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Views and Opinions.

The Clergy and the Wireless.

On several recent Sunday evenings I have "listened in" to more or less prominent clergymen speaking from Marconi House, London. These have included the Bishop of Croydon, the Rev. Basil Bourchier, and a Presbyterian parson whose name I have forgotten. Altogether I have listened to five sermonettes of about fifteen minutes each, and with the exception of the Presbyterian—an Edmonton man—whose speech, while full of false reasoning was from a theological point of view intellectually passable, I hardly think it possible to get haphazard from any other body of educated men such a mass of platitudes and of intellectual emptiness as these men poured on their unseen audience. It is not that one disagreed with what was said. Intellectual differences may be taken for granted, but so great an exhibition of trained incapacity was simply appalling. There was not a single strong idea to leaven the lump of parsonic imbecility, and I have no hesitation in saying that no five educated men picked out of the streets by chance could possibly have given a poorer show. The many thousands who have "listened in" will be able to say whether this judgment is deserved or not, but for my own part I cannot imagine a more deadly attack upon the clergy than for someone to take down these speeches as delivered, print them, and distribute them among the public. Of course, it may be that the British Broadcasting Company have a majority of Atheists on the Board of Directors, and this is their way of holding up the clergy to ridicule. I do not know. All I do know is that if the men who gave these Sunday evening sermons were representative, then the clergy are—mentally—even worse than I imagined.

* * *

Safeguarding the "Trade."

When this Sunday evening broadcasting first began the proceedings started at 6.30. This continued for a few weeks, and then the parsons got to work. Against Sunday games the clergy had argued that it interfered with the pleasure of people using the parks. Against Sunday entertainments, that they involved labour, and to continue them might rob the British workmen of his day of rest. Broadcasting was open to neither of these objections. It interfered with

no one. No one need listen unless he cared to do so, and he listened inside his own house. The labour involved in broadcasting was so infinitesimal that no objection could be raised on that head. But 6.30 is church time, and with the choice between a good concert at home and going to church the clergy felt they stood a small chance. Man, they say, is incurably religious, but all the same he appears to get rid of it if he is given a reasonable chance of doing so. So the Broadcasting Company was induced not to commence its concerts till 8.30 on the very evening when most people could listen to them and would appreciate them most. The sole concern of the clergy here was to guard their professional interests. The selfishness of their action was almost naked and unashamed, and they not only robbed the people of two hours good entertainment, but into the remaining two hours they inserted themselves. If that was intended as compensation the irony was superb. It reminds one of the mother who gave her little boy a penny every time he took his castor oil, and then put the pennies into a money-box to buy more oil with.

* * *

The Rule of the Black Robe.

I do not know the inner history of this deal between the clergy and the Broadcasting Company, but I cannot picture the Company running after the clergy begging them to come and deliver their sermons, or so desirous of the religious betterment of the people as of their own accord to stop their concerts till after church time. The first move must have come from the clergy. They saw a rival show opening and they took what steps they could to stop it. Professionally one ought not to blame them. Most theatrical managers and business men would do the same if they could, and forming a corner is an old commercial game. Only the aim of the business man is open and, so far, honest. That of the parson is underhand and dishonest. He does not say, "I want to guard my industry from competition." He says, "I wish to raise the morality of the people by putting before them my beliefs, and to guard against their being robbed of their day of rest." And the Company, which desires to keep on good terms with the public hesitated before offending a body of men who can preach against them from thousands of pulpits, and, more particularly, can bring a tremendous amount of back-stair influence against those who offend them. So the Broadcasting Company gave way, the concerts were postponed till after church time, and the clergy were allowed to put a finger in yet another national pie. I am assuming, of course, that I have correctly gauged the cause of the clergy being mixed up with the wireless transmission, but I do not think I am very far from the mark. For it would be a mistake to assume that because the clergy preach an intellectually decrepit creed they are therefore without influence. They are not. They exert a great influence partly based on what they once were, partly because they are the bulwarks of so many sinister interests in the country. We are not priest-ridden in the sense that a country like Spain is. There it is open, here it is surreptitious, but it is active all the

same, and the way in which some of our politicians play to the clergy may be taken as proof of the truth of what is here said.

* * *

The Power of Minorities.

I have dealt with the clergy and the wireless because it appears to me to convey a lesson to all Freethinkers. Love of ease, and superficial observation combine to make a great many imagine that because the clergy are more accommodating than they were, and because they no longer find it profitable to openly oppose certain forms of thought, therefore the need for an aggressive policy no longer exists. There is greater need for it now than ever. Just as intense drunkenness is the greatest stimulant to an active temperance campaign, or an oppressive tyranny the strongest stimulant to liberal reform, so while religion assumes openly its most intolerant forms it in a way provides its own antidote. But when it becomes accommodating, when it apes a liberalism it does not feel and cannot appreciate, then is the time when we need to be most on guard against it. Others think that because we are in a minority it is almost useless to protest. Well, confessedly, we are in a minority. That is the position of all advanced thinkers. They would not be what they are, and they would not serve the useful purpose they do serve were it otherwise. It is idle to lament what is inevitable, and that can only be altered by those who are advanced going over to the conservative majority. But it has been too much of a tradition with Freethinkers that because we are in a minority, and because oppression has always been the lot of the minority, therefore it is useless to complain. But minorities are of all sizes and qualities. A minority may be so small as to be safely ignored. Or it may be made up of people of such poor intellectual quality one may treat them with contempt. Or, yet again, a minority may be of such a size and quality that it need only exert itself to command the attention it deserves. And we neither know how strong we are, nor the influence we can wield until we assert ourselves a little more strenuously than we are in the habit of doing. After all, the intellectual and other revolutions that have occurred in the history of the world have always been the work of strenuous minorities. There is perhaps no greater political fallacy than that which asserts the majority rules. The majority never has ruled. It is the forceful minority that moves the world and rules the world. The majority only registers its decisions.

* * *

Pulling Our Weight.

Decidedly we are not sufficiently alive to what we might do if we asserted ourselves more than now happens. In the case of the Broadcasting Company, for every Freethinker who writes the company protesting against the intrusion of the clergy there are a score or more who simply express their disgust privately. And what is the Company to think? It hears but one side, and in this matter, as in the case of Sunday games, the Churches see to it that their organizations are put into action and their forces are marched round and round like the members of a stage army. And while they are made to appear stronger than they are, we appear weaker than we are. We see the same thing in political movements where Freethinkers keep their opinions on religion to themselves and suffer without protest the intrusion of religion from opportunist parsons. Again, in the case of the Salford boycott of the *Freethinker*, while a very gallant fight for fair play is being made by a few, it is certain that all who could make the Council acquainted with their opinion of the bigotry displayed have not done so. There is simply no reason whatever why this state of things should continue. We are much stronger

than most people believe we are if we can only get together and act together. We are carrying meekness to excess. Christians say they believe in turning one cheek when the other is smitten, but they take care to advertise the principle without illustrating it in practice. We disown the principle and go a long way towards putting it into practice—and don't even get the benefit of an advertisement. For the thousandth time I must point out that there is only one way in which we can make certain that Christians will deal justly with Freethinkers, and that is by putting it beyond the power of the majority to act unjustly. The complete secularization of life can only be brought about by the publicly expressed determination of Secularists that it shall be accomplished.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

God in Christ.

DR. A. R. HENDERSON, Chairman of the Congregational Union, devoted his opening address to a lively discussion of the subject of God's active presence in the universe. He refers to the attack on the Christian faith in the name of science which is centred in the claim made by some that "a fortuitous concourse of atoms made the Cosmos," and which, according to him, is "a far bigger demand to make on human credulity than if it were claimed that *Paradise Lost* resulted from the tossing of myriads of letters of the alphabet from an aeroplane." The illustration of the alleged absurdity of the scientific claim is as unfortunate and meaningless as the very wording of the claim is inaccurate. No present day scientist of any note asserts that "a fortuitous concourse of atoms made the Cosmos," because, as a matter of fact, there is not and never has been "a fortuitous concourse of atoms." The universe came into being by the operation of physical and chemical laws, by which laws it is still governed. Dr. Henderson seems incapable of accurately stating the scientific claim. And yet he admits that since the War the fundamental question has been "Can we believe in God; and if so, what kind of God can we believe in?" He also admits that a million voices now confirm Carlyle's accusation, "He does nothing." At this point he affirms that "man needs God," forgetting, evidently, that as the result of psychological investigation recently made among American college students, it was discovered that forty-three per cent. of the men and twenty-two per cent. of the women declared themselves indifferent to the existence of God, nearly all of these being non-believers. He also forgets that in his own country there are many thousands of men and women who feel absolutely no need of God, and who are getting on quite satisfactorily without him. How silly it therefore is for a man to stand up before such an assembly and proclaim that "if it were finally discovered that God could not be found, the angels of joy and hope would take their flight from the earth."

Dr. Henderson is no more successful in his attempt to construct an argument for the existence of God. According to the brief report of the address in the *Christian World* of May 10, we learn that:—

Developing his argument he asked: Did not natural law itself need to be explained by Mind? The universe was interpretable because it had been thought through by the Infinite Intelligence. Arguing that to satisfy our nature God can be nothing less than a personal Intelligence, a personal Love, and a personal Will, he went on to the revelation of God himself to man, culminating in the fact of Christ. The process of redemption was the very life of God. Love suffering for man's sin—that was the very heart of the Eternal.

Let us look at natural law and ascertain how Mind

can explain it. As a matter of fact, Mind neither does nor can explain natural law. On the contrary, it is natural law that explains Mind, mind being a product which it took Nature millions of years to bring forth. To say that "the universe was interpretable because it had been thought through by the Infinite Intelligence," is to betray inexcusable ignorance of the facts on the one hand, and on the other, an utterly unjustifiable use of the imagination. It is estimated by geologists that the world is from 25,000,000 to 800,000,000 years old; and it is a certainty that for more than one half of either of those long periods there was no trace whatever of the existence of intelligence, infinite or finite. Even after the appearance of living beings it was countless ages before psychical activity began. Whatever mind may be, the study of biology proves beyond the possibility of doubt that it is an evolutionary product. The idea of an Infinite intelligence is a child of the imagination, of the objective reality of which there is not a scintilla of evidence. It is easy enough to say that the revelation of God has followed the evolutionary line until it culminated in the person of Christ, and that "to satisfy our nature God can be nothing less than a personal Intelligence, a personal Love, and a personal Will"; but this is only an irresponsible playing upon the fancy, in which the men of God indulge to a most culpable extent.

Nothing can be more palpable than the fact that the Christian Gospel has been the most dismal and complete failure in all history. Dr. Henderson describes it as the hope and guarantee of progress, but such it has claimed to be for nineteen hundred years, though in point of fact for upwards of a thousand years it did its utmost to check all progress, and very nearly succeeded. It is to science that we are indebted for all genuine progress ever made. Even Dr. Henderson gives currency to the fallacy that "progress could not come from a change in the social organization," and proceeds thus:—

The slums of our great cities, breeding disease, increasing temptation, endangering child-life, shutting out God's sunshine, begetting hopelessness and insensitiveness to the degrading conditions of life, are a disgrace to civilization. But try to sweep them away and you are confronted by the obstacles raised by greed, selfishness, and lethargy.....A civic conscience is to be found only in the few. A consuming passion for righting the wrongs of the downtrodden marks a man out as singular.

That is only too sadly true. "What we need," Dr. Henderson exclaims, "is a mighty spiritual dynamic that will make social welfare a life-long crusade." But the Chairman of the Congregational Union forgets once more that this mighty spiritual dynamic and the slums have co-existed, even in this country, for nearly fifteen centuries. At these May meetings similar remarks have been made for scores of years, the public being invariably assured that God in Christ has been in the thick of the fight to oust selfishness from business and carelessness from civic life, and that to him there are no privileged classes. And yet in spite of all God and men can do the slums and the privileged classes are still here in the third decade of the twentieth century. The only conclusion to which reason allows us to come is that God in Christ is a sheer myth, and can do absolutely nothing, though still exceedingly useful to the Churches.

On Wednesday, May 9, Dean Inge contributed a most remarkable article to the *Evening Standard*, entitled "What think ye of Christ?" It was ostensibly a review of Papini's *Story of Christ*, but incidentally it weighs in the critical balance most of the prominent Lives of Christ that have yet been published. We do not intend to deal with the article as a whole, but only with a few statements therein made which we regard

as at once false and insolent. All readers of the Dean's *Outspoken Essays* do not need to be told that he is by no means an orthodox theologian, though it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain what his theological views really are. In this article, for example, he candidly admits that the materials for a biography of Jesus "are miserably scanty, and [that] some of these are not scientific history as we understand it." "The old documents," he adds, "are the most familiar and widely known of all books. Why, then, cannot we be content with the Gospels?" In other words, why are the modern Lives of Christ so eagerly welcomed and so widely read? The following is Dean Inge's answer:—

The chief reason is that Christ remains the most supremely interesting figure in all history. Many people have lost faith in the Churches, but only the most violent enemies of society have lost faith in Christ. After 1900 years he still counts for much more in human life than any other man that ever lived. As Browning says:—

That one face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my Universe that feels and knows.

That paragraph could scarcely contain more inaccuracies and falsehoods than it does. Naturally, to Christians, Christ is the most interesting figure the world has ever produced; but, then, Christians are not the only people in the world. Quite as naturally, to Mohammedans, the prophet Mohammed is "the most supremely interesting figure in all history." Confucius is equally interesting to the Chinese, and Gotama to the Buddhists. In his well-known book, entitled *Buddhism*, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the late Professor Rhys Davids inserted a table showing at a glance the relative numbers of the different religions and the percentage each bears to the whole. According to this table (p. 6) the Christians number 327,000,000, being about 26 per cent., while the Buddhists reach the high number of 500,000,000, being about 40 per cent. It follows that to the overwhelming majority of people the Lord Buddha is "the most supremely interesting figure in all history." Which of the two Lords is the more historical and the more helpful is another question altogether.

Dean Inge's next sentence is a lie of the blackest dye. We italicize the lie: "Many people have lost faith in the Churches, but only the most violent enemies of society have lost faith in Christ." We confidently challenge the very reverend gentleman to substantiate the second clause of that sentence. Will he name six unbelievers in Christ who are "violent enemies of society?" Did Charles Darwin become a violent enemy of society when he lost faith in Christ and Christianity and abandoned both? Did Charles Bradlaugh hate society when he devoted his life to its service, because he had no faith in Christ? It will be remembered how terribly men suffered under the abominable Combination Laws, imprisonments, fines, and even transportation being the forms of punishment inflicted upon offenders. Who protested against those wicked laws? Not the Church, not prominent Christians, not Wilberforce, the friend of black slaves far away, but who took no interest in white slaves at home. Vigorous protests came, however, from a small band of men who had lost faith in Christ, such as Robert Owen, Richard Carlile, Cobbett, and others. Has the Dean the audacity to characterize such practical servants of the people as "violent enemies of society"? If he is a gentleman as well as a Christian he will withdraw that lie and apologize for having put it on paper.

We hold that God in Christ has had his chances and missed them, but we are not going to call the Dean names because he (erroneously as we think) holds and expresses the opposite view.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Heroic Age of Freethought.

Liberty's chief foe is priestcraft.

—Charles Bradlaugh.

They dwell apart, a calm heroic band.

—William Morris.

DULCET speakers on Pleasant Sunday afternoon platforms never tire of boasting of the tolerance of the religion they profess. It is well, therefore, to attempt to dispel the idea that the Christian religion is the embodiment of toleration. Trials for blasphemy and heresy have been very numerous, and, curiously, the comparatively enlightened nineteenth century holds the unenviable record for the number of blasphemy and free speech prosecutions. Still more significantly the twentieth century continues the bad record of its immediate predecessor. The reason is that during this period the working classes of this country awakened to intellectual issues, and the Church and governing class united to suppress freedom of thought and liberty of action.

A hundred years ago Thomas Paine was dead, but "his soul was marching on." His books were very much alive, and the *Age of Reason* and the *Rights of Man* were being read widely. This was one of the earliest concerted efforts made to arouse the workers with the Evangel of Liberty. The pioneers had to pay a very heavy price for their opinions. Be it remembered, the *Age of Reason* was no ordinary book. It was a thunderous engine of revolt, to use a famous phrase of Lord Morley's. There were critics of the Bible, it is true, before Paine, but they were scholars whose writings were over the heads of ordinary folk. Paine himself, a man of genius, had sprung from the people, and he spoke their language and made their thoughts articulate. Boldly as Paine might write, his books would have been strangled at their birth but for the extraordinary courage of the Freethinkers. Richard Carlile, for example, suffered over nine years' imprisonment in this battle for Freedom. The Orthodox were thoroughly aroused by so determined a resistance, and persecuted without mercy, and without regard to age or sex. Carlile's wife and sister were dragged to gaol for two years each. As each Freethinker was imprisoned fresh ones stepped into the breach, and one after the other they went to prison. To think of it is to feel a glow of pride. One small circle of Freethinkers serving between them over fifty years in prison, many thousands of pounds worth of literature destroyed, and all in defence of the rights of free speech in a country supposed to be in the very van of toleration and civilization.

The Freethinkers fought with their backs to the wall against overwhelming odds, and they gave a most excellent account of themselves. Paine's works were followed by others equally trenchant, and Orthodoxy became seriously alarmed. The State priests actually joined forces with the Nonconformist clergymen, and engineered many prosecutions against the Freethinkers. John Cleave and Henry Hetherington were both prosecuted and sentenced. Then the Freethinkers carried the battle into the enemy's camp. They prosecuted the respectable tradesman, Edward Moxon, and other publishers, for selling Shelley's *Queen Mab*, a poem full of Atheism, and for which so many Freethinkers had suffered. This clever move succeeded, and the counter-attack showed the orthodox that they could not butcher Freethinkers to make a Christian holiday with impunity.

Quite a campaign was conducted around Charles Southwell's *Oracle of Reason*, the first distinctive Freethought periodical. It was the last word in audacity from the title to the colophon, and it very soon attracted the slings and arrows of authority.

Before many issues, Southwell was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and a fine of £100. Holyoake, the second editor, followed with six months' imprisonment for a jest after a lecture. Thomas Paterson, the third editor, shared the fate of his colleagues. His defence, which was published under the caustic title of *God versus Paterson*, earned for its author the affectionate name of "Bulldog." These prosecutions were not confined to England, and up in Scotland, two stalwarts, Finlay and Robinson, were sentenced. Then Matilda Roalfe was imprisoned for selling the *Age of Reason*.

Half the nineteenth century was now gone, but the Freethinkers had attracted powerful friends. In 1857 Pooley, a poor labourer, was sentenced to nearly two years' imprisonment for chalking words on a parson's gate. This was too much for decent people. Buckle, the historian, and John Stuart Mill, at once denounced such abominable persecution. At the trial of Pooley the prosecuting counsel was "silver-tongued" Coleridge, afterwards Lord Chief Justice, and by the irony of events the judge in the memorable *Freethinker* trial of 1883. It was in that year that George Foote was sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and W. J. Ramsey and Kemp to nine months' imprisonment respectively. A petition for release was curtly refused, although it was signed by Herbert Spencer and a long list of persons of intellectual eminence.

Imprisonment was by no means the only indignity imposed. Daniel Eaton, who was fortunate in securing the championship of the poet Shelley, was not only prosecuted seven times, but had the pillory inflicted, and £2,500 worth of books destroyed. Shelley himself was declared, judicially, because of his Freethought, to be unfit to be the guardian of his own children. Many years later a similar dishonour was inflicted on Annie Besant. A large number of the prosecutions of the unstamped Press were simply disguised blasphemy trials. It was only Bradlaugh's extraordinary knowledge of law and alertness which prevented his imprisonment for blasphemy. As it was, he had to fight the bigots for thirteen years for his right to represent Northampton town in Parliament. A former Marquis of Queensberry was deprived of his seat in the House of Lords on account of his known Freethought opinions. Last, but certainly not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed for Freethought purposes were diverted to the next-of-kin, but happily, the famous Bowman case has stopped this highway robbery in the name of religion. In addition, Freethought leaders have been involved in constant and costly lawsuits, deluged with personal abuse, and have been the victims of a concerted Press boycott. Is it not true that Christian toleration is a sham?

MIMNERMUS.

Let us not forget that it is from the very non-morality of destiny that a nobler morality must spring into being; for here as everywhere man is never so strong with his own native strength as when he realizes that he stands entirely alone. As we consider the crowning injustice of fate, it is the negation of high moral law that disturbs us; but from this negation there at once arises a moral law that is higher still. He who no longer believes in reward or punishment must do good for the sake of good. Even though a moral law seem on the eve of disappearing, we need have no cause for disquiet; its place will be speedily filled by a law that is greater still. To attribute morality to fate is but to lessen the purity of our ideal; to admit the injustice of fate is to throw open before us the ever-widening fields of a still loftier morality. Let us not think virtue will crumble, though God Himself seem unjust.—Maeterlinck.

The Human and the Divine.

UPTON SINCLAIR'S NEW BOOK.

Here it is at last! The book we have been waiting for these many years! The *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of wage slavery! Comrade Sinclair's book the *Jungle*! And what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did for black slaves the *Jungle* has a large chance to do for the white slaves of to-day.

It is alive and warm. It is brutal with life. It is written of sweat and blood and groans and tears. It depicts, not what man is, but what man is compelled to be in this world of the Twentieth Century. It depicts what our country really is, the home of oppression and injustice, a nightmare of misery, an inferno of suffering, a human hell, a jungle of wild beasts. —Jack London.

SURELY a terrible indictment, surely the truth also, but surely not all the truth—"this partial view of human kind is surely not the last." Surely it must be, at the same time, that no society can be called humane or cultured that is content with even one poor soul in hell; which also is the indictment of our Christian religion, which is slowly but surely killing it; which made the "next world" more awful than the worst of this. We have been piously and poetically assured that slaves cannot breathe in England (or America). Even Ingersoll, in his moments of generous enthusiasm, spoke of the stars and stripes as the grandest flag that ever kissed the breeze. So the British patriot as nobly lauds Britannia's emblem of the free! So might the breast of the pirate captain swell with pride as he pointed aloft to his emblem of authority, of duty, and adoration! "Wha wadna fecht for Charlie?" or any other king, or any other flag, in any cause, be it good or bad. But, soft! Oh, yes! We know quite well the flag, like "God," should stand for all that is splendid in a nation and a man, but how many devoted millions have had their faith in flags betrayed! Meantime the flag—the red of the Socialist or of the Salvation Army included—is but the stamped signal of the hosts of superstition in war or peace. The Bible enjoins that servants (slaves) obey their masters. Obedience to authority will probably always be necessary; but men's blind, unthinking, absolute obedience to a flag or a man, as in the army for instance, sinks them to the level of the beasts where he is easily and dumbly drilled into the doing of any brutal work. Necessity, also, in our social system, or want of system, climatic rigours, accident, poverty, disease, etc., etc., are compelling things apart from flags and masters and generals.

The *Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair, startled the world in the early years of our young century. I have just been reading it for the first time previous to commenting on Sinclair's latest production, *They Call Me Carpenter* (Werner Laurie, Ltd., 7s. 6d. net). It would be a pity to let the older generation forget the *Jungle*, if that were possible, or let the younger remain unaware of its existence. It is certainly one of the world's great books, and might have been, but for the anti-climax at the end, the equal (on the economic plane) of Dostoieffsky's psychological *Crime and Punishment*—than which I can imagine no higher praise, if it be not to say that the *Jungle* is greater than the Bible, inasmuch as it reveals a wider world, a higher heaven, and a deeper hell. The anti-climax comes when the very human and actual, much suffering Yoorgis gets "converted" to Socialism, "sees the light," just as in a little Bethel, and thereafter gets lost among a number of dreary, dry as dust speculators on the new age. Instead of which the end should have been "worked up to a flaming crescendo of revolt." Or, on the other hand, the devoted, brutalized Lithuanian should have been crushed at last in the mills of God and Man that had tortured him so long and so relentlessly; he, the epitome of a million victims past, perhaps of millions more to come! Reading

—up to a point—this epic of a poor struggling human being, you want to rise up, and rave, recite, and madden round the land: You understand at last, however mistaken they may be, why there are Socialists, and you feel that this Socialism, like other doubtful things, is the outcome of the noblest urge of the human breast.

It is curious, and, if we come to think of it, not a little humiliating, how fond we are of horrors—when they happen to other people! As who should sit in a cool, comfortable corner in hell, carousing, and callous of those writhing in agony all about him. A Socialist friend of mine protests that a book like *Les Miserables* seems to him like a stirring up of the Clyde mud with a stick. We wonder what he thinks of the *Jungle*, which stirs up the mud of the human river with a dredger! Perhaps the Socialist, in his eyes, redeems the American realist.

In *They Call Me Carpenter* our author has sought to please the reader as well as to advance his own social doctrine, and the book is certainly a most attractive and readable one. The story opens with a light-hearted sceptical talk between the narrator and Dr. Karl Henner, "one of those cultured foreigners whose manners are like softest velvet, so that when you talk to them you feel as a Persian cat must feel when it is being stroked."

"I was glad that Prussian militarism was finished," said the young ex-soldier, and Dr. Henner answered: "A painful operation, and we all hope that the patient may survive it; also we hope that the surgeon has not contracted the disease"—just as quietly as that. "In there" (St. Bartholomew's Church), I said, "over the altar you may see Christ the Carpenter, dressed up in exquisite robes of white and amethyst, set up as a stained glass window ornament. But if you'll stop and think, you'll realize it wasn't we Americans who began that!" "No," said the other, returning my laugh, "but I think it was you who finished him up as a symbol of elegance, a divinity of the respectable inane."

Mobbed in the street for trying to see a "Hun" picture film, the young swell, who had "been through the Argonne," seeks refuge in the church referred to, where, lying bruised and dazed, he sees the window figure stir, come towards him, and place a soothing, healing hand upon his head. Later the two sally forth to explore the wicked city. Now the story becomes at once difficult and easy to write. The prophet, as he is now called, follows faithfully "in his steps" as of old, but much delicate ingenuity is required of the writer to "ease off" the miracles a bit, and make the god act like a man. It is all very inane and unconvincing, while the story remains intensely interesting, like Bunyan's, *as a story*. Apart from the miraculous Second Coming—given a good moral we forgive all expedients—the living Christ is as hopeless and helpless as the dead one. This the prophet himself at length realizes. After suffering unspeakable indignities, including a can of red paint emptied on his divine head, and a Magdalene of the street stripped naked and thrown beside him, and after which, when the naked girl had rolled off, he was tossed in a sheet by thirty men till he was pitched away through a glass roof. Then his Christ-like character forsook him—a redeeming, but quite unprecedented happening—the gentle, compassionate countenance was "contorted with fury":—

"I meant to die for this people! but now—let them die for themselves! Let me away from them! Anywhere, any way! Let me go back where I was—where I do not see, where I do not hear, where I do not think! Let me go back to church!"

Exactly! we might exclaim, there is your only niche and usefulness—the dream-world of the past, the stained glass window of the present, never the saviour

of the future. "Lo, strength is of the plain root virtues born!" Social salvation must come through facts and experience, not through phantasms and dreams. Longings there will always be, ideals we hope, in the human breast; these will shape our ends; dreams, also, of a better world, and strivings after it, but not "another world"; we shall, when we choose, find our material, our impulse, and our inspiration in this one.

Our author is still a man in his prime, a brilliant and voluminous writer, who at twenty had produced, *in bulk*, as much work as Sir Walter Scott. These notes may meet his eye, the writer of which would suggest, in closing, that Mr. Sinclair stick to the very human Yoorgis of the *Jungle* in preference to the all-to divine figure in *They Call Me Carpenter*.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Freethought and the World; With Some Thoughts on Crucifixion.

We have received the world as an inheritance which not only has no one of us a right to damage, but which it is the duty of each generation to leave to posterity in an improved condition.
—*Joubert*.

As algebra enables us to a great extent to dispense with figures, so paradox acts as a short circuit for words and lengthy arguments. William Blake accused Christians of crucifying Christ head downwards; this terrible accusation still remains unanswered. More terrible still, his charge is true, and what is more paradoxical, Freethinkers will find their most effective weapons in most unlikely places. The Jews, with a few notable exceptions, have failed to live up to their reputation as the chosen race. They have rejected and do reject the spirit of the white race, which is by a long series of evolution, fatalistically destined to save the world—if the world is to be saved at all. By the retention of their tribal ideas and their operations on the life-blood of society, which is credit, the Jews consistently reject the white race, and retard the upward movement of the western races. The point need not be laboured now, that in this manner, esoterically and exoterically, the Jews have crucified Christ and continue to do so.

There are arguments for the existence of Christ, the man, and there are arguments against his existence. In terms of eternity neither arguments matter. We are either stupid or slow in perception, but with amazement that is impossible to convey in language, we confess that we are staggered when we see Christians looking over the graves of some millions who were killed but yesterday, at the figure of *One* who was supposed to be killed some two thousand years ago. There is the commercial reason which may explain three parts of the phenomenon. There is the static and stupefying atmosphere of Christian religion which may complete the diagnosis, but the commercial and static reasons are precisely the reasons that substantiate our charge against Christians as being the crucifiers of Christ. The white race is the Saviour, the Christ, the force that will bring order out of the chaos of the world, or prevent our engulfment into primeval old night, and if this dementia known as the Christian religion were not the crucifier and flagellator of the spirit of man, what is *your* justification O Freethinker?

In a mundane sense we know from whence we came and whither we go—from the womb to the grave. If Saturn evolved life, and this life tumbled into the sun, and our very genesis was a rain of sparks from the sun on to this once dead world, it would be the fall of man—if it were as true that water wets and fires burns, it would not help us in the reality of the present. If the Heraclitean theory were irrefutable,

it would only prove it to be irrefutable, and would be of no help to us in the destiny of mankind. The red hatted and mitred monsters of the religious world, confronted with the spirit of mankind have blasphemed against it above and beyond the calmest whispers or volcanic eruptions of Voltaire. Huxley, it is stated, expressed a wish to get his heel into and scr-r-unch it round in the mouths of those who did not consider Lyell and Murchison fit to lick the dust off the boots of a curate. In our opinion he would have aspired to a much better deed by rationalizing the myth of Christ and throwing the onus of crucifixion on to the flabby backs of these incubi and succubi of mankind.

The Jews, in their mission as the chosen race, have failed. The Christ of Christianity has failed. If the fable of the Mons Angels (having its genesis in a London pot-house) grew up but yesterday, what a task for Sisyphus to get at the truth of the life and death of Christ! Better to swallow the lot whole, fact, fable, fiction, and quackery—our mental stomachs have to deal with other food just as strange—and assimilate from it the truth inherent in the reality. This reality is none other than Christ is the spirit of mankind. Witness the dissolution of the Roman Empire—pan-human in its extent and motive, consciously or unconsciously. Then comes a tribe of mystery-mongers, crucifiers of the flesh, crucifiers of the spirit of mankind, weak and therefore cunning. Comes then this tribe holding the only weapons worth picking up—the sword and the lily—and using both at the wrong time and place. Why should we Freethinkers break our teeth gnawing the stone of Misuse made of them by the black hoards, testified in history and ratified by the existence of philosophers whose eyes were set on the eternity of the human race, and not on the heaven of an imagination? It is a waste of time.

During the war, men who had never before met Germans, Austrians, or Turks, discovered that human beings were much the same all the world over. Admiral Sims has now given it to the world that on sea the one time enemy was chivalrous, considerate, and in every way possible conformed to the rules of warfare, the alphabet of which our journalists could not stammer. There have been conferences bringing together the different western nations, to be followed soon we hope by conferences of the peoples as distinct from diplomatists, etc. In other words, the last great war was in the nature of a family quarrel, or at most, a civil war. All this points to the fact that the unity of Europe, given certain things, may become a certainty. That we may become "good Europeans" is possible; that Freethinkers may, by their efforts, find their function in working for the real Saviour of mankind, we are convinced. With a synthesis of science, art, and a revaluation of the myth of Christianity, human consciousness may make an ascent to another plane, where Christianity in its old, pathetic and grievous sense may be forgotten—this its final tribute.

If the western races find their world function as the real Saviour of the world, and incidentally of themselves, historians a thousand years hence in a super-theologic sense will record the resurrection of Man. Our privilege, our duty, our responsibility, as Freethinkers is to help to roll away the stone from the tomb.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Happiness and health have this much in common. The more we strive after them the less likely we are to achieve our aim. The first sign of ill-health—physical or mental—is over concern for health. And that man invites constant misery whose whole thought is how to be happy. If we are to achieve either happiness or health they must come as the incidental consequence of our lives, not as the fruit of our conscious aim.—*Peter Simple*.

Acid Drops.

The brilliant editor of *Cassell's Weekly*, a gentleman who has a finger on the pulse of the big uneducated reading public, has made a discovery. By strenuous thinking he has found out that the simple Gospel narratives of the historico-mythical Jesus are psychologically unsatisfactory, indeed, sadly out-of-date. They suggest, he tells us, a "rather (!) mystic personality," and, of course, his intelligent readers have no use for mysticism, qualified or unqualified. The writers of the Gospels, he goes on, "always give us the same impression of the Christ. Their view-point is too similar. They see him always from the same angle." Now what an intolerable waste of words is here! More than twenty to say what could be said better in five. Why in the name of Swift and Voltaire could he not have said quite simply that "they write from one standpoint?" That is at least good English and good sense, although it is not true. They do not write from the one standpoint, for the Jesus of the platonising John is no more the Jesus of Mark than he is the Jesus of the *Toldoth Sepher Jeshu*.

It is too much, perhaps, to expect a graduate of the school of journalese to appreciate even so broad a distinction. It is a question of knowledge, not of journalistic ideas or "stunts," and your popular journalist soon comes to regard knowledge as a hindrance to ready writing. Even a little of it may be dangerous, the best equipment being an omniscient ignorance. Now, what probably happened was this: The proprietors of the paper ordered the editor to give the publishers a leg up, and the "rabid Atheists" a leg down by boosting Papini's *Story of Christ*. How is the editor to do it and save his face? It is the first time he has heard of Giovanni Papini. He has a vague notion of the history of Christianity and the criticism of the Gospels, and is completely ignorant of the mentality of the unbeliever. He has to get the sentimental balderdash across to the reader with as much ununction as he can command. As all the papers are talking nonsense about the book, any of his friends and contributors who are Atheists will make excuses. Well informed and capable writers will smile sardonically and say that a man is to be judged not by his writing but by his speech.

Anyhow if you are a hired writer you have to do what you are told. The worst of it is you are likely to overdo it when you are not quite certain of your ground. Papini's book is just the violent emotional reaction towards superstition of an unbalanced mind. His Atheism was a mere temperamental revolt, whole-hearted certainly, but antipathetic to clear-minded Freethinkers. His Jesus, like Mr. Frank Harris' Shakespeare, is largely a projection of himself; an absolute, idealized Papini (or shall we say?) a Fascist. Indeed, the Jesus of the Gospels is all things to all men. For Renan he is the sentimental hero of a charming novel which only wanted the usual happy ending to make it perfect; for Rémy de Gourmont he is a wise and tolerant sceptic, a creator of new values by the dissociation of ideas; for Farrar he was a pious Victorian prig. For the editor of *Cassell's Weekly* he is a mere name, an occasion for empty rhetorical phrases. What business indeed have his readers with Jesus except in the way of gossip? And gossip, whether it be about Jesus or anyone else is always acceptable to a certain type of intelligence.

The editor manages to get in some particularly stupid things about Atheists. He separates them into "rabid" and "scientific." Now the "rabid" Atheist is a man who has no æsthetic emotions. But I doubt if anyone is absolutely insensible to beauty. I do know that some religious people of my acquaintance are less sensitive to æsthetic impressions than are some of my Atheistic friends. Indeed these emotions are in no way dependent on religion. We suggest that Mr. Flower should discuss this point with his contributor Mr. Ernest Newman who is in a position to enlighten him on the question of rabid

and deep-thinking Atheists. But perhaps it would not be wise for Mr. Newman's manner is not always of a honeyed sweetness, and the acid flavour of his remarks would not be calculated to add to the pleasures of an editor's life. He would perhaps want to know what Mr. Flower means by saying that he "would like to put a copy of this book into every British home." This is a pious aspiration which is sure to find an echo in the religious bosoms of Hodder and Stoughton, but the intelligent Christian and all Atheists will prefer the story as it is told in the Gospels without the tawdry trimmings of sophisticated sentiment.

Two coloured men were charged before a North London magistrate last week with fortune telling, and the magistrate, as usual, gave them a lecture on the iniquity of their ways. He told them to get their living in an honest way—good advice, although not very easy to carry into practice at present—and then said, "This sort of thing may go down at a country fair, but it will not do in London." And that was both stupid and untrue. For that kind of thing goes down just as well in London as it does at a country fair. The proof is the very large business that is done in fortune-telling, charms, mascots, etc. The foundation of it all is the encouragement given to studies of the "occult" and "mystical," which are after all only other names for the kind of thing that the magistrate was lecturing the black men about. It is simply stupid to imagine that you can encourage the "occult" in Mayfair or Bayswater without at the same time encouraging it in Whitechapel or Bermondsey. Fashionable and wealthy quarters cannot claim a monopoly of folly and foolishness.

"This sort of thing will not go down in London," said the magistrate. Will it not? Well, if his honour will glance at some of the evening papers of May 8, he will find there an account of 800 pilgrims who were leaving London for Lourdes in order to seek a cure for their complaints. There were sufferers from cancer, paralytics, consumptives, and cripples. They were accompanied by a number of priests whose business it was to assure them that the "Mother of God" would cure them when they arrived at Lourdes. And before the train left Victoria they sang, "Look Down, O Mother Mary." That added an effective touch of satire to the whole scene. The Mother of God was invited to look down on that collection of sufferers who were coming to her shrine to be cured. If she could cure them at Lourdes, why not in London? Why make these people perform a wearying and agonizing journey to get what, if it could be got at all, might just as well be obtained in London? And the priests accompanying that procession, the Church which organized the procession, knew perfectly well that save for an hysterical case here and there, which might have been as well treated by anything in which the patient placed trust, the processionists would return as they went.

Now assuming that someone had applied for a summons against these priests for practising on the ignorance of these poor people. Of course, it would not have been granted, but one can imagine that North London magistrate, with his "This sort of thing will not go down in London," solemnly repeating a lot of the usual rubbish about the sanctity of religious conviction and the goodness and self-sacrifice of the priests who organize these processions. Yet one would like to know the essential difference between the man or woman who charges half-a-crown for telling a fortune, reading an horoscope, or concocting a charm, and the Church organizing a procession of sick people after telling them that the Mother of God is waiting to receive them at Lourdes to cure their illnesses. Is there any difference between them? Is the Church that obtains millions for this sort of thing really better than the man who dupes servant girls out of half-crowns, or the maker of mascots who gets larger sums from members of the royal family and the aristocracy? Is not the same superstitious type of mind evidenced throughout? And what is the use of fining the poor practitioner and leaving those who sow the seeds of superstition in the minds of the young untouched?

We have written the substance of the following so often that we may be excused for reprinting the following from last Sunday's *Observer* as illustrating what we have just said:—

There is a well-known psychological rule according to which powers are lost in the inverse order to that in which they were acquired. In sickness and old age we return to childhood, and the last memories to go are those which were first formed. So, too, in sickness and decay of the body-politic beliefs and customs are revealed which belong to an earlier cultural stage. Thus with the mental disintegration caused by the war many beliefs appeared that the unobservant might have thought were dead or dying. Of all types of magical relationship, that is the most primitive which the operator regards as entirely individual, and which results from an unaccountable chance connection. Such is the "mascot." We may smile at Pliny's use of basilisk blood to gain success in petitions, but to believe in some general law on the matter is at least, as Professor Flinders Petrie points out, a faith of a higher order than that of the ex-Prime Minister who wears a swastika for luck and talks heartily about it to school-boys. The historian of folk-custom regards the votive models in the chapels of the saints as a higher development than the lucky coin on the watch-chain or the horse-shoe on the door. He will place the devotee of Thor and Woden—who exhibited at least a moderately consistent, if low-grade, theology—above the believer in the angels of Mons.

The fact is that our civilization has derived such beliefs from all the various evolutionary levels through which it has passed. The lowest is the imbecile mascot; superior to this are survivals of the ancient pagan faiths; on a considerably higher plane is the belief in astrology; and there are many other strata. It is through the Middle Ages that nearly all these beliefs have reached us.

Put into other and plainer words, it is Christianity which has been the great conservator and sanctifier of the crude and savage superstitions which still disgrace our civilization. And the unfortunate thing is that the *Freethinker* is the only paper in this country that dares say so.

As our readers are aware, we have always paid Dean Inge the compliment of considering him, in point of ability, as above the vast majority of clergymen in this country, but when we find him writing a sentence of this kind:—

Many people have lost faith in the Churches, but only the most violent enemies of society have lost faith in Christ.

It is plain that one has to count his mental ability as having been considerably over-rated, or that he is just the ordinary journalist—with little more than the average journalist's knowledge of history—writing to order and playing upon the ignorance of his readers. All it amounts to is that the man who does not agree with Dean Inge is an enemy of society. And as he has said, when a man holds poisonous opinions society is justified in treating him like a mad dog and putting him out of the way. Dean Inge has had his precursor in the shape of a gentleman named Torquemada. He would find himself in complete agreement with the Dean of St. Paul's as to the treatment of people with "poisonous" opinions.

Quite apart from the merits of this particular case we think that everyone who values the liberties of the subject and constitutional rights will be pleased with the verdict of the Court of Appeal in the case of Mr. Art O'Brien. It will be remembered that Mr. O'Brien was seized on an order from the Home Secretary and handed over to the Irish Free State without any trial in this country. We had quite enough of this particular form of anarchism during the war and wish it to end once and for all. Even during war time it is open to the gravest abuse, but if this sort of thing is to be permitted during peace time, then one may at once say good-bye to all legal protection for the individual. And for our part, as we have said before, we have no more liking for "Bolshevism" when it is actuated by a government at home in the name of orthodoxy than when it is actuated by a government abroad in the name of revolution. We congratulate the British public on this vindication of the British judiciary. It is not the first time the courts have stood between the tyranny of a government and the individual, and we hope

it will not be the last. The case is to go to the House of Lords, but we shall be surprised if the decision is altered. By the time this issue of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of its readers the case will have been decided.

We see that in the event of the case going against the Government it is suggested that the latter shall insert in the "Criminal Justice Bill," now before the House of Commons, that when the Home Secretary shall decide on deporting a British subject he shall give notice to an Advisory Committee, and only on their confirming the order is it to be carried into effect. We sincerely hope that nothing of the kind will be done. It is only another example of the old Russian administrative order once removed. There is only one thing that is sound, constitutional, and which affords any protection for the subject. That is open trial in a properly constituted court, tried by judges who are independent of the executive, and with full publicity given to the proceedings. The proposed regulation strikes at the root of what used to be regarded as British liberties, and a generation ago there was scarce a politician who would have dared to seriously suggest such a legalization of bureaucratic power. It may be as well to remember the remark of one of the Labour members recently, that the Government was setting an example for the Labour Government to follow if ever it came to power. And an abuse of freedom and justice in the name of one party or cause is no more to our liking than its abuse in the name of another party or cause. We are for equal freedom all round, for the things we disbelieve as well as for those we believe.

Since writing the above we see that the House of Lords has decided that it has no power to listen to the appeal. The decision of the Court of Appeal, therefore, stands. We are sincerely glad of this. It is a matter of the greatest public importance. It is too often forgotten that the main purpose of law is not the backing up of a government, but the protection of the individual.

Religion and politics—as they are—throw off similar phenomena. Mr. Winston Churchill, who, in the mock heroic language of the House, "crossed over" is now in the wilderness telling people what he thinks about those who managed to keep their seats. The pulpit not being big enough for Dean Inge, this reverend gentleman has now descended into—no, journalism, where he will be used so long as he is a paying proposition. In his new sphere the Dean should be quite at home on the authority of the Prince of Wales who stated that newspapers frequently published things that did not happen.

The Rev. Donald Fraser, from Livingstonia, is fluttering in the twilight of dawn. He says, "if we understood the languages of the other peoples we should find there words which are the language of a man's soul. Learn it and hear them speak and beneath that dark skin you will find a man not unlike yourself—loving and hating, sorrowing and rejoicing." And then he deliberately goes and spoils this poor quotation in his own words from the *Merchant of Venice* by saying: "And stretching out tired hands to God, if haply, he may find Him." In the first place, missionaries as missionaries deny God. He is everywhere and yet he needs an ambassador. It will not do. America's race question plus religion will make it necessary to create a separate heaven, and, whilst we as Freethinkers would willingly help anyone to turn the key for universal harmony, it cannot be done by Christianity.

If Christians were asked who would be the most valuable man on earth we could anticipate their answer, but, as evidence of our culture and our unique position as a Christian country we invite Dean Inge to read this cutting taken from a daily paper as popular as Beecham's Pills:—

If a man were to arise to-morrow good enough to beat Dempsey anyone could guarantee him £100,000 and still make a profit. There is no person on earth so potentially valuable as a heavy-weight boxer.

The National Secular Society.

THE Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

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To Correspondents.

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

W. ALLAN.—Thanks. Next week. The article forms a good study in Christian psychology.

J. E. COCKROFT.—Pleased to have your appreciation of Mr. Coleman's article on "Freethought in Economics." We are always ready to open our columns to articles on sociological topics, provided they are not rabidly partizan. We think that a fair sprinkling of such articles have appeared of recent years, and we believe have met with the general approval of our readers.

L. MAY.—To hope for more is not to be discouraged at what has been accomplished. We merely urge Freethinkers everywhere to do something, no matter how little, and no matter the kind of work, to help the Cause. It is the many helpers that make what might be an intolerable burden comparatively easy.

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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.

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

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

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

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The League of the whole world's honest thinkers against fanaticism and superstition is apparently composed of an imperceptible minority.—Renan.

Sugar Plums.

A number of intending visitors to the Leeds Conference will have this paper in their hands before leaving home. For their benefit we again remind them that delegates and members will meet at the Guildford Hotel, Guildford Street, at 7 o'clock. On Sunday the two business meetings will be held at 10.30 and 12.30 in the Town Hall. This will be for members only. In the evening a public meeting will be held in the same building at 6.30, and will be addressed by the President (Mr. Cohen), Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Moss, Mr. Corrigan, Mr. Clifford Williams, and others. Admission to this will be free. The meeting has, we believe, been well advertised, but there is always room for a little personal advertising on the part of friends. Further announcements in connection with the Conference will be made in the course of the meetings.

The weather has not been very suitable for outdoor meetings up to the present, but we are pleased to learn that Mr. Corrigan had a good meeting in Regent's Park on Sunday last. Mr. Whitehead has concluded a very successful week's lecturing in South London, and opens his "Mission" in North London on Tuesday evening, May 2. Particulars of this course will be found in our Lecture Notices, and it is to be hoped that by then some indications of summer may be forthcoming.

In the provinces Mr. Atkinson continues his Tyneside programme with, we are pleased to note, a fair measure of success. He has been addressing appreciative audiences in many places, and has now arranged for regular weekly visits to some of these stations. We fancy this will be better than spending a whole week in one place and then leaving it altogether. In some of the places visited the chief difficulty is want of local help. It is cheering to the speaker, as well as being helpful in other directions, to find some friendly faces among the audiences, and we suggest to local Freethinkers the advisability of helping in this manner. Those who wish to get into touch with Mr. Atkinson should write him, saying how they are willing to help, c/o Mr. J. Fothergill, No. 2 Hut, Madras Street, Simonside, South Shields. We should like to see this Tyneside experiment made quite successful. It could then be followed by a good indoor campaign during the autumn and winter.

It is universally conceded that one cannot write about the other side of the moon in the absence of knowledge. But it is quite another thing when one is writing about the other side of the grave.

It is part of the Christian teaching that the world was saved by men killing a God. There may be a profound truth in that. It is by killing its gods that the world advances. When the Jews killed Jesus, "Very God of Very God," they set an example that all the world should have followed. Deicide is not a crime, it is the most imperative of virtues.

The Romans erected an altar "To the God who takes no heed." That is the only God of whom no evil is recorded.

It is of no great value to anyone merely to know the thoughts of great men. The important thing is to re-think them. It is only thus that they become our property, and that we become something more than a mere phonographic record of what is passing.

I have a friend who carries a potato in his pocket, and who laughs heartily at another who believes in the truth of the Resurrection. The latter is also amused at seeing people afraid to sit down thirteen at a table. I am able to appreciate the sanity of each—with reference to the other.

Richard Carlile.

(Continued from page 301.)

VI.—PRINCIPLES AND POLITICS.

How contemptible was the opposition of the practical politicians to the Despotic Measures will be seen from the conduct of Henry Hunt.

Samuel Bamford was by no means a Free-thinker and possessed no bias in favour of Carlile's opinions. His account in *Passages in the Life of a Radical* of the relations between Cobbett, Carlile, and Hunt make interesting reading therefore. Bamford describes his entry into the Reform movement of his day, the riots of 1816, the influence and authority of William Cobbett's writings, and the establishment under his influence of Hampden Clubs. Bamford also showed his admiration for Henry Hunt, lamenting only the latter's love of theatrical display and applause and injustice to his colleagues. Present with Hunt at the famous Peterloo massacre, at which Richard Carlile was present also, Bamford was charged with Hunt at the Yorks Assizes for seditious conspiracy before Mr. Justice Bailey and a special jury in March 1820. Bamford throws great light on Hunt's contemptible behaviour in connection with that trial, and his willingness to secure his own glory and reputation at the expense of his colleagues. Bamford then proceeds to describe Hunt's speech for the defence and his reference to Richard Carlile:—

Hunt had thus obtained what he so ardently desired, a night for consultation, reflection, and repose, and a crowded morning audience for his grand exhibition. I shall not dwell upon his defence, except to notice one passage relative to Richard Carlile. In the commencement of his address he said, "I am not only charged in the opening speech of the learned counsel with having attempted to overthrow the constituted authorities of my country, but also to extinguish in the flame of infidelity the altar of our holy religion. It has been industriously promulgated that I was connected with Mr. Carlile; it has been promulgated that I am a man of his principles. Where is the proof? Without it why should the imputation have been cast? I shall not advert to the conduct of that man, because the law has imposed its punishment upon him, and he is now enduring the reward of his temerity. It would, therefore, be improper and imprudent and unjust for me in open court to touch upon such a subject, but why was the topic introduced? I will tell you, gentlemen—to connect our cause with that of irreligion, and to identify the cause of the reformers with that of Mr. Carlile. I profess to be a reformer, but not a leveller; I profess to be a lover of liberty, but not of licentiousness; sweet, lovely liberty, gentlemen, is pure and amiable as sacred truth; licentiousness is as disgraceful as darkness and falsehood." And then in a subsequent passage, he said, "You have heard the miserable attempt to fix upon me an irreligious connection with Carlile. I have known the man, and if I do not say what I think of him, it is because he is now suffering the sentence of the law, and therefore is not a fit subject for anybody's animadversion. Of him I shall say nothing now, but I shall say that none of the principles, professions, nor doctrines he is said to have espoused were ever, at any moment of my life, imbibed by or believed in by me. In the face of God and my country I most solemnly declare that I never read one line of the theological works of Carlile until Dr. Stoddart's libel upon me first put them into my hands in the following manner: Mr. Scarlett was then employed, as he is now, against me in the Court of King's Bench. Carlile's trial was going on, mine was the very next, and I was bound to watch it, or else expose myself to the consequences

of being absent when called on—a verdict for the defendant. Such was my unfortunate case, or else I should not have been in London, much less in Court, when Carlile's trial was pending. I here further declare, in the face of heaven, that among the reformers, rich or poor, I never recollect to have seen one line of the theological works of Thomas Paine. Why, then, identify the reformers with such doctrines? Good God! was it not enough to charge us with crimes against our fellow-men, but that also we must be designated as infidels against our religion and our God."

Whilst Hunt uttered those last sentences the tears trickled down his face. "Good God!" I also mentally exclaimed, "Is it possible? Are not my ears deceiving me?"

Carlile was one of those who went with Hunt in the carriage from Johnson's to the meeting on the morning of the 16th. He was so fortunate as to escape from the field, and had since been tried, found guilty, and sentenced to imprisonment for a theological work, and was at the moment Hunt thus denounced and renounced him in prison. No human power, nor dread of human power should have been able to compel Hunt to make use of such language at that time, and under those circumstances. Whatever Carlile was, good or bad, religious or the contrary, the law had for the present done its work with him, and that is seldom part done; and above all other moments, that was not the one to aim a clumsy and treacherous blow at a late comrade, now bound and fettered. "Can this," thought I, "be also one of the fashionable levities of great folk? If it be, it is requisite that I should be more guarded and more self-governed in future." And so I was; I continued to respect Hunt for his good points, but I was no longer entirely blinded to his faults. I never could forget this scene.

And so Henry Hunt, the great political reformer, by his conduct assisted the Society for the suppression of Vice in its war on thought and freedom and the man who stood for both. In the same year as Hunt made this hypocritical denunciation the Vice Society proclaimed unending war on "that most audacious offender, Carlile," and the *Age* spoke of "the miscreant tinker." Yet Carlile's thought and struggle were more useful as well as more heroic than Hunt's politics. To-day we behold him as the genius of his age.

Thus persecuted by tyranny and abandoned by cowardice, Carlile employed his prison hours in clearing his vision and strengthening his outlook. In his speech from the dock in 1819, he abandoned the idea of God, only to cling to the title of Deist. This temper continued down to 1821, when he proclaimed himself an Atheist. Four years later, we have him denouncing Deism as misleading and implying cowardice. "Man," he says, "has no intelligent superior, no immortal soul. The mortal soul of man is the only intelligent lord of matter." During the same period he progressed politically. In 1819 he takes his stand on the written law, and scorns the Common Law. In 1825 he proclaims as his motto in the *Republican*, "Free Discussion Against All Law." 1820 witnessed him favourable to Hunt and other reformers. By 1825 he has seen through them. He realizes that the poor are the people to write for and that their enlightenment must settle the social question.

"I write for the poor," said Carlile in the *Republican* for June 17, 1825, "though all of that class do not see it. I write for the poor or the rich oppressor would not persecute me."

Yes! he wrote for the poor. He struggled for the poor, and his magnificent example inspired others to do the same. It secured to the poor the unstamped Press. Watson, one of the shopmen, who went to

prison for selling Carlile's publications, persuaded Henry Hetherington to establish a workman's newspaper in defiance of the Government. Hetherington, who was two years Carlile's junior, consequently established his *Poor Man's Guardian* and *Poor Man's Conservative*. They were both unstamped. This was in 1831. Within three years over 750 men and women went to gaol for selling them. Some went several times. On the last prosecution of Hetherington, Lord Lyndhurst, a Tory judge, exhibited disgust with the prosecution, and practically told the jury to legalize the sale. This was done, and the stamp tax prosecution collapsed. Carlile's policy won the day. Knowledge became a public right. GUY A. ALDRED.

(To be Continued.)

Huxley, Gladstone, and Conchology.

NOBODY can accuse me of any excessive tenderness for the immortal W. E. G.; all the same, if the late T. Huxley's retort about the first chapter of Genesis be correctly quoted in the *Freethinker* of a few weeks back, in one particular I must confess myself "on the side of the angels." Huxley is quoted as saying that we have no reason to believe that an aqueous condition of our globe preceded its present state of land and water. This may be true generally, nevertheless so far as organic being is concerned, roughly speaking the further we go back in time the less land and the more water there seems to have been. One swallow does not make a summer, and it does not in any case follow that if the Chaldean speculations about our world happened to be right in this respect, the Hebrew Bible that borrowed them was inspired. One theory is (Dupuis and Volney) that the Creation really refers to the recurrent annual creation of the world, and that the Deluge is merely the spring floods. There is another possibility, viz., that the Chaldeans decalated, so to say, their theory of a world creation upon the annual one, and perhaps referred the beginning to that of a great or sidereal year reckoned from some arbitrary point of time. Anyhow in high latitudes—and the primitive Chaldeans, according to Volney, had originally drifted south from a much more northern region—the moisture of spring seems indispensable for the development of plants and animals, and when we reflect that apparently such solid animals as human beings are 70 per cent water, and many of the lower animals contain a still larger percentage, some such semi-mystical deduction as above suggested might very likely fit the case. Huxley was an admirable writer, but he was far from infallible. He had hankering after the sentimental side of Christianity, which may excuse what often seemed like trimming and truckling to the religious ignorance of the day. I attended a course of his lectures at Edinburgh in the year 1873. It was a biological one, and the subject was nematoid worms. It was about the most tedious course of lectures I ever attended. He had a big blackboard and drew the internal anatomical details of one nematoid worm after another upon it with a piece of chalk from memory and without a note. It was wonderful, but beyond measure monotonous. His mind must have been chock full of the anatomical details of the interiors of nematoid worms. To make matters worse he spoke with a kind of unctuous lisp—a mannerism in vogue with a certain school of sciolists in those days. The whole course left about as much impression as a similar number of the late H. M. Butler's sermons would have. Sometimes he attempted to wind up a lecture with a dash of religious sentimentality about tropical sunsets and things of that ilk. We shuffled

with our feet to suggest the cobbler stick to his last so obstreperously that he had to shut up. Very different is his admirable monograph on the crayfish and his general critical essays. The reasoning which appears to point conclusively to an aqueous origin at any rate of our globe as habitable comes from a somewhat tainted source, but for all that appears to be conclusive.

As late as twenty years ago S. P. Woodward's *Manual of Conchology* was the standard English work of the kind and may be still. It is a monument of laborious detail and learning. Considering the technical character of the work the not numerous inaccuracies are excusable. The author, mainly it would appear a museum naturalist, drags in his Great Artificer when he has the chance in a way that is quite uncalled for. Though, perhaps, a lukewarm evolutionist, he seems to have had strong leanings towards the old ideas, for on page 45 he writes: "It is a particular provision for preventing the blending of species that hybrids are always barren." It is not perhaps his fault that his classification is a tangle compared to which the jungle of Hindu religions is a turnpike road. The frequency of the pentagonal grouping of cells in plants and animals is so marked that the pentagon has become universally the symbol of life. In plants the arrangement is particularly marked in the more highly developed plants (dicotyledons), and can most likely be explained by certain mechanico-geometrical considerations. But the author seems to see all Nature dominated by a gigantic pentagon. He consequently divides the animal kingdom into five groups and writes: "All known animals are constructed upon five different types (whatever that may mean) and constitute as many natural divisions or sub-kingdoms. The highest of these groups is separated from the next below it by a sharp line of distinction (!) The groups are: (1) Vertebrates; (2) Molluscs; (3) Insects, crabs, sea-urchins, and starfishes; (4) Jelly fish, corals and sea anemonies; (5) Protozoa, any small animals such as sponges, diatoms, foraminifera, infusoria, and so on.

The author thus lumps hawk-moths and starfish together, a preposterous arrangement, for crabs and hawk-moths are far more like snails and even birds than they are like sea urchins.

The chapter on "Distribution Through Time" is one of the best in the volume, and from the nature of the case the evidence based on museum statistics, so far as it goes can hardly be other than correct. As to the land and sea question, the general summary seems conclusive. I give the most important results of bivalves (exclusively aquatic and nearly all marine except one small oyster that sometimes climbs trees): 7419 fossil species; 4295 recent; ocean sailing cuttlefish; 2193 fossil species; 6 recent (the pearly nautilus and 3 paper ones). Brachiopods, also exclusively sea, often deep sea bivalves: 1842 fossil, 102 recent. Nucleobranchs, exclusively pelagic: fossil 160, recent 55. Pteropods, exclusively pelagic: fossil 95, recent 85. Spiral sea-shells, gasteropods mainly on reefs and rocky coasts: 8,465 recent, 5819 fossil. Pulmonifera—land snail shells (operculate): 931 recent, 46 fossil. Land snail shells without opercula: 5,404 recent, 542 fossil.

Naturally the distribution in time tells the same story. All the brachiopods (i.e., the genera) are found in the earliest formations. On the other hand the pond and river snail-shells appear in the later lias. The swamp and operculate snail-shells in the chalk (the most recent often secondary rocks), while the ordinary snail-shells first appear like ourselves in the tertiary system, but in the eocene the earliest of the tertiary formations. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the air-breathing hermaphrodite snail-shells are the

highest forms of mollusc, just as the air-breathing terrestrial mammal are the highest form of vertebrates. The development as air-breathers has, however, gone on presumably much longer in the land snail-shells than with human beings for they appear in the eocene, whereas so far it is a moot question whether human remains occur in any tertiary formations. Though the chapter in Woodward appears generally speaking reliable, I must note a strange discrepancy on page 127 in the table summarising results as to "Development of Families, Genera and Species in Time." We have the total number of recent and fossil species 30,000, but in the general summary (p. 135) 20,502 is given as the number of recent species, and 18,568 of fossil ones, which sum is 39,070, or 9,070 more species than in the previous computation.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

La Paz, B.C., Mexique.

Writers and Readers.

Dethroning Shakespeare—Anti-Stratfordian Scepticism.

This year all lovers of the plays and poems rightly or wrongly attributed to William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon, will celebrate the third centenary of the publication of the First Folio. Naturally the biggest show will be made by the orthodox believers in the genius of the "Stratford rustic." Their triumphant voices will be heard far above the dribble of dissent that will reach us from the anti-Stratfordians, the Baconians, the Derbyites, and the Oxfordians, or, to speak more correctly, they began to reverberate throughout the land on April 23, the birthday of the alleged playwright and poet. But I am glad to know that the rejoicing is not confined to the orthodox, the heretics have their share. They agree with us in holding that the plays are the high-water mark of English letters, although I fancy the pleasure they experience is just a little spoilt by the knowledge that their scepticism is not shared by the majority of intelligent people.

Now, as a more or less educated Freethinker with no vested interest in Stratford-on-Avon, I have a sort of natural sympathy with the sceptics. I am one with them in their dislike of the critical, or rather the uncritical method of Sir Sidney Lee. I must confess to finding a good deal of pleasure in Sir George Greenwood's light and amusing sceptical theses. His books, I hasten to say, occupy a place of honour on my shelves, supported on one side by the solidly based work of Mr. A. C. Bradley, and on the other by Mr. J. M. Robertson's epoch-making and scholarly monographs. I am glad to be able to say that the ingenuous sceptic cannot justly charge me with either ignoring the anti-Stratfordian theory as negligible, or dismissing it as absurdly pretentious. Indeed, I am vastly amused by the sceptic's dexterity in getting to the weak places in the orthodox defence, which, I am afraid, is not a very carefully planned one. It has been suggested that we believers should dig ourselves in. The enemy, we are assured, cannot get us out until they discover some contemporary evidence that contradicts or disproves the Stratfordian authorship. Meanwhile we stick fast to our belief that the "Stratford rustic" was the amazing creator of the plays, regret that we do not know more about him, and turn with ever-renewed æsthetic pleasure to the problems presented by the plays.

If, however, we feel in need of diversion, we can turn to the ingenious and mutually destructive theories of the absolute heretics; we can pit the Baconians against the Oxfordians or the Derbyites, or, what is more to my taste, we can amuse ourselves with the critical skirmishes of the pure sceptics. I recommend to those of my readers who are disposed to regard the authorship of the plays as a more or less open question a little book I have just come across. *Will o' the Wisp, or the Elusive Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell) is a contribution to the First Folio tercentenary by Mr. George Hookham, a comrade-

in-arms of Sir George Greenwood. An afternoon of attentive reading given to this essay of one hundred and forty pages should convince the intelligent reader that there is something not unlike a Shakespeare problem, that very much of what has been put before him as biographical fact is the merest "conjectural reconstruction from the shards of record and anecdote." It is true that all we know about Shakespeare can be written easily on a sheet of note paper. But surely the obscurity which veils his personality does not warrant us in dethroning him. A like obscurity surrounds Fletcher and Marlowe, while of Beaumont, of Webster, of Ford, and of Tourneur we know hardly even the dates of birth and death. What, too, do we know of Edmund Spenser? Biographical information from external sources is so inadequate that one of the more intelligent and scholarly Baconians, Mr. E. G. Harman, has contended that he was one of the many impersonations of Francis Bacon. Such difficulties as the absence of manuscript, of anything like a reasonably satisfactory biographical record, such as we have for Ben Jonson, the inability of his own age to see in Shakespeare a genius for all time, such difficulties would be insuperable if they were supported by contemporary doubt or denial. Some of the sceptical objections are trivial. It is argued that the "Stratford rustic" could not have been the author because the Warwickshire writing of the name was Shagspur or Shaxper, that is, the first vowel was short, as if it were not the most natural thing for a writer to convert a vulgar name into an aristocratic one. Gallien becomes Le Gallienne, Levy is easily truncated into Lee, and Palgrave was once mistaken for the English equivalent of Cohen. Then there is the argument from authority—a stupid one in my opinion. If Elizabethan specialists like Emerson, Henry James, and Mark Twain, could not square the Stratford man with the plays and poems, there are men of genius for whom the psychological problem presents no difficulty. I cannot here do more than remind the reader of Robert Browning's distinction between the objective and the subjective poet. The more we know of the personality of Shelley the better we understand his poetry, but with the dramatist it is different, for his creation is complete in itself and stands apart from the nature of the man.

Dogmatic Unbelief.

For the average man scepticism is an uncomfortable position. He must have something positive, something to fill up the gap left by the clearing out of the Stratford yokel. It does not matter very much who it is, except, of course, that it must be an aristocrat. You have the whole of the Elizabethan-Jacobean nobility to choose from, and all you need is a solid grip on the principles of historical science, and you cannot help but be convinced that the real writer of the plays and poems was Francis Bacon, Lord Derby, or Oxford. There is as much evidence for anyone of these as for the others. Oxford is the latest claimant put forward, but I am afraid the ingenious framer of the theory has spoilt his chance of convincing us by reprinting Oxford's verse. He should have kept the acknowledged poetry well in the background. It has about as close a relation to the wonderful verse-rhythms of the plays and sonnets as (shall I say?) the verse of Mr. George Bedborough to that of Mr. Edward Carpenter.

But we Freethinkers ought, I suppose, to reject the Stratford man because we reject the historical Jesus. I don't quite see why, but I am prepared to examine any theory, to keep an open mind, and not to abuse the other side too much when I find them talking nonsense. Now that there is to be a coalition of all those who reject the man of Stratford we orthodox believers are evidently in for an uncomfortable time. A *Shakespeare Fellowship* was founded at the end of last year to spread the good news that whoever wrote the plays it was not the man whom Ben Jonson called the "Swan of Avon." Sir George Greenwood is the president, and he has the enlightened support, among others, of Prof. Abel Lefranc, Mr. T. J. Looney, and Colonel Ward. The proceedings of the distinguished fellowship will be found by the curious in these matters in the cultured pages of the *Hackney*

Spectator, and the discussions are to set us a good example of controversial urbanity, a sort of Arnoldian sweetness and light, as against the plain rudeness of Mr. J. M. Robertson. But, of course, there are different ways of showing your contempt or annoyance, my preference being for brutal directness. Then you know where you are.

One of the distinguished members of the *Fellowship* has been lucky enough to unveil the mystery surrounding the "Mr. W. H." of the *Sonnets*. The wonderful sequence of *non sequiturs* by which the unsophisticated heretic is led from "W. H." to "William Hall," and then to Hackney and the Earl of Oxford, will, I am certain, convince the sort of literary jury desiderated by that expert in evidence, Mr. T. J. Looney, although I am not so sure that Sir George Greenwood will not be more amused than convinced. The *Sonnets*, as the reader knows, were dedicated to W. H., which letters may stand for William Hall. A William Hall was known as a middleman between author and publisher, and procured the manuscript of a work by Robert Southwell, the Jesuit martyr. Southwell was a visitor at the Hackney house owned by Oxford, where the work, of course, came into Hall's hands. Now the *Sonnets* were published in 1609, five years after Oxford's death, and when his widow was clearing up, having sold the house. Of course, there can be no reasonable doubt that the *Sonnets* were given to Hall by Lady Oxford, and our certainty is made doubly certain by Colonel Ward's discovery that a William Hall was married in Hackney just before the *Sonnets* were issued. I don't see how anything could be clearer; it is not mere conjecture, the erection of possibilities into facts, the elicit method of the orthodox believer. By no means; it is the strict application of the principles of historical criticism to the problem of the Shakespearean authorship. Well, some of us have our notion of the principles of historical criticism which we arrived at by hard study under the guidance of M. Seignobos, but I am afraid our notion does not square with that of Colonel Ward. He and the other Oxfordians, with the Derbyites and the Greenwoodian sceptics, have just the same notion of historical criticism as Sir Sidney Lee and other believers have. For the purpose of their thesis they want a particular conjecture raised to the dignity of a fact. It is easily done by slipping in a "doubtless" or some such approach to certainty. Sir Sidney Lee is not the only sinner by a long way. Even Sir George Greenwood is not as careful as one would expect him to be, while the out-and-out heretic is amusingly preposterous.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

South African Jottings.

Is our Labour Press being captured by the clergy? One would think so when one comes across such effusions as those emanating from Mr. John Galtres given a prominent place in its columns, and presumably paid for. Writing in the South African Labour organ, the *Guardian*, this molluscous specimen of Socialistic Christianity has been boosting the merits of religious soothing syrup for settling social evils and industrial troubles. He tells us "there is no question that if the principles of Christ really ruled men's lives there would be no unemployed problem at all." There would not indeed, for if "Christ's principles" had ruled from the start the race would have become extinct long ago, and Mr. Galtres himself would never have seen the light of the sun, nor written Sunday-school twaddle in the columns of a twentieth century Labour paper. Asceticism would have settled all sociological problems for all time. The Ages of Faith were ushered in by a wave of asceticism succeeded by a reaction that for a thousand years or more turned Europe into a moral cesspool. That was the logical effect of Christ's principles in action. War was another, and He came "not to bring peace, but a sword." On the principles of Christ Christians are backworldsmen, who can only see the world's filth. They are egoists, too, whose whole aim and object it must be to save their own miser-

able, individual souls, and "hate" their kith and kin, wife and child in the process. To become "blessed" they must mourn, and wail, and weep. They are to love the "foolish" and cultivate the "weak" things of the world. Therefore knowledge, education, wisdom of this world they must despise and "become as little children." They must also become "meek" and "poor in spirit." This world with all its beauties, riches, and wisdom, they are to hate, and centre all their hopes and aspirations on an hypothetical world beyond the skies. Poverty is "blessed," riches damnable; while unhappiness, wretchedness, and misery are trials and distinctions. On Christ's principles there must be no resistance to enemies and tyrants, and meekly the non-resister must turn his cheek to the smiter, and bend his neck to the yoke.

Christ's principles, my dear friend, are principles fit for slaves and none else, and this is what all great democratic leaders from the days of the great French Revolution to our own times have recognized. Christianity is the enemy of all human advance, the steady opponent of all reform. Mr. Galtres thinks that "what the world needs is a Christian Commonwealth." What the world does need is common-sense and self-realization, and not the cant and rant of religious ignoramuses. And the first common-sense step to take is to discard Christianity and all its pernicious doctrines. No greater enemy of the worker has ever existed than Christianity; no greater friend of mammon, privilege, and power in high places. Mr. Galtres informs his readers that the "basal principle is that men should love their neighbours as themselves." But this is not a "basal principle" of Christ's teaching at all, and ante dates Christ by many centuries. If this be Christ's "basal principle" what a colossal failure it has proved itself after a trial lasting more than twenty centuries! It is like that other principle of turning the cheek to the smiter which, as Mr. Joseph McCabe says, "nobody seriously recommends." Anyhow it is no working formula for the solution of economic problems.

Christ is acclaimed by his devotees as the "Prince of Peace," but the "Prince of Peace," if his own words have been correctly reported and transcribed, brought "not peace, but a sword." And if He ever lived at all, and really uttered these words, how true they turned out to be! For Christians have deluged the world with blood almost from his day to this. They have torn one another to pieces like wild beasts; they have blotted out whole nations whose lands they coveted.

Mr. Galtres considers that "the cant about economic law should deceive no one outside a madhouse." Omit "economic law" and substitute "Christianity," and Mr. Galtres will be right. Mr. Galtres further impresses on us that "the parable of the labourers in the vineyard illustrates the Christian way" of "payment according to need and not by results," which he further defines as "the ideal of the Gospel." What have our Trade Union, Marxian, Fabian, and Communistic friends got to say here? Is the "ideal of the Gospel" their "ideal" too? I am not an economist. I am afraid the "Gospel according to St. Galtres" is not likely to catch on just yet. Possibly the next Trade Union Congress or the Internationale may examine it in committee and report progress. In the meanwhile Mr. John Galtres must abide in a world in which "Christ's principles" are anathema.

That Christianity has been a huge failure is pretty generally conceded everywhere nowadays, but perhaps nowhere is this fact more clearly emphasized than in the reports of Church Missionary Societies, and in this connection the report of a meeting held in Bloemfontein of missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church will be of particular interest to readers of the *Freethinker*. The meeting in question was a congress of the "Oranje Vroue Sending Bond" (Women's Mission Society) of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Orange Free State, and was attended by about sixty delegates, as well as a large body of the Dutch Reformed clergy. From a summary of the report given in the *Friend* it appears that the society showed a credit balance of £385. There were fifty-five branches of the Bond in the Free State with a gross membership of 3,500. The total contributions of these branches during the year was £4,960. Dealing with the work of the missionaries, Mrs. Strydom, the wife of a

Soudan missionary, had a doleful tale to tell. In the words of the *Friend* reporter:—

They had been busy there for twelve years, and she could not truly say that they could count ten converts to Christianity. They had had over twenty at one time, but there always came the inevitable backsliding. They had to contend with the great insidious danger of Mohammedanism, and had also met with opposition from the Government there.

Her husband, the Rev. Mr. Strydom, continued in the same strain and—

told of the difficulties they had to face, not only from the Mohammedans, but from *Europeans who feared no God, and whose influences in the Soudan—as throughout South Africa—proved one of the greatest factors they had to contend with.* The whole of Northern Africa, he continued, was covered with the followers of Mohammed, and daily there bowed towards Mecca, in Africa alone, between sixty and seventy millions. He proceeded to explain briefly the meaning and practices of Mohammedanism. Mohammed chose a wise and easy way. He started 600 years after Christ, and to-day he had 100,000 more followers. Daily the natives of Africa were being attracted into the folds of Mohammedanism, the rituals, the flowing robes, the Arabic verses which were so widely taught and acquired parrot-like proving irresistibly attractive to the simple and credulous native. Mohammedanism was omnipresent and insidious, but they were Calvinists, and the fight was to be waged if they had to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. The Mohammedans were coming southwards more rapidly in the last twenty-four years than they had done during the previous two centuries, and if the tide was to be stemmed it behoved all the Christian world to strive without wavering or flinching (Report in the *Friend*, Bloemfontein).

Here we have the naked truth from those best able to afford it. An annual expenditure of roughly £4,500 does not yield even one soul to the Lord's harvest! The striking tribute paid to the influence of Atheism is both frank and generous, and fairly takes one's breath away, coming as it does from such a source. It is satisfactory also to learn that the "Government" opposes the mischievous activities of these modern crusaders. No doubt the fight will continue in spite of the formidable odds. At least the shekels seem to be coming in, and such useful contributions cannot fail to keep in employment and afford an easy existence to these parasitical clerics for some time to come. But the day is not far off when they will be recognized for what they are, and the army of "poor whites" will receive a not inconsiderable reinforcement.

SEARCHLIGHT.

Harrismith, O.F.S.

Correspondence.

DEAN INGE AND PERSECUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—During the war Dean Inge said he would have people executed who cast doubt on the value of Sir Almroth Wright's inoculation which our soldiers had to undergo for prevention of typhoid. Now this nostrum was forced on our soldiers without any possibility of proving its effectiveness—nor has there been to this day. It has been dropped in the army and some other put in its place. There is at the present moment an attempt to reinstate compulsory vaccination. The most powerful London newspapers have dwelt continually on stamping out smallpox by its means. Now my own opinion is that vaccination and inoculation of diseased matter as prophylactics are fee-hunting impostures that ought to be prohibited. Their action is always mischievous and diverts money from housing and sanitation. Ethically, scientifically, and logically, vaccination like Christianity hasn't a leg to stand on. But what is the action of the journals I refer to? No opposition to these medical fads is allowed. This should certainly give rise to suspicion of conscious fraud. There should be a Royal Commission to enquire into these things on which doctors should not be allowed. Medical witnesses should be heard on both sides. The judges should consist entirely of laymen, and half their number should consist of Trades Unionists, because the evil effects of vaccination fall on the workers

more than the better-to-do classes. A trained statistician should preside, for it is statistics and not medical opinion that gives decisive results. All doctors know about vaccination, etc., is to perform the operations and take their fees; and to them ignorance is indeed bliss, like the priests and parsons.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

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.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No meeting.

OUTDOOR.

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METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 6.30-8.30, Mr. Keeling, Mr. Baker, Mr. Shaller, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "No Morality Where There is a God."

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