and to the finer spirits danger does not deter, it attracts. The attraction of the unknown, the quenchless thirst for knowledge, the love of adventure, are permanent qualities of human nature. And without them our racial history would be very poor reading indeed.

The Glory of Man. * * *

There is a lesson here for both our religionists and our militarists if they will only read it aright. For while the former tells us that destroying religion will rob life of its moral value, the latter are equally loud in their assertion that without their form of folly life will be destitute of courage and heroic action. There is an agreement in absurdity between the two classes that most clearly represent a survival from the more primitive aspects of human life. And how completely false both these views are! These men who set sail for the Antarctic were not inspired by religion; they are as far as possible removed from that old-fashioned religious egotism which looked upon the salvation of one's own soul as the chief duty of existence. It may also be that the aim of the majority was not even a scientific one. Some may have been motivated by that resistless desire for more knowledge which lies at the root of all scientific investigation, but for the rest we need not go farther to explain their action than the simple love of adventure. It is the unknown that attracts them; the desire to do something that no one has yet done. To risk where others have risked; to succeed where others have failed; that is the great desire of this type of man—a type that has been of incalculable benefit to the race. And this love of knowledge and adventure is not dependent upon either religion or its twin sister militarism. They are qualities that are deeply imbedded in human nature, and they express themselves in various ways. A child peering about the inside of a mechanical toy, or scrambling up a sandhill for the love of the adventure it offers, or balancing itself on the top of a wall illustrates them in simple forms. The fully fledged explorer and scientist only displays them in a more developed shape.

* * *

Social Origins.

Now if our system of education were other than it is, less under the control of the priest and the recruiting sergeant, it would be recognized that the seed-plot of all our virtues is neither the Church nor the barracks nor the battlefield, but social life. Both religion and

militarism do but exploit what has been developed elsewhere. During the late war we made great play with both chemical knowledge and aviation, but neither were developed by warfare. War was but using the knowledge acquired during times of peace. The courage shown by the soldiers on the battlefield was not developed in times of war, that also was developed in social life and squandered in the anti-social field of war. Neither had the development of these virtues anything to do with religion, although religion, like war, utilizes them and exploits them for its own ends. In social life we have a constant call for all the virtues that both the religionist and the militarist praise. We have men risking their lives on the land and on seas in a score of different ways. We have them showing the qualities of duty, comradeship, loyalty, brotherhood, in thousands of ways in the course of their everyday life. We have courage exercised in quietude, and often in face of strong social disapproval, in obedience to what is believed to be the call of duty. And all these things are done not in the excitement of the battlefield, where there is every inducement to "play the game," and positive punishment if the game is not played. Neither are they performed from a selfish motive to save one's soul in the next world. They are done from a simple sense of duty. It is not the voice of God speaking in the soul, but the voice of the tribe, of the race, a voice which began its infantile lisps in the far off days when groups of animal-like humans huddled together in cave-like shelters, and it has continued to speak in clearer and clearer tones with the passing of the ages.

* * *

Freethinkers and Christians.

Now I am not denying the courage or the sense of duty of the soldier, neither am I denying the goodness of the religious man. I am simply asserting, with the utmost assurance, that the sense of duty and the courage of the soldier are not dependent upon the existence of military warfare, and the goodness of the religious man is in no wise dependent upon his religion. Both are confusing things that are quite distinct. And against both lies the same indictment, namely, that they squander in fruitless ways, or to put the matter modestly, in less fruitful ways, qualities that might be more usefully expended. So far as the religionist is concerned it is quite obvious that the impulse to do good, the power to act rightly is not confined to the believer. Nor will it be denied that as good men and women exist in the ranks of the ungodly as in the army of the godly. And why will Christians persist in paying their opponents the violent compliment of asserting, in substance, that they are made of poorer clay than the Freethinker? For that is what it really amounts to. The Freethinker can get along without the belief in God, he can do his duty to all around him without belief in heaven or hell; why, then, are we forbidden to believe that the Christian can do likewise? If we can do without these extraneous props to a decent life, why cannot the Christian? Is he really such a poor creature as his defenders would have us believe? Really, I think better of the man that is buried beneath the believer than his champions appear to do. I believe that human nature is healthy enough at bottom to function properly in response to the promptings of normal social life if only we will allow it to do so. Crutches are useful to cripples, but it is a depressing thing to conceive the whole human race such incurable cripples as these champions of Christianity would have us believe.

* * *

A Question of Education.

It is really, both with regard to religion and militarism, a question of education. There is a sense

in which human nature is always the same, there is also a sense in which it is always undergoing a change. Fundamentally we are one with our ancestors of thousands of years ago. We have the same passions and the same appetites. We resent pain and we seek pleasure. We eat when we are hungry, we roar when we are angry. But what we eat, and what we drink, the kind of pain we are most afraid of and the kind of pleasure we most eagerly seek, the things that delight us and the things that rouse our anger are no longer what they were. In other words, while our nature remains substantially unchanged in the possession of certain fundamental qualities, these are always undergoing education. And it is here that the power of training comes in—not the mere scholastic education that we receive in schools, although that too has its place and its importance—but the education which we receive, almost from the moment of birth, from the whole of our social environment. Hand the child over to the care of the priest, allow the priest to fill a prominent position in our social life, and we shall have as a result that mistaken and depressing view of human nature which is represented by my correspondent. Give the child while at school all that you can give him in the way of military drill, fill his mind with stories of the deeds of soldiers, and be comparatively silent over the greater deeds of the scientist and the student, let him see as he approaches maturity the place of honour given to the soldier, and the intellectual worker snubbed or treated as a mere crank, and you will have populations prepared for world-wars, with all their folly and filth and lies and general degradation. The game is in our hands, and we can make of human nature almost what we will. We can level it with the earth or lift it to the stars. Society itself sets the standard of value to which the rising generation adjusts itself. And society itself must reap the consequences of its own decisions.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Present Situation."

THE Cambridge Conference of Modern Churchmen, held at the beginning of August, has given rise to a vast amount of discussion both within and without the Anglican Church. In the *Church Times* much of the Correspondence is weekly devoted to criticisms of the various papers read at the Conference. Canon Peter Green, of Manchester, has contributed several letters in condemnation of certain views expressed by the Rev. H. D. A. Major, editor of the *Modern Churchman*, and Bishop Gore filled a whole page with a statement of the Catholic doctrine of the Deity of Christ which, he maintains, the Dean of Carlisle does not hold. In the September number of the *Modern Churchman* all the papers read at the Conference, with one exception, "are published substantially as delivered"; but the object of the present article is to call attention to a sermon by Canon Barnes delivered at the close of the Conference in Girton College Chapel. Taking as his subject the "Present Situation," he affirms that beyond all doubt religion matters. He praises the Conference for its seriousness, tension, and at times elation of feelings. He is also delighted to find that all participants quite unconsciously assumed the existence of God and his active presence in the world. He says:—

Forty years ago the triumphs of modern science seemed to have made Materialism a possible creed and Agnosticism a wise one. The evolutionary view of the origin of the universe and of man has become one of the postulates of your thought. Yet none of us are troubled by the unbelief to which a generation ago that view seemed naturally to lead. Herein, of course, we are representative of the better educated of our countrymen.

The Canon may be quite justified in declaring that the discoveries of science have not had the effect of driving those now known as Modernists to Materialism, but he is certainly mistaken in thinking that he and those who share his views "are representative of the better educated of our countrymen." What about the thousands of men of science the majority of whom are, admittedly, Materialists, and what about their innumerable disciples? Is it not a statistically established fact that in London, Paris, and Berlin, with their population of thirteen millions, less than three millions attend any place of worship? Are we not repeatedly assured that the mass of the people are non-religious, by whom Christianity is simply ignored? Even at the Cambridge Conference Professor Foakes Jackson, of Union Theological Seminary, New York, asserted that the public no longer cares for religion at all. His words are significant:—

People are not saying as they did formerly, "Give up your impossible dogmas and the evident myths on which they are based, and let us have a plain statement of the essentials of Christianity." The day for such lectures as Harnack's *What is Christianity?* is over. There is a growing conviction, not the less dangerous because it now rarely finds a voice, that Christianity can be ignored. Men no longer care about the sort of sermon they once listened to with attention, and are less and less troubled by religious doubts; not because they have ceased to doubt, but because they are hardly interested at all in the religious problem.

Now Dr. Foakes Jackson is a Presbyterian Professor, whose paper was not part of the official programme of the Girton Conference, but who, out of courtesy, was invited to speak in order to reply to attacks made upon the first volume of a work entitled *The Beginnings of Christianity*, which he and Professor Lake had edited and published a year or two before. With Professor Foakes Jackson's theological opinions we are not now concerned, and we have quoted from his paper merely to show that Modern Churchmen are by no means "representative of the better educated of our countrymen." They are merely representative of a small minority of our countrymen who still cling to superstition, in one form or another. Canon Barnes has renounced and ceased to preach the old myth of the Fall in Adam, and in doing that he has undermined the foundation upon which Christianity has rested throughout the ages. With the doctrine of original sin, that of the Atonement must necessarily be dismissed. For those who reject those two dogmas orthodox Christianity is annihilated. Even the need for it no longer exists. If he is speaking for his fellow-beings, and not only for the members of the Churchmen's Union, the Canon has no right whatever to say that "we are, one and all, convinced that we are not chance products of blind forces, but creatures of a Divine process, sons of God, who has made us for himself," for this also is fully as mythical as are the Fall and the Atonement. This claim is founded not upon knowledge but upon blind belief. After dropping two doctrines which until yesterday were regarded as among the fundamentals of the Faith, the reverend gentleman has the audacity to tell us that "a new certainty has emerged after a somewhat prolonged period of uncertainty." A new certainty of what can legitimately be said to have emerged, and has it come as the direct result of casting the doctrines of the Fall and the Atonement overboard? Strangely enough, it is alleged that, the old foundation having been knocked off, a new, "strong, firm foundation in secret has been laid on which religion, like some splendid cathedral, will be built anew." What is this new foundation? What is it that takes the place of the belief in the Fall and original sin? Was the new foundation laid at the Cambridge Conference, and if so, why was it laid in

secret? Why should there be any secrecy at all about it, if all the people are expected to build their religion anew upon it? Assuming the truth of the Canon's astounding teaching, we join him in asking, Will the new religion be Christian? and we answer, Certainly, not, in the hitherto accepted sense of the adjective "Christian." Christianity is a creation of the Church, as Professor Foakes Jackson avers; and even the Gospel Jesus is unhistorical. It is contrary to reason to believe that such a person ever existed. Canon Barnes himself must be fully aware that science recognizes no supernaturally born individual in all history.

In reality, the Canon allows his theology to override his science. There is no trace of science in the following utterance:—

I am an Evangelical.....Probably all who have been present would wish to assert that they also are Evangelicals, firmly convinced that the Gospel of Jesus is the religious message of God to man. Yet one or two, in discussing subjects where language cannot adequately express feeling, have seemed to doubt whether the Jesus of history was the unique Person in whom St. Paul and St. John saw the only begotten Son. I weigh, without prejudice, I trust, all that they have said. In the end I feel no hesitation in affirming that Jesus rose from the dead to become the living Christ, one with the Holy Spirit. We all seek for truth. But whereas to some truth seems a tide destined to rise and sweep destructively across lands where Jesus reigned as the Son of God, to me it is the power which will set free new streams to irrigate his kingdom. Yet even those who seem, to the majority among us, to under-value the supreme greatness of the Founder of our faith, are eager to hasten the coming of the kingdom of God, as he proclaimed it.

That is the language of a theologian, pure and simple. The Canon is in no sense whatever even a Modernist. He repudiates the belief in the Fall in the name of science, and yet when he identifies the Christ of theology with the Gospel Jesus he gives science the slip and slaps reason in the face. If man never fell, how can he stand in need of redemption, regeneration, restoration, and renewal? All the terms in the Christian Gospel presuppose the Fall and without it become meaningless. To be sure the Gospel Jesus is no more historical than the theological Christ, though the difference between them is immense. The amazing thing is that when Canon Barnes reads Genesis and the fifth chapter of Romans he permits science to control his thinking, and is most anxious to relieve thoughtful young people of the theological task of believing the incredible; but when he enters the Four Gospels he flings criticism down the wind and plays the role of a reverent believer.

To us Modernism and orthodoxy are equally unbelievable and absurd. Even orthodox divines are at sixes and sevens among themselves. Scarcely any two of them are in entire agreement. Some argue that salvation is through faith in the atoning death of the Son of God, while others dogmatically declare that salvation is through the sacraments, though faith and morality are required from those who rely on the sacraments. As Professor Lake clearly shows, "not only was that the Christianity of Irenæus and his contemporaries, but it has remained the Christianity of the Catholic Church to this day. Protestants may ignore or regret the fact, but historians cannot deny it." The Modernist school is equally divided within itself. Scarcely any two of them see eye to eye. As is evident from a perusal of the papers read at their Conference, some go much farther than others. Whether they are called Modernists or Liberals, nothing is more impressive than the divergence of views displayed by them. The truth is that they have no guiding principle to which they all bow. Furthermore, neither school knows of any test to which to

subject its dogmas. The Catholic Church has been a magnificent success as a human institution, but as a God-governed and God-inspired instrument for the world's redemption it has proved a stupendous failure. The Protestant Church has not been so fortunate, its whole history having been extremely stormy. It has broken up into innumerable little sects which have been at never ceasing and most grievous strife with one another. We disown both Churches, and are resolved to do our utmost to destroy both in order that Humanism, characterized by not a single shred of supernaturalism, may come in like a gracious, mighty river to heal the terrible wounds from which society has been so long bleeding, and cleanse and sweeten life by its serene purity and strength.

J. T. LLOYD.

Bamboozling Believers.

Liberty's chief foe is theology.—*Charles Bradlaugh.*
Solemnity is of the essence of imposture,
—*Lord Shaftesbury.*

THE clergy seldom admit their fear of Freethought. In public they never tire of the bold refrain, "Who's afraid?" Behind the scenes, however, they arrange quietly the means of retreat. Fortunately for civilization retreat is the order of the day, and will continue to be so. Since Freethought has been organized the Army of the Lord has had little rest. The frontal attacks of the Freethinkers are beginning to tell heavily, and the clergy are getting nervous. Camouflage is the order of the day. Not long since the House of Convocation of Canterbury decided to abandon portions of "God's Holy Word," and to delete from the "Book of Common Prayer" some objectionable features of the Old Testament. This astute clerical manoeuvre may deceive believers for a time, but it will not save the Christian religion.

The ruse is an astute one, but it cannot serve for any length of time. To prune the barbarities of the "Psalms" may spare the blushes of Christian ladies and of young clergymen, but it is a very risky and hazardous proceeding. The cure is as bad as the disease. The "Psalms" are an integral part of the Holy Bible, and David, "the man after God's own heart," is too closely allied with the central figure of Christ to be thrown thus rudely and unceremoniously to the rubbish-heap without disastrous results to orthodoxy. It is not only a policy of despair in the particular instance, but a precedent which will exert, in the long run, anything but a happy effect upon the Christian position.

The "Psalms" were written many centuries ago, and have been regarded by religious folk as the inspired utterances of the Almighty. For the future Psalm lviii. will not be printed in the Book of Common Prayer "as appointed to be read." The Convocation of Canterbury has so decreed by 43 votes to 13, and the superior clergy have dismissed King David as though he were a church cleaner who had dared to suggest a decent wage, or an Archdeacon who had gained too much publicity.

What is wrong with the fifty-eighth Psalm? It is a comparatively short one, but the clergy suggest that it is "un-Christian in character," which is a polite way of saying that it is out of harmony with modern ideas. This is the sort of thing that the clergy do not wish their congregations to read:—

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

The quotation is not pretty, nor edifying, and it is not

remarkable for its "spirituality," but the clergy have not selected the worst utterances in the Bible for condemnation. Other portions of "God's Holy Word" are equally open to objection, as, for instance, the unlovely passage in Psalm cix.:—

When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

And, again, in Psalm cxxxvii.:—

Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

Observe that the clergy have themselves started to pull "God's word" to pieces. They have begun with the "Psalms," and King David, "the man after God's own heart," thus comes in for tardy, but none the less deserved, rebuke. David is now admitted by the clergy to be a savage, and the champions of Christianity are obliged to throw the old Oriental barbarian overboard in order to absolve their deity from the crimes and vices of his favourite.

Let there be no mistake concerning the action of the clergy. They are in retreat. One of their spokesmen has advocated further drastic changes. Bishop Well-don, speaking at Nottingham, said that the Book of Common Prayer was out-of-date. It had never been modified since 1662, and a Prayer Book dating back over 250 years could not satisfy the present age. A good deal of the language used in the liturgy sounded artificially upon the lips of worshippers to-day. Bishop Well-don even went so far as to say that the plain, unvarnished language of the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer was "painfully distressing." Our forefathers might have tolerated such direct speech, but who would speak so to-day. The Prayer Book also contained too many prayers for the Monarchy, and there were too few for the People. In short, the Prayer Book is past praying for.

If, however, Bishop Well-don finds such faults with the Book of Common Prayer, what is to be said concerning the Bible? The sacred volume is full of savagery from cover to cover. From the first error in Genesis to the final absurdity in the Book of Revelation much of the writing is revolting to modern readers. In many places in the Old Testament the pages are filled with the scuffles of savages, whose arrows are "drunk with blood," to adapt its own charming phraseology. There are also many passages which can no longer be read in the presence of a mixed congregation. As for the New Testament, the moral perceptions of to-day are shocked beyond expression at the awful doctrine that countless millions of mankind will suffer eternal punishment. The clergy know all these things, and are seeking to camouflage their Prayer Book and their Bible so as to retain the respect of their congregations.

This clerical move of mutilating the Bible is not a paltry matter. The Bible is not an ordinary book. It is stamped as God's Word by Act of Parliament. It is forced, including the Psalms, and all its unseemly passages, into the hands of children at schools. It is used as a fetish for swearing upon in Courts of Law. Men and women have even been punished for criticizing it. And now the clergy are admitting the force of Freethought criticism. At present, it is true, the clergy are tearing unseemly pages from the Old Testament, but, before long, the New Testament will suffer. When the process is complete the Christian religion will be a thing of shreds and patches. The Hebrew Bible will take its proper place among the many other so-called Sacred Books of the East, and the clergy will have to look for honest employment. The mutilation of the Bible is the beginning of the end of the Christian Religion.

MIMNERMUS.

Three Tempers.

A LITTLE while ago, when addressing my old friends at the Leicester Secular Hall, I happened to refer to the general world-situation to-day, and I ventured on this remark: "I think that, of all the million or so years that have passed since the human race may be said to have begun, the best year is 1921."

I fancy this observation caused no small searching of hearts among the audience. Perchance some minds immediately agreed with me; many paused (very reasonably) to reflect; and I assuredly noticed that a few straightway dissented. In the course of discussion I told my hearers that one could not possibly decide such an issue in a brief debate. So much depends upon one's disposition, outlook, and knowledge of the past. Nor shall I attempt to decide the point in this printed page. I propose simply to survey the three tempers in which I find people approach it. And it may be as well to say that I shall just speak out of my current knowledge of social life, without quoting books or creeds.

The first is the theological temper, the life-philosophy which accepts a God-Father as supreme President of the universal kingdom or republic of space, stars, planets, and humanity. Strong men of past ages, such as Cromwell, Cæsar, Mohammed, or Plato had considerable confidence in this President, and, on the whole, this belief in divinity worked sufficiently well in their relatively simple world. Life to-day has become exceedingly complex. The great war of 1914-18 did not create the complexity. It revealed it as in a flash of planetary lightning. And now, belief in the President is violently challenged. So far as I can judge, by watching men of theological ways of thinking and feeling, their temper betrays doubt and indecision. Of course, in sermons and on paper they still assert faith in a sovereign Will which will use war, capitalism, Socialism, Communism, unemployment, and all other evils and problems for the ultimate triumph of the God-Father. But the spirit of their policy is very different from that of the proud popes of the Middle Ages, or of the militant Covenanters of 17th century Scotland. I see no sign of a sure expectation that God will settle the universal Labour question, or provide a solution of the difficulty of Japanese emigration, or restore the credit of the Bible as a perfect guide-book to life and manners. I trust I never fail to acknowledge, in all sincerity, my sense of the honourable and genial motives of masses of Christian workers, both clergy and laity, in the conduct of parish, mission, schools, guilds, and the like. But they remind me of an old aristocrat who preserves the dignity of his mansion and park, and yet who is conscious that his rents and dividends are declining, and that the estate must pass to other and more capable hands.

The second temper is that which characterizes people who worship so-called "principles," such as the principle of Liberty, the principle of Progress, the Principle of the Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number, the principle of Democracy, the principle of Conscience, etc. Please let me be clear in this respect. I value liberty, progress, happiness, democracy, conscience, and the rest. But, for myself, I should never care to express my idea of a useful life as the service of these principles. These principles are not (like Plato's "Ideas") a sort of divine beings that lead a separate existence. To think so, or to act as if we think so, is to treat principles as if they were gods to be worshipped. For example, I respect "conscience," but do not worship it as supreme, for I am certain it often errs, and often leads individuals into foolish and anti-social courses of action. And, as a

matter of experience, I observe that men who regard "principles" in this extremely obedient temper, are apt to be disappointed and crest-fallen when unkind events refuse to fulfil their ideals. They complain that naughty human nature, or fickle mobs, or brutal majorities show contempt for principles, and leave a few melancholy prophets to pursue the road of truth and righteousness. One meets many such "knights of the rueful countenance," especially since the Great War; and, in my judgment, the ruefulness of their countenance raises a strong suspicion as to the soundness of their method in handling the problems of the personal life and of civilization.

The third temper is that which is founded in love of humanity as a race, and confidence formed after studying the racial history. Let me here appeal to a plain illustration. Suppose you pray to Mary, the Mother of God, and hope to obtain consolation and healing for yourself and the world from her, that is a theological temper. Suppose you go about as a social reformer, declaring that all institutions and politics must be governed by a maternal (that is, a benevolent and protective) principle, and every failure to come up to this principle argues a corrupt and defective heart and society, that is the metaphysical temper—the temper which worships an absolute idea. And suppose you watch the growth of mother love through the history of the family and of civilization, and rejoice in every proof of its spreading influence in present-day life and development, then that expresses the third temper, the positive temper, the temper which avoids judging life by a rigid rule of God, or an absolute code of "principle," and delights in every actuality of progress, welcomes every indication of a wiser and more fraternal spirit, and judges each such indication relatively to time and place. This third temper recognizes, from a patient brooding over history, from the records of primitive man to the annals of the Great War of 1914-18, that humanity is imperfect, that it grows, learns, repents, reforms, and improves. It does not see humanity as a slave, obeying a divine will, or disobeying a divine will. It does not see humanity as an official in a cosmic bureau, compelled to fashion life by an absolute rule, a code imposed from without, a principle laid down by mysterious powers and essences. It sees humanity as a being of flesh and blood, unfolding its capacities from childhood to adolescence, and from adolescence (such as, I incline to think, civilization has now reached) towards the richer values of adulthood. Nor do I, for one, feel the slightest objection to the efforts of our very limited intellect to ponder, at times, the question: Whence came this our race, and what is its destiny? What I object to is the two-fold folly, first, of pretending to possess any scientific knowledge of the answers to these questions (and remember that all the great Catholic "schoolmen" claimed that theology was the queen of sciences), and, secondly, of devoting to such questions anything more than the reverie of a quiet, occasional hour, or such exercises of discussion as might tend to keep us humbly mindful of the relatively narrow extent of our thought and genius. Our central study should be given to a two-fold theme; one aspect of the theme is the history of man in its expanses, material, moral, æsthetic, intellectual, and the other aspect of the theme is intimately involved in the first, namely, the psychology of man. With heart-felt satisfaction I perceive that this history is being more and more pursued, and that this psychology engages a deeper attention, both in the realm of medical practice and of educational experiment, than ever before. And I affirm that they who follow these lines of study are most likely, in the presence of the vast problems that confront mankind to-day, to preserve a brave and cheerful temper. F. J. GOULD.

The Bible-God.

IN his *Autobiography* (page 40) John Stuart Mill says:

I have a hundred times heard my father (James Mill) say that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind had gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity.

To the student, the history of the God-idea is one of exceeding interest and fascination. It is, in fact, the history of man's earliest explanation of natural phenomena. If we go back in imagination many thousands of years, we shall find man in a very rude condition, steeped in ignorance respecting nature and her mode of action, and attributing all phenomena to living creatures, which he believed to possess qualities far transcending his own. Man's first objects of worship were fetishes. In the course of ages he began to see that he owed much of the pleasure of his existence to natural forces—to the sun, to seas, rivers, lakes, etc. To these, therefore, he transferred his affections, and made them the objects of his worship. Later on, as man developed, he began to see that, however wonderful were the effects produced by the great forces about him, these were not intelligent, nor were they uniformly beneficial. Consequently, he imagined intelligent spirits behind these forces, and these, in their turn, became his gods. When men had formed themselves into tribes and nations they established gods—tribal deities—of their own manufacture; imaginary beings, but real enough to the ignorant people who believed in them, and to these they attributed all sorts of extraordinary powers. Among the Hindoos Brahma was such a god, among the Persians, Ormuzd. The Mohammedan's god was Allah, while the Jewish and Christian god was either Elohim or Jahveh, *ie.*, Jehovah. These gods were believed to rule and govern the universe, but more particularly to devote themselves to the preservation and progress of the Jewish race.

The highest attributes were assigned to Jahveh, who ultimately became the only god of the Jewish people. That the belief in the plurality of gods is a perfectly natural belief in a lower order of mind is seen by the fact that nearly all savage races attribute the multifarious phenomena of the universe to a variety of gods differing in power and goodness. John Stuart Mill in his *Essay on Theism* has pointed out that it is far more natural in an uncultivated mind to believe in a multitude of deities as causing the diverse and apparently hostile forces of nature, than to believe these operations are "the work of a single will."

The Jews ascribed to their god Jahveh the following attributes: they said that he was infinite, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, and they declared that he was infinitely wise and good. Now nothing can be clearer to the scientific mind than that the attributes claimed by the theologian for his deity are all impossible qualities and cannot co-exist in one being. They are, in fact, but the attributes of man very much exaggerated. Man is finite; God is said to be infinite; man has a small degree of power or might; God is said to be Almighty; man has a little wisdom; God is infinitely wise; man displays a little goodness sometimes; God is said to be infinitely good at all times. But how is it possible for God to be infinite if he exists apart from the universe? How can God know anything if there is nothing outside of him to know? How can he be intelligent if he is not an organized being with thinking faculties? And if God possesses think-

ing faculties he cannot be said to be omniscient, because every day's experience brings additional knowledge to the mind that perceives, reflects and judges.

A few moments reflection will convince any intelligent person that such attributes could not co-exist in one being—even if that being be called a God. Consider for a moment the attributes of the Bible God and see how far they accord with the description given of them by believers. Jahveh is alleged to be infinite, yet when we refer to the Bible we find that the Bible God walks (Genesis iii. 8), talks (Deut. vi. 24), smells (Genesis viii. 21), works (Genesis ii. 2), rests (Genesis ii. 2). We are told that he is unchangeable, yet we find upon examination that the Bible God repents (Genesis vi. 6). We are informed that he is all good, yet we find that God curses (Genesis iii. 14), hardens men's hearts (Exodus xiv. 4), delivers men into the Devil's power (Job ii. 6), punishes the guiltless (1 Sam. xv. 3), creates evil (Is. xlv. 7), makes some men the slaves of others (Exodus xxi. 2), and orders the wholesale slaughter of men, women and children (1 Sam. xv.). Indeed, the God of the Bible possessed most of the bad qualities of the people out of whose imagination he grew. He had no idea of justice, he visited the sins of the fathers upon the children, who had done him no harm, he gave instructions for the murder of the heretic by stoning to death, even if it had to be done by those who were nearest and dearest to the unfortunate victim.

As a final example of the savagery of this Jewish God let me give one further example. It occurs in the twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy (10-16):—

When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace unto thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: and when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword; but the women and the little ones, and the cattle and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself, and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.

Can anything more villainously barbarous and cruel be conceived? All the old men and women, all the disabled and infirm, all to be ruthlessly slaughtered and the young women to be given over to a horde of soldiers to satisfy their brutal and lustful natures, and thirty-two virgins to be preserved as a tribute to the Lord! (Numbers xxxi. 40). In all the literature of the world there is nothing more detestably wicked than this. Well might the noble minded Shelley exclaim:

The name of God
Has fenced about all crime with holiness;
Himself the creature of his worshippers;
Whose names and attributes and passions
change—
Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God or Lord—
Even with the human dupes who build
his shrines
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world
For desolation's watchword; whether hosts
Stain his death blushing chariot wheels, as on
Triumphantly they roll, while the Brahmins
raise
A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans;
Or countless partners of his power divide
His tyranny to weakness; or the smoke
Of burning towns, the cries of female
helplessness,
Unarmed old age, and youth and infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
In honour of his name; or last and worst,

Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
And priests dare babble of a God of peace
Even while their hands are red with guiltless
blood,
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all
Making the earth a slaughter house.

(Queen Mab.)

What an indictment of the God of the Bible!

And at this time of day neither the Jews nor the
Christians can offer even the shadow of reasonable
defence.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Acid Drops.

The *Daily Herald* (October 17), commenting on Lord Dawson's unreserved advocacy of birth-control at the Church Congress, remarks:—

Mr. J. W. Gott, in March last, championed the cause of birth-control, in Birmingham. He was rewarded with three months' imprisonment, his stock of literature was destroyed, and he was, moreover, ordered to pay the costs of the prosecution. At the time of going to Press Lord Dawson has not been arrested. Mr. Gott was a poor man. Lord Dawson is the King's Physician.

The official Church in England has been richly endowed both with worldly goods and with well-conditioned men and women. The *Daily Mirror* (October 10) gives a portrait of the Bishop of Exeter in the act of "prophesying the resumption of war in Europe." He urges us not to disarm. We learn from the issue of the following day that the Bishop of Worcester "sees no guarantee that all gifts for Russian relief reach those it is desired to benefit." This is indeed the charity that "thinketh no evil." "By chance there came down a certain priest that way and when he saw him he passed by on the other side." The Bishop has probably heard something like this before, but it will bear repetition. Men who can, with the noble courage of a lioness defending her cubs, defend "sacred books" long since discredited by science, scholarship, and the moral conscience of civilization, usually hold original views on the sacredness of human life.

Rev. Professor Milligan, speaking at Glasgow University on "The Function of Biblical Criticism," said:—

Care must be taken in the manner in which the conclusions of Biblical criticism were presented to those who had not had the necessary training for judging of their exact significance. At the same time it was impossible for ministers and teachers to ignore the general methods and results of critical study (*Glasgow Herald*, October 12).

This passage affords a fine insight into the theological mind, and the ethical ideals of the Christian Church. These ideals in the past saved souls and begot saints. In the present they save "livings" and beget hypocrites. The conscience of the average ecclesiastic rises superior to doctrines which he can no longer enforce. Speaking of the Church of England and the maintenance of her doctrines, a well-known writer said that "many of the most gifted and most accomplished men among us are maintained in well-paid leisure to attend to such things." Perhaps the Church of Scotland is in the same happy position.

The *Strand* for October has a readable article by Charles Kingston on "The Fine Art of Fraud." Yankee adventurers, he says, travel about India selling diplomas issued by the "University of the United States." But the Indian natives are not the only simple ones in the world. Many years ago the number of M.A.'s and D.D.'s in Australia and New Zealand, many of them clergymen, who held such American degrees, was a public scandal. Mr. Kingston cites the case of a famous Nonconformist divine: "He styled himself 'doctor' for many years until a law-suit revealed the interesting fact that the 'university' which conferred it on him had never known any alumni except five small negro orphans." The partition wall between saintliness and imposture has always been a very thin one.

The *Catholic Herald* (October 8), referring to the reported cremation of a well-known Roman Catholic journalist, said that "there would be no Catholic burial for anyone who was to be cremated." In 1911, when the Prussian State Parliament was considering a bill to allow cremation in any part of Prussia, the Roman Catholic Centre opposed it fiercely, some of their representatives declaring that the measure was a blow aimed at the faith. As the bill only made cremation permissive, this attitude afforded a fine instance of the Roman Catholic idea of toleration. The opposition seems to be based on the conviction that cremation will tend to break up belief in the immortality of the soul. We hope it will.

The *Review of Reviews* for October summarizes the contents of an article contributed by German clergymen to the *Christian Work*, an American publication. We are assured that there is a new spirit in Germany, urging the people to seek consolation for defeat in religion. The younger Germans define the new movement as "a spirit of getting away from crass acceptance of outward prosperity and power founded on force." One who knows anything of the German clergy's utterances during the war, and their attitude for some years preceding it, can only feel loathing at such pious moralizing. Again and again in Germany *Vorwärts* and other Socialist newspapers appealed to the clergy to cultivate a more pacific spirit among the people. Had Germany's spiritual advisers, particularly those of the Prussian State Church, done so, it is certain that the military clique would have had great difficulty in dragging the country into war at all. The road to international brotherhood is through the co-operation of those in all countries who believe in emancipating the human mind from religious superstition. For it is this particular form of superstition that breeds others in endless variety.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham said recently that Protestants are bewildered by the conflicting doctrines of various bodies, that they abandon the practice of religion altogether and take their chance of what will come after death. This reminds us of Adam Lindsay Gordon's dying stock-rider, who declared:—

I should live the same life over if I had to live again,
And the chances are I go where most men go.

The natural cowardice of men and women has always been the priest's greatest asset. When they are fearless enough to "take their chance," and not mean enough to want to go where most men do not go, they will devote their energies to one world at a time, and will not pay bishops or archbishops or anybody else to save their souls.

At the recent meeting of the Catholic Confederation of England and Wales several speakers declared that a Roman Catholic could not be a Socialist, and urged members to use their influence to oppose all association between the co-operative movement and the Labour Party. It was afterwards officially announced that this attitude is not endorsed by the Roman Catholic hierarchy here. The *Co-operative News*, referring to the incident, says that "there are many exemplary Catholics who are at the same time quite exemplary co-operators and exemplary Labourists." Exactly what qualities enter into the composition of the latter may be a matter of dispute, but as long as Labour behaves itself the Roman Catholics, like the other religious bodies, would much rather use it than rouse its hostility. If, on the other hand, Labour becomes a real force in the political life of England, and proves intractable—for instance, by insisting upon secular education, or by singing "The Red Flag" in a loud voice—it is not unlikely that the Roman Catholics will debar their flock from membership in the Party, and they may even organize their own trade unions, as they did in Germany and other parts of Europe.

The October number of *The East and the West*, a missionary publication, shows how Christianity spreads the spirit of brotherhood. The Society for Propagating the Gospel and the London Missionary Society have long been working in the Telugu country, and claim that their work had put an end to the feud between the two principal tribes. Now an American Baptist Mission has started

operations in seventy-six separate villages in the territory, and introduced an element of animosity into the Christian communities. Roman Catholic missionaries in parts of what used to be German East Africa long ago made the same complaint about Protestant missions there. Abroad, Christianity thrives upon the ignorance of native races; at home, it whines about the tendencies of modern thought.

The *Christian World* (October 6) contains an advertisement of *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks*, by Colonel Garnier, author of *The Great Pyramid*. Over forty years ago the Fifteen Puzzle was engaging the attention of a section of the public, and even accomplished mathematicians passed judgment on it, among them R. A. Proctor, the astronomer. In an article on the Puzzle he said there was "proof positive" that the architects of the Great Pyramid had studied it, and were acquainted with the distance of Alpha Centauri, the nearest of the stars.

The Fifteen Problem admits of 20,922,789,880,000 distinct positions. Now, all the best measurements of the distance of Alpha Centauri indicate rather more than twenty billions of miles.....They could not have learned this by any observations possible in their time. Hence we have further evidence of supernaturally imparted knowledge.

Proctor said his remarks were taken quite seriously by some "rather dull-brained readers."

According to the *Catholic Herald* (October 1), Cardinal Gasquet declared recently that "dogmatically, the Established Church stood for confusion and chaos." The Cardinal believes, we gather from our contemporary, that the dissolution of the Anglican Church is at hand, and that men will have to choose between the Catholic religion and Agnosticism. We give the Cardinal and his followers a tip, free, gratis and for nothing. Instead of using the word "Agnosticism" in this connection, always insist that the choice is between Rome and Atheism. The latter is far more effectual as the villain of the piece. Nowadays reverent Agnostics are as plentiful as flies round a sugar-basin in the height of summer.

The same issue of our contemporary advertises a luminous crucifix (small size 2s. each, or three for 5s.), illustrated by a wood-cut showing electrical rays emanating from a crucified Christ, and strongly resembling the familiar advertisements that proclaim "another great triumph for electricity." This luminous crucifix is "eminently calculated to inspire devotion, and speak to the heart by night as by day." Yet our modern apologists contrast their pure religion with the "mythology" of the ancient world.

Another item from the *Catholic Herald* may be worth noting. An English traveller, we are assured, has paid a glowing tribute to the Catholic peasant in Italy. Many of the Tyrolese, he says, can neither read nor write, yet they are scholars and mystics in their way. He praises highly their manners and bearing, whereupon the *Herald* comments: "Where the Catholic Church has a fair field, she makes even of peasants, poor though they may be, the kings and queens among the human race." Illiteracy is a big price to pay even for this result, but we do not think the gentlemanly manners are due to Romish influence. Much the same story comes from Westerners who have visited Russia, and deplore the passing of the "unspoiled peasant." The "spoiling" process in man's onward march is undoubtedly a bad thing for those who thrive on superstition.

Canon Horsley declares that "our inner consciousness, our personal experience, assures us" that the story of the fall of man is true. It is a drama, and with the parable of the prodigal son "affords a broad basis for the teaching of morality." The geographical situation of Eden, and the name we give to the original pair, whether Adam and Eve or anything else, are things that do not matter. Hence, Canon Horsley would teach the story to children, and extract a moral lesson from it. That such stories as the fall and the six days' creation present no difficulty to

the professional soul-saver is intelligible enough to those who know anything of the theological mind. He is too seriously concerned with "inspired truth" to adopt any other attitude. Only when sincere laymen, themselves the fathers of boys and girls, revolt against the foisting upon defenceless childhood of stories of uncertain date and authorship, and proved to be inconsistent with the teachings of science, will the claims still put forward for the Bible be finally abandoned. Those claims are more impudent than the old ones based on verbal inspiration.

The Hon. George Coventry, heir of Lord Durhurst, was married recently at Carmarthen. The Bishop of St. David's officiated, assisted by the Archbishop of Wales and the Bishop of Coventry. The presents, which were valued at over £250,000, included many from members of the royal family. At a time when there is said to be a dearth of clergymen, especially in the Established Church, when Press and pulpit and parliament are vociferously urging the practice of economy, and when denunciations of Materialism are the stock-in-trade of all our spiritual advisers, we earnestly commend these details to the notice of the toiling masses, so significantly called the "flock" by our Christian Great-hearts.

We have often reported cases in which members of the clergy have done as they ought not to have done, and it is all the more incumbent on us to report when the clergy show a better sense of the fitness of things. The secretary of the Church Reform League told the Church Congress the other day that the clergy were dying and retiring twice as fast as they were being ordained. The sentence is a little mixed, but we excuse that on account of the cheerful quality of the report.

Mr. E. W. Evans, a Christadelphian, says that the story of the curse uttered in Eden, because of transgression, is literally true, and that it is "well-nigh past comprehension" that it should be held up to ridicule, in view of the unanimous consent of human experience to its literal truth. What is even more incomprehensible is that an influential journal, even in the London suburbs, where intellectual difficulties in regard to religion soon run to seed, can find half a column of space to "prove" the story.

After the Anglicans the Congregationalists. The latter have also been meeting in conference and find that their problems are very similar. There is not only a dearth of candidates for the ministry, but those offering are not of the right quality. This is one of the most hopeful signs in the present outlook for Freethought. Human nature, after all, is not on quite such easy terms with its conscience that men of fine personality can be found in the twentieth century to find "spiritual truths" in intellectual and moral falsehood.

In a discussion on "Best Books" in the *Daily Mail*, some correspondents mentioned the Bible. This brought a very pertinent reply from another writer who pointed out that the Bible is not a book, nor is it an English book, but a translation of some Oriental works. A palpable hit!

The Bishop of Bangor looks forward quite confidently and joyfully to the time when Christians shall be united together in one body. And he pictures a time when all the Nonconformist ministers will come in a body asking to be confirmed, and requesting ordination. We question the rush of Nonconformists, but it is a wonderful thing to dream about. The satire of a Church which has always had its mouth filled with the cant of love and brotherhood, thinking it to be a tremendous thing that one day Christians themselves may live together without quarrelling, is delicious. And the point of the whole thing is that it is Christians who by their quarrelsome temper keep the whole world in a state of readiness for war which sooner or later precipitates it. Christianity is the most gigantic hypocrisy that the world has ever known.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 23, South Place, London; October 30, Birmingham; November 6, Swansea; November 13, Leicester; November 20, Liverpool; November 27, Ton Pentre; December 4, Friars Hall, London; December 11, Birmingham; December 18, Golder's Green.

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.

W. T. NEWMAN.—The account you send reads convincingly, but then it is written with the intention to convince, and in all such matters the unintentional omission of small details would materially alter the whole complexion of the matter. And so far as we know there is no more evidence for spirit photography of any great value than there is for the photographs of fairies about which we read. With regard to the Fellowship, see "N. S. S. Notes" in this issue.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

There were crowded halls, morning and evening, at Mr. Cohen's lectures at Glasgow on Sunday last, and rather lively questions and discussion on both occasions. It was pleasing also to note the large number of young men and women present and the keen interest with which the lectures were followed. This was the opening of the Glasgow Branch's lecture season, and it augurs well for the forthcoming meetings. There was also, we learn, a good sale of literature, with many enquiries for Mr. Cohen's new work, *A Grammar of Freethought*. The President of the Branch, Mr. Hales, occupied the chair in the morning, and Mr. Lancaster in the evening.

To-day (October 23) Mr. Cohen occupies the platform at South Place Institute. His subject is of first-rate interest to all Freethinkers, and should be of value to all who cherish freedom of thought and speech. It is "Freethought, Blasphemy, and the Law." We hope that Freethinkers will make a special point of advertising this lecture among their, more or less religious, acquaintances, and so help to bring the importance of free speech and the iniquity of the present state of the law home to as many as possible. South Place is within a few minutes' walk of Liverpool Street Station, Great Eastern Railway, and can be easily reached by 'bus or tram from all parts

of London. The lecture will commence at 3.30, and admission is free.

In his lecture on "A New Age of Reason" at South Place last Sunday Mr. A. B. Moss ably reviewed the work of the great Freethinkers of the nineteenth century from Paine to Foote. He made an appeal to all those who had inwardly discarded supernatural beliefs to declare their opinions fearlessly. By so doing they could not give offence to any honest man or woman. This afternoon Mr. Cohen will lecture on "Freethought, Blasphemy, and the Law." Mr. Moss will take the chair at 3.30, and we hope there will be a crowded house.

To-day (October 23) Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures twice in the Rusholme Public Hall, Dickenson Road, Rusholme, Manchester. In the afternoon at 3 o'clock his subject will be "Secularism Caricatured," and in the evening at 6.30 "The Bankruptcy of the Christian Religion." We shall be pleased to hear of large audiences at both meetings. Tea will be provided at a moderate charge.

Mr. E. Clifford Williams will lecture this evening (October 23) for the Birmingham Branch N. S. S. in the Picture House, Station Street. The subject is "Love the Redeemer," and the chair will be taken at 7 o'clock.

Lord Dawson, physician to the King, delivered an outspoken address on sex problems and birth-control at the Church Congress meeting in Birmingham last week. In the camp of Orthodoxy and Respectability his remarks have had the effect of a high-explosive bombshell. Hence, Dr. C. V. Drysdale's address on "Neo-Malthusianism and Secularism" this evening (October 23) at the North London Branch of the N. S. S., 15 Victoria Road, N.W., is certainly topical and should attract a large audience.

The Oaths Amendment Act was passed in 1888, more than thirty years ago, and some judges have not yet got over their opposition to it. They cannot do away with it, but they appear determined to make those who avail themselves of it as uncomfortable as possible. On October 2 Mr. J. Breese was summoned to attend as a juror at Birmingham Quarter Sessions. In one of the cases to be tried the prisoner refused to speak and the Assistant Recorder, Mr. Atkinson, before swearing in the jury said the issue to be tried by them was whether the prisoner was "mute of malice or by act of God." When the oath was administered to the rest of the jury Mr. Breese asked to affirm, and the affirmation was administered, with the proposed addition that he would try whether the man's refusal to speak was by act of God. The following then occurred, which I take from the *Birmingham Mail*:

Juror: I can hardly use those words, sir.

Mr. Attenborough: Very well. Please leave the box, but don't leave the Court. Stay here all day. Another juror who raised the same objection was treated in the same way.

Now, so far as we are aware a similar case has not before occurred, but that does not remove the injustice involved in the case. We also believe that the judge was acting correctly in administering the formula in the way he did, although it is high time that such a ridiculous one was wiped away. We have taken legal opinion on the matter, and are informed, as we anticipated, that the Oaths Act does not touch the case, which only provides for the omission of any words of imprecation or calling to witness, and this was not part of the oath required. Nevertheless, the intention of the Act is plain, and that was to relieve persons who had an objection to the use of these religious formulæ, and the judge would, we think, have been within his rights had he so modified the formula as to meet the legitimate objection of a juror ready to do his duty, but who had a genuine objection to the form in which he was asked to do it. And, assuming that even this was not within the power of the Assistant Recorder, it was plainly a vindictive act to compel these two men to remain in court all day when they were clearly informed that their services would not be required. It was sentencing them to a day's imprisonment for

having an opinion and acting up to it. Here, again, the judge was within his right in so doing, but that does not alter the character of his action. It is a pity that both the jurors did not walk out of court and leave the judge to act as he thought fit. He could, and perhaps would, have then ordered their committal for contempt of court, but in that case an application could have been made to a higher court, and the judge's conduct made the subject of a hearing. As the matter now stands we can only protest in the strongest possible manner against what was done, and congratulate both gentlemen on the stand they made. We are calling the attention of the Home Office to the case, but we are not sanguine of any result. What is required, apparently, is an amendment to the Act.

In a leading article on "Modern Churchmen and the Younger Generation" the *Challenge* (October 7) says that the young men of to-day are interested in Christianity scientifically as well as emotionally. It quotes the case of a youth who asked his father, a churchwarden, for information on the Synoptic problem. "I never heard of it was the reply." Our contemporary thinks that the results of modern scholarship, and their bearing on the faith, should no longer be withheld from the people, though there may have been some justification for doing so, "while these results were still purely tentative." The plain English of all this is that it is impossible nowadays to prevent young men and women from discovering the truth concerning Christ and the Gospels, and the mythical nature of a large part of the so-called sacred record.

Such articles as this, however, deserve the attention of all Freethinkers. If the Church can make a strenuous effort to revive interest in a worn-out supernaturalism, handicapped with the doctrine of human depravity, surely we can enlist the support of a section of England's youth in behalf of a system which spends all its energy on human service and the present life. The Protestant sects in England—and everywhere else for that matter—are past all surgery. Are we making the most of our opportunities?

A Buddhist reader informs us that:—

The renaissance of Buddhism in the Far East is causing a great deal of uneasiness to the Christian missionaries, and is really the most powerful means of countering their mischievous activities. Also the re-arranging of Buddhism in India proper is another means of helping to destroy the lying imposture and superstition of the Brahman priesthood. The Hindu caste system is the curse of India, and until it is destroyed there is no hope and no future for the Indian peoples.

We should imagine from our own correspondence that that awakening is going on far more rapidly than most people at home are aware of. We know that our own readers in India are increasing, and we are receiving more applications for Freethought literature in general. And when the awakening does come we do not think that the half-gods will receive much hospitality. We doubt whether those peculiar people who have ceased to be believers in God but do not like to say anything against it, and are in mortal fear lest the rest of the world should think they are without a religion, will get much encouragement.

There is no band of Freethinkers in any part of the country who have worked more persistently and more earnestly than the Birmingham Branch. Its President for the last twenty years has been Mr. R. G. Fathers. Mr. Fathers is now giving up office, and the members have very properly decided to present him with a testimonial as a mark of their personal respect and appreciation of his work. We are delighted to see that this is being done, and we are making this announcement for two reasons; first, to show our personal appreciation of Mr. Fathers and of his work for the Freethought cause, and secondly, to give old members of the Birmingham Branch who may be in other parts of the country an opportunity of associating themselves with a well-earned act of recognition of a loyal worker in the greatest of all causes. The Secretary of the Branch is Mr. J. Partridge, 245 Shenstone Road, Rotton Park, Birmingham.

Euripides at University College, London.

THE *Bacchæ* of Euripides is an almost unique piece of literature, of especial interest to Freethinkers, and its performance in Greek at University College last week is an event that deserves a passing note. The drama presents the story of the introduction into Greece of Dionysus, a Saviour-God, born of Semele, daughter of Cadmus, and begotten of Zeus, "the father of gods and men," who appears to her in a blaze of supernatural lightning. He partakes of both the divine and the human nature.

The story of Dionysus in the religious cults of Greece reveals many interesting features as well as some parallels with the rites and doctrines prominent in several other systems of worship, ancient and modern. Walter Pater explained the religion of Dionysus as an outgrowth of primitive tree-worship, which was itself a part of the wider belief that all "trees and flowers are indeed habitations of living spirits." Now the particular tree which figured most largely in the life of the Greeks of every race and class was the vine, and Dionysus became its special god. But as a god he was peculiarly beloved by the common folk. He is not one of the original members of the great Olympian hierarchy: rather is he at first "despised and rejected of men." Eventually, however, he is adopted into the Olympian family as the son of Zeus.

There is no doubt whatever that the worship of Dionysus was grafted on to the Orphic mysteries. Those initiated into these mysteries laid special stress on the need of purification from sin, they had to be "born again"; symbol and ritual were of high significance, and the expectancy of reward or punishment in the after-life was a dominant influence. A highly important religious survival, carried over into Orphism from prehistoric times, was belief in the efficacy of sacrifice, of blood. Teiresias, the aged seer, pleads for Dionysus in the drama:—

This is the God-begotten one, whose outpoured blood
Maketh our peace with all the Gods, and so
Through him we too have won the gift of life.

The Orphic congregations of later times, Professor Gilbert Murray tells us, solemnly partook of the blood of a bull, which was, by a mystery, the blood of Dionysus himself, the "Bull of God," slain as a "sacrifice for the purification of man."

Exactly how far the picture given to us in the *Bacchæ* of Dionysus and his reception in Greece represents historical truth, it is impossible to say, but what we do know of the later development of the cult is of interest as showing how religious elements that appeal to the popular mind become absorbed into the older and more established beliefs. Euripides himself is usually spoken of by the critics as a "rationalist." His own attitude, however, to the Dionysus cult, as revealed in this drama, has been the subject of almost endless dispute, the details of which we do not intend to inflict upon the innocent readers of the *Freethinker*. For our present purpose it suffices to state that the central figure of the play is only one of the many Saviour-Gods that have come to proclaim to oppressed humanity the way of salvation and the coming of the kingdom, and on examination each of them will be found to bear strange resemblances to its predecessor.

VIATOR.

Human sacrifice, symbolic or actual, was adopted into the religious ceremonies of Athens. It was a growing belief which spread through successive generations, and prepared the way in the end for the reception of the doctrine of the Christian Atonement. But before the key to the mystery was revealed, the frightful conception inspired the purest minds in Greece with a repugnance proportional to the fascination which it exercised on the multitude.—James Anthony Froude.

Writers and Readers.

BEN JONSON, SHAKESPEARE AND THE
ANTI-STRATFORDIANS.

I SHALL be surprised if the reader who has the happiness to share my interest in the amenities of literature has not frequently regretted the cessation of hostilities between the Right Hon. J. M. Robertson and Sir George Greenwood. The witty and always urbane altercations of these two champions of Shakespearean orthodoxy and Shakespearean heterodoxy used to be the one bright spot in the somewhat operose pages of a monthly devoted to the propaganda of Rationalism. They justified to a certain extent the claim put forward in the title of the journal. But it would appear that these spasmodic attempts to live up to its title, to become what it only pretended to be—a guide to English letters—were not appreciated by its more serious minded readers. Naturally enough, the editor and his friends had the thoroughgoing contempt of high-browed Rationalists for mere Shakespearean frivolities, and our two amiable combatants had no option but to find another field of battle. Those of us who are curious in these light matters have the habit of scanning the publishers' advertisements for any signs of renewed hostilities. I was lucky enough to come across one the other day in the shape of a pamphlet of sixty pages by Sir George Greenwood entitled *Ben Jonson and Shakespeare* (Cecil Palmer, 3s. 6d. net).

The author of this light-hearted attack on the good faith of Ben Jonson, the sheet-anchor of the belief in the Stratford Shakespeare, is, like his friend Mr. Robertson, an uncompromising Freethinker both in philosophy and religion; but, unlike Mr. Robertson, he carries his natural scepticism to the length of rejecting the traditional Shakespearean belief. He seems not to be able to understand how intelligent Freethinkers who are also students of our national poet can be so perversely wrong-headed as not to share his infidelity. Now, Mr. Robertson, as my readers are aware, professes a rational and unashamed faith in the genius of the so-called "rustic of Stratford-on-Avon," one William Shakespeare. In supporting his belief he is very careful not to play into the hands of the Baconians and anti-Stratfordians. His critical acumen, or, as he would prefer to call it, the scientific method, which comes to pretty much the same thing, has helped him to avoid the assumptions and over-statements of Sir Sidney Lee and the late Churton Collins. He never converts the merely possible into the probable, and the merely probable into the factual. He is prepared to admit that what we know about Shakespeare personally can be written on a sheet of notepaper, but, as Mr. G. C. Macaulay once pointed out, we know even less of Beaumont, Webster and Ford whose names, for all we know, may have masked the personality of an aristocrat or syndicate of aristocrats of the period. Mr. Robertson is also wise enough not to hand Shakespeare over to the enemy by insisting on his classical and legal learning. In fact, he brings to the subject that masculine common sense, combined with an intimate knowledge of the period, which was the characteristic of eighteenth century criticism. The work he is now doing on the *Canon of Shakespeare* in preparation, I take it, for his *magnum opus*, a polychrome edition of the poet, will give him the place of honour between Malone and Stevens, and this in spite of the pointless depreciation of his work by certain academic critics who resent the encroachment of an independent outsider on what they regard as their private preserves.

Sir George Greenwood, as some of my readers will remember, is a man of ready wit and ample leisure. His mission in life, judging by the zest he contrives to put into it, is to stir up the orthodox Shakespearean. It is rather easy work when he confines his attention to Sir Sidney Lee who, in spite of his Hebrew origin, is as fatuously solemn as a Scottish professor of moral philosophy. Sir George has always found his friend Mr. Robertson, a harder nut to crack, and, in their little encounters, he has often escaped by the skin of his teeth. His critical

attitude to Shakespeare may be put briefly thus: The name "Shakespeare" which was first given to the public on the dedicatory page of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) had been adopted as a convenient mask-name. Later, many people wrote under that name besides the real "Shakespeare" whoever he may have been, and they did it unrebuked and unrestrained. Several men of high position, but, more especially *one man of high position and of supreme genius*, wrote plays under that name. Shakespeare the actor-manager figured as "honest broker" for these plays. He received them, put them on the stage if they suited him, and they became, presumably, the property of the Company. They became "Shakespeare's" plays and the authorship was generally attributed to him, although it must have been known that whoever was the real "Shakespeare," many of the plays were not "Shakespearean" at all.

Now like Emerson, Henry James, and other people not intimately acquainted with Elizabethan literature Sir George is unable to wed the "man from Stratford" to the great plays. He is not, however, prepared to say that they were written by Francis Bacon, an ascription savouring of crankiness, nor does he give his support to the theories put forward from time to time by alien scholars who cannot be expected to appreciate the subtler element in English poetry, or by Englishmen suffering from chronic literary anaesthesia. He will have nothing to do with M. Abel Lefranc, who backs the Earl of Derby, or with Mr. J. T. Looney, who puts his money on the Earl of Oxford, although he is condescending enough to quote these gentlemen when they happen to support his purely negative theory. This theory, I am ready to admit, has a certain value. It helps to counteract the tendency of critics and biographers of Shakespeare to build on conjecture, and when it is presented with critical acumen it is valuable alike to the believer and to the infidel. But unfortunately we find Sir George indulging in conjectures as patent as any in the official life of the poet. His pamphlet is supposed to controvert the testimony of Ben Jonson, which Mr. Robertson holds is "monumental and irrefragable." Jonson wrote the verses in praise of Shakespeare prefixed to the Folio of 1623; he was the most important literary figure of the time, and it "cannot reasonably be doubted" that he was called in to write the Preface *To the Great Variety of Readers* signed by the players Heminge and Condell.

Now all we are entitled to say is that Jonson may have been called in to edit the Folio, that he may have written the two prefaces because there are phrases that suggest his style, but when Sir George puts off his customary judicial balance, when he writes with the object of making Jonson a liar, and tells us that "As writer of the prefaces, and closely associated with the preparation and publication of the Folio he was guilty of the *suggestio falsi* concerning the "stolen and surreptitious topics," we pass at once from conjecture to certainty. We do not know that Jonson was called in to edit the Folio and we must leave it at that. We certainly cannot convict him of a *suggestio falsi* on such flimsy evidence. It is the same with Sir George's arguments from Jonson's epigram *Poet Ape*, which is brought in to show that the "man from Stratford" was first a broker and then a purloiner of plays. There is "little doubt," we are told, that the lines refer to Shakespeare. One would expect a consensus of scholarly opinion on this point if there is "little doubt" of it. As a matter of fact, the identification is pure conjecture, and is dismissed with contempt by Mr. Gregory Smith in his excellent study of Ben Jonson (*English Men of Letters Series*). Indeed, the whole thesis is a sequence of conjectures raised by critical bluff to the dignity of facts with the object of "proving" that Jonson was "fully cognisant of the true authorship of the plays therein (the Folio of 1623) given to the world," and that his association with the publication of the Folio and his knowledge of the authorship "coloured the cryptic utterances of his old age." Those of us who are wont to read alike for pleasure and profit Sir George's witty onslaughts on the orthodox Shakespeareans are surprised to find him following so closely the unbalanced critical method of Sir Sidney Lee. The credit of Jonson

is not to be lowered by conjecture, and we who have no theory to bolster up are quite content to wait for the facts—if there are any.

The New Cambridge Shakespeare.

Following the order of the first Folio the second volume of the Cambridge Shakespeare is *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Cambridge University Press, 6s.). It is probably an old play re-cast by Shakespeare in his prentice-days before he had acquired his wonderful power of creative representation, and, what is more, re-cast in a hurried and perfunctory fashion. The amazing final scene in which Valentine, as Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch says, "empties the baby with the bath, and, after pardoning his false friend, proceeds to give away (in every sense) his most loyal lady-love to her would-be ravisher" has taxed the ingenuity of commentators who think that the "man from Stratford" is responsible for the whole of the play. When Mr. J. M. Robertson has applied his analytical method to it we shall be in a better position to say what are the traces of the master hand. Anyhow, I don't think he will deprive us of these verses:—

Poor wounded name : my bosom, as a bed
Shall lodge thee till thy wound be thoroughly healed—
Who would be trusted, when one's own right hand
Is perjured to the bosom.

The system of punctuation discovered by the editors helps the dramatic delivery and enforces the verse-rhythm. The study of it by Shakespearean players ought to do much to make the delivery of blank verse on the stage a pure delight for sensitive ears.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Correspondence.

"TO BE, OR NOT TO BE."
TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I read with interest what appeared in the *Freethinker* of October 2, on the interview with Sir Oliver Lodge, who believes that there is a life beyond the grave, that "the intelligences on the other side have no material bodies, and, therefore, cannot make any direct impression upon us, because of our limitations." Sir Conan Doyle, a doctor of medicine, who ought, by his education, to know more than Sir Oliver Lodge as to the nervous system, is also a believer in a future life. One of my most intelligent correspondents began to study Spiritualism when a sceptic, but after two years of study is a believer, and has again begun to pray, which he had not done for thirty years. When in practice at Manchester in the 'seventies of last century, I had a patient who, along with his wife, was a Spiritualist, and had mediums from London at seances which I attended. I detested them imposing upon the credulity of the sitters, but there were some things occurred which I could not explain; nevertheless, after studying the subject I have come to the conclusion that we are mere machines, that what is called mind has been mistaken for a soul, and that death is the end of us. Others, such as Carlyle, have come to the same conclusion, but it will be a long time before the majority will give up their belief in immortality.

The evidence in the Bible as to a future life has hitherto been held to be sufficient by the clergy, but now some of those in the Established Church of Scotland seem desirous of evidence through their senses, seeing that that Church has appointed a committee to enquire into the subject of Spiritualism. If we are mere machines, and have no soul either to save or damn, what will become of the clergy, and, indeed, the Christian religion? Even now it has lost its hold upon the people, the clergy have lost the awe they once inspired, and comparatively few go to church. Sensual immorality is increasing, venereal disease is making sad havoc among the young of both sex, juvenile crime is deplorable, so that it is full time that philanthropists should lay their heads together and do what can be done to improve the moral sense of the people. Our grandfathers never doubted the existence of the soul, and believed in hell as a place of eternal tor-

ment. It was through the fear of hell they were kept from doing what they regarded as sinful, and there can be little doubt that the increase of immorality is due to the loss of the fear of hell as a place where the souls of sinners would be punished. It is by fear, fear of pain, that man can train the lower animals and keep them from doing wrong, and it is by fear that man himself is being perfected. Fear of bodily pain prevents him from injuring himself, and fear of mental pain, remorse, will, in time, keep him from injuring others. The soul has hitherto been man's chief care, but when its existence is no longer believed in the body will receive that attention which the soul has hitherto had.

With a view to settling the question of the existence of the soul, it would be well to enquire how such an idea originated. When I came to the conclusion that there is no soul I thought I would have some difficulty in disproving Plato's arguments in proof of its immortality, but when I studied Plato's words I was astonished to find that he took the existence of the soul for granted. He does not seem to have had any doubts as to its existence, but it is well to doubt and be resolved to prove everything so far as possible. The belief in spirits was a sort of instinct. Primitive man when he saw the lightning and heard the thunder could not help thinking that someone was thundering. He called the agent a spirit, and peopled the world with spirits. In time he thought there was only one spirit; but the scientist can find no evidence of the existence of even one spirit, and the only spirits I can recognize are the spirits of good and evil in the human heart.

How to make our children good ought to be the aim of our education authorities, and as the child is father of the man if children were good, men and women would be good, and there would be no need of churches or the clergy. If, however, the clerical profession is to be continued the education of the clergy should be changed.

At present they are educated for the ministry, and taught to believe certain doctrines and dogmas. If in after years they should have any doubt of the truth of such teaching, what a dilemma they would be in. They would either abandon the profession or become hypocrites. How few could afford to leave their churches; hence the majority of them would continue to pretend to believe what they no longer could. But it is not possible to take a young man and make a minister of him, for, like a poet, the minister is born and not made. The same is true of the physician, for unless a youth has the power of observation he will never be a good physician. My medical education handicapped me, and from the story of the good Samaritan it may be that the education of the clergy ruins their character. They were both clerics who passed and took no notice of the disabled man. Thus, then, if a spirit is a creation of human ignorance, and if death is an endless, dreamless sleep, it is full time that our children should be taught the truth, and what is called religious education prevented from being taught in our schools.

JOHN HADDON, M.D.

THE MYTH OF JESUS.

SIR,—I have been reading recent allusions to the so-called founder of Christianity, and I think that when all is told, really too much has been made of the subject. It is worn threadbare; the topic and the personality have invaded quite too great a space on the stage of modern critical literature. The personage of Jesus is made to dwarf those of the great moralists and reformers of antiquity, Sakya, Mouni, Confucius and Socrates. The life of this Messiah of the Jews, the most barbarous people of the time, is devoid of human interest, without any truly impressive features, the life of an ignorant but presumptuous fanatic with insensate notions, of an artful quibbler and a professional mystic, yet who had not enough foresight and prudence to steer clear of the fatal consequences of his sayings and doings. He established no new morality to supersede the ancient Hebrew ethics, while the practical sides of his exhortations were lamentably unfitted for adoption by any human community. The injunction to offer the unassaulted cheek after the assault of the other is insane, and subversive of all that makes life tolerable in this world of evil; as Thomas Paine has aptly put it, it "degenerates man into a spaniel." The invitation to abandon kith and kin, wife

and husband, to follow the lead of the Prophet of Nazareth, is a selfish monopoly of the natural rights of others, calculated to involve pernicious consequences in social life. Instead of approving of resistance to unlawful aggression, this sapient teacher suggests the *encouragement* of a repetition of the misdeed, and instead of enjoining the performance of one's duties to one's connections, he calls on one to *shirk* them, by turning one's back on those nearest and dearest in the sacred family circle. The oft-cited "Sermon on the Mount" is a farrago of rhapsodical nonsense, brimful of the mysticism and vaticinatory verbiage which were the stock-in-trade of the ancient seers, and so congenial to the hearts of credulous followers. Barring the disputatious acumen of Jesus, and his thaumaturgical exploits, there really remains nothing remarkable about his character, even in the light of evangelical record, doubtful as that medium of information has been abundantly proved to be. The Talmud, Josephus, Tacitus and a few pagan writers allude to Jesus quite incidentally, and he and his adherents were obscure. Nevertheless, the unquenchable thirst for mysteries, inherent in mankind, and the interested motives of the churches have created and perpetuated the colossal superstition prevailing to this day.

All the world's great reformers have endeavoured to make the best of a bad job, while Jesus, disregarding facts and indulging in fancies, sought to turn human nature into the impossible thing which twenty centuries of his doctrines have failed to evolve.

F. STERNS FADELLE.

SIR,—Mr Robert Arch, citing the passage "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God," which occurs in the three first Gospels, observes that "It is inconceivable that it should have been written of a person who had never lived at all."

Professor Schmiedel, in his article on "The Gospels" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, selects nine short verses from different parts of the Gospels in proof of the historical existence of Jesus, discarding all the rest, but the quotation given by Mr. Arch is not among them, so evidently he did not attach any importance to it, and the reason is obvious. "The kingdom of God" was not a Christian idea introduced by Christianity, as the vast majority of Christians believe. The Jews looked forward to a coming Messiah who would establish "The kingdom of God" hundreds of years before the alleged advent of Christ, and every orthodox Jew prays for that coming to-day just as their ancestors did when the Psalms and Isaiah were written.

As for the Epistles speaking of the "Brethren of the Lord," and the "Lord's brother." As we have shown in our articles, the Christians took over and incorporated our Jewish writings. For instance, the *Didache*, or "Teaching of the Twelve," the first six chapters contain no mention of Jesus, only "the Lord," the remaining ten chapters containing the name of Jesus are a late Christian addition (see J. M. Robertson, *The Jesus Problem*). "Brethren of the Lord," then, would be disciples or followers of the Lord, not blood relations. And, of course, a single member would be described as a brother of the Lord.

As to Mr. Arch's belief in the authenticity of the Pauline Epistles, it is impossible to deal with a subject like that in a letter, but has Mr. Arch acquainted himself with the mass of criticism dealing with this subject? If not, his opinion alone is not of much value.

In reply to "Unorthodox," I should like to point out that in his first letter he objected to Dr. Carpenter's description of the journey to Golgotha as "long," on the ground that he had a work—no author's name or title given—which gave the distance as about seventy-five yards. In reply, I pointed out that there are several sites given by different authorities, and that Professor Adam Smith declares the site to be unknown. "Unorthodox" now produces his trump card, an illustration of Golgotha which he says adorns the mysterious work before mentioned, and he wonders if the rival sites can present such evidence in support of their claims! I have no hesitation in assuring "Unorthodox" that with the aid of a camera equal evidence could be produced for the rival

sites, even should they number a hundred. "Unorthodox" reminds me of the gentleman who believed in Baptism "because he had seen it done."

"Unorthodox" further informs us that the proceedings before the Sanhedrim did not consist of a trial, but a conspiracy. It is always described in Christian works as a trial. And, indeed, there would be no need to seek for witnesses to come and testify against Jesus if they were only conspiring against and not trying him. Of course, the Sanhedrim had no power to punish by death, but I never asserted they had.

Then "Unorthodox" says that Jesus was delivered to Pilate in the early morning. Matthew says, "When morning was come." Well, morning does not come very early in the last days of December, therefore this leaves less time than ever for the events narrated. For Pilate sends Jesus to Herod "who questioned him with many words" (Luke xxiii. 9), and when he answered nothing, arrayed him in a robe and mocked him. Herod then returns Jesus to Pilate, where he is tried and again mocked by Pilate's soldiers. All this takes place between daybreak, at the end of a December day, and nine o'clock!

Really, "Unorthodox" makes the case worse instead of better.

W. MANN.

National Secular Society Notes.

READERS of this journal are already aware of the suggested formation of a Freethinker Fellowship League. Those interested were invited to communicate with me, so that a meeting could be called to ship the fellows who were willing to league with each other, find them officers and send them on their journey with our blessing! Maybe the holiday season is responsible for the very poor response, so, following the Executive's instructions, I again invite all those living in either town or country to send me their names and addresses within the next fortnight, say by November 7, and if the replies warrant it, a preliminary meeting will be called at the N. S. S. office, and the results reported to provincial friends.

New readers of the *Freethinker* often wonder what the N. S. S. is, and what it stands for. They *mean* to enquire, but go on *meaning* for years. In order to bring these friends into the fold and also to give individual members, living in distant parts, the fullest information, our booklet, *General Information for Freethinkers*, has been compiled, and you can obtain a copy from me, at the N. S. S. office, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, for the small sum of twopenny, post free. Send a 2d. stamp and ascertain how Freethinkers get married, buried, affirm, form a Branch of the N. S. S., arrange for lecturers, obtain literature, and otherwise conduct their affairs as free and rational beings.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

Evolution—A Lover's Rendering.

WORLDS have been shattered and races died,
From the wreck of skies have fallen stars,
And all the tragic story was for this—
That you should live in beauty, and should love.

Gaunt saurians have wallowed in the slime
And fought with hairy barbarous men;
Life strove with death and won, though dying,
That you should live in beauty, and should love.

Winds whispered and wailed about the earth,
Tempests of ocean flooded the land,
And ocean's bed became the solid place,
That you should live in beauty, and should love.

And when these things had long been done and dead,
Into the fire of pain where man is born
Thy mother cast herself in sacrifice,
That you should live in beauty, and should love.

G. E. FUSSELL.

Freethought on Tyneside.

PIONEERING.

ONCE more we have carried the flag of Freethought to some of the better known, and to some of the lesser known, districts on Tyneside. Our President lectured in Newcastle after an absence of twelve years, which is not altogether a pleasing thought for reflection. We also penetrated the Derwent Valley as far as Chopwell, where a lecture upon a challenging Freethought subject was given for the first time. But while much has been done for us our work is still essentially of a pioneer nature: In Tyneside, as elsewhere, the burden of pioneer work in our cause is left in the hands of a few energetic fighters. A slight effort on the part of the goodly number of people who are undoubtedly favourable to the cause would easily ensure a steady and insistent propaganda. But let it not be thought that we are desirous of being in the least unduly censorious. The pioneer of Freethought has enough and to spare of satisfaction in payment for any effort that may be expended in furthering the Movement, the greatest Movement of all time. Where else can we contemplate any system which secures true equality as compared with Secularism? But though our progress may seem slow to some enthusiasts, it is better to build well, then the structure will stand. Our self-imposed task is of vast dimensions, mainly because the idea of Freedom has been shirked and trampled upon through the ages. Let us, therefore, persist in our Pioneering.

J. FOTHERGILL,

Secretary, South Shields Branch, N. S. S.

A RESUSCITATED GOD.

Immanuel Kant has pursued the path of inexorable philosophy; he has stormed heaven and put the whole garrison to the edge of the sword; the ontological, cosmological, and physico-theological bodyguards lie there lifeless; Deity itself, deprived of demonstration, has succumbed; there is now no All-mercifulness, no fatherly kindness, no other-world reward for renunciation in this world, the immortality of the soul lies in its death-agony—you can hear its groans and death-rattle; and old Lampe is standing by with his umbrella under his arm, an afflicted spectator of the scene, tears and sweat-drops of terror dropping from his countenance. Then Immanuel Kant relents and shows that he is not merely a great philosopher but also a good man; he reflects, and half good-naturedly, half-ironically, he says: "Old Lampe must have a God, otherwise the poor fellow can never be happy. Now, man ought to be happy in this world; practical reason says so;—well, I am quite willing that practical reason should also guarantee the existence of God." As the result of this argument, Kant distinguishes between the *theoretical reason* and the *practical reason*, and by means of the latter, as with a magician's wand, he revivifies Deism, which theoretical reason had killed.—*Heine*.

Obituary.

The South Shields Branch of the N. S. S., and Freethought generally, has sustained a serious loss owing to the removal by death of the late George Hannan. The deceased, the eldest son of the Branch chairman, was of very great promise. The sad event came quite suddenly. An operation, which was deemed successful, left no apprehension as to the satisfactory recovery of the deceased. But such was not to be the case. The interment took place on Thursday, October 13, at Harton Cemetery. A large number of relatives and friends assembled at the grave-side, where the Secular Burial Service, that of Austin Holyoake, was impressively read by Mr. J. Fothergill, Secretary of the Branch, and was attentively listened to by all present. The keenest sympathy with the bereaved is felt by our members, as well as those of other Branches throughout the district.

RALPH CHAPMAN.

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.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE. (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross): 3.30, Mr. W. Siddle, "The Development of Life."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, "What is Life?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Dr. C. V. Drysdale, "Neo-Malthusianism and Secularism."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. Marbarak Ali, B.A., "The Christian and the Moslem—Plan of Salvation."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, S. K. Ratcliffe, "A Political Pilgrimage."

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE (Finsbury Pavement, E.C.) : 3.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Freethought, Blasphemy, and the Law."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Picture House, Station Street): 7, Mr. E. Clifford Williams, "Love the Redeemer."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's): 7, Mr. Henry Crowther, "Nature Study and its Influence on the Mind."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Edgar Eagle, "The Realistic Drama."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme Public Hall, Dickenson Road, Rusholme): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Secularism Caricatured"; 6.30, "The Bankruptcy of the Christian Religion."

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *Advice to Parents*, Ingersoll; *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 1s. per hundred, post free 1s. 2d.

THREE NEW LEAFLETS.

1. *Do You Want the Truth?* C. Cohen; 7. *Does God Care?* W. Mann; 9. *Religion and Science*, A. D. McLaren. Each four pages. Price 1s. 6d. per hundred, postage 3d. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N.S.S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

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