

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN ■ EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

Vol. XLIII.—No 9

SUNDAY, MARCH 4, 1923

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Ancient and Modern.

The wonders of the discovery in Egypt continue, and although it has provided nothing substantially new, it has strengthened our knowledge of the life of ancient Egypt and enlarged our conception of the degree of civilization there achieved. On the face of it there is nothing more in the discovery of the body of a dead man surrounded with all the paraphernalia of everyday life than there is in the discovery of other ancient bodies—historic or prehistoric. For the drama of human life must have gone everywhere on much the same lines. There has always been the clinging together of the male and the female. Birth and death, with all the phases of human passion which lie between, have always been present in every stage of human society, and to these the finding of gold and jewels, and alabaster vases, and couches and chariots, add nothing substantial. Old Sir Thomas Browne found himself inspired to write one of the classics of English literature—and one of my own boyhood's loves—by the contemplation of a funerary urn found in Norfolk; and there is a touch of the master in Shakespeare founding one of his most pregnant deliverances on the turned up skull of a clown. Clown or king it is much the same when we are dealing with the fundamentals of life, but the imagination of most people is a sluggish quantity. It needs size, and glitter and rank, and power to quicken it into anything like activity. The birth of a child in a royal palace seems to most of more importance than the birth of one in a cottage. A war in which only a few thousands are engaged seems smaller to most than a war in which millions are battling; and yet exactly the same things are present in both cases. The *quality* of them is not altered by magnitude or social position. Few will deny this as a matter of theory; but, unfortunately, few will act upon it as a matter of practice.

* * *

The Religion of the Grave.

The most pathetic aspect of the discoveries in the tomb of King Tutankhamen is connected with religion. In ancient Egypt there were gods many and lords many. Some were feared and some were loved; but loved or feared they were believed in with an intensity that we moderns would find it difficult to

realize. The Egyptians had their saviour-god, virgin-born, put to death by treachery and raised again from the grave, exactly as the Christians retold the story in the New Testament mythology. They had their belief in an after-life—which was as real to them as Paris is to us; and was—as all after-lives are—only a copy, drawn to a different scale, of this one. Whatever may have been the exact interpretation of the meaning of the things buried with the dead by the ancient Egyptians, and civilization brings many new interpretations of old things, their original significance is clear. When the savage buries with the dead warrior the weapons he used and the clothes he wore in this life, he does so in order that their ghosts may accompany his ghost into the next world. We have the lingering of this belief in the placing of flowers on a grave, just as we have the survival of the fear of the ghost of the dead man in the wearing of black—originally a form of disguise—after a death. The Egyptians had reached the stage of believing that there might be a resurrection of the dead, exactly as the Christians taught centuries later. There is nothing new in the history of religion, there is only a reshaping of a few primitive ideas under the pressure of later knowledge. But it is always the game of the religious leaders to pretend that there is something about their religion which differs from others. To know only one religion is to understand none. That is one reason why the followers of one religion are always warned not to study foreign faiths. To understand one must know all; and to understand is to cease to believe.

* * *

The Poor Gods!

And the gods? In one form or another there appear to have been dozens of them in Tutankhamen's tomb. They seem to have been put there to guard the king. Poor things! They could not guard him against a band of Arab thieves. They could not guard him against Mr. Carter and Lord Carnarvon. They could not even protect themselves. For these gods, once so powerful, so feared or loved, so earnestly believed in, are now mere names, objects of scientific investigation or popular curiosity. Catalogued and labelled, so many items in a museum. They are stared at by people who have gods of their own, who say of them exactly what the believers of the gods they are staring at said of them, who prayed to them as those who are looking on pray to their own deities. Yet, how many, of those who are examining the catalogued remnants of past deistic greatness draw the right inference from what is before them? They say as the Egyptians said, "Ours is the true God. He will endure for ever." It is certain that if ever our civilization is buried as was the Egyptian, some future Lord Carnarvon will dig amid the ruins of Westminster Abbey and will lead a gathering of wondering visitors to the curious remains of the religious belief of the semi-savages of the twentieth century. What poor weak things the gods of the world are! From Mumbo-Jumbo to Jehovah, from the crude idol of the savage to the vague abstraction of the half mentally emancipated philosophic Theist, they all show the same pitiable weakness in the

face of attack. Man credits himself with immortality, he has never yet succeeded in giving immortality to a single one of his gods. Myriads have died; and those remaining show unmistakable indications of decay.

* * *

What Christianity Has Done.

There is a further moral to be drawn from the loudly expressed surprise at the degree of culture which ancient Egypt must have possessed. I think that for a great deal of this we have to thank the Christian Church. One may fairly assume that had Christianity never existed the discovery of so developed a stage of culture would not have come on the world with such surprise. For Greece, India, China, and Egypt, all had their stories of highly developed civilizations that had preceded their own time, and none of the religions of these people made it necessary they should believe otherwise. Christianity was in a different position. It stands as one of the most gigantic impostures that were ever foisted upon mankind. A religion such as Mohammedanism took its rise with a mere man, who was only superior to others in so far as he was favoured by God with a special perception of the truth; and that is a claim made by mystics in all ages. Other religions had their myths which did not involve a serious interference with actual history. But Christianity took a series of ancient myths and foisted them upon the world as actual history—and history of a comparatively recent date. It could not afford to let the people become familiar with ancient civilization if such an imposture was to be maintained. So on the scientific side it gave a history of the world which made it a ridiculously late creation. Within quite recent times the great Dr. Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge, was so certain about things as to be able to show that the world was created 4004 B.C., and that man was made on October 23 at nine o'clock in the morning. Even so great a scholar as Sir J. G. Wilkinson was compelled to modify his results of a study of the Egyptian monuments so that his chronology might not interfere with the date of the supposed deluge of Noah. On the cultural side a similar policy had to be followed. In order to impress upon the people the ethical and social superiority of Christianity it was necessary to represent all pre-Christian history as being comparatively uncivilized, and the people as irredeemably bad. That kind of teaching was so persistent, it was maintained over so lengthy a period, and all opposition to the official view was so suppressed, that it became a common characteristic of Christians to regard all non-Christian peoples as being more or less uncivilized. The attitude of the white man towards the coloured one—an attitude quite foreign to the peoples of antiquity—is one product of this teaching. Naturally the world is surprised when it learns to what degree of culture some of the nations of antiquity had reached. The surprise is a measure of the ignorance in which the reign of the Christian Church has plunged the world.

* * *

What Might Have Been.

We have often said before, and we repeat it here, that when history is properly written and properly understood it will be realized that the triumph of Christianity represents one of the greatest disasters that have overtaken the civilized world. At present history is not properly written. Either because it is written under the glamour of Christian tradition, or because writers of repute are afraid to say in plain print what many of them whisper in private, there is still current much verbal rubbish about the good influence of "true Christianity." The truth about religion is slurred over and a wrong impression is left on the mind of the reader. Yet there are the plain

facts staring all in the face that Christianity had its rise in centres well-advanced in the arts of civilization, that this civilization decayed under Christian rule, and that the active hostility of the Church to all forms of scientific thinking actually led to the quality of ancient civilization being almost forgotten. Against these undeniable facts all the apologies of Christian writers break down. On the other hand, let us imagine that the Christian Church had never existed. Imagine that the story of civilization had gone on from the point reached by antiquity, with no more than the normal fluctuation to which all human institutions are subject. Imagine there had been no Church with its embargo upon the investigation of Nature and upon the free circulation of ideas. Imagine that there had never been active a Church, backed with the power of the State, suppressing advanced ideas in all directions. Eliminate from the expenditure of human energy the amount spent in fighting the obstruction of the Church, and thus leave a larger balance to be expended in productive efforts. Imagine this to have been the case, and who will dare say to what heights man might by now have reached? What he is would only be a mere promise of what he might have been—a statue in the rough compared with the finished article. And the difference between what is and what might have been must be placed to the credit of the Christian Church.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"God's Methods"—A Rejoinder.

THE Rev. B. N. Switzer has had the goodness to reply to my criticism of his book, *The Mystery of the Ages*. He finds fault with my saying that to him the Bible is "verbally inerrant." I am fully aware that he does not use such an expression, but how can God's truth as expressed in the Bible be inerrant if the language is fallible? He tells us that he "puts forth the very words of Scripture to speak for themselves"; but how can he do that if he regards the words as imperfect? The Rev. H. W. Webb-Peploe, M.A., in his sermon at the Conference held by the Bible League in 1902, firmly maintained that "the Book, if it be of God, must be perfect originally, and that all that lies with man as a critic is this—to discover the Original if he can." That is the view in which I was myself brought up, and which I had the courage at twelve years of age to defend in an unforgettable debate. Mr. Switzer says that "the Bible exists in more than five hundred languages"; but the orthodox claim is that in the languages in which God gave it as a revelation of himself it must be perfect in every respect, and Mr. Webb-Peploe believes that the Original copy still exists and may be found. Mr. Switzer says that "the words of the Bible are merely the imperfect human vehicle which by the infinite skill and wisdom of God is adapted to convey his truth to mankind"; but surely the adaptation of the words by "the infinite skill and wisdom of God" must have rendered them a perfect vehicle of his Truth. The reverend gentleman employs the following irrelevant comparison:—

If a vehicle be used to convey a friend to our house, we receive our friend with joy, and we are thankful for the vehicle, but we do not embrace it and take it into our home, for it has merely done the work of conveying our friend to us. Yet we may become very much interested in the vehicle, especially if it conveys our friend to us over and over again.

If the Bible is a revelation of God's Truth, does it not inevitably follow that the words are a vehicle in a fundamentally different sense from the train, omnibus, or carriage which brings a friend to our home? You cannot take the revelation into your house and leave the words outside. If a revelation there be it is

absolutely inseparable from the language which gives it expression.

The author denies the statement that he accepts the theory of evolution. Perhaps I would have been more accurate had I said that he accepts some of the *facts* of evolution, upon which, however, he puts his own interpretation. For example, he does not traverse "the contentions of modern geologists and others with reference to the existence of *prehistoric man*"; but he explains his existence as follows:—

Geologists, perhaps, little realize that the crumbling remains of a prehistoric race, which they love to work amongst, are the relics of creatures far more degenerate than ourselves, fallen from a high estate, and now disembodied and, mayhap, gloating over these earthly studies, and longing for a chance to be given them of entering once more into flesh that they may work wickedness as in times long gone by.

Apparently it did not occur to the author that in penning that paragraph he was throwing enormous discredit upon the Creator. Even this prehistoric race is represented as having fallen from a high estate and become exceptionally degenerate. Every race of intelligent beings God ever made seems to have gone hopelessly astray. The point, however, is that Mr. Switzer preaches evolution in his book, notwithstanding his vigorous repudiation of the theory, only evolution up to the present, according to him, has been downwards rather than upwards. Ever since his expulsion from Eden man has kept sinking lower and lower in moral degradation. "The same failure to do any good thing marks every child of man" (p. 17).

That Mr. Switzer repudiates the term "Bibliolatry" as utterly inapplicable to himself does not surprise me in the least. By Bibliolatry I understand extravagant homage paid to the letter of the Bible. For me, of course, all Christians are Bibliolaters, and theologians of the author's stamp are such to an extraordinary extent. Since Mr. Switzer rejects and abhors the theory of evolution I gladly withdraw the charge that he is a less consistent Bibliolater than Mr. Bryan. I willingly place the two on the same level as Bible-worshippers.

I now come to a point of much greater importance, namely, the author's attitude to science. After charging me with misrepresenting some of his views, he says:—

He asks the seemingly irrelevant question as to why I should bother my head about geology? Please, Mr. Reviewer, why should I not, seeing that geology is one of the most interesting studies in Nature? To me the two most wonderful books in existence are "The Book of God's Revelation," *i.e.*, the Bible, and what is called "The Book of Nature," *i.e.*, the visible works of God. The former book declares that "the fool hath said in his heart there is no God," and the latter book even the ignorant Heathen can read and gather from it that there are millions of "gods," only alas! to decide that there is not one good god amongst them all.

I do not think the question referred to is at all irrelevant. I again ask Mr. Switzer why he takes any interest in geology, because the story told by geologists is a distinctly evolutionary one? It is well known that the distinguished geologist, Sir Charles Lyell, accepted Darwinism in his old age, and introduced it into the tenth edition of his *Principles of Geology*. Reviewing this edition in the *Quarterly Review* (April, 1869), Dr. Russel Wallace said:—

The history of science hardly presents so striking an instance of youthfulness of mind in advanced life as is shown in this abandonment of opinions so long held and so powerfully advocated; and if we bear in mind the extreme caution, combined with the ardent love of truth which characterize every work which our author has produced, we shall be convinced that so great a change was not decided on without long

and anxious deliberation, and that the views now adopted must indeed be supported by arguments of overwhelming force. If for no other reason than that Sir Charles Lyell in his tenth edition has adopted it, the theory of Mr. Darwin deserves an attentive and respectful consideration from every earnest seeker after truth.

In his sixty-second year Lyell realized that evolution was the only theory that explained the stratified system and rock formations, and from his day to our own practically all accredited geologists have been and are ardent evolutionists. But if modern geology and astronomy are true the Genesis account of the creation of the universe and man is false. The great Mr. Gladstone maintained that Genesis was true and could be harmonized with both geology and astronomy, but Professor Huxley proved conclusively that such a contention was radically indefensible; and to-day few people have the temerity to advocate the Biblical view of the beginning of things.

Mr. Switzer informs us that to him the two most wonderful books in existence are the Bible and Nature. We know what his view of the Bible is; but Nature he defines as "the visible works of God." And yet, curiously enough, the "visible works of God" fail to reveal him, for our author expresses the view that an ignorant Heathen, reading the Book of Nature, gathers from it that there are millions of gods and that not one of them is good. Cardinal Newman confessed that the study of Nature inevitably leads to Atheism. It was to prevent that catastrophe that he joined the Catholic Church and put his reason to sleep. The truth is that an honest investigation of the phenomena of Nature brings us face to face with physical and chemical laws by which both living and non-living substances are governed.

Assuming the existence of God, there is no possible escape from the conclusion that the two books just mentioned are utterly irreconcilable. To define the facts of Nature as "the visible works of God" is to represent the Deity as an inconceivable monster. The operations of natural laws are characterized by the utmost cruelty. The struggle for existence resulting in the survival of the fittest, scientifically known as the law of natural selection cannot possibly have been guided by infinite wisdom and love. Yet the Bible teaches that the will of a holy and loving God prevails everywhere, a doctrine to which the phenomena of Nature give the lie direct. Indeed the only conclusion to which my knowledge of both animal and human life drives me is that God's plan, so exhaustively depicted by Mr. Switzer, has completely miscarried, the Prince of Darkness having been victorious in all ages rather than the God of justice and love. I believe in neither, and, as I said before, the perusal of the *Mystery of the Ages* has had the effect of confirming me in my unbelief.

J. T. LLOYD.

If Jesus Christ made false promises with respect to prayer in cases of sickness, of what value are his promises in any other respect? I declare, sir, that the "Peculiar People" are the only real Christians, and they are persecuted by the mere pretenders to that title. To be honest as Christians go is to be one man picked out of ten thousand. Let us endeavour to be logical. Let us try to be honest. Let us clear all the prayers out of the Prayer Book. Let us, at any rate, eliminate the form of prayer in a time of sickness. Let the prayers of no more congregations in our State churches be asked for absent members lying upon their sick beds. Let us have no more foolish petitions for the health and longevity of royal personages. Let no more thanksgiving services be held for the recovery of a Prince of Wales from gastric fever. Let us recognize that medical attendance, and not the help of God, is "the one thing necessary."—*Freethinker*, January 1, 1899.

A Butterfly on the Wheel.

I come in rearward of the throats of song.

—Francis Thompson.

We have a kindness for Leigh Hunt.

—Lord Macaulay.

Dreams and the light imaginings of men.—Shelley.

WONDERS will never cease! Here, fresh from the printing-presses, is an edition of the poetical works of Leigh Hunt, published by the firm of Milford, and containing no less than seven hundred pages. To an age which finds Byron often long-winded and tedious, what excuse can be given for such a waste of paper and type? Leigh Hunt was never a great poet; he was essentially a minor singer; but he had happy moments. Those felicitous utterances are found in many anthologies, and we are grateful for them. In resurrecting so large a mass of fugitive verse, however, the publisher appears to have gone further than an austere lover of literature might approve.

During his lifetime, Leigh Hunt was derided as a leader of the "Cockney School" of poetry. Doubtless, the assault and battery were directed as much against Hunt, the editor of the saucy *Examiner*, as against Hunt the writer of verse. For Hunt had little more than a very pretty talent for poetry. He was fortunate, too, in having for friends such poets as Keats and Shelley, and it cannot be gainsaid that he had at first a strong influence on them. After all, the poems, or a few of them, form the only part of Leigh Hunt's voluminous literary baggage which will survive. Perhaps one of his happiest lyrics is the charming trifle addressed to Jane Welsh, afterwards the wife of the austere Thomas Carlyle:—

Jenny kissed me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in!
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I'm growing old—but add,
Jenny kissed me.

Some of his sonnets are excellent. One of the best is that on the Nile, written in rivalry with Keats and Shelley, and losing little in the comparison. It commences:—

It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream,

and includes the magnificent description of:—

The laughing queen that caught the world's great lands,
which is not only a very fine line, but the discovery of a cadence which has been imitated ever since. Hunt's sonnet on "A Lock of Milton's Hair" is a fine example of his enthusiasm for great writers, and is worth quotation:—

It lies before me there, and my own breath
Stirs its thin threads, as though beside
The living head I stood in honoured pride,
Talking of lovely things that conquer death.
Perhaps he pressed it once, or underneath
Ran his fine fingers, when he leant blank-eyed,
And saw in fancy Adam and his bride,
With their rich locks, or his own Delphic wreath.

As a critic, Leigh Hunt secured the rare commendation of Macaulay for the catholicity of his taste. The compliment was richly deserved. Of all authors, indeed, and of most readers, Leigh Hunt had the keenest eye for merit, and the warmest appreciation of it wherever found. An active politician, he was never blind to the abilities of an opponent. Blameless himself in morals, he could admire the wit of Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Wycherley; and, a Freethinker, he could see both beauty and wisdom in the dusty volumes of the old divines. It is to his credit that his universal knowledge, instead of puffing him up, only moved him to impart it. Next to the pleasure he took

in books was that he derived from pointing out to others the pleasure in them. Witness his *Wit and Humour* and *Imagination and Fancy*, two of the finest and most readable handbooks in English literature.

Hunt was honest in his criticisms. He did not care a straw whether an author was new or old, an Englishman or a foreigner, for his sympathies crossed between two writers when he thought it appropriate. Thackeray had the same outspoken sincerity, as, in speaking of Fenimore Cooper's full-blooded hero in the *Leather-Stocking* novels, he says, "I think he is better than any of Scott's lot."

The most readable of his other works is his *Autobiography*, which is full of unexpected humour and delightful anecdote. That is Hunt's way. Living on the lower slopes of Parnassus, he, now and again, rises to greater heights. Amid reams of verbiage he could write "Abou Ben Adhem," a poem which has found its way into every anthology and every heart. It is Ariel turned Prospero, and showing in the transformation how antic and irresponsible a spirit Ariel is.

MIMNERMUS.

The Protestant Reformation.

V.

(Continued from page 118.)

Open a Protestant history of the Reformation, and you find a picture of the world given over to a lying tyranny, the Christian population of Europe enslaved by a corrupt and degraded priesthood, and the Reformers, with the Bible in their hands, coming to the rescue like angels of light. All is black on one side—all is fair and beautiful on the other. Turn to the Catholic history of the same events and the same men, and we have before us the Church of the Saints fulfilling quietly its blessed mission in the saving of human souls. Satan a second time enters into Paradise, and a second time with fatal success tempts miserable man to his ruin.....Each side tells the story as it prefers to have it.....Now, depend upon it, there is some human account of the matter different from both these if we could only get at it, and it will be an excellent thing for the world when that human account can be made out.—J. A. Froude, "Short Studies on Great Subjects," Vol. I, pp. 36-37.

LUTHER'S denial of free-will and his belief in predestination followed logically from his doctrine of the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Since then man has lost the power of free-will:—

Luther's doctrine of Justifying Faith is closely bound up with his theories on the absence of free-will, man's inability to do what is good, and the total depravity of human nature resulting from original sin. In his *De Servo Arbitrio* against Erasmus Luther deliberately makes the absence of free-will the basis of his view of life.¹

From all of which it follows that Luther had, in this, as well as in his teaching as to the uselessness of penance and good works to secure salvation, departed seriously from the orthodox teaching of the Church of Rome. In fact Luther attacked the dogmas and doctrines before he attacked the abuses of the Church. In spite of his assertion that he would have been ready to burn any heretic who opposed the teaching of the Church, yet he was himself a heretic, and had he never opposed the abuses, sooner or later, his divergence from orthodoxy would have brought him into conflict with the Church.

Moreover these views did not descend suddenly upon Luther by divine illumination from on high, as so many Protestant historians pretend. They were the

¹ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, p. 189.

outcome of a long incubatory process of searching the Scriptures, the schoolmen, and the Church Fathers. As Braun says, in *Life of Luther* :—

It is impossible to speak in the strict sense of any religious experience which Luther had in the monastery. It was no catastrophe which, with elemental force, brought about the reformer's change. Any dramatic element is entirely wanting. There was in his case no Damascus. It is a useless task to attempt, as has been done again and again, to determine the year and the day on which the actual reforming flame burnt up in Luther's soul.²

Grisar has traced, step by step, from Luther's earliest lectures and sermons, the formation of Luther's ideas, long before his challenge to Rome in the matter of the Indulgences.

At first Luther was in sympathy with the humanists, who, with Erasmus at their head, were translating, editing, and annotating the newly recovered literature of ancient Greece and Rome. He even speaks of Erasmus, in a letter to his friend Lang, in 1517, as "our Erasmus"; yet in the same letter he confesses that his liking for Erasmus is becoming weaker, and concludes :—

The times are perilous, and a man may be a great Greek or Hebrew [scholar] without being a wise Christian.....He who makes concessions to human free-will judges differently from him who knows nothing save Grace alone.

As for the comparative value of Greek and Hebrew writings, Luther declares :—

The wisdom of the Greeks, in comparison with the wisdom of the Jews, is altogether bestial.³

As Grisar observes :—

At the time that his new doctrine originated he was far more in sympathy with the theories of certain groups of late mediæval mystics than with the views of the humanists.

Nevertheless :—

From Erasmus and his compeers he undoubtedly borrowed, in addition to a spirit of justifiable criticism, an exaggerated sentiment of independence towards ecclesiastical antiquity. The contact with their humanistic views assuredly strengthened in him the modern tendency to individualism.⁴

A spirit of freedom was abroad, unknown since the days of ancient Greece and Rome, which it was impossible to escape altogether.

Meanwhile Giovanni, son of Lorenzo de' Medici, the Magnificent, had succeeded, in 1513, Julius II to the papal chair under the title of Pope Leo X. Within two years he squandered the 300,000 ducats he found in the papal treasury. Vast sums were required to complete St. Peter's at Rome. The Pope had come to the end of his financial resources, but his spiritual resources were unimpaired. He resolved to exploit them; so it was decided, in the year 1517, to open a special sale of Indulgences in all the countries in Europe, as the erection of the Church of St. Peter was a matter of common interest to the whole Christian world. As Froude puts it :—

The notable device of his holiness was to send distinguished persons about Europe with sacks of Indulgences. Indulgences and dispensations! Dispensations to eat meat on fast-days—dispensations to marry one's near relation—dispensations for anything and everything which the faithful might wish to purchase who desired forbidden pleasures. The dispensations were simply scandalous. The indulgences—

well, if a pious Catholic is asked nowadays what they were, he will say that they were the remission of the penances which the Church inflicts upon earth; but it is also certain that they would have sold cheap if the people had thought that this was all that they were to get by them. As the thing was represented by the spiritual hawkers who disposed of these wares, they were letters of credit on heaven. When the great book was opened, the people believed that these papers would be found entire on the right side of the account. Debtor—so many murders, so many robberies, lies, slanders, or debaucheries. Creditor—the merits of the saints placed to the account of the delinquent by the Pope's letters, in consideration of value received.⁵

If one had asked Pope Leo whether he really believed in these pardons of his, says Froude :—

He would have said officially that the Church had always held that the Pope had power to grant them. Had he told the truth, he would have added privately that if the people chose to be fools, it was not for him to disappoint them.⁶

A river of spiritual blessing would flow from the eternal city, and in return a river of gold would go to Rome.

The Indulgences in Germany were farmed out to Albert, Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg, who was to receive half the plunder. Albert entrusted the proclamation of the Indulgence to a Dominican monk named Tetzel, a popular, but bold, forward and audacious speaker, much given to exaggeration. To quote Froude again :—

His stores were opened in town after town. He entered in state. The streets everywhere were hung with flags. Bells were pealed; nuns and monks walked in procession before and after him, while he himself sat in a chariot, with the Papal Bull on a velvet cushion in front of him. The salerooms were the churches. The altars were decorated, the candles lighted, the arms of St. Peter blazoned conspicuously on the roof. Tetzel from the pulpit explained the efficacy of his medicines, and if any profane person doubted their power, he was threatened with excommunication. Acolytes walked through the crowds, clinking their plates and crying, "Buy! buy!" The business went as merry as a marriage bell till the Dominican came near to Wittenberg.⁷

Half a century before, all this would have excited little or no hostile comment. But the times were changed, a new generation had arisen. Ulric von Hutten had written and published his book, *The Roman Trinity*, a violent attack upon the disorders at Rome. The *Letters of Some Obscure Men*, by Crotus Rubeanus, a similar work, had both had an enormous circulation and created a great sensation, and above all Erasmus, the greatest scholar of the time, had written his *Encomium Morie* (*Praise of Folly*) in 1509, in which he scourged the monks and held them up to the laughter of Europe. The air was charged with electricity. The authorities at Rome suspected nothing of the changed conditions; they were really throwing a lighted match into a powder magazine by sending Tetzel there to sell Indulgences. His appearance had the effect upon Luther of a red rag upon a bull. Moreover Luther knew that he did not stand alone when he delivered his challenge; he knew that there were now thousands of men who thought as he did upon the matter and would give him their support, so on October 31, 1517 he nailed his ninety-five theses against Indulgences to the Church door at Wittenberg and started the Reformation. W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

² Cited by Grisar, *Luther*, p. 61.

³ Michelet, *Life of Luther*, p. 283.

⁴ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. I, p. 44.

⁵ Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, pp. 77-78.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 78.

⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 78-79.

Writers and Readers.

"THE CRITERION" AND MR. J. M. ROBERTSON ON FLAUBERT.

A little while ago a correspondent of mine, a lady who cultivates with equal intelligence the amenities of literature and the acerbities of anti-Christian propaganda, asked me if I could recommend her a purely literary review in which the exercise of thought and expression was absolutely emancipated. I at once went over in my mind the journals I had come across, and was obliged to rule them out as either not purely literary, or as not reaching the standard of mental freedom presumably demanded by my friend. She had told me that she had tried *The English Review* but had found it too light-heartedly Bolshevik, while *The London Mercury*, she was pleased to aver, was only *John O'London's Weekly* in a more expensive form, or at best a plausible imitation of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. Now I am afraid I cannot quite share my correspondent's somewhat high-brow contempt for these critical journals. I am, of course, willing to admit that Mr. Austin Harrison is never happier than when he is giving us a new and violent æsthetic shock, and I am not unprepared to grant that "safety first" is the unwritten law of Mr. Squire and his friends. Still, I have no sort of quarrel with either of these editors. Mr. Squire has not a little of that pragmatic idealism which I admire so much in the editor of the *British Weekly*, while Mr. Harrison has quite a number of ideas in common with us Freethinkers. We admire immensely his courage and independence. I shall always be grateful to him for introducing me to the work of Mr. D. H. Lawrence, while many of my readers must remember that he printed Foote's outspoken article on Meredith's attitude to and relations with Freethought. I imagine that he is the only editor who would not have thought twice before extending hospitality to the leader of popular Freethought. Even John Morley and Frank Harris drew the line at Foote.

However that may be, I have just come across a literary review which, in my opinion, should satisfy Freethinkers whose demands are as exacting as those of my correspondent. The *Criterion*, of which two numbers are before me (October, 1922, and January, 1923), is a quarterly journal of letters published by Mr. Cobden-Sanderson (annual subscription 14s., single numbers 3s. 6d.). It is not, I hasten to say, thinned down with politics, sociology, and ethics, but is unadulterated literature. This is a form of periodical criticism and art somewhat foreign to our English nature. We usually like our æsthetic pleasure well diluted with instructive facts and moral preachments, just as we drink alcoholic liquor not for the natural, healthy, and sensual pleasure of drinking, but for that worst of all philistine reasons—the stomach's sake. To be quite candid—I am nothing if I am not candid, so my friends tell me—this is the only literary journal which I should make a point of not only finding, but also creating time to read.

In the first number Mr. George Saintsbury, the most unprofessional of emeritus professors, writes on *Dullness*. It would be a stupid and cheap witticism to say that he writes well because he is full of his subject. That remark may have been both true and witty when it was applied, as it originally was, to a Frenchman who wrote a latin poem on the disease which Columbus introduced into Europe; but it has no point as against Mr. Saintsbury. Whatever his shortcomings, and they have been underlined with more malice than urbanity by Mr. J. M. Robertson and Edmond Scherer, he cannot be charged with lack of brightness. He indicates that there are two forms of dullness—the relative and the absolute. Dullness, the reader will have noticed, is often merely the reflection in a writer of a quality which exists only in the reader. A few days ago, a friend of mine, a Freethinker of parts, told me that he found Foote a dull writer. But when I remember that my friend had an excessive admiration for the mere hack-work of a well-known writer, I was not at all surprised to find that he had a

poor opinion of Foote's intelligence. Another friend of mine—I hope the indulgent reader will not judge me by the company I keep—very thoughtfully informs me that Mr. J. M. Robertson's little study of Voltaire is a "dull presentment of a brilliant subject." I certainly admire the courage of my friend in saying boldly what he thinks, but I shall consider him a dull fellow indeed if he persists in his opinion when he has had time to compare this most brilliant of studies with what has been done by Strauss, Morley, and M. G. Lauson. A close and brilliant writer claims an attentive and intelligent reader. Writing, it has been said, is a co-partnership between the author and the reader. And dullness, if it is there at all, may be in the one or the other. We should all do well before we condemn an essay, or a poem, or a novel, to make quite sure that our minds are as bright as they ought to be. Of course there is an absolute dullness, but as Mr. Saintsbury wittily remarks: "Even in the worst work and the worst writer there remains, for one who has trained himself, the interest of wondering whether it is the worst." This is precisely the sort of pleasure I have found in reading the literary essays of the late Frederic Harrison.

The other articles include a *Plan of a Novel*, by Dostoevski, whose *Crime and Punishment*, an amazing murder story with psychological trimmings, has been analysed for us by Mr. Andrew Millar; an essay on the *Legend of Tristan and Isol*, as handled by English poets, Swinburne, Arnold, and Michael Field, an excellent piece of work by Mr. Sturge Moore; a short story by Miss May Sinclair, and a note on Mr. James Joyce's much abused *Ulysses* by M. Iarbaud. *Ulysses*, I am assured by some of my friends, is not worth the time spent on reading it; but curiously enough, I have often found that books so described are by no means negligible. Besides I know what to expect from Mr. Joyce, who is quite the biggest man we have, a writer to be reckoned with. Frankly, I have read nothing finer of late years than his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. He has all the artistry of Mr. George Moore with ten times his audacity. I am now looking round for someone who will lend me a copy of *Ulysses*.

The January number opens with a trenchant article on Flaubert by Mr. J. M. Robertson, for whose literary criticism I have an unreserved admiration, shared, I hope, by many of my readers. If not, so much the worse for them, for they wilfully shut themselves out from one of the rarest forms of intellectual pleasure. Mr. Robertson's criticism of letters has not, I am afraid, attracted quite the attention it deserves. It is authoritative, and this sort of work is not readily accepted except when it comes from the universities. Another hindrance is its complete independence, its individuality of outlook. He cannot bring himself to follow the fashion. He will attack established reputations, reveal their inherent weakness, intellectual and artistic, at the moment when they are docilely accepted by everyone. He will fight valiantly for the reinstatement of a writer who has been neglected, misunderstood, or lightly disparaged. This sort of literary knight errancy he has practised throughout his life, and now people are coming to see that his transvaluations of Shakespeare, Shelley, Poe, Burns, and others are surprisingly nearer the truth than those of the orthodox critic. He now puts up a splendid defence of Flaubert against the disparagement of a modern critic of some philosophic ability, Mr. J. Middleton Murry.

For Mr. Murry, Flaubert "came as near to genius as a man can come by taking pains," that is, he comes just short of genius, is in the critic's opinion but a minor master. It is this contention, a contention which was fashionable in France twenty years ago, that Mr. Robertson counters with his customary dialectical skill. For those of us who have read and pondered over *Madame Bovary*, the *Tentation de Saint Antoine*, and *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, there can be no question of Flaubert's genius, especially when we employ comparative tests. We do not think of him as a minor writer, as one who fails to recognize the graver issues

of life, whose diction is unimpressive, whose workmanship is uncertain. Flaubert has his limitations, but what artist is free from them? If *Salammbô* is ruled out as coming short of genius because of its want of a large comprehensiveness, it is difficult to see how we are to include *Don Quixote*, *Le Misanthrope*, and *Hamlet*, still less the work of men whose genius is admitted although it does not reach the universality of these. Mr. Robertson says:—

But the collapse is most complete when the critic seeks finally to clinch his declassification of Flaubert by a test of "serenity," the mark of the great writer, "The quality of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole." This quality is ascribed to (of all people!) Tolstoi, to Hardy, to Ibsen, to Tchekov; and it is defined as "the consciousness of having reached a point at which one is no longer rebellious or indignant at experience. Flaubert—this is the final judgment—"never reached it."

We have here, once for all, a completely untenable position, involving a vital confusion: (1) between mood and mode; (2) between the serenity of art and the serenity of philosophy; as well as (3) a vain assumption that all great literary art is the product of one philosophic mood. The outcome is that we must pronounce Shakespeare to have been philosophically serene at all stages of his artistic life, in *Lear* as in the *Winter's Tale*; and Tolstoi to have been no less "serene" in indignant aspersion of humanity and nagging preachments than in a tale or treatise of resignation. Such a verdict against the evidence is mere critical egoism. It mechanically and unreasonably excludes from the category of great literature all lyric indignation, all pessimism that impeaches the scheme of things; all sombre satire, all unresolved grief, however perfect be their expressions. It ascribes philosophic resignation to writers who only fitfully and precariously possess it, and makes a literary merit of a semi-scientific creed. The true critical test is that of the serenity of art, which is a deeply different thing from philosophic acceptance of "experiences." The serenity of art is impressed on Flaubert's best work as plainly as on any man's.

The admirers of Flaubert, and I know that many of my readers are glad to be numbered among them, will thank Mr. Robertson for his magistral vindication of the greatest of modern French novelists as against the detraction of his latest hostile critic. Those of us who have a standard by which to measure creative genius are, of course, no more disturbed by Mr. Murry's temperamental disparagement of Flaubert than we were by Mr. Arnold Bennett's pompous contempt for Thackeray, or Mr. J. D. Beresford's foolish belittling of George Meredith.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Acid Drops.

We congratulate the Glasgow tramways committee on its sense in refusing permission to Gipsy Pat Smith to address its employees at the works. The impertinent manner in which these travelling evangelists push their way into and before people whether they want them or not is astounding. The antics of these peripatetic professional soul-savers are bad enough when they are confined to halls specially engaged for the purpose, but they become intolerable when they thrust themselves unasked into people's homes and places of employment.

We write this in great fear and trembling. "Sursum Corda"—whoever he may be—has sent specimens of the literature distributed at Mr. Cohen's lecture in Weston-super-Mare to "the King of England, the Home Secretary, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Erskine," asking them what they are going to do about it? He even suggests that a united prayer meeting shall be held in the town to ask the "Great Governor and Ruler of the Universe" what he thinks about it. So we have cause for fear, and if the editor of the *Freethinker* disappears suddenly his friends will have some clue as to the cause of his disappearance, for here is the King of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Home Secretary, Lord Erskine, and the Governor and Ruler of the Universe solemnly asked to pay immediate attention to

the President of the National Secular Society and the horrible literature issued from this office. Our hands tremble too much to write more.

The spirit of caprice lurks in strange places. In the *Times Literary Supplement* Anglican Essays and Quacks and Charlatans are rubbing shoulders on the same page. From the Essays the reviewer extracts something of profound importance about partaking of "His Body and His Blood." Under "Quacks and Charlatans" the reader may discover that "St. Paul's Earth arrived from Malta, a remedy against all kinds of poisons."

Insurance companies do not appear to attach much importance to the tender care of the Christians' God. We read in the *Daily Mail* that:—

As the result of the numerous fires in churches and convents in Canada, the insurance companies have cancelled all policies in regard to churches, schools, and religious institutions, and insist on new policies at increased rates of from 32 to 50 per cent.

According to Dr. MacRory, Roman Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, the amount of "Peter's Pence" collected recently in that diocese amounted to £829. It must be annoying to Saint Peter, whilst he is gate-keeping, that so much money should be collected in his name and spent by people he has never been introduced to.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been featured on the screen in prominent incidents of his career. Presumably to illustrate a life of Christian humility and resignation.

"Religious controversy is no longer conducted at white heat," says the *Daily Telegraph*. Ordinary folk, who have read of the fires of Smithfield, will feel a quiet satisfaction.

The Temperance Council of the Christian Churches of England and Wales have inaugurated a crusade, and started a fund for the raising of £50,000 for that object. At the first meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Bourne, and leading Free Church ministers were present. Perhaps these pious temperance advocates will start by lowering the strength of "communion port," or by substituting "ginger-pop" in its place.

The erstwhile khaki wearing Bishop of London is one of those peculiar individuals who are certain to be wrong even when they are right. For example, he has just suggested that in order to celebrate the bicentenary of Sir Christopher Wren a dozen of his city churches should be pulled down. In a "spiritual" sense we should be inclined to add to the number, but the Bishop does not, of course, mean that. He wants the money from them to build other churches elsewhere—which is much like a scientist gathering all the germs of fever from an infected area and scattering them over the countryside. From another point of view we have a weakness for these old churches. As architecture they have an artistic and educational value, and we have not so much of these things that we can afford to destroy what we have. From another point of view we think these things are illustrative of the mental life of certain periods. Certainly models of them all should be preserved, and with them should go models of the clergy in full war-paint. Together they would form a valuable museum for the benefit of posterity. How otherwise are the civilized people of say, 20050, to form an idea of what the more savage members of present day society were like?

Father Degan, speaking at Coalville, said the Church that was going to win in this country is the one that not only commands the worship of God, but encourages comic songs between. There is a good deal in this, and if only

Father Degan would add beer and "baccy" to the programme we can promise him a full house every time.

Dr. Randall Davidson has completed twenty years as Archbishop of Canterbury. During that time this chief of a "spiritual" religion has netted the material sum of £300,000 as a salary. In addition, he has had two palaces to live in, and is styled, "Your Grace."

"We are living at the present day in the midst of Paganism," says the Bishop of Salford. It is a queer Paganism which supports 50,000 Christian priests.

"Religion is stern. The road of Christ is narrow. The condition of discipleship is cross-bearing," says the *Church Times*. What on earth is the matter? Have the patent medicine proprietors decided to advertise in other periodicals?

Recently the chaplain of the Colorado House of Representatives, in offering up his daily prayer, informed the Lord, "Our Courts are corrupt, God has been expelled from our churches, our pulpits are filled with essayists, our boys and girls are going to the dogs, our labouring men are going to work with empty pails, while our farmers starve and the middlemen wax fat on exorbitant prices." Now if the Lord had been attending to his business properly he would have known all about this. But, at any rate, the House of Representatives have decided to cancel that particular prayer. We do not quite know how this is done as the prayer was addressed to God, and, presumably, reached its destination some time before the official cancellation. But the members have decided to inform the Lord that he has been misled by the chaplain concerning the state of Colorado. It is a pretty picture of an all-wise God who has to have his daily news bulletin corrected by a bunch of members of parliament!

Religious advertisements are sometimes very funny. Here is one. The Rev. Douglas A. Brown advertises "A quiet day with God." Now does that mean that God will not worry the people, or the people will not worry God? And what is a noisy day with God? If the Lord listens to all his followers have to say we can quite understand the desirability of a quiet day.

Awakened by burglars, the Rev. J. Doxford, a Wesleyan minister, of Bromley, opened fire with a revolver. He fired three shots and the burglars made off. The more austere exponents of Christ's teaching will be shocked at such pugnacity.

The late Mrs. Ormiston Chant, who has died at the age of 74, will be best remembered for the Purity crusade she led against the music-hall promenade in the 'nineties. It was not until twenty-two years later that this one promenade was closed. What a victory! The "Purity" crusaders forgot the other promenade of:—

Thirty thousand women with one smile,
Who only smile at night beneath the gas.

The Vicar of Leeds says that it is untrue to talk of empty churches. His proof is that there are more people assembled in churches than attend football matches. That is very ingenuous, and it seems cruel to point out that (1) people pay to attend a football match, and (2) there are not quite so many football matches as there are churches. Except when there is a "show" on in a large church we do not hear of people being turned away from church for want of accommodation.

Speaking of football reminds us of a statement by the Rev. Kenneth Hunt, himself a football player, that "over

and over again he had prayed for the side for which he was playing, and frequently victory followed." All we can say on this is that it was not very sportsmanlike on the part of Mr. Hunt. The other side had engaged to play Mr. Hunt and his team, not the team plus God Almighty, and it was distinctly unfair for Mr. Hunt to have an unseen but powerful player helping his side. Fair notice should have been given that God was helping Mr. Hunt and his team, and then the other team could have got another deity to help it. There are plenty of deities about to give a very wide choice.

A local London paper, noticing Mr. Hunt's declaration, asks what is to happen if both teams pray to God for help? That, of course, makes the thing ridiculous, but we may point out to the editor of the paper that this is precisely what people who pray are always doing. During the war each side prayed to the same God for help, and each believed it got it. One man prays for rain because he is a farmer, and another prays for dry weather because it helps his particular occupation. Of course it is absurd, but then the whole practice of prayer is absurd. Every religionist sees it is absurd when it is offered up to some other God or for some other purpose than his own.

As a comment on the remark of the Vicar of Leeds we may put the wail of the Vicar of Shepperton, in the Parish Magazine. He says, "Some of you might surely make an effort to attend the daily service. No one comes at all now." If the vicar will consult his brother of Leeds he will find he is quite mistaken and that there are as many people at his church as attend football matches. They may not be visible to gross material organs, but they are plain to the eye of faith.

Cardinal Bourne considers that no Roman Catholic boy or girl should be sent to a non-Catholic boarding school, and attendance at a non-Catholic day school is to be regretted if it cannot be avoided. Catholics can no more shed their bigotry than a leopard can part with his spots.

The *Northern Echo* quite approves Lord Balfour's belief that life, to be satisfactory, must have a theistic setting. That is only what one may expect in a country where religion is an established thing and newspapers live by not offending established institutions. But the paper goes on to say, not very coherently, that "it is one thing to assume a divine purpose in the world; it is another thing to constitute oneself the instrument by which that purpose is to ensure the infliction of penalties for wrongdoing." But if one believes there is a divine purpose in the world it would follow that one would try and put oneself into line with that purpose. It is just at that point that the trouble commences, for each one must be the judge of what the divine purpose is, and that means in practice clothing one's desires and passions with all the authority of the said "divine purpose"; which further means that it is only safe to believe in a divine purpose so long as you don't bother about it, and ignore it altogether in practice. What the *Northern Echo* appears to mean is, "Leave the Gods alone." That was the advice of Confucius, but the *Northern Echo* is not Confucius, and opinions in a paper must not be definite—unless they happen to be those of the majority, then they may be dogmatic.

Frantic appeals for money for the poor of Mesopotamia, and other places, have been published (and paid for) in the Press. That is the English way. Excite sympathy for the Arabs, and ignore the street-Arabs at home.

"The world is not better, or more moral, than it was," says Bishop Welldon. This is said after two thousand years of the "Religion of Love."

To Correspondents.

Those subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

L. MUSKETT.—The Counsel was correct. Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant were each sentenced to six months' imprisonment with a fine of £200 for publishing the Knowlton pamphlet. The indictment was subsequently quashed in the Court of Appeal. The Counsel was within the truth in saying that Bradlaugh was condemned to prison. Perhaps one day Dr. Stopes may find it wise to recognize how much she owes to Bradlaugh and Besant for the fight they made.

"ATHEIST."—There seems little use in filling the columns of this paper with exposures of the frauds of mediums. These are fairly well known, but are not noticed by the people who should notice them. There are some who seem born to credulity and superstition, and these seem incapable of salvation. Stop them in one direction and they break out in another.

D. LEAHEY.—We are sending papers. If a subscription is sent we will guarantee regular delivery, or should any be lost in transit will send substitutes free.

H. MAY.—Yours is not an uncommon experience, but to do anything with a view to recognition is a sure way to sorrow. Recognition of one's work is pleasant when it comes unsought and unasked, but to work for it is to rob it of its chief value when it arrives.

H. J. H.—You did well in raising the issue, and the result is not surprising. Politicians are much of a muchness all the world over and all the time. The service develops the type and attracts the type it creates.

S. ROBINSON.—Thanks for cuttings. The worst possible policy for anyone to follow in conducting a paper—or anything else—is to try to please everyone. The *Freethinker* has a special mission to perform, and there is no other paper in this country that is doing it. It is because it is a specialist journal that it can do the work it is doing.

S. BETTS.—As you say the sight of Sir Frederick Treves' Elephant-man is a queer commentary on the wisdom of an all-wise creator, but probably a showman would see in it an indication of Providence, and it is as good an indication as any that we have heard of.

W. REPTON.—One must be cautious in commenting upon a trial while it is proceeding. Contempt of Court is a very elastic offence.

T. R.—There are more new readers made through giving copies of the *Freethinker* to a friend than by any other method. Yours is the experience of many others.

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 4) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Central Hall, Hillgate, Stockport, at 6.30, on "What the World Gains from Unbelief." Judging from previous visits, there will be no doubt in anticipating a good attendance. On Sunday next, March 11, Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester.

To-day (March 4) is the anniversary service at the Secular Hall, Leicester. Mr. Lloyd will be the principal speaker, and there is sure to be a good assemblage of all the local friends. The Leicester Society has kept up a very gallant fight for many years, and has been fortunate in having a fine hall at their command in a central position. Those responsible for the conduct of affairs have every reason to congratulate themselves on the standing of the Society in the town, and we add our congratulations to the many that will be received on the good work being done.

We were glad to see in the *Daily Herald* a short but excellent article on religion and labour from the pen of our occasional contributor, Mr. V. Hands. It is good to notice a distinct feeling of uneasiness in the ranks of the supporters of the Labour Party at the way in which many of its leaders try to make the Labour movement an adjunct to the churches. The simple innocence which makes the honest ones among them believe that they can capture the churches is quite refreshing to contemplate.

The audience at the Town Hall, Birmingham, on Sunday last was well up to the usual level and there was no mistaking the keen interest with which Mr. Cohen's lecture was followed. Mr. Willis occupied the chair and strongly urged upon those present the desirability of their giving their heartiest support to the Branch. It was good also to see the bookstall once more active. This is a very important side of our work and should not be overlooked by any branch, or by those who wish to see the movement go ahead. To-day (March 4) Mr. Clifford Williams will lecture in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, at 7 on "Medicine-Men, Ancient and Modern." We hope that most of those present at the Town Hall will be at the Brassworkers' Hall to listen to Mr. Williams. They are certain to be repaid for their attendance.

We were pleased to see a notice in the *Moffat and Ammandale Herald* of Mr. Mitchell, a resident of Moffat and a Glasgow merchant, who when he died in 1874 provided by his will that a sum of money, which eventually reached about £70,000, should go to form the library in Glasgow that now goes by his name. One of the conditions of the bequest was that no book should be excluded from the library on the ground of its contravening any opinion, political or religious. That was a wise provision, and we should be interested in learning whether it has been faithfully carried out. One could not expect the *Moffat Herald* to mention that Mr. Mitchell was a Freethinker. Had he committed a murder his heresy would have been given prominence. As it was a matter of founding a library it was as well to let people assume that he was a sound Christian.

Laughter.

LOVELY is laughter: the child's innocent trilling of joy, Aërial laughter of girls, the half-shy mirth of a boy, Jubilant uproar of men who jesting fellowship prove, The mocking-tender delight of woman's laughter of love. All these most beautiful are; but the terrible Laughter Inane,

The cackling *clicketty-click* that tokens an empty brain, Fatuous, vacuous screech, blatantly unashamed— Thuswise the fiends in Hell torture the ears of the damned.

JOHN ERNEST SIMPSON.

Grace Before Meat.

I EXPECT most of our readers are acquainted with the story of the small boy and his aunt who were dining out at a restaurant. The youngster having been reproved by his aunt for commencing his lunch without first saying grace, protested, "But, Auntie, I thought you were *paying* for this." That really sums up all that can well be said from an anti-grace point of view. Personally, in my most pious days I could never see the reason for thanking my Maker for having been graciously pleased to provide me with the means of maintaining the life He had—presumably with some object of his own—given me. At the best it seemed to cast a reflection on his benevolence, whilst it might well be the means of my forgetting the ill-requited labours of those to whom I was more immediately indebted. It meant drawing an invidious distinction between myself and those less fortunately placed, and thanking God for giving me what He had denied to others.

From a rational standpoint the Christian's grace is a piece of colossal conceit. It is, however, a species of egotism of which most Christians are guilty and none ashamed. They protest that their God is not anthropomorphic, and yet continue to outrage common-sense and decency by offering up a grace. With such people argument is worse than useless, one can only fall back on the great weapon that never fails to destroy cant and error, viz., ridicule.

Such an example of the power of ridicule I came across some time ago in a book written by that ill-fated satirist the late Frank Richardson. It occurs in a volume of short stories under the quaint title of *Bunkum*, a work that Mr. Richardson dedicated to "the wives of all British whisker wearers in deepest sympathy." Whiskers, or, as he termed them, face-fittings were one of Mr. Richardson's pet aversions, as also was the devoutly religious person, as the following quotation will show:—

Some portions of his grace were bright and pithy. In the main it was sound, and showed knowledge of men and things and cities. Certain views that he expressed on current topics were backed with admirable historical data. But Mr. Tebb was inaccurate as to the state of the Lancashire cotton trade in 1897, and his opinion of Scandinavian Architecture was perhaps a little extravagant, but on the whole it was one of the most workmanlike graces that I have heard in the States.

When Mr. Tebb had finished I asked him why he didn't publish it or deliver it as a lecture. The question pleased him, so I suggested that, if he condensed the grace a little, and put in a few conundrums, it could be brought out in monthly parts. I hinted that it would command a ready sale in Scotland.

After dinner the Rev. Jupiter Tebb surpassed himself, as also did Mr. Richardson in his description thereof:—

After lunch he proceeded, with tight-shut eyes, to incubate another grace. This production was encyclopædic. It was a liberal education for a young man.....There were moments when I gave up hope, so impossible did it seem for mortal mind to assimilate all the facts and figures that the Rev. Jupiter placed before the Deity in expressing gratitude for the lunch.....Passages that he fancied would present difficulties to the intellect of his Maker he prudently illustrated by diagrams drawn with a fork upon the table-cloth. He wound up with an appendix on "Death: Its Use and Abuse." This he supplemented by a treatise on "Decay: Permanent and Temporary.".....It eventually transpired that the man had been in a species of trance produced by acute verbiage!

Yes! Read Mr. Richardson by all means. Whether it be the Christian's grace or the Christian's face, Mr. Richardson is equally funny. Take for instance the following piece of satire:—

Sir Kirkby Wiske had lately resigned his judgeship on the Common Law side. An octogenarian, he had for ten years been entitled to his pension, but he had struggled manfully along until chronic insomnia on the Bench compelled him to retire. Yet his resignation had not impaired that comprehensive ignorance which had been his chief characteristic as a judge.

It is such men as Sir Kirkby Wiske who refer to blasphemy as "a dangerous crime."

What Mr. Richardson's views on religion were I cannot say, but it is evident that, like most humorists, he was a good old Pagan at heart.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Fetichism and Idolatry.

II.

(Continued from page 123.)

FATHER MEROLLA, in 1666, writing of the fetiches in the regions of Angolo and Congo, says:—

Before the gates of their houses almost all have one of these idols, whereof I have seen some five or six feet high; others are smaller, but both are generally clouterly carved. They place them likewise in the fields, where they are never worshipped, but on account of finding out some theft, for which the thief, when discovered, must die. They that keep idols in their houses, every first day of the moon are obliged to anoint them with a sort of red wood powdered—probably a substitution for blood. At the appearance of every new moon, these people fall on their knees, or else cry out, standing and clapping the hands, "So may I renew my life as thou art renewed."

The moon as a time measure, especially connected with feminine periodicity, has been widely an object of worship, and it is interesting to note that exactly as the ancient Egyptians assimilated their hopes of a resurrection to the fact of the sun dying daily and being daily renewed, so did the savage Africans place their hopes of renewed life on the renewal of the moon.

Mr. Monteno, in his description of "Angolo and the River Congo" (ii, p. 7), says:—

In these towns were the largest "fetish" houses I have seen in Angolo. There was a large hut built of mud, the walls plastered with white, and painted all over inside and out with grotesque drawings, in black and red, of men and animals. Inside were three life-size figures, very roughly modelled in clay, and of the most indecent description. Behind this hut was a long court the width of the length of the hut, enclosed with walls about six feet high. A number of figures similar in character to those in the hut were standing in this court, which was kept quite clean and bare of grass. What, if any, were the uses to which these "fetish" houses were applied I could not exactly ascertain.

Commenting on this the Rev. H. Rowley says:—

These "fetish" houses, or rather temples, were devoted to nature-worship, a species of idolatry that seems to have been universal. In earliest times it prevailed with the Egyptians, it was inveterate among the Jews, it is symbolized in the rites of Adonis, Aphrodite, Isis, etc.; and in India and Japan it is even now most popular.

In my essay on "Phallic Worship Among the Jews," in *Bible Studies*, I have pointed out that in the temple at Jerusalem the women wove hangings for

the Asherah, and that in the same precincts were the houses of prostitute priests. Arnobius mentions:—

that the Arabians worshipped an unshapen stone; the Persians, rivers; the Scythians, a sabre; the Thespians, a branch instead of Diana; the people of an unheven log instead of the mother of Gods; the Pessinus, a flute instead of the mother of Gods; the Romans, a spear instead of Mars, as the muses of Varro point out; and, before they were acquainted with the statuary's art, the Samians a plank instead of Juno, as Aethlius relates.

Mr. C. G. Leland in his *Etruscan Roman Remains in Popular Tradition*, p. 19, says:—

The old religion survives in Italy. There is actually in Tuscany a culture or worship of fetishes which are not Catholic, i.e., of strange stones and many curious relics.

He gives abundance of instances. Amulets in animal forms, mouse and pig; holy stones, spells, charms and invocations for cures by magic; bells used to drive away storms, etc.

Remains of fetishism may be found at home in the crooked sixpences, hard potatoes, curious stones, and other charms, which even civilized people are known to carry in order to bring them luck. This superstition is particularly rife among criminals, some of whom have indeed been "spotted" by their carrying such articles with the hope of warding off detection. So sailors wear a child's caul to save them from drowning, the idea being that as the caul has shielded the young life in its passage to the world, so it will continue to exert its power. In *Notes and Queries* for 1882 we read of a person who wore a dead toad, wrapped in silk round his stomach for ten years as a charm against scrofula.

The fetish state of mind is equally shown in the belief in particular lucky or holy days. Many country people still refuse to commence any important undertaking on a Friday, and the special sanctity of the Sabbath forms part of the same general superstition.

There are many traces of fetish worship in the Bible. Sacred trees and stones are frequently referred to in Genesis and the historical books, and the holy paraphernalia of tabernacle worship are *taboo*.

The Urim and Thummim, ephod, phylacteries and teraphim were originally fetishes. Gideon and all Israel worshipped an ephod at Ophrah (Judges viii, 27), and the prophet Hosea (iii, 4) announces as a misfortune that "the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." In Ezek. xxi, 21, the word teraphim is translated "images," and it is evident from this passage that they were used as oracles for magical consultation. Teraphim were kept in the household of David, and these household gods, as we gather from the story of Michal substituting one for her husband (1 Sam. xix, 13), were rude images in human form. For "Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed and put a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth." It is evident David took no more heed of the second commandment than of the seventh. Probably he had never heard of it. Laban calls the teraphim his "gods" (Genesis xxxi, 30); and so does Micah (Judges xviii, 18-24). In the thirtieth verse of the latter chapter the word Manasseh has been substituted for that of Moses in order to conceal the fact that the direct descendants of Moses actually worshipped images down to the days of captivity. (See Revised Version.)

The most sacred fetish was the ark, which probably contained the rude stone of the fetish Jahveh, as we know that the holy of holies of the most splendid temples of Greece contained rude stones called by the names of Hera or Zeus. The ark was, like the images

of the Philistines, carried into battle, and supposed to presage victory. As is usual with fetishes, it was *taboo* except to the priests, and Uzzah was suddenly smitten to death merely for preventing it from falling. That worship of images and atrocious sacrifices to them did not stand in the way of participation in Jahveh worship we have evidence from Ezekiel, who tells us "when they have slain their children to their idols then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house" (xxiii, 39). The coronation stone, now in the House of Lords, was probably one of the fetishes once worshipped in these islands. "The worship of stones is condemned by Theodoric, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the seventh century, and is among the acts of heathenism forbidden by King Edgar in the tenth, and by Cnut in the eleventh century" (Forbes Leslie, *Early Races of Scotland*, i, 256-7). A writer on ancient customs in the Isle of Skye in 1795 says: "In every district there is to be met with a rude stone consecrated to Gruagach, or Apollo."

In anointing the stone with oil (Gen. xxviii, 18) Jacob performed one of the most common acts of fetish worship. Kalisch, in his note on this passage, admits that the word Bethel is probably taken from Bætyll, signifying a fetish stone. A striking case of the survival of fetishism is the reverence paid by those stout opponents of idolatry, the Mohammedans, to the Kaaba, the black stone at Mecca, supposed to be of meteoric origin, and so literally to have fallen from heaven. "A stone which fell near Chicomoztot, or the Seven Caves, an important spot in the mythological topography of the ancient Mexicans, was worshipped by them as the son of the divine couple, Ometeculi and Omecihautl." (Peschel, *Races of Man*, 248.)

In Jerusalem there was a perforated stone which the Jews annually anointed as late as the fourth century of our era (W. R. Smith). In the "Characters" of Theophrastus, the Superstitious Man pours oil on the smooth stones at the cross road and goes down on his knees and worships them. Lucian mentions one Rutillianus, who, whenever he saw an anointed stone, used to fall on his knees before it, worship it, and remain standing beside it in prayer for a long time. At Delphi there was a stone on which oil was poured every day. It was said to have been the stone which the crafty Rhea gave to her cannibal husband Cronus to swallow instead of the infant Zeus. Cronus swallowed the stone, but spat it out again (Pausanias, x, 24-6).

In the New Testament there are remnants of fetishism. People are cured by touching the hem of Christ's garment (Matt. xiv, 36), and the handkerchiefs and aprons of Paul prove of efficacy in exorcising evil spirits (Acts xix, 12).

Relic worship is itself a relic of the fetishism from which all forms of image worship and idolatry have grown by the ascription of powers to the effigy similar to those of the person it is supposed to represent. When we read how "the Samoyedes feed the wooden images of the dead," we are reminded that even in the dolls of our children we may find some trace of early fetishism.

Idolatry sprang from fetishism, and in much of heathen idolatry there was something tender and humane. Rude stone images were often attempts to keep in remembrance some revered father or chief. The author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, xiv, 15, observed:—

For a father afflicted with untimely mourning, when he hath made an image of his child soon taken away, now honoured him as a god, who was then a dead man, and delivered to those that were under him ceremonies and sacrifices. Thus in process of

time an ungodly custom grown strong was kept as a law, and graven images were worshipped by the commandment of kings. Whom men could not honour in presence, because they dwelt far off, they took the counterfeit of his visage from far, and made an express image of a king whom they honoured, to the end that by this their forwardness they might flatter him that was absent, as if he were present.

Images were supposed to embody the qualities of spirits they represented. In Congo, fetishes or idols are placed in fields to protect growing crops, and do, in fact, act as scarecrows. Herbert Spencer, in his *Principles of Sociology* (Vol. I, p. 333), notes how among more advanced peoples there still persists the idea that the idol of the god, developed from the effigy of the dead man, is the residence of a conscious being as implied by the statement of Erman respecting the Russians of Irkutsk:—

Whatever familiarities may be permitted between the sexes, the only scruple by which the young women are infallibly controlled, is a superstitious dread of being alone with their lovers in the presence of the holy images. Conscientious difficulties of this kind, however, are frequently obviated by putting these witnesses behind a curtain.

Like beliefs are found in many different races. Bastian tells us that a negress in Sierra Leone had in her room four idols whose mouths she daily daubed with maize and palm oil; one for herself, one for her dead husband, and one for each of her children. And of the Bhils we read:—

Their usual ceremonies consist in merely smearing the idol, which is seldom anything but a shapeless stone, with vermilion and red lead, or oil; offering with protestations and a petition, an animal and some liquor.

Even of the most advanced nation of antiquity Plutarch tells us *De Iside et Osiride*, c. 71):—

The Greeks were accustomed to speak of the statues of brass and stone, or painted figures, not as images made in honour of the gods, but as the gods themselves.

Just so, Catholics speak of the Virgin of Chartres, meaning the black image there, or the Virgin of Loretto or Lourdes. J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Concluded.)

Islam and Freethought; The Great Mind.

II.

(Continued from page 60.)

In my last article, which appeared in the *Freethinker* of January 28, I dealt with the question of the Law as propounded by Mr. Kamal-ud-din. I now propose to place his assumption of the existence of a Great Mind, in or behind Nature and the Law, upon the operating table and see what it looks like in the light of Freethought, facts and common-sense.

Mr. Kamal-ud-din says that a piece of wood detached from a tree loses further growth, but may be "converted into a chair or a table under the dominion of the working mind," and in such "dead matter worked out anew into a chair, table, or other useful article," he sees undeniable proof of a working mind, the human mind.

If we see a policeman's truncheon worked out of a piece of dead wood, we infer it to be the work of a human mind, through the medium of material matter such as hands and tools, and a policeman's truncheon is a "useful article"—on occasions. If, however, the piece of dead wood were of suitable size and shape, it

could be used by a man as a cudgel to crack skulls with without being worked up at all; it would still be a useful article, but would indicate no proof of a working mind. A smooth, flat stone off the beach is a useful article to crack nuts with, but does not indicate a working mind; it simply indicates the working of a law of Nature—the action of water upon a fragment of stone. The utility of an article, therefore, is no proof or indication of a working mind. It is only when we see things that from experience and observation we know are not found in Nature—such as flint arrowheads—that we infer them to be the work of human minds and hands. Beyond this we see nothing but the workings of the laws of Nature.

Instead of chairs and tables, Mr. Kamal-ud-din would, I think, have done better had he instanced a watch or a steam engine as proof of a working human mind. A primitive savage seeing and examining a locomotive engine for the first time and marvelling at the wonderful ingenuity of its mechanism might feel inclined to deify and worship the engineer who made it and apostrophise him somewhat as follows: "O mighty engineer, how marvellous is thy work! Thou hast made this wonderful engine and put steam into it to give it life and motion; thy power is great and mysterious. I do not understand it, and know very little about it; therefore, O great, mysterious, powerful engineer, I bow to thee and worship thee." And the engineer would probably say to him: "Get up, you silly ass, and don't make a fool of yourself!"

Further to illustrate his theory of a Great Mind in Nature, Mr. Kamal-ud-din instances the telephone and its inventor, and the girl who controls the exchange system. However much we may admire them and praise them for their cleverness, we do not worship the telephone girl or the inventor of the instrument she so deftly manipulates.

Mr. Kamal-ud-din also instances "that development of military organization known as the 'brains of the army,' the general staff." It so happens that I had over three years' experience in the army (home service) during the war and the armistice, and my experience taught me that the army possesses very little brains but a lot of "red tape" and routine. The "brains of the army" is certainly not worshipped by those who must perforce carry out its orders. If Mr. Kamal-ud-din will read a leader which appeared in the *Daily Mail* of November 29 last, he will be told that "Lord Haig's conception of the war was limited by the defects of his own capacity, intelligence and skill," and that "since the war Lord Haig has devoted all his energy to work for the men who served under him, and striven to show his gratitude to the rank and file, without whom the war could not have been won." The italics are mine, and I quote this article to show that Mr. Kamal-ud-din's simile of the brains of the army for the Great Mind is perhaps more apt than he intended it to be; for it is more than probable that if this Great Mind exist, it is limited by the defects of its own capacity, intelligence and skill, and is also dependent upon material matter to work out its ideas.

Mind is entirely dependent upon matter for its manifestation, and if there be a mind in Nature, it must have been co-existent with matter throughout all eternity. It is needless, therefore, to argue as to whether mind or matter was the "first cause," or which existed first, like the problem of the hen and the egg. If the human mind could have a conscious and active existence without the human body, it was needless and senseless for it ever to be confined in and combined with the human body. The mind is dependent upon the material brain matter, and the brain matter is dependent upon the stomach and its food. Without the stomach, what becomes of the brain? Without the brain, what becomes of the mind? To all

intents and purposes it is non-existent. If steam alone could propel a train from place to place without being confined in the engine, there would be no need for the engine. Even for the dissemination of our thoughts we are dependent upon such material matters as pens, ink, and paper.

Because he sees undeniable proof of a working human mind in such useful articles as chairs, tables, telephones, and armies, Mr. Kamal-ud-din infers that there is a working mind in "the whole universe where the whole growth has been from the birth of time." What does he mean by the birth of time? Time is but a word applied by man to indicate the relativity or sequence of events as they are presented to his apprehension, and as eternity has no beginning, no birth, the word "time" was not born until it was invented by man. If a man travel by train from, say, London to Liverpool, the stations on the route are there all the while, though he cannot see them. London becomes the *past*; the *present* is where he happens to be at any given moment, and the stations ahead of him are the *future*; but past, present, and future stations are in actual existence throughout the whole of his journey.

There may be a working mind in Nature; it is not my object to disprove it, nor could I do so; but that is no reason why I should believe in it. My object is to show that, if it exist, there is no necessity or justification for us to personify, deify, or worship it. We had far better confine ourselves to the study and improvement of the human mind; it is the only mind that is or has ever been of any use to mankind.

Apart from the minds of animals and plants (for plants have minds, else how do they know thorns are injurious to and a protection against animals?) the only mind of which we have any evidence is the human mind, and of human minds there are various sorts. There is the good mind, the evil mind, the strong mind, the weak mind, the simple mind, the high mind, the low mind, and so on. We can only judge of the human mind by its actions, by its manifestations through the medium of material matter. If then, there be a "Great Mind" co-existent with Nature, we can only judge of it likewise by its actions as manifested in the laws of Nature. Let us then, for the sake of argument, assume that there is a Great Mind in Nature, and consider it by what we know of its actions.

A. W. MALCOLMSON.

(To be Concluded.)

Correspondence.

RELIGION IN THE COURTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

STR,—I have long held the administration of English justice in almost reverential regard, and the ability to discriminate and dissect the evidence brought before the Courts is a matter for congratulation. It is wonderful how the Court, at least in mundane affairs, can dissociate itself from matter extraneous to the case before it, and exclude irrelevant matter.

It is said that Roman Catholics, that is those of them who have sufficient intelligence, are capable of discoursing on any subject of which they have full knowledge, and the ordinary affairs of life; but when any question affects their religion or their beloved Church they become as men doped with opium or cocaine. That is to say, they lose their reason and become incapable of acting as they would in normal conditions.

It is a misfortune when judges of the High Court become doped with religious fervour, just as much as if they were drunk with wine. Those of them who drink wine will no doubt leave that duty alone until the proper time, and leave their heads clear until the evening dinner.

In certain societies the discussion of religion is ex-

pressly excluded because it so often splits up societies of men who otherwise would retain their sanity and freedom of intercourse.

If it is necessary in ordinary human intercourse to adopt this precaution it is more than doubly so in the administration of justice, for if the Court is once suspected of religious taint no reliance can be reposed in its impartiality. It is astounding to find that a Justice of the High Court can be found at this time of history who expresses in his Court a belief in miracles, whether performed by Jesus Christ or Christian Scientists. In any event one is as likely as the other, and neither is possible. It is more than likely that the Justice in question has sufficient intelligence to know that he was expressing a belief intended to be conveyed to ignorant minds, but to those who know the truth he realized his belief would be winked at with one eye and the other would be shut. This attitude will not support the administration of legal justice. Courts of Justice are not places where witnesses may express their beliefs. Facts and truth are demanded, and the judge would be the first to denounce any witness who came to state what he believed.

Casuistry from a learned judge will not suffice for British justice if he desires to retain the confidence of litigants, and above all he must be sincere and not use his trusted office to perpetuate superstition which arises from the dark ages.

It is distressing beyond the expression of language that the administration of justice should have been dragged to the level of the Church by one whose business it is to keep to facts and to confine himself to mundane affairs, and to the evidence brought before him.

If the reference made by the advocate was irrelevant, the judge should have rejected it, and not have taken it as a text to preach from.

I trust that those whose duty it is to administer justice will see these references in your journal, because none is so sensitive to public opinion as those who are called upon to act with impartiality.

SINE CERE.

WHERE REYNARD SCORED.

STR,—Captain Nigel W. W. Freer, of Harlow, Essex, while hunting with the Essex hounds a fox that took them over some very "difficult country," was killed one day last week. His horse fell "attempting a fence" near Epping, and rolled over on its rider, inflicting fatal injuries. The Master of the Hunt instantly took the pack home (the Kennels). Sequel: A "giddy," callous "old varmint" reached his hole singing to the southerly breeze, "It's an ill wind that blows *nobody* any good."

Will the benediced cleric who subscribes to the Hunt caution the congregation at the funeral service with a reference to the "wise virgins"? Their lamps were trimmed and burning.

FRED WHITBY-EDWARDS.

To God in Heaven.

We heard in childhood; preach they still;
Naught happens here but at Thy will!
That by Thine own all-seeing mind
This universe was first designed.

For all these mercies, Thou, O Lord!
By true believers wert adored.

Lord! In this world by Thee designed
Much ill with good is intertwined.
In Thy severe, impartial plan
Comes death and worse to beast and man.

Earthquakes and tempests take their toll,
And droughts and floods beyond control.
On man and beast alike they fall,
And pitilessly slay them all.

The locusts come in countless swarms,
Or insect life in other forms;
The work of months in one brief hour
These countless myriads all devour.

We watch and see our cattle die
From bite of tick and sting of fly;
Whilst other insects like to these
Infect ourselves with fell disease.

With microscopes mankind has found
The loathsome forms that lurk around,
And on our food and bodies crawl.
But Lord! "Thou mad'st and lov'st all!"

The germ that hydrophobia gives
And in the dog and rabbit lives;
The germ that makes the cancer start
Of Thy creation are a part.

Lord, in Thy wisdom, Thou didst make
The filthy fly, the deadly snake,
And all the other pests that bring
Disease and death in bite and sting.

Thy priests command us all to kneel,
And pray, and make to Thee appeal.
They teach us that Thou art inclined
By earnest prayer to change Thy mind.

Lord! How our women prayed and prayed,
And what appeals to Thee they made
That Thou wouldst in the Great War spare
And shield their men who suffered there.

Though fervently they prayed, yet fell
Their men the same from shot and shell.
In vain, O Lord! they called on Thee
To exercise Thy clemency!

And others prayed as earnestly
For those in peril on the sea;
But none the less their kin were drowned,
And submarines their targets found.

Yet, for Thy mercies, Thou O Lord!
By true believers art adored.

RATIONALIST.

Obituary.

On February 21, at her home, 7 Robert Street, Failsworth; aged 71 years, Mrs. Jane Warren, widow of the late John Warren. The deceased lady had been a life-long attendant at the Secular School, Pole Lane, Failsworth, and during her life wielded much influence in moulding the policy and teaching carried on there. In her younger days she gave much assistance in the dramatic representations, and latterly she was actively associated with the ladies' sewing class. In cases of trouble or sickness her help and advice was much sought after and ever given ungrudgingly. In this respect her loss will be felt very acutely. The funeral took place on Saturday, Feb. 24, at Failsworth Cemetery. Mr. James Pollitt conducted the Secular Burial Service in a very sympathetic and efficient manner, eulogizing the high moral lesson to be learnt from the life of the deceased. The sympathy and condolence of our congregation and her many friends are extended to the family in their bereavement.—J. SMITH, *Secular School, Failsworth.*

It is with deepest regret we have to record the death of another veteran Freethinker in the person of Mr. Walter Stewart, of 59 Lausanne Road, Hornsey, who passed away peacefully on Tuesday last, February 20, at the age of 82. A Chartist, Co-operator and, practically all his life, a Freethinker, Walter Stewart was almost an historic figure in the North of London, particularly in Wood Green and Finsbury Park, where his never ceasing advocacy of and activities in the Cause he had so dearly at heart earned him the devoted affection of his friends and the respect of his enemies. Although living for many years on a small pension, he was always ready to come to the assistance of those poorer than himself. In accordance with his often expressed wishes, his body was cremated on Friday last at the newly built Crematorium at Hendon. By an unfortunate misunderstanding as to the whereabouts of the new building, the friend who had undertaken to read the service, and other mourners, were, to their everlasting regret, unable to be present, but determined that their father's wish for a Secular funeral should be carried out, a Secular service was conducted in turn by his three sons in true Stewart spirit. To them, and to all the members of his family, we offer our deepest sympathy, feeling that in this hour of their sorrow they may find consolation in the thought that this world has been the better for Walter Stewart having passed through it.—E. M. V.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30. Debate—"The Land is the People's and cannot be Bought or Sold"; Affirmative, Mr. J. W. Graham Peace; Negative, Mr. T. F. Palmer.

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, Social Meeting—Instrumental and Vocal Music—Recitals.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2.): 11, Joseph McCabe, "Renan as a Moralist."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. V. J. Hands, "Moral Bankruptcy of Christianity."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyll Street): 11.30, T. A. Williams, "Is Anti-Vivisection in the Line of Progress." Questions and discussion. Silver collection. Committee meet after Lecture.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Rooms): 7, Mr. Arthur Haigh, "The Soul of Man."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, 42nd Anniversary of the Opening of the Secular Hall.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (101 Higher Hillgate): 2.30, Mr. R. A. Crank, "The Argument from Conscience"; 6.45 at the Labour Church, Lower Hillgate, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "What Humanity has Gained from Unbelief."

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