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Views and Opinions.

The Savage Within the Gates.

In a lecture delivered some years ago (1908), Sir James Frazer pointed out that the systematic enquiries of anthropologists—

carried on among the less educated classes, and especially among the peasantry, of Europe have revealed the astonishing, nay, alarming truth that a mass, if not the majority of people in every civilized country is still living in a state of intellectual savagery, that, in fact, the smooth surface of cultured society is sapped and mined by superstition. Only those whose studies have led them to investigate the subject are aware of the depth to which the ground beneath our feet is thus, as it were, honeycombed by unseen forces. We appear to be standing on a volcano which may at any moment break out in smoke and fire and spread ruin and devastation among the gardens and palaces of ancient culture wrought so laboriously by the hands of many generations.

The only words which, in my opinion, are open to question in the above passage, are the reference to "the less educated classes." It implies that superstition is only rife among these, and this is not the case. There is quite as much evidence in favour of the truth of Sir James Frazer's statement to be found among our "educated" classes as among the avowedly non-educated. We see members of the Royal family displaying "Mascots" with all the pleasure that a peasant in one of the less educated centres might derive from them. A very large sale in these things is effected in some of the more fashionable centres, and in a thousand and one ways it may be shown—quite apart from the prevalent superstition of the current religion—that the savage may be found in silk as well as in rags, in Mayfair as well as in Whitechapel, and that the existence of what passes for education does not prohibit the most absurd of superstitions.

* * *

The Revolt of the Caveman.

As I write there lie before me two examples of what I have said, both of them from the United States. Now the level of education is not, I think, lower in America than it is here, but from some cause or the other religious cranks seem to flourish there with greater luxuriance than with us. This may be because our crankiness is better regularized than theirs, and our stupidity more carefully organized. But I do not think that in this country we should find responsible

bodies of people ready to deliberately propose that the teaching of evolution should be prohibited to the public by legislation. It is not that there are not on our local governing bodies a number of men sufficiently ignorant to think that this kind of knowledge should be kept away from young people; everyone who knows these men is aware that quite a fair proportion of them are, on scientific and cultural matters, much on the level of the cavemen. But they would not be prepared to publicly advertise the fact. In America they seem ready to do these things and to feel proud of it. Thus, a Bill was recently brought into the Kentucky legislature to make the teaching of evolution punishable by a fine of from 500 to 1,000 dollars. And the Bill was only defeated by one vote. Quite a number of Christian associations appear to have passed resolutions against the teaching of evolution and have appointed committees to consider in what way this vile doctrine can be eradicated. And it all makes one feel that even though man may have descended from an ape-like form, a great many have not yet developed quite so far as to preclude the possibility of a return to the ancestral state.

* * *

The Past and the Present.

The lay protagonist of this "Back to the Dark Ages Movement" is William Jennings Bryan, late candidate for the Presidency of the United States, and a man who certainly must have a considerable following in America, and does, consequently, wield a considerable influence among the people. The *New York Herald* of Sunday, March 19, published a four column article by Mr. Bryan on Darwinism, which is a still further proof that in his belated view of things Mr. Bryan does not stand alone. And Mr. Bryan has at least one merit, he is thorough in his obscurantism. He will not have evolution in any shape or form, neither in the plant world nor in the animal, nor in the human world. In that one cannot withhold a certain measure of respect for him, and there is a certain educational value in studying him. Such remains of primitive man as have been found have enabled scientists to reconstruct the physical shape of our prehistoric ancestor. But the important part of him remains vague and undefined. We know what he looked like; what we all would like to know is what were his thoughts about things? How did he feel in face of the phenomena around him? That is a question we must all have asked ourselves at some time or another, and to that query William Jennings Bryan supplies an answer. The cave man must have looked at his world with much the same thoughts that W. J. Bryan looks at his. That type does not change. It is as enduring as the hills. It is the past breaking into the present, much as one can see at times the primitive granite breaking through the more modern strata of the earth's crust.

* * *

Evolution and the Bible.

I am not going to argue that evolution is a fact; one might as well waste time to-day in proving that the earth goes round the sun. Evolution is a demonstrated

truth, although Mr. Bryan, in common with many others, seems quite unable to distinguish between the fact of evolution and the machinery by which evolution is brought about. There is any amount of room for speculation about the latter, there is no room whatever for doubt about the former. My interest in Mr. Bryan is that he illustrates a type, one that is far commoner than many people imagine, and which embodies a danger that very few appreciate. The curious thing is that from the religious point of view I believe Mr. Bryan to be in the right. He says what every Christian ought to say or cease to be a Christian. Take, for instance, the following:—

Darwinism destroys faith in the Bible. The Darwinite rejects the Mosaic account of creation, and the same reasons that lead him to reject this will lead him to reject all that is miraculous and all that is supernatural in the Bible. When he eliminates all of the Old Testament that is inconsistent with evolution (and that means that he eliminates practically all that is important) he proceeds to eliminate from the New Testament all that is inconsistent with evolution. This means the elimination of the virgin birth of Christ, Christ's miracles and the resurrection of the Saviour; it also eliminates Christ's claim to power, universal and eternal. The Bible becomes a story book—a book of fiction—no longer binding as an authority; Christ becomes a mere man, with an ape for his ancestor on his mother's side at least, and most of them believe on his father's side also. If the believers in Darwinism will be frank enough to state in writing how much of the Bible they accept as true the parents can understand how little of God's word is left.

Now, if I were a Christian I think, nay, I hope that I should say just what Mr. Bryan says here. For he is logical, he is so far honest, and it requires a certain kind of courage to come forth into the open and boldly proclaim belief in that which most genuinely educated men would be ashamed to confess. I believe with Mr. Bryan that when you eliminate from the Bible all that is inconsistent with evolution, when you have abolished the miracles, the virgin birth, the resurrection, etc., you have, in a Christian sense, abolished the Bible. Intelligible and intelligent belief in evolution is not consistent with belief in the Bible. Genuine belief in the Bible is not consistent with belief in evolution. Mr. Bryan does well in thus calling attention to the absurdity of the position of those who try to run the two things together. He may be stupid, but he is honest. He may be—mentally—a caveman, but he is a mentally honest caveman. He no more doubts his God than the caveman doubted the actuality of the tribal ghosts. Across the ages the two meet and mingle in spirit.

* * *

The Threat to Civilisation.

With Mr. Bryan as a person I am not, however, concerned. I am thinking of Mr. Bryan as the representative of a type, and as an illustration of the truth of what I cited from Professor Frazer at the beginning of these notes. In many respects we Freethinkers take a too circumscribed view of the position in which we are placed. We have left the childish legends so far behind us, they are so completely banished from our mental life, and we, perhaps, mix so casually with the genuine believer that we are inclined to overlook the fact that all we have done is to make a little clearing in the midst of a huge forest of superstition. And we need to be always on our guard to prevent the vegetation around us over-running the clearing we call our own. In the days of old Rome a cultured Roman would probably have stared with unbelieving amazement had he been told that in the course of a century or so the civil and literary culture around him would have given place to a mass of superstitions as degrading as any that ever clogged the brain of man. To-day,

our danger is not so acute; our culture is broader based, and more deeply rooted. But the danger is still there. "The surface of cultured society is sapped and mined by superstition." The mass of the people—in all social ranks—are "living in a state of intellectual savagery." A savage is not of necessity one that goes about without clothing and decorated with feathers. Culture is not a question of clothing, but of mental outlook. A man may be as much a savage in a silk hat as in a head-dress of feathers, and it is the savage in civilized dress that we have to-day to fear, the man who lives in the twentieth century and thinks in terms of thousands of years ago. A common explanation for the downfall of the old Roman civilization is that it was largely due to the influx of barbaric tribes. The explanation has become popular with Christians because it helps to hide the demoralizing influence of their creed. But, in any case, civilization is no longer threatened with that danger. The savages that threaten us are not without, but within. The threat to civilization comes from the persistence of ideas which had their birth in the fear-ridden ignorance of primitive man—and which have been perpetuated and transformed into settled institutions by the cunning and cupidity of his fellows. That is the great threat to civilization to-day, and in fighting that the Freethinker is acting as the defender of the best and highest interests of the race.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Facing the Facts.

THE Ven. P. S. Waddy, Archdeacon in Palestine, is now on a visit in this country, and has recently occupied the pulpit of St. Paul's Cathedral. The sermon, entitled "The Road from Bethlehem to Calvary," is published in the *Guardian* of April 7. The Archdeacon has much to say about the various Churches represented at Jerusalem where he resides. He tacitly admits that Anglican Christianity is a type by itself, differing more or less considerably from other types to be found there. He is fully aware of the popular impression that "Jerusalem is the place of jarring discords between fellow-Christians of Eastern Churches, and of fanatical opposition between Christian and Jew"; but he pleads with us to "greatly discount stories to the discredit not only of our Eastern brethren, but also of Jew and Moslem." He is deeply and proudly convinced that towards the realization of a serene state of Christian brotherliness "the Anglican Bishopric seems likely to be, in the Providence of God, his chief implement, if only we are worthy of ourselves, staffed by the Church's best men, upheld by home sympathy, buttressed by home prayer." Whilst frankly acknowledging that Christians have much to learn from other religions, he yet stoutly maintains that "we have something of supreme value to supply." The real object of the sermon is to make clear what that something is.

We who live in Jerusalem have two great advantages. It is not easier for us to live up to our Christian ideals. But we are helped to feel the wonder and reality of the Life of lives; and also to remember that all its events must be interpreted in one great unity. The mere walking along its roads and hillsides is a proclamation of the drama of the Gospel. There are the sites, actual and commemorative. Each stirs us to think of its own event, reminding us not only of his Death and Passion, but also of his patient and successful teaching, of homes that gladly welcomed him, and of streets where he went about doing good. But also every visitor is struck by noticing how close the sites lie to one another. You cannot walk to one without passing others.

What the Archdeacon is anxious to impart to us is "the Message of the Holy Sites," particularly of Bethlehem and Calvary. He asks us to face the simple facts as they are presented to us in the Gospel story. He assures us that God offers us, not subtle explanations, but plain facts. Curiously enough, the Archdeacon does not condescend to explain anything whatever, but hurls what he calls facts at our heads. The first of his facts is that of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ; but this is not a fact, but a theological interpretation put upon an alleged fact. The Incarnation is an inference drawn by the founders of Christianity, supported by not a single ascertained fact. The message of Bethlehem, according to this remarkable discourse, is that God is close at hand, and not a long way off as most people imagine. The Archdeacon ascribes the following speech to the Almighty:—

I will not have this; I will not be put a long way off. Far off in space beyond the stars, am I? I am going to stop this idea once for all, and to stop it by a plain fact, not by a line of reasoning. I am coming to live among men as a man; I will show before the end of my visible life that not even death can take me away from them.

Does the venerable gentleman really fancy that living in Jerusalem entitles him to put his own words into the mouth of God? As he well knows, God has never spoken; no words have ever dropped from his mouth; his never-broken silence is the conspicuous fact about him. The talk about his coming down from heaven to live among men as a man is an interesting but wholly unbelievable fairy tale, one of the exploded fables of the above so powerfully repudiated by Meredith. It was a degradation to convert Christmas into a Christian festival in commemoration of what never happened, and never can happen. It has certainly not "come to pass that Christmas especially is the plain man's festival of religion"; Christmas is still the joyous day set apart to celebrate the return of the sun with spring and summer in its wings. This message is beautifully and enrapturingly true while the Bethlehem message is entirely mythical.

Assuming that at Bethlehem God manifested his nearness by becoming man, the Archdeacon declares: "If that is the kind of thing God does, we need no one to explain to us why we ought to be happy in the world where God has placed us." "This is the Bethlehem message, and it is meant to be carried on with us along the road to Calvary. If that is the kind of God he is at Bethlehem, then that is the kind of God we shall find him all along the road of life." "Nothing can cancel that fact; then nothing can logically cancel the feeling that results from that fact, that a man has a right to carry a happy outlook all through the life in which that God places him." "You ought to be able to tell a Christian by his happy face; but you cannot. In practical experience, religious earnestness is rather associated with long faces than with infectious buoyant happiness." The question, however, is what right has anyone to be happy because the tale is told that the Word of God became flesh on Christmas Day some two thousand years ago? Mr. Waddy says that the fact of God's nearness gives or should give that right; but as a matter of fact it does not, and the question naturally arises, what is the good of having a God near who neither says nor does anything at all? What ground is there in such nearness on which to be buoyantly and triumphantly happy? By all means, let us face the facts, but let us face them with scrupulous honesty. In spite of both Bethlehem and Calvary the world is not happy, nor at present on the road to happiness. So far as flooding the world with joy is concerned Christianity is a stupendous fiasco. According to the Archdeacon in Palestine "the fundamental thing that balks us of joy in our outlook is a rightful

thing done wrongly; we call it facing facts." People say:—

Look at the actual world; look at the tangle and chaos of it, the obvious power of the Devil, the mass of human stupidity, treachery, oppression, and suffering. Are we to look out with calm happiness over all that? The two things will not fit. We forget it somewhat at Christmas; but when the holidays are over, and we get back to dreary, stubborn facts, the happy, rosy outlook will not last; it is not justified, we must face facts.

That sounds like fair, logical reasoning, and the venerable gentleman admits that such it is. Doubtless those are facts, he owns; but he contends that there are other facts which counterbalance them and which we must face. Like the dogmatist that he is, he expresses himself as follows:—

There is no part of the Christian message about which a preacher would more earnestly wish to be powerful and effective than this, the legitimate right of a man living full in the world, facing facts with his eyes wide open, to be dominantly happy and triumphantly hopeful; the necessity that is laid upon a Christian believer to be a man of joy; the logical duty of firm-founded, unshakable happiness as the base of his outlook upon life. We must face facts; and God says, "That is what I ask you to do. But is it not explanation you are rather asking for? Remember, I never promised explanations; I promised facts; I gave you Christmas and Good Friday; that settles the kind of God I am; and if you forget that, of course, I cannot promise that you will be happy."

That is how this preacher makes God speak. If he really believes that the Almighty exists how great must be his presumption in venturing to set words in his mouth! As a matter of stubborn fact, however, it is the Archdeacon himself who is speaking all the time, only in his eagerness to enhance their importance in the eyes of his hearers he is audacious enough to attribute some of his utterances to God himself, feeling perhaps that thus the Supreme would or should speak if he did or could. Now, let us come to the facts once more, and face them, one of which according to the preacher, is that two beings, God and the Devil, are waging desperate war upon each other in this world, and that mankind are divided in their allegiance, multitudes, possibly the majority of them, serving as the Devil's soldiers, and the rest as God's. This war is said to have been going on from the beginning of human life and to be, on the whole, fiercer now than at any previous period. The Archdeacon says:—

There is no doubt that there is a Devil at work in the world; there is no doubt men sin and oppress; these are facts. But there is no doubt either that there is a God; and that is the kind of God he is; and that kind of God has all the power there is in the universe; and these are facts, too. When you are facing facts, face them all. That kind of Devil winning the victory against that kind of God! It would take much to make us believe it.

At last the preacher has given his case clean away. If God is "that kind of God and has all the power there is in the universe," why on earth is there war between him and the Devil? Fancy such an utterly unequal war being allowed to continue through all the ages and with no visible sign yet of an end! The very idea is laughably absurd. Whilst no doubt perfectly sincere and good-hearted, the Archdeacon is hopelessly superstitious and credulous. Being professionally bound to swallow something, he swallows all there is to swallow, without a moment's qualm, and apparently suffers no ill effects, except in his logic which limps and slips most pitifully. He says that Jesus won a glorious victory on Calvary, which was sealed by his resurrection and ascension; but the victory, according to his own prediction, was to have been a victory for the world. In no other sense could it have been worth

the winning. And the preacher coolly asks, "And can the world's Calvary be more hopeless than the Saviour's?"

Our conclusion is that God, the Devil, and the war between them are not facts but fables, and the evils and wrongs, injustice and oppression prevalent in the world become intelligible only when we have cast the supernatural myths behind us for ever. We are not fallen sinners at enmity with heaven, but slowly rising, evolving beings, with a grand future before us, if we do justice to the possibilities within us.

J. T. LLOYD.

Shakespeare and the Inquisition.

What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text.
I had rather be a dog and bay the moon
Than such a Roman.

—Shakespeare.

SIR SIDNEY LEE has made a most interesting discovery concerning Shakespeare. He has had lent to him a copy of the Second Folio of 1632 which had been the subject of official expurgation under the authority of the Spanish Inquisition. The volume had previously lain for nearly three hundred years in the English College Library at Valladolid, Spain. Not only are the inquisitor's notes of value in showing how priests handle books, but, incidentally, they dispose of the claim made by some Catholic writers that Shakespeare belonged to their religion. Further, the discovery shows that Shakespeare's works had circulated in Europe long before British criticism had reached the dizzy heights of hero-worship.

The expurgator of the Holy office was not content with deleting a large number of words and passages from the plays, but the text of *Measure for Measure* is torn out bodily from the volume. To show how thoroughly the work was done, the inquisitor scores out the prefix in the phrase "Saint Cupid" in *Love's Labour Lost*. In *As You Like It* the expression "his kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread" is inked through, like the comparison between "the nun's lips to the friar's mouth" in *All's Well that Ends Well*. And there are scores of similar deletions.

It is unnecessary to follow the inquisitor's emendations and corrections in great detail. Sir Sidney Lee devotes two columns in the *Times* to recording some of them. After all, facts are more stubborn things than mere expressions of opinion in a priest hot on a heresy hunt. And the circumstances of Shakespeare's life are too well known to-day to admit of equivocation and successful camouflage.

Mary Arden, the poet's mother, came of a Catholic family. The probability is that she was herself a Romanist, but there is no evidence either way. Shakespeare's father is not so doubtful. He was a member of the Stratford Corporation during Elizabeth's reign, and must have conformed to the Protestant religion. The result seems that young Shakespeare was brought up under a probably Catholic mother, and a father who was a professing Protestant.

The circumstances of Shakespeare's early life being so, the more clearly is emphasized Shakespeare's own revolt from Rome. The plays themselves are clearly not the work of a Catholic. Shakespeare was so ignorant of Romish ritual that he makes Juliet ask the friar if she shall come "at evening mass." No Catholic could have made this mistake. *King John* is, obviously, not the work of a Romanist. In *Henry VI Gloucester* is made to say to Cardinal Beaufort:—

Under my feet I stamp thy cardinal's hat,
In spite of pope or dignitaries of Church.

The purport of *Love's Labour Lost* is to show the utter uselessness of vows. Again and again in the plays there are eloquent passages directed against the celibate ideals of the Romish Church. In a wonderful line in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he pictures the forsaken sisterhood of the cloister:—

Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.

The fatal objection to the suggestion of Shakespeare's Catholicism is that neither Queen Elizabeth nor King James could have publicly favoured Shakespeare if he were a Romanist. Nor could the Pembroke have given him their patronage. But, we know, that Shakespeare was no Puritan, no conventional Reformation Protestant. He was known to be irreligious, and the epitaph on Mrs. Hall, Shakespeare's eldest daughter, clearly implies that his life had not been one of piety:—

Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall;
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
Wholly of Him with whom she's now in bliss.

She derived from her father her wit, but none of the influences which conduced to her salvation. In an age when religious wars and schisms were convulsing Europe, and in England the Reformed religion was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Old Faith, it is remarkable that Shakespeare turned his back on Christianity. Not, observe, from hostility, for he was too free from prejudice for that. It was from the knowledge that, as a philosophy of life, it threw no useful light over human thought and human circumstance. On these momentous questions his own views were Secularistic. It is well, for Shakespeare's name is the greatest in the world's literature.

MIMNERMUS.

A Gross Superstition.

It is somewhat surprising, when one considers the millions of pounds of the ratepayers' money that have been spent on education, that there are still so many people whose minds are dominated by that grossest of superstitions—the fear of a God. From the cradle to the grave man is being continually reminded of the awful consequences that are in store for him should he offend or express his disbelief in that somewhat touchy Being. The picture of hell has been held over the heads of immature children and credulous women whenever an opportunity occurs. It is principally the women and children the clergy are now after; it is an old truism that "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

Now let us get rid of this master superstition once and for all. The only god it is possible for the Theist to postulate must be a Personal God, who can listen to our supplications, answer prayers, and generally take care of his children. All other definitions, such as the Ultimate Reality, the Unconditioned, the Final Cause, the Divine Essence, and other absurdities are so much dust thrown in the eyes of the would-be enquirer in order to confuse the issue.

In the first of the "Thirty-nine Articles of Religion" of the Church of England God is described as "One true and living God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions." This is about the best description of *nothing* one could possibly wish for. It goes on to state that he is of "Infinite power, goodness, and wisdom, the maker and preserver of all things visible and invisible." This is the god I propose to show has no more existence, except in the imagination of the credulous, than Father Christmas or the Bogey-man. The Biblical story of the creation of man we may dismiss with a smile. The Bible says that God created man in his own image. Darwinism shows that man is not a special creation, but has descended from apes,

and goes through the same process "in utero" as the lower animals. Geology has shattered the belief that the world was created 6,000 years ago, and astronomy has given us a scientific explanation of the formation of this and other planets. In fact, science has driven the final screw into the coffin of supernaturalism, and it only remains for us now to lower it into the grave of primitive beliefs.

If you ask the average Theist how he knows his deity exists he will probably say, "I learnt it at school," or "I read it in the Bible," or "it is a universal belief." Any one of these replies means that he has accepted the information from others, trusting to their veracity, without verifying their statements or thinking the matter out for himself. And this is true of the greater part of most men's beliefs, taken without verification from their parents, teachers, and self-styled spiritual advisers. It does not seem to occur to them that the only facts that they can safely accept must be capable of demonstration or verification in some way. All the beliefs about nature and man which have not been founded on scientific observation have directly or indirectly been used in the interest of the Churches. These beliefs have been protected by force against the sceptic who uses his reason. And here we have a curious position. To deny a demonstrable fact such as two and two make four, or disbelieve in the existence of, say, Mr. Gladstone, simply provokes amusement, and a faint suspicion that the disbeliever has been sampling a product well known in Scotland. But to disbelieve or deny an undemonstrable and unprovable doctrine gives rise to serious consequences. In mediæval times the denier would have been tortured and then put to death. In the enlightened twentieth century he is described as a very dangerous criminal by a delightful, but somewhat simple, old gentleman who occupied the highest position on the judicial bench. However, I am digressing.

Of all the arguments brought forward to support the existence of a deity the favourite is the argument from design. The argument is that the world presents clear marks of design, endless adaptation of means to ends which can only be accounted for as due to a deliberate plan of an intelligent Being. This sounds very feasible until you come to prove it. If this world, as we know it, is the product of an intelligent Being, then that Being must either be in its infancy or in the last stages of superannuation. If I had any belief in a deity at all, this is the last place I would credit him with making. It is obvious to any unbiased mind that a mere intelligent Being is not a sufficient cause to explain the effect, because that would demand an explanation of its existence just as much as the natural world, and thus we find ourselves committed to an endless series of causes. A favourite argument advanced by Theists is that of Paley and his famous watch. This argument is still used, but has ceased to have any value. Paley tried to prove (in his *Natural Theology*) the existence of God from the argument of design. Just as a watchmaker is inferred from a watch, so is a divine workman inferred from contrivances in nature. He takes his instances largely from the organs and constitution of the human body. Now Paley has simply civilized his God and made him into a scientific and ingenious workman. His idea of God is that of an ingenious workman who has to deal with rather difficult material. The answer to this argument is that we infer a maker of the watch for the simple reason that we have a previous experience of such an article being made. A baby who had never seen or heard of a watch would never come to the conclusion that it was a deliberate design. We have no previous experience of worlds being created by an intelligent Being, therefore the analogy does not hold good. Paley's defence, like all other Theistic apologies, is simply the per-

formance of an able legal adviser to the deity. Darwin has discredited the theory of adaptation of means to ends in nature by an infinitely powerful deity. Hume and Kant have shown the inadequacy of the argument from design as a proof of God's existence. The very analogy between nature and art on which the argument depends breaks down when we study the life process of nature.

A well-known German writer (Lange) has given us a very good illustration of the fallacy of this analogy. If a man wants to shoot a rabbit which is in a certain field he would not think of procuring hundreds of guns and place them around the field and cause them to all be fired off at once in order to kill the rabbit. Or, if he wanted a hat he would not procure hundreds in order to wear one and let the others be wasted. If he did we should say he was not responsible for his actions. Yet these are the sort of things the God of the Theist does. If a superior intelligence is responsible for nature, then this intelligence is wasteful to a degree of recklessness. Take the propagation of life, for instance. For the production of one life thousands of germs are sacrificed. The "end" is achieved at the expense of thousands, and as a rule the result is destruction and failure. And if the finished product, the human body, is considered as a work of intelligent design, then a doctor would be able to design a far better one than we have, which only points to the bungling and incompetent designer of the Theist.

"God" is an obsolete way of explaining the universe. Theology is superseded by science, and science has dealt a resounding blow at the Church from which she will never recover. Science has given the death blow to the theory that it is necessary to postulate a supreme intelligence who formed the universe, as we know it, from primeval chaos. All the alleged proofs of an intelligent wisdom in regulating the motions of the heavenly bodies have entirely collapsed. Every feature of the actual cosmos is a direct result of the inherent properties of the original nebula that could not have evolved in any other direction. That was settled in advance by the law of gravitation. The universe is a collection of vast masses of matter in every stage of condensation. It is a vast panorama of worlds in all stages of birth, life, and death, and science sees no beginning and no end. Whatever the progress of science may hereafter reveal, at present it knows nothing of a personal god or immortality of the soul. It knows nothing of a life beyond the grave. Religion has surrounded death with supernatural terrors, and has poisoned the lives and embittered the deaths of thousands of good men and women. Let us get rid of this monster superstition and devote our energies to the betterment of mankind, instead of wasting time and money on this gigantic illusion. All that a belief in God has done has been to drench the world in blood. Wherever this idea has flourished man has hated man. It is a tragic record of torture and the sword. The fear of God has been established by despots, murderers, and religious hypocrites. The house flag of the ship of Christianity has been the scull and cross-bones. This world is a reality, let us make the best of it while we are here and try to leave it a little better than we found it. We should make every day a joy and every man a brother. Let us do our duty here, then if there is another life it will come as a pleasant surprise and we shall enjoy it all the more.

LEONARD MASON.

Happily, the faith that saves is attached to the saving doctrines in the Bible, which are very simple; not to its literary or scientific criticism, which is very hard. And no man is to be called "infidel" for his bad literary and scientific criticism of the Bible; but if he were, how dreadful would the state of our orthodox theologians be!—*Matthew Arnold.*

Book Chat.

Chaucer's libel on God's chosen people.

A little while ago the serious pages of the *Jewish Chronicle* were enlivened by some amusingly violent and wrongheaded protests against the use of Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale" in Jewish schools. As the reader is aware, the story which our English poet puts into the mouth of the aristocratic, simple-minded and conventionally pious nun is based on legends (or it may be facts) current throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. This particular Canterbury tale is the ingeniously pathetic story of a Christian child cruelly done to death by an assassin hired by certain Jews whom Satan had beguiled into the belief that their law had been insulted. Now all such stories our irate Hebrew friends hasten to assure us are egregious libels on the chosen and long-suffering race, and therefore unfit to be made the texts of literature to be studied by Jew or non-Jew. To the one they are flagrant insults, and to the other incentives to anti-Semitism.

That is, of course, as it may be; but Chaucer's use of the story for dramatic purposes is no proof that he believed it, although, apart from the alleged ritual murders, which are a little too much for even a Russian policeman of to-day, some of the outrages are not absolutely incredible. It is not unreasonable to think that the barbarian of the Old Testament may have lived on into the Middle Ages, or turned up sporadically as a sort of sport. After all, the isolated murder of a Christian child is the merest amateur brutality compared with Samuel's sanguinary slaughter of the king of the Amalekites, or the exploits of the hairy, ferocious and intolerant old prophet Elijah the Tishbite, or, worse still, the brutal handling of the cultured old lady Jezebel by such a blackguard as Jehu. Chaucer may have thought that the Jew, if he at all resembled his ancestors, was capable of everything. And it is more probable that he felt that his business as a dramatic artist was to select the story which would best express the character he wanted to project. This, by the way, is the view of the momentous subject that commended itself to Mr. Gerald Friedlander, one of the more intelligent contributors to the discussion.

Shakespeare and the Jew: Shylock a Caricature.

Is Shylock a libel on Jews? This is the question which the gentleman I have mentioned above, Mr. Gerald Friedlander, has attempted to answer in a little book published a little while ago by Routledge and Co. It is an excellent study of the subject by a critic who has knowledge balanced by acumen, a somewhat rare combination. Mr. Friedlander shows that Shakespeare had no knowledge of the Jew as a social, moral and intellectual human being. The dramatist found the wicked Jew a sort of stock character which never failed to please the groundlings, or, indeed, the whole house. But the maturity of his conception of mankind forced him to reject the monstrous creations of wickedness, an example of which he had before him in Marlowe's Barabbas, the villain of *The Jew of Malta*. He set himself to put on the stage a figure that would be to the outward eye the despised Jew and to the inward intelligence a symbol of human suffering. Shylock captured the imagination of the poet and began to develop along lines not laid down by his creator. He changed under the poet's hand from a vulturish usurer (*Shalok* means a cormorant, a name impossible for a moneylender off the stage) to a much ill-used man, who in modern times, at least, compels the sympathy of the spectator. But really he is no more a Jew than his precious daughter Jessica is the daughter of a Jew. No Jew of Shylock's force of character ever turned Christian, and no Jewish daughter ever dishonoured her father or the memory of her mother. The whole play is so consciously or unconsciously unreal that it is a pity we do not set it to the rag-time of farcical comedy. Instead of which we turn it into a tragi-comedy (more tragedy than comedy) and make it top-heavy by increasing out of all proportion the moral weight of one character.

For example, we take the "pound of flesh" story too seriously. I am pretty certain that Shakespeare knew as

well as we do that any court of justice in Christendom would have mulcted both parties to a bond so flagrantly contrary to good morals. Indeed, this is precisely what did happen at Rome when Secchi the Christian made a wager with Sampson Ceneda the Jew as to the truth or falseness of the reported capture and sack of St. Domingo by Drake. The stake is a pound of flesh if Ceneda loses, and a thousand scudi if Secchi loses. It turns out that the Jew loses, and the Christian insists on his bond. The Pope, who is appealed to by the Jew, imposes a heavy fine on each of the parties. The story is historically true, and is given from contemporary sources by Gregorio Leto in his *Life of Pope Sixtus V.*

Although Shylock may be unreal enough as a picture of the typical Elizabethan or European Jew, or it may be of Jews of any period, he is absolutely true to human nature. He is so roundly and palpatingly real that the other characters of the play are mere cardboard figures. He is so vital that he attracts all the sympathy alike of his creator and the spectators, and converts an amusingly brutal comedy into something that is not unlike tragedy. To the other characters in the play and to the Elizabethan playgoer he was a despicable and bloody-minded usurer; to Shakespeare and especially to the more sentimental modern mind he is a symbol of age-long racial suffering, and, as Heine says, the only gentleman in the play.

A new argument against the Baconian heresy.

One of the keenest pleasures for the critic of letters is that of coming across interesting material in unlikely places. The *Central* is the journal of the students of what is now the City and Guilds (Engineering) College. It appears two or three times yearly at 2s. 6d. per number, and is edited by Mr. F. W. Jackson (1 Hill Grove Crescent, Kidderminster). In the July and December (1921) numbers of this scientific journal I was surprised and delighted to find two articles by Mr. A. S. E. Ackermann on "Bacon and Shakespeare." Mr. Ackermann gets at the subject in quite a new and original way. It occurred to him that the Bacon-Shakespeare hypothesis might be tested by means of his hobby, popular fallacies. He postulates that Bacon was too deeply imbued with, and too loyal to, scientific principles to set down anything antagonistic to the principles he held so ably. Therefore, if Bacon wrote Shakespeare we ought to find the poet adhering to the same popular scientific errors as the philosopher. Mr. Ackermann then proceeded to work through Bacon and Shakespeare noting the popular fallacies and tabulating them in various forms. Sometimes he finds Bacon right and Shakespeare wrong; sometimes the poet is right and the scientist wrong. This is a part of his summary:—

Bacon treats of 63 different fallacies, or allied matter, in 30 of which he is right and 28 wrong; i.e., in 47.6 per cent. of the subjects he is right and in 44.5 per cent. wrong. Shakespeare deals with 51 distinct fallacies in only 11 of which he is right and 38 wrong; i.e., in only 21.6 per cent. of the subjects he is right compared with Bacon's 47.6 per cent., while he is wrong in 74.5 per cent. instances compared with Bacon's 44.5 per cent. These facts seem strongly to indicate that Bacon did not write the works of Shakespeare, especially when the cases mentioned are taken into account in which Bacon definitely refutes certain fallacies which Shakespeare never does.

What is more, there is not a single instance in which Bacon adheres to one fallacy more than once, but Shakespeare seems to delight in his errors and repeats them; and, again, Bacon's subjects, natural history, physics, medicine, chemistry, in view of the knowledge of his day, tended to increase the number of errors, whereas in the subject matter of the poet there was no such inherent tendency. These conclusions will hearten the orthodox Shakespeareans, and if any Baconians still survive the onslaught of Mr. J. M. Robertson, they will be able to amuse themselves by testing Mr. Ackermann's results.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Hateful to me as Hades' very gates is the man who utters one thing with his tongue, and conceals something different in his heart.—Homer.

Acid Drops.

It is only natural that the religious Press should make the most of the assumed conversion of Robert Blatchford from what he understood to be Materialism—but which we do not admit was so—to a sloppily sentimental hope of a future life. We have come across several such notices during the past week, and the religious folk have so little to jubilate about that it seems hard to do anything to mar their enjoyment on the present occasion. And yet when all is said and done Materialism still remains the dominant mental attitude of all our leading scientific men, and it is only rejected by the few who do not take the trouble to understand what Materialism really is.

On this point we may congratulate Dean Inge on having the common-sense to see that Mr. Blatchford's talk of Materialism being killed because of the alleged dissipation of the atom is so much nonsense. It is the kind of stuff that people talk who derive their scientific conception of things from a weekly article in some popular paper of the "penny awful" type. Dean Inge himself is not quite so clear on this point as he might be, but at least he is able to see that no alteration in our conception of the nature of matter can really affect Materialism. He says, "We do not banish matter by resolving it into particles too small to be seen and too light to be weighed." He might have added that even though the whole conception of matter was killed, the essence of Materialism—that is, the conception of the universe as consisting of determinable force or forces—would still remain. But this would, we expect, require more exact thinking than Dean Inge appears to have brought to bear on the subject.

Ultimately, Dean Inge falls back for a justification of the belief in a future life on the statement that it rests on an instinct of "pure affection." We have not the slightest idea as to what this instinct of affection is; or in what way our affection for one another here can guarantee that we shall live on the other side of the grave. Dean Inge's article (in the *Evening Standard* of April 13) reads like that of a man who having suddenly discovered that he has given too much away to the enemy manufactures a formula in order to allay the fears of his followers. And as they have, for the most part, been brought up on words, we have no doubt but that the plan will turn out to be fairly successful.

We see from the *New York Times* of March 30 that after arrangements had been made for the delivery of a lecture by Mr. J. Lewis on "The Bible the Nemesis of Mankind," in the University Philosophical Society, the governors stepped in and prohibited the meeting. Had it been a lecture glorifying the influence of the Bible it would have been another matter. But the last thing that Christians wish to place before the people is the truth about their own religion.

We have received a "Poem" by a Mr. G. A. Baker on the recent Dudley Port disaster, when a number of young girls lost their lives as a consequence of an explosion. Mr. Baker's verse is horrible, and his beliefs match his rhymes. He explains that God called these young girls home. We are not in a position to say he has not, but a God who calls a number of young girls home by the method of blowing them sky high is a deity we would rather be without. How pleased God must be with his followers! Whenever something more than usually horrible occurs they never seem to fail to trace his handiwork. If there is a God, the Atheist is the only one whom the deity will have to thank. He does leave him alone, instead of painting him as a cross between a criminal and a lunatic.

We do not know what Dean Inge means by saying that when Buckle championed the belief in immortality he surprised his friends. His belief in a future life was well-known, as were his attenuated deistic opinions. There

was no surprise about it, except the surprise that a thinker of his calibre should rest his belief on so flimsy a ground. Buckle offered not a single spark of evidence in support of the belief in a future life, save one, which a better understanding of the facts would have destroyed. He warned believers that all the usual "evidences" were flimsy and unreliable. But he said that the strongest argument was the universality of the affections, "the yearning of every mind to care for something out of itself." A better understanding of the facts, as we have just said, would have prevented his making this statement. Indeed, he gave the explanation in the next sentence, but without appreciating its significance. It was, he said, "the golden link which knits together and preserves the human species." Exactly. Man is a social animal, and the development of his nature has, as a consequence, a reference to the group to which he belongs. But that has no reference whatever to a life beyond the grave, but to the social state here. And it can be seen, not alone in man, but it can also be seen in the animal world in every gregarious group. It is curious how religious advocates turn to the weaknesses of great men to find support for their beliefs. They are frightened of their strongest points.

The Bishop of Liverpool says that he is himself a Socialist, in the sense that Christianity teaches him to share with others. But the Christianity he has no affinity and no sympathy with is the Socialism that is "blatantly and aggressively Atheistic." We have no doubt but that the Bishop can put up with anything so long as it drags Jesus in with it somehow or the other, and we are equally convinced that the Socialism or any other "ism" that doesn't leave Christianity out will not be of much use to those who ought to be benefited.

Whenever a clergyman starts telling the truth he must expect trouble. It is his business to teach Christianity, not to tell his congregation all that educated people now know about Christianity. Therefore, we imagine that the Rev. R. Tricker, of Lane Congregational Church, Hephworth, Yorks, is in for a bad time. Quite recently he let loose on his congregation in this way:—

Until quite recent times the doctrine of the atonement, which said that by virtue of the fact that Jesus died on the cross God forgives the sins of men, has been regarded as central to Christianity, probably because it was the main theme of St. Paul's teaching. But this doctrine has now been quietly and unostentatiously relegated to the scrap-heap of theological dogma.

We sympathize with Mr. Tricker's desire to tell the truth, but the pulpit is not the place for him to indulge in such luxuries. And, indeed, if Mr. Tricker really believes that one wonders what he is doing in the Church at all. He should come out, because if the doctrine of Atonement is not to be accepted, there is nothing left of Christianity that is vital.

An indication of the coming trouble may be seen in a letter to the local press, signed by the Vicar of Holmfirth Parish Church and six other clergymen. These protest that the forgiveness of sins through the death of Christ is accepted "whole-heartedly" by the congregations represented by them, and as fundamental. It is curious that the fools should have all the logic on their side, and the sensible men—who are still in the pulpit—occupy so indefensible a position. And men like Mr. Tricker do not seem to realize that in saying what they do say they are doing more than merely rejecting a doctrine. They are accusing the Christian Church of having through all the centuries been engaged in teaching the people a lie. We have never doubted the fact, and it has been part of our case against Christianity. Once upon a time all that we could say with certainty was that it was a lie. To-day we can say with truth that a large number of the clergy know it to be a lie, but are doing what they can to keep their congregations in the dark.

The *Catholic Times* (April 8) is appreciative of the good qualities of the dethroned Karl, just deceased. It

also finds much to admire in his predecessor, Francis Joseph. Now we have no wish either to jeer at men who are down or to malign the dead, but it is a notorious fact that the Roman Catholic press always finds something worthy of laudation in all prominent personages who fully recognized the claims of the faith. Outside the Church and its appointed apologists, the Habsburgs were the best hated of the reigning houses of Europe, and the chaotic conditions now rife nearly everywhere are largely due to their intrigues and ambitions. We think it not unlikely that some readers of the *Catholic Times* have met Italians, Croats, and Serbs, who claimed to be "good Catholics" and yet drew very different conclusions from those of our contemporary concerning the "virtues" of the Habsburgs.

The newspapers last week reported floods on the Dvina, resulting in a loss of two hundred lives. Yet it is not many months since we were reading of the drought in the valley of the Volga and other parts of Russia. We often hear of the "moral reserves" of nations or individuals, but the morality of Providence appears to be always in reserve.

The *Manchester Guardian* (April 12) contains an article by G. J. on "The Free Churches," in which he pays a high tribute to Spurgeon's "gifts and graces" as a preacher. What was the secret of the great Baptist's influence, despite his "impossible exegesis" and "obsolete theology"? The writer of the article makes this inquiry, but does not answer it very satisfactorily. The plain English of Spurgeon's secret is that his theology was not "obsolete" when he was at the height of his popularity. Heaven, hell, redemption, inspiration were all unconditionally true for the overwhelming majority of the lower middle class in England, to whom Spurgeon made a real appeal, and in whom he evoked a very real response.

The *Daily Express* says that those people who went to Church on Good Friday were celebrating "the most tragic event in the world's history." We do not agree with this summary of the situation, nor do we see how Christians can agree with it. If the Christian theory be true, instead of the crucifixion being the occasion of a great tragedy, it was one of the most joyous things that ever happened. The death of Christ saved the world, and as he was God Almighty himself one must assume that he was none the worse for the experience. We admit that from the decently human point of view the whole business is very saddening. It is not very cheerful for people to go about shaking hands with themselves because someone is getting punished for their faults. But that is quite another question.

We remember in the far-off days when the agitation was going on for more battleships, some newspaper interviewed Harry Lauder to get his opinion on the matter. We could never discover why a music hall comedian should be consulted on the question of battleships, but, apparently, it served with the uneducated readers of newspapers. Now someone has been asking the same gentleman his opinion about religion. He told the interviewer that he got his religion from his mother's knee, which may be quite true, although it is not quite original. And in any case, we should say that a religion derived from someone's knees is not very impressive. Now if he had got it from his mother's head the statement might be more impressive, although even then much would depend upon the kind of head she had. But the chief point of the comedian's comment was that there had been a drift away from religion, but "a drift back had begun." We don't know where Harry Lauder found it—perhaps he detected it among his audiences when listening to him depicting a drunkard or an idiot. But the choice of words is most unfortunate. Drifting back to religion! Well, if one went back to religion, having once left it, one would imagine him to be of the shiftless, loose, uninformed type of mind that could be properly described as "drifting." We hardly think that Lauder is at his best as a religious preacher.

The *Church Times* (April 7) deals at some length with the bogus "university degrees" conferred by American institutions. The mere fact that our religious Press is frequently asked by correspondents for information about these degrees is a sinister comment on the intellectual standing of many would-be soul-savers and on the facility with which religion lends itself to fraud. According to Dr. G. E. MacLean, many of these bogus concerns in U.S.A. were started by clergymen, and their resident correspondents in England are found among clergymen. These are the men who delight in warning the public against the moral dangers of infidelity.

The Roman Catholic organs eagerly announce any recent converts to "the one true faith," but say nothing of the noticeable proportion of those converts who return to the Anglican fold, sometimes after a very short stay in the stronghold of infallibility. The Rev. Reginald Wynter, formerly Vicar of St. John's, Taunton, seceded to Rome about two years ago, but has returned to the "national" Church. He has gone to St. Thomas's, Bethnal Green. This is a long way from Taunton. In the congratulations extended by the Anglican Press to the returned prodigal, one notes a good deal of reserve. The Establishment allows some degree of variation in doctrine within the fold, but does not encourage it in regard to choice of religious institutions.

The *Islamic Review* (April) says that "Christian doctrines are again in the melting-pot to suit modern minds," and in confirmation of its statement quotes abundantly from recent pronouncements of Canon Alexander, Principal Major and Dr. Hastings Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle. How does all this difference of opinion, concerning doctrines which are certainly vital in the Christian creed strike the more intelligent Buddhists and Mohammedans who are asked to receive "the divine message"? For this message claims to be final and of universal scope, and is by no means superior to the use of aggressive methods of propaganda. As far as India is concerned, our missionaries boast of the ethical task ahead of them and the necessity of breaking down the spirit of caste. They might profitably turn their attention to the social and religious divisions at home, to say nothing of mere intellectual and historical difficulties, which are not decreasing in "the household of faith." Some time ago a writer in the *Hindu*, after commenting on the "unscientific dogmatism" of Christianity, and the tactics of those propagating it in India, added: "Let those whom it consoles and satisfies stick to it by all means." A very correct estimate, gracefully expressed, of the "spiritual" value of "the faith once delivered to the saints."

The *Yorkshire Post* (April 11) states that an oratorio was recently performed at York Minster, and that a proportion of the seats were reserved and paid for. Thereupon the authorities demanded payment of the entertainment tax, which our contemporary appears to regard as an altogether unwarranted procedure. We should like to know on what ground of common everyday justice a building used for this purpose is exempt from payment of rates.

"Millions now living will never die!" We had our prescribed dose of this in London not long ago, when representatives of the International Bible Students' Association gave "popular" expositions of inspired prophecy and its true interpretation. From the *Press* (March 4), we learn that Mr. W. W. Johnston has been "attracting big audiences" to hear the same story in Christchurch, New Zealand. Probably not one educated Christian in a thousand gives any credence to this sort of thing. Yet it secures columns of notice in the newspapers, and extravagant claims are made on behalf of the Bible as a character builder. Prediction and visions represent a low state of culture in the history of religious systems, for their appeal is essentially to the "herd-instinct" in men and women. But in most Christian countries both journalists and statesmen are fully alive to the dangers of "materialism"—especially in the masses.

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.

F. A. P.—Pleased to have your appreciation of our article on Capital Punishment. We note what you say, but it is an editor's duty to consider all classes of his readers. The Scotch saying that it takes all sorts to make a world applies in more than one direction. We quite agree that more light is needed on social and ethical problems.

H. WRIGHT.—Hope you will find *The Other Side of Death* helpful in dealing with your spiritualistic friends.

D. S. MACDOUGAL.—We are much obliged for cuttings. Always useful.

H. MARTIN.—Of course we should be both pleased and flattered to see your suggestion for organizing reading circles for the study of Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism?* and *A Grammar of Freethought* carried out, and we are prepared to assist in the matter by presenting free copies to any circles that are formed for that purpose. There is no more useful thing than for a number of people to read a book together and discuss. We did a lot of work in this way when we were younger, and we occasionally hear from friends in various parts of the world who testify to the amount of good they derived from our old reading classes.

F. HARTING.—We should be very pleased indeed to find ourselves in a good shop on a front street. As you say, the advertisement would be of great value to the movement. But that would require money, and unless that long looked for millionaire materialises we must let it remain as an ideal to be hoped for. At present it is taking us all our time to keep the wolf from the door, and to launch out in new directions is impossible.

F. E. MONKS.—Thanks, we are quite well. Plenty to do must be a tonic. We are glad to find you appreciate *The Other Side of Death* so much. We have reason to believe that it has helped many to understand Spiritualism and other aspects of the future life controversy.

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

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Sugar Plums.

Now that Easter is over Whit-Sunday will be with us very soon, and we hope that members and Branches of the N. S. S. will bear in mind that this is the date of the Annual Conference. It will be easier this year for friends to travel than it has been on recent occasions, and it is to be hoped that as many as possible will avail themselves of the occasion. The Conference will be held in Nottingham,

and intending visitors should advise the Secretary as soon as possible if they wish arrangements to be made for their stay.

Elsewhere in this issue we print a list of those constituencies in which friends are willing to put questions to candidates for Parliament on the subject of the Blasphemy laws. The list is lengthening, but it is not nearly long enough. There should be a questioner in every constituency in the country, and if more than one so much the better. There cannot be too many. We believe that many have not troubled to send in their names, although they will put the questions when the time arrives. Still, it is best for them to have their names registered as the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws will then be able to better gauge their strength in the constituencies. We must keep this matter before the public now we have started with it.

Lieut-Commander F. W. Astbury, M.P. for West Salford, has replied to an enquiry regarding his attitude to the repeal of the Blasphemy laws that he is "prepared to support the Bill on the Blasphemy laws." If members are pressed, and they act up to their promises, we should be able to muster quite a respectably sized vote whenever a critical division is taken on the Bill.

In the last issue of the *Sunday Chronicle* Sir Oliver Lodge has some "comments" on Mr. Blatchford's amazing article on the subject of Materialism. While Sir Oliver fully sympathises with Mr. Blatchford in his attitude towards a future life, he is too good a physicist to allow the idle talk about the death of Materialism to pass unnoticed. He points out for the benefit of Mr. Blatchford that "the foundations of Materialism are not much injured," "Matter is quite real, and the dissection of the atom into electric corpuscles is not a revolutionary change." "The fundamental unit which we used to think was the atom of matter we now think to be the atom of electricity.....But it seems to me just as material—or, perhaps, one should say physical—as matter was." Mr. Blatchford was quite evidently out of his depth when he commenced to discuss the meaning of Materialism and the bearing of recent discoveries on the position of Materialism.

When that is said it remains to add that when Sir Oliver leaves the world of physical science, where he is admittedly one of the masters, and begins to philosophise he provides the critic with plenty of fallacies for dissection. He tells us that it is the philosophy, not the science, of Materialism that has broken down, that the various sense organs of the body are, "after all, instruments and mechanisms constructed and employed by 'something else.'" It would take more space that we have to spare at the moment to discuss all the weaknesses of these statements. We can only say briefly that it is precisely the philosophic Materialism that is unaffected by the discoveries of science. Whatever be the nature of the atom, or whether there be an atom at all, does not affect the basic principle of Materialism, which is pure determinism. What Materialism has stood for since the days of the Greeks has been the principle that the world we know is the product of calculable and determinable forces. The precise nature of "Reality" does not affect Materialism in the least. The atom of matter was just a working conception which the materialist philosopher took from the scientist, and any modification in our conception of the nature of matter could not affect the principle on which Materialism took its stand. And as for our senses being constructed and used by "something else," with all due respect to Sir Oliver Lodge that is just words. It conveys absolutely no meaning to anyone who tries to think the thing out. When Sir Oliver Lodge is able to separate sight from the organ of sight, hearing from the organ of hearing, and so forth, there will be some use in talking of the senses being used by something else. We do not attribute to matter "functions and properties which belong to something else," we simply find certain qualities associated with the organism, and it is for those who believe that there is something else to be discovered to prove their position. Hitherto all that any Spiritualist has been able

to show is that we do not thoroughly understand the precise nature of the process that is going on before our eyes. That is ground for patience and research; it is no basis whatever on which to make positive assertion about there being something else.

We are asked to announce that the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. will be holding a Social Gathering in the Saint Enoch's Tea Rooms, Argyle Street, on Friday, May 12 at 7.15. The gathering will be in the nature of a "Farewell" to Miss N. Black, who is leaving shortly for Australia. A presentation will be made to Miss Black during the course of the evening. Those who wish to subscribe towards the presentation, or to be present, will please communicate with Mr. O. Little, 16 Catkin Avenue, Rutherglen, Glasgow. Miss Black has been an earnest worker in the Glasgow Branch, and we hope that the gathering will be a good one. She is the daughter of a very fervent worker for the Freethought cause, and she will take with her to the other side of the globe the good wishes of all who know her. We very heartily add our good wishes to the many that will follow her across the seas.

Hugh Walpole.

THE esoteric makes its appeal to some, the exoteric to others, and celticism may be regarded according to the point of view as belonging to either. It holds an irresistible appeal. It is filmy, fogged, and glimpsed rather than seen. It has all the attraction of a mystery which cannot be accurately explored and does not at the last stage yield up its final secret. It is just as mysterious, just as enchanting, however deeply it is experienced.

The Cult of Cornwall is only a branch of celticism, but it is none the less important for that. It has been the subject of so many able and popular pens that it is perhaps more real to a greater number of people than the Irish cult. There seems to be an atmosphere, a vivid, living local colour in Cornwall which is not so potently present in other countries, or so the wonder workers would have us believe. Not the least of these wonder workers is Mr. Walpole.

He has at least the ability to depict the wonder of Cornwall and its strange people. He has sensed the atmosphere of a dead and gone but glorious past which hangs about the relics of strange races who inhabit that section of the earth's surface. Here a subdued pantheism peeps out of the Christian superstructure of the local religion. Weird creatures, neither fish, flesh, nor fowl flit through the pages of his books. Men, who are scarce men, who are almost demons, work their will upon more normal types, but even these normal types are slightly abnormal. Nothing seems to be real; all is in some way artificial, and yet, quaintly enough, this artificiality, the effect of environment would seem to grant to the unusual a real significance, a true naturalness, so that it almost is as though, circumstances being as they are, the abnormal has become the normal.

This sense of abnormality is possibly dependent upon the meticulous examination to which the characters are subjected. How few persons, would, if wholly, or almost wholly, "given away" not be fairly subject to this charge? What, indeed, is normal in human character when it becomes necessary to make a definition?

Outside Mr. Walpole's merely strange characters his Trojans bear a marked kinship to Mr. Galsworthy's Forsytes, and, indeed, to Meredith's Egoist. But the treatment of such people has been cumulative in the hands of these three writers. Meredith was kind enough only to make Willoughby impossible, but really rather human in spite of his vanity. It is clear that he had his emotions, and that at times they were profound enough; Galsworthy, less kind, did not show

vanity of quite the same description. His people, proud though they were of their family, desired before anything to keep the family, a none too ancient one, at the level it had attained. Meredith did not assume, for the purpose of his book, that Willoughby's family or position required any examination. His was just a realist picture of things as they are, assuming nothing and denying nothing. Walpole's Trojans are the Forsytes frozen by their ancient lineage and icy with family tradition.

Whatever phase of social life comes from the pen of Mr. Walpole, it is clearly and accurately depicted. After reading Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill he might almost be suspected of having been a schoolmaster. After the perusal of *Fortitude*, the conclusion that he changed his profession to that of free lance journalist and novelist is forced upon the attention. Such is the proof of the accuracy of his work.

Social satire, however, is not alone the food of his spirit. Rather is it the drink he takes in passing. The strong meat is the will and the power of the will. Perhaps that is the reason why he chooses Cornwall with its queer mentality and its other worldliness for the birth-place of his people.

The hold of their birth-places on the minds of these people is very fast. It is not loosened by the passing of the years, and it is one with their hopeless contentedness with their families in spite of all the heredity which that involves. It is almost as if for these people the stranger was a matter of no import. He may be lovable, interesting, even inspiring, but always they hark back to their own, and the loves and hates of their own.

Weird moods obsess them, and they play with the notion that these are the will of the family, exhorting them to a certain course of action. Their passions, always intense, are never for a moment dormant. For ever they are in the grip of primal emotions. Intensity sways them like leaves in the wind, and being asked the bourne to which they are travelling, they could not answer, for what do they know of themselves? They know only that the tentacles of fate have clasped them, and that they are fore-doomed to certain unchangeable ends. Alas for such!

It is a matter for wonder to those who have not known Cornwall whether all this is true, whether, indeed, it is any more true of that country than of any other, or whether Mr. Walpole has not painted his people with the heavy brush of his own imagining.

No human being has ever completely known one of his fellows. The need for secrecy, inherent in the necessity for protection of the ego, forbids that any man should completely reveal himself to his dearest friend. Were there a bold enough spirit to do this, his friends would scarce be able to withstand the ruthlessness. The gaps in knowing, which leave so much to be filled in, sustain interest and love, and where there is no more curiosity, which must continue in spite of utmost certainty in given circumstances, it is the end of all.

These strange, deep-feeling ones of Mr. Walpole's may be just so strange, as they are not quite known by him. They may gain from the intensity of his own emotion. Their weird longings may, perhaps, be but the emanations of those sub-conscious desires which permeate all at times, and which, perchance, are more frequent in the rugged Cornwall than in more quiet scenes.

Whatever the explanation, there can be no detraction from the skill with which they are drawn; there can be little from the seriousness of effort, and no artist can do more than use his medium for the sincere expression of his convictions. That Mr. Walpole's convictions are sincere no one of his readers would fail to admit, and that is his highest reward.

G. E. FUSSELL.

The Tree and the Fruit.

Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

It is asserted that a wave of national pessimism is passing over this country, and it is anticipated that the constant repetitions of the gloomy forebodings of our modern publicists will tend to weaken the general moral of the community.

We are told that our statesmen are devoid of principle, our clergy lack vision, our Press is decadent, our bankers, merchants and tradesmen are worshippers of Mammon, our working classes are idle and drunken, our women are unfit for motherhood, the overwhelming majority of the people never enter a place of worship, Sunday is rapidly becoming a day of pleasure, women are no more interested in the Church than men, her rebound from conventional virtue is as daring as her attire, she rejects religion in the interest of freedom, finally, "a surprising number of people regard the Church as a dying curiosity."

All this is nothing new. We are only too familiar with the oft-told tale, our minds and ears are wearied with its "damnable iteration."

The Jeremiahs lament, and their lamentations fall on deaf ears. Is not the present the outcome of the past? Can we expect to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?

Look back to the time when the men and women of to-day were boys and girls. Consider their heredity, environment, and training. The prophets of woe are undermining their own platform, they are committing theological suicide.

In a society nourished on a dismal theology, supplemented by a mawkish hymnology, and a morbid sentimentality; with an absence of sound ethical principle, with no adequate standard of morals, no real philosophy of life, its relations, duties, and tendencies—is it at all surprising that things are as they are? Are not you amazed that matters are no worse?

The pessimists have had their say, with the usual exaggeration they have laid the colour on with a trowel and have employed the darkest of tints. We do not believe in their pessimism now, any more than we believed in their optimism, and the promised revival of religion during the war.

"Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city" even yet.

There is a pretty saying, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." Let us glance at the type of woman who was rocking cradles fifty or sixty years ago. First let it be said that she was a *good* woman according to her light; she took her clothes to Church regularly every Sunday, she was kind and affectionate to her family, faithful to her husband, an industrious and frugal housekeeper. Her mind was too often narrowed and dwarfed by a blighting theology, she was obsessed by the fear of an everlasting hell, naturally afraid of the dark, timid at the squeak of a mouse, nervous of sickness and fearful of death. Ignorant of hygiene and sanitation, she dreaded the recurrence of infantile ailments, accordingly she was prone to coddle and pamper her children, and dressed them in heavy flannels, comforters, capes, tippets, and goloshes.

Her religion was often intense and instinct with emotion; her theology was scrappy rather than profound, it was also of a gloomy and melancholy order. She was scrupulous in giving her children regular doses of Bible lessons, catechism, and hymns, and many of the maternal precepts were inculcated by means of verses, from Dr. Watts and other pious writers. The following was very popular in Christian

households in the middle of Queen Victoria's reign:

In the winter when 'tis mild
We may run, but not be wild;
But in the summer we must walk
And improve the time by talk.

It is not strange that the girl of to-day having a wider outlook than her grandmother should be more virile in word and deed. It is not surprising that she has "kicked over the traces" in more ways than one.

Sunday observance was taught in the following seductive appeal:—

Come bring to me your Noah's ark,
Your pretty, tinkling music cart,
Because my love, you must not play,
But holy keep the sabbath day.

In the best regulated Christian families quarrels would sometimes arise and children vented their rage by "calling names." Then Mamma intervened, and instructed the little ones how—

God quickly stopped their wicked breath
And sent two raging bears,
That tore them limb from limb to death
With blood and groans and tears.

The natural result of such teaching is easily imagined. The mother was frugal, and she trained her children both by precept and example to follow in her footsteps. One penny per week was the usual allowance for pocket money, usually paid on Saturday. It was a great day. Visions of ginger-beer, ice-cream, cakes, sweets, nuts, and apples made the head swim and the mouth water. Conceive, if you can, what it meant to a boy or girl with a penny to spend to hear the lines which follow:—

Should you wish to be told the best use of a penny,
I'll tell you a way that is better than any,
Not on apples, or cakes, or playthings to spend it
But over the seas to the heathen to send it.

When the child left home he had, of course, no idea of the value of money; in consequence, he probably ran into debt, and was upbraided for his extravagance, the moral being enforced by the parable of the prodigal son. In such event, there was probably no "fatted calf."

Is it at all credible than any healthy child would express the desires in the following favourite hymn?

I want to be an Angel
And with the Angels stand,
A crown upon my forehead,
And a harp within my hand.

It is a certain fact that no normal boy or girl ever wanted anything so absurd. To teach such nonsense was to make the child both a prig and a liar.

There's a home for little children,
Above the bright blue sky.

The curriculum of the day-school would probably give rise to doubt of the truth of this statement.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains

is simply horrible in its ghastliness.

Whatever Lord we lend to Thee,
Repaid a thousand-fold shall be,
Then gladly will we give to Thee
Who giveth all.

A lucid commentary on the text "godliness is great gain." The British tradesman does not as a rule "serve God for naught," and in the training of the young idea "PROFITS" must not be lost sight of.

Much of the cant and hypocrisy rampant in the evangelical period of the Victorian era has happily passed away, but much still remains. Religion is bankrupt, the gods are discredited, the Bible is neglected, and Secularists are not disturbed. On the contrary, we see in the "signs of the times" indications that Freethought is gradually advancing. The work of the pioneers is bearing fruit. The dawn is at hand. The darkness is passing away. We are not "gloomy"

if the clergy are. We see in the crumbling of the old institutions the herald of a brighter and happier future. One of the greatest stimulants to renewed endeavour is the foretaste of victory.

Where the priest of God has failed the ministers of Humanity aspire to direct the hearts and minds of the people into saner and happier channels, proposing to all men a system of life and conduct founded not on faith, but on knowledge. A moral life based upon the reality of things, and not on a human guess.

The World, Society and Man, these are the verifiable and demonstrable foundations on which we will endeavour to develop a community whose people shall be neither ignorant, idle, poor, nor profligate.

BERNARD MOORE.

The Resurrection.

II.

(Continued from page 254.)

It is said that the terrified watch went and told the chief priests and elders, who gave them "large money," and asked them to say the disciples came by night and stole the body whilst they slept, and promised to make it all right with Pilate.

Is this a likely story? If a miracle had occurred the soldiers had simply to tell Pilate. But to accuse themselves of sleeping at their posts was to invite the punishment of death. Nor could the Sanhedrim pacify Pilate, for the Jewish authorities and the Governor lived in a constant state of antagonism.

The conduct of the priests is absolutely unintelligible. They had compassed the death of Jesus as a "deceiver." When they found that he was not a deceiver, but had angels in his retinue, and was lord of life and death, they would have trembled with fear, and repented in sackcloth and ashes. And deceiving the people was useless in this extremity, for it was no protection against *him*.

One little sentence throws a flood of light upon the story. Matthew writes that the stealing of the body by the disciples "is commonly reported among the Jews *unto this day*." This proves the story to have been written long afterwards, and allows scope for the growth of any quantity of legend.

Were there any truth in this story of the watch at the sepulchre, it could not have been neglected by Mark, Luke, and John. Their silence shows they never heard of it, or treated it with contempt. It rests entirely upon the authority of the first Gospel, a work which comes to us, not from the apostolic age, but from the second century; and being in itself absurd, and without a tittle of corroboration from the other evangelists or from contemporary sources, we must dismiss it as an idle fable.

This was so obvious to the early Church that it forged certain Acts of Pilate, in which it is said that Pilate forwarded a report of Christ's miracles, death, and resurrection to Tiberius, and that the emperor solicited the Senate to enrol the crucified Nazarene amongst the gods.²⁹ This monstrous forgery is accepted, at least as substantially authentic by Tischendorf; but his English translator, though writing under the auspices of the Religious Tract Society, is obliged to remark that Tischendorf "stands almost alone."³⁰

There is a similar forgery in the extant copies of Josephus,³¹ which Gibbon says "was inserted into the text between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius."³² The authenticity of the passage has been effectually disposed of by Lardner;³³ Bishop Warburton called it "a rank forgery, and a very stupid one too";³⁴ and De Quincey says it "has long been given up as a forgery by all men not lunatic."³⁵

Many Christian apologists have asked this fatuous question—If the body of Jesus was gone from the sepulchre, how came it to be removed? Further, it is asked—Why did not the Sanhedrim prosecute the Apostles if their story was false?³⁶

These questions are based upon the assumption that the Gospel story *is true*; which ends the controversy by begging the question.

The body of Jesus was in the possession of his friends. It was laid in a friend's tomb, it was embalmed, or at least to have *been* embalmed, by friends, and they were the parties last seen in charge of it. If it disappeared, therefore (of which there is not the slightest contemporary proof), it was for them to give an account of it, and not the priests and Pharisees, or the Roman authorities, or the general body of the Jews. Nor was there any reason for anxiety on the part of the enemies of Jesus. They had got rid of a troublesome person; they believed there was an end of him; they had other matters to think of, and they might well be indifferent to the babble of his terrorised disciples.

It must be remembered that Jesus was not such an important person *then* as he is *now*. The Christians who ask these questions as to what became of his dead body, and why the Apostles were not immediately contradicted, both assume the truth of the Gospel story and transfer their own feelings to the Jewish rulers, by whom they were not entertained.

Continuing our examination of the Gospel story of the Resurrection, we find its contradictions both numerous and startling. It is impossible to deal with all of them, but a selection will suffice.

Matthew brings two women to the tomb, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary." Mark brings these two with a third named Salome. Luke omits Salome, and mentions a third called Joanna, with "other women" who are not identified. John brings Mary Magdalene alone.

This is a curious specimen of Gospel harmony. The only point of agreement is the presence of Mary Magdalene, a lady from whom Jesus had ejected seven devils. She was apparently a victim of hysteria, and probably subject to hallucinations.

Matthew says there was an earthquake, and an angel rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre and sat upon it. Mark alludes to no angel outside, but says the women looked into the tomb and saw a young man in white. Luke mentions no angel, but places *two* men in the sepulchre. John says the women found the sepulchre open, without mentioning man or angel, until Mary Magdalene came a second time, when she saw two angels.

Matthew says that Jesus appeared first to the women. Mark and John say that he first appeared to Mary Magdalene alone. Luke says that he first appeared to two disciples as they were walking to Emmaus.

Matthew and Mark say that an angel told the disciples to go into Galilee. John also takes them there, although he omits the message. Luke keeps them in the Holy City. In this he is supported by the author of the Acts, who says that Jesus expressly "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem."

The same harmony prevails as to the subsequent appearances of Jesus. Matthew makes him appear but once, immediately before his ascension. Mark makes him appear three times: to the women, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and to the eleven. Luke makes him appear twice: to the two pedestrians, and to the eleven in a room. John makes him appear four times: to Mary Magdalene alone, to the disciples in a room *without* Thomas, to the same again *with* Thomas, and to the same once more at Tiberias.

John is the only one who tells the dramatic story of Thomas, who refused to believe that the Master had risen, without putting his fingers in the print of the nails, and his hand in the hole in the side. John, of course, is the only one who mentions the spear-thrust in Christ's side at the Crucifixion, because he wanted a hole for Thomas to put his hand into, and the other evangelists had no need for such a cavity.

There is a similar agreement as to whether the risen Jesus was a man or a ghost. Now he comes through a closed

²⁹ Lardner, *Works*, vol. vi., pp. 605-625; Gibbon, chap. xv.

³⁰ Tischendorf, *When Were Our Gospels Written?* p. 82

³¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. xviii., ch. iii.

³² Chap. xvi., footnote.

³³ *Works*, vol. vi., pp. 492-505.

³⁴ *Divine Legation of Moses*, bks. ii. and vi.

³⁵ Essay on "The Essenes," *Works*, vol. ix.

³⁶ See Hartwell's *Horne's Introduction*, vol. i., pp. 245-247.

door, and anon he eats broiled fish and honeycomb; now he vanishes, after walking and talking with his disciples, and anon he allows the sceptical Thomas to examine his wounds, in proof that he was not a spirit, but solid flesh and bone.

The orthodox method of reconciling these contradictions is to reckon all the appearances of Jesus as *separate*, and save the veracity of the evangelists at the expense of their memory. But a candid writer, like Dean Alford, is constrained to admit that the narrative will ever be perplexed and obscure until we read it in heaven, and that we must meanwhile "be content to walk by faith, and not by sight."³⁷

It is justly pointed out by Matthew Arnold that the atmosphere of the Gospels is more fully charged with the miraculous after the Crucifixion.

And the more the miraculousness of the story deepens, as after the death of Jesus, the more does the texture of the incidents become loose and floating, the more does the very air and aspect of things seem to tell us we are in wonderland. Jesus after his resurrection not known by Mary Magdalene, taken by her for the gardener; appearing in *another form*, and not known by the two disciples going with him to Emmaus and at supper with him there; not known by his most intimate apostles on the borders of the Sea of Galilee;—and presently, out of these vague beginnings, the recognitions getting asserted, then the ocular demonstrations, the final commissions, the ascension;—one hardly knows which of the two to call the most evident here, the perfect simplicity and good faith of the narrators, or the plainness with which they themselves really say to us: *Behold a legend growing under your eyes!*³⁸

Whoever will read Paul's epistles first, and the Gospels and the Acts afterwards, will see how the Christian myth grew from vagueness to precision under the shaping imagination of the Church of the first century after the Apostles. Paul's account of the Resurrection differs from that of the Gospels, and he places his own subjective vision of Jesus on precisely the same level as his objective appearance to the apostles. Indeed, it is clear enough that *seeing* in that age, and among such people, frequently meant seeing with what Hamlet calls the "mind's eye."

Here we are naturally brought to the so-called testimony of Paul. This proselyte to Christianity does not appear to have known Jesus personally. He was bitterly hostile to the followers of Jesus, and for many years their active and remorseless persecutor. It is evident, therefore, that he disbelieved the story of the Resurrection on the evidence then existing. Nor was his conversion effected by a fresh investigation. It was caused by a miracle or a sunstroke on the road to Damascus. Even the three accounts of this incident in the Acts are in flat contradiction to each other. In the ninth chapter we are told that there shone round about him a light from heaven, and he fell upon the ground and heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him. His attendants also stood speechless, "*hearing a voice and seeing no man.*" But different versions are given, ostensibly by Paul himself, in the twenty-second and twenty-sixth chapters. In the first of them, he says that his attendants *saw* the light, but "*heard not the voice.*" There are nine other points of disagreement, but this is the most vital. When writing to the Corinthians many years afterwards, Paul declared that he had *seen* Jesus,³⁹ which is an entirely fresh invention. It is perfectly clear that he possessed an accommodating memory, unless the author of the Acts had a very bad one; for whereas the chronicler, in relating Paul's conversion, makes Jesus speak only a few words,⁴⁰ the convert himself, in a speech before King Agrippa, amplifies them into a little oration.⁴¹

Paul lost his eyesight and his appetite for three days after this incident, and the whole of the circumstances are consistent with the theory of his having suffered a sunstroke.

According to his own account in Galatians he was not anxious to obtain evidence. He did not go up to Jerusalem and question the apostles about their dead and risen Master. He "conferred not with flesh and blood."

His subjective experience was sufficient without objective proof. He went into Arabia for three years; then he returned to Damascus, and subsequently went to Jerusalem, where he saw Peter and James.⁴² But their evidence was unnecessary, for he speaks of his conversion as wrought by a "revelation." But a revelation to Paul was no revelation to other persons. He had God's word for it, but they had only Paul's; and, as Thomas Paine says, what is revelation in the first instance is only hearsay at second-hand.

Paul condescends to particulars as to the Resurrection in the first epistle to the Corinthians.⁴³ His story is very different from that of either of the Evangelists, and includes an extraordinary circumstance which they had apparently never heard of, and which in itself is ridiculously incredible. He declares that Jesus was "seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." Now, we read in the Acts (i., 15) that the total number of the faithful *after the Ascension* was only a hundred and twenty; and even if every one of these saw Jesus, which is contradictory to the Gospels, the remaining three hundred and eighty "brethren" must have been created in Paul's imagination.

Paul was writing to the Corinthians, who lived at a distance from the scene of the Resurrection. Had he written thus to the Hebrews they would have denounced him as a liar or a madman. One stroke of the pen was as easy as another, and five hundred was a good round sum. But he took precious care not to produce one of the five hundred, or to give the names or addresses of any of them; and his unsupported word, in respect of what occurred when he was not himself present, would be laughed at in any Court of Justice in any part of the world.

We conclude that Paul's testimony to the Resurrection is absolutely worthless. He had no personal knowledge of Jesus, and could not recognize him if he saw him. He disbelieved the Resurrection on the evidence of the disciples of Jesus, and prosecuted them as impostors and blasphemers. All he could possibly tell us about the Resurrection is what he heard from other persons, for his own private "revelation" from heaven was perfectly useless to anyone but himself. G. W. FOOTE.

(To be Concluded.)

Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws.

THE names of volunteers willing to interrogate Parliamentary candidates have been received from the following constituencies (April 12). There are still a large number of constituencies unprovided for.

Antrim (Mid); Balham and Tooting; Bewdley (Worcestershire); Banffshire; Bristol (South); Battersea (South); Bromley; Brixton (Lambeth); Birmingham; Croydon; Croydon (North); Chard; City; Carnarvon Borough; Clapham; Cambridge; Camborne (Helston); Chorley (Lanes); Chelmsford; Dartford; Denbigh (West); Devon (Mid); Durham (East); Derby; Edinburgh (South); Ealing; Ealing (West); Finchley; Finsbury; Glasgow (St. Rollox); Glasgow (Hillhead); Gainsborough; Hythe; Huntingdonshire; Hulme; Hendon; Hampshire; Hammersmith (North); Hornsey; Islington (North); Kennington (Lambeth); Kensington; Kingston; Liverpool (Waterloo); Liverpool (Wavertree West); Liverpool (West Toxteth); Leeds (North); Leeds (West); Leeds (Brunswick); Lewisham (East); Lanarkshire (South); Leyton (West); Manchester (Stretford); Manchester (Moss Side); Merthyr; Montgomery County; Mitcham; Macclesfield; Newcastle (West); Newport; Norwood (South); Oxfordshire; Portsmouth (North); Pontefract; Prestwich and Middleton; Peckham; Rugby; Romford; Sheffield (Eccleshall); St. Pancras (North); Sussex (Mid); Shoreditch; Streatham; Stourbridge; Surrey (East); Salford (North); Southampton; Tottenham (South); Tottenham (North); Woodbridge (Suffolk); Whitechapel; Weston-super-Mare; West Ham (North); Wolverhampton (East); Wandsworth; Wirral; Westminster (St. George's); Wood Green; Willesden (West); Walthamstow (West); Walthamstow (East).

⁴² Galatians i., 15-19.

⁴³ xv., 3-8.

³⁷ Dean Alford, *Greek Testament*, vol. i., p. 905.

³⁸ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, p. 151.

³⁹ 1 Cor. ix., 1; xv., 8.

⁴⁰ Acts ix., 3.

⁴¹ Acts xxvi., 14-18.

Correspondence.

RATIONALISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE.
TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have met with many instances recently where Socialists and Labour men have shown their indifference to the fight for truth in matters of theology. The standpoint is that Labour must not meddle with religious issues, but allow its members, Catholics and Protestants, to believe what they please. It is a very plausible but short-sighted attitude. It ignores realities and shuts its eyes for the sake of temporary gain to the fact of the fundamental conflict between superstition and social justice.

There is, in my judgment, no greater ally of privilege and injustice than irrational dogma. One might give numerous illustrations of this tendency. *Let me mention two.*

There is a revival just now of Millenarianism. Thousands of religious folk, including hosts of young people, crowd great halls to hear about the second coming of Christ. Such absorption in stupid supernaturalism destroys the nerve of political or social effort. These religious devotees are drugged into apathy and indifference towards the rational solution of the problems of industry. A similar effect is observed in the stress on substitutionary salvation found both in evangelical Protestantism and in another form in popular Roman Catholicism. Both religionists get rid of their sins and future consequences by relying upon the efforts of some external power, the merit of Jesus or the magic of the mass. The effect of this superstition is to blind the eyes to the real causes of evil, which can be removed by rational effort, and by rational effort alone.

The Rationalism of the Freethinker is not exactly that of the present writer. He would lay more stress on the constructive side of the appeal to reason than the Iconoclasts of aggressive Freethought. But, nevertheless, the Freethinker is a valuable ally of the work of social reconstruction. Until you undermine the degrading unmanly influence of religious superstition you cannot introduce Reason or Justice into industrial and political affairs. The man who allows his mind to be poisoned by the dope of the priest will remain the slave and the tool of the exploiter, the militarist and the politician.

RICHARD LEE.

Obituary.

It is with deep regret that I have to record the death of Mrs. Wm. Heaford, the beloved wife of our friend and colleague William Heaford, well-known throughout the country as a Freethought lecturer and writer, who peacefully passed away after a brief illness at her residence at Thornton Heath on Tuesday, April 11. Mrs. Heaford shared her husband's convictions on religion and was well-known to most of the leaders of the Freethought movement. In accordance with her wishes a Secular Service was read by the undersigned at the grave at the Mitcham Road Cemetery, Croydon, on Saturday, April 15, where a large gathering of friends and relatives were present to pay a tribute of love and respect to her memory. Her association with her husband dated from the time of the establishment of the Walworth Freethought Institute in 1876. Although she had suffered very severely, at intervals, from a very painful malady she bore her suffering with great fortitude, and when health returned her outlook on life was always optimistic. She took a keen interest in the intellectual and social movements to which her husband devoted his life, and gave a fond mother's care to everything that concerned the well-being of her children, and for many works of kindness to those who came within the circle of her acquaintance she will long be remembered.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.



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LONDON.

INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross): 3.30, Debate on "Some Ethical Problems." All invited.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Christianity's Harmony with Science—Astronomy."

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

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