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Views and Opinions.

Getting at the Facts.

One of the most difficult things in religious controversy is to get disputants to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. If it is a discussion as to the *existence* of God one is almost certain to find it complicated by a discussion as to his goodness or badness—a quite distinct question, and a secondary one. In a discussion as to the historical character of the New Testament Jesus one is indeed fortunate if there is not raised yards of sentimentality about the ideal perfection of Jesus—again a quite distinct matter since there is no necessity for an ideal figure ever to have existed, it is enough to have conceived it. Christians are quite obviously men and women in addition to their being members of this or that Church, but the most difficult thing in the world is to get Christians to consider conduct as following from normal human nature as distinct from their conduct as members of a Church. I do not, of course, claim that this confusion of issues is a peculiarity of the religious mind, it is very common with all sorts of subjects; all I claim is that it is more inherent in religious subjects than it is with others. In science when we are in doubt as to the causative value of particular factors we proceed by the method of elimination and difference. We leave out certain of the factors and see what happens. If the usual result follows we decide the omitted factors to be non-essential. In religion the whole thing is one grand confusion from beginning to end. A man prays for health and finds himself getting better, therefore, his better health is an answer to prayer. There is an endless series of similar instances all resting upon the inability to keep distinct things separate. There is something quite significant in the fact that heaven has always been placed in the clouds.

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What is Christianity?

Last week, in noticing Mr. McConnell's *Confessions of an Old Priest*, I cited his pathetic hope that although he had surrendered all Christian doctrines the Church might still provide a field for his services. In completing my review of Mr. McConnell's book I do not purpose dwelling upon his criticism of Christian doctrines which is very well done indeed, but which, naturally contains nothing that is new to readers of the *Freethinker*. I desire to pay attention to what in

my opinion is a confusion of mind as to the part that the Church has played in society in the past and may play in the society of the future. And in the case of Mr. McConnell this confusion is the more surprising since he so clearly, at the very beginning of his book, points out what is the essential characteristic of Christianity. Dealing with certain ideals of life, he points out that these cannot be called Christian since they were in the world before Christianity and exist apart from it. He says:—

These ideals are not the *differentia* of Christianity. That is, in its essential quality something entirely different. Its distinctive quality is not the possession of these ideals, but the sanction which it provides for them. The sanction arises out of a set of alleged concrete facts in time and space. If we were not dulled by familiarity with the claims of Christianity we would be amazed at their mere presentation. They are in substance these: That about the year 752 A.U.C., a child of a virgin mother was born in a remote district of Asia, and was named Jesus. Of the first thirty years of his life nothing is known. At about that age he appeared as a peripatetic rabbi. He claimed to be in unique fashion the Son of God. He declared that the eternal destiny of every human soul would be determined by whether or not it accepted him at his own valuation. He spoke with a divine authority which allowed no contradiction. He asserted that anyone looking on him saw God. He wrought innumerable miracles, curing men by a word of palsy and leprosy, transmuted water into wine, walked dryshod on the waves of the sea, restored life to a friend who had been four days dead and buried, was put to death as a disturber of the peace, his body was sealed in a rock-hewn sepulchre, three days later he rose from the dead, a month later he was caught up to heaven in a cloud, and announced that in like manner he would come again to judge the quick and the dead.

Now that presents without ambiguity the mass of absurdities that forms the essence of historic Christianity, and, as Mr. McConnell says, once we relieve it of the solemn setting in which it usually appears, one is left wondering that so great a mass of crude superstitions could command the adherence of a single person with the smallest pretensions to sanity or common-sense. The *differentia* of Christianity, Mr. McConnell insists, is the historical Christ. All else connected with the Christian Church, including its ethical teaching, is not Christianity. A quite honest Church would stand or fall by the historical Christ, but an intellectually honest Church would almost persuade one to believe in miracles. It seems without the range of the natural order of things.

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Fearing to Stand Alone.

It is the more surprising that Mr. McConnell, after giving us a hundred pages of excellent material which completely shatters any claim of Christianity to be more than an elaborate system of mythology, should in the last twenty pages conclude that Christianity "is a certain ideal of life," that "the Christ of human consciousness.....is the accumulated ideals of the race." The conclusion is entirely temperamental. It

has no basis in either logic or fact. Mr. McConnell is still held in bondage to some vague form of Theism, and to a "church" which shall stand as some sort of a super-social organization. This illustrates what I said at the opening—the difficulty of getting people to discriminate between the essential and the non-essential. As preliminary to a few words of criticism on that point, I may remark that Mr. McConnell's analysis of Christianity does not go back far enough. When he traces Christian doctrines to a pre-Christian source, he might by following the same method have traced the idea of God to exactly the same forms of mental confusion that gave rise to such absurd beliefs as those which he rejects. There is no better basis for the belief in God than there is for the belief in a virgin-birth. The one owes its existence to precisely the same conditions as the other, and to refine or to restate the belief in God so as to rob it of its legitimate meaning while giving it a significance to which it is not entitled, is an illustration of that want of moral courage which, as Mr. McConnell properly says, does much to disgust so many. On the one hand there is the compulsion of current life which forces many to see the falsity of religious beliefs, and on the other there is the weakness which holds them to the old forms and robs them of the courage to apply their knowledge in a logical and a practical manner. To throw away mere forms and hold on to essentials is a good thing. The pity is that so many throw away the essentials of religious belief while clinging to forms which rob their surrender of its practical value.

Why a Church?

Much as he has rejected, Mr. McConnell clings to the idea of a Church which shall enshrine the worship of some nebulous deity—the more nebulous the better apparently. To the question why should he not cast in his lot with such bodies as "the Ethical Church," etc., he replies, I think correctly, that these are, substantially, failures. "The so-called liberal Churches have made practically no impression. The satisfaction of the religious need is not to be found in sweet reasonableness." This is a very common position, but it illustrates what I mean when I speak of the difficulty of getting people to fix their minds on essentials. So long as there is a sincere conviction of the truth of religious dogmas one can understand it keeping Church members together. But to-day, when educated people think so little of the truth of dogmas, and even uneducated ones smile at them, it is plain that we have to look at the maintenance of a Church as little more than a social convention. Why, then, should men like Mr. McConnell aim at establishing a Church at all? He would probably reply, on the lines of Matthew Arnold, that a Church may function as a centre of social intercourse or as a centre in which men can meet and discuss, or hear discussed, things that will lift them out of and above the hum-drum of every-day life. So far, good. But why must this take place in connection with the worship of some super-sensible, or some superhuman being? The tendency of men to get together for the exchange of views, or for the discussion of differences, or for the appreciation of some mutually admired thing, is in no way dependent upon religion. In itself it is one of the expressions of the gregarious instinct of mankind, and the disappearance of every shred of religion cannot affect that. As a matter of fact, the satisfaction of these idealistic impulses are not at present found in the Churches. The association of men for artistic, literary, musical and similar purposes goes on all around us. There is not a single purpose for which men and women can combine for which they do not combine. In this case Mr. McConnell, like so many others is attributing to religion something that has no essential connection with it. Religion neither creates

nor strengthens these impulses, it merely exploits them, and it trusts to the prevalent mental confusion to hide the fact of the exploitation.

* * *

Human Nature and the Churches.

There is a further word to be said on that head. When it is said that the Churches provide centres of association for people and so serve a useful social purpose apart from their dogmas, it is assumed that in the absence of the Churches such centres would not exist—and this is monstrously untrue. The truth here is that the Churches, more than any other institution, have been powerful in preventing the full development of this side of life. Consider only one thing. Sunday, because it is the day of rest, is the day on which social intercourse is easiest, and yet the Churches have fought with might and main against clubs, against museums, against musical, literary, and social gatherings on that day. It has, so far as it could, forcibly prevented all sorts of intercourse on that day, except the intercourse that took place in connection with the Churches themselves. What is true of Sunday is true, with variations of terms only, of the whole of life. The Churches have so impressed upon people, year in and year out, the lesson that there are certain aspects of life that can only find full expression within the Church, that one finds many who have given up all belief in religious doctrines repeating this as though it were an established but melancholy truth. On the contrary, it is monstrously untrue. Clear religion out of the way, divest the Churches of their dominating position in certain strata of social life and in the thoughts of men and women, and we leave room for the unfettered social impulses to seek and find healthy gratification; and that they will find it we have no doubt. Such healthy outlets as have been found have been in spite of the Churches, and the socialization of man will certainly go on the more rapidly in their absence. The man who thinks life will not go on so well in the absence of the Churches is in the position of the "dope-taker" who, having had his vitality lowered by the use of a drug, wonders what life would be like in its absence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Does Man Thirst for God?

THIS year Lent lasts from February 14 till Easter, and is, omitting Sundays, a fast of forty days, in imitation of the alleged fast of the Gospel Jesus. To what extent it is so observed by present day Christians, we do not know. The fifth and sixth weeks in Lent are respectively called Passion Week and Holy Week. It is a curious contrast that whilst the Jews are feasting the Christians are keeping their fast. At first Lent only lasted forty hours, but by the fourth century the period had been extended to about forty days. What is the object of the fast? What benefit do those who keep it expect to derive from it? It must be remembered that during Lent daily services are supposed to be held and innumerable sermons delivered. Whether a starving person is in a fit condition to appreciate religious services, particularly sermons, is highly doubtful, to say the least. A fast may prove exceedingly beneficial to the health of body, and it may probably help to deepen and strengthen what is called the spiritual life. It may intensify the thirst for God as revealed in Christ. Dean Inge recently preached a sermon entitled "The Thirst for God," which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* of March 8. The very reverend gentleman opens his discourse by giving a vivid description of the misery of physical thirst "in the parched-up land of Palestine, surrounded by waterless deserts, a country where even

the rivers are swallowed up in the sand or dried by the fierce heat, so that they never reach the sea," and in the interior of Australia. Of the latter country he speaks thus:—

I have heard of a young Englishman out there who lost his way in the Bush and wandered up and down and round and round, until his body, contorted with its last agony, was found within a mile of the spring which he was vainly seeking. The word thirst in such climates calls up the idea of the most passionate and painful craving that a man can experience. It is the agonized protest of the body against being deprived of its most vital need. If not assuaged, it is the prelude to the most dreadful of deaths.

When we remember this we shall realize the full meaning of those passages in the Bible where thirst is used metaphorically.

Here the Dean quotes those passages, of which the following may serve as a sample: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." The text is, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii, 37). Nearly one half of the sermon is made up of quotations, without any comment.

At this point the Dean institutes a contrast between Christianity and Buddhism, which in reality is not a contrast at all. He admits that "next to Christianity, the noblest religion in the world is that of Buddha, the Indian prophet and teacher who lived about 500 years before Christ." That is perhaps the best compliment a Christian has ever paid to another religion. And yet the Dean unintentionally misrepresents the teaching of the very religion which he so cordially praises. It is true that Gotama condemned desire or thirst in the sense of lust, but he encouraged the cultivation of right desires. Indeed, his Eightfold Path included right aspirations. As the late Professor Rhys-Davids puts it:—

After Right Views come Right Aspirations. It is evil desires, low ideals, useless cravings, idle excitements that are to be suppressed by the cultivation of the opposite—of right desires, lofty aspirations. In one of the Dialogues instances are given—the desire for emancipation from sensuality, aspirations towards the attainment of love to others, the wish not to injure any living thing, the desire for the eradication of wrong, and for the promotion of right dispositions in one's own heart, and so on. This portion of the Path is indeed quite simple, and would require no commentary were it not for the still constantly repeated blunder that Buddhism teaches the suppression of all desires (*Early Buddhism*, p. 59).

Is it not true that the Bible, too, denounces desire in the sense of lust? We read in I John, ii, 16: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Paul says (Gal. v, 16): "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

Thus the Dean is completely mistaken when he represents the Indian sage as saying: "Crave for nothing, grasp at nothing; blessed is he that thirsteth for nothing, for he shall be at peace," and he is equally at fault in omitting to mention that Gotama and Paul are at one in their condemnation of lustful desires. Buddhism and Christianity are not at variance on the subject of lust, but they do differ radically in their attitude to the supernatural. Gotama repudiated the soul theory just as our present-day psychologists are doing. His philosophy of life is wholly Atheistic. With God or Gods he had nothing whatever to do, and his exhortation to his followers always was not to put their trust in God, but to rely upon themselves alone. Dean Inge believes in the soul without possessing the slightest evidence of its existence. He believes in God in precisely the same way. He says that "the soul

of man, when it is healthy, is athirst for God," and that "God only, through Christ, can slake the soul's thirst." Let us look that astounding statement firmly in the face for a moment. Has the Dean of St. Paul's the audacity to declare that only believing Christians have healthy souls? He cannot but be aware that the number of genuine believers in God in every Christian country is phenomenally small. In our own land there are physicians, lawyers, and teachers not a few, multitudes of scientific inquirers, and thousands of professional Secularists, who neither believe in God nor are athirst for him. Does the Dean really think that all such people are cursed with diseased souls? Mohammedans believe in God and are no doubt athirst for him; are they also diseased because they do not accept Christ, through whom alone, according to the Dean, God can slake the soul's thirst? If he means what he says, he is a hopeless victim of blindest Christian prejudices. Unnumbered hosts long for and seek to practice the good and true and beautiful, and experience enrapturing delight in so doing, who are not at all athirst for God, and Dean Inge insults them by asserting that their souls are not healthy. Ardent admirers of the Dean's able articles in the *Evening Standard* are amazed to find that he holds and gives expression to such a narrow-minded, prejudiced, and antiquated view.

It is quite true that believers in the Deity of Jesus Christ are naturally athirst for God; but the Dean knows as well as we do that such believers are rapidly dwindling away. Liberal theologians have to be reckoned with everywhere. Even in the Presbyterian Church of America they are becoming a mighty host. Indeed several learned clergymen in that communion and in others over there have recently abandoned Christianity itself. Even in the Dean's own Church there is a large and growing party called Modernists, who have broken with tradition and dared to raise their voices in opposition to the historic Creeds. From several statements in the two volumes entitled *Outspoken Essays* the inference is not unreasonable that he, too, is to be numbered among them; but unfortunately many of his sermons are wholly out of touch with most of his published articles. In the discourse now before us, for example, he affirms that to hunger and thirst after righteousness is the same thing as hungering and thirsting for God, because righteousness is Christ. Assuming the historicity of the Gospel Jesus he cannot truthfully be identified with righteousness however earnestly he may have urged his followers to do righteousness. Righteousness is an ethical relationship between man and man, and millions hunger and thirst after it who have never heard of the Gospel Jesus, or of the Church's Christ.

Our complaint is not that Christians are to blame for being athirst for God. They would be guilty of gross hypocrisy if they were not. The truth is that no one can be a Christian without desiring and professing to have communion with God. Our complaint is that religious teachers, like Dean Inge, treat non-religious people as if they were diseased. Our contention is that those who work for the benefit of their fellow-beings without religious beliefs are the sanest and wholesomest folk on the planet. We are deeply convinced that faith in the supernatural is a disease of the worst kind, of which, happily, humanity is being slowly but surely cured. J. T. LLOYD.

Archdeacon Farrar's last sermon in Westminster Abbey, contained two notable admissions; first, that "our working classes as a body turn their backs on the Churches"; secondly that "the so-called religious Press is rife with that peculiar spitefulness which seems to be a characteristic of insincerity." A Daniel come to judgment, yea, I say, a Daniel!—*Freethinker*, February 1, 1891.

The Priest's Finger in the Pie.

It is an absolute crime that you should sanction the instilling into the minds of children statements which are not true, and which the instruction they receive a few years later will infallibly upset.
—T. H. Huxley.

GOVERNMENT publications, as a rule, are "as dry as a remainder biscuit after a voyage." There are, however, some exceptions. A Blue-Book on education has been issued showing, for the first time in nearly ten years, the sure and steady decline of sectarian schools in England. In the period under review the Church of England, the richest and most powerful religious body in the country, lost no less than 218 schools and 461 departments. This is not a mere revolt against priestcraft in the schools, it is a sign of the trend of public thought and opinion. During the same period the Wesleyans lost twenty-seven schools and forty-seven departments. The importance of this decline can hardly be over-estimated. In less than ten years the Church of England, despite the efforts of its 25,000 priests, has lost no less than 116,230 scholars, and the Wesleyan Church, despite its thousands of ministers, has lost 11,194 scholars. This must have a far-reaching effect. At present the position is that the scholars in council schools throughout England outnumber the scholars in sectarian schools by considerably over a million.

As things stand, this is a victory for the Nonconformists as against the Conformists. For under the famous or infamous Compromise, the Bible was retained in the schools and the teachers were permitted to give reasonable explanations. We all know how the thing worked. Sheer, plain, unadulterated Evangelicism, with the addition of prayers, hymns, and artfully disguised composition and examination papers. Superstition, although masked, was still in the schools. It was only tolerable as a mild attack of fever is better than a severe attack. If the priest was excluded from the school-room, the obedient Christian layman was graciously permitted to do the work of his pastor and master, who was waiting round the corner.

Observe that, whatever happens, the clergy are entwined with education, as George Meredith puts it, "like poisonous ivy." Children are kept ignorant of the things that matter. Of the millions of scholars attending schools only a small percentage are capable of writing a decently worded letter. And this happens after fifty years of national education. They are taught, however, to regard religion as a sacred thing, and to reverence the clergy as their pastors and masters. Priests have no reason to complain of the educational system of this country. It is most admirably adapted for the purpose of the exploitation of the working classes, the most numerous body in the nation.

It may be contended that this reverence is paid to these priests because they have chosen as their business the supervision and direction of the religious habits of the English people. In reality the clergy are just medicine-men engaged in similar work to their dark-skinned prototypes in savage nations. They tell us of gods who get angry with us; of a terrible devil who must be guarded against; of angels who fly from heaven to earth. Fifty thousand men are engaged in this sorry trade, which is a profitable one. The business is actually no more honest than fortune-telling. Many a poor old woman has been sent to prison for taking money from a servant girl after promising her a handsome husband and six fine children; but these priests are allowed to take large sums of money for promises of good fortune in "the beautiful land above."

Seeing that little merit attaches to the clerical profession, are we to assume that reverence is due to the

exemplary lives led by those belonging to this favoured caste. Police Court records show that the clerical character in no wise differs from any other class. They may retort that there are black sheep in every fold. True, but men who are not priests do not pretend to be a class apart, and to be the direct agents of a god. They do not ask to be known as "reverend," or "right-reverend." It is because the priests expect us to look up to them that we compare their behaviour with their boastings. When they come down from their pedestals we will make the same allowance for them that we make for other men.

Few worse misfortunes can befall a people than this of possessing a powerful priestly caste in its midst that saps the very springs of morality, that encourages ignorance and mental confusion, and that hinders the wheels of progress. It is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls should be taught old-world nonsense and barbarism in the twentieth century. It is an affront to the spirit of Democracy. The clergy must revise their whole attitude towards education, or the nation will revise its attitude towards them.

MIMNERMUS.

The British Sabbath.

WHEN Rip Van Winkle awoke from his twenty years' sleep and found himself in a world of unfamiliar aspect he probably noticed that there were, nevertheless, one or two things which had undergone no transformation. The Catskill Mountains, for instance, amid whose wild valleys he had fallen asleep, were still there, solid and firm as ever, their peaks and contours still presenting their old familiar shapes, and we can imagine how old Rip must have regarded them with feelings akin to affection. Here, at least, was something he knew and remembered—something which assured him that he was still actually on this earth, and had not been transported to another planet.

Somewhat similar experiences await one who, like the present writer, returns to England after a dozen years of absence, four of which happen to have been the most calamitous in human history. He does not, indeed, find quite as revolutionary a change as Rip Van Winkle did, but some minor changes are quite observable. For instance, the English language seems to have become enriched by a new and picturesque vocabulary, and seems likely in time to acquire an idiomatic pungency and "snap" even greater than that exhibited by the great American tongue. And the snappiness of the language seems to be quite in keeping with the snappiness of its users, for it largely constitutes the language of the flippant "flapper" who appears to be another post-war product. It is saddening to reflect that what used to be the type of English girlhood—the modest and gentle mannered maiden, in her dainty blouse, with sunny tresses dancing in the breeze—has given place to the self-assertive hoyden in abbreviated skirt and uncouth "jumper," and with hair hideously "bobbed." Nor is it surprising that along with this condition of rather dubious attractiveness on the part of the female, all chivalry on the part of the male should be rapidly disappearing. Such an act of courtesy as the offering of a seat to a woman in a crowded tramcar or railway carriage is almost unheard of now, I understand. It "simply isn't done," and would probably be resented by the "emancipated" female on whom it is tried.

But my purpose in this article is not so much to call attention to the things that have changed as to deal with something that has remained unchanged. As Rip Van Winkle, on awakening from his prolonged snooze, must have noticed that the Catskill Mountains

had undergone no striking alteration of position or shape, so the Briton returning to his native soil after a lengthy absence has the satisfaction of observing that certain grand old mountain ranges of British Conservatism still stand as solid and immovable as ever—such imposing peaks, for instance, as the House of Lords, Party Government, and the Church as by Law Established, with its glorious Bench of Bishops. But the most precious and perhaps the most enduring of them all is surely the British Sabbath.

To one who returns after a long sojourn east of Suez—where “there ain’t no ten commandments,” or at any rate where the fourth one is not very rigidly observed—this grand old British institution is peculiarly impressive. He watches it in active operation with a fascinated interest and a feeling of mystified wonder such as a discoverer of Egyptian antiquities might experience on seeing a mummy step out of its sarcophagus and proceed to walk about. And no one will deny that such a remarkable phenomenon would deserve some serious attention.

As far as the present writer has been able to observe it, the actual business of church-going on Sundays appears to have decreased. The solemn visaged folk, carrying books of devotion and wending their ways to their various conventicles in obedience to the call of discordant bells, seem not to be so much in evidence as of yore. And those who do go to church seem to do so with less ostentation, with less affectation of superior holiness, but with a certain sort of modest self-effacement, as of persons who find themselves in a dwindling minority. This change may be only imaginary, but at any rate I have completely failed to observe any such impressive spectacle as the suburban grocer, arrayed in frock coat and top hat and accompanied by his family in their “Sunday best,” solemnly walking up the suburban street to interview the Creator of the Universe in the little Baptist Chapel round the corner. This striking object lesson in British middle class respectability which used to brighten the dullness of the British Sabbath seems to have disappeared from our streets, and has left a blank which no other form of street entertainment can adequately fill.

But whether or no the church-going section of the population has undergone any change, it would seem that the non-church-going section remains much the same in its Sunday habits. That portion of the British public which declines to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” still tamely consents to keep it deadly dull. Paterfamilias stolidly wheels the perambulator containing his youngest offspring, and renews his week-end acquaintance with the other “kids.” Courting couples walk aimlessly about “wrapped up in each other” and in blissful enjoyment of the emotional warmth thus generated—indeed, so completely wrapped and buttoned up are they in this wise that the young man is quite oblivious of the solemn warning of future possibilities which paterfamilias and his perambulator so plainly give. Boys and girls in the hobbledehoy stage of development indulge in horse-play at street corners, in a sort of rough, animal courtship prompted by vague sex impulses newly awakening. Children make the empty side streets their playground, with noisy shoutings which suggest not so much a spirit of exuberant merriment as an undercurrent of quarrelsomeness and ill-humour.

And thus is wasted the one day of the week when some healthy recreation is demanded—the one precious day of leisure which should be devoted to rational human enjoyments and relaxations. The situation seems pathetic until we remember that it is largely brought about by social inertia, and social inertia deserves no pity. When the rational majority of the people allows itself to be dominated by a foolish and pernicious taboo imposed by a superstitious minority

under the guidance of a handful of medicine-men, the natural comment is, “Serve them right.”

It has been remarked that every civilized people has the form of government it deserves, and this applies with even greater truth to social institutions, for social institutions are more dependent on an enlightened public opinion than are forms of government, and enlightened public opinion is the essential characteristic of true civilization. Among primitive peoples social institutions were the offspring of rigid and unchanging social habits or customs rooted in ignorance, fear, and superstition, and such systems of social custom were perhaps of some protective value to the communities possessing them at this early stage of development. We have instances of this principle even in the organic world, where we observe that the shell of the mollusc or the crustacean, the heavy carapace of certain reptiles, or the protective plates of the armadillo among mammals are associated with an inert and sluggish habit of life, and are generally characteristic of the more primitive forms in these respective classes. But in the course of advance to higher forms of organic and social life a better way has been found. In the former case a greater mental alertness or physical activity has made it possible to dispense with the heavy and cumbersome protective shield, with its accompanying disadvantages. In the latter case the rigid and inflexible customs of primitive man have given place to pliant and modifiable social institutions, not based on blind, unreasoning superstition, but on rational principles of justice or utility as formulated by an enlightened and humane public opinion.

At any rate this is what usually happens, and what must happen if progress is to be achieved, but in the case we are considering the heavy old carapace of superstition still cumbers the social body—the “cake of custom,” as Bagehot called it, is not yet sufficiently cracked. And worse still, certain antiquated laws which, centuries ago, crystallized out while the cake was forming lie embedded in it still, and seem unlikely to be got rid of till the cake cracks sufficiently to admit of their removal. Such, I believe, is the Lord’s Day Observance Act under which shop-keepers can be and sometimes are still prosecuted for plying their lawful trades on a Sunday; and I am not sure that there does not repose somewhere among the antique legislative lumber of this country a law which compels Sunday attendance at church on pain of the pillory or the stocks, or something of that sort. This is a sobering and solemn thought for the modern Freethinker who has possibly not entered a “place of worship” for the purpose of doing any business in that line for many a long year.

The Sunday observance question in a modern civilized State presents itself in two aspects which are quite distinct, though closely related. There is the primary religious aspect which enjoins the keeping of the day “holy”—and incidentally melancholy—in accordance with a supposed divine command, and there is the modern secular aspect which recognizes the necessity and utility of a weekly cessation of work. And it is probable that the persistence of the Sunday observance idea in its former aspect is directly due to this close relation which it bears to the rational view of Sunday as the weekly day of rest and recreation; just as, in the organic world, certain useless or even harmful characters may tend to persist because of their correlation with characters which are necessary or beneficial to the organism.

This consideration suggests that the effective remedy lies in the gradual weakening of this association. In the case of organic evolution a “correlated variation” which results in the perpetuation of a harmful character would probably be eliminated by natural selection, and the harmful character would thus be got rid

of, but in the case of social evolution this would have to be effected by a gradual modification of public opinion. The purely secular aspect of the weekly holiday would have to be clearly differentiated from the religious aspect till the association between them, founded on an ancient and discredited myth, should completely disappear. The result would be to make the weekly day of rest a purely social institution, to be freely used in all socially legitimate ways, whether secular or religious, according to each individual's private preferences. That this view is becoming recognized even in the Church is shown by the recently proposed amendment of the fourth commandment, in which all reference to the mythical aspect and the secular aspect of the command are alike omitted.

A. E. MADDOCK.

Writers and Readers.

Essays in Freethinking.

It is a delicate and difficult task that I have before me at this moment. I want to say how much I admire the qualities of lucidity, breadth and acumen which distinguish Mr. Cohen's lighter work, and to say it without that eulogistic emphasis which I should find, perhaps, not wholly inappropriate if I were writing in any other paper than the one of which he is the editor. Mr. Cohen, I am aware, has never acquired the bad habit of praising anyone to his face. It is also a habit which I have the honour to share with him. Moreover, I take it that the indulgent reader will agree with me that anything in the nature of direct praise is peculiarly unnecessary in this place. The older Freethinker who has watched the steady development of a talent unmistakable from the outset will not thank me for pointing out the obvious, while the younger sort who know Mr. Cohen only by his later and more mature work will not need their admiration enforced by anything I can say. Still there is just this to be said: All of us who are not absolutely anti-social are glad to know that any intelligent opinions we may possess are shared with people of equal or more than equal intelligence. If it gives pleasure to any reader to know that I set a very high value on Mr. Cohen's admirable dialectical skill, his command of precise and nervous English, the weight and dignity of his thoughts, this simple note of reserved commendation will have its reason for existence.

The collection of essays just published, the first of a series which I hope will run to a goodly number, is made up of articles that first saw the light in the pages of this paper, under the caption of "Views and Opinions." They deal with a pleasing variety of subjects in the graceful and easy style of the born commentator on current fact and opinion viewed from the angle of a broad-minded and educated Freethinker. A day or two ago I mentioned the book to a not unintelligent friend of mine, who told me that he had looked into it, but thought it inferior in interest to Foote's *Flowers of Freethought*. Frankly, I don't agree with him. I am, of course, willing to admit that Foote's two volumes of essays make pleasant enough reading provided they are taken in small doses. After a little while you get as tired of them as you do of O. Henry's stories. There was a good deal of wit and intelligence in Foote's mental make-up, together with a trace of artificiality, or (shall I say?) artifice. He was brilliant in spasms. In their natural place, the columns of the paper for which they were written, they made delightful reading, for they came as a continual surprise in contrast with the writing of duller and more laborious wits. Transplanted into a soil unsuited to them they lost not a little of the charming colour and form they possessed at first. They were modelled in style on the spoken word. The periodic sentence was painfully avoided, and the result, for some readers at least, was a nervous irritation set up by a sequence of short verbal explosions. Within certain limits speech may be made the measure of the written word. Foote, unfortunately,

pushed the theory too far. His prose developed on abnormal lines, and lost in dignity and harmony more than it gained in epigrammatic terseness. Now in Mr. Cohen's admirable prose we observe the normal development from a laboured complexity to graceful simplicity, a sort of inverted evolution, the famous Spencerian definition turned round the other way. Another point against my friend's judgment is that Foote had no great staying power. He was incapable of a big sustained effort, the patient building up of material implied in a complicated subject such as Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex*. No! much as I admire the distinctive ease of Foote's best writing, and his temperament of the intellectual aristocrat, I am not prepared to set his *Flowers of Freethought* above the *Essays in Freethinking*.

There is matter here to suit all tastes. If you want a lively and provocative little study of the religious mind you will find it in the opening essay wittily entitled "Psychology and Saffron Tea." Should your tastes lie in the direction of closely reasoned exposition you will be delighted with "Monism and Religion," "On Compromise," or "Spiritual Vision," although if you happen to be blessed with a natural appreciation of beauty in all its manifestations you will, no doubt, come to the conclusion that the last-mentioned essay leaves the question of mysticism pretty much where it found it. You will, however, make allowance for the somewhat rigid positivism, and, with the wise tolerance of the sceptic, return to your old loves, to those poets whom Foote delighted to honour, to Donne and Crashaw and Blake. You will refuse to be reasoned out of your æsthetic enjoyment. A page of Traherne's lovely meditations will remove every trace of indignation, and you will remember that Mr. Cohen prefers the tinkling banalities of *The Pirates of Penzance* to the subtle rhythms of *Tristan and Isolde*.

Two of the essays that I find myself re-reading with pleasure and instruction are those in which Mr. Cohen discusses the so-called influence of the English versions of the Bible, and Huxley's unfortunate endorsement of the views of the uninstructed journalist. We have always been assured that we owe our greatness as a nation to the English Bible. It may be that our political ideals and practice are those of the gentle Hebrew under the Mosaic dispensation, but our literature has, I fancy, a more civilized basis. What the English version may have done was to check the tendency to formlessness in the shaping of sentences by setting an example of a balanced prose. But it could not have been more effective than the Vulgate, which was for long the version preferred by scholars.

Another essay that is sure to attract the more literary reader is the one on "Shakespeare and the Jew." It was suggested by an amusing decision of an American Board of Education to withdraw *The Merchant of Venice* from its list of class-books. Shylock was found to be a libel on the Hebrew race. It is not for me to decide whether he represents a true or untrue picture of the Elizabethan Jew. With the exception of his conversion to Christianity at the last moment, which I hold to be stupidly out of character, he is certainly the one living person in the play. Although he was modelled to some extent on Marlowe's unsympathetic view of the Hebrew in his *Jew of Malta*, and therefore historically untrue to type, we have to give Shakespeare the credit for an intention to vindicate rather than to vilify the Jew. Shylock, as I have said above, is the only living character in a play which, on the whole, is far from being "one of the world's greatest plays." For me it reads very much like an old play revised in a hurry by Shakespeare. The casquet business is dull and artificial, and the passages of great verse which we all praise in disregard of their want of dramatic appropriateness, are like mere patches of velvet on a garb of hoddengray. The presence of the great figure of the long-suffering Jew is the only reason why we have not noticed that Antonio, Bassanio, Lorenzo, Jessica, and that pert hussy the insufferable Portia, are mere romantic stage properties. But even Shylock, great as he is, cannot make the play a great one.

Renan and Religion.

To the courtesy of a French reader I am indebted for a copy of *Le Journal* containing an interview of a Parisian journalist with the daughter of Renan. She points out that although he had no religious convictions he showed great tact in discussing the religious beliefs of other people. But there is another side to this question of Renan's thoughtful consideration. Rémy de Gourmont has suggested with exquisite malice that what journalists regarded as Renan's indulgent good nature was really a charmingly disguised contempt. It is possibly true, and the Jesuits, who are invariably quick-witted, had never any doubt of his Atheism. They were not taken in by the delicate irony of the *Prière sur l'Acropole*, which has been called an epigram in the manner of Racine, or by romantic sentimentalism of his most popular but worst written book, *The Life of Jesus*. Renan was an aristocratic Atheist, which for some people is an anomaly, for the Freethinker is more often than not a democrat, although our Thomas Hobbes was both a Monarchist and an Atheist. However that may be, Renan was the sworn enemy of all supernaturalism—Roman Catholic or Protestant. Dean Inge must often be reminded of the Frenchman's witty advice to a friend: "Become a Protestant, and then you may be a bishop without believing in God." Although he may have avoided squarely denying the theistic conception, he yet discounted it to a serious degree. He does say that "an absolute personality is an absurdity," and to say that God is "impersonal is equal to saying that he does not exist." How far he was from belief in God is shown by these words written late in his life: "The whole of human development may be of no more consequence than the moss or lichen with which every moist surface is covered." As a corollary from this implied Atheism we note what he writes with always unwavering decision about supernaturalism:—

There is no such thing, so modern science teaches, as the supernatural.....The sole cure of this strange malady, which to the disgrace of civilization has not disappeared as yet from humanity, is modern culture.....Posterity will look upon those who are fighting supernaturalism in our days as we look upon those who fought against witchcraft in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.....The essence of criticism is the denial of the supernatural..... Its negation has become an absolute dogma of every cultured spirit.

Naturally the rigid Freethinker is scandalized by Renan's having a mass said for his beloved sister, a devout believer. Yet in reality such a compromise should deceive no one who recognizes the amazing complexity of the human mind. It speaks to us as plainly of human kindness as of ironic scepticism. A man of Renan's temperament and mental outlook was sure to regard good-natured tolerance as the best corrective of philosophic hardness. The reader will, no doubt, remember his story of the tender-hearted parish priest who, after he had brought his congregation to tears by his vivid picture of the suffering Lord, said to them: "Weep not, my brethren, all these things happened long ago, and then, after all, they may not be quite true."

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Acid Drops.

The *Referee* enquires why it is that the Broadcasting Company does not send out anything before 8.30 on Sunday. The reply is simple. When broadcasting began it sent out its concerts at 6.30. Then the parsons got to work, and so that people should not be tempted to stay away from Church they induced the Company to hold them up till after church time. There could be no pretence here, as in the case of Sunday games, that the public might be subjected to annoyance. It was Sabbatarianism and the professional interest of the parson naked and unashamed. Yet there are people who imagine that we are not a priest-ridden public! Because they do not see the priest interfering always openly they foolishly assume them to be innocuous. The truth is that the rule of the priest in this country represents one of the most dangerous forces against the freedom of the people. Open interference would arouse resentment and secure its own

defeat, but the policy which goes to work in the cowardly and dishonest way in which the priest works in this country is hard to fight because of the mental apathy of the mass, and because so few recognize an enemy that does not come in quite open display. We strongly advise all interested to write the Broadcasting Company protesting against this parsonic interference with an entertainment which can be better enjoyed on Sunday than on any other day in the week. If it is desired to give the Broadcasting Company a day off let it be on one of the weekdays. No one will be injured by that.

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"As the Jewish population increases in a district so does drunkenness diminish," said a solicitor at the Tower Licensing Sessions. What a searchlight this throws on the civilizing effect of the Christian religion! Sobriety was never a Christian virtue.

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Vickers, the famous Sheffield armament firm, has signed a contract for equipping the new tank battalion, the price being about £120,000. There has not been a pip-squeak from the thousands of priests who tell us that "Thou shalt not kill" is a Divine ordinance.

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The late Mr. Walter Dyson, of Manchester, made a fortune of £42,765 from selling tripe. The fifty thousand clergymen in this country should smile broadly.

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The sensation-mongering Press has been making a fuss about the digging up of "Abraham's City," an ancient town in Mesopotamia. One daily paper editor writes lusciously: "It holds out some hope that records of the patriarch's time may be recovered." Was that gentleman of the Press educated at Oxford University, or the Oxford Music-hall?

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"There are people of the Peter Pan type who never grow up," says Dr. Hadley. These must be the brainy folk who believe the story of Noah's Ark is sober history.

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The *Daily Mail* pours ridicule on the suggestion that the Bible should be brought "up-to-date." Of course, it ignores the awful suggestion that it is out-of-date.

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The attention of the Government has been called to the gentle manners of the Nagas, a people of the Naga Hills, Assam. They are very much given to head hunting, and seem to care little whose head it is so long as it is a head. Of course, at the root of this gentle pastime lies religious belief. It appears that the Nagas desire the heads in order to secure a good rice harvest. In this way the people killed are sacrifices for the good of the people. Now our own missionaries can go and wean them of this practice by telling them of the kind of human sacrifice in which the white man believes. Of how, instead of individuals being killed annually we had one killed a long time ago as a sacrifice for us for ever. It is just possible that the Nagas may think this an improvement on their own customs or they may turn up their noses at such parsimony, and it is just possible that some intelligent Naga may enquire as to the substantial difference between their own practice and the Christian belief. And we should much like to hear the answer of the missionary to that.

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The Bishop of Southwell says we cannot expect much from a public with "minds saturated with accounts of murder and suicide, filth connected with divorce courts, quarrels between husbands and wives, and the lust of men and women." We beg to remind the bishop that he is describing a public that is the product of Christian tradition and Christian training. And we also venture to ask just one question. Is the public so described an outcome of Christianity, or does it register the failure of Christianity after so many centuries of power? If he has the courage to answer the question readers will not be long in drawing the correct inference therefrom.

During recent months no less than fourteen Catholic churches and institutions have been destroyed by fire in Canada. The total loss is estimated at £1,000,000. Quite recently the Methodist Episcopal Church in Montreal was destroyed by fire. Providence appears to be in a playful mood.

A newspaper article deals with "The Things Women Do!" There was no mention of the fact that they are the sole remaining support of the Christian religion and many other superstitions. The hand that rocks the cradle has had far too much to do to worry about the busy world.

Our pastors and masters! The Rev. John Hewitt, of Denmark Hill, S.E., was charged at Lambeth with a grave offence in Ruskin Park. The evidence was taken in camera, and accused was remanded. The Rev. R. O. Johns, of Billingham, has been sent for trial for attempting a criminal assault on a servant-girl.

The clergy bear their sufferings in silence. The Rev. F. H. Gillingham, formerly rector of Bermondsey, has been presented by his ex-parishioners with a bicycle, tea and dinner service, study chair, and silver tea urn.

A nurse has landed at Plymouth from the steamer *Monroe*, having been refused permission to land in New York. She had accompanied a patient who had double pneumonia. It is Puritanical acts of this kind that give point to Ingersoll's jest that it would have been better for Americans that Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers rather than that they should have landed at Plymouth Rock.

How is it that editors so often entrust book reviews to the greenest and youngest members of their staffs? In a notice of Mrs. Stobart's book, *Ancient Lights*, a London newspaper refers to the author's "sublime audacity" in criticizing parts of the Bible. The writer on the Press was not guilty of audacity but of sublime ignorance.

Four Mormon missionaries, who were conducting a campaign in Nottingham, were mobbed by a crowd, being bombarded with mud and decayed oranges. Common Christians are always so anxious to display the super-culture of their creed.

The Bishop of Birmingham has placed his palace at the disposal of the Prince of Wales for his forthcoming visit to the city. Doubtless, the Bishop remembers that the King of Kings had not where to lay his head, and is anxious that the mistake should not be repeated in the present august instance.

We have referred several times to the projected trial of the Rev. Dr. Grant for heresy, the said heresy consisting in his disbelief in childishly ridiculous things, such as the Virgin Birth and the Biblical miracles. American papers now say that the trial has been put off for a time. The reason for this is that an effort is being made to collect fifteen million dollars for a new cathedral in New York, and it is feared that a trial at this juncture might split the Church and so prevent the money being raised. Men of really high principal are our ecclesiastical superiors. They have a profound belief in the law and the profits.

After the Christian parson the Jewish rabbi. Rabbi S. Grant, in the course of a sermon defending his brother medicine-man—the Rev. P. Grant—from a charge of heresy, said that he did not believe the Ten Commandments were graven in stone by God and given to Moses on the mountain. Wonderful! Consider the daring mentality of two men, the one denying that the immaculate conception is true, and the other that the great Mumbo-Jumbo did not carve out two tablets of stone and give them to a mythical personage some thousands of years ago! Why, in any decently civilized community

men would regard the imputing to them of such beliefs as a slur upon their sanity. In a Christian country to publicly repudiate them is the way to get a reputation as an advanced and daring thinker!

The *Daily Express* reports an amusing case at Bow County Court. A Chinese witness, asked if he were a Christian, replied in the negative. The interpreter insisted that he was. The celestial very gravely answered: "Me no understand Christian. Me saved by Salvation Army."

Fashions for men are to be more highly coloured, and models of hats of plum and maize colours are already being shown. We hope that this does not herald a return to the violently coloured blankets of Bible days.

Walter Arthur Wood, of Tollington Park, committed suicide whilst suffering from religious mania. The consolations of religion, so often boasted of, appear to have failed in this instance.

The Rev. A. Buxton, Vicar of All Souls' Church, Langham Place, attributes public neglect of religion to the fact that people live in flats instead of houses. He says that there is no home life in flats, and people are driven to the Devil. As other priests say that the decay of church-going is due to "after-war" depression, Sunday games, charabancs, and public-houses, it seems like a guessing competition.

There are no beggars like the clergy. The Dean of Lincoln has collected £5,000 in the United States and Canada towards the repairs of Lincoln Cathedral. If the contributions come in well enough it will end in the "Stars and Stripes" rivalling the "Union Jack" among the symbols of our sacred religion.

The Rev. L. S. Kempthorne has been consecrated Bishop of Polynesia by the Archbishop of Canterbury. As the diocese includes Fiji, Samoa, and other islands in the Pacific, a church parade among the scanty clothed natives ought to please the episcopal eye.

The *Daily Express* found on a recent Sunday nine of the City churches empty and a tenth packed. It attributes the state of the tenth to the efficiency of the preacher. That may be quite true, but it says little for the religious convictions of the people. The fact is that you can pack a church as you can pack a music-hall provided something sensational is on the bill, and much the same mental type go in both instances.

Considerable feeling has been aroused at Somersham, near March, by the vicar charging two guineas each for three wreaths placed on the grave of a railwayman killed at March. The vicar is within his legal rights we understand. It is when one reflects on such things as these that one understands why "graft" is much more common in public life in America than it is here. In America when a public official wishes to steal he must do so and run the risk of exposure. In England the various forms of "graft" are legalized and institutionalized. That appears to be the main difference; and the Englishman who is legally robbed in so many ways looks at the American and thanks God that our public life is purer than his. Well, a man would be a born fool who ran the risk of imprisonment to get something which the law already guarantees him.

Oh! those gentlemen of the Press! Referring to the alterations in the Bible suggested by the National Assembly of the Church of England, a prominent London newspaper remarks that "the proposal is to bring the Bible into line with modern scholarship and thought by correcting bad translations." Presently we shall be informed that the patriarch Lot was a Sunday-school teacher, and his daughters the foolish virgins.

To Correspondents.

- LETTERS from Rev. B. N. Switzer, F. W. Edwards, and Robert Arch are unavoidably held over till next week.
- C. A. AMES.—The Babylonian story of the deluge has been known for many years. It appears to be the one on which the biblical story of the deluge was framed. The man who was told by the brother of Charles Bradlaugh of the latter's conversion was listening to a very untrustworthy character. W. R. Bradlaugh's untruthfulness was well-known to many who had much to do with him. He traded for years on being the brother of Charles. Being the brother of so well-known a man was his only credential to the public, and he made the most of it.
- SEVERAL of our readers advise us that the quotation about which enquiry was made last week is from *Twelfth Night*, Act iv, Scene 2.
- CHARLES BAKER (Harrismith).—P.O. for 20s. received and allocated as desired.
- MISS E. M. VANCE acknowledges.—N.S.S. Benevolent Fund (Bethnal Green Branch), 5s.; General Fund, ditto, 5s.
- G. W. (Victoria).—Books despatched. Mr. Cohen is writing you. Pressure of work is responsible for his not having done so before now.
- G. HARDY.—Sorry we cannot find space for your letter, but you are in error in speaking of evolution as being as much taboo as Secularism. This may be the case in certain very narrow circles, but evolution is now generally accepted and no man runs the risk of taboo in advocating it. Religious people—even those holding office in the Church—both write and speak in its advocacy. The Churches are not quite so foolish as to oppose an established scientific doctrine. We agree with you that evolution, properly understood, is fatal to religion, and whatever risks one runs lies in pointing out the implications of evolution, not in advocating it as a scientific truth. That is quite safe.
- T. ROBERTS.—Our shop manager will readily make arrangements for the purchase of bound volumes of the *Freethinker* on the instalment plan for those who wish to procure them in this way.
- The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.
- The *Secular Society, Limited*, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- The *National Secular Society's* office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- When the services of the *National Secular Society* in connection with *Secular Burial Services* are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the *Pioneer Press*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "*The Pioneer Press*" and crossed "*London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch.*"
- Letters for the Editor of the "*Freethinker*" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—
- The *United Kingdom*.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.
- Foreign and Colonial*.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 25) Mr. Cohen is giving a special lecture in the Town Hall, Stratford. His subject is "What Humanity Owes to Unbelief," and the proceedings will commence at 7 o'clock. Stratford Town Hall is very easily reached from any part of London. Trams and buses stop at the door, and it is within five minutes' walk of Stratford Station (G.E.R.). The meeting has been well advertised, and we hope to be able to report a record gathering.

We are very pleased to say that a number of London Freethinkers and London organizations are taking our advice and bombarding the L.C.C. with letters of protest and resolutions against any curtailment of the facilities for Sunday games in the public parks. We trust that this will be kept up, and that the advance made will not be lost for want of action on the part of those interested. We note that the R.P.A. is circularizing its London members to get them interested in the agitation, and a pamphlet by Mr. Harry Snell, M.P., L.C.C., is just issued by Messrs. Watts & Co. on "The Case for Sunday Games," price threepence. Mr. Snell scores distinctly against the Sabbatarians, and at the same time exposes their gross hypocrisy in making public the following:—On March 9, 1920, Mr. W. C. Johnson asked the Chairman of the Education Committee:

Whether during the period extending from November 12, 1919, when the proposals of the Committee to allow child labour on Sundays with certain restrictions were made public, down to February 3, 1920, when the Council decided to forbid it entirely, any representation against such employment of children on Sunday was received from the Lord's Day Observance Society, the Imperial Sunday Alliance, or individuals who recently protested against the proposals of the Parks Committee that games on Sunday should be allowed in certain open spaces.

The reply of the Chairman was that no such protests had been received. This exactly bears out what we have so often said, and neatly exposes the humbug of the pretence that the people who wish to close the Parks on Sunday are animated by the desire to prevent Sunday labour or concerned with the moral and intellectual well-being of the people. Their only concern is to drive people to church. If they cannot do that they care little what demoralizing consequences ensue to the rising generation through shutting up avenues of healthy recreation. The hypocrisy of the whole Sabbatarian movement should be made as clear as possible.

English people pride themselves that we are not a priest-ridden people. Openly so, perhaps not. But this only means that the priest is driven to gain his ends by underground methods, which is worse both for the priest and for the community. The Sunday agitation is a case in point. This is a parson-fed agitation from beginning to end. There is nothing else in it, and those laymen who support it simply show their mental inability to see beyond the points of their own noses.

The *Pioneer Press* issues this week a pamphlet which we think will be found invaluable for propagandist purposes. It consists of a reprint of one of the most telling chapters in Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*, describing the state of England after some centuries of Christian rule, and a more damning indictment of the influence of Christianity on civilization it would be difficult to depict. The indictment is the more telling since Draper is an acknowledged authority all over the world and so cannot be set on one side as being the work of one animated by propagandist enmity to Christianity. It gives a crushing reply to any claim set up for Christianity on the cultural side. Those who know Draper's work will need no pressing to have this very important section in a handy form. Those who do not will be well advised to read it as soon as possible and pass copies on to friends. The price of the pamphlet—32 pages on good paper—is twopence, not a price at which profits are to be looked for, but we have printed a large edition and anticipate good sales. The postage is, of course, extra, except for orders of twelve copies.

Mr. A. B. Moss wishes us to announce that he intends continuing lectures in the open air this summer. It is good to see so much enthusiasm in the Cause in one who has served it so long as Mr. Moss has, and we hope that full advantage will be taken of the offer by the London Branches. At the same time we trust that Mr. Moss will err on the side of moderation in the number of lectures he undertakes in the open. It is a strain for even a young man, and we have no wish to lose so earnest a worker as Mr. Moss. Mr. Moss's address is 42 Ansdell Road, Queen's Road, Peckham, S.E.

The Birmingham Branch concludes its winter season to-day (March 25) with a lecture in the Brass Workers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, at 7 o'clock, by Mr. F. E. Willis, J.P., on "A Freethinker's View of Death." The meeting is to be made the occasion of a presentation—really a wedding present—to Mr. and Mrs. Willis. We hope that all the good wishes which we are sure will accompany the presentation will be realized. Mr. Willis, in spite of his many calls in other directions has been an indefatigable worker in the cause of Freethought, and every Birmingham Freethinker should be present on Sunday as an evidence of the appreciation which Mr. Willis so well deserves.

Reports of Mr. Cohen's recent lecture in Stockport appear in the *Stockport Express*, the *Stockport Advertiser*, and the *Cheshire Daily Echo*. We are pleased to see this as it helps to bring Freethinking ideas before a larger number of people.

We are glad to hear of an improved audience at the St. Pancras Reform Club on Sunday last to listen to a lecture from Mr. R. B. Kerr on "The Birth Control Movement." To-day (March 25) at 7.30 Alderman F. A. Combes will open a discussion on "Does Trade Unionism Benefit the Working-class?" Admission is free.

An attempt is to be made to establish a Branch of the N.S.S. at Wood Green. We know there are plenty of Freethinkers in the district and numbers of readers of this journal. If those who are willing to help in the matter will write Mr. H. Dawson, 64 High Road, Wood Green, N.22, something may come of the matter. Wood Green is a district that would repay attention.

Mr. F. Rose, Johannesburg, writes in enclosing subscriptions for self and friends, "Many thanks to yourself and your co-workers for the *Freethinker*. There is not one permanent or occasional reader I have spoken to that does not admire it. It deserves more help than it gets." Such comments are encouraging in pursuing a task that would discourage many. Mr. Rose is good enough to ask if he can help in any way. The way in which all can help is to secure readers, and if all worked as well in this direction as our correspondent our troubles on the financial side would be at an end. There might be more in other directions, but those we do not trouble about. It is trying to keep the wolf away from the office door that threatens the natural colour of our hair.

The Glasgow Branch is also closing its winter propaganda to-day, after two very successful meetings on Sunday last with Mr. Lloyd. For the closing meeting a lecture will be delivered in the Shop Assistants' Hall, 97 Argyle Street, at 11.30. There is going to be a "Musical Morning," which should be enjoyable by all. On Thursday, March 29, a Social Evening will be held, with high tea, music, etc. The Secretary, Mr. C. Little, we understand, is leaving for America, and there will, we expect, be some recognition of this at the social function. We desire to associate ourselves with the recognition of Mr. Little's valuable and ungrudging services to the cause of Freethought in Glasgow.

We are pleased to see that in the local papers reporting the proceedings at the funeral of the late Mayor of King's Lynn, due recognition is made of his connection with the National Secular Society, and also that Mr. Cohen was there as President of that Society and as editor of the *Freethinker*. This is only proper, but when we are dealing with the Press and Freethought what is proper is not always done.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti visits Manchester to-day (March 25). He will lecture at Cromford Café, Cromford Court, Market Street, at 3 o'clock and 6.30. His two subjects are "The Immorality of Faith," and "Religion and War." Manchester friends will please take notice. The position of the meeting place is very central and can be easily reached from any part of the City or suburbs.

Obituary.

Death of the Mayor of King's Lynn.

It is with the deepest regret that we have to record the death of Mr. Richard Green, of King's Lynn. Mr. Green was one of the oldest of East Anglian members of the N.S.S., and his devotion to the cause never wavered for a moment. He was a personal friend of Charles Bradlaugh and of G. W. Foote, and a great admirer of the *Freethinker*. It was one of the last papers he read shortly before his death on Sunday, March 11.

Richard Green was a remarkable man and he led a remarkable career. He was born in the humblest circumstances, quite shut off from the companionship of books and of those educational opportunities which abound to-day. But where there is a strong determination to know, knowledge will be gained somehow, and by hook or by crook books were obtained, and judging from results there must have been present from the outset a native taste for good literature. That, indeed, cannot be acquired, it can only be developed. Wide reading and careful reflection led him into the advanced radical movement and then into Freethought, and a more fearless champion the Freethought cause never had. He was, as we have said, a personal friend of Bradlaugh; he took the chair for him when he came to King's Lynn to lecture, and championed him against the prejudice that was quite naturally evoked.

Over thirty years ago he entered the King's Lynn Council, and had served unbrokenly on that body ever since. He held various offices, was chairman of the library committee for over twenty years, and the library owes much of its usefulness to his unsparing labours to make it as serviceable as was possible. He was twice elected to the mayoralty, and was serving his second term in that office at the time of his death.

It speaks volumes for the character of the man that throughout the whole of his public life he never concealed in the slightest degree his freethinking opinions. They were known to all. His family, eight children, were all brought up with the Freethought view of life ever before them, and are as proud of their opinions as their father was of his. In this he was admirably backed by his wife, a woman of a fine and strong character who shared his views and herself takes an active part in public life. She is a Justice of the Peace and is otherwise engaged in the affairs of the town.

Prior to his death he had expressed a desire that Mr. Cohen should, if possible, conduct his funeral service, and on being asked by Mrs. Green, Mr. Cohen went down to King's Lynn on March 16 to officiate. The ceremony was, of course, a civic one, and we question whether anything like it has ever taken place in any other town in the British Isles. The coffin, covered with flowers, was lying in state in the Town Hall, and standing behind two addresses were given. One was by the Rev. Mr. Bremner, who was there as a personal friend of the Mayor, not as a minister of religion. He bore very eloquent testimony to the high character of his friend and voiced what was evidently a common feeling, the deep affection in which Mr. Green was held by all. Then Mr. Cohen delivered an address dwelling upon the character of Mr. Green as displayed by him in his public life, and upon the service he had done to the community as a whole by so splendid an example. He had lived his life well, and had by his actions made it easier for others to follow the paths of mental honesty and straightforwardness. The Town Hall was crowded with a standing audience during the whole of the time, and among the audience were a goodly sprinkling of the local clergy.

From the Town Hall the funeral cortege, led by a body of police and accompanied by the town's officials, wended its way to the cemetery. The whole town was in mourning. Shops were closed, flags were at half-mast, the route—about a mile in length—was lined with people who showed their feelings in their respectful demeanour. A large crowd had already gathered at the cemetery when the funeral procession arrived, and immediately after the coffin had been lowered into the grave a brief address was given by Mr. Cohen, after which the proceedings came to an end.

Lengthy obituary notices appeared in the local and county papers, and each bore testimony to the high character of the man, to his wide sympathies, his devotion to duty, and his unconquerable love of truth and justice. As a husband, a friend, a parent, and as a public man, no one could have been held in higher respect. It was a splendid example of how character will beat down the most stubborn prejudice—even that of religion, which is the most stubborn of all. Our sympathy goes out in fullest measure to Mrs. Green who now finds herself bereft of her life's companion. Fortunately she is a woman of splendid courage. She went through the very trying ordeal in the Town Hall in a manner beyond praise. None but herself will ever know what the effort cost her, but both she and her children will carry with them the memory of one who helps to make us proud of our humanity, and does something to compensate for its less pleasing aspects. We can cordially endorse the remark in one of the local papers that the family has lost an ideal head and the town of King's Lynn a valuable servant. We would also add that Freethought has lost one of its most devoted followers. By his example he reflected credit upon the principles he professed, and his unswerving adherence to truth in circumstances that must often have tempted to dishonourable compromise will bear its fruits in making the path of honesty easier for those that follow him. On March 16 we took our farewell of one whom we should have been proud to have known better while he was alive, but who will for long have a niche in our memory now that he has passed away.—C. C.

FREETHINKERS all over the country will learn with the very deepest regret of the death of Mrs. Sidney Gimson, of Leicester, on March 15. Leicester Freethought has been closely connected with the name of Gimson for two generations, and there is probably no name better known in the Freethought world. Most Freethought speakers who have visited Leicester will remember Mrs. Gimson as a gracious and kindly hostess, although her kindnesses were not restricted to Freethinkers alone. Mr. Sidney Gimson loses a life companion, and in such circumstances one can only express here what we are sure all who have known either Mr. or Mrs. Gimson will feel—their heartfelt sympathy with him and her family in their bereavement. One might put this feeling into a greater number of words, but it could gain nothing from repetition. We would only express our appreciation of the one who has gone, and our sympathy with those who are left. Time may dull the edge of grief but it cannot remove the loss of a gracious presence.

The sweetest and most inoffensive path of life leads through the avenues of science and learning; and whoever can either remove any obstruction in this way, or open up any new prospect, ought so far to be esteemed a benefactor to mankind.—David Hume.

God Knows!

“How do we modern people contrive to believe and be irreverent at one and the same time?” This is one of the many questions put by Clemence Dane in a recent article on religion. Possibly she herself would answer it with the popular but somewhat irreverent phrase, “God knows!” As a matter of fact, however, the article quoted from does itself furnish, if not an answer, at any rate, some material for framing one. It is clearly written by a believer; one, indeed, who is, as will be seen, gifted with prophecy. And there are certainly some remarks which might be called irreverent.

Our prophetess has engaged herself in the ancient “attempt of the created to unveil their Creator.” This has always seemed to us a rather unmannerly proceeding. If God is so attached to his veil, it is surely for him to reveal himself as and when he will. Curiosity which involves so gross an interference with liberty ought to be restrained. Is not God, like the little nations, entitled to some degree of self-determination?

Though we do not agree with unceremonious unveilings, we are not so benightedly fastidious as to refuse to take advantage of whatever glimpse of Deity may be vouchsafed, and as our author has been particularly fortunate in her endeavour to add to and improve the idea of God, we propose to examine her contribution with all the care which the character of her article demands.

Improvements in the idea of God postulate some new outlook; fresh facts or a fresh mind. Both are present in the article in question. The fresh facts are found in the effects of the war, and the fresh mind has discovered a new system of logic or thought, a system capable of far more wonderful results than any at present in use among Rationalists, an instrument which will enable the enquirer to answer the riddles of the universe with undreamt of facility.

It is desired, for example, to show that the realization of God is the supreme experience, and this is how it is done. “Who am I? God knows! Who made me? God knows! Whither go I? God knows! In a word the history of man is the history of religion—which is the history of God. This realization of God is the supreme experience of man and nation alike.”

As a suggestion for the revised Prayer Book there would be something attractive about it. “What is your name?” “God knows!” “Who gave you that name?” “God knows!” Such amendments would simplify and modernize the Catechism in a very acceptable manner. As logic—for a logical sequence must surely be intended—one can only gasp with admiration, and say, “This is a method which is capable of all. Why was it not thought of before?” To which comes the inevitable answer, “God knows!”

Speaking for ourselves, we must confess that whenever we use this phrase it is only as a cover for our ignorance. But in the article quoted from it is an instance of modesty; for we are convinced that when the writer says “God knows!” she knows too. How otherwise could she tell us what is the purpose of life? Here, now, is a problem about which we have often cudgelled our poor brains in vain, handicapped, no doubt, by an ancient and cumbrous system of logic. It requires one who has been clever enough to laugh at such fetters to tell us that “though it has taken countless generations to give us our idea of God, unless we can add to it we have failed in the purpose of our racial as well as our individual life.” Not very encouraging is it? We find the reference to countless generations decidedly chilling. They,

the great uncounted, have failed; but fortunately for the reputation of the twentieth century one of its earliest authors has succeeded. Her subtle logic and untiring zeal have met with their reward.

To appreciate the value of her addition to our idea of God one needs to go back a little. "What is God?" she asks, and, avoiding the facile "God knows!" she explains that he is to the savage, Power; to the Greek, Beauty; to the Jew, Law; to the East, Wisdom; to the follower of Christ, Love; and "for two thousand years the idea of God has paused at this point in the minds of men." Two thousand years! It looks as if he does not really care for this unveiling business after all. Yet we have the writer's authority for declaring that the purpose of life is to add to the idea of God. Curious is it not? Man fails in life if he does not add something to the God idea. God created him, and yet for two thousand years there has been nothing but failure. Even then man was generously helped out by the incarnation artifice. Such little difficulties, however, only serve to show how the established methods of logic handicap one.

A pause for two thousand years or thereabouts, and then—Clemence Dane! She herself would not put it like that, for she is nothing if not modest. Imagine having the wonderful good fortune to throw fresh light on the idea of God! Who but the most modest would choose to hide it among columns of advertisements for permanent waves, linen remnants at bargain prices, and other such eternal verities in a shilling magazine? She takes no credit to herself, nor does she claim a direct revelation from God, as so many of her predecessors have done. Modestly she offers the credit to the people of the century. This veil of modesty, becoming as it is, should not, however, be allowed to hide from anyone the fact that it is Clemence Dane, and not the people of this century, who has discovered what the countless generations of the last two thousand years have been groping after in vain. In putting it as she does she is simply adopting the method of the modern educator who, instead of forcing his ideas upon us, would rather let us find out for ourselves, taking care, of course, to put us gently but firmly on the right road.

What, after all, is this wonderful revelation? Man has tugged at the veil before, and has caught a glimpse of Power, Beauty, Law, Love, and now, as we "fetch up breathless in the year of Our Lord, 1923," another tug reveals—Laughter! This is what we waded through columns of print for. This is what Man has waited approximately two thousand years for. Imagine our prophetess, after all that time and trouble, getting nearer and nearer to God, who is watching her through the veil; at last she gets near enough, gives a little tug, and says, "Peep Bo!" No doubt God would be fairly convulsed with laughter. He had been working up for this for two thousand years—none of that wretched anxiety to get a laugh inside the first minute, which usually characterizes the human comedian and his audience. Molière's skill in keeping M. Tartuffe "off" for so long has always been admired. But—two thousand years! Molière is left standing still! Shaw and Grock must resign! It is God who is the great unapproachable comic.

But doubts assail us. Would he really be laughing at Clemence Dane? It would be unchivalrous, to say the least; and Power, Beauty, Law, Wisdom, and Love are but attributes of chivalry. Moreover, unless she was dreaming—unworthy thought—so clever a writer would surely be too wide awake not to realize for herself that the laughter was against her, and would certainly not set it down as a permanent condition of the Heavenly Father.

What then is he laughing at? Ay, there's the rub!

Is Life the jest? Is the Universe a colossal joke, and God the worst of practical jokers? Even if men did tramp through Hell, as the article reminds us, to the tune of "Smile, Smile, Smile," they never dreamt that the tragic consequences of Life's convulsive joke were a fit subject for hilarity among the gods.

But we are in danger of getting too bitter.

The two essentials for the stimulation of laughter are, according to Bergson, unsociability in the performer and insensibility in the spectator. If God were laughing at his own joke he would have to combine the two. Need we say that we are reluctant to add these two conceptions to the idea of Deity? Better to pause another two thousand years!

There must be some alternative solution. Who is the Joker and who the Joke? Is it, perhaps, Clemence Dane who is laughing? It is worth considering. Spencer said that laughter is an indication of an effort suddenly encountering a void. Kant described laughter as the result of an expectation which of a sudden ends in nothing. Can this be the explanation? After two thousand years of effort have we encountered a void? Have the expectations of countless generations ended in nothing? We incline to think that it is Clemence Dane who is laughing after all, and that she has followed in the good old fashioned way, and, maybe conscientiously, maybe maliciously, made a gift of her laughter to God and so helped to fill the void.

D. BAREBONES.

Psychology—Ancient and Modern.

It is possible that we have made many startling claims on behalf of the practical wisdom of the Aphorisms and Sutras of Patanjali. Epicharmus tells us that

The gods for labour sell us all good things.

The wisdom contained in these¹ two little books is accessible to all; only the labour to practise and understand them is necessary. We shall have utterly failed in our efforts if we have given the interested reader the impression that we are introducing a new religion or any theories implying a complete and passive attitude towards life. Hegel tells us that thinking is divine service, and Freethinkers among their other services to mankind are the leaven in the world, very needful to prevent the primitive mental antics of Christians from erasing many good things from the book of life. But life cannot stop at Freethought, and, bearing this in mind, we offer the two books mentioned above for the consideration of all, and particularly for those who have explored the psychic world and found disappointment.

As a test of the practical wisdom set forth in Aphorisms and Sutras and without any straining of our observation we should like to give two examples of modern psychology—or behaviourism. Then we may see how they compare with the wisdom of the east.

In discoursing to his friends Peer Gynt, elevated in spirits and under the influence of wine, reels off one of those revelations that are sometimes heard from friends and sometimes from children:—

The Gyntish Self—it is the host
Of wishes, appetites, desires—
The Gyntish Self, it is the sea
Of fancies, exigencies, claims,
All that, in short, makes my breast heave,
And whereby I, as I, exist.

—Act iv, Sc. 1.

¹ *Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, Theosophical Publishing Society, 161 New Bond Street, W. *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, J. M. Watkins, 21 Cecil Court, Charing Cross, London, W.C.

In his book entitled *Conflict and Dream*, the late W. H. R. Rivers put forward his method of curing war patients who are suffering from shock. His treatment consisted of tracing the patient's symbolic dream to its real meaning and then making the patient end the conflict by facing rather than by trying to suppress his memories.

In the above two instances, summarized by desire and fear respectively, we have modern material to work upon. Let us now see how they are dealt with in the Aphorisms and Sutras. If we run together the tenth and eleventh Sutras they read as follows: "The series of dynamic mind-images is beginningless, because Desire is everlasting, since the dynamic mind-images are held together by impulses of desire, by the wish for personal reward, by the substratum of mental habit, by the support of outer things desired; therefore, when these cease, the self-reproduction of dynamic mind-images ceases." Ibsen has presented his ideas in the dress of romance, and Grieg has acutely understood him in his music; and possibly this is the only form that appeals to the many. We do not criticize the form, we only point out that Patanjali has in five lines what Ibsen has in five acts. There is no end to the desires of Peer Gynt, and for dramatic purposes, Ibsen finishes the play by the love of Solveig for Peer. The dramatist was in a tight corner as any reader may discover on examining the Button-Moulder's speech with the wanderer.

Now to take the instance of the psychologist's cure for a patient suffering from a repressed complex. The Aphorism of Patanjali will take us even farther than that suggested by the late author of *Conflict and Dream*. In speaking of detachment—not forgetting, *mes amis*, that the Freethinker has detached himself from the reward of a Christian Heaven, we read, "If the object is a non-desirable one, non-attachment is attained when the student has resolved to sacrifice any chance of avoiding harm which the object may cause him." At this point we begin to get somewhere near an understanding of fear. We also begin to see that the Christian's hope of heaven is grounded in fear, that the source of the wish for immortality is derived from the same quarter, and that the physical and psychical cravings for everlasting existence have the will of the Christian completely at their mercy. And at this point we will leave him there—with fraternal deference, with the hope that he is happy, and if not, with the assurance that deliverance lies with himself. Habit, imitation, custom and the bog light from the priest will keep him there; by an effort of will he has to challenge all four to grasp his freedom to enable him to breathe the atmosphere in that country discovered at no small cost by the illustrious dead whose names are not mentioned in polite society.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

—William Ernest Henley.

Correspondence.

MIND IN NATURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am pleased to see from Mr. Kamal-ud-din's letter in your issue of March 11, that he finds my epistles so interesting as to make him impatient at the delay in the appearance of my concluding remarks, which has been due, as he correctly surmises, to pressure of other matters, coupled unfortunately with a slight attack of influenza—one of many of "God's loving mercies," or the workings of the Great Mind.

The impression conveyed to me by Mr. Kamal-ud-din's letter is that, unable to reply to my objections to his making a god by clothing, personifying and deifying some unseen, mysterious power in Nature, he is dodging from one corner to another and trying to draw a red-herring across the scent by enticing me into a lengthy and futile argument about Ernst Heinrich Haeckel's Monistic theory of the universe.

Now, I have never read any of Haeckel's works, nor Darwin's, nor Huxley's. My arguments and deductions are derived from observation, meditation, intuition, "inspiration," and personal experience among various peoples, both savage and civilized, in different parts of the world. Since reading Mr. Kamal-ud-din's letter, however, I have looked up Haeckel in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and I find that he "held that, just as the highest animals have been evolved from the simplest forms of life, so the highest faculties of the human mind have been evolved from the soul of brute beasts, and, more remotely, from the simple cell-soul of the unicellular protozoa. As a consequence of these views, Haeckel was led to deny the immortality of the soul, the freedom of the will, and the existence of a personal god."

Haeckel, therefore, was an Atheist, and it seems strange that Mr. Kamal-ud-din should call him up to support Deism, or "God in Islam." At Haeckel's conclusions I arrived long ago, without ever reading his works or studying his Monistic theory; but Monism and Monotheism are not the same thing; one can be a Monist without being a Monotheist. I have read over my articles on "Islam" that have already appeared in the *Freethinker*, and I find no reference to Monism or to Haeckel. I said that Monotheism, the belief in one personal god only, as a loving-heavenly-father-creator of everything and everybody, is absurd in the face of the facts of Nature and our everyday experience of life.

There are many unseen and mysterious powers in Nature, about which, as Mr. Kamal-ud-din admits with regard to his G.U.M.P., we know very little. There are, for instance, gravitation, electricity, magnetism; a trinity of natural forces which may possibly be one and the same thing in different forms; but why any man—other than an ignorant and superstitious savage—should manufacture a personal being or deity out of these powers, either singly or rolled into one, I fail to see. I cannot help wondering how Mr. Kamal-ud-din, seemingly so devoted a student of scientific investigation and learning, can still be so primitive as to make a god out of a power or force in Nature; to do so is anything but scientific. Primitive man imagined everything he could not understand or otherwise account for in the forces of Nature to be caused by ghosts, spirits, gods, or devils, whom he sought to placate by sacrificial offerings.

From Canney's *Encyclopædia of Religions* I learn that Monism is that philosophy which traces back all phenomena to a single physical or spiritual principle. Physical or Material Monism is represented by such a writer as Ernst Haeckel. Monism recognizes that "God" is not to be placed over against the material world as an external being, but must be placed as a "divine power" or "moving spirit" within the cosmos itself. It teaches that all the wonderful phenomena of Nature around us are only various products of one and the same primitive matter. Monism can never recognize in "God" a personal being or an individual. Spiritual Monism may represent "God" as the infinite sum of all natural forces, the sum of all atomic forces and all ether vibrations. Monistic idealism recognizes no fundamental distinction between matter and spirit.

All this coincides with my contention that mind and matter cannot be separated, and that the powers or forces

in Nature cannot be looked upon as a personal being or "God."

This "seeking after God," or search for a "first cause," only leads us to the "mighty atom," or to the "protoplasmic primordial atomic globule," from which, like Pooh Bah in "The Mikado," everyone and everything is descended.

In his sermon at Woking, Mr. Kamal-ud-din said that science, in discovering new secrets of nature, is but revealing God. On the contrary, the more the secrets of Nature are revealed by science, the further away does the idea of "God" recede, like a Jack-o'-Lantern, or Will-o'-the-Wisp.

Mr. Kamal-ud-din's objection to my "sportiveness" in dealing with the subject under discussion reminds me of an incident that occurred recently in the house at which I am staying. A Christian spinster lady of ninety years of age, who is what is termed "very religious"—if praying, and reading the Bible, and possessing an insane regard for dogs and cats before human beings, and wearing a solemn face constitutes religion—was speaking of a new rector recently arrived in the parish. She said he had not yet called to see her, but had called on the lady next door, who had told her that he was "very jolly." "I don't see how a clergyman can be jolly," she added, solemnly.

If Mr. Kamal-ud-din thinks that such subjects as the G.U.M.P., or the Great Mind, or Monism, should be discussed with solemn visage and bated breath and superstitious awe, I cannot agree with him. Even judges and lawyers indulge in facetiousness at times and cause laughter in the law courts. To solemn-faced, black-coated religionists I have a strong antipathy.

A. W. MALCOLMSON.

Psychoanalysis.

I FLUNG the doorway open wide
And said: "Come forth, ye Things that hide
Beyond the Threshold!" Forth they came,
Enveloped in a greenish flame
Which gradually died away,
Leaving the cold clear light of day
To show them up unmercifully,
My dear subconscious sins unruly.
Blandly I gazed on those dread shapes;
Salacious serpents, bawdy apes,
And other bestial obscenities
Unfit to share the Zoo's amenities.
Nor felt I warmer toward the swarm
Of rottenness in human form
That skipped and pranced and shuffled after,
With greasy leer and brazen laughter.
There waddled Lechery, once so fair,
A sad old scamp with mousy hair,
Who smacked his bloodless lips so thin
And slobbered down his thorny chin.
There Incest, loved of many a king,
A pallid, unprovoking thing;
And dear Dolores, bitter and tender,
A frowsy slut with a torn suspender.
Gone was the glamour, lost the lure
Of satyr-priest and vampire-whore.
(These fantasies require, it seems,
The merciful half-light of dreams).
I looked them up, I looked them down;
They quailed beneath my frigid frown.
At last I spoke. I said: "By Freud!"
I'm inexpressibly annoyed
To see so clear (in proper lighting)
The darkling dragons I've been fighting.
You wretched, feeble, palsied frights,
Was't you that gave meen sleepless nights?
No answer came. In mute astonishment
They hung their heads at my admonishment.
I looked them through and round-about;
At last, at last, I'd found them out,
Poor witless, pitiful inanities,
Shadows of Diabolian vanities.....

There was'nt a decent sin to pick,
So I turned on my heel—and was slightly sick.

JOHN ERNEST SIMPSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.1): 8, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, "Message of Science to Our Age."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "Does Trade Unionism Benefit the Working-class?" Affirmative, Alderman F. A. Combes.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. J. H. Van Biene, "Pricked Bubbles."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Festivals of the Seasons."

STRATFORD (Town Hall): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "What the World has Gained from Unbelief."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. F. E. Willis, J.P., "A Freethinker's View of Easter."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, "Musical Morning." Come and enjoy yourselves. No questions. No discussion. Only a Silver Collection.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Rooms): 7, Limelight Lecture by T. E. Duncan, "Russia."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Operetta—"The Little Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe." Performed by the Children of the Secular Sunday-school. (Silver collection.)

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Cromford Court Café, Cromford Court, Market Street, City): Mr. R. H. Rosetti, 3, "The Immorality of Faith"; 6.30, "Religion and War."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (12a Clayton Street East): 3, Conference, Propaganda, etc.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (191 Higher Hillgate): 2.30, Mr. G. Ambler, "Life." Questions and Discussion. All invited.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Dockers' Hall): 6, Branch Meeting.

BOOKS WANTED.—Several copies, prompt cash. *Anacalypsis*, Higgins; *Ancient Egypt*, Massey. All Early Freethought Works. Foote's *Romances* and *Heroes*. Robt. Taylor's, etc.—Write, H. GREEN, Bookseller, 66 Knights Hill, S.E.

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