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Views and Opinions.

Woman and the Church.

We are pleased to see the active agitation that is going on with regard to a reform of the divorce laws. When we have such an example as the Rutherford case, in which a woman, married to a man who is declared by a court of law to be a homicidal maniac, is yet denied divorce because she cannot prove adultery, we have a state of things which is properly described as unjust and inhuman. It does not appeal to justice, to morality, or to common-sense. One does not need to argue that marriage and its dissolution should rest upon mere individual caprice, to say that a law which denies the right of divorce to two people who cannot live together without sinking their relationship to what is little better than paid prostitution, is an outrage on the very institution of marriage, so long as we regard it as above the coupling of two animals. Where a state of things exists, such as does exist in numerous cases, it is idle to talk of whether a marriage shall be dissolved or not. It is already dissolved; it is only a question of whether the law will give its formal sanction to what is an accomplished fact, and permit the two parties to form better and cleaner relationships. Reasonable facilities for the separation of two persons, one or both of whom have blundered over one of the most important undertakings that a man and woman can jointly undertake should be regarded as an elementary and agreed fact with all who are competent to discuss the subject. Marriage, to all whose minds have not been fouled by orthodox Christian conceptions, is something more than the mere physical mating of members of the opposite sexes.

* * *

Religion the Obstacle.

Among those who are carrying on a fight on behalf of this most desirable reform is Lord Buckmaster. He writes with all the authority of a legal luminary, and with the ardour of a convinced reformer. And judging from some of his recent letters he is finding that the great obstacle he has to meet and overcome in the struggle for justice is Christian prejudice. Substantially there is none other. One cannot conceive anyone opposing such reforms of the divorce laws as would bring them into greater consonance with a sane principle of justice, or would put an end to a state of

things that condemns thousands to misery or to illicit connections. It is only minds that are saturated with religious prejudice that can stand out in such circumstances, and which interpose a "Thus saith the Lord!" against a proposal made in the interests of family happiness and decency. In the more civilized days that are to come our descendants will certainly smile at the sight of a people priding themselves on their civilization, but who yet permitted so important an institution to be dominated by the alleged utterances of an alleged saviour-god some two thousand years ago. Not what social and moral requirements are, but what "Our Lord said" is to be the test. And the thing becomes still more absurd when it is borne in mind that the person whose deliverance is to be taken as final for all time on the subject was a celibate, holding out the hopes of another life where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, the titular head of a Church which has always held celibacy to be the ideal state, and marriage only permissible as a concession to the uncontrollable passions of man. It is a pity that Lord Buckmaster did not speak out quite plainly as to the nature and origin of the opposition he encounters.

* * *

History as it is Written.

Apart from this there is one passage in Lord Buckmaster's recent letter to the *Times* which made us open our eyes. He says:—

Eminent divines have again and again pointed out that even the words of St. Matthew, on which the whole case against divorce rests, only refer to the particular conditions of society in relation to which they were uttered. What was that condition? The bulk of women of those days outside the noble Roman families were regarded as nothing but the means for perpetuating the species through the gratification of desire.

The first comment one may make upon that surprising deliverance is that when men of the standing and ability of Lord Buckmaster can be led to make statements that are so wholly indefensible, there need be little surprise that ordinary men and women and ordinary journalists say them also as though they were the products of ripe scholarship and mature judgment. In actual fact they are only a summary of the historic falsities by which Christianity "dopes" one generation after another, and I am quite certain that had Lord Buckmaster been getting up a case for presentation to his brother law lords he would have been careful to have made certain as to what the facts really were. It is, of course, true that many divines to-day say the words of Matthew apply only to the conditions then prevailing, but that is only a very common theological dodge used in order to overcome the resistance of common-sense to these ancient oracles. Lord Buckmaster might have bethought himself that Matthew was writing in Judea, not in Rome, and that the state of opinion which is alleged to have been common in Rome with regard to women, could by no means have entered into his mind. Matthew obviously

was not writing with an eye on Roman society, but with a purely religious object. He probably knew as much about the state of opinion at Rome as a penny-a-liner in Fleet Street does about the opinions of the Bushmen on the relative values of pigments.

* * *

Perpetuating a Slander.

The statement about the position of women in Rome is really inexcusable coming from one in Lord Buckmaster's position, and from one of his attainments. It is a mere careless handling of one of the historic falsehoods about the Roman world by the aid of which Christianity has tried to cover up its own deficiencies and faults. I do not mean that in old Rome the position of woman left no room for improvement, or that there was not a very considerable amount of sexual immorality existing. But I am quite sure that the immorality was certainly not greater than during the truly Christian ages of the world, and that the dignity and freedom of woman was greater in the best days of the Roman Empire than it was in all the Christian centuries until almost our own day. It is to be noted that Lord Buckmaster refers specifically to the woman outside the noble Roman families. Why the distinction? The only reason that I can see is that we have more intimate details concerning the "noble Roman families" than we have of the others, and he knows it is not true of them, so hands on the Christian slander to cover those about whom we are not so well informed. But that will not do. It is in precisely the ranks of the wealthy and the luxurious classes that one must look for the widest and wildest moral aberrations. The lives of the mass of the people are too humdrum to admit of any very violent departure from established customs. Lord Buckmaster knows that the lives of the better class Roman families, together with the works of the Roman writers, present us with ideals of womanhood, both domestic and social, such as have never been surpassed; and these writings are supplemented by sketches of actual characters, with memorial inscriptions, which make it quite impossible for him—not being a clergyman—to apply this particular slander to the Roman women as a whole. Hence the reservation. But I submit that when we have these ideals held up to a people, and note the actual characters that have come down to us, no one who appreciates the meaning of historical criticism will credit for a moment that the lives of the bulk of those unknown Romans differed to any very great extent from those who are known. Moreover, the majority are never given to erratically vicious courses. They are too conservative, too hide-bound by custom for that. The strong domestic affection of the Romans is one of their outstanding characteristics. Indeed, it was upon the popular affection for the figure of the mother and the child that the Church built its worship of the Virgin Mary.

* * *

What the Church Did.

Women, says Lord Buckmaster, were regarded by the Romans "as nothing but the means of perpetuating the species through the gratification of desire." Curiously enough it is the Christian Church itself that is really open to that identical charge. It was the Church and not Roman law or Roman sentiment which took from the conception of women its nobler qualities and left only the lower. This runs right through early Christian literature, with its vile denunciation of the nature, the character, and functions of women. But it will perhaps be more to the point if, instead of making statements of my own, I cite a Christian whose learning and ability to speak on this admits of no question. The Rev. Principal Donaldson, in his work dealing with the position of

women has the following on the influence of Christianity on woman. After saying that we may define man as a male and woman as a female human being, he adds:—

Now what the early Christians did was to strike the male out of the definition of man, and human out of the definition of woman. Man was a being made for the highest and noblest purposes; *woman was a female made only to serve one*. She was on earth to inflame the ear of man with every evil passion.

The words underlined are italicized by me, and I think they say exactly, and with truth, what Lord Buckmaster says with inexactitude and untruth of the Roman idea of women. And if Lord Buckmaster will do me the honour to read my little book on *Woman and Christianity*, he will find the facts set forth that trace these views of women to their origin. And in fact many of the abuses which Lord Buckmaster is trying to remedy owe their origin entirely to Christian and religious prejudice.

* * *

Breaking the Fetters.

It completely passes my comprehension how anyone can read the New Testament with an open mind and then claim anything for it on account of its favourable influence on the position or character of women. It knows very little of the domestic side of female life, and it places woman under the complete control of her husband. She is to obey him blindly, "as Sara obeyed Abraham," she is to remain silent in Church, she is not to be permitted to teach, she is the origin of evil, she is, as Donaldson says, a fireship always trying to run alongside the male man-of-war and blow him to pieces. And it hardly needs a layman like myself to remind an eminent lawyer such as Lord Buckmaster that these conceptions found their reflection in Canon law and afterwards in civil law, which took from woman whatever freedom she possessed under the Empire, and to regain which has been some of the principal objects of those who have fought for the equality of the sexes. There is a religious cause for this which goes deeper than Christianity, but for the moment I am only concerned with the historic influence of Christianity, and with correcting a gross misstatement concerning the life of the old Romans. A Church which stamped married life as lower than that of celibacy, which held woman when married to be a mere article of her husband's property, which denied her the right to play her part in public life, can have no other effect than that of eventually lowering her character. The Churches have always used women, and they have never ceased to exploit her. And one of the most promising signs of the times is that she is throwing off her ancient thralldom and demanding to be placed upon, at least, an equality with man.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

DELUDED.

I pity all whose superstitions need
Perpetual prayer vague terrors to allay;
Poor trembling bigots who, till they turn gray,
Place fervent trust in some unworthy creed.
Dreading a phantom hell, they meekly plead,
The crafty priest religiously obey,
And think by genuflections night and day,
That God will for their frailties intercede!
Fools! When the world is but an atom rolled
Amid the starry vastness of dim space,
This vain and miserable human chaff,
With confidence derisive to behold,
Dreams that to Heaven ascend its cries for grace,
And cannot hear God's cold, contemptuous laugh.

—Francis S. Saltus.

The Virgin Birth.

III.

ITS PAGAN ORIGIN.

WE have seen clearly that the Virgin Birth is not a New Testament doctrine, and that the Apostolic Fathers, in works indisputably authentic, do not so much as mention it. The truth is that the very idea is essentially non-Jewish; but in the Pagan world we find it at every turn. Pagan Saviour-Gods, in ancient times, were most numerous, and it was asserted of them that they were virgin born, the mother being generally, though not always, a mortal, and the father a Divinity. Indeed, even men who gained distinction in the world, whether as thinkers, administrators, or soldiers, came to be regarded, sometimes before, but usually after death, as having had a god for their father. Plato was virgin-born, and Alexander was reputed to be a son of Zeus, the supreme Greek deity. Augustus issued the report that his mother, Atia, was once, while asleep in the Temple of Apollo, visited by the god in the form of a serpent, and that in the tenth month afterwards he himself was born. These facts show conclusively that virgin births were believed by the Pagans to be by no means uncommon occurrences, and this belief had prevailed for thousands of years before the Christian era began. As is well known, the Gospel Jesus is represented as the proclaimer of a new religious cause, the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven about to be established upon the earth. It was in the service of this cause that he lived and died, and it was for its promulgation that he appointed the twelve apostles. Its central and most emphatic tenets were the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all true believers. It was a simple, practical religion, of which the Epistle of James is a beautiful compendium. The Jerusalem Church, with the Apostle James as its head, was founded on purpose to propagate and perpetuate the religion of Jesus, which the Modernists, or Liberal Theologians, of to-day are endeavouring so hard to restore. Of course, in this early form of the Christian religion there was neither room nor need for a virgin birth, for Jesus figured in it not as a supernatural being whose mission it was to offer himself as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, but as "a teacher come from God," and entrusted with the sublime task of revealing God to the world. But with the assumption of apostleship by Paul a radical change began to set in. It was a change of the most revolutionary character, though extremely slow of realization, a change in the course of which, as Professor Bacon observes, the Gospel of Jesus became the Gospel about Jesus, which was the Gospel specially designed for the Gentile world, and in the course of which also Jesus himself was transformed into a Saviour-God, by mystic union with whom alone, in his death and resurrection, Salvation was possible. Naturally, the Gentiles, on hearing Jesus proclaimed Son of God and Saviour of the world would inquire whether he, too, like Dionysus, Apollo, Adonis, Attis, or Mithra, was Divinely born, and an affirmative answer would serve as a strong inducement to believe in him.

The first known advocate of the virgin birth of Jesus was Justin Martyr, the first Christian apologist whose works have come down to us, who though born in Palestine was not a Jew. We do not know for certain, but probably the year of his birth was 114. We infer from some passages in his writings that his parents were Pagans, and he distinctly tells us that prior to his conversion to Christianity he had been a notorious turn-coat. First of all he attached himself to a Stoic philosopher, with whom he spent a considerable time. Getting tired of Stoicism, he betook himself to "another, who was called a Peripatetic, and as he fancied, shrewd." Losing confidence in

Aristotelianism he joined the Pythagorean school, his teacher being "very celebrated, a man who thought much of his own wisdom." Here again he failed to find a satisfying spiritual home, and in his disappointment "it occurred to him to have a meeting with the Platonists, for their fame was great." As a Platonist he made rapid progress. Plato's famous doctrine of ideas pleased him immensely; but even Platonism could not give perfect peace to his restless, turbulent mind. After trying all the philosophical systems of his time and having found them all wanting, last of all he became a Christian, though without altogether shedding Platonism. Far be it from us to cast the least suspicion upon the sincerity of Justin's conversion to any of the systems just mentioned, but it is self-evident to an unbiassed reader of his writings that he possessed an unusually shallow mind, and one is amazed at the flimsiness of the argument on which his faith rested. For example, in his Dialogue with a Jew called Trypho, Justin frankly admits that the majority of Christians in the third decade of the second century held that Christ was a man of men, that is, a man born like all other men. That was what Trypho maintained, and Justin replied thus:—

It is quite true that some people of our kind acknowledge him to be Christ, but at the same time declare him to have been a man of men. I, therefore, cannot agree with them, and will not do so, even if the majority insist on this opinion and impart it to me; for by Christ himself we have been commanded to base our conclusions, not on human teachings, but upon predictions set forth by the blessed prophets and imparted in his own teachings.

Justin's main point is that the virgin birth of Christ was plainly predicted by Isaiah (vii, 14):—

This, then, "Behold a virgin shall conceive," signifies that a virgin should conceive without intercourse. For if she had had intercourse with anyone whatever, she was no longer a virgin; but the power of God having come upon the Virgin, overshadowed her and caused her, while yet a virgin, to conceive (*First Apology of Justin*, chap. xxxiii).

Whether the birth narrative had been already added to Matthew's Gospel at this time (135) or not we do not know, but it is quite certain that both Matthew and Justin were totally misled as to the meaning of the alleged prophecy by quoting it from the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament rather than from the original Hebrew. Every Hebrew scholar is aware that the original word rendered "virgin" does not mean a young girl who has never known a man, but simply a young woman, young, that is, as to age, with no reference whatever to her condition, whether single or married. In the second century a new Greek version of the Old Testament appeared in which that mistranslation of the Septuagint was corrected, *neanis*, young woman, being substituted for *parthenos*, a virgin. The truth is that the Jews of the second century were much superior as literary interpreters to the Christians, for they saw with the utmost clearness that Isaiah, vii 14, predicted not the advent of a National Messiah in the dim distant future, but the birth of a son to King Hezekiah by a young woman, probably his wife. Those intelligent Jews of the second century used to taunt their Christian neighbours with the unpleasant truth that they had been duped into accepting a Pagan fable as a Christian fact, namely the myth of Danae, a young woman whom her father had put in prison to prevent her becoming the mother of a son who would slay his grandfather; but the poor deluded parent was easily outwitted by the supreme God, Zeus, who entered the prison in a shower of gold, where he found the damsel and by her became the father of the celebrated Perseus.

As taught by Justin Martyr the dogma of the Virgin Birth was in its infancy. By the middle of the latter

half of the second century it had grown and matured considerably, particularly as advocated by Irenæus, Tertullian, and others. Irenæus was probably a Greek, born and bred at Smyrna. He became Bishop of Lyons, one of the most important cities in France, from which centre he was able to carry on an eminently successful theological propaganda, and doubtless did much towards popularizing the new tenet of the Virgin Birth. According to him, in one form, the Word of God "was sent into the Virgin, and was born of her, both man and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God," and, in another form, the Word "was sent down, from the spirit and power of God the Father, into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and born of her." Tertullian (160-230) expressed the belief in practically identical terms. The addition made by these two Fathers was that the Son of God was sent down into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and born of her both Son of Man and Son of God. All that Justin maintained was "that the Word, who is the first-born of God, was produced *without sexual union*." During the first century absolutely nothing was said about the Virgin Birth; but by the middle of the second century the doctrine had begun to assume a definite form. As yet, however, no allusion was made to the part in the conception alleged to have been taken by the Holy Ghost, the formula being simply, *Born of the Virgin Mary*, which in the fourth century was amplified into, *Born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary*. In the eighth century the dogma appeared in its final form: *Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary*.

The inevitable conclusion, at this stage, is that the gradual evolution of the dogma of the Virgin Birth is itself a sufficiently strong proof that it deals, not with a historical fact, but with a myth of heathen origin utilized by the real makers of Christianity to invest their Saviour-God, like other imaginative creations of that order, with the golden halo of a supernatural birth.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Delights of "Dod Grile."

Ridicule is the only weapon the English climate cannot rust.
—Byron.

Laughter is the peculiar property of man.—Rabelais.

A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.

—Shakespeare.

AMBROSE BIERCE, soldier, author, humorist, is better known and better appreciated in the United States than in England. In America his works have been collected in a handsome edition in twelve volumes; but in this country he is represented by stray, out-of-the-way books which are the joy of the discriminating lover of literature, and by articles in the long-defunct *London Figaro*. His career is in many respects remarkable, for it unites the man of action with the man of letters. When over seventy-years of age he left San Francisco to fight with General Villa in Mexico. A generation earlier he had fought in the American Civil War in the Federal Army, rising from a private soldier to the rank of major. At the close of the Civil War he wondered whether to devote his life to military or to literary pursuits. He decided to be an author, and made a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic. In fact, he made two reputations. Under the pen-name of "Dod Grile," he showed himself the finest satirist since Swift; and, under his own name, he wrote stories that challenged comparison with Kipling, Poe, and Maupassant.

Why Bierce's books of humour are not as popular as those by Mark Twain, Jerome K. Jerome, and Finlay Dunne, the creator of *Marlin Dooley*, is a mystery. That he is as funny as either is evident; that he is a better writer than either is equally evident. If his

humour is not appreciated by the public to the extent of these others, it may be because he has chosen to expend it largely upon a disrespectful perversion of religion. The proper study of mankind is man, and possibly the only burlesque that causes the wide mouth of the general public to broaden to a grin must also concern Nature, and not the alleged supernatural.

Bierce deserves a place beside the other humorists mainly because his work is of a rarer quality than theirs. Two of his books with the quaint titles *The Fiend's Delight*, and *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull*, revealed a mordant satire that is absolutely unique, and they were as full of profanity as an egg is full of meat. The title-page of *The Fiend's Delight* was provocative. It was ornamented with a drawing showing a sooty devil toasting a fat baby at a large fire, whilst underneath the letterpress reminded the reader that every day one should do a worthy action. Another facet of Bierce's unusual genius was revealed in the book, *In the Midst of Life*, a series of powerful short stories largely concerned with military episodes in the American Civil War, which for bare horror outdid Sheridan Lefanu.

Discussing his works, so modern a critic as Gertrude Atherton said that Bierce had the most realistic imagination of any of his contemporaries. This quality overflows in his humour. Here are a few examples taken at random from his writings:—

I once knew a man who made me a map of the opposite hemisphere of the moon. He was crazy. I knew another who taught me what country lay upon the other side of the grave. He was a most acute thinker—as he had need to be.

If a jackass were to describe the deity, he would represent him with long ears and a tail. Man's ideal is the higher and truer; he pictures him as somewhat resembling a man.

In calling a man a hog, it is the man who gets angry, but it is the hog who is insulted. Men are always taking up the quarrels of others.

Camels and Christians receive their burdens kneeling.

It is wicked to cheat on Sundays. The law recognizes this truth, and shuts up the shops.

Most people have no more definite idea of liberty than that it consists in being compelled by law to do as they like.

To pick out passages haphazard is not doing real justice to a brilliant writer. Not only does a jest's prosperity lie in the ear of him who hears it, but it has its life in atmosphere of its own, and there are few flowers so tender in the transplanting.

While the creator of *Mr. Dooley* is welcomed, and the author of *The Books of Artemas* is passing popular, one cannot help regretting the inadequate appreciation that Ambrose Bierce has won on this side of "the herring pond." Of course, most reading people know his writings, but that the larger public should not have an opportunity of testing what he has written is, to say the least, unsatisfactory.

The function of a laugh-maker is often underestimated. The man who grins at you through a horse-collar and sets you laughing back at him does you a service. The physiological value of laughter has never been correctly appraised. Although doctors bestow a certain patronage on cheerfulness, and give it a minor place in the pharmacopœia, no one will dispute that the humorists are the benefactors of society. The great Rabelais, himself an incomparable humorist, declared that laughter is the peculiar property of man. We tend to lose sight of this truth, and we are less wise than our more robustious forefathers. The man who has no music in his mind is discontented. Just as certainly the man who cannot laugh is only half a man. It is only by gay hearts that the best work of the world is done.

MIMNERMUS.

Early Religion.

"Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor." —Pctronius.

The trees,
The grass, the clouds, the mountains and the sea,
All living things that walk, swim, creep or fly
Were gods: the sun had homage and the moon
Her worshipper. —Shelley, "Queen Mab."

FEW definitions of religion have attracted more attention than that of Matthew Arnold: *morality touched by emotion*. "That is what we approve of," many have said, and they have been loud in praises of a definition which seems to give religion a sure and permanent place in human regard. For differ as men may on other points, all agree as to the importance of morality to human society, and as to the necessity that persons shall not only know what is the right path, but have also the impulse to follow it.

If, however, we look at the actual manifestations of religion in the past, or, indeed, in society around us, we shall see that Mr. Arnold's definition is fallacious, nay almost unmeaning. Religion and morality are distinct, and are not necessarily welded together by any fire of emotion.

It is currently believed that religion is a revelation from an all-wise deity, and that before there was any written revelation there was the primitive revelation of personal communication with God. The study of early human history so far from confirming this shows the exact opposite. Instead of having fallen from a perfect religion man has but slowly emerged from the grossest superstitions. No one now supposes that some God invented architecture or music. We can trace how these arts have grown. Religion, as much as the arts, has developed from rude beginnings. It is a growth of earth, not a gift of heaven, and its manifestations have usually very clear traces of their clayey origin sticking to them.

All religion may be traced to two simple elements, the object, and the manner of worship; the god and the rite. These represent an elementary theory of things; so that it may more truly be said that religion lies at the roots of philosophy and science than that it has any connection with morality. Of the god and the rite, the former is ever uncertain and fluctuating, the latter only evident and stable. The story of the god, the myth and dogma, are often only inventions to account for the rite. Its study is then most fruitful in taking us back to early religion. No one who has studied religion in its various manifestations would for instance deny that circumcision is a religious rite, yet it takes us back to "the ages before morality."

Early man was savage, stupid and obscene. He is represented to-day by the inmates of gaols and lunatic asylums. Crime and lunacy are atavistic, showing stages once common. Lombroso shows the criminal has the habits and propensities general in the past; and Mr. J. H. King, that once common delusions and superstitions remain with the insane, even to the point of believing themselves animals.

The records of every ancient people prove that, in early times, much was practised as religion which we now decidedly consider immoral. I need only allude to the universal practice of bloody sacrifices and other cruelties arising out of the belief in propitiating dreaded gods or ghosts.

Man's first thoughts were things: his first language gestures. Without abstract words man can have no clear conception of abstract ideas. If all his language speaks of physical sensation only, if he have no such words as *mind*, *right*, or *virtue*, his intellectual and moral nature must be in embryo only. This is what philology teaches us as to the condition of early man. All these words are taken from concrete things; *mind* signifies measure, *right* means straight, and *straight* something stretched; *virtue* means manliness, and so

on. There are tribes still in existence that have no abstract words, and yet have a religion. They have no sense of the meaning of the word to love, yet they worship or pow-wow to their fetishes in order to obtain the goods they covet and avert the calamities they dread.

Our best guides to archaic beliefs and customs are those of modern savages. All savage tribes are found to be full of the terror of invisible spirits. They fill all nature. The places of the living are haunted with the spirits of the dead. Of these only the ancestral spirits are friendly, and even they are rather feared than loved. It was the fear of spirits inspired acts of worship. The notion that calamities were produced by spirits made men seek to appease their malevolent designs by propitiatory offerings.

Other aids in studying early faiths are peasant folklore and children's songs, games, and superstitions. But the former have usually been refined, modified, and beautified by collectors, and the latter have lost through the stamping-out process of successive generations some of their most objectionable ancient features.

Mr. Leland, in his valuable *Etruscan Roman Remains in Popular Tradition*, remarks (p. 91): "Fairy tales suggest nothing as yet, even to well-informed people, but innocent, sweet, pretty and amusing Märchen." But the old myths out of which these grew were nothing of the kind. However, it has come to pass that most collectors, influenced by fear of the Major-General Reader, quietly pass over this element which was, if not the great guiding influence in myths of what we may call the tertiary formation (or polytheism as it was passing into pantheism) was, at least, almost the chief. He goes on to say that it was out of what could most terrify and revolt man that all primitive sorcery and much secondary Shamanism were developed, and if we would know man's early history we must not, or cannot, avoid such study.

Early religion knew nothing of what we now call moral duties. In its simplest expression it might be defined as a wish whose fruition depends upon unknown power. Carlyle, speaking of the Norse God Wünsch, calls the God *Wish* "the rudest ideal that man ever formed; which still shows itself in the latest forms of our spiritual culture." Man's early beliefs had their origin in sensation, and the most powerful sensation is pain, and its related emotion fear. Unpleasant occurrences, at any rate in the past history of the martyrdom of man, have been more frequent and more forcible than pleasant ones, and they produce a deeper and more lasting effect. Hence devil-worship lies at the very root of religion. Monotheism has evolved from Polydemonism.

Early man was constantly exposed to danger and pain, hunger, thirst and wounds. He knew that to maintain his own existence he was compelled to inflict suffering and death, and he tried to propitiate the spirits by sacrifices. Take this victim and spare me is his unuttered prayer.

Sir John Lubbock says in his *Origin of Civilization*, p. 206:—

It must, however, be admitted that religion, as understood by the lower savage races, differs essentially from ours; nay, it is not only different, but even opposite. Thus, it is an affair of this world, not of the next. Their deities are evil, not good; they may be forced into compliance with the wishes of man; they generally require bloody, and often rejoice in human, sacrifices; they are mortal, not immortal; a part, not the authors of nature; they are to be approached by dances rather than by prayers; and often approve what we call vice rather than what we esteem as virtue.

The thoughts of every man, like those of every other animal, were centred in the world around him.

His vital wants are at first merely animal, and are as simple as they are savage, but they steadily multiply, diversify and refine with every advance in intellectual and social development. Necessity for food, dread of other living beings, fear of darkness, storm, thunder and lightning, the mystery of generation, dreams and fear of the dead returning in dreams—these were the sources of man's religion, and they are unconnected with morality, in the ordinary sense of the term. (Moral origins are organic, i.e., the morality of parentage, of the herd, etc., found in all gregarious animals.) In the observation of nature there is no direct moral lesson. She brings to life and she brings to death. She crushes a man as remorselessly as a moth. Only in human society arise the need and conditions of morality. True, the sentiment of fear germinates that of reverence and this in turn becomes the source of social subordination. True, customs which tend to tribal welfare are placed under the sanction of religion, which remains when the customs have lost their utility. But terror of the unknown lay in the background of all religion.

Savages, like children, personify everything. Sky, clouds, thunder, lightning, rain, earthquake, whirlwind, sun, moon, stars, ocean, trees and mountains, even their weapons and the utensils around them. All are alive and possessed of the passions they feel within themselves. But they are vastly more potent than man. Hence they are to be appeased and cajoled. Man never can do other than interpret phenomena in terms of his own experience. But where we propound a scientific theory early man constructed a myth. The absurd, credulous, and well-nigh incomprehensible, character of their beliefs largely arises from their regarding all objects as instinct with a consciousness and personality akin to their own. Their gods are indeed magnified non-natural men, often in bestial shape with magical powers, whose employment makes for unrighteousness. Theft, murder, adultery, rape, incest; every species of lust and brutality, distinguish the stories of early deities. They have the same supernatural power which the savage medicine man or sorcerer claims for himself. They can change their shape, become invisible, speak in thunder, rule the winds and waves, raise the dead, and visit the underworld of the departed or ascend into the sky; yet they are so subject to mortal limitations that they hunger and thirst, can be imprisoned, beaten and even put to death; though they generally obtain a speedy resurrection. Their dealings with men are capricious, chastising those who believe not, or disobey, the priests, and they delight in blood, and the infliction of pain on their enemies. This is but saying they are made in the image of their creator.

The terror which haunts savages as it does wild animals springs from being surrounded by enemies. Just as the dog starts at the least sound, showing his ancestral instinct which made his progenitors shun anything strange, so in the words of Sir A. C. Lyall "the fear of ghosts is the faint shadow still left on our imaginations by the universal belief of primitive folk that they are haunted by the spirits of the dead." To man in his wild state the same life appears to stir in everything, in running water, in a tree and in a creature; it ends and disappears in everything at times, but it reappears again constantly, in shape, movement and outward character so similar as to seem identical; conveying the inference that something has gone and come again; there is nothing around a savage to suggest that the animating principle of vitality suffers more than suspension or displacement. The analogy of Nature affords him no prescription that death means extinction, while his imagination supplies him with constant evidence to the contrary.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Concluded.)

LIFE AND DEATH.

The roses all are dead; the wintry winds are blowing
Along the shivering streets and o'er the sighing field.
Barren is every bed where once bright flowers were
glowing;

No more the hedgerows green their fragrant clusters
yield.

And so it is with life. The days are growing greyer;
The old loves depart and wither roselike, one by one;
Nought can escape the spear of Time the blossom-
slayer;

Something of glory fades at every set of sun.

The hills shine still the same; the purple-robed dim
mountains
Are joyous as of old; but man from day to day
Ages. The silver sea with undiminished fountains
Sparkles; but some hope dies with every shower of
spray.

We are helpless in the hand of Force that urges on-
ward;

We cannot stay our feet; no faster can we go.

Whither are we to turn? Moonward or seaward?
Sunward?

Or to the hills' disdain? or to the fountains' flow?

O terrible blind God who urgest on our pinions,
Hast thou no eyes nor heart—hast thou no need nor
care?

Is there no conscious soul within thy waste dominions?
Only the viewless void of unresponsive air?

"And we shall mix with rose"—so they say—"and
with lily;

And with the tiger's joys and with the lion's glee;
Laugh in the breeze that floats above the upland hilly;
Smile in the stars that shine above the summer sea!"

Folly! One single hour of warm sweet human living,
With woman's lips to kiss and power her heart to
sway,

Surpasses all the joys wide Nature hath for giving;
Outburgeons the full rose and mocks the starry ray.

Others again: "The dream of conscious living over,
Our influence shall abide and flow throughout the
race;

We shall re-live in souls of many a future lover;
Burn through the flamelit love in many a future
face.

All that we gave shall last. More glorious for cessa-
tion

Of the small human life, our words like winged
things

Shall haunt the hills and meads of many a future
nation—

Become to future souls their revelation-springs."

Madness! A single day of passion, be it riot—

Be it a rose-crowned shame, so that the thing be
sweet—

Is lordlier than long years of rotten dead mute quiet
Within the churchyard green, or underneath the
street.

And higher than all the words ranks pure love o'er the
glory

Of posthumous renown, how high soever this;

And better than new dawns o'er mountains grim and
hoary

Is the first sense of love within the throbbing kiss.

And better than to mix with all the ages' splendour,
Or blend in doubtful joys of bird and flower and
tree,

It is to stand with love, and watch love's glances
tender,

Human, alive and strong, beside the summer sea.

—George Barlow.

Acid Drops.

The beautiful feelings engendered by Christianity, not merely in relation to non-Christians, but also between Christians themselves, may we continually noted. The character of the Eastern Christian is quite well known to travellers, and also to our own Government. But policy does not always make telling truth advisable, and so one is left to sift out something of the facts from rival narratives. And here is one from the Rev. Father Lynch, writing in the *Dublin Evening Herald* for November 13, a copy of which has only just reached us. Father Lynch says that—

Whenever the term "Christian" is used as fighting the Turk the prefix "anti-Catholic" should always be used. The Catholic Armenians, aye, and the Catholic Greeks, both of whom count hundreds of thousands in Asia Minor, had always to look to the Ottoman Government for protection against the so-called Greek Christians as well as Armenian Christians.

This quite bears out what we have said more than once, namely, that when it comes to murdering populations the Eastern Christian has nothing to learn from the Turk. How many of these Christian massacres are attributed to the Turks no one can tell. Our own papers will not tell us. Christian influences here manage to muzzle them, for the last thing in the world that a British newspaper will do is to embark on an exposure that will offend Christians or bring discredit on Christianity. So we are left to get at the truth as best we can and when we can.

The Master of Hallingdon, says the *Evening Chronicle*, "has received instructions to enforce rigorously an article of the Poor Law Institutions Act, 1913, which provides that all inmates, other than Roman Catholics, the sick, persons of unsound mind, and children, shall attend both prayers and divine service at the Union Institution." If that is the case it is a most intolerable piece of religious bigotry. The idea of making the misery and poverty of men and women a condition of denying them an elementary right of other human beings is one that would only occur to a Christian or to some other person with a religion of an equally barbarous character. What we are surprised at is the elimination of the insane and children. The former are always religious, and the latter appear to be of the right age for the work of Christian parsons.

The Rev. Bruce Cornford, of Portsmouth, has promised to give a badge to every member of his congregation who subscribes a given sum to church funds. We have no doubt that many will be led to give in order to get the badge. The mania that people have for wearing a decoration, even though it be only an O.B.E., is remarkable, and testifies to the childish things that attract and even buy folk. Titles that are really earned for useful social service may reflect honour upon those who give and those who receive. But titles that are scattered about as they are now, and purchased in the way they are now, are little better than an insult to a self-respecting man or woman. The straightforward thing would be to have them on sale at a post office so that one might purchase them as one does a dog-licence.

There are twenty churches in Worthing and eighteen out of them petitioned the Council to have Sunday games stopped. There have been no complaints from any of the inhabitants of Worthing concerning the Sunday games, and we are glad to see that the Council refused to interfere with the present state of affairs. The impertinence of these churches would be surprising were it not so common. We trust that other councils will follow the example set.

It will be some consolation to Londoners who are trying to find their ways home in yellow fogs, that something equally difficult is being fought out in the provinces, and particularly at Burton-on-Trent. The great question there appears to be that of the precise time of day when

the Lord's Supper shall be eaten. Mr. J. A. Kensit states, in this town almost subsisting on the beer trade, that "the Anglo-Catholics emphasized that it should be in the morning," and he went on to ask if there were any Churches in Burton who followed the Lord's Custom of the Lord's Supper in the evening? This matter, at a time when we have two million unemployed does not even rise to the level of contempt.

Those who have any doubts of the cultural value of religion should carefully consider the following, which we take from the *Outlook* for December 9:—

Three-quarters of a million members of the Epworth League, a society of young people of the Methodist Episcopal Church, decided by a vote that Edison is the greatest man in all history, Theodore Roosevelt the second, and Shakespeare the third. The other successful candidates for the ten greatest men of all time were ranked in the following order: Longfellow, Tennyson, Herbert Hoover, Dickens, General Pershing, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Volstead, author of the Prohibition Act.

That list would be hard to beat. But we miss from it the names of Barnum, Horatio Bottomley, and Scrymgeour, the god-elected member for Dundee. And we do wonder why the name of Shakespeare was inserted. He was not a Methodist, and we are afraid might have spoken disrespectfully of prohibition.

St. Boniface Roman Catholic College, with its library, has been destroyed by fire. Two students also perished. Where was the saint? Where were God and all the saints when the tidal wave swept a part of the Chilean coast? At the time of the Messina earthquake Roman Catholics proclaimed loudly that it was sent to punish the sins and faithlessness of the Sicilians and Italians. What have the Roman Catholics of Chile and Winnipeg done?

The Rev. E. B. Cornford, of Portsmouth, writing in the local parish magazine, says that he has no room for "Sunday penny Christians." The widow's mite nowadays is only a mite, and there is little profit in going into the highways and by-ways and "compelling them to come in," unless they contribute at least a silver coin.

The Welsh Congregational Union has appealed to the civil authorities to enforce "Sabbath observance." The most bitter and systematic opposition to the "desecration" of Sunday in Australia is being offered by the Presbyterians and those that would here be classed as "Nonconformists." The view held in some quarters that Dissent is a force that makes for "religious freedom," is misleading if taken in the literal sense of the words. By attacking one form of authority and seeking to substitute another, it has multiplied sects and divisions, and thereby made the persecution of anti-religious thought much harder. But in itself Dissent has left no stone unturned to enforce Sabbatarianism, Bible in schools, and similar spiritual "benefits" upon the whole community. Its claim to be the herald of religious freedom constitutes one of the most impudent chapters in a very impudent history.

The *Catholic Herald* (December 9) directs the attention of its readers to the fact that Protestants have numerous agencies organized for the "task" of converting the Jews, and urges Roman Catholics to bestir themselves in this missionary enterprise. The word "task" in this connection is happily chosen. According to a report and balance sheet, issued some time ago by one of these agencies, each convert cost several thousand pounds. Even in orthodox circles some doubted whether the souls saved were worth the outlay of time, energy, and cash. Our contemporary quotes the statement, without giving the source: "If you do not save him (the Jew) he will destroy you." This is a model of good taste, and with admirers in such a quarter the Jew should be indeed flattered. The Roman Catholic Church has accomplished much in the course of its history, and its votaries can

appreciate with remarkable refinement the distinction between salvation and destruction.

In the same issue of the *Catholic Herald* there is an article which quotes extensively from a recent speech by the Rev. Professor Reid, D.D., of Glasgow University. The reverend professor and doctor deploras the decay of Protestantism and the lack of authority in its churches and teaching. Rome, on the other hand, "speaks with the authority of the Pope, who claims to be infallible." Claims of this kind are highly attractive to some minds. We once heard an enthusiast declare positively that he was the Messiah, and on another occasion a vehemently sincere soul-saver "claimed" that he had proved from the Scriptures that the Pope was anti-Christ. To know how to make your "claims" is the mark alike of a good politician and a good Christian apologist.

Mr. Lewis Casson is to be congratulated on his pamphlet supplied with the programme at the New Theatre. On the merits of Shelley's dramatic power in *The Cenci* we shall leave others to speak; it is something for a London audience to be told that "perhaps we have caught up to Shelley"; and perhaps we have not. A society unmoved by the imprisonment of the late J. W. Gott may have a little further to go—not accompanied, we hope, by mediæval-minded judges.

Dr. J. R. Bhatia, resident medical officer in the Infirmary, Burnley, writes regarding a paragraph which appeared in "Acid Drops" on the Greek executions that he was "shocked" at its nature. He says:—

The failure was no fault of the officers but was due to the superiority in numbers and equipment of the Turkish army. To execute a person for some failure which could not have been a success, even under the best generals, is sheer injustice and inhumanity. As regards the supposed deterrent effect on war-mongers, it is simply ignorance to talk like that, as if it is the individuals who make wars. The true cause of war is capitalist imperialism—a struggle for markets and raw material, oil, etc., and not any mental perversity of Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, or M. Venezelos, who are after all no more to blame than those six Greek officers. The latter were mere pawns in the imperialist game. To say that 'we are not sorry' at such a cold-blooded, cruel act, displays either ignorance or callousness hardly worthy of a Free-thinker.

If Dr. Bhatia will re-read the paragraph again we think he will realize that he has failed to grasp the idea it sought to convey. We expressly dissociated ourselves from any opinion as to the cause of the war, or its ultimate aims, or as to the humanity or inhumanity of this particular act. What did appear certain was that if this particular war had been successful—as with all other wars—those partaking in it would have been loaded with honours and hailed as national benefactors. That is the usual policy in all wars, and we said that we were not altogether sorry if it would drive home the lesson that those who gamble so lightly in wars would realize that it was their own lives they were playing with as well as those of other people. And in this consideration we include not the generals merely—in fact, they are often the least blameworthy—but the politicians and all who see in a war merely another gamble in international rivalries. If war were recognized as a dangerous game for all those who are in power when war breaks out, and for those who have been immediately in power before the war occurred, we fancy wars would not be so frequently undertaken. After all, the greatest "war criminals" are not those soldiers who misbehave themselves during war, but they who bring the war about, and it is those we would like to see punished or degraded. As to the generals being merely pawns in the game, that is true of the mass of the people in every country engaged in a war, whatever it nature or cause. They always suffer; and we would prefer that suffering shared by the rooks, kings, queens, knights and castles on the board as well as by the pawns. We do not agree that "capitalist imperialism" is the only cause of war, but that would take us into a foreign field were we to discuss it. All we

would say here is that it appears to us that capitalist imperialism utilizes certain existing factors to its own ends. And that is a different proposition from the one advanced by Dr. Bhatia.

One of our readers writes us that having attended a village concert near Leicester, he listened to a young lady reciting some verses called "The Atheist." The subject of the poem was of the stock religious kind. He abused his wife and children, etc., etc., and finally ran off with another man's wife. When he was ruined he came back to his wife, found her in a flourishing way of business, became reconverted to Christ, and lived happily ever after. Our correspondent came away, addressed a very nicely worded letter to the young lady dwelling upon the character of real Atheists, and courteously advised her not to permit herself to become a tool in the hands of others for the purpose of playing upon the prejudices of the uneducated. We hope the letter will have the desired effect. It will certainly make this young lady realize that in circulating these slanders about men and women who believe in religion she will certainly have among her listeners some who are pitying the reciter, rather than approving her. Such quiet protests are certain to do good.

It is rather surprising to find Lord Lambourne, while officiating as chairman at a meeting of the R.S.P.C.A., asking for a more liberal use of the lash against those found guilty of cruelty to animals. We are afraid that Lord Lambourne's championship can rest upon little better basis than the fact of his being fond of animals himself. Otherwise we fail to see any justification for the attempt to cure brutality by being as brutal as the other fellow. We have nothing but a feeling of utter disgust for one who can be brutal to any animal, and very much of the "sport" in which society leaders indulge is to us no more than a brutality that is fashionable, as distinguished from a brutality that is not fashionable. But the cure for brutality, in either direction, is certainly not by developing brutality in the name of justice. It is a significant thing that the palm for brutality to animals lies with the Christian nations of the world.

Lord Lambourne notes that there has been an increase in the number of cases of cruelty to animals during the last two and a half years. One would think that the cause of this lies on the surface; indeed, Lord Lambourne says that he expects we must blame the war for this. We certainly must. Four years of steady brutalization of a people cannot be experienced without leaving some very definite traces of the process. It is the price we pay for all wars that endure for long. Human nature being what it is always meets brutality and suffering in two ways. It makes some natures—the few—extremely sensitive to the sight of pain, and it brutalizes others—the larger number. That is one of the reasons why Christianity has always produced, or attached to itself a few highly sensitive natures, with a mass of dull, brutish people. It is surely the height of absurdity for Lord Lambourne to argue that as the war has encouraged cruelty, the right way to correct is to serve out larger doses of the same decoction that has produced this particular sickness.

Dean Inge declares that the charge against the Englishman of being hypocritical is due to his success. In the Dean's interpretation of the word "success" there may be some truth in the statement. Emerson once wrote that his countrymen had been abnormally successful in the world. "We interfere in Central and South America, at Canton, and in Japan; we are adding to an already enormous territory." He went on to say that he could point to men of "indispensable importance to the carrying on of American life." But to do so would spoil the conversation. We, too, have interfered in many places. We took opium to China, and took Hong Kong away from her. That was eighty years ago. Our latest is enforcing payment of taxes in Mesopotamia by means of bombs dropped from aeroplanes. We could mention other things that would "spoil" the Dean's conversation.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

December 17, Watford.

To Correspondents.

- W. WILD.—Thanks for cutting, but we are sorry that pressure of work will not permit us to engage in newspaper correspondence unless the occasion is very pressing indeed. Cannot it be taken up locally?
- P. W. WOOD.—Thanks. See "Views and Opinions."
- C. MARKS.—The Church performs any number of miracles for such as are ready to see them. It is our unbelief that stops our seeing them. We quite agree on that. If we did believe we should see them readily enough.
- E. G. STAFFORD.—Thanks. Shall appear. Sorry we missed you at Liverpool. Perhaps you may have another chance before the season is over.
- A. R. WILLIAMS.—Thanks. We hope to publish next week.
- G. WETHERELL (Victoria).—The volume and the paper are being sent. Glad to hear that the *Freethinker* is going the rounds in Victoria. We get all over the world. If only it were in greater numbers we should be more satisfied.
- G. W. IRVING.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the passage. A telling sentence is apt to do its work better than a lengthy disquisition. It was Voltaire who said that you could not kill a superstition in a work of twelve volumes folio. And that came from a master in the art of propaganda.
- J. A. REID.—It is difficult to say what exactly Lord Balfour believes in matters of theology. It is quite certain that he is not a Christian in any proper interpretation of the term. Someone once described him as hiding his doubts about religion in general by emphasizing his scepticism about science in particular. That may be very near the mark. When the lectures appear in volume form we may say more about them.
- E. R. PIKE.—Article received and shall appear. We are always pleased to receive articles for insertion. We cannot, of course, use all we get, but those unused are not always rejected on account of lack of quality, it may be that for some reason they are not suitable at the time, and efficient editing is known quite as much by what is kept out of a paper as by what is put in.
- G. LUNN.—Membership form for the N.S.S. is being sent; also *Freethinkers* for distribution. Thanks.
- H. S. ENGLAND.—The leaderettes are striking, and we are using them. Mr. Cohen has had more than one invitation to visit America, but he has his hands too full here to entertain it. We have a goodly number of readers in the States and we should much like to meet them. Perhaps the future may see your wish for a much larger circulation of the *Freethinker* in America realized.
- AUTOLYCUS.—We are not at all surprised at Glasgow readers appreciating the article on "Evidence"; the subject is really, as we said, of first-rate importance. A *Freethinker* who enters on discussion with a Christian should always carefully examine the terms of the indictment drawn up by the other side. If this is done it will often be found that a great deal of the case is assumed to commence with.
- A. RUSSELL.—The discussion is interesting; we shall be interested in learning how it progresses. A brief letter then would be acceptable. It would spoil it to publish now.
- AUTOLYCUS informs us that the quotation given by him from Omar Khayyam was taken from the *Golden Treasury* edition, p. 42.
- 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.

To-day (December 17) Mr. Cohen will visit Watford and will lecture in the Labour Church at 7 o'clock. We have many readers in that district, who will no doubt take the opportunity of being present.

For some time we have been supplying, gratis, copies of the *Freethinker* to the Shoreditch and Haggerston Public Libraries. We have now received a request from the Borough Librarian to cease sending them "till further notice." We do not know what this means, and we should be glad if some of our readers in the Borough of Shoreditch will find out. They have a perfect right to know why the *Freethinker* is not on hand as usual. If it is the bigots who are at work we can then see what may be done to check them.

The tickets for the N.S.S. Annual Dinner on January 16 are now on sale, price 8s. each. They may be obtained from the *Freethinker* and from the N.S.S. offices. It will take place at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras Station, and that is alone a guarantee of a good dinner. The social side of the entertainment will be of a first class order. We hope that those who desire tickets will secure them as early as possible, as the number available is strictly limited. There have been many requests for a resumption of these dinners and we look to all London friends, and to as many provincial ones as can manage to attend, to see to it that the gathering is completely successful.

We are glad to say that our recent note about increasing the circulation of the *Freethinker* has borne some fruit, but not enough. In these bad times it is not now a question, immediately, of increasing circulation, so much as preventing a decrease. It is against that we are fighting, although we do not lose sight of the larger object. But the prolonged and severe depression in trade is hitting everyone very hard indeed. Our friends should do what they can to get newsagents to show the paper, and insist upon the fact that it is sent out everywhere on sale or return.

With regard to the publications of the Pioneer Press, it should also be borne in mind that those wishing to order, and who desire to save carriage, can get them at published prices by ordering through their newsagents.

The usual fortnightly meeting of the N.S.S. Discussion Circle was held on December 5, when Mr. Bedborough opened with the subject, "What is My Duty to My Neighbour?" Next Tuesday evening Mr. Arch will open the discussion.

Mr. F. P. Corrigan pays his first visit to Manchester to-day (December 17) and will lecture at 3 and 6.30 at the Public Hall, Dickenson Road, Rusholme. We hear excellent reports of Mr. Corrigan's lectures and we trust that all Manchester readers will see to it that they are present at both meetings and will try to bring at least one friend with them.

At Birmingham another (local) speaker also makes his first appearance on the Branch platform. Mr. O. Melton will speak in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, at 7, on "Gods, Devils, and Lesser Spirits." We should like to hear that the hall is filled.

Pagan and Christian Civilization.

XII.

(Continued from page 789.)

It has been often asserted that the abolition of slavery in modern Europe was exclusively owing to Christianity. I think that is saying too much. Slavery long existed in the heart of Christian society without greatly exciting its astonishment or drawing down its anathema. A multitude of causes, and a great development in other ideas of civilization were required to eradicate this evil of evils, this iniquity of iniquities.—Guizot, "History of Civilization," 1848, pp. 108-9.

If the whole American Church had dropped through the Continent and disappeared altogether, the anti-slavery cause would have been further on.—Theodore Parker, "Works," Vol. vi., p. 333.

THIS new development of the slave trade among the Christian nations was infinitely more barbarous and cruel than the old Pagan slavery:—

According to the calculation of Sir Arthur Helps there were carried between the years 1579 and 1807 more than five millions of human beings from Africa to America, where they and their descendants became slaves. For more than two centuries and a half no voice, either in the Church or out of it, was publicly heard against the slave trade and its consequences.¹

But the five millions conveyed to America represents only a part of the toll. The slaves were so closely packed and shackled in the slave ships—especially constructed for the trade at Liverpool and Bristol—that:—

Under the most favourable circumstances it was expected that one slave in every five would perish. In every cargo of five hundred, one hundred would suffer a miserable death. And the public sentiment of England fully sanctioned a traffic of which these horrors were a necessary part.²

To all this must be added the ruin and devastation caused in Africa by the raids of the slave hunters, large parts of the country being laid waste and desolate:—

Wide stretches of countryside were systematically ravaged by organized bands of raiders armed with muskets, "hunting down victims for the English trader whose blasting influence, like some malignant providence extended over mighty regions where the face of the white man was never seen".....The direct loss of life which this perennial warfare inevitably necessitated must have been enormous in itself, to say nothing of the indirect loss through the destruction of crops and granaries incidental to it, and the consequent starvation ensuing. The transport to the coast by land and water of an incessant stream of shackled captives, over distances extending to many hundreds of miles, must have been even more ruinous. It has been estimated that something like 30 per cent. of the captives perished before reaching the coast, where the exhausted and emaciated survivors were crowded like cattle in barracoons waiting for a slave ship, whose arrival meant for them the still more terrible agonies of the "middle passage."³

When the survivors from this holocaust arrived at their destination there was little alleviation of their sufferings; as Lecky says:—

The supply of slaves was too abundant to allow the motive of self-interest to be any considerable security for their good treatment. Often, indeed, it seemed the interest of the master rather to work them rapidly to death and then to replenish the stock.⁴

Of the cruelties, the abuses, the immoralities, the inconceivable barbarities and tortures, practised upon the unfortunate slaves, when they finally reached the

slave plantation, we have no space to deal. As Mr. Morel says, a description of them would—

fill hundreds of volumes. They seemed to have reached the height of their intensity in Dutch Guiana and the British West Indies. "For a hundred years slaves in Barbadoes were mutilated, tortured, gibbeted alive and left to starve to death, burnt alive, flung into coppers of boiling sugar, whipped to death."⁵

Although this hideous traffic had been going on since the time of Queen Elizabeth, when Sir John Hawkins sailed with the first slave ship, named the *Jesus*, in October, 1564, in which Queen Elizabeth and many of her courtiers took shares, it was not until more than two hundred years later that any public protest was raised against it. As Westermarck observes:—

Negro slavery is interesting chiefly because it existed in the midst of a highly developed Christian civilization [and yet] surpassed in cruelty the slavery of any Pagan country, ancient or modern, was not only recognized by Christian governments, but was supported by the large bulk of the clergy, Catholic and Protestant.⁶

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the slave trade had reached its greatest dimensions. "One of the most important and most popular parts of the Treaty of Utrecht," says Lecky, was that by which Britain secured—

during thirty years an absolute monopoly of the supply of slaves to the Spanish Colonies.⁷ [And later] it was a boast of Chatham that his conquests in Africa had placed almost the whole slave trade in English hands.⁸

Buckle says:—

George III looked on slavery as one of those good old customs which the wisdom of his ancestors had consecrated.⁹

It was not till 1776 that the question was first brought before Parliament when David Hartley brought a motion against it, which, says Lecky, was easily defeated, and it appears to have excited little attention.¹⁰

The same historian tells us that Berkeley, the great metaphysician and champion of religion against infidels and Deists, "had slaves when in Rhode Island" (Vol. II, p. 248). And George Whitefield was one of its "most prominent and influential advocates." (*Ibid.*)

"It took twenty years of Parliamentary agitation," says Benn, "to destroy such an indefensible iniquity as the slave trade,"¹¹ which was not abolished until 1807, and even after that was accomplished slavery remained in full force. As Morley observes:—

Pitt, Fox, Grenville, and Grey habitually disclaimed any intention of emancipating the blacks on the sugar islands. In 1807 when the foul blot of the trade was abolished, even Wilberforce himself discouraged attempts to abolish slavery, though the noble philanthropist soon advanced to the full length of his own principles. Peel in 1833 would have nothing to do with either immediate emancipation or gradual. Disraeli has put his view on deliberate record that ".....It was an ignorant movement. The history of the abolition of slavery by the English and its consequences would be a narrative of ignorance, injustice, blundering, waste, and havoc, not easily paralleled in the history of mankind."¹²

⁵ Morel, *The Black Man's Burden*, p. 22.

⁶ Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, pp. 704-711.

⁷ Lecky, *History of England*, Vol. II, p. 243.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 358.

⁹ Buckle, *History of Civilization*, Vol. I, p. 448.

¹⁰ *History of England*, Vol. VII, p. 360.

¹¹ Benn, *Modern England*, p. 158.

¹² Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, Vol. I, pp. 104-105.

¹ Herzog's *Religious Encyclopædia*; Article, "Slavery and Christianity."

² Mackenzie, *America, A History*, p. 63.

³ Morel, *The Black Man's Burden*, 1920, pp. 20-21.

⁴ Lecky, *History of England*, Vol. II, p. 245.

Mr. Gladstone in his first election address, at Newark in 1832, declared that he rested the lawfulness of slavery—

upon the fact that Scripture, the paramount authority upon such a point, gives directions to persons standing in the relation of master to slave for their conduct in that relation; whereas, were the matter absolutely and necessarily sinful, it would not regulate the manner.

That is the view taken by Mr. Gladstone, the author of *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, the foremost champion of Christianity of his time, and yet in the face of this we find him, sixty-one years later, in reviewing *Robert Elsmere* in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1893, claiming that Christianity abolished slavery!

It took another twenty-seven years of agitation to abolish slavery in the British Colonies—in 1834—and then it was not through Christianity working upon the hearts of the slave-holders, but because the Government paid twenty million pounds for their release, of which sum Mr. Gladstone's father received "over seventy-five thousand pounds for 1,609 slaves."¹³

Lecky says:—

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was itself a large slave-owner, possessing numerous slaves on an estate in Barbadoes.¹⁴

When Garrison began his campaign against slavery in America, he found the whole of the Churches arrayed against him. He himself says:—

Let the winds carry the tale to the four quarters of the earth: In Boston, in the year of our Lord, 1837, in the sixty-first year of American Independence, not a single meeting-house, not a hall of any magnitude, can be obtained on any terms—not even for money at an exorbitant price!—in which abolitionists may plead the cause of the trampled slave! But it is believed there is not a single pulpit in this city to which a slave-holding preacher cannot find ready access, even for the avowed purpose of vindicating the soul-destroying system of slavery as a divine institution from Holy Scriptures.¹⁵

Garrison also declared:—

A great majority of the clergy of the country constitutes THE MAIN OBSTRUCTION to the progress of our cause,

using large type for emphasis. Oliver Johnson, the editor of the *Christian Soldier*, in his book *Garrison and His Times*, 1882, says that the managers of the American Board of Foreign Missions—

were deadly hostile from the start.....The whole fraternity of national benevolent associations—the Bible, Tract, Home Missionary, and other societies—under the management of clerical and lay representatives of the Churches, struck hands in resistance to the movement against slavery, being determined that no anti-slavery society should have a place in their consecrated circle (p. 75).

It is certainly vain to attempt to blot from the page of history the sad and disgraceful truth that the representatives of the popular Christianity of that day were deaf to the groans and agonies of the slaves, insensible of the humanity of the negro, indifferent to the sin and shame of slavery, and disposed to take the slave-holder's part against every earnest effort for abolition (p. 70).

The same writer says:—

It is my sober belief [that the American clergy by] their virulent attacks upon the Abolitionists, did more than all the politicians in the land to harden the conscience of the South and lull the North into a guilty sleep over the wrongs of slavery, thus leading the country step by step to the "bloody arbitrament" of a civil war (p. 412).

The Methodist and Baptist Churches.....The Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregational, Unitarian and Universalist Churches.....were essentially alike in spirit in their firm resistance to the anti-slavery movement (p. 245).

Of the Quakers Mr. Johnson says:—

There was no influence working against the cause more insidious or potent than that of the Quakers (p. 252).

It is true there were a few Christians whose humanity was stronger than their religion, who sided with the abolitionists, and, as Mr. Johnson points out:—

There has been an attempt of late years to make the fidelity of these exceptional men a shield and covert for the Churches that persecuted them; but the justice of God will never permit such a travesty of the truth of history (p. 70).

As the same writer further remarks, the Churches—

Having the power to strike the chains from the slaves at any time, they not only refused to exercise that power, but did what they could to hinder those who were working with that end in view. They did not even emancipate the slaves within their own pale, but continued to hold them as long as they could, and until the shackles were broken by war.¹⁶

(To be Concluded.) W. MANN.

Laughs From Leacock.

A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.

—Shakespeare.

RELIGION and humour are the two great incompatibles. Not that by this I mean that the religious man is seldom humorous. On the contrary! The religionist often has the prime qualification of the born humorist, viz., he is often most funny when he is striving most hard to be serious. Again, I do not deny that the religious man may possess a keen sense of humour, but he must only exercise that faculty on secular things or cease to be religious. For if there is one thing more than another that religion cannot stand, it is being laughed at. The Blasphemy Laws aim at one thing—to protect the Christian from the humorous sallies of the unbeliever. Beneath the witty jibes of Mr. Cohen God Almighty would cut a sorry figure. It is, indeed, significant that although we are told "Jesus wept," we never hear of him laughing. Think of it! This God-man was devoid of the most human quality of all. He lacked "the saving grace" of a ready wit which, if he had possessed it, would have saved him from making such an ass of himself when confronted by the barren fig-tree. Even Judas might have repented himself at the thought of betraying "so goodly a wit," but fate decreed otherwise; and now, when mortals need cheering, and when cares and troubles press heavily on the human spirit, we turn not to the pages of holy writ but take up a volume of Leacock and go with our host into the pleasant land of smiles.

For aught I know to the contrary Mr. Stephen Leacock may be a very religious man—as a man. He may be a Primitive Methodist, a Particular Baptist, or a Baptist who is not so particular; he may—heaven forbid—be a highly respectable churchwarden or a Christian Scientist, but he is certainly "some humorist"—and whoever asked a humorist what his religion was?

Whenever Mr. Leacock, the humorist, touches on religion or religious folk he does so with a gentle satire that is irresistible, and it is the Freethinker who can afford to chuckle most. Take the following

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 23.

¹⁴ Lecky, *History of England*, p. 17, Ed. 1878.

¹⁵ Garrison, *The Story of His Life*, Told by his Children, 1875, Vol. II, p. 124.

¹⁶ Oliver Johnson, *Garrison and His Times*, p. 248.

skit on Christian charity activities. The people of a certain church had decided to do something for the unhappy Armenians, and to that purpose they determined to devote the collections taken up at a series of special evening services. Says Mr. Leacock:—

To give the right sort of swing to the services they put a new pipe organ into the church. In order to make a preliminary payment on the organ, it was decided to raise a mortgage on the parsonage. To pay the interest on the mortgage the choir of the church got up a sacred concert in the Town Hall. To pay for the Town Hall, the "Willing Workers" Guild held a social in the Sunday-school. To pay the expenses of the social, the rector delivered a popular lecture on "Italy and Her Past," illustrated by a magic lantern. To pay for the magic lantern, the curate and the ladies got up some amateur theatricals. Finally, to pay for the costumes for the theatricals, the rector felt it his duty to dispense with the curate. So that is where the Church stands just at present. What they chiefly want to do is to raise enough money to buy a suitable gold watch as a testimonial to the curate. After that they hope to be able to do something for the Armenians!

Even modern science comes in for a share of Mr. Leacock's satire, as follows:—

Certainly the progress of science is a wonderful thing. One can't help feeling proud of it. I must admit that I do.....I feel as if I had been personally responsible for it. I believe all generous hearted men feel the same. Just think of it! A hundred years ago there were no bacilli, no ptomaine poisoning, no diphtheria, and no appendicitis. Rabies was but little known, and only imperfectly developed. All of these we owe to medical science. Even such things as psoriasis and parotitis and trypanosomiasis, which are now household names, were known only to the few, and were quite beyond the reach of the great mass of the people.

The works of Mr. Leacock are full of delicious fooling, and anyone requiring a hearty laugh should not fail to get *Literary Lapses*, it is as full of humour as a sausage is full of meat. I cannot close this article without a somewhat lengthy quotation from a satire of his: *Aristocratic Education*. No Free-thinker can afford to miss it! The House of Lords was assembled to consider Clause 52,000 of the Education Bill, dealing with the teaching of geometry in the schools. The clause read as follows: "The angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and if the equal sides of the triangle are produced, the exterior angles will also be equal."

The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke against the clause. He considered it, in its present form, too secular. He should wish to amend the clause so as to make it read: "The angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are, in every Christian community, equal, and if the sides be produced by a member of a Christian congregation, the exterior angles will be equal." He was aware, he continued, that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are extremely equal, but he must remind the Government that the Church had been aware of this for several years past. He was willing also to admit that the opposite sides and ends of a parallelogram are equal, but he thought that such an admission should be coupled with a distinct recognition of the existence of a Supreme Being.

The leader of the Government accepted His Grace's amendment with pleasure. He considered it the brightest amendment His Grace had made that week. The Government, he said, was aware of the intimate relation in which His Grace stood to the bottom end of a parallelogram and was prepared to respect it.

Mr. Stephen Leacock's books will while away many a passing hour, and he who has them by him can exclaim with Mme. Delysia, "Ain't we got fun!"

VINCENT J. HANDS.

The Cenci.

SHELLEY, that most practical minded poet, to whom proofs of tyranny and injustice on earth were more necessary sustenance than food or drink, must have experienced something of the thrill of successful speculation, as well as stark horror, when he stumbled upon the account of the doings of Count Cenci. Here was a demon hot from hell, and a heroine fresh from heaven; a theme that justified the wildest intuitions of the precocious thinker who had already announced the bankruptcy of the universe, and was prepared to find a bailiff seated on the threshold of every human heart. Did not a certain delightful acquaintance become "a brown demon" after a remarkably short period of closer communion? It was impossible for the poet to make Count Cenci too loathsome. No dramatist could very well overdraw the sufferings of Beatrice. The drama lay ready to hand. Shelley had but to breathe into the framework his passionate love of justice. Steeped in the dramatic literature of all ages, as familiar as any Elizabethan journeyman with the machinery of poetic tragedy, he yet approached his task with a confidence born rather of moral energy than a sense of technical efficiency; indeed, we know that he first tried to persuade Mary Shelley to write the drama, and that at all times he displayed extraordinary faith in the capabilities of his friends. But Shelley himself, in addition to possessing the useful quality of "nous," happened to have all the dramatic gifts at his fingers' ends, and so he could not fail.

Without some such prelude as the above, it would be difficult to do critical justice to *The Cenci*. Unhappily for the present generation, the one thing drama lacks to-day is a spirit, a universality and poetic power such as Shelley breathed into this effort. Who are we, who fumble blindly among formulæ, old and new, who know more about psychology than the psyche, less about love than "sex," to put this inspired boy in his place? We must first admit the inferiority of our clumsy, groping morality, and the absurdity of much that is written about the art and mission of the theatre. If the type of poetic drama to which *The Cenci* belongs does not fit in with modern conceptions, then our quest in search for new types is blind. It is, indeed, unnecessary to find new ways. Drama of this character is fundamental and organic; its production at the present time marks an important epoch in the progress of the theatre, and may lead to a renaissance of poetic tragedy, encouraging our poets to return to an inspiration that is not of the theatre—nor even of the emancipated theatre; while it is the duty of the critic to point, and to keep pointing, to the clear distinction between drama which springs from the life-blood of the poet, and which is the ultimate justification for the theatre as an institution, and the common or garden dramaturgy of the everyday stage.

The action of *The Cenci*, as I have hinted, was a divine gift. Had Shelley been obliged to invent it, he must have failed. His moral indignation fused the concrete example of hideous wrong and lifted it from its sordid depths into the realm of the sublime. Passion, and passion alone, produces the greatest art. Just as the infuriated lunatic performs prodigies of physical strength, or the lover achieves miracles of courage, so the poet, impelled by the strength of his vision conquers the difficulties of his medium. It is not for modern critics, who too often apply the obstacle test and ignore the relative force behind the ingenuity, to say that Shelley's hand ever faltered in the presentation of this tragedy. The action does not so much work itself out, as burn out, after rising to a white-heat. And yet there is cunning enough in the

mere machinery of the play; it is full of dodges and devices which reveal the eminently practical and solid basis of the poet's mind. The argument is well and deeply seated. It was wise to make Beatrice, not the actual murderer of her father, but by justifiable instigation, the avenger of human, not merely feminine wrongs. Count Cenci and his daughter are not only symbolical figures; their flesh and blood cries out, and both for some kind of justification. Even the loathsome sinner excites, at moments, a shuddering sympathy, although he would not if Shelley had not artfully made him call upon God to witness that there is a free licence on earth to sin loathsomely and exercise endless tyranny. There, the Atheism of the school-boy came in usefully to aid the student dramatist, for the whole drama turns upon this speech of Count Cenci. It is from this point onwards that one feels the birth in Shelley of a more moral conception of fate than that of blind, cruel necessity. Unravelling the threads of the vile intrigue he probably clinched the long drawn out argument in his own mind, and decided that, in the long run, the balance of human wrongs can be set right. There is compensation, but man can only achieve it by rising superior to his own laws and trusting utterly to inward conviction. Shelley expresses his own conviction in the calmness of Beatrice, once the deed is accomplished, and in the sublime denouement.

All the actors at the New Theatre spoke Shelley's verse with a curious ease and obvious enjoyment, and perhaps this was as much due to the poet's peculiar assonance, his use of soft vowels, as to his unfailing sense of verse rhythm. There is only one possible interpretation of Beatrice, and Miss Thorndyke seemed at times literally possessed; she has at last, and it is to be hoped for good, cast off her Grand Guignol tricks. Never once did she allow the emotion of Beatrice to lapse into inappropriate pathos; for *The Cenci*, like all great tragedy, leaves its audience dry-eyed and calm. Nor is there another actor in London who could have done Count Cenci as well as Mr. Robert Farquharson, although Mr. Moscovitch would have been more terrible in the part. But the sly malice, and the suggestion of insanity bred by lust and cruelty expressed in Mr. Farquharson's rendering were perhaps the best means to adopt. Orsino is a secondary villain filched from any Shakespearean tragedy, and Mr. Duncan Yarrow played the part on those lines; as, in fact, did all the characters in the sub-plot, Miss Beatrice Wilson's "Lucretia" standing out, not only as an individual performance, but in the assistance she rendered to Miss Thorndyke. The sombre blue light employed throughout was effective, and it is good to notice that in the matter of stage-settings, modern producers are slowly discovering the science which conceals science.

Shelley has been and will soon be gone. And yet.....one feels that nothing has happened. The reception of *The Cenci* has been comparatively luke warm, although this time the public have been ahead of the critics in their readiness to signalize a great event, which is a wholesome indication. The truth is that some of our modern interpreters of the theatre have come dangerously near to falling into the "Art for Art's sake" heresy, which infected literature and Poetry towards the end of the 'nineties. The absence of tragic drama of the calibre of *The Cenci* has led to a doctrine of despair, to an over-emphasis of the theatre as a highly specialized art, when it is really much more like a temple. You can invent an art of the theatre with the smallest packet of ideas, perhaps the smaller the better, but great drama is only created by the exercise of the same force which inspired the early monks to wheel mystery plays on platforms from one town to another, and induced Shakespeare and his friends to build a theatre that would be good enough

for us to-day, if only we shared more of the spirit of the Elizabethans, and which drove Shelley to write *The Cenci*.

WILFRED CLAY.

South African Jottings.

THE healing Hickson says his mission is to restore the art of healing to the Church, but his latest pronouncement in favour of the oldest of savage superstitions seems to place him fairly in the category to which all rationalists consigned him long ago—that of the primitive medicine-man and wizard. Before that august assembly, the Johannesburg Diocesan Synod, he has solemnly declared his unswerving faith in demoniacal possession, and that he has actually cast out devils in Japan. Doubtless, before the next Synod comes round he will have become still more expert, and we may confidently expect to hear of his raising the dead. With another resurrection duly accomplished the old fundamental miracles will become out of date, and we should suggest to the Bishops, as Mr. Hickson's labours are drawing to a close, the crowning tableaux of his transfiguration on Table Mountain followed by his glorious ascension to Mars in a fiery chariot.

This would put the cope stone on the superstructure of mediæval superstition which they are so laboriously attempting to raise. The belief in demons and demoniacal possession led to that fearful delusion of witchcraft which in former ages led to the agonizing death under cruel torments of hundreds of thousands of innocent victims. Many of our more academic Freethinkers will perhaps modify their opinion now as to the advisability of employing the method of direct attack in dealing with a Church whose cry is frankly that of "Back to the Middle Ages." In the Durban *Guardian* the Rev. Ramsden Balmforth has been making the claims of the Faith-healers look very thin. After enumerating the different methods of healing in vogue outside the ordinary methods of medical treatment he shows that on the most liberal estimate faith-healers cannot claim more than two per cent of cures. The Christian Scientists publish no statistics as to the proportion of cures to failures, while there is only one faith-healing centre where it is claimed that accurate medically attested records are kept, viz., "Lourdes." To this shrine about 150,000 superstitious devotees wend their way every year, but a large proportion of these are not patients. Of the sick less than two per cent. are said to go away cured.

Mr. Balmforth quotes Mr. F. W. H. Myers in the *Journal of the Psychological Research Society* as saying, "There is no real evidence either that the Apparition of the Virgin was itself more than a subjective hallucination or that it has any more than a merely subjective connection with the cures." Mr. Balmforth refers his readers to Zola's *Lourdes* for a vivid realistic description of the pilgrimages and scenes. He then proceeds to deal with mental science or psycho-therapeutics, and shows that in New York the Mental Science Institute there, according to the *American Journal of Psychology*, cured 25 per cent. of the cases admitted, while 50 per cent. of the remainder were partially cured.

Next Mr. Balmforth touches on the work of Dr. Bernheim and the Nancy School as well as that of Dr. Cone and Dr. Bandonin, and he states that from the Nancy Hospital 80 per cent. leave that institution cured, while Dr. Cone and Dr. Bandonin by similar methods claim a still higher percentage and invite investigation. Summing up, Mr. Balmforth says: "Two per cent. of cures to the faith-healers by their method of emotional excitement; 80 per cent. by the scientific, ethical, and truly religious methods of psychology and auto-suggestion! The faith-healers are turning their faces backwards to the Middle Ages." He then asks the question, "Why follow a system which only cures 2 per cent., when the quieter but more effective methods of psychological treatment and auto-suggestion give 70 or 80 per cent. of cures?" and adds, "We have not yet fully realized the value of the Socratic maxim: 'Know thyself.'"

Judging from some of the correspondence I receive from brother Freethinkers in South Africa there seems to be a pretty general desire for more "dynamics" in the movement. The "direct attack" method of the *Freethinker* is appreciated and admired, while the timid

and halting policy, pursued in some other quarters, is just as much deplored. Some seem to suspect with reluctance that class "snobbery" and caste prejudices are at work to prevent that closer union which is so desirable in all sections of the movement. We cannot forget the attitude of certain "academic" Freethinkers during Bradlaugh's fight for freedom, and the contempt with which they viewed it, although benefiting by the result. If our message is not to the masses then is it vain. And the sooner this fact is realized the better for all concerned. As far as South Africa is concerned I strongly recommend all whole-hearted lovers of the Cause for which we stand to support the National Secular Society, and form a strong headquarters branch in Johannesburg. From that centre branches will eventually radiate in different directions. This effort is worth making, and I commend this proposition to the consideration of all concerned. The National Secular Society is the fighting wing of the English Freethought movement, and there is nothing of the academics' arm-chair method about it. It is the party of action, and its appeal is not a sectional one. Its journal is to be met with wherever the English language is spoken, and the Society has already a footing on the African Continent. Undoubtedly, we are passing through very depressing times just now, and the economic pressure is great. But are we downhearted?

An esteemed correspondent writes to say he has a plan for hastening the good work and getting a move on generally. He says: Why not form "A World-Wide Anti-Christian Union" on articles "plain, simple, and strong," whose main object would be to bring about the disassociation of religion and politics? Undoubtedly, such a "Union" is needed. Possibly some of your discussion circles might like to get to work on it and see what they can make of it. If such a Union ever matures I will provide a suggestion for an emblem. How would a five-pointed star set in an aureole showing all the colours of the spectrum answer—emblematic of the Light of the World to the five Continents? SEARCHLIGHT.

Harrismith, South Africa.

Correspondence.

LABOUR AND THE PSALMS OF DAVID.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It may interest Mr. Pike to know that Mr. Keir Hardie's parents were members of the Glasgow Secular Society, although he himself—at least in his later years—was a member of the Evangelical Union. With Mr. Pike's comments I agree. The Churches are out to capture Labour, and they may, through the apathy of the Labourists, be successful. They do not try it with the N.S.S. and kindred bodies because one may, with a kind of plausibility not uncommon in the political world, describe oneself as a Christian Socialist or a Christian Anarchist or a Christian anything else, but never as a Christian Atheist. In passing I would like to draw attention to some Christian attempts, by discarding Genesis, by doing mouth honour to the theory of evolution, to arrive at Christian Atheism. But to measure the success of Freethought propaganda is not possible by the book-keeping methods of commerce. If our friend joins the nearest branch of the N.S.S. and helps to create a Freethought atmosphere he cannot fail to leave the world better than he found it. AUTOLYCUS.

CHURCHES AND THE RATES.

SIR,—My attention has been called to a note in your issue of November 26, in which you say that you would like to know if Toplady Hall is rated, in view of the fact that one of Mr. Comyns Carr's meetings was held here during the election.

I beg to inform you that the Toplady Hall, and the institutional premises of this church, are rated, so that the question of "common decency" does not arise in this instance. HARRY E. GAZE.

[We are pleased to insert this information. We are looking forward to the time when all churches and chapels are treated as other buildings are treated, instead of their being subsidized to the extent of their ratable value. This is more indefensible on the part of the Dissenting Churches than it is on the part of the Established Church. The latter believe in State support, the former profess to disbelieve in it.—Editor.]

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON. INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.1, side entrance down steps): 8, Debate, "Is There a God?" Mr. P. Pengelly v. A. Blady.

N.S.S. DISCUSSION CIRCLE (62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Tuesday, December 19, at 7, Mr. Arch will open the discussion.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. Walter B. Wingate, "Newton and Modern Physics."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "China in the Modern World."

COUNTRY. INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. O. Melton, "Gods, Devils, and Lesser Spirits."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, Discussion. (Silver collection.)

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Councillor J. K. Kelly, "Prison Reform."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Rusholme Public Hall, over Free Library, Dickenson Road): Mr. F. P. Corrigan, 3, "The Message of Science to Our Age"; 6.30, "Immortality! Fact or Fiction?"

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Socialist Society's Rooms, 23 Royal Arcade): Tuesday, December 19, at 7.30, Mr. A. Bartram, "The Elements of Economics."

WATFORD (Labour Church): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Freethought and the Social Question."

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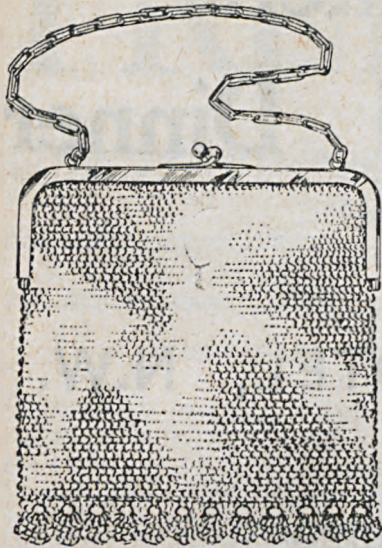
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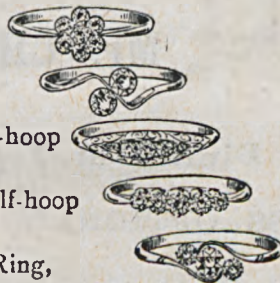
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