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Views and Opinions.

An Act of God.

During a recent gale a chimney stack crashed through the roof of a house in Battersea killing a man and his granddaughter. At the inquest the coroner said, "The accident appears to have been an act of God, and I do not think that anyone was to blame." The verdict is quite a common one; it is recognized at law, and appears on all sorts of insurance documents. No one will guarantee a policy-holder against an act of God. Companies will take risks in all sorts of directions, but they usually draw the line at an "act of God." It appears that no one can count upon what he will do or when he will do it. And when he does it, he acts not merely, as the hymn book says, in a mysterious way, but, judged by all canons of human judgment, in a cowardly way. In a recent case he took advantage of a woman kneeling by the bedside to say her prayers to asphyxiate her. In the case mentioned above the poor man and his granddaughter were taken quite unawares. They were killed without warning. So also in the case of many of the earthquakes about which we read. If a volcano were kept active all the time there would be a constant warning and people would look out. But that is not the way in which "Providence" sets to work. It, or he, or she, allows just sufficient time to induce people to settle down and to feel fairly secure and then it sets to work. There is a rush and a roar, and all that is left is shattered homes and dead and maimed bodies. After that "Providence" settles down to another period of rest, like some wild animal gorged with its "kill," or turns its attention to some other part of the world. The earth is the Lord's, and he does as he pleases with his own. And those who escape his mercies—thank him for their own preservation! A wonderful thing is the religious sense!

Did God Do It?

Did that Battersea coroner really believe that the chimney fell, killing the old man and his granddaughter, as a consequence of God's action? I admit that it is sound doctrine to believe so. If the world is God's world, if all that happens happens with his knowledge and as the consequence of forces which he called into existence and directs, then it was God's act. That is quite plain, and the legal implications

are equally clear. For it is an accepted legal maxim that a man is responsible for all the consequences of his actions. If I set a huge stone rolling down a steep hill and it kills a child in its course the law will hold me responsible for the child's death, and a jury will return against me a verdict of manslaughter. If a man stood behind that chimney stack and pushed it over so that it killed the man and the child he would be guilty of either manslaughter or murder. And if God was behind the falling over of that chimney, as was deliberately asserted by the coroner, why was it accompanied by the opinion that no one was to blame? It would not do to say the falling over of the chimney was due to John Smith pushing it over, but I do not think that anyone was to blame. The coroner gave it as his deliberate opinion that God was to blame. It was an "act of God." No language could have been clearer. And the proper course would have been to have returned a verdict of murder or manslaughter against the one who was asserted to have been responsible for the deaths of those two persons. If the coroner meant what he said, he should have acted up to it. If he did not mean what he said, he should not have said it. The authorities do not like courts being treated with contempt. I suggest that one way of preventing this would be for courts so to act as not to deserve it.

* * *

If Christians Had Courage!

During the war, and in the course of an inquest on some of the victims of a raid, a jury brought in a verdict of manslaughter against the Emperor of Germany. The coroner refused the verdict on the ground that the Kaiser was beyond the jurisdiction of the court, and there was no way of executing the warrant. But the jury stuck to their guns, and somewhere in the country that verdict is on record. Now, suppose that this Battersea jury had taken the coroner at his word and returned a verdict of manslaughter against God. Would the coroner have rejected the verdict because the subject of the judgment was beyond the jurisdiction of the court? That would have been rather anomalous, because each one of the jury in taking the oath had called God into court in order to watch whether they were acting properly or not. And it would have seemed strange to have told them that all this was a mere sham and he was not there at all. Besides, a warrant could not be served on the Kaiser because we were at war with Germany. But if the Kaiser had during peace time and when visiting this country killed a man and a child by pushing a chimney over on them there would have been a demand that some sort of a trial should be held. And if that were impossible, then, I presume, this country would have broken off diplomatic relations. And here is a plain way out. If God does actually push chimneys over on people, or send earthquakes to kill them, why not have the courage to say that all diplomatic relations will be broken off until a better state of things prevails? We could stop all prayers, close the Churches, discharge all his ambassadors—the clergy—and decline all further communication or

tribute until better behaviour were promised. We could lose nothing by the experiment.

* * *

The Strain of the Savage.

Many, many centuries ago when the wild ancestor of our domesticated dog wished to lie down it first of all trampled round and round a certain space in the grass. The object was to make sure that nothing of a dangerous nature lurked where it wished to rest. To-day we see the descendant of that dog in our homes, and before resting on the quite harmless hearthrug, it solemnly turns round several times and then sinks down with a grunt of satisfaction. Many, many centuries ago when our wild ancestor shivered in terror beneath the roar of a storm or the outbreak of a volcano, or whenever something incomprehensible and nasty happened, he said it is the gods who do these things, and to appease them he grovelled before them, offered them sacrifices, and strove for their good will. Hundreds of generations pass, but the strain of the wild is still active in both dog and man. With just as little reason as the dog has for performing its revolutions before the fire, man goes through his mental revolutions before the unexpected, the incalculable, the calamitous. Tell a friend that you have had a thousand pounds left you and he will say "Lucky beggar"! Say that a mutual friend has fallen down and broken his leg, or that a ship has gone down and all aboard drowned, and he will say "Good God"!—with an unconscious emphasis on the "Good." It is another example of the re-emergence of the savage. The moment the name of God is mentioned the cloak of the civilized drops off and we are left in the skins and feathers of the cave man. The Battersea coroner does not realize this, but neither does the dog twisting about on the hearthrug appreciate the significance of his actions. If he did he would not perform them. Neither would the coroner. It is the unconscious perpetuation of the savage that keeps religion alive.

* * *

Befriending God.

If there is a God the best friend he has on earth is the Atheist. He pays him the compliment of not believing of him all that his friends and worshippers say about him. When the Battersea coroner says that God pushed over the chimney and so killed the old man and the child, which, being God, he must have known would have happened, the Atheist declines to believe it. He believes that even God should have a fair trial, and demands that something more than the coroner's bare word, based upon nothing but the coroner's ignorance of what actually occurred, is required before God should be charged with so brutal a crime. In a South African paper that has just reached me, the *Midland News*, there is a writer saying that the plague of locusts from which the country has been suffering has been sent by God, and he believes that the way to go to work is, not to kill the locusts, but to repent and please the Lord. Here, during the war there were plenty of our own parsons who assured us that the war was sent by God to remind us of the evil of our ways. The Prayer Book of the Church of England informs us that whatever be the nature of the disease from which we may be suffering, we may rest assured that the Lord sent it. Plagues, disease, earthquakes, wars, sudden deaths, all are said by the worshippers of God to be his work. Well may the Lord say, "Save me from my friends"! By comparison he must look upon Atheists with affection. They do not accuse him of any of these things. They deny that God murders old men and children, poisons the air with the germs of disease, or litters the seas with the wrecks of ships. George Jacob Holyoake once described Secularism as a religion that gave God no

trouble. So one might describe Atheism as a frame of mind that refuses to saddle God with almost every crime in the calendar, and then offer him the crowning sarcasm of praising him for his goodness. The Atheist leaves God alone. And if the gods had returned that compliment to man history would not be so plentifully sprinkled with the crimes and follies that darken its annals.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

An Anglican Church Heresy Hunt.

THE Anglican Church, like the Presbyterian Church in America and Scotland, has had almost innumerable heretics within its borders. To go no further back than the middle of the nineteenth century we find charges of heresy flung about against such great men as Dean Milman, Robertson of Brighton, Kingsley, Whately, Hare, Thirlwall, Maurice, Dean Stanley, and Benjamin Jowett. Those men were subjected for many years to a terribly bitter and cruel persecution. *Essays and Reviews*, which appeared in 1860, was denounced as a work calculated "to annihilate the authority of the Bible as the inspired Word of God," the views expressed in it being described as "erroneous, false, and anti-Christian." One of the writers, Dr. Temple, was severely rebuked by the Bishop of Exeter, who declared that "the general tenour of this unhappy work is plainly inconsistent with fidelity to the Thirty-nine Articles." Curiously enough, in 1869 Temple himself became Bishop of Exeter, and he ended his days as Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1889 *Lux Mundi* was published, and caused another fierce controversy to arise. Dr. Gore, the editor of this collection of theological essays, contributed a remarkable article on "Inspiration," a subject which, according to a review in the *Guardian*, received "bold and perilous treatment." The chief and most vehement critic of Dr. Gore and the other writers was Archdeacon Denison—"St. George without the dragon," as his friends affectionately called him—who went to the length not merely of denouncing them by letters, but of presenting a long *gravamen* in convocation and of moving a resolution of censure which, however, after a lengthy discussion, was rejected by a large majority. For many years Dr. Gore remained a suspected heretic, and there was strong opposition to his appointment as Bishop of Worcester.

In 1912 the Rev. B. H. Streeter was charged with heresy on the subject of the Resurrection in an article contributed to *Foundations*, a volume which created a considerable excitement in ecclesiastical circles. Mr. Streeter was even asked to resign his examining chaplaincy to the Bishop of St. Albans. Another panic was occasioned by Dr. Glazebrook's views on the Virgin Birth expressed in his *Faith of a Modern Churchman*. To-day the Resurrection is still a subject of keen debate. The Rev. C. E. Douglas, curate of St. Luke's, Camberwell, accuses the Rev. H. D. A. Major, Principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, and editor of the *Modern Churchman*, "of openly teaching doctrine concerning the Resurrection which is contrary to the Christian religion as set forth in the ancient Creeds of the Province of Canterbury contained in the Book of Common Prayer, and in the Holy Scripture where the Resurrection of the Body is taught explicitly, and is a vital element in the general theological and philosophical system." Canon Peter Green, of Salford, had already charged Principal Major with heresy on the same and other subjects in an article in the *Church Times* of August 19, 1921, in the course of which he wrote:—

But, surely, the Resurrection must go too. Not merely gross views of a material Resurrection (which,

in view of 1 Cor. xv. 36-54, could never have been truly part of the Church's teaching), but all idea of a Resurrection at all.

In the same journal of September 9 the Principal replied as follows:—

Those words are calculated to give your readers the impression that not only do I not believe in our Lord's Resurrection, but that I do not believe in the Resurrection of Christians either. This I wish unreservedly to contradict. Canon Green's ingenious supposition that, as I do not believe in the Resurrection of the material body, the only form in which I can believe in the Resurrection is in the form in which Napoleon survives in the *Code Napoleon*, suggests that he has never heard of a *tertium quid*, namely, the survival of death by a personality which has shed its physical integument for ever. This happens to be the form which the doctrine of the Resurrection assumes in my mind.

It is out of this reply that Mr. Douglas's accusation arises, in respect to which the Principal's impeachment to the Bishop of Oxford has been made. The Bishop made some inquiry with the result that he has refused to hear the case, with which refusal Mr. Douglas is sadly disappointed. The *Guardian* condemned the "delation," and fervently hoped there would be no trial for heresy, while the *Church Times* devoted a leading article to a strong justification of Mr. Douglas's action, and a spirited defence of trials for heresy when fairly conducted. Mr. Douglas announces that he has appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury against the Bishop of Oxford's decision.

Now, the Resurrection is a subject concerning which nobody possesses any knowledge whatever. To us all doctrines of it are alike unbelievable and absurd. It is true that the Thirty-nine Articles and the Catechism distinctly teach the Resurrection of the body, but this has never been the unanimous teaching of the Church. Clement of Alexandria and Origen held the opinion that "at the Resurrection it is not a literal body of flesh that is raised, but a spiritual body." Origen was convinced that in the present body there is a living power, a germ, which gives it shape and form, and at last will give rise to a spiritual organism in harmony with the particular soul, whether good or evil, that receives it. In the New Testament, especially in the Pauline Epistles, we do not find any trace of a material Resurrection. Even in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians the body to be raised is not the body that was buried. Paul tells us that there are two bodies, one natural and the other spiritual. To us a spiritual body is a wholly meaningless phrase, an utterly inconceivable and impossible thing. He also makes an inexplicable distinction between bodies terrestrial and bodies celestial; but his important point is that we shall never recover these physical bodies after we have lost them. Paul's doctrine of the Resurrection kept on developing to the very last. In 2 Cor. v. 1-8, for example, it is not really a Resurrection that he teaches, but a most wonderful change which is to take place at death. He says: "We know that if our tent—that earthly body which is now our home—is taken down, we have a house of God's building, a home not made by hands, imperishable, in heaven." These two views are absolutely irreconcilable. The truth is that Paul was as ignorant as we are about an after life. It was theories that he had which he treated as revealed truths; and as regards an after life he advocated now one theory and then another totally different; and he advocated each as a vital part of the Gospel communicated to him by Jesus Christ from heaven.

Principal Major's doctrine is in essential agreement with Paul's; but what are we to understand by a spiritual resurrection? On the assumption that an immortal soul or spirit resides in the physical body,

there can be no resurrection at all if the body is not raised. Survival is the only appropriate term to use in that case. An immortal spirit cannot die, and nothing can be more preposterous than to speak of it as being raised from the dead on the last day. There can be no rising from the dead if the body that died is not revived. The Principal does employ the word "survival," but he only makes his case more irrational by so doing. Unlike Canon Green he has heard of *tertium quid*, namely, "the survival of death by a personality which has shed its physical integument for ever." Will he kindly tell us what evidence he has of the survival of a personality so stripped? We know of none. The Bishop of Oxford acted wisely in refusing to encourage the heresy hunter by arranging for a trial of the suspected heretic. The *Church Times* says that the Faith must be loyally maintained; but which Faith, that of Paul, Clement, and Origen, or that of the Thirty-nine Articles? Of the Faith there are innumerable versions in endless conflict with one another, and at present all the versions are being whittled down.

The only reasonable conclusion is that the so-called Faith has not justified its maintenance in any of its forms. As Confucius held long ago, this world's problems are alone sufficient to tax the energies of the human race.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Business Side of Religion.

The carpenter said nothing but
The butter's spread too thick.

—Alice in Wonderland.

THE alluring advertisements of such bodies as the Young Men's Christian Association and the Church and Salvation Armies, besides the numerous appeals of other religious bodies for cash for secular purposes reminds us that the Christian religion is now a business and is worked on commercial lines. Missions and meetings are advertised in the same way as liver pills, or the latest musical comedies and blood-and-thunder melodramas. Preachers and revivalists adopt similar methods to circus proprietors and music-hall managers with the same satisfactory results. The purely business side of religion, however, is seen clearest in the methods now adopted in order to raise revenue for a religion alleged to be "without money and without price."

The extent to which ordinary commercial means have displaced voluntary contributions so long in vogue in connection with congregations is very significant. The old-fashioned method of collecting coppers and threepenny bits during the service is no longer considered adequate. Even the amateur sale of work is being superseded by more up-to-date and efficient substitutes. So much is this the case that trading by religious bodies is considered by business men as a menace to the welfare of the trading community. Bazaars, conducted on a strictly business basis are held for the reduction of church debts and the erection of costly places of worship. Missionary and other propagandist societies owe a good deal of their large incomes to sales of goods, and many thousands of pounds are raised annually in this manner for religious interests. At a bazaar held at Lincoln over £1,000 was realized, and a week's missionary exhibition at a seaside town brought £200 clear profit. A sale of work in South London produced £250, and a dozen similar functions realized over £2,000.

Imagine the many similar exhibitions and sales held annually throughout the country for the various religious organizations, Bible and missionary societies. Add to these the 13,000 parish churches, and 10,000 chapels, mission halls, and tin tabernacles, all of which now look to bazaars, exhibitions, and sales, as an easy

and legitimate means of raising money, and we begin to realize the extent of the practice. Where is all this to end? The logical outcome is seen in the vast trading organization of the Salvation Army, which sells regularly among its members tea, clothing, children's toys, musical instruments, and all manner of requisites, and uses the profits for its propaganda. The Army touts for emigrants at the usual charges. Insurance business is also encouraged, thus justifying the pleasantry that Salvationists are insured against fire in both worlds.

This inclusion of Mammon as the fourth person of the Trinity has had another result, which would have shocked the sober Christians of the ages of faith. It has led to the desire to make religion a pleasant, as well as a profitable, pastime. To attract audiences, painful Sabbaths have been replaced by Pleasant Sunday Afternoons. String bands and soloists take the place of leather-lunged preachers. Labour Members of Parliament, and other tame publicists, share the pulpit or platform with reformed burglars and converted policemen. We sometimes wonder how the spiritual work of the Churches was conducted before the introduction of these worldly attractions. Faith, we must suppose, was stronger in those days of old, not needing the artificial impetus of secular amusement. Our believing ancestors went to Church, and their families with them. It was a painful duty but it had to be done; but nowadays father so often stays at home, or makes for the golf links, or other recreation; mother cooks the Sunday dinner, and even the children have to be bribed to attend.

For there is no question that Sunday-school excursions, prizes, boys' and girls' brigades, and socials for young people, are bribery and nothing else. The clergy pretend that these holidays are organized with the object of taking the children into healthy surroundings. In theory the practice is excellent, but the effect can be gauged better from the point of view of the children than the parsons. The scholars regard these holidays not as a privilege but as a right. They have learned the stories of "Jonah and the Whale," and "Noah's Ark," and the holiday is a payment. Take away the bribe and they would consider themselves under no obligation to attend. A smart juvenile can attend the excursions of every religious denomination within reach. By a neat arrangement of the programme he can get nearly a week of holiday-making, and figure in religious statistics as four boys instead of one.

All these straws show which way the wind is blowing. Christianity is undergoing a transformation, and is no longer what it used to be. The sooner the man in the street realizes this the better it will be for everybody. The pretensions of the clergy regarding the spirituality of their religion are nauseating. They have an aroma like that of the crowded cabin of a small Channel steamer on a very rough day.

MIMNERMUS.

EDUCATION AND PROFIT.

For that is another of our grand mistakes—people are always thinking of education as a means of livelihood. Education is not a profitable business, but a costly one; nay, even the best attainments of it are always unprofitable in any terms of coin. No nation ever made its bread either by its great arts, or its great wisdoms, by its minor arts or manufactures, by its practical knowledges, yes; but its noble scholarship, its noble philosophy, and its noble art, are always to be bought as a treasure, not sold as a livelihood. You do not learn that you may live—you live that you may learn. You are to spend on National Education, and to be spent for it, and to make by it, not more money, but better men; to get into this British Island the greatest possible number of good and brave Englishmen.

John Ruskin, "The Crown of Wild Olive."

The Ever-present Taint.

Fancies too weak for boys, too gross and idle
For girls of nine, O! think what they have done,
And then run mad indeed, stark mad; for all
Their by-gone fooleries were but spices of it.

THE evil that religions do lives after them. Long after any sincerity in Christian belief has disappeared the evil Christian influence still lives, not only in its bones and other relics but in our customs and ideas, if any; nay, it pervades every pore of our poor old unsocial social system. It taints everything around us. Christianity to-day, more than ever, is an unhealthy mental and immoral atmosphere. It is mostly invisible to the naked mental eye—quite invisible to the eye of the orthodox. He cannot even smell it. He knows it not! It is an invisible, noxious gas, and being heavy, clings to the ground. Hence, it is upon the people who are down, if not out, that it has its worst effect. They who are strong, stalwart, and erect can breathe the free, purer air of higher and fresher regions, uncontaminated by the foul gas still clinging to the ground around their feet. The Free-thinker has got out of the deep pit of Christian darkness. His mental lungs have been purified from its poisonous gas.

Those who observe and read with a rational, discriminating, co-ordinating mind can detect the traces of this taint day by day. Not an issue of an orthodox paper but contains proof of this. Unfortunately, the insincerity and hypocrisy of Christian belief render any discriminating, co-ordinating, judgment in observing, reading or thinking well nigh impossible to the average man and woman. They seem, so to speak, to observe, to read, to think in thought-tight compartments. They hold opinions or entertain ideas in religion, politics, business, industry, sport, morals, and what not, all of which altogether mutually and flatly contradict each other. This failure even to strive towards intellectual sincerity and logical consistency has been much intensified by Christian belief, especially in its later and still more hypocritical forms. It has been fully exploited, too, by the Christian Numbo Jumbo men at the expense of foolish people. It is started on them very early in life; they are taught in the arithmetic class that three times one are three while they learn in the Sunday-school that Three Times One is One. (No wonder Christian divines did not invent algebra!) It finishes very late in life, when the priest or parson tells the dying Christian (rational medicine having failed) that he is going to a happy home, while all his Christian friends sob around his bed at the prospect.

Recently some of the British-papers expressed much concern at the revival of Mormon missionary effort. Our tight little island is to be invaded by 300 Mormon agents from the dry little (or little dry) continent. I noticed one paper which gave voice to its Christian fears at the visitation in two-thirds of a column with headlines that were Transatlantically striking. An adjacent column told the tale of a woman burying a naked, living child in a sand-hole. When seized she said, "For the love of God, let me go!" Elsewhere comment was made about the number of women in Britain who will be unable to marry as there aren't nearly enough men to go round. Probably the Christian editor would have been horror-stricken if the Mormon missionaries had announced their intention to deliver Britain from the evils outlined in the latter two items of news.

I do not propose to waste time, temper, and space upon the comparative merits or demerits of Christianity and Mormonism. The latter is no sillier than the former. The elder is, at least, as false and evil as the (Brigham) younger. If the story of the rise and

spread of Christianity proves its truth (as I've been told oft-times), *a fortiori* the birth and growth of Smith's religion proclaims it as more than Gospel truth.

We are always told by our Christian friends that their bitter attacks upon the Mormons are inspired by moral, more than religious, zeal. As has happened before, in the history of Christianity, the one's as bad as the other. The belief in, and the practice of, polygamy is the chief count in the Christian's indictment of Mormonism. To that is added the accusation that the Mormon Elders entice large numbers of young women away from their homes out to Utah. There, neither the women nor the men require to follow "Christ" or St. Paul in the apotheosis of celibacy. We need not discuss to what extent these charges are true. Again, that is not my purpose. Doubtless, there is, or has been, some truth in the case against the Mormon Elders. Equally, doubtless, there has been much exaggerating in the Christians' attack. They are prone to exaggeration—especially against a rival cult. Freethinkers know that well.

The point to be emphasized is that in so far as the Mormons have succeeded in converting young women to their creed their measure of success has been due to the Christian atmosphere in which these young women have been bred. From infancy onwards they have believed that, in some way, the Bible is the "inspired word of God." Their belief may be vague; it may be almost unconscious, but they have breathed for so long in this Christian atmosphere (without thinking) that they become more or less easy victims to plausible preachers who secure the opening for their attack through the Bible. Basing argument on the Bible no one can ever condemn polygamy. It is not only *not* condemned in the Old or New Testament, but was practised (in its grosser forms, too) by the old saints (shall we call them?) and Jehovah quite approved of the whole squalid business. The teaching of the reputed "Christ" of the Canonical Gospels, of St. Paul, and of the other New Testament unworthies, all make for the glorification and sanctification of celibacy. To the real human, marriage ought to be the finest relation in life, and by "marriage" I do not mean a merely legal relation, far less a religious one. It seems to me, too, that monogamy—one wife, one husband, at one time—is the highest form of this relation, and it is likely to remain so. (Polygamy is the highest form of tribulation.) It is difficult to imagine a rational human finding any satisfaction either in polyandry or polygamy. Neither is pretty polly to a cultured mind. But at the other extreme from celibacy the Christian religion has degraded marriage to a religiously-licensed lust gratification for those (men) who are lustfully inclined. Woman was, or is, the victim. Polygamy is nowhere condemned—except in one passage for bishops. The Christian religion has been the enemy of man, a curse upon him, but it has been a hundred times more cursefully the enemy of woman.

If the moral ideas, the working philosophy of life, so to say, of these young women had been built up on a sound, rational basis, the Mormon missionaries couldn't catch them alive, as the missionaries say they do. Their conversion, or perversion (it all depends upon the point of view) is another instance of the immense injury inflicted upon the young by the infamous Christian Bible. Social reformers might well take for their battle cry, "Ecrasez l'infâme." Once, upon the platform in the city of Loiners, it was pointed out to a parson, who used to assist Freethought propaganda by his opposition, that the Christian Mumbo Jumbo men couldn't meet the Mormons effectually. They had to leave that to the Freethinkers. He was more than peeved at the thrust, the

more so that it was true. And there was a Mormon missionary speaking often in the same city. In this case, as in others, physical violence is the only argument that the Christians can use—just as it is the chief religious and political persuader of Carson and de Valera. All the time, the smashing of faces, while it may spoil the features, doesn't upset the faith of the Mormons. They still secure their women converts. Betrayed by being bred in belief in the Bible, and faced by the fact that men are so scarce, the women prefer being "sealed" to an Elder rather than be single with "Christ," and out they go to Utah. The Bible is to blame for them being "led by the nose, as asses are."

All this is only one instance of the evil wrought by the Christian religion. It is also typical of that inconsistency, insincerity, hypocrisy and failure to see things in their true relations which are so characteristic of modern Christianity. These vices are as common as humility is rare. At times even rational people are affected. Other illustrations can be found as easily as pebbles on the beach.

Frinstans. At the Church Congress the Bishop of Birmingham said, "I am still prepared to forgive the owner of a racehorse backing in a moderate way the chances of the beautiful animal that he has trained and that he takes pride in," quite ignoring the fact that the owner probably did *not* train the "beautiful animal." Then he proceeded to say that "the working man ought to be able to enjoy his games without constantly betting on his football team," in the training of which he has taken an active part! O! Shades of Whately and his logic! Evidently, to *this* Christian, the sin consists in being a "working man." Only the purblind inconsistency, fostered by Christianity, could lead a man, with even an ordinary education, into making such a fool of himself. Nothing but modern Christian belief could so befog the minds of otherwise sane people as to make them blind to the inconsistency and hypocrisy of the Bishop.

At that same Church Congress the Bishop of Guildford waxed almost hysterically eloquent on that old bête noire of (male) Christians—sex, or rather, woman. After, apparently, enjoying the pleasure of administering an all-round flagellation to women in general for the laxity and downward trend of their "morals" (in *re* sex, of course), he attacked "a certain class of psychologist and psycho-analyst that would have us believe that the supreme factor that dominates all human life and character is sexual in origin.....The people of this school appear to eat, drink, and sleep in terms of sex. From being an exaggeration their doctrine becomes an obsession, and then a mania." The present writer has enjoyed (and otherwise) many different kinds of drinks, including dry ones, but never yet has he had the pleasure of "drinking in terms of sex." A Scotsman is said once to have said that whisky was good, and champagne was good, but when you mixed the two you spoilt two good things. That would appear to apply to the Bishop of Guildford's new drink, though, perhaps, they *do* indulge in it sometimes in other than rational circles.

The rational psycho-analyst is one whom the priest and parson may well fear—above all other Freethinkers. The Christian big-fetish man might be revealed—even to himself. Perhaps that fear accounts for the Bishop's fierce attack. There are, without doubt, some psycho-analysts who over-stress the factor of sex-feeling. There are "quacks" who, more or less successfully, exploit this comparatively new field of science. But paid professional, official Christians have not the slightest standing ground from which to attack even the worst pseudo-psycho-analyst for exaggerating the influence of sex-feeling. The Christian religion, from its very start (or what we

know of its start), was tainted with sex-obsession. Probably no other religion—certainly none other of the "great" religions—has ever been so "possessed by the evil spirit" of sex-exaggeration, sex-obsession, and sex-mania. Many of the Christian saints and leaders were, in very truth, "sex-maniacs." Looking back on the trial of Christian superstition we find the taint of sex-morbidness over all its works. The "lower animals" were far more healthy-minded, in this respect at least. There are more traces of it still to-day. Inspired by this wholly evil spirit of "sex-obsession" Christian divines, protestant and Catholic alike, have attacked woman in the vilest of language. The impudence of these Christian Witch-finders is indeed monumental. Yet the Christians, female even more than male (shame, be it said), let it go without a protest. That is another proof of the way in which Christian belief damns intelligence. True, the parson doesn't call her the Devil's snare, and worse, to-day. When he has thrown away the "Fall," the "Virgin Birth," the physical Resurrection, and a lot of other queer old ideas; when he has taken to birth-control votes (if not pulpits) for women, evolution, and the Labour Party (what an anti-climax!), he realizes that he must moderate his language towards women. He'd do even more than that to save his religion and his business. There is one evil that the professional Christian is sincerely determined not to intensify, that is unemployment. He means to stick to his job as long as he can, no matter what the sacrifice may be in principles. Still, the fact that he is so anxious—the way in which he is strenuously trying to wheedle the workers and the women—betray his fear of the sack. He may even have to pay his honest share of rates and taxes for his place of business.

If he only knew it, he'd be a happier man, engaged in useful work, instead of telling the tale. Meanwhile, "The injuries that they themselves procure must be their schoolmasters."

ATHOS ZENO.

Man and His Fate.

As Newton numbered the stars, and as Linnaeus has numbered the plants, so Chaucer numbered the classes of men.

—Blake.

CHAUCER, a true son of Jupiter, will dwell in eternity for bringing form from chaos. Without human perfection and gnosis of man we shall be incapable of understanding perfection in one who supplies many thousand of priests with an easy life. We must not be arrogant and ask these gentlemen how they came to be familiar with the God they profess to worship. We must not ask them, although many are ugly, if it is true that they are made in their maker's image. We must be content to assume that these industrious mist-gulpers have transcended the human vanities of this earth, and, as they are up in the clouds of knowing the unknowable, we must neither wish to follow them nor indulge with them in speculations that are unearthly.

The world of mankind is contained in the classes or types drawn by Chaucer. Shakespeare's world has these types in action, and genius, in the direct line of descent, does not try to thrust beyond the embracing circle of completeness. Take away from Chaucer and Shakespeare their theology, and the loss is small; take away from these two giants their philosophy of human life, and the remainder is worthless. From the foot upwards they build, and the structure they raise is too massive and too tragic for the superimposition of a God living in a burning bush, dying on a cross, and after death, having agents to spread distractions like the plague—in his name. This Christian roof over the destiny of man is paltry, ridiculous, and pathetic.

Shakespeare's fame does not rest on his religious convictions; Chaucer does not live on his theology; both endure by their tenacity of purpose in keeping close to the human heart by their passionate thinking, and patronage either by priest or rationalist is offensive and as futile as trying to grasp a rainbow.

Mr. Thomas Hardy's novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, was published in the year 1874, and we are tempted to think that the public then were as little disposed to accept it as they are to this day. This novel (we prefer to call it a drama) is a dramatic narrative of mankind and Fate engaged in the eternal conflict. Here and there we have the faint ironic touch in the religious sentiments of the Dorset labourer. Religious sentiments throughout the book are in a minor key—above all towers the immense figure of Fate or Destiny—and those readers who saw this figure on the stage in *The Betrothal* of Mactertlinck, realize the impossibility of compressing the imagination in the real. Fate or Destiny is a figure greater than any Titan of theology; the Christian deity belongs to the lower order of gods who have now disappeared in fire, earth, air or water. The progress of Fate is a series of chance in the lives of men and women. There is an insistent note of chance in all the writings of Hardy, and chance to human life is as natural as the air we breathe. The element of chance, the gossamer thread that suspends action, the spark that animates it, smash to atoms the absurdity of benevolent design. One second of folly may make more disaster than can be repaired by hours of thought.

Bathsheba Everdene, in a freakish moment, sends a Valentine to a man who regards it seriously. Fanny Robin arrives at the wrong church to be married. Boldewood forgets to tell Bathsheba that she is beautiful, and Gabriel Oak, with a character suited to the name, is held fast in the bonds of indecision, and "passions spin the plot." Who can forget the romanticism of Troy? And does not his career amplify the couplet of Blake's?—

The Sword sang on the barren heath
But could not make the sickle yield.

To the soldier, force; to the farmer, persuasion, and we know what virtue conquers in the end. Lovely woman stoops to folly, dazzled by brass and scarlet, yet in Bathsheba there is pure gold. Straight from her heart come the instructions to Joseph Poorgrass: "Carry with you some evergreens and flowers to put upon her coffin—indeed, gather a great many, and completely bury her in them. Get some boughs of laurustinus, and variegated box, and yew, and boy's love; ay, and some branches of chrysanthemum. And get old Pleasant to draw her, because she knew him so well." This for her dead rival, and the plaything of the soldier.

The conclusion of Chapter LVI. contains wise words that will live as long as mankind and no longer. Tragedy with blind rage strikes down the gentle Fanny Robin, the half-hero Troy, the gentlemanly Boldewood, and after a quiet wedding of Bathsheba and Gabriel we do not need to go any further. Passionate strife, the illusion of vanity, the emptiness of romance are now at an end.

Hardy has used in this story the Greek method of tragic irony, but, in so doing he has done something more. The Christian religion (of 1874) is used in the comedy manner of the gravedigger in *Hamlet*. It is subsidiary to Destiny or Fate. It is of as much importance in the story as the quality of the paper on which it is printed. There is a spaciousness about Greek tragedy that embraces or contains the feeble attempts of Christianity to make Palestine the centre of the world. And for Freethinkers who do not belong to any of the three categories defined by Matthew Arnold, the conclusion is as clear as daylight. *Katharsis* or purification derived from a reading of this dramatic

novel will remind us that we are mortal; it will emphasize the fact that actions precede consequences, and that there is enough evil in the world already without adding to it, and Christianity, official or professional, is a gratuitous insult to mankind in the hands of Fate. Gods have been born and have died, and Fate has recorded their names, and the Christian God's name is written on the scroll. Hardy's reading of life has helped to add it to the list of those artificial terrors of life that strip man of courage, and would have him live by the gracious permission of that Peter Pan savage—the priest.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

Not everyone, says the *Leeds Mercury*, agrees with the views of the Bishop of London, but everyone agrees as to the sincerity with which they are expounded. We are not at all concerned to question the Bishop's sincerity. About the hardest thing that could be said of any clergyman to-day is, not that he does not believe in Christianity, but that he does. There is, however, an important distinction between the Bishop and those on the other side. His sincerity in expounding the beliefs of primitive savages brings him £10,000 a year and two palaces. Sincerity in attacking Christianity may bring one imprisonment, and the Christian, with a few exceptions, would say "Serve him right."

There is an old story of Douglas Jerrold who said of a man who had been lecturing on drink that he was full of his subject. We thought the same when we came across an article by Dean Inge in the *Evening Standard* on "Literary Forgeries." For this is a subject on which the Christian Church holds an unchallengeable record. No other institution and no other collection of persons can hold a candle to it for deliberate and unblushing forgery. So much so, that there is not a document that has passed through the hands of the Christian Church, and which it would have been to its interest to falsify, that it is not suspected of doctoring. For downright unadulterated lying and imposture the Christian Church comes an easy first in the history of the world.

To do Dean Inge justice he does not omit to point out that the Christian Church has been an expert at this unwholesome game. But he deals with it as gingerly as possible. Thus:—

The most successful literary frauds have unfortunately been connected with ecclesiastical history. After the first pioneers of Christianity had passed away, there came a time when a writer could hardly hope to gain the ear of the public except by passing off his book as the work of an apostle. A whole crop of forgeries appeared—or should we follow the delicacy of scholars, who call them not forgeries, but "pseudepigraphic writings"? We shall never know for certain how many of these pseudo-apostolic treatises have found their way into the New Testament Canon. The Church was honest, but uncritical. It rejected many documents, like the "Acts of Paul and Thekla," a rather pleasing romance which was brought home to its author, who pleaded that he wrote it "to do honour to Paul." The Second Epistle of Peter has been given up by all except a few conservative Die-hards; and some other books of the New Testament are of doubtful authenticity. But when once suspicions were roused, some critics rushed to the opposite extreme, and disputed the genuineness of books which are as certainly authentic as 2 Peter is spurious. Somewhat later, novelettes on the persecutions became very popular. They falsified history, but were not exactly forgeries.

We don't know what Dean Inge means by saying that the Church was honest, but uncritical. These forgers were the Church. They worked for the Church and their forgeries were made in the interests of the Church. To call them "pseudepigraphic writings" is only another way in which Christian dishonesty, when detected, tries to escape the odium of its offence. When a man brings

forward a piece of pseudepigraphic writing in the shape of a signature on a cheque he is likely to get seven years. But these Christians were honoured as pillars of the faith, and so far as we are concerned they well deserve the title. And we should like to have Dean Inge's explanation that this religion of his, which is acclaimed as the acme of innocence, has always had in its train and in its service some of the most notorious liars and forgers in history. It is a phenomenon that calls for explanation. We should like to see the Dean essay the task. Our columns are open, if he has the courage.

During a religious revival demonstration at Inveralochy, Aberdeenshire, a journalist and a photographer were set upon and severely injured. And yet mythology and newspapers have very much in common.

There is going to be trouble over the question of prohibition in America if someone is not very careful. Roman Catholics and some other Christians are threatening civil war if the drinking of fermented wine in the Sacrament is interfered with. They will not drink the blood of Jesus if it is made out of ginger beer. A "well-known priest," quoted in the *New York Globe* of December 24, says, "If such action is carried out, it will set the country aflame from border to border, and from sea to sea in a religious war..... Fermented wine is a part of the holy sacrament, and every man and every woman of faith would defend its use under attack, as they would defend their honour or their virtue." The Episcopalians and the Roman Catholics of the States have our sympathy. It is degrading to perform the miracle of the sacrament in some cheap feotal drink. Good, strong, generous wine is the only suitable medium for such a miracle. The stronger the better, for if it is only strong enough, and enough of it is taken, we will guarantee a miracle every time. But we cannot guarantee an ecstatic feeling on rhubarb wine.

Professor Phillimore, addressing the students of the Catholic College of St. Aloysius, Glasgow, said that the Act of 1918 gave Catholics a splendid chance of providing a proper supply of teachers among the graduates of the universities. The universities were open to be captured, they were undefended cities. By this means the Professor hopes to be able to capture the educated intelligence of Scotland, if not of Britain. It is an old policy of the Catholic Church, but we doubt if it can be worked quite so easily as it once was. This is not because Catholics are becoming more honourable in their dealing with others. They still believe, as do most other Christians, that where the interest of their religion is concerned ordinary considerations of honour have no force, and they are willing to take all advantage of being placed in a position to do one thing, and for the doing of which they accept payment, to do quite another and a different thing. In ordinary affairs this policy would be called by a very ugly name. In religion it is called piety, or godly zeal.

What Professor Phillimore overlooks is the fact that these graduates are subjected to forces that the Roman Church can neither destroy nor control. While the Catholic Professor may be endeavouring to instil into the mind of the student the more or less ridiculous doctrines of his quite ridiculous Church the forces in the outside world are steadily creating a type of mind to which the legendary stupidities of the whole Christian Church are quite foreign. And in that situation the teachings of Roman Catholicism stand about as much chance of gaining acceptance as do the teachings of the same Church concerning witchcraft and demoniacal possession. Ultimately it is life that is fighting religion, and it is the control of life that the Church must secure if it is to gain final victory.

For downright smug inanity could anything surpass the new year platitudes of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Rev. Dr. John Clifford? The former solemnly assures us that we need "a world-will for peace, righteousness, and liberty." The latter goes one better: "The great need for 1922 is righteousness—personal, ecclesiastical,

social and political." The number of champions of righteousness is increasing. Judging by trials for blasphemy and heresy one is inclined to say the same thing of the devotees of liberty in England.

The *Spectator* published recently a letter from the Secretary of the British Empire Union, on the "Socialist and Proletarian School Movement." This organization, we are assured, "has enlisted the support of religious bodies of all denominations against these schools." We are not surprised to hear this. One reads a good deal nowadays about "Christian Socialism" and the churches' sympathy with Labour's ideals. So much protestation is only necessary because the record of the Church in regard to the toiling masses is far from clean. Sectional patronage of this kind is the very thing that Labour should resent. If the ideals of the worker include that independent thinking on all questions which will make him many and mentally alert, particularly where the traditional religious beliefs are concerned, Christian sympathy with them will soon sink below freezing-point.

According to a recent issue of the *Catholic Times* Father McNabb stated that, "thanks to effective Catholic propaganda," the authorities in the United States had banned both the literature and the public meetings of the neo-Malthusian League. We are not directly concerned with this organization, but we are supremely interested in the rights of free speech. A well-organized body like the Roman Catholic Church is a deadly menace to human freedom, particularly where it commands a large following. This was very noticeable in the Germany of pre-war days. The Catholic Centre, acting on the principle of support in return for concessions, long held the balance of power in the Reichstag, and in several States its influence was directed against such measures as that making cremation permissive. Yet we are urged in some quarters to let Rome "save civilization" from the present unrest by restoring a form of feudalism and ecclesiastical authority. We are asked to pay homage to carrion in order to avoid the trouble and discomfort of clearing it away.

The editor of a Czecho-Slovakian paper asked a number of well-known men the question: "Which five persons would you put into the Ark if to-day there were another deluge and you were Noah?" To this Mr. Bernard Shaw replied: "I should let the whole damned crew drown, and let God invent something better. The human race is a hopeless failure." We hope that God will leave the creation of another race to other hands. We have never known a case of God interfering without his making a mess of things. According to his own diary, the Bible, he made a mess of creation. His cures for disease, which he had himself introduced, were quite worthless, and even when two-thirds of himself came to earth and got itself crucified in order to satisfy the other one-third things only went from bad to worse. To wipe out the human race might be a debatable proposition. To trust God to set another one going that should be more satisfactory would be downright insanity.

Reviewing Dr. Morris Jastrow's work on the Song of Solomon Mr. W. L. Courtney asks how it was that a series of poems that are on the face of them the expression of love in its most sensual phases became, in the hands of the great Christian leaders, a great spiritual allegory? That is an interesting line of enquiry, and it is unfortunate that Mr. Courtney does not give the answer—perhaps it is more than he dare do in the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, for the time has not yet come when our leading writers may tell the truth about religion. Most of them know it, but to tell it, that is a very different thing. And yet the particular truth that underlies this allegorizing the sensualism of the Song of Solomon is very simple. The religious fervour of many of the great Christian figureheads had its roots in a repressed sexualism that would out in some form or other. And the Song of Solomon provided the setting for the sexualism which masked itself under the guise of love for Jesus and the

Mother of Jesus. Indeed, many of the ecstatic writings of the great Christian saints are little more than elaborate essays in eroticism, and if the names of John Jones and Mary Smith were substituted for those of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary there is not a publisher in Britain who would dare to publish them. And in our own days we have an indication of the same subterranean workings of sex feeling in the keen interest taken by some of our celibate religious leaders in what is called sexual purity, which from a personal point of view is sexual impurity.

At a concert at Carnegie Hall, New York, fifteen noted pianists played fifteen pianos all at the same time. The effect must have been somewhat like the orthodox idea of heaven.

Christians often repeat the phrase, "there is no health in us," and a glance at any of the religious periodicals shows that the remark is not altogether idle. There are more patent-medicine and similar advertisements in their columns than anything else. The advertisers appear to have gauged the mentality of their readers accurately. An asthma puff contains a testimonial from "the wife of the chaplain to King Edward and Queen Victoria." To folk who regard the story of Noah's Ark as sober history such a testimonial should prove "as strong as proof of Holy Writ."

In a case at Bridgend, Glamorgan, in which two bank officials are charged with embezzling large sums of money, it is stated that both identified themselves with local religious movements. It is a familiar story.

Oh! Those journalists! Newspaper men have been filling a lot of space concerning a cock bird which is said to have laid an egg at the Royal Horticultural Show. A hard-headed editor would have "given the bird" to any reporter who brought in such a story, but anything seems silly enough for Christian readers in a Christian country.

Providence cares as little for churches as for any other business places. For the second time in six months St. Mary's Church, Maidenhead, has been broken into, and the offertory boxes rifled. The intruder left the remains of a bread and cheese supper near the altar.

The Rev. S. M. Reynolds, rector of Burnmoor, Durham, dropped dead whilst making a call on a parishioner. Evidently, Providence does not regard clergymen as being as valuable as sparrows.

The Salvation Army benefits to the amount of £2,000 by the will of the late Mr. W. C. Reid, of Edinburgh. The dead hand in religion is a most important factor in the dissemination of old-fashioned ideas.

A week of prayer has been held at the Central Hall, Westminster, in connection with the World's Evangelical Alliance. Pity the sorrows of a poor, old deity.

UNINTELLIGIBLE PRAYERS.

Two Irishmen were discussing the earthquake at Messina.

"Fwat a turrible thing it 'ud be, Pat, if we had an airthquake in poor disthressed owld Oireland."

"Sure, we should niver have an airthquake in Oireland. The Oirish are such a prayin' people."

"But the Oitalians are a prayin' people too. Haven't they got his Howliness the Powpe livin' among them. The Oitalians are always prayin'."

"Yis, begorra, but who would undherstand thim, Pat? When they shtarted gibberin' in Oitalian, how would the blissid saints unnderstand fwat they wanted. Ye couldn't till whither they were prayin' agin an airthquake, or askin' for wan."

WHY NOT HAND THIS COPY TO A LIKELY

To All Our Readers.

THE PIONEER PRESS published this week a pamphlet which I think I may say, despite the fact of its having been written by me, is of more than usual interest at the present juncture. It is a pamphlet on the Blasphemy laws (as will be seen by reference to the last page of this issue), and is designed to furnish an outline of the existing state of the law, with a summary of the case for their abolition. It aims at putting in the hands of every reader of this paper a statement which may be used by them in enlisting support and sympathy in the campaign which is now being started, and which should not be dropped until its object has been achieved.

My own share of the work here has been to write the pamphlet and to do what I can to get friends to see that it is well circulated. And it is at this point that every reader can lend a hand. There is in the country a large number of liberal-minded men and women—inside and outside the Churches—who, while not avowedly with us in our general campaign, yet consider that these iniquitous Blasphemy laws should be wiped out of existence. What we want is to see that their help is enlisted, and I am suggesting to all readers of the *Freethinker* that they should see that every likely man and woman, particularly if engaged in public work, should get a copy of this pamphlet. Particular attention should be paid to the more liberal type of clergyman in this matter, and an opinion on the subject elicited. When a favourable reply is received that should be at once sent to this office so that a record may be kept, and that record will form part of another plan which will be announced in due time.

Every reader will, I hope, have at least one copy of this pamphlet, which can be used in this way, but in order to induce those who can to take extra copies and circulate them, all orders for six and upwards will be sent post free. As the pamphlet is published at threepence, this means that for the modest sum of 1s. 6d. each of our readers can put in a very useful bit of propagandist work at a trifling expense. Or, if the names and addresses of those public men and women are sent us we will see to the dispatch of the pamphlets at this end. We would, if we could, send out twenty thousand of them to members of public bodies all over Britain, but that is an expense beyond our means. Our only wealth is the capacity for labour, and readers will admit that we do not grudge spending that.

Mr. W. B. Columbine, who has already made two generous contributions to the Blasphemy Defence Fund, has kindly placed at our disposal £25, to be expended in circulating the pamphlet in quarters where its perusal may have good practical results. Copies will be sent to the leading newspapers and to all Justices of the Peace.

We are afraid that we are always worrying our readers about something or the other, but we do not see how that can be avoided. When I became Editor of this paper and was elected President of the National Secular Society, those who were responsible were asking for the worry they have had, and I should be sorry to disappoint them. All we can promise them is that just so soon as we see the Church disestablished, Christianity banished from the schools and all departments of State, the Blasphemy laws abolished, and Christianity reduced to the level of a sectarian future, then I promise to let our friends alone. So all of them may look forward to an easy time—in the future.

Meanwhile, we must work, and work hard. We have a splendid chance of doing something effective at the moment, and I have suggested above one direction in which good work may be done.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Blasphemy Defence Fund.

THERE is still required to meet the expenses of the two trials and the appearance in the Appeal Court a sum of somewhere about £60 or £70. We are unable to state the exact amount until the solicitor's account has been received. When that is done a statement of income and expenditure will be published. Should the amount subscribed more than meet the expenses the surplus will be devoted to the agitation for the repeal of the Blasphemy laws.

The Fund will close on January 29.

On Monday Mr. Cohen returned from Swansea with a rather severe cold. As he had not succeeded in shaking it off, he did not attend the office on Tuesday, the day on which the *Freethinker* goes to press. The detailed list of subscriptions, to be added to the amount stated last week, £416 19s. 6d., will be acknowledged in next week's issue.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 22, Stratford Town Hall; January 29, Stockport; February 5, Birmingham; February 19, Glasgow; March 5, Nottingham; March 12, Manchester; March 19, Leicester.

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.

E. A. MACDONALD (Johannesburg).—Thanks for new year's greetings. As you say, there is still a deal to do, and up to the present we have only scratched the surface. Still, so long as we are making headway it is something to be pleased with. We note you have not yet paid that promised trip to England.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges, W. E. Hickman, 4s.

N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges, W. E. Hickman, 4s.

MRS. M. BRESLEY.—Blasphemy pamphlets are being sent. The association of Freethinkers for aesthetic and similar purposes is desirable, but that will right itself as the progress of our ideas gradually prevents the association of these things with religious ideas.

J. S. BUCKLE.—Thanks for second subscription and references, which will prove useful.

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

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

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

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

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

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press" and crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

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

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

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

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

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

SUBSCRIBER AFTER YOU HAVE READ IT?

Sugar Plums.

This evening (January 22), at 7 o'clock, Mr. Cohen will speak in the Stratford Town Hall. His subject, "Why the World needs Freethought," should be equally attractive to supporters and honest opponents of our movement, particularly, perhaps, to those of the latter who declare that Freethought has no constructive policy.

The wild weather on Sunday last, which appears to have been general all over the country, materially interfered with Mr. Cohen's meeting at Swansea. In the circumstances the three or four hundred people who turned out to the meeting said a deal for the interest taken in Freethought locally. But for the weather the meeting looked as though it would have been a record one.

After the lecture Mr. Cohen had to travel to London in order to be in the court at the blasphemy trial. As he went to Swansea with a cold, the all-night journey did not improve it, but he will most likely shake it off during the next few days. And there is too much to be done now to waste time in being ill.

The West Ham Branch is holding another of its Social Evenings in the Metropolitan Academy of Music, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, on Saturday, February 4, at 7 o'clock. There will be the usual programme of songs, dances, etc., and admission is free to all members and their friends.

Stockport friends are asked to note that in future meetings of the local Branch will be held every Thursday evening at 191 Higher Hillgate, at 7.30. Local supporters and enquirers will please note.

This evening (January 22) at 7 o'clock Mr. George Whitehead will lecture for the Birmingham Branch at the Picture House, Station street. This is Mr. Whitehead's first visit to the Branch, and we hope he will have a crowded house. The subject, "A Criticism of Jesus Christ," is one which he handles with considerable ability.

Considering the vicious hostility on the part of the clerk of the weather last Sunday, Mr. Lloyd had an excellent audience at the Stratford Town Hall, when he spoke on "The Story of the Earth." The questions at the conclusion showed the interest with which the lecture was followed.

The Islington Branch of the Woman's Co-operative Guild passed a resolution protesting against the revival of the Blasphemy laws and the conviction of J. W. Gott. The resolution has been forwarded to the Home Secretary. We hope that all interested will keep this up. Freethinkers have remained too quiet under this long sustained injustice.

The late Mr. Edward Shield, who, as was announced a few weeks ago, bequeathed the sum of £50 to the *Freethinker*, also left £100 to the National Secular Society. This has now been paid by the Executors to the trustees of the Society. We note this as the first legacy which the N. S. S. has received under its new Trust Deed. To our own knowledge it will not be the last. And both the *Freethinker* and the Society can find good uses for whatever they may receive in this direction. Fighting is impossible without funds, as recent events have well shown.

The hearing of the appeal against the conviction and sentence of J. W. Gott for blasphemy took place before the Lord Chief Justice and two other judges on Monday, January 16. The report of the proceedings reaches us just as we go to press, and will appear later. Sir Henry Curtis Bennett made a good speech in favour of at least a revision of the sentence, and

in any other than a blasphemy case his arguments would certainly have had more influence with the judges. But where religion is concerned a judge is to be trusted no more than any ordinary believer, and the sentence stands without modification. More, the Lord Chief Justice refused to allow the sentence to date from the conviction, so that the five weeks during which Mr. Gott has been held awaiting the appeal is so much extra punishment. We shall have something to say next week on both the appeal and on Justice Avory. At present we can only say that we left the court filled with a stronger feeling of disgust for this caricature of justice. And the judges may rest assured that so far as one person was concerned, the only reason that these trials have not left him with a greater contempt for Christianity is that you can add nothing to infinity. We wonder that the very name of Christianity does not stink in the nostrils of every decent minded man and woman.

But although we have not succeeded in getting the sentence quashed, we do not regret the fight, nor do we think that our friends will regret it. We did not hope for a complete victory, but we consider that something has been gained in showing the bigots that we can and will fight them every step of the way. It will at least make them think twice before they make another attempt. We have very good authority for saying that had the police known that the N. S. S. would take up the case they would have rested content with the charge of obstruction. Perhaps it is as well that they should clearly understand that the N. S. S. cannot allow a blasphemy charge to pass without its being false to the best and noblest traditions of the Freethought party. And perhaps we may add that this is one more reason why the N. S. S. should be kept up to the proper point of fighting efficiency. But for the N. S. S. this scandalous trial and sentence would have been allowed to pass without a single official protest from the Freethought world.

What remains is for us to make this trial a step in the direction of repealing these infamous laws. We can all do something towards this, and in another part of this issue we suggest a way in which a large number of our readers can. We must make the bigots pay, and make even our mediævally minded judges realize that a God who cannot stand without the support of a policeman is a God that honest men and women should be ashamed to own. One or two of the expressions of the Lord Chief Justice were so intellectually shocking, and betrayed so hopeless a mentality, that one wondered whether we were living in the twentieth or the tenth century.

THE MORAL EQUIVALENT FOR WAR.

If now—and this is my idea—there were, instead of military conscription, a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against *nature*, the injustice would tend to be evened out, and numerous other benefits to the commonwealth would follow. The military ideals of hardihood and discipline would be wrought into the growing fibre of the people; no one would remain blind, as the luxurious classes now are blind, to man's real relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently solid and hard foundations of his higher life. To coal and iron-mines, to freight trains, to fishing fleets in December, to dish-washing, clothes-washing, and window-washing, to road-building and tunnel-making, to foundries and stoke-holes, and to the frames of sky-scrapers, would our gilded youths be drafted off, according to their choice, to get the childishness knocked out of them, and to come back into society with healthier sympathies and soberer ideas. They would have paid their blood-tax, done their part in the immemorial human warfare against nature; they would tread the earth more proudly; the women would value them more highly; they would be better fathers and teachers of the following generation. Such a conscription, with the public opinion that would have required it, and the moral fruits it would bear, would preserve in the midst of a pacific civilization the manly virtues which the military party is so afraid of seeing disappear in peace.

—Professor William James.

Black Army Tactics.

The first American Birth Control Conference met in New York City on November 11 (Armistice Day); two sessions daily were held on that and the day following. Valuable papers were read by physicians and other prominent men and women of both Europe and America. A Birth Control dinner on the evening of the 12th at the Potel Plaza.....A meeting of physicians and nurses for the discussion of contraceptives..... and as a conclusion, and aftermath.....a Birth Control Mass Meeting at the Town Hall on the evening of the 13th.

All went well—more than could be expected—except the Mass Meeting.....the doors were opened; a large crowd on the outside came in; the hall is nearly full when a Holy Man—one of the Holier than thou sort—appeared, and so horrified was he.....so many people who had fallen so low as to want to hear a discussion of so important a subject as "Birth Control—Is it Moral?" The gentleman of the cloth is none other than Monsignor Joseph P. Dineen, private secretary of Archbishop Hayes. He 'phones the police station—the police respond—the doors are closed—because of the heavenly peal. Margaret Sanger is arrested without a warrant for presuming to speak to an audience in a hall for which the money is already paid.

The next morning Mrs. Sanger appears in court.....the police captain who ordered her arrest cannot be found.....the pious Friday man is far away.....the woman is allowed to go free.....Three days thereafter the faithful snooper is promoted—becomes Chancellor of the diocese of New York.

Another meeting is advertised where the same subject will be under discussion—and the same speakers, one of whom was Harold Cox, of London, an ex-member of Parliament. The Press had condemned the suppression of the former meeting, and there was no attempt to throttle this one. Police were sent in numbers, and both city and county authorities had stenographers present to take down proceedings. The Archbishop was invited to attend and present his side of the case. It was stated by the Press that such invitation was regarded as an "impertinence." It was not an "impertinence" on the part of his man Friday to break up a meeting where the crowd had assembled.....no that was not "impertinent." It was impudence, and an outrage. It was more—the close relationship of Priest and Police.

But.....anyhow. The Archbishop was not present at the meeting. The Park Theatre was full; three thousand were turned away. A dodo fellow, otherwise known as a prominent clergyman, with great difficulty got through the crowd into the hall, where he expressed himself in opposition to birth control. Whatever may be said as regards his lack of discernment, at least he was not afraid of an open fight, with no robes or priestly dignity—or other ensconce—to hide behind.

Later, Archbishop Hayes gives a letter to the Press in which he proclaims: "As a citizen and a churchman....." As a "citizen" his voice is scarcely heard as he sinks into the common denominator. It is as a "churchman" when he verifies the command! (!) of God; when representative of all the ignorance, superstition, dogma, and persecution of the Rule of Rome; the religion of Intolerance and Hate—that it behoves us to take notice of this man in robes. Thus spake.....the Voice in the Cathedral....."The Catholic Church's condemnation of birth control (except it be self control) is based on natural law, which is the eternal law of God applied to man....." Since "natural law" and "the eternal law of God" are powerless to act, it remains for the Catholic

Church to get a myrmidon and a club to carry out these "natural" and "eternal" laws.

Now just what does this Rumble from Rome mean by "self control"? If God anywhere in Holy Writ made mention of "self control" please give chapter and verse. The grand Archbishop must be slipping something over.....The command to "increase" and "multiply" makes no allowance for this new heresy of "self control" so piously vouched by the Roman hierarch. Is this a valid reason—so long unexplained—why priests and nuns may refrain from carrying out the Divine injunction and have no offspring because of an assumed "right" of "self control," which other people less favoured by Divine sanction have the burden of bearing—and caring for—children? The priests and the nuns have set aside their duty to God—have no children—no burdens—no responsibilities to either the community or to God. The whole watter is settled with a hocus pocus wave of the hands—a sinister subterfuge; an insidious snide of "self control"—and all is well.....with the Bishop.

I dare say if the communicants of the Catholic Church—all of a sudden—should follow the example of the priesthood, commence this practice of "self control" there would come—very soon—a shriek from this eminent prelate. A shortage of births! Which means—less baptisms—less confirmations—a dropping off in confessions! In the end less deaths—and fewer souls to be prayed out of purgatory! Isn't it just terrible! What will become of the job of the Church? Aye, there's the rub! The Archbishop, priests, nuns, and sundry of the Papal appointees would run out of sinecures, and, perhaps—let us hope—find better employment.

Ministers of other various Churches and jurists on the bench are also backward in that their families contain a paucity of children. I wonder what part "self control" plays in their lives. If it is right to practise "self control"—and it appears the clergy—especially of the Catholic Church—are doing that very thing.....is it not about time for John Jones and Pat Murphy, and Carl Schultz and Tony Morino to "control" themselves in such manner as to forestall the coming of more hungry faces than they can feed—children who will have misery, starvation, and ignorance as a recompense? But there will be less souls to be saved! Ah! Ha! Say, but the Archbishop knows what he's doing! Let the clergy get busy and do their part of the "increasing" and "multiplying" and do their share of providing for the welfare of these babies in the world—instead of saving them in another realm after they are dead.

Margaret Sanger has never suggested so radical a departure or so arduous a task as "self control." She has merely advocated the "Limitation of Offspring" for the lower classes—the others are practising—in more or less degree—the sanctimonious "self control" as enunciated by the Man of God.

However, this "self control" by the sacrosanct has its own reward.....Thanks to the Archbishop for the suggestion....."self control" for the Individual and Home Rule for the Family is not such a bad idea after all.....And when the Individual and the Family attain this "self control" and Home Rule; cease to be priest ridden, and affirm an independence of Papal authority—with no one to sip the Holy Water; no one to count the Precious Beads; and no one to fondle the Crucifix—the priests will have a chance to take the nuns out on a lawful honeymoon; an extended vacation of thirteen moons per year. A very unlucky number—indeed—for the priestcraft, who will never again have a chance to come back; and a very, very lucky number for the confiding jackasses who have been "multiplying" the Church membership, and supplying the fellow in the gown with corn and wine; the while he was engaged in "self control" and

song—and the fluttering angels compassed him round about—in a tryst of pita-pat—in felicitous amour.

Away over yonder in Rome I see the poor old Pope—silent, lugubrious, and forlorn—as he squats in Beggars' Corner—his garments all tattered and worn—his drooping head and fallen crown—shall be lifted. Ah, nevermore!

WALTER MERCHANT.

(New York.)

The Old Guard.

A REMINISCENCE.

It is now some years since I discovered him leaning across a five-barred gate. It was a cheerful October day, for the sun was shining although the sky was clouded over in parts. He was watching the flight of a company of starlings and taking in the landscape at the same time. Old Crawford is an octogenarian, and is known for the kindly, tolerant view he takes of life generally. We knew his views on theological matters, but I never found him in such a communicative mood as I did that day. There was a certain sadness in his old weather-beaten face.

After passing the time of day I very soon found the reason of his serious demeanour. His old friend G. W. Foote was dead. Crawford is himself stooping under the weight of years, and has not much longer the privilege of battling on this mundane sphere, but I found he held his views as tenaciously as ever. As his stick swung idly from the top bar of the gate he gave me a glimpse of his past history. He had been a hard working man in his time and brought up a respectable family. Grandchildren sometimes clambered about his knees. He had undergone his measure of sorrow and tribulation in the world, having lost two or three lads in the prime of manhood. But perhaps none of his family were such keen Free-thinkers as the old man who had fought his way through a thousand hardships. There was a flash of fire in the old warrior's blue eyes as he recounted his early struggling against what he then conceived to be dangerous beliefs. Brought up in one of the strictest Calvinistic sects he believed it was his bounden duty to follow truth at any cost. Whether he had succeeded in his quest or no was not for him to say. But he was quite certain he had been loyal to his own convictions. Truth has so many facets that it was not for him to dogmatize regarding other folk. But, as the old man pointed out, when he began to cut loose from the ancient moorings it was because he believed that if there was a God of truth that Deity could not possibly object to any of His creatures being loyal to their own conscience. At that period he had been reading Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, as well as some of Ruskin's works, and it was the flaming spirit of these prophets which induced him to follow the beckoning of his conscience at all hazards. Thus it was that he severed his connection with what is called orthodox belief. It took him some years until he finally fought his way through all the creeds in Christendom, giving various dovecots a trial in the course of his wanderings.

Then it was that he heard Mr. Bradlaugh in the North. The old man's face lit up as he mentioned Bradlaugh. Many a time he had walked miles to hear Iconoclast. There must have been something in the rugged fearlessness of that apostle which drew old Crawford, for he became what he called an "out and outer." He cast off every shred of supernaturalism and became an enthusiastic devotee of the new faith—or want of faith. He grew quite eloquent as he told of the many times he had heard all the old Free-thought lecturers. Harriet Law and Annie Besant in her palmy days. Chas. Watts, Foote, and A. B. Moss. Touzseau Paris, Holyoake and Jos. Symes

who went out on a mission to Australia. How the old fellow chuckled as he gave me an account of some of these heroes in debate. For they were heroes in the old man's eyes, and he looked up to them accordingly. How these prophets had been stoned in their day. How they had been slandered by well-meaning critics who misunderstood them.

Slander

Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile: whose breath
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie
All corners of the world.

I, myself, had heard some of these men, but I had never encountered Harriet Law. This was enough to set Crawford on to extol the qualities of that lady.

Then there was the debate between the Rev. Marsden Gibson and Mr. Bradlaugh. My friend was there both nights, and enjoyed himself exceedingly. That was the last time he heard Bradlaugh, for he died not long afterwards. The glint of battle was in the old man's eyes as he told of a hundred fights.

He then took me into his little cottage close by and showed me a few photographs which he had framed and hung on the walls. There was a curious quintette which attracted my attention. Some of them must have been taken from old books, or something of the sort, for Voltaire and Paine were each in evidence. I pointed out to Crawford that both of these were deists and could hardly be supposed to favour his extreme views. "Ah! but," said he, "if they had lived nowadays they would have been in my position." It would have been of no avail to argue with such unflinching optimism. Then we had Bradlaugh and Ingersoll—another great favourite of Crawford's—and who do you think was in the centre of this group? None other than the late Professor Huxley.

"Surely," said I, "you do not claim the Professor among your number, he called himself 'Agnostic.'"

"And what is an Agnostic?" replied Crawford. "What is the difference between Agnostic and an Atheist?"

As Mr. Foote used to say, "An Agnostic is simply an Atheist wearing a tall hat." Both are without a knowledge of God, and there is practically no difference.

On leaving the old gentleman he again referred to the death of Mr. Foote, and speculated on the future of the Party. Though his affections were naturally with the old leaders, yet his hopes ran high with regard to the younger men. Mr. Cohen, he felt sure, had the making of a wise general in him, and for depth of philosophic thought was difficult to match. Mr. Lloyd, A. B. Moss and others, he felt sure, would carry the flag with unswerving fidelity. The future had no terrors for him. He did his duty here, and should another life be found beyond the grave, old Crawford will be as capable of taking his share in it as any I know.

ALAN TYNDAL.

In the Acts of the Apostles we meet with a class of persons whose features have in our own times become again familiar to us—quacks and conjurers professing to be in communication with the spiritual world, and regarded with curiosity and interest by serious men high in rank and authority. Sergius Paulus was craving for any light which could be given to him, and in default of better teaching had listened to Elymas the Sorcerer. Simon Magus, if we may credit Catholic tradition, was in favour at the Imperial Court of Rome, where he matched his power against St. Paul's and was defeated only because God was stronger than the devil. The "curious arts" of these people were regarded both by Christian and heathen as a real mastery of a supernatural secret; and in the hunger for information about the great mystery with which the whole society was possessed, they rose, many of them, into positions of extraordinary influence and consequence.—James Anthony Froude.

Writers and Readers.

MOLIÈRE AND RELIGION.

I do not think that even the most malicious of my friends could say that I ever attempted to bring within the fold of Freethought any great man whose cast of mind was not clearly anti-religious. My scepticism and caution in this matter may possibly annoy those of my readers who are propagandists at any and every cost, for we Freethinkers have this in common with the Christians; we sometimes think that we honour the best of causes when we set it just a little above the truth. It was once my privilege to possess the friendship of an amiable, but misguided young man whose only aim in life was to add every week a new and resplendent jewel to the already radiant diadem of Freethought. If it so happened that he was not able to "put up" an irreproachable Freethinker he was not discouraged; he was left the free play of his imagination, which had no difficulty in converting a mystic into an atheist. I told him that he reminded me somewhat of Sylvain Maréchal, who compiled an absurd *Dictionary of Atheists* in which Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Bossuet rubbed shoulders with Toland, Diderot and Jean Meslier.

But after all there is no need to try to raise the prestige of Freethought by laying claim to doubtful adherents. I for one am quite satisfied with the imposing display of names in J. M. Wheeler's excellent little dictionary, supplemented by Mr. J. M. Robertson's magistral studies in the history of Freethought. They show that no age has ever been without its groups of emancipated thinkers, while nowadays it is hard to find a man or woman of really outstanding ability who is not more or less a Freethinker.

There is, curiously enough, one great writer who does not figure in Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. Somehow this painstaking scholar contrived to miss Molière, the greatest comic writer for the stage, the tercentenary of whose birth (January 12, 1622) our friends on the other side of the Channel have just been celebrating with artistic enthusiasm and national pride. The oversight is, no doubt, to be explained by Wheeler's lack of interest in the lighter forms of literature, and his want of acquaintance with Molière either by the book or the stage. The literary criticism of the dramatist he would be likely to come across in the course of his reading would lay no stress on Molière's anti-religious bias, that being precisely the side of an artistic mind which our English writers find it convenient to ignore. Even the best of modern English studies of the dramatist, Mr. Arthur Tilley's *Molière* (Cambridge University Press, 1921), does not bring out at all clearly the philosophical value of the great comedies. But French critics are less squeamish. In the seventeenth century in France there was no hesitation in placing him—not on the side of the angels. His whole career was a progress in Freethought. The Jesuits who gave him his "humanities" laid the foundation of his large and tolerant philosophy of life, and probably dissipated what theistic belief he had commenced with. And when as a young man he studied philosophy with the man of science and materialist, Gassendi (1591-1656), a follower of Bacon and friend of Galileo, his natural anti-theistic bias must have been as confirmed as that of his fellow student Cyrano de Bergerac. In choosing the calling of a play-actor he put himself outside the pale of what was then considered respectable society, although he had always the protection of Louis XIV and the loyal friendship of a few *libertins* who were distinguished in philosophy and letters. His sworn enemies were not so much the Jesuits as the austere Jansenists. They had that irrational hatred of the stage which is always associated with the puritanical type of mind, and when Molière brought his company to Paris the theocratic government of the city excommunicated all play-actors, putting them on the same footing, as Remy de Gourmont remarks, with loose women, money-lenders, magicians and fortune-tellers. Every parish priest kept a list of the names of parishioners who fre-

quented the playhouse, and could at any moment deprive them of civil rights. Great pulpit orators like Bourdaloue and Bossuet used their powers of persuasion, exhortation and abuse, and pamphleteers like Barbier d'Aucour represented Molière to his religious readers as a cynical preacher of all the vices whose aim was to destroy men by making them laugh, whose *cocu imaginaire* was an invention for the better making of real ones.

The religious bigots brought against Molière a formal charge of impiety and sacrilege, and they were justified from their standpoint, for he was the most formidable enemy the modern spirit had raised against them. They avenged themselves in the end by refusing to bury the dramatist in consecrated ground. But the better sort of clergy were more shocked by Molière's philosophy than by his comedies. What they detested and dreaded, as Remy de Gourmont has pointed out, was the vindicator of the natural man, the lover of liberty, the sworn enemy of religious prejudgments. In him they persecuted one of the liberators of human nature, one whose work of liberation was all the more effective because it was disguised as mere popular amusement. It was a struggle between the priests and the play-actors, and the comedians won. Paris just escaped being converted into a Geneva.

Molière's contemporaries had not the slightest doubt with regard to his contemptuous disregard of religion, and we who read his plays now can understand why they regarded him as a sort of devil incarnate, a corrupter of virtue, a *mauvais maître*, a professor of evil, as Louis Veuillot was pleased to call every great thinker who rejected the claims of the Church of Rome. The impiety and the epicurean scepticism of his plays are obvious. In *Don Juan* there are two scenes (Act iii., scenes 1 and 2), which so scandalized the faithful that they were cancelled after the first performance. Don Juan and his servant are walking through a forest, both disguised, for the avenging brothers of the wronged Elvire are on Juan's scent. To while away the time they discuss the fundamentals of belief, Juan standing for materialism, Sganarelle for religion. The valet gets the worst of the argument and damages his nose into the bargain. This trusting of the defence of religion to an uneducated serving-man was understood as an insult to orthodox intelligence. It was certainly not very flattering. But worse was to come. In arguing the two have lost their way, and meeting a beggar they ask him to direct them. He begs for alms in the name of God and says that he will pray for their health and prosperity. Don Juan asks him how he spends his time. He replied that all his time is given to praying for those who help him. "Then you have everything you want," remarks Don Juan. "I have nothing," replies the beggar. "But surely a man who is always praying to God could not possibly be in a wretched condition. That is but a poor reward for all your trouble. Come, now, try what a little blasphemy will do. Curse God and I will give you a guinea. Well, if you can't be persuaded to blaspheme, if you would rather die of hunger than curse God, I will give you one not in the name of God, but in the name of suffering humanity."

It was with *Tartuffe* that Molière fully revenged himself upon his religious persecutors. It has often been said that this terrible satire is merely an attack of religious hypocrisy. Sainte-Beuve is under this impression when he tells us that it was directed against Jesuit casuistry. But Molière had no quarrel with the Jesuits, who preferred to remain neutral in the contention between religion and comedy. Their attitude toward Molière was fairly sympathetic. They probably enjoyed his ridicule of the casuists. He was not a theologian like Pascal, but a philosopher who took a wider view of the world. No, what Molière attacked was religion itself and Brunetière evidently had this in view when he called *Tartuffe* a Freethinking tract. Certainly it is that, and something much more precious. It is the most wonderful piece of comic stage craft the world has ever seen, and one of the truest and most moving pictures of life as shaped by religious ideals.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

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