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## Views and Opinions.

### A Prevalent Superstition.

We dealt, a week or two ago, with what has been called "The Great Lying Creed." And it was not very difficult to prove that in all forms of falsification the Christian religion stood above all others. Its record begins with its earliest known appearance, and it has had an unbroken sequence since. Yet there has grown up, side by side with this practice a tradition of a quite opposite description. This is the legend of the purity—moral and otherwise—of primitive Christianity. This did not commence so early as the Christian practice of "lying for the greater glory of God," it is a comparatively late product. The early Christians, to do them justice, made no special claim to a superior morality. They could not do so with any greater chance of success than could Christians of to-day claim a superiority of conduct over non-Christians. Their concern was not moral but religious. They were not troubling about man's conduct in this world, but his eternal salvation in the next one. They thought the world would soon come to an end—they were simple enough to believe that Jesus Christ meant what he said—and in a world that was soon to pass away purely ethical conduct was of very minor consequence. Primitive Christianity was only pure in the sense that it had fewer foreign elements added to its original structure than it had at a later date. Otherwise it is literally true that Christianity became purer—morally—as it became more corrupt doctrinally. Morally, Christianity is purer to-day than it has been in the whole of its history. And that is precisely because it is less Christian to-day than it has been in the whole of its history.

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### Getting Near the Truth

Still, the tradition of an ideally pure Christianity got itself established—a not very difficult matter where Christians themselves controlled the machinery of education and the channels of publicity—although here and there a Christian writer found the theory rather too hard to swallow without some sort of protest. Thus the late Dean Farrar remarks in the course of one of his historical works:—

To represent the Christian Church as ideally pure, or stainlessly perfect would be altogether a mistake.

.....Hatred and party spirit, rancour and misrepresentation, treachery and superstition, innovating audacity and unspiritual retrogression were known among them as among us.

Something very much stronger than that might be said, but we will let it go. As this was said of the Christian Church in its infancy, it is plain that the influence of Jesus on his followers was not of the loftiest. But having said this, only three pages farther on we get the following:—

When we turn from the annals of the world at this epoch to the annals of the Church, we pass at once from an atmosphere heavy with corruption into a pure and pellucid air.

The Dean would probably thank God that he was writing for Christians, otherwise he might fear that some of his readers would ask what kind of a "pure and pellucid air" was it in which flourished "hatred and party spirit, rancour and misrepresentation"? Evidently that kind of atmosphere was not fatal to qualities that have always been prominent in the Christian Church.

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### The Glamour of the Past.

The purity of Christians and of Christianity is something like miracles—neither are to be seen at the time, they can only be witnessed somewhere else at some other time—the farther back the better. The discovery of a pure Christianity and a moral generation of Christians is not always made so far back as the second or third century; sometimes it is only three or four hundred years ago. But it must be a reasonable distance away. Thus, Lord Morley, who belongs to the type of Freethinker who is usually more anxious to emphasize the good points of Christians than to proclaim those of unbelievers, in his little work *On Compromise* illustrates what he believes to be the value of the old religious type by saying:—

Men were then devoutly persuaded that their eternal salvation depended on their having true beliefs. Any slackness in finding out which beliefs are the true ones would have to be answered for before the Almighty God, at the sure risk and peril of eternal damnation. To what quarter in this large historic firmament can we turn our eyes with such certainty of being stirred and elevated, of thinking better of human life and the worth of those who have been most deeply penetrated by its seriousness, as to the annals of the intrepid spirits whom the Protestant doctrine of indefeasible personal responsibility brought to the front in Germany in the sixteenth century, and in England and Scotland in the seventeenth? It is not their fanaticism, still less is it their theology, which makes the great Puritan chiefs of England and the stern Covenanters of Scotland so heroic in our sight. It is the fact that they sought truth and ensued it, not thinking of the practicable, nor cautiously counting majorities and minorities, but each man pondering and searching so "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye."

There is as much fallacy in this statement as one could wish for. It is easy to say that these men were convinced of the importance of right beliefs and the value of private judgment, but it is not true that by right

belief they meant that men must search and fight for truth at all costs, and by the right of private judgment that each man has a right to proclaim whatever he believes to be the truth. The history of the men of the Reformation is a direct denial of this. By true belief all they understood was *their* belief. The formula, "The truth shall make you free," did not mean the large and unfettered truth such as is proclaimed by science, but the doctrinal "truth" embodied in some highly debatable sectarian dogma. The Protestants were, almost to a man, at one with the Church of Rome in believing it right to suppress all religious beliefs with which they were not in agreement. They insisted upon the duty of the State to do so. Indeed it is to this same Protestantism that we owe the establishment of a State Church, with its corollary of a State ordained religion and the right of the secular power to suppress heresy and blasphemy as civil offences.

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#### Christianity or Science ?

So long as we use words with a reasonable regard for their proper meaning, it is downright nonsense to talk of either the early Christian or the leaders of the Protestant Reformation as having a regard for truth or for true belief or for liberty of private judgment. Nowhere has the Christian, in either his private or public capacity, tolerated open examination and criticism of his beliefs if he could possibly prevent it. Nowhere have Christians shown regard for the right of private judgment where it could be suppressed. And there is a world of difference between advocacy of what the religious world calls *the* truth, and the impartial search for truth. For this we have to leave the region of religion and turn to that of science. It is true that religious men have in all ages shown devotion to what they believed to be the truth, and were ready to die for it if needs be. But for sheer love of truth for truth's sake, for a tenacious devotion to principle without the incentive of personal gain, the history of science is without a rival. With the religious man who went to the stake for his opinions there was always the underlying incentive of personal gain and a rich reward to be reaped in the next world. That is one reason why the religious appeal could so often touch commonplace and even mean characters. It was an appeal to selfishness clothed in the language of generosity and self-sacrifice. But scientific workers have had no such surreptitious appeal to their selfish passions. They have often been martyred with no sense of personal gain to compensate them. They have had no monuments raised to their memory, and no institutions to keep alive the knowledge of their sacrifice. But in the totality of forces that eventuate in a higher civilization, their work counts for infinitely more than the spectacular sacrifices of religious enthusiasts.

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#### The Decline of Religion.

Whatever superior degree of toleration or disinterested love of truth the Christian of to-day shows, and which lifts him above the believer of earlier generations, is due to that broadening of the intellectual horizon that has gone on in spite of Christian opposition. Lord Morley, in the passage I have cited, is altogether wrong in his generalization. If men to-day no longer get into the passion of fervour that the early Protestants did, it is not because they have less regard for truth, but because they have a livelier sense of the absurdity of the Christian superstition. The Protestants could take the Roman Catholic Mass seriously, because their own minds were filled with beliefs of the same intellectual value. They were like a couple of Central African natives quarrelling over the merits of their respective fetishes. The cultured

man of to-day smiles where the man of an earlier generation raved because the whole mass of Christian superstitions are to him supremely ridiculous. A knowledge of human nature begets toleration, and toleration develops, not indifference to truth, but a livelier sense of the absurd. And there is really a far greater enthusiasm to-day for truth than has ever existed in any of the purely Christian centuries. We are realizing that the great and essential functions of life are quite independent of religious beliefs. We are gaining clearer conception of the right of any person to hold any opinion he chooses on religious or on any other subject, and this inevitably dismisses dogmatism in all directions. It is curious to find two such men as Dean Farrar and Lord Morley combining to perpetuate this superstition of the love of Christians for truth and their beneficial influence on morals. And yet as the world goes one need not be surprised. In the one case we have the trained and paid advocate making a case for his brief. On the other side we have the not unusual phenomenon of the liberated intellect, perhaps unconsciously, anxious to appease the demons of respectability and conventionality by dropping a modicum of incense on their altars, even though there may be a sense of the absurdity of the whole performance.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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## Lord Byron.

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I.

(Concluded from page 547.)

BYRON was a friend of the people because he was a lover, advocate, and promoter of liberty. Even Macaulay, who did not like him, admits that "his political opinions leaned strongly towards the side of liberty," and that he gave financial assistance to the Italian insurgents in their desperate revolt against the oppressive measures of the Austrian Government. It is well known how valiantly he joined the Greeks in their campaign against the tyrannical yoke of the Ottomans; and in this connection Macaulay states that "his conduct in this new situation showed so much vigour and good sense as to justify us in believing that, if his life had been prolonged, he might have distinguished himself as a soldier and a politician." During his short residence at Genoa he established, in co-partnership with Leigh Hunt, and with the assistance of Shelley, a literary organ entitled *The Liberal* which, though its life was brief, aimed at emancipating or revolutionizing the intellectual life of the English-speaking world.

In his early twenties he was elevated to the giddiest pinnacle of fame and honour. Society idolized him. Macaulay, writing in 1831, says:—

Everything that could stimulate, and everything that could gratify the strongest propensities of our nature, the gaze of a hundred drawing-rooms, the acclamations of the whole nation, the applause of applauded men, the love of lovely women, all this world and all the glory of it were at once offered to a youth to whom Nature had given violent passions, and whom education had never taught to control them. He lived as many men live who have no similar excuse to plead for their faults. But his countrymen and countrywomen would love him and admire him. They were resolved to see in his excesses only the flash and outbreak of that same fiery mind which glowed in his poetry. He attacked religion; yet in religious circles his name was mentioned with fondness, and in many religious publications his works were censured with singular tenderness. He lampooned the Prince Regent; yet he could not alienate the Tories. Everything, it seemed, was to be forgiven to youth, rank, and genius.

Of the substantial truth of that eloquent passage there can be no doubt whatever, though one can discern in it an implied depreciation of the young poet's worthiness to receive such worship, as well as an assumption of the capricious nature of the worship itself. But while the tide of admiration and love was at its strongest and highest an incident occurred which put a sudden and disastrous stop to it. For some reason unknown to this day, Lady Byron left her husband's house in London on a visit to her parents at Kirkby Mallory. On the way she wrote a loving letter, addressing him as "Dear Duck," and signing herself as "Your Pippin." Her father a few days later informed him that she would never return to him, and she never did. A deed of separation was soon drawn up and signed. That is really all that has ever become definitely known about the unfortunate affair. And yet society immediately and unscrupulously took it for granted that the husband was the guilty party, and began forthwith to pour out the vials of its wrath upon his unhappy head. As Macaulay puts it, the poor man "was persecuted with an irrational fury," the British public being "in one of its periodical fits of morality," which, according to him, happens once in six or seven years. Hard beyond words was Lord Byron's case, and Macaulay adds:—

True Jedwood justice was dealt out to him. First came the execution, then the investigation, and last of all, or rather not at all, the accusation.....The obloquy which Byron had to endure was such as might well have shaken a more constant mind. The newspapers were filled with lampoons. The theatres shook with execrations. He was excluded from circles where he had been the observed of all observers. All those creeping things that riot in the decay of nobler natures hastened to their repast; and they were right; they did after their kind.

We quote Macaulay's defence of Byron with all the greater satisfaction because he was not one of his admirers. Writing to his sister Hannah on June 10, 1831, about his article on Moore's *Life of Byron*, he said: "I do not like the book: I do not like the hero."

The persecution was more than the poet could endure. His wife left him on January 15, 1816, and he finally left England in April of the same year. Macaulay very significantly and sarcastically observes:—

The howl of contumely followed him across the sea, up the Rhine, over the Alps; it gradually waxed fainter; it died away; those who had raised it began to ask each other, what, after all, was the matter about which they had been so clamorous, and wished to invite back the criminal whom they had just chased from them. His poetry became more popular than it had ever been; and his complaints were read with tears by thousands and tens of thousands who had never seen his face.

Byron never forgave his treatment in England even after the tide had turned in his favour. He once passed through Florence, and the hotel at which he stayed had fifty windows in front, and as he went to his carriage all those windows were crowded with women, chiefly English women, anxious to catch a glance at their favourite poet; but he took no notice nor returned their salutations.

Faults of temper, appetite, and passion he had in abundance, very largely his sad heritage from the past; but at bottom he was a good man, eager to do good to his fellow-beings. There were times when he bitterly reproached himself and cherished the forgiving mood, longing for strength to conquer self. To himself he mournfully said:—

Tread those reviving passions down,  
Unworthy manhood! unto thee  
Indifferent should the smile or frown  
Of beauty be.

His character was much superior to that of his profligate father or that of his whimsical mother, and incomparably superior to that of the grand uncle whom he succeeded in the peerage. Taking all the circumstances—heredity and environment—into full consideration, Byron's character and conduct were, on the whole, highly creditable to him, and this was an achievement due to his own exertions alone, and not at all to any assistance derived from any supernatural source. John Galt, who knew him personally, and wrote his *Life* in 1830, says that "Lord Byron had but loose feelings in religion—scarcely any"; that "he was not a member of any particular church, and, without a reconstruction of his mind and temperament could not have become such." At Cephalonia, while he was waiting for an opportunity to be of service to Greece, there was a Dr. Kennedy who did his utmost to convert him to Christianity. It is true that the Doctor was anything but a cogent Christian apologist, though he imagined that he was; and whilst the poet listened to him with politeness he was not impressed by his argument. Galt admits that his "attempt to quicken Byron to a sense of grace failed." Here is a sample of the conversation:—

His lordship said, "I do not reject the doctrines of Christianity; I want only sufficient proofs of it to take up the profession in earnest; and I do not believe myself to be so bad a Christian as many of them who preach against me with the greatest fury—many of whom I have never seen nor injured." "You have only to examine the causes which prevent you" (from being a true believer), said the Doctor, "and you will find they are futile, and only tend to withhold you from the enjoyment of real happiness, which at present it is impossible you can find."

"What, then, you think me in a very bad way?" "I certainly think you are," was the reply; "and this I say, not on my own authority, but on that of the Scriptures.—Your lordship must be converted, and must be reformed, before anything can be said of you, except that you are bad, and in a bad way."

Is it any wonder that Dr. Kennedy was utterly incapable of converting Byron to Christianity? Yet so highly did he himself think of the attempt that he published the conversations, with a significant letter from Byron's valet, William Fletcher, concluding with the following statement:—

For myself I should be only too happy to be converted to the truth of the Gospel. But at this time I fear it would be doing my Lord more harm than good in publishing to the world that my Lord was converted, which to that extent of religion my lord never arrived.

The late Mr. Benn (*Modern England*, p. 126) went so far as to express the opinion that "probably he (Keats) was indebted to Byron for an emancipation so complete that no trace of a struggle with supernatural beliefs has been left in his works."

We have thus found that three of the greatest poets at the commencement of the nineteenth century, Shelley, Keats, and Byron, were Freethinkers; and it is well known that neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth was an orthodox believer. J. T. LLOYD.

The Hebrew genius has not, like the Greek, its conscious and clear-marked division into a poetic side and a scientific side; the scientific side is almost absent. The Bible utterances have often the character of a chorus of Æschylus, but never that of a treatise of Aristotle.—*Matthew Arnold*, "St. Paul and Protestantism."

The later Roman law having assumed, on the theory of natural law, the equality of the sexes, control of the person of the woman was quite obsolete when Christianity was born.....But Christianity tended from the first to narrow this remarkable liberty.—*Sir Henry Maine*, "Ancient Law."

### Ever a Fighter.

Time's hand shall hoard the gold of such a name  
When Death has blown the dust of base men hence.  
—Swinburne (*on Landor*).

The man who feels that he has truth on his side must  
step firmly, Truth is not to be dallied with. —Goethe.

If you do not say a thing in an irritating way, you may  
just as well not say it at all, since nobody will trouble  
themselves about anything which does not trouble them.  
—Bernard Shaw.

WHATEVER may have been thought of Charles Bradlaugh's significance as a thinker and a politician, whatever may be the influence he wielded in public affairs, the memory of his personal career must live while anyone has an eye for the dramatic and romantic in English history. The story of his meteoric rise is like a leaf torn from the pages of Plutarch; the tale of his untimely death is as moving and poignant as a tragedy of Sophocles. He must live with Cromwell, Cobbett, and Gladstone as one whom a vivid and forceful personality must always make interesting. The years since he died have quieted the shoutings and tumult of the bad, old days in which he lived, but they have left the heroic figure of Bradlaugh clear-cut for our regard.

Not only was he a forceful personality; he was a great man. The thirteen years' fight he made to get into Parliament, the years of struggle outside, against an overwhelming majority of opponents formed an Homeric page of modern history. His triumph in the hour of death was as complete as that of Nelson on the deck of the *Victory*. Thanks to Bradlaugh's courage and devotion, heterodoxy is no longer a serious bar to the citizen, and the authority of the clergy has been shorn of its worst dangers.

It is strange that people are only now beginning to see that Bradlaugh's antagonistic attitude to religion was actually forced upon him. He had no wish to fight the clergy and their supporters. He did not want to waste his time arraigning the characters of the Patriarchs, the gallantries of David, and the absurdities and cruelties of religion. But he saw quite clearly that priestcraft was the bulwark of tyranny. It was precisely because the Christian clergy formed the shield of injustice that he challenged them. If, by so doing, he seemed to those outside of his influence a mere iconoclast, he has in this only shared the fate of the world's greatest reformers. His life was shortened because of the ill-treatment he received. Dead, he remains a living force by the nobility of his life and the consistency of his example.

"Thorough" was his motto, and throughout life he acted up to it. He was no dreamer of dreams, leaving others to translate his ideas into deeds. First and last, he was a man of action. In his earlier years the Freethinkers were feebly led and fitfully inspired. Without his magnetic leadership their stay in the desert might have been prolonged many years. It was he, most ably seconded by men and women of real talent, who made the Freethought Party as we know it to-day.

What a price he had paid for his leadership! For a whole generation he led the forces of Freethought, but the Philistines were too much for him at the end. With the odds a thousand to one against him, his iron constitution gave way. Aged prematurely, he kept the boldest of fronts to the enemy. Jealousies and unkindness and bitterness are in most human labours, but religion, with its insincerities and intellectual meannesses seems to hold a poison of its own which narrows the vision and blunts the edge of principle.

Bradlaugh fought for Liberty, and his life struggle was as heroic as that of the Spartan heroes who held the pass of Thermopylæ against the Persian hordes. Let us salute the memory of one of the bravest men who ever drew breath.

MIMNERMUS.

### Freethought and Truth.

I must give you my honest thought. You have the right to demand it, and I must maintain the integrity of my soul.  
—Robert Ingersoll.

It requires intrepidity of opinion and independent sturdiness of thought to tell the people home-truths; and there is nothing else of which they stand so much in need as men of such a stamp; men who will think clearly and speak fearlessly. With the Christian religion truth has ever been subservient to expediency—indeed this has been one of the main conditions of its survival—and this in turn has left its impress on all departments of our national life. Mental camouflage has become a fine art, and Policy before Principle the by-word of modern politics; a condition of things which is driving men and women who love truth-seeking and truth-speaking into the ranks of Freethought in ever-increasing numbers. It is at once the right and the duty of the Freethinker to speak the truth as he sees it, and he who correctly gauges the spirit of the Freethought movement, realizes that in giving his honest thought, "without fear or favour," he is promoting the highest interests of the Cause.

Having escaped from the shackles of orthodoxy the genuine Freethinker has too keen an appreciation of personal freedom, and prizes his hard-won liberty too highly to surrender it under another banner. He requires no incentive to truth-speaking, it is with him a second nature, and thus Freethought and truth tend to become synonymous terms.

A single-hearted devotion to truth has ever been a rare virtue; it was never a characteristic of the herd and is only reflected in the world's greatest minds. Certain it is that no religion ever placed it in the foreground of their constitution, much less made it the basis of their creed; and much as Freethought differs from all religions, it is in this very matter of truth wherein the greatest divergence lies.

The motto of the National Secular Society: *We Seek for Truth*, inspires us with hope for the future and gives us courage to endure the present. No movement founded on it can die so long as it is true to itself; and when the great religions of the world are tottering and falling, Freethought will still be marching on, numerically small as it may be, but ever holding aloft the banner of truth.

Religionists are beginning to perceive the value of truth. Eminent divines, in moments of amazing outspokenness, have declared that there is no religion higher than truth. It has taken a long time and much Freethought propaganda to make them realize it, and when that realization is general the end of Christianity will be very near. The end is, however, not near yet, for while a few of the more advanced religionists are beginning dimly to discern it, the average churchgoer is blissfully ignorant of it and too enamoured of the old ways to care for it. Thus, while there are not wanting a few theologians ready to pay lip-service to the majestic lines of Tennyson:—

Because right is right, to follow right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence;

And while the congregations still sing joyously:—

To seek the truth whate'er it be  
To follow it where'er it leads.  
To turn to facts our dreams of good  
And coin our lives in loving deeds—

it is left to Freethinkers to put it into everyday practice. "For what"—asked that great Freethinker Moncure Conway—"is greater than to be numbered with those who extended the bounds of human freedom and thought, who enlarged the hope and vision of mankind?" It is considerations such as these that make one feel proud of the movement and happy to take one's place in a society which aims at establish-

ing a nation of free beings capable of seeing their duty and doing it without hope or fear of reward or punishment in a future state; for truly "the heroism of life is the doing of great things for those who shall live after us, and seeking no reward save what fruition shall mean to those we have thus served to help."

VINCENT J. HANDS.

### In the City Road.

LAST week I visited Wesley's Chapel in the City Road. At one time good London Methodists used to relate with pride the details of its history; but its present aspect hardly conveys the impression that this spot is the Mecca of their twentieth-century representatives.

The Chapel stands on the site of the old foundry, "near Upper Moorfields," which Wesley purchased from the Government when this thoroughfare, now teeming with the life of men and women more concerned with immediate profits than with future salvation, was a mere lane. In the open space in front of the Chapel are two notice-boards, partially obscured by a mass of ill-tended shrubbery, which announce a few facts and dates of historical interest. From one of them I learn that John Wesley, M.A., of Lincoln College, Oxford, laid the foundation stone on April 21, 1777. Writing under this date in his *Journal*, Wesley records that a brass plate, inscribed with his name, was placed on this stone and then covered with another stone, which would probably be seen no more by any human eye, but "would remain there, till the earth and the works thereof are burned up." The Day of Judgment was a very real thing to him and his community; they had been nurtured on something much stronger than a progressive revelation. In this front enclosure there is also a monument to the evangelist, on the base of which are engraven the historic words, "The world is my parish."

The modest sum of sixpence admits the visitor to the Wesley Museum, which adjoins the Chapel. On the opposite side of the road is the "hallowed ground of Dissent," Bunhill Fields, where, amid a goodly company of once noted revivalists, repose Isaac Watts and John Bunyan. Daniel Defoe, hardly a saint, but a zealous standard-bearer of the cause, is also buried here. The cemetery is a dismal place, eminently suitable for the soliloquies of those that walk by faith alone, if there are any left in this degenerate age. But one recalls the names I have mentioned, and the works associated with them, with a sense of pathos. They are like sign-posts, pointing in one direction to the past, in another to the future. Watts gave us sheaf after sheaf of hymns and "divine songs." From memory I quote four lines of one of them:—

There is a hell, a dreadful hell,  
And never ending pains,  
Where sinners must with devils dwell  
In darkness, fear and chains.

I do not say that this is typical, but many of his hymns, including those written for children, are on this line in regard to doctrine. Bunyan was not, like Watts, a D.D. He was only a sinner saved by grace. But he was equally concerned about the "dreadful hell." And this tinker gave us the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the story of Christian and the Delectable Mountains, of the Giant Despair and the rest. He has an assured place in our imaginative literature, and in our hearts. Defoe lives to-day in *Robinson Crusoe*. Who now reads his various writings on "occasional conformity" or the "new tests"? In life and letters it is the human element that is permanent. The service of man will outlast the service of God.

Both Bunyan and Defoe were the victims of Anglican intolerance and persecution. High dignitaries of the Establishment, like Warburton and Lavington, poured the copious vials of their scorn upon Wesley's head with all the characteristic Anglican detestation of "disloyalty." But what toleration have the new aspirants after "Christian perfection" accorded to opponents? Wesley himself was not in favour of religious equality where Roman Catholics were concerned. His spiritual descendants, however, have had more practical opportunities of showing what "civil and religious liberty" really means to them. How many of them have used these opportunities to help to sweep away the blasphemy laws? They always have been, and are still, the prime movers in every effort to enforce "Lord's Day observance." To judge how far any religious system objects to persecution on principle, one must see it invested with power. That applies to the Nonconformist conscience as much as to anything else.

Four months before his death Wesley preached at Colchester. Henry Crabbe Robinson, who was present, said that the service "was for the most part a pantomime, but the pantomime went to the heart." The collective singing was a great asset to the performance. This factor, indeed, contributed materially to the success of the early Methodists in England. But the intellectual and economic conditions provided a suitable atmosphere, without which the lovefeasts and the psalm-singing would have been barren result. On the one hand, the mass of the people was steeped in ignorance; on the other, the industrial revolution was bringing in its train a whole host of baneful influences. It was into the lives of those exposed to these influences that Methodism conveyed its current of religious emotion. Man was obviously a fallen creature, and to exploit his plight rather than to work for its complete removal gave efficacy to grace in what seemed to the revivalists a practical fashion. The idea was Christian to the core.

Southey declared that Wesley would be found to have "produced the greatest effects, centuries or perhaps millenniums hence, if the present race of men should have continued so long." It has already continued well over one century, and part of the Chapel is beginning to sag badly. Some time ago an appeal was made for funds to repair it. This building, a Welsh Wesleyan chapel a few yards to the west, and the burial ground, present collectively a scene of sepulchral gloom which it would be difficult to match even in a city where gloom is by no means an unknown quantity. Our Prime Minister, who early in life commanded the respect due to the depth of his convictions, recently visited the City Road and extolled Wesley's work. I think all the latter-day disciples of the great soul-saver should wend their way thither. They might feel the thrill of new "religious experiences."

According to Tyerman, his biographer, Wesley "died as he had lived, without a purse." But only a few, especially in our age, can afford to live and die in this way, and those few will not be looked for among the Methodists. They are too well aware of the intimate relationship between the temporal and the eternal. After all, Wesley's *Journal* is the most precious thing he has bequeathed to posterity, and much of it is truly delightful reading.

There will be no more Wesleys. A progressive revelation and periodical restatements of "fundamentals" cannot breed them. Only Sin and Satan, well entrenched, can do that, and they have both been hit very hard by modern thought. The guardians of the faith may reconcile their religious convictions with the conception of evolution, but they won't convert "publicans and sinners." Every now and then our daily Press discovers that working men no longer

attend divine worship, and very gravely warns its readers of the discovery. The souls of the other absentees do not count. But that the working man should lose sight of the goal, once so conspicuous, is no trifling matter. It may lead to all sorts of eventualities. Perhaps he dislikes the baggage which he is asked to carry on the way to the goal. At any rate, he has escaped, at considerable cost, one or two Edens, and he does not ask for any more.

VIATOR.

## The Christian Socialist.

A SEASIDE COMEDY.

It was the Sunday evening following Glasgow Fair Week; the speaker was a local councillor, teacher, and B.A., a very honest, courageous, and tenacious, if not too well informed, upholder of the Socialist ideal. His subject was "Religion and Socialism"—one that left him an all-to-easy victim of Freethought logic in the questions put by City and local Freethinkers, who had evidently been fed on the philosophy of this journal. Apart from the mythical and miraculous aspect of the Nazarene, the speaker held that his work and teaching were essentially revolutionary, in that he championed the cause of the poor, advocated the rights of man as man—as of more value than many sparrows—and characterized the rich and ruling classes of his day as hypocrites and whited sepulchres.

At the close of the address a mild young fellow from Glasgow reminded the speaker he had (in derision) called this a Christian country. Was it not, he asked, in its present evil state largely *because* it was a Christian country? In answer, the speaker repudiated the religious character of Christ, and said he dwelt only on his moral and economic teaching. Whereupon a local questioner asked: Was it not the "burden of sin" Christ laboured to remove, and not the economic one; not houses on earth he offered, but mansions in the skies; not happiness here below, but eternal felicity in some never, never land, that only "simple faith" ever hoped to enjoy?

At this point an impatient Communist in the crowd endeavoured to put the tin hat on, what he supposed, a useless discussion by an enquiry into the relative virtues of our parliamentary and Russian Soviet systems of government. Very interesting, certainly, and perhaps grateful to the harassed speaker, but obscuring the main issue, and so irrelevant.

Later the City Freethinker asked: Would progress have been so far advanced without the Capitalist system? The native heretic echoed that by asking: Would not progress have been much further advanced to-day had it not been for the Dark Ages of religious faith? This the lecturer had the goodness to answer only with a smile of assent!

At the close of the meeting the City chap confided to a neighbour his opinion that real progress could not be made without attacking religion. As it was, social reformers were "taking the poison with them," and the poison would "do its work," in the future as in the past, irrespective of mere forms of government.

It was, moreover, borne in upon the mind of the writer that a pure socialization, really mental sanitation, is identical with Freethought—if it is not, then is *our* preaching vain also.

SANDY HILLS.

The true poet manfully accepts the condition in which destiny has placed him, and therein tries to make his existence harmonious; the sham poet, like a weak workman, fretful over his tools, is loud in his assurances of what he *might* be, were it his lot to live in other circumstances.—George Henry Lewes, "Life of Goethe."

## Scented Days.

THE Freethinker is an object of pity to the Christian—when he is not the object of persecution. A Christian judge has just sentenced a rather foolish and forward Atheist to the savage sentence of nine months in prison, with hard labour, for a trumpery and childish offence—a pure and simple case of persecution—but even the pity of the better, if little wiser, Christian is misapplied. A handful of withered sprays and flowers, gathered last summer from the impartial breast of mother Nature, are scented still. They have just been sent through the post to a dear friend as mementoes of a sacred place—the parting place of Burns and Mary—as flowers of Freethought, to be cherished in the heart of friendship, scented still! We do not care to remember all the past, but in glimpses and vistas of old and tranquil joy those memories return unbidden, and the winter of our discontent is made glorious summer by such "visitations of the divinity in man." The sun shines warm again in glowing noons, sunrise and sunset are far apart, the trees rustle and busk again in green and gracious leaf; an atmosphere of enchantment broods upon those quiet roads of long ago; trials, sorrows, and disappointments fade or are mingled in a gentle mist of recollection:—

Old faces, all the friendly past,  
Rise within the heart again.

There is something common to us all. The Christians may spare the Freethinkers their pity; they may yet have sense enough to spare us their persecution; we do not ask the last as a favour, we will fight for it as a right.

A.M.

## EMPEDOCLE'S ON ETNA.

Is it so small a thing  
To have enjoy'd the sun,  
To have lived light in the spring,  
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;  
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling  
foes—

That we must feign a bliss  
Of doubtful future date,  
And, while we dream on this,  
Lose all our present state,  
And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?

Not much, I know, you prize  
What pleasure may be had,  
Who look on life with eyes  
Estranged, like mine, and sad;  
And yet the village-churl feels the truth more than you,

Who's loath to leave this life  
Which to him little yields—  
His hard-task'd sunburnt wife,  
His often labour'd fields,  
The boors with whom he talk'd, the country spots he  
knew.

But thou, because thou hear'st  
Men scoff at Heaven and Fate,  
Because the Gods thou fear'st  
Fail to make blest thy state,  
Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there are!

I say: Fear not! Life still  
Leaves human effort scope.  
But, since life teems with ill,  
Nurse no extravagant hope;  
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then  
despair!

—Matthew Arnold.

## Acid Drops.

There is one thing about Mr. Robert Blatchford that compels admiration. When he takes up with a subject he is generally able to write about it as though it had never been written about before, with the result that a newcomer is led to the presumption that it is really a new topic so far as the bulk of the people are concerned. Of course the secret of this may be non-acquaintance with the subject on the part of both writer and reader, otherwise the fact that a subject has already been discussed at length and for very many years, would certainly lead to a weakening of the sense of freshness. But it is a dangerous frame of mind for anyone to possess—dangerous because it is certain to lead the possessor astray before he has gone very far.

This aspect of the matter is obtrusively evident in Mr. Blatchford's *Sunday Chronicle* articles on Spiritualism. Mr. Blatchford's experience of the matter appears to consist in the recent reading of a few books written by Spiritualists, and he quite ingenuously takes all the statements therein at their full face value. What, for instance, can one make, merely as an effort in reasoning, of the following:—

Either there are spirits and these spirits manifest, or the surface of the earth is simply crawling with liars. I cannot believe that the thousands of educated, gifted, and honourable women and men who have testified to the truth of these amazing phenomena are wilful and unscrupulous liars.

Well, there really are a great many liars on the face of the earth, and people will lie for very many reasons. And apart from liars there is a still larger number of people who are constitutionally incapable of setting a plain unvarnished account of what they do see or hear. The reliability of witnesses is one of the greatest difficulties that fronts everyone, even when one is quite sure that the witness is perfectly honest and honourable. And Mr. Blatchford seems pathetically unacquainted with all that may be said on the matter of mere trickery, played on very earnest and honest people, by those who have no pecuniary motive for deceiving.

But that is not all. There is not a superstition, no matter how gross, that has not had its truth supported by thousands upon thousands of quite honest men and women, aye, and able men and women. How on earth does Mr. Blatchford imagine that all the religions of the world with their absurd miracles and fantastical beliefs have been established? Does he think that these were the work of only knaves and fools, and that they managed to lead the world by the nose? That is a view of human nature and history that is too childish for anyone out of an asylum to maintain. And if the testimony of honest men and women will not establish the truth of Christianity, what is there that their mere testimony will establish?

The question is not one of honesty, nor is it wholly one of capacity. It is a question of being acquainted with the kind of evidence that is of importance, and of possessing the knowledge that will enable one to understand what does occur. And we say quite plainly that Mr. Blatchford shows no evidence of the first, and is certainly devoid of the second. An understanding of Spiritualism is not to be gained by reading a few books on Spiritualism—the only preparation Mr. Blatchford seems to have had—and then shouting out that if it is not true then the earth must be crawling with liars. The people who testified to the reality of witchcraft were neither fools nor liars, and the Blatchfords of that day cried out that witchcraft must exist because so many honest and able men and women testified to its existence. Light was let on the subject when men and women came along with the proper kind of knowledge for dealing with the subject. And we would suggest to Mr. Blatchford that he may seek enlightenment along the same road. It means hard study, and the knowledge is not to be acquired between the two issues of a weekly paper. But it is the only method of getting there.

The Modern Churchmen's Congress is being held at Oxford this year, and is again producing a crop of startlingly heterodox opinions. Mr. Emmet, while allowing that Christianity possessed "distinctive features," warned his hearers that they must not "jump lightly" to the conclusion that it is the best religion to-day because it was the best for an earlier age. Professor Soothill suggests a possible combination of Christianity and Buddhism "for the salvation of the world." In a leading article (August 25) the *Daily Telegraph* sounds the alarm. It says that all this seems like "lightly brushing aside received doctrine." It does indeed. Our contemporary deplores the effect of such utterances, not on the learned, but on "the ordinary unlearned Christian man or woman." One can always be sure of the *Daily Telegraph's* leaders, they are intended to be taken very seriously. But it is by no means the only organ of public opinion that lays stress on the need of the religious factor, not for the cultured few, but for the mass of the population. We commend this fact to those who think that intellectual emancipation counts for little among the influences that raise the all-round status of the "disinherited."

Professor Alban Widgery condemned the system of compulsory Christian instruction in Indian schools. It was a great drawback that a Christian ecclesiastical establishment was being maintained by the State out of Indian revenues imposed upon people overwhelmingly non-Christian. The Anglican Church in India is legally a part of the Establishment. It says something for the conscience of this institution that it can carry its divine message to India upon such inconvenient terms. At home, the official church is revising its articles and prayer-book, but the "glad tidings" are still good enough for the black or yellow man. And the Establishment is in a large way of business in many climes.

Speaking at Lugano on August 25, Mr. Bertrand Russell, who recently visited China, said that if Europeans continued their present policy in this country the result would be to make the Chinese a great military people, and perhaps all that constituted the beauty of their civilization would be destroyed for ever. If this statement, and facts like those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, do not make every Christian heart thrill with the story of the faith's triumphs, our preachers and prophets have signally failed in their efforts to lead the flock to the promised land.

The Northern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church raises a strong protest against the desecration of the Sabbath, which tends "to destroy us socially and religiously," and calls upon the magistrates to resist every attempt to "introduce such desecration into our midst." It also noted the probability of crop failure, which shows "forth God's displeasure against us as a people," and set August 17 aside as a day of fasting and prayer. We do not know what effect this has had on the crops, but both resolutions are characteristically Christian. The one makes the usual appeal to force, and the second sets up the usual snivel and whine when dealing with God. We suggest that as it is evidently God's business to look after the crops it would be more manly if the Northern Presbytery told its deity quite plainly that unless he did his work properly it would decline to offer him any service whatever. But the average Christian grovels before his deity the more soundly he believes that said deity is thrashing him.

The *Daily News* has unearthed a very pretty story about a certain evangelist, Gipsy Pat Smith—who must not be confused with another evangelist, known as Gipsy Smith. Gipsy Pat Smith has been conducting a twenty-four days' mission at Cardiff. He has been sowing in the Lord's field, and he evidently thinks he has a fair right to the harvest, and the harvest has been a pretty fair one, judging even by the standard of high prices and increased wages.

Here is the story as told by the *Daily News* correspondent. When some of the Cardiff Churches approached Smith for a month's mission it was first suggested that he should be offered £100 for the work—not at all a bad sum for one who was preaching the glorious gospel of self-sacrifice. To this Smith objected, and at length stipulated that he should take all after expenses were paid. But towards the end of the mission it appeared that after the personal expenses of the missionary were paid there would be no more than about £50 left for the preacher. So as the Lord loveth a cheerful giver Gipsy Pat Smith took steps to see that the congregations got the Lord's love. First a hint was given to some of the wealthier ones that the balance would not be a very large one, and a private whip round realized about £150 which was handed to Smith. Then the evangelist, it is said, had about 5,000 envelopes printed, one of which was given to each of the congregation on the last nights of the mission asking for a "Free-will Offering" for Gipsy Smith. These were collected and given to the preacher. It is said that the committee had no hand in this, but the sum realized is not stated by the only one able to make the statement, but it is assumed to have run to several hundreds.

That is the bare story, and it is causing a considerable amount of talk. But there is really nothing new about it. It is quite common for these "Free-will Offerings" to be asked for at mission meetings, and very many of these professional evangelists have a keen eye for the takings, quite as keen as Mr. Horatio Bottomley is said to have had. Most of these gentlemen do very well in the service of the Lord, and those responsible for the missions know it quite well. Some weeks ago we pointed out that when the unscrupulous methods of the evangelist Torrey were exposed, many of the leading clergymen of London justified their continued support of a character such as that on the ground that he was doing good work for the Lord and an exposure would injure the cause of religion. The same thing happened at Cardiff. "For the sake of peace and quietness" nothing was said even by the members of the committee who were disgusted at the conduct of the evangelist. It appears that Gipsy Pat Smith's real offence is that he was found out. In America evangelists are less careful to hide what they make. In this country one must show greater care. The earnings need not be smaller, but they must not be advertised. Whether in taking up territory or in annexing collections John Bull "gets there," but one must always keep the moral and religious aspects of both to the front.

But really the financial aspects of these missions are not a whit worse than the other side. Religiously and morally the results are practically nil, save so far as they impose upon the outside public by giving them false sense of the power of religion over the people. When a mission is arranged by several churches working together there are a certain number who look forward to it with all the eagerness of an expected annual outing. They go to each mission as it comes, they feel the power of the Lord on each occasion, and they gloat over their experience much as a confirmed drinker gloats over his last "burst." All this must be quite well known to the promoters of missions, but they have become part of the recognised machinery of certain churches, and they are kept going because self-interest and cowardice prevent those who know speaking out. And quite naturally the game attracts a class of evangelist who in the religious world exactly stands for the carpet-bagger in the political world who exploits whatever may be the particular fashion of the moment.

A church in Telmers Square, Tottenham Court Road, has been converted into a picture palace; another church at East Ham is now the headquarters for the unemployed. Two churches at Sundon and Streatfield, Bedfordshire, have been left to decay for ten years. The old oak beams and the woodwork generally were covered with mould, and the bibles were all mildewed. But this condition of the churches was no ground of exemption from the payment of tithe rent, for the recovery of which two men

were sued at the Luton County Court. Is it one of the little ironies of history that John Bunyan's county should provide so convincing a proof of both the material and the spiritual condition of English Christianity in the twentieth century?

The parish church of All Saints', South Wingfield, has been destroyed by fire. Another accident has occurred to Lourdes pilgrims. On the return journey a motor-car, packed with them, "dashed down a hill, jumping over twenty-five feet on to a lower road." Five were seriously injured. The Rev. Canon A. E. Humphreys, of Stonebridge, Willesden, was found lying unconscious dressed in rowing shorts, in a ditch by the canal at Alperton, Wembley. He died on August 17 without regaining consciousness. Floods were reported near Cardiff last week. Providence will survive all these little incidents. A Scotch parson once declared that "the Almighty is compelled to do many things in his official capacity that, as an individual, he would scorn to do." We are sorry to say, however, that in his official capacity Providence has been consistently encouraged in his pranks by the clergy.

A cyclone wrecked the town of Giugliano, near Naples, the population being forced to camp in the fields. Several lives were lost. Five cases of smallpox have been reported in Stepney. Providence is carrying out experiments which to him are probably highly interesting. They may seem inconvenient to certain individuals, but his official representatives assure us that they are quite consistent with his character.

One of our readers is now engaged in reconstruction work in the war devastated area of France. From a recent letter we cull the following reference to a visit to a small cemetery on the Somme:—

Apart from the main rows of graves and quite isolated was that of a French soldier—ill-kept and with the usual tinsel ornaments at its foot, obviously the only form of outward respect that a poor family could afford. I looked as usual for the gilt cross and small figures of Christ and the Virgin that are nearly always placed there by the poor peasantry. They were not in evidence, but instead the following in bold letters on a framed card: *Tu es parti, malgré nos prières* (You have left us in spite of our prayers).

The prayers of rich and poor alike are equally efficacious. But there is about this grave that human touch which the drivel of scriptural texts and the presence of a crucifix only blight and disfigure.

## How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. And the paper and the Cause is worthy of all that each can do for it.



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.

R. A. CRANK.—Keep on pegging away. Persistency combined with judgment is the policy that tells in Freethought propaganda. The world moves slowly, but it does move, and it is comforting to feel that one is doing something to accelerate the motion.

C. LITTLE.—Sorry your letter did not reach us in time to be of use in last week's issue. Hope your "Ramble" was a success.

R. CLARK.—As a statement of the juristic conception of "law," Lord Shaw's statement is correct enough. But he is not correct in saying that competition as it now exists in our social system favours as little law as possible. The conditions of competition are limited by law, and it is the action of laws that prevents the naturally strongest taking what they please.

A. W. MALCOLMSON.—Will write you shortly. You should have received proofs of articles.

A. M.—A very appreciative letter. We are returning it. The minister must be one whose acquaintance should be worth cultivating.

INDEPENDENT.—The answer was intended to cover a reply to both of you. We are not at all moved by the writer of a pamphlet thinking that we ought to reply to him. The subject was discussed in the paper, and we do not feel personally inclined to go any further with it. So far as we are concerned the matter ends there.

TAB CAN.—We quite appreciate your wish that you could do more for the *Freethinker*. But you do what you can, and if all would do as much as they could the way would be comparatively easy.

C. BAKER.—Tansley's book is quite a good one, but we would also strongly advise *The Psychology of Insanity*, by Dr. Hart, Cambridge Science Manuals (2s. 6d.). Dr. Coriat's *Abnormal Psychology* is also a work that will serve as a very good introduction to the subject. Later follow with Freud's *Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* and Jung's *Analytical Psychology*.

D. CARTER.—We are pleased to have so thoughtful and so frank a letter from a new reader. And we are not surprised that you find some things with which you do not agree. In a way we hope that this will always be the case. For when every reader of the *Freethinker* agrees with all it says it will be neither worth writing nor publishing.

G. E. QUIRK.—The fault lies in the present rule of the newspaper world which appears to be "circulation at any cost." Nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of this being accomplished, with the result that we have suppression of unpopular views on the one hand, and a shameless exploitation of ignorance and passion on the other. Poor as we are we flatter ourselves that we are one of the very few that do stand for an opinion, and for that opinion alone. We shall make use of your MSS. later.

H. E. LATIMER-VOIGHT.—Sorry we cannot agree with your estimate of the late Lord Northcliffe. His greatest champions admit that the secret of his success was that he had a very common-place mind and used his energies in the exploitation of commonplace and ignorant minds. It is true that there does not lie against him, as against others, the charge of defrauding people of money, but there are surely worse offences than that. To deprave the tone of public life and of the public press is surely a far graver offence, even though one is not legally indictable for it. Certainly the press under his influence has changed for the worse. As to his services during the war, we suggest that the war is too near, and the truth too little known to be quite certain in our judgment here. We are not impressed by the chorus of praise in the press. That is very easily obtained.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Our friends at Stockport have been endeavouring to get the *Freethinker* placed in the reading room of the public library. After some time, and assisted by the local trades council, a reply was received from the Library Committee to the effect that they could not grant the request. We understand that some amount of local feeling has been aroused in the matter, and justifiably so. This is one of those acts of religious tyranny and bigotry which should be resisted, and we hope the agitations will continue.

We thank our friends for what they have done in this matter, and suggest that as it is obviously the desire of the bigots to prevent the *Freethinker* being known and read, one way of punishing these people is to see that the *Freethinker* goes into as many new hands as possible. Those who can induce newsagents to display the paper or posters should do so, and anyone who will undertake the distribution of specimen copies will receive a parcel on dropping a card to this office. We must beat the bigot if we can. The bigots hate and fear the *Freethinker*. That is among the compliments paid it.

Mr. J. W. Gott is now out of prison and called at our office the other day. We were quite shocked at his appearance. He is quite broken in health and it is evident that his long term of imprisonment has been too much for him. He will need a period of rest and quiet to make even a partial recovery, and on that subject we may have more to say after the National Secular Society's Executive has met on the first Thursday in September. But we feel sure that Freethinkers would like to make sure that the rest ordered by the doctor is taken. However mistaken some may think Mr. Gott's methods, there is no mistaking his sincerity and no question as to his devotion to Freethought. The bigots have done their best to prevent him carrying on his propaganda by breaking his health, and they appear to have succeeded only too well in that. The brutal Mr. Justice Avory, and the stupid late Lord Chief Justice will no doubt feel happy at the effect their barbarous sentence has had. Others will remember the matter as one more indictment in the case against the savage religion that still obtains in this country.

One point in connection with Mr. Gott's release is worth remembering. During his imprisonment Mr. Gott was forbidden to attend the prison chapel, and was never on any occasion visited by the prison chaplain. But just before his release the Deputy Chaplain came into his cell and said, "Well, Gott, you are going out and I do not think that you will live long. You will not be able to carry on your evil work much longer." The brutality of that speech almost passes belief. It should be remembered as evidence that Christianity, when it can express itself freely and naturally, is as brutal and vindictive as ever it was. Most of the other prison officials appear to have conducted themselves very well, but this prison

preacher belongs to a type that flourishes best under Christian auspices. We understand that the prohibition of attendance at chapel was the consequence of a direct order. Perhaps they thought the relaxation of attendance at chapel was too much for the Atheist prisoner. We must bear that chaplain in mind.

Mr. Charles Baker writes from Harrismith (South Africa): "Let me express my high appreciation of your *Other Side of Death*. This ought to be circulated far and wide; the concluding chapter on Spiritualism should satisfy the most exacting critic, and the handling of the subject from the standpoint of the new psychology will be a source of delight to every reader. To many it will undoubtedly come as a revelation." We are glad to say that the work is circulating very satisfactorily, in spite of the boycott against which we constantly have to fight. The book is intended to explain as well as to controvert, for after all the question of how people come to regard a falsity as truth is not less important than proving a falsity to be such.

We are sorry that we unintentionally did one paper an injustice in our last issue, although the fault was not ours, but that of a correspondent, who we are quite sure acted in ignorance. In the prefatory to his letter on the House of Lords Dr. Hardwicke mentioned a number of papers that had failed to insert his letter, and among these the *Star*. Another correspondent now calls our attention to the fact that the letter appeared in the *Star* for August 7. We regret the error, and are sorry to have done our brilliant contemporary an injustice.

Mr. George Whitehead had a very successful meeting at Peckham Rye on Sunday, August 20, and this was followed up by two lectures from Mr. Corrigan on Sunday last. These meetings were so gratifying that further lectures were arranged during the week, and to-day Mr. Corrigan will again lecture on the Rye, particulars of which are given in the "Guide Notice." There seems to be a fine field for propaganda here, and every prospect of a good branch of the Society being established. We hope that those of our readers who live in the neighbourhood of Peckham Rye will make a point of being present at these meetings.

The Glasgow Branch is holding one of its "Rambles" to-day, and the place to be visited is Loch Libo. Members and friends are asked to meet at the corner of Union Street and Argyll Street at 11.30 prompt. Nearer home the West Ham Branch has arranged for an excursion to Loughton. The train will leave Stratford (Main) Station at 10.10. Tea is provided, and Mr. H. White will act as guide to the party.

We are pleased to learn that the Manchester Branch's discussion class is making excellent progress, with the prospect of developing one or two local speakers. Its next meeting will be held at the house of the Branch President, Mr. F. Monks, 70 Fairfield Street, Pendleton, on September 10 at 6.30. The subject for discussion is "The Gods of Egypt."

#### MODERN LOVE.

Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,  
They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers;  
But they fed not on the advancing hours;  
Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.  
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,  
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.  
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul  
When hot for certainties in this our life!—  
In tragic hints here see what evermore  
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,  
Thundering like rampant hosts of warrior horse,  
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!

—George Meredith.

## Religious Psychology.

IN the material sciences it is no longer discreditable for an investigator to be conspicuously detached from all religions and to be, in his scientific work, obviously uninfluenced by any fear of being discredited, or hope of being rewarded, for supporting any system of religious thought. Perhaps an exception should be made for the very general fear of discrediting religious sex-morality, or perhaps we ought not yet to call sexology a material science. A different attitude appears to prevail in the study of the psychology of religion. Within this domain we encounter everywhere an emotional aversion—a fear to impair the supposed influence of religious values, creed or institution. This fact constitutes the first problem, one of the fundamental problems, with which the psychologist of religion is confronted. Upon the understanding of that problem may depend our view of the scope, the method and the temper, of our approach to the psychology of religion. If we fail to recognize and to overcome the influence of this fear we shall so far impair the scientific efficiency of our work. With this phase of the problem I begin my discussion.

In the physical sciences temperament is at present of relatively little importance. Of course, it will still affect one's need for and the content of one's ultimate theory of things. But temperament will seldom make much, if any, difference as to the immediate thing to be done. An Oliver Lodge, with a strong mystical predisposition toward spiritism, will, on that account, have very little dispute about a practical chemical procedure. In the field of religious psychology, however, the situation is different and more primitive. In the matter of religious experiences and their interpretation, the sum total of observable data having an obvious import is as yet relatively small, in comparison with the factors of doubtful import. In the physical sciences we can more easily check up our predisposition by the use of our sense organs and by laboratory experimentation with material objectives. In religion we are dealing with feelings, ecstasies and other psychic material more difficult of direct sense observation, and accordingly more easily misinterpreted so as to satisfy our temperamental need. Therefore, in the present state of ignorance as to the psychology of religion, it is more true than in chemistry, that what we are going to do about it is determined by our antecedent emotional attitudes; that is, by our temperamental necessities. As our psychologic understanding enlarges that newer understanding will doubtless become as much a part-determinant of future conduct, as knowledge of the conditions of chemical reactions has resulted in an important modification of the former alchemical temperamental predisposition.

In earlier stages of biologic science many used their knowledge of biology as a handmaid for serving the ancient theologies and cosmologies. Now relatively few do this, and on the whole the development of biologic science has produced a large modification in the former interpretation of religious thought and feeling. Greater results may be expected with the achievement of more exact knowledge of religious psychology. In the meantime one of the most important factors in appraising the relative value of the work of psychologists of religion is to know the temperamental predisposition of the investigator, his attitude toward those mystical experiences and their mystical interpretations, which are of the very essence of the problem. According to my present view, this attitude is to be judged, not by the individual's approval or disapproval of the mystical theory or creed, but by the psychologic *how* and the psychologic *why* of that sympathy or aversion. That we each have predispositions (prejudices) must be taken for granted.

The important problem is to discover at what evolutionary level of desire and of mental process these prejudices are formed and functioning.

We have numerous *religious* psychologists who make their psychologic intelligence a servant for their mysticism, instead of using it as a tool to unlock the hidden psychogenetic treasures, or as a corrective for immature mystical tendencies. They are more concerned to entrench the "spiritual" interpretation of "religious" ecstasies than they are to discover a possible relationship of these ecstasies to psychic erotism or to any other known factors of human causation. For them it is more important to fortify "faith" with special pleading than to enlarge our psychogenetic understanding of "faith." Men of repute have written numerous friendly essays and books giving sympathetic and superficial descriptions of Christian mysticisms. Others have sought to supply a scientific psychologic support for Christian preconceptions, and to increase the efficiency of missionary effort. Still others have gathered and given us statistical information of religious data. This all has its value, though perhaps a very different value from that ascribed to it by these authors. At the beginning of new scientific endeavour, it is inevitable that there should be considerable of such groping, somewhat beside the main issues. The regrettable feature is that thus far practically all the professional psychologists have seemingly been afraid of a critical psychogenetic study or interpretation of religious experiences.<sup>1</sup> Neither has any one attempted to give us a standard for the classification of religious phenomena or of the psychologists of religion, according to any scale of evolutionary psychology. In short, a worthwhile (scientific) psychologist of religions is yet a matter of the future.

From the Freudian viewpoint, the psychogenetic contribution to this sensitive emotional regard and the extravagant valuation of mystical views will probably be found in the fear-psychology of the moralistic conflicts. These emotionalisms find their chief roots in the adolescent and pre-adolescent erotic emotional turmoil. One aspect of that conflict is a feeling of inferiority. The urge for a neutralizer or compensation for this distressing feeling creates an efficient preparedness for the emotional identification of the sufferer with something that seems superhuman, transcendental or supernatural. Therefore and thereby he attempts to justify a compensating phantasmal claim of superiority over his unregenerate fellows. The relative degree of morbidity of this inferiority-feeling becomes the determinant, and the exact measure of the "value" attached to whatever interpretation is given to the so-called religious experience. Thus also it becomes the exact measure of the fearfulness often attaching itself to a psychogenetic study of religion, such as tends to discredit the emotional, transcendent valuations and associations.

In many persons this fear-psychology attaches itself, vaguely and indiscriminately as an aversion, to all effort at an understanding of religion and becomes a hatred of those who publicly offer such religious enlightenment. Accordingly, this fearfulness and aversion may be attached to every attempt to study religious psychology by the objective method. It is sacrilege to do aught but achieve the mystic trance and indulge with pious awe and trembling solicitude in uncritical introspective study of religion. Toward the more rude investigators, from mild boredom, through disgust to bitter hatred, in proportion to the intensity of the emotional disturbances underlying the fear. This is the psychology of persecution.

<sup>1</sup> Van Teslar, J. S.: Problem and present status of Religious Psychology; Jour. of Relig. Psych. 7:214-36; Nov. 9, 14.

In some instances this fear may fortify itself by means of misconception as to the *scope* of the psychologic investigation of religious experiences and beliefs. To others it will be more readily apparent that psychology of religions has no direct and immediate concern with the objective verity of religious concepts. The immediate concerns of the psychologists of religion may well be limited to these: (1) the psycho-genetic determinants of religious experiences and of their interpretations; (2) the psycho-evolutionary classification of the desires and mental processes involved in these experiences and in their interpretations; (3) the subjective and objective conditions of preparedness for experiencing religion, generally considered, as well as for particular persons, particular experiences, and particular interpretations of these. Thus limited, possibly some psychologists may recover their courage and their poise. It may help some timid souls to be reminded that the mystically predisposed found no more difficulty in making God the creator of evolutionary law than their predecessors experienced in making him the creator of a flat world with nothing as the raw material. So, too, if it should develop that all mystical religious experience is largely psychic-erotism, they could still believe that a God was only using the reproductive mechanism as an instrument to His ends.

The student of religion finds this fear-psychology everywhere at work, even among psychoanalysts, whose therapeutic task is to help others to overcome morbid fear. Thus, Jung says:—

It is thought to be much more beautiful to solve unnoticed an erotic tension, in elevated feelings of religious poetry in which perhaps many other people can find joy and consolation. One is wrong to storm against this conception from the radical standpoint of fanaticism for truth. (*Psychology of the Unconscious* [trans. by Hinkle] p. 73.)

Many lesser lights also fear to be charged with a "fanaticism for truth." These often declare that religion is a sublimation of sex. I believe this judgment to be the product of their own fear-psychology, and that in fact religion is but a false sublimation (see my *Religion Not a True Sublimation*, Open Court, 36:495) a misleading appearance or pretence.

Sometimes I have flattered myself to have achieved a little of the attitude of a relatively impersonal observer of the agonies and ecstasies of Christian mystics, who are wrestling with or for the "Holy Spirit." I have already published a part of my researches in that field.<sup>2</sup> One may therefore imagine my surprise on finding that so eminent a religious psychologist as Prof. George A. Coe considers persons of my type perverted, "strangely perverted." He says:—

His nature must be strangely perverted who can behold a soul struggling in any fashion to reach the ear of God and not feel his own soul's desire mingling with that of the suppliant. (*Religious Experience and Scientific Movement*, p. 53.)

I have published evidence tending to show that these agonies, for which Prof. Coe has such keen sympathy, are only emotional conflicts, psychoerotic in essence and origin. Because of the fear and shame of sex (the personal sexuality), the religionist usually excludes its true nature from consciousness. Even when he is conscious of it, fear will usually compel him passionately to disavow the fact. Only in extreme cases does it find expression in sexual apotheosis, *e.g.*, among Mormons,<sup>3</sup> Bible Communists, and in some celibate societies.

<sup>2</sup> Revivals, Sex and Holy Ghost. Jour. of Abnormal Psychology, 14 (No. 1-2): 34-47; Apr.-July, 1919.—"Heavenly Bridegrooms," *Alienist and Neurologist*, 1915-1917. "Unique Heathen," by N. S. Sankey Jones.

<sup>3</sup> "Sexual Determinant in Mormon Theology." *Alienist and Neurologist* 29:208-22; May 1908; Trans. *Imago*, 3:197-204; Apr. 1914; Abstracted with other like matter in *Psychoanalytic Review*, 3:223-230, Apr. 1916.

Doubtless there are some workers in the domain of the psychology of religion who must label such an attitude as mine as something even more discreditable than does Prof. Coe. After discussing persons who take my attitude, Prof. William James expresses the "wish that all this medical materialism could be made to hold its tongue." Professor Edward I. Ames is more elaborate and more mystifying in his opposition to a thorough investigation of religious experience. He divides all humans into the following classes:—

(1) Those who lack mentality as generally pathologic types; (2) Irresponsible and inconsequential persons not defective or diseased; (3) Criminal classes; (4) Religious persons with or without mystical experience. (*Psychology of Religious Experience*, chap. 19.) In his uncritical sentimentalism all people are of two kinds: either mentally or socially defective, or religionists. My own opinion of myself is that I am "cured" of religion without being essentially defective. My opinion of Dr. Ames is that his conception of psychic evolution is as inadequate as his opinions about the differential essence of religion are immature.<sup>4</sup>

THEODORE SCHROEDER.

*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be Continued.)

## Witchcraft in Europe.

To read the history of belief in witchcraft and magic is to come to doubt the soundness of our most cherished opinions, however popular they may be, however firmly they may be held by men of the most powerful intellect, and however well attested may be the evidence by which their validity is established. Lecky has well said:—

It is, I think, difficult to examine the subject with impartiality without coming to the conclusion that the historical evidence establishing the reality of witchcraft is so vast and so varied that nothing but our overwhelming sense of its antecedent improbability, and our modern experience of the manner in which it has faded away under the influence of civilization, can justify us in despising it. The defenders of the belief, who were often men of great and distinguished talent, maintained that there was no fact in all history more fully attested, and that to reject it would be to strike at the root of all historical evidence of the miraculous.....The subject was examined in tens of thousands of cases, in almost every country in Europe, by tribunals which included the acutest lawyers and ecclesiastics of the age, on the scene and at the time the alleged acts had taken place, and with the assistance of innumerable sworn witnesses. The judges had no motive whatever to desire the condemnation of the accused; and, as condemnation would be followed by a fearful death, they had the strongest motives to exercise their power with caution and deliberation.....If we considered witchcraft probable, a hundredth part of the evidence we possess would have placed it beyond the region of doubt. If it were a natural but a very improbable fact, our reluctance to believe it would have been completely stifled by the multiplicity of the proofs. (*The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*.)

Shrewd men and women of the world, keen-witted statesmen and politicians, critical lawyers, clear-brained scholars, and sober-minded philosophers have believed implicitly in witchcraft. Gregory the Great, Martin Luther, Queen Elizabeth, Lord Burghley (her great minister), Francis Bacon, Sir Matthew Hale, Sir Thomas Browne, James I of England, Dr. Johnson, and John Wesley, are but a few names, taken at

random, of those who never doubted the existence of witches.

The belief in witchcraft, magic, and demons was inherited by the Middle Ages from antiquity, and continued a virile belief until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Estimates of the number of persons put to death during that period for magical practices vary from one hundred thousand to several millions.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst men's minds were dominated by belief in witchcraft and magic the most absurd tales, which to-day would meet with a contemptuous incredulity, were accepted without serious question by educated and uneducated alike. If an old woman lived alone, in a wretched hovel, and was ill-clad and ill-nourished, the probability was that she was a witch. If she kept a cat, and particularly a black cat, then there was no possible doubt of her character, for it was well-known that the evil spirit which served those who had sold their souls to Satan constantly took the form of a black cat. Should she chance to stumble, it was because a couple of sticks or straws lay in the figure of a cross before her. If she made a mistake in church, and cried *Amen* in the wrong place, the rest of the congregation never failed to conclude that she was saying her prayers backwards—a potent spell. Frequently she was carried hundreds of miles through the air, in a few minutes, riding on a broomstick, or a goat, or whatever other vehicle the Devil might choose to employ. One of her spiteful amusements was to transform herself into a wolf, and devour her neighbour's flocks. Could you but wound her in the animal form, she would retain the wound when she resumed her human form. A hunter, having severed the paw of a wolf which had attacked him, retained it as a trophy; but, on arriving home and opening his bag he discovered in it a bleeding hand, which, by the rings on its fingers, he recognized to belong to his wife. She was sought for, and found in her chamber, minus a hand. She was put to the torture, and confessed her crime, and was burned. Hundreds of such cases were alleged before the tribunals, and lycanthropy was accepted by many of the greatest theologians, and by the law courts of most countries. In the Salic law, of the fifth century, for example, it is enacted "that any sorceress who has devoured a man should on conviction be fined 200 sous." Vast numbers of persons were charged with being werewolves before the French tribunals, and most of them condemned to death by burning.

However, there were at all times those who doubted the existence of werewolves, and the Emperor Sigismund invited the scholars of his age to debate the subject at his court. There, after a three-days' sitting, it was unanimously decided that there were such creatures. The same question was argued before Pope Leo X and an exactly contrary conclusion arrived at. Extraordinary ingenuity of argument was displayed during these debates; the stories of Lot's wife, and Balaam's ass, and other biblical stories were quoted as evidences for the existence of werewolves; those who held the opposite belief also justified their stand by texts from the scriptures; and both sides searched the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine for arguments with which to confound their opponents. As early as the year 314, the twenty-fifth canon of the Council of Ancyra had declared that those who believed in the existence of werewolves were worse than infidels or pagans. It might be thought that this unequivocal utterance by the Church would alone have been sufficient to have silenced those who

<sup>1</sup> Seeing that 7,000 persons are said to have been burned at Trèves alone, and that the German jurist, Benedict Carpzov (1595-1666) is supposed to have sentenced 20,000 people to death for having had traffic with the Devil, the former estimate is probably a modest calculation.

<sup>4</sup> See my "Differential Essence of Religion." Reprint from *Truthseeker*, 41:689-90; 706-7; 726-7. Oct.-Nov. 1914.

maintained that were-wolves did exist. But those who desired to believe in the existence of were-wolves were able, by a kind of intellectual gymnastics, to demonstrate that the canon should be held invalid. Boguet, *grand-juge* of St. Oyan de Joux and St. Claude, in Burgundy, in his *Discours des Sorciers*, defended his disobedience to the canon by asserting that the Council of Ancyra was not a general or synodal council, and triumphantly referred to the confessions he had wrung by torture from a number of his victims.

Typical of the arguments of those who defended belief in were-wolves is the following passage from Bodin's *Démonomanie des Sorciers* :—

If we admit that a man can change iron into steel, and make many kinds of artificial stones which resemble natural gems, it must be strange if Satan, with the great power that God has given him over the elementary world, cannot change a man into a wolf.

This was written in the sixteenth century.

The were-wolf, said those who claimed to speak with authority on the subject, might be easily recognized, for it was invariably destitute of a tail, since although the Devil had the power of metamorphosing members already formed into new shapes, he was utterly incapable of creating new ones, that being the prerogative of the Almighty. Olaus Magnus, Archbishop of Upsal, in his *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*, gives another characteristic by which the were-wolf might be distinguished from the natural animal. He says :—

I may do well to add that were-wolves, transformed from men, are to be found in great abundance in the northern countries. They enter beer-cellars, and will drink up many barrels of beer; and then will pile up the empty barrels, one at top of the other, in the middle of the cellar, in which particular they differ from the natural wolves!

But although the wolf was the most popular form assumed by witches and wizards, they were not averse on occasion to transforming themselves into other beasts. In 1634 a boy named Robinson was taken round from church to church, telling the following story: He was gathering plums in a wood, when he saw two greyhounds. He was about to stroke one of them, when it turned into Dame Dickenson, a neighbour, and the other into a little boy. Dame Robinson then took him to a witch meeting, where he saw many other persons. All whom he pointed out as having been present at the meeting were seized, tried, and a score of them put to death. In after years the boy confessed that the whole tale had been put in his mouth by his parents and others. A few years later (1633), an old woman named Julian Coxe was tried on the accusation of a huntsman, who declared that he set his dogs at a hare, coursed her, and saw the hounds seize her, when she vanished. He ran up to the place, and found Julian Coxe, panting and breathless, lying on the other side of a bush, which convinced him that she had been the hare. Upon this flimsy evidence the unfortunate woman was convicted and burned to death.

"To raise the wind," now degenerated into slang, once described in all seriousness the most dreaded of the witches' black art, for it was well known that hail and thunder-storms were frequently the work of malevolent spirits, who, acting under the instructions of a witch, would desolate the fields of one of her neighbours for whom she had conceived a spite, whilst leaving the neighbouring country undamaged. One of the most famous trials for witchcraft occurred in 1590, when James I of England (then James VI of Scotland), after a stormy passage from Denmark to Scotland with his bride, attributed the rough weather he had encountered to the foul machinations of witches (to whom he was a peculiar object of dislike),

and set his agents to work to discover the culprits. Two persons were seized—Agnes Sampson, a white witch,<sup>2</sup> and Dr. John Fian. Agnes Sampson was tortured by twisting a cord about her temples; and John Fian had his nails torn from his fingers and pins driven in, his legs crushed in iron boots, and his finger-bones splintered in the thumbscrews. "The wisest fool in Christendom" supervised the torture, and questioned the wretched prisoners. At last, in an extremity of agony, the woman admitted that she had wished ill to the king; and the man declared that he had been to a witch-meeting in North Berwick, where the assembly had danced round the church *wither-shins*,<sup>3</sup> until the lock of the door gave way, when they entered and continued their revels within. It also transpired that two hundred crones had been present at the unholy ritual, and had baptized and drowned a black cat, thereby raising the dreadful storm which had all but wrecked the royal vessel. Dr. Fian named the company that had been present at the witch-meeting, and all were seized, tried, and condemned to death, thirty of the poor wretches being burned alive on one day.

It was on a charge of having pulled off their stockings and made a lather of soap, and so raised a storm at sea in which a ship nearly foundered, that a woman named Mary Hicks, and her eleven-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, were executed in 1716—the last legal execution of witches in this country.

Some of the early Christian Emperors legislated against magic, but it was not until the fourteenth century that there was a systematic attempt made to root out witchcraft.

The fearful epidemic, known as the Black Death, which devastated Europe in that century, seems to have aggravated the haunting terror of the invisible world of demons. Trials for witchcraft multiplied, and for three hundred years the discovery of witchcraft and the destruction of those who were accused of practising it, chiefly women, was a standing feature of European civilization. Both the theory and the persecution were supported by Holy Scripture. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," was the clear injunction of the highest authority. Pope Innocent VIII issued a Bull on the matter (1484) in which he asserted that plagues and storms are the works of witches, and the ablest minds believed in the reality of their devilish powers. (*History of Freedom of Thought*, Professor J. B. Bury.)

W. H. MORRIS.

(To be Concluded.)

#### WORTH REMEMBRANCE.

Of me ye may say many a bitter thing,  
O men, when I am gone,—gone far away  
To that dim Land where shines no light of day.  
Sharp was the bread for my soul's nourishing  
Which Fate allowed, and bitter was the spring  
Of which I drank and maddened; even as they  
Who wild with thirst at sea will not delay,  
But drink the brine and die of its sharp sting.  
Not gentle was my war with Chance, and yet  
I borrowed no man's sword—alone I drew  
And gave my slain fit burial out of view.  
In secret places I and Sorrow met;  
So, when you count my sins, do not forget  
To say I taxed not any one of you.

—Philip Bourke Marston.

<sup>2</sup> A white witch was a woman who was supposed to devote her supernatural powers to good ends; she used her spells and charms to cure diseases, to find lost property, and so forth.

<sup>3</sup> That is to say, moving in an opposite direction to the course of the sun, a powerful spell.

## Correspondence.

"A PRESSING PROBLEM."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent A. J. Marriott, in passing judgment on the Douglas Scheme, fails entirely to arrive at the true meaning of the terms used. He says "Bankers do not create credit." Major Douglas does not say they do, but he does say that bankers create financial credit without which the real credit of the country cannot be distributed unless we resort to the old fashioned method of barter. But modern civilization could not be carried on with such a crude instrument. Therefore the banker, having full unrestricted control of financial credit, absolutely controls the trade of the country, and indirectly the lives of people. Now the Douglas Scheme asserts—and these assertions have not yet been refuted—that due to one or two grave errors in our financial system manufactured goods cannot be distributed. At any given moment there is not sufficient purchasing power in circulation to purchase the goods and commodities at the price demanded by our financial system. This grave flaw will be more and more accentuated as time goes on, due to the advance of science, organized mass production, and the displacement of human labour by machinery. Hence it will be seen that there is less purchasing power issued in the form of wages and salaries in proportion to the ever increasing productive capacity, which factor makes intelligible the periodic trade slumps and unemployment.

Credit issue is controlled by the banks as a business proposition with a view to making money scarce or plentiful as it suits them. The value of the money in circulation is derived from the amount of gold in the banks and not as it should be from the value of goods which we are able to produce.

This short note is quite inadequate to give a full exposition of all the fallacies inherent in our financial system, but I hope it will lead one or two thinkers to investigate the scheme. In my opinion it is the only line of thought in existence at the present time which gives any hope of building up a suffering Europe. All that is asked is that the scheme shall be given a trial and judged by its fruits. The present system stands condemned by its results. In spite of the fact that almost every industry in the country is capable of producing goods vastly in excess of our needs, we are still living the life of savages without being conscious of our disease.

W. A. BARRATT.

## Immortality.

I AM immortal as a burst of song,  
That quivers from the thrush's throat  
And sinks to silence.

I am immortal as the kiss of love,  
That wakes the world to melody,  
And leaves a memory.

I am immortal as the laughing hour,  
That throws her leaven on the sodden heart—  
And trips away.

I am immortal as the purple dusk,  
That drugs the weary brain to dreams,  
And fades.

I am immortal as the wind of March,  
That woos the barren earth to life—  
And passes.

I am immortal as the stubborn hills,  
That breast the storms of centuries,  
And wear to sand.

I am immortal as the living sun,  
That flames a moment in eternity,  
And sputters out.

JOHN H. GAVIN.  
From Poetry.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on post-card.

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THE "LAURIE" DISCUSSION CIRCLE: Every Thursday at the Laurie Arms Hotel, Crawford Place, W. Social reunion at 7.30 p.m. Chair taken at 8 p.m.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. Darby, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park): 6, Mr. Burke, A Lecture.

PECKHAM RYE.—11.15 and 7, Mr. F. P. Corrigan lectures.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): Mr. A. D. McLaren, 3.15, "The Old Faith and the New"; 6, "Free-thought Landmarks."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.2): 11, Sir George Paish, "Confidence."

THE TRIANGLE, RYE LANE.—Wednesday, September 6, 7.45; Mr. F. P. Corrigan, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Outing to Loughton. Train 10.20 a.m., Stratford (G.E.R.). Lunch to be carried. Tea will be arranged.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (Mersey Square): 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture Monday, September 4 to Friday, September 8 inclusive, at 7.30 p.m. Will all members please make a point of attending these meetings and giving their support?

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