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Views and Opinions.

If I Were God!

Have mercy on me, oh my God!
On poor Martin Elginbrod,
As I would if I were God,
And you were Martin Elginbrod.

That is the most human and the most sensible prayer I know of. It is probably apocryphal, but it will serve. It is only asking God to act towards his creatures as almost anyone of them would act towards him if the position were reversed. Of course, it is an unusual form of prayer because it is asking God to behave sensibly and in a decently human manner. And his worshippers—and creators—will not have it thus. They insist that things which would be horrible or silly if done by man are good and wise when done by God. When the pious man sees his children stricken with disease he bows his head and says, "It is God's will." If someone knowingly inoculated the child with the germs of fever he would go round hunting for the man with a club, and any jury would return a verdict of justifiable homicide. During the eruption of Etna many thousands of people prayed to God to stop the lava flow, thereby proclaiming their belief that he could if he would. But the eruption went on, and those who prayed him to end it proceeded to praise him for his wisdom and goodness for not doing what they had asked him to do; which any decent human being would have done if he could. So, if we are to judge from what his followers tell us about him it is useless asking him to act towards Martin Elginbrod as Martin Elginbrod would act towards him. He seems incapable of doing so. He does not believe in reciprocity. He will take all and give nothing in return.

* * *

The Traffic Regulator.

Greatly daring—for a parson—the Rev. F. Y. Leggatt the other day asked the readers of the *Christian World* "If you were God, what would you do?" He then proceeded to show to his own satisfaction that if "you" were God you would act exactly as God does. That is rather a dangerous kind of an excuse, since if God can do no better than we would, there does not seem any particular reason why we should go on worshipping him, spend many millions annually in extolling his greatness, and maintain an

army of over 50,000 parsons to sing his praise and insist upon our own unworthiness. Mr. Leggatt puts "M.A." at the end of his name, but it is clear that his degree does not involve an understanding of the most elementary facts of scientific method. Thus, Mr. Leggatt says that if you were God you would have to "set up a scheme of law" to control the world. So that in Mr. Leggatt's opinion the world and law stand to each other as, say, a policeman does to the traffic along Fleet Street. Unless the policeman is there the traffic would be all confusion. Unless you set up "a scheme of law" there would be nothing but "chaos and confusion." Nature is one thing—a mass of objects acting in a confused and contradictory manner—and God steps in and regulates its movements as a policeman does the traffic. And that, as Euclid would say, is absurd. For in Nature the law of a thing is just the way it acts. It is not something imposed, it is part of the thing itself. It has nothing whatever to do with anybody or anything "controlling" it. The policeman is not necessary to the picture. This is all very elementary, but Mr. Leggatt is a well-known preacher, and it is well to bear in mind the kind of almost unbelievable stupidities that make up the stock-in-trade of the like.

* * *

What Might Be Done.

Mr. Leggatt thinks of his God as a policeman regulating the traffic, and the analogy is just one of those confusingly stupid ones in which the pulpit delights. A policeman standing at the juncture of two or three busy roads has to make the best of it, and lay down the "law" for its movement. But suppose the policeman were somehow endowed with power to make the traffic self-regulating? Suppose he could make vehicles that would of their own accord so move that there would never be a stoppage and never a block. Naturally he would make the vehicles and everyone would be pleased. The purpose of a cart being to carry things from one place to another, the better this task was discharged the better for everyone concerned. Now the policeman has to take the carts and horses and men and machines as he finds them and must make the best of them. He has to deal with forces that he did not create. But Mr. Leggatt's almighty regulator is in a different position. He is not called in to manage a universe which someone else has dumped down on him. He made it himself. He gave it all the capacities it has, and he knew beforehand how it would act. And it is idle to say on his behalf, "God is doing the best he can with the world, and you could not do any better." The answer is obvious. If I were God, and if I desired to set about creating I would manage things so that a great many—if not all—of the present evils did not exist. Mr. Leggatt deals with the eruption of Etna, and presumably he believes that God is doing his best with it. Rubbish! Given the power that God is believed to have there are scores of engineers who could devise plans for liberating the internal heat of the globe without endangering a single life. Almost any of us could improve on God's management of the world, and, as a matter of fact,

most of us do improve on it. The story of civilization is mainly a history of that improvement.

What God Does. * * *

Mr. Leggatt says that God is repeatedly teaching man if man will only learn the lesson. How? Well, says Mr. Leggatt, take Etna. The slopes of Etna are fertile and the peasants are tempted to dress their vines upon them; and century after century the same thing happens. The peasants train their vines on the fertile slopes, "they know the danger in which they stand and have been warned of God by the repeated acts of history." Charming! But everyone except a professional theologian ought to be able to see through such undiluted foolishness. Who made the slopes fertile? God. Who made the human so foolish as not to be able to learn the lesson, or so daring as to defy it? God. And who, when he has created this combination, proceeds to blow up or burn up the peasant? God. And who is it who are supposed to be taught by an eruption and destruction of life? Not those who are killed, quite clearly. The people who are being taught are those who have not run the risk at all. Thus the almighty policeman when he set about arranging the universe made the situation tempting, then he made the kind of man who would fall to the temptation, then he killed the men who did exactly as God must have known he would do, and, finally, the poor devil is killed so that someone else may learn the lesson of his death. What a God! And what worshippers! For downright stupidity it is an almost matchless combination. And Mr. Leggatt says that if you were God you could not do any better. It is tolerably certain that "you" could not do worse. The best thing we can say about such a God is to hope that he doesn't exist.

* * *

Improving God's Work.

There is a logic of fact which one may well set against the logic of theory, and contrasting theory with fact it is plain that man, even the religious man, is seldom satisfied with God's way of managing things. If he were he would leave him to his work and not bother his head about it. But he suggests in his prayers various ways in which God might improve things, and he sets about improving them himself. If God is really responsible for what Mr. Leggatt calls a "scheme of law," then he planned so that the sins of the fathers should be visited upon the children. And when the parent did wrong God said he would make the children pay for it. But so far as he can, man takes care that the children shall not be punished for what was done by others. Mr. Leggatt says that when the villages round Etna were overwhelmed the King of Italy, the Pope, the priests, and others did what they could to relieve the sufferers. Quite so; but that was really getting in God's way. For if Mr. Leggatt is right, God, by "the repeated acts of history," was teaching these people they must not cultivate their vines on the slopes of Etna. And the Pope, and the King, and the priests, and the others, are all getting in God's way and interfering with his plan of education. Of course, I am not blaming them for doing what they did, but it is strange for Mr. Leggatt to do so. I do not blame them because, as I have said, that is a lesson of civilization. Civilization goes on by ignoring God and by forsaking his methods. It is not God that turns the waste places of the earth into fruitful fields, but man. It is not God that discovers the antidotes to diseases, but man. It is not God that makes good the waste of an eruption, but man. And man not merely civilizes the earth, he civilizes heaven and God. For it is by the influence of man that the savage tribal deity of the Bible has become the mild constitutional reforming God of the present day Chris-

tian. I do not know how much God has educated man, but I am quite certain that in the matter of education God has much for which to thank man.

Let us Forget. * * *

Unquestionably, like the famous king of Castile, if I had been present at the creation I think I would have suggested various improvements. No surprising wisdom would have been needed for that, only a little ordinary common-sense. But if I were God, and had as much common-sense as the average human, and had been gifted with foresight, the first thing I would have done would have been to let things alone, and the next cause men to forget all about me. Being God I should have foreseen that one of the chief causes of trouble in human society would have been bothering about me. I should have seen that among savages there would have sprung up a whole batch of hideous customs—the burning of widows, the slaughter of servants on the death of a chief, the sacrifice of human beings to me to get rain or a good harvest, self-mutilations to get my good-will, with other brutal and blood-thirsty practices. And passing on to more civilized times I should have foreseen how men would have quarrelled, and hated, and fought, and lied, and stole, and worked injustice because of their belief in me. I should have seen the multitudes burned at the stake and tortured in prisons. I should have foreseen how a genuine knowledge of Nature—upon which human welfare ultimately depends—would have been obstructed because men believed that I did not like it. And being God, and foreseeing all these things, I should naturally and sensibly have decided that the best thing that could happen to mankind would be to forget that I existed. Next to a God that doesn't exist, a God forgotten is the next best thing. I would have made men forget all about me and attend to their own business. That is, if I were God, and assuming that I had as much sense as an intelligent human being. But then there is no evidence that God exists, and still less that, existing, he goes to work as intelligently as man would.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Jesus Saves."

A THIRD specimen of the Rev. A. Boyd-Scott's attempt to "construe the Christian Faith in terms of modern thought" in his interesting book, *Nevertheless We Believe*, occurs in Chapter II, in which he treats of Jesus as Saviour. It is characteristic of the clerical profession to take many things for granted and always handle them as axioms. God, the unseen world, and the soul are invariably taken as such in the pulpit, and they are so used in this book, particularly in this eleventh chapter. From the ordinary evangelical point of view, "Jesus Saves," is an exceedingly good title, but looked at in the light of modern scientific thought it conveys no meaning whatever, and the treatment of the subject bears no sign of modernity. Among the things which all men and women, consciously or unconsciously, are seeking to know, we are told, is the truth about their own souls and God. It is perfectly true that that is what the pulpit tries hard to persuade us to do, though with amazingly little success, and its success is so small simply because it ignores the duty of proving that all men and women have souls, and that there is a God with whom they have relations. The fact is, however, that the pulpit neglects this primary task because of its utter incapacity to perform it. The clergy are fully aware of this incapacity, and a few of them openly acknowledge it. What is generally done is to assume the existence of God and of the soul, and then proceed to weave purely imagin-

ary descriptions of both. To the majority of preachers faith and knowledge are identical. To believe a thing is to know it. Curiously enough, when Adam ate the apple he lost his soul because it was an act of disobedience to God's command, and all human souls have been in a lost condition from that day to this. More curiously still this lostness of the soul through Adam's sin was fatal until God sent his Son to redeem it by dying for it on the Cross. According to orthodox theology it is from this soul-lostness that Jesus saves mankind; but this is how Mr. Scott puts it:—

Salvation is deliverance from Homelessness; in the first place, the gnawing sense of homelessness within our own souls, where so much is in disorder; secondly, the sense of homelessness we have in our intercourse and strife with people about us; thirdly, the sense of homelessness we have in this appalling universe of round earth beneath us and frigid stars above. From this triple homelessness all men and women, either consciously or unconsciously, are seeking deliverance.

That passage is apparently devoid of theological implications; and yet, on carefully examining it, we discover that it rests on an entirely theological foundation. The soul is God's creature, and its home is in him. It is here only as a pilgrim; and even when saved by Jesus it must say:—

Here in the body pent,
Absent from him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

As a matter of simple fact we are not on the earth as strangers and pilgrims, but as veritable denizens. We are natives of this world. Here our life begins, runs its course, and ends, and here alone, or nowhere, are we really at home. George Meredith makes this truth the burden of many of his poems. He calls earth our mother, in whose heart is our home. He says:—

Earth your haven, earth your helm,
You command a double realm;
Labouring here to pay your debt,
Till your little sun shall set.

In *The Thrush in February* we find these noble lines:—

Love born of knowledge, love that gains
Vitality as earth it mates,
The meaning of Pleasures, Pains,
The Life, the Death, illuminates.
For love we earth, then serve we all;
Her mystic secret then is ours
We fall, or view our treasures fall,
Unclouded.

Once more, in *My Theme*, the poet rises to the following height of ethical grandeur:—

I say but that this love of earth reveals
A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,
Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift.

Mr. Scott cites the case of Peter as an illustration of what salvation signifies. (This is how he expresses it:—

Jesus gave Peter life, his own Life, as surely as if the blood of Jesus had been transfused into Peter's veins. Jesus shared Peter's life, his spiritual struggles, his sins, his victories, his defeats, his trembling recoveries.

That is a merely fanciful delineation of Peter's association with his Master. Was it not Peter who denied his Lord, swearing energetically that he had never known such a man? Was it not Peter whom Paul resisted angrily at Antioch because he had been guilty of wicked dissimulation and led others into the same fault? Assuming the historicity of the documents, there can be no doubt but that Peter's character remained practically unaltered throughout his life. Mr. Scott idealizes Peter beyond recognition; and that is what he does with Christian believers generally. They are all being miraculously transformed from the ordin-

ary human type into the image of God in Christ. The preacher waxes extremely eloquent in his description of Christ's unlimited power and omnipresence:—

Christ is so full, rich, and comprehensive a soul, that we Christians have no name for him but the very Son of God. What limit, therefore, can we set to his capacity to unfold in his thought and loving contemplation, not one or two or three souls simultaneously as even I can do, but myriad souls? Even when he was curbed in Palestine by the body that curbs and cabins us, he could be present at what we call a "distance" with Nathanael and the Centurion's daughter and Lazarus, could feel a touch of vaguely formed faith on the hem of his robe by a woman behind him in the jostling crowd. What limit can we place to his power, now that he is unshackled by space and time, to know each soul in what appals us as the millions of souls, and to be in touch with each soul at what we call "the same time." Please make an effort to follow out these tentative suggestions for yourselves. It is thus, if I may confess it, I have reached something of a point of view from which I find nothing inconceivable in the thought that my Lord, a living personal soul "through there," is everywhere about us, with every individual soul of us.

Far be it from us to cast the least shadow of a doubt upon the sincerity of Mr. Scott's glowing confession of faith. There are thousands of Christians who share both his belief and experience, and their honesty it would be a grave offence to call in question. For many years we firmly held the same faith and passionately enjoyed the same experience; but ultimately the eyes of our understanding were opened and we saw with the utmost clearness that the belief in Christ's presence and power, or even in the historicity of the Gospel Jesus, was wholly groundless, and that it must be discarded; and the moment it was gone the experience it had engendered ceased. Did this drastic change give rise to a sense of incalculable loss? No. On the contrary, there sprang up in the mind an unspeakably precious feeling of relief, emancipation, and freedom, which emotion endures and gathers additional warmth and strength. And there are many thousands in this country who have passed through a similar crisis. We are therefore profoundly convinced that Mr. Scott is radically mistaken when he asserts emphatically that all men and women, either consciously or unconsciously, are yearning for and seeking the salvation offered through Christ. The statement is fundamentally false. We go further, and unhesitatingly characterize the Gospel he preaches, in the very words chosen by himself: "This is all make-believe, hallucination, mirage."

Has it never occurred to Mr. Scott to wonder, if Christ really is the omnipotent, omnipresent, and all-loving Redeemer he so fluently portrays, why so many thousands of churches, with their ministers and other workers, are required to prevent both his name and his religion from dying out in our land, and that in spite of their diligence and zeal their Master's cause is visibly losing ground? The very existence of such institutions in never-failing operation must surely be a deadly insult to the Divine Saviour of the world, or would be if he really existed. There are good men and women in the Churches who are doing their utmost to make the world a better place to live in, and their only mistake is that they regard themselves as instruments through which Christ works. If Christ lived he would not need instruments; he would do his work without the assistance of any intermediaries. The fact that the work is not done, the world being still unredeemed, is an irresistible evidence of the non-existence of the beautiful supernatural Saviour so lovingly believed in and adored by Mr. Scott.

J. T. LLOYD,

The Shadow of Dante.

King, who hast reigned six hundred years.

—Tennyson.

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea.

—Wordsworth.

THE sixcentenary of Dante's death was noted in this country by the publication of a scholarly work, *Britain's Tribute to Dante in Literature and Art*, by Dr. Paget Toynbee, which contains a wealth of information concerning a literary reputation almost without a parallel. Since the opening of the nineteenth century, Dr. Toynbee tells us, there have been twenty-six complete translations in English of Dante's masterpiece, whilst there are twenty-one of the *Inferno*, eight of the *Purgatorio*, and five of the *Paradiso*. So that one or other of the great Italian's poems have been rendered into our language on an average every twelve months. This is a proud record and a solid proof that only the great classical poets, such as Homer and Virgil, rival Dante in the affection of English men of letters. Nor is this all, for the same may be said of English artists, who have been fond of representing episodes from Dante's *Divina Commedia* in painting or sculpture.

What wonderful changes have taken place in Europe since Dante's time! Poets have rushed, comet-like across the literary horizon, lightened the darkness for a moment, then as rapidly disappeared. Their songs, their messages, even their names, have been forgotten. Dramatists have provided fun and tragedy for the public of their time. Most of their names are lost to memory, and their plays are lumber. Time is merciless, and strews the poppy of oblivion over all but the worthiest. Dante is one of the select few. He has had but one superior during the six centuries since his death, and that is William Shakespeare, the greatest name in the world's literature.

Of Dante's life but little is known. Even before his death he had come to be the subject of many flourishing legends. It is well nigh impossible to make out exactly what he did. So deep is this obscurity, that his stature gains from the uncertainty an unreal proportion like that of a tall man in a mist. Dante Alighieri was born in Florence, Italy; was of noble birth; and had a passion for knowledge. He learned all that the schools and universities of his time could teach him "better than most," fought as a soldier, did service as a citizen, and became chief magistrate at Florence. While young he met Beatrice Portinari. She made a great figure in his life, and a greater in his immortal poem. He married another "not happily." In some Guelph-Ghibelline strife he was expelled the city, and ate the bitter bread of banishment. Without a home, he turned to the world of the imagination, and wrote the *Divina Commedia*, one of the most remarkable of all books, and died, not old, at the age of fifty-six.

Dante's masterpiece, the *Divina Commedia*, consisting of the three parts, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*, form a unique epitome of the Christianity of the middle ages, a very different thing from the invertebrate and decadent substitute which is still retailed by the clergy as the real Christian religion. The poem was written in an age of Faith, and Dante was a firm believer. His uncompromising realism brings vividly before us the full extent of the credulity of those far-off days in which Paganism and Christianity were intermingled. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. His similes appear the illustrations of a traveller. Dante even introduces Virgil as his guide to the Infernal Regions. He compares the precipice which led from

one circle to another in Hell to the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The place where heretics were confined in flaming tombs resembled the cemetery of Arles. He puts Francesca da Rimini, whom he had nursed on his knee as a child, among the damned, "imprisoned in the viewless winds, and blown about the pendant world." Count Ugolini is introduced among other sinners. His own loved Beatrice, the lode-star of his stormy career, continuously appears and reappears throughout the poem. Dante was all imagination, but he wrote like Hakluyt.

The power of Dante's genius carries everything before it. Such transcendent originality of conception is alone rivalled by old Homer and our own Shakespeare. For his having adopted the prevalent superstition in all its extravagances we no more blame Dante than we criticize Homer because he uses the Pagan deities. The *Divina Commedia* is none the less a reliable mirror by which we may view mediæval Christianity. There is an air of grief and sound of lamentation over all this lurid and unlovely conception of life. A monster sits in the seat of duty and rules a terror-stricken world. Dante shows us horrors heaped on horror's head. He points to hell after hell, each more disgusting and abominable than the last, round every species of petty sinners. He pictures in unforgettable language the torments of the unbaptized, the heretics, the avaricious, the gluttons. Some are tossed in furious winds. Some are lying in filth, others are punished in fury tombs, whilst numbers are tormented in rivers of blood. Except in the writings of the mentally unbalanced Fathers of the Church and Christian theologians, few have ever had such ideas of filth and corruption. The tender human emotions of the man are almost smothered by this awful theology. The gloom of the Infernal Regions tinges even the flowers of Paradise, and dims the glories of Heaven.

The Christian Superstition, of which Dante sings with such power, is now in the melting pot, but it matters little to the *Divina Commedia*. The puissant imagination, the artistry of the great genius of Italian literature can never stale. There are few pages without those superb felicities of speech which tingle the blood. Dante's reputation has outlasted empires, kingdoms, and commonwealths. Nations degenerate, cities become desolate, great soldiers and statesmen fade into mere names, but the supreme glory of a great genius survives the centuries, and clothes a poet's name with immortal glory, which grows in lustre through the ages. Genius has made the name of Dante illustrious, and his greatness is secure as the everlasting hills.

MIMNERMUS.

Ignorance: The Primal Evil.

To quell three Titan evils I was made,—
Tyranny, sophistry, hypocrisy;
Whence I perceive with what wise harmony
Themis on me Love, Power, and Wisdom laid.
These are the basements firm whereon is stayed,
Supremely strong, our new philosophy;
The antidotes against the trinal lie
Wherewith the burdened world groaning is weighed.
Famine, war, pestilence, fraud, envy, pride,
Injustice, idle, lust, fury, fear,
Beneath these three great plagues securely hide.
Grounded on blind self-love, the offspring dear
Of ignorance, they flourish and abide:
Wherefore to root up ignorance I'm here!

TOMMASO CAMPANELLA (1568-1639).

(Translated by John Addington Symonds, 1877.)

Chains and Slavery.

FREETHINKERS are seldom either pessimistic or Calvinistic. Thoughtful they must be, and compassionate; sometimes rash and unruly—young men in a hurry—reasonable at last in ripening wisdom. Having failed, in their first generous enthusiasm, to storm heaven, or shame its shameless (or brainless) defenders into capitulation, they may find, as I do often, that the garrison, while outwardly conforming, is inwardly revolting. It is a generous estimate to say that only twenty-five per cent Freethinkers read the *Freethinker*. For the rest their Freethought is furtive still, and something more non-committal than our sturdy little journal satisfies for the time—something such as even a clergyman need not blush to have in his possession. As to blushing, indeed, if "intellect" is capable of so much "ingenuous shame," the blushes should be all upon the other cheek!

So much by way of exordium, where so much more might be said. I am fond of the open-air Socialist meeting on our sea-shore on the Sundays—or rather I am grateful to the Comrades of the I.L.P. for providing on that day a little secular opposition to the sacred flapdoodle of the Churches, etc. The other Sunday I took notice of a quiet, cultured-looking young man standing respectfully attentive on the outskirts of the small crowd. A talk on Socialism easily leads on to a discussion on religion—the one, I have long maintained, is useless without the other—just as religion "pure and simple" divorced from secular concerns is of no conceivable utility. In an after-meeting talk with the young man, he and I were soon deeply but amicably committed to a discussion on religion. He told me he was a teacher in a Roman Catholic school, that he was the son of very religious, working-class parents, and had himself had a hard struggle to get his education; economic and other reasons were strongly opposed to the expression of his developed mind—especially along religious lines. I was able, I fancied, to throw out some useful hints on Determinism which, as a definite and very significant doctrine, seemed new to him—at least in name. He saw, he said, that Christ (God in human form) had not saved the world. But the priests told him the way had been opened which had been closed before owing to man's fallen condition. Even then he was not satisfied. It was, said my new friend, as though a bag of gold had been placed at the top of a pole and the competitor tied hand and foot before being allowed to climb—or the climb made impossible at the start.

I thought the illustration an excellent one, giving, as it did, the guilt to God, the great original handicapper. The young fellow was quite honest and compliant, but discreet, and I forbore to press him too hard. Besides I found, as one nearly always does in similar cases, his mind had advanced much further than was at once evident. I took the occasion to recommend to him *The Age of Reason*, by Thomas Paine, with all my encomiums on that great and simple fearless writer, but he told me he had read it three years before and had just been going over it again.

I could only beg his pardon and say: "Well, if you have read and understood *The Age of Reason* there is no need for me to say more! My humble reasoning is a poor thing beside that immortal work, which, though written by a fervent Deist, has done more to revolutionize religious thought than any other single book."

The case of my young acquaintance is a very common one, but which, if not edifying, should be encouraging to Freethinkers. While religion is still securely rooted in the numerous and popular, hence excitable and perilous mind, the clearer intellects in

the religious stronghold are but half-hearted in its defence; and while still manning the crumbling walls of superstition, cast wistful glances to "Canaan's fair and happy land!" It is a confused and cowardly heroism, as witness the great men who, in scorn of public opinion, or in satisfaction of their moral and intellectual needs, have confessed their innermost convictions, and in so doing have remained illustrious—to saint and sinner alike. However, we are not all cast in the heroic mould, and we can sympathize with, and welcome, the secret advances of the hundreds like the young man in question as potential if not present help for the great days to be.

ANDREW MILLAR.

The Church in France.

I DO not know to what extent the American papers have been recording the various steps in the *rapprochement* which has been going on for some time between France and the Catholic Church; but the matter is one which has lately come very much to the front in French political discussion, and its political and social implications are rather far-reaching. It will be recalled that in 1905, following the suppression, a few years before, of the monastic orders in France, all of the Church property in France was virtually confiscated, and the churches and other buildings were turned over to the communes for general public use, or assigned to the few private associations which were formed to maintain religious services. Grants of public money for the support of churches and church-schools disappeared from the national and local budgets, and religious instruction in public schools was forbidden. The vehement denunciation of the separation-laws, as they were called, by Pius X, and the stubborn opposition of Catholics in France, led in 1907 to a modification of the laws to the extent of allowing the churches to be used for the religious services to which they had formerly been affected, but subject to the laws and administrative decrees regulating public meetings in general. Those church buildings which had been classed, because of their historical or artistic interest, as public monuments, were under the control of the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, so far as alterations and repairs were concerned, but the maintenance of the clergy, and of such private schools as were permitted to be conducted under religious auspices, was derived entirely from private contributions.

The breaking of the connection between Church and State undoubtedly harmonized with a change of religious sentiment which had long been going on in France. While Protestantism was, and is, an all but negligible influence in France, less than half of the population of France was even nominally Catholic, and the rank and file of the radical Socialists were more or less inimical to religion in any form. The Modernist movement, too, although short-lived and now only a memory, had its effect upon public opinion. The patriotic response of Catholics when the war broke out, however, and the devotion of priests who served by the thousands as chaplains during the war, operated to modify national feeling with regard to the Church, and about two years ago a new policy began to emerge. After the usual diplomatic discussion, and after public opinion had been sounded through the press, a French ambassador was accredited to the Vatican, and one of the ablest and most astute of papal diplomats appeared as nuncio at Paris. The Church let slip no opportunity to drive the entering wedge. The death of Cardinal Amette, a moderate was followed by the transfer to Paris of the Bishop of Rouen, another able Church politician of the approved

reactionary type. Public lectures by eminent Catholic scholars multiplied prodigiously; an imposing literature of popular religious manuals and discussions of economic and social questions of the day appeared in the shop-windows; patriotic religious services with flags and elaborate music drew to the Churches crowds of the socially elect; and the godless General Confederation of Labour, already threatened with disruption by the Communist movement, was further weakened by the organization, particularly in the industrial north, of so-called Christian syndicates of Catholic wage-earners.

A new phase of the question, that of the return of the monastic orders, is now agitating the public mind and provoking heated comment in the Radical Press. The opposition to the orders, several of which have contrived in one way or another to get a preliminary footing in the country, is intense in many parts of France; and a number of communal authorities are resisting strenuously the attempt to recover former monastic buildings which for years have been devoted to other uses. The Government, however, appears to have been won over. Proposals, approved by the Government, for the re-admission of four important orders, were favourably considered by a Senate committee just before Parliament adjourned, and will undoubtedly be adopted when the Chambers reconvene next month, unless the opposition in the Deputies develops unexpected strength. It is also proposed, "for reasons of foreign policy," to return to the Church, under a lease, the old seminary of St. Sulpice, used during the war as a haven for refugees from the invaded departments and now occupied by various bureaux of the Ministry of Finance. The building is a vast structure with more than 400 rooms, and in view of the acute housing-shortage in Paris, the demand is loud for the use of the seminary as lodgings. The Government, however, plans to rent the building to the Church authorities for the ridiculously small sum of 50,000 francs a year, meanwhile acquiring other property for the Ministry of Finance. An attempt was made in the Senate to block the transfer by requiring the approval of the Chambers in the case of all rentals of State property exceeding 45,000 francs annually, instead of leaving the matter to be dealt with, as at present, by simple ministerial decree. This issue, too, will be fought out when Parliament reassembles; but there is only too much ground for anticipating that "reasons of foreign policy" will prevail.

The political significance of what is going on is, as I have said, far-reaching. France has changed much since 1907, but the Church has not. It is still the ally, open or tacit, of every reactionary movement in Europe that is important enough to be supported. It is working hand in glove with the Fascist Government of Mussolini in Italy; it is close to the monarchist plotters in Bavaria; it is an efficient ally of the anti-republican *Action Française* in France. It has been openly charged, by no less powerful bodies than the national associations of soldiers and *mutilés* of the war, with conniving at a sabotage of the law regarding the education and support of the 550,000 war-orphaned of France, in order to bring a large proportion of the orphans under the control of clerical schools. That the Church is opposed to Communism goes without saying; but it is equally opposed to every other political or social movement to which the taint of radicalism can by any possibility be imputed. There is food for reflection in the fact that the new cementing of accord between the Government and the Church should be actively carried on at a moment when religious interest of any kind is at a very low ebb in France, when the intellectual classes are admittedly alienated, and when the great mass of industrial workers talk as bitterly of the Church as they do of

capitalism. One of the American newspapers published in Paris, commenting the other day upon the execution of Mgr. Butchkavitch at Moscow, referred to "the bitter criticism heard, even in official quarters of the Soviet step in throwing down the gauntlet to the nations which consider Christianity as the directive power of their interior and exterior policies." One wonders to what nations of Europe to-day such an observation applies; to what, in contemporary France, the allusion to the "directive power" of Christianity may possibly be supposed to refer.—The *Freeman*, reprinted from the *Truthseeker* (New York).

Acid Drops.

Give a man a dose of religion—even if it be of the attenuated sort—and it appears to be enough to blind him to the most obvious of facts. Thus Mr. George Lansbury says that "The day is past and gone when our religious pastors and masters can stand up and ask for God's blessings on the inhuman, barbarous methods of modern warfare." But what did our religious pastors and masters do during the war? And what do they do when they are asked to bless a battleship or the colours of a regiment? Of course, they do not say in so many words, "God bless poison-gas." That would be a degree of morality and honesty which the average Christian finds it very difficult to reach. But the battleship must use the modern appliances, and so must the soldier. It is sheer humbug to pray for the success of soldiers in war and then pretend that you are not endorsing what soldiers do and use.

Mr. Lansbury says Christianity is international, and evidently draws from this the conclusion that somehow or other Christianity makes for universal brotherhood and good-will. One would like to know when Christianity has done this? Why it cannot make for good-will between Christians within the nation, let alone doing it for those who are divided by national barriers. The only sense in which Christianity is international is the sense in which a conquering imperialism is international. That is, it will merge in a common citizenship all whom it compels to submit to its yoke. But it has no brotherhood and no internationalism for those who are outside its community. The truth is, when one puts on one side phrases and looks at facts, that there are in Christianity all the elements for the narrowest of passions, the most rigid of barriers, and the most enduring of hostilities. The history of Christianity proves that this is so. If Mr. Lansbury could only get rid of his maggot of religion, which so undermines his judgment, he would see this easily enough.

It would appear that we have a case before us that requires the attention of the N.S.P.C.C., which society, we believe, has moved to larger and more commodious premises—a feather in the cap of Christianity as it were. The Rev. C. P. Hankey, Vicar of St. Matthew, Westminster, writing to the *Daily Herald*, states:—

It is not uncommon for a small boy to be moved to tears by the story of Christ's Passion, if it be told really well. I have never heard of this happening with a small girl.

There may be a time when it will be considered an indignity to notice this kind of rubbish emanating presumably from one who has enjoyed the advantages of something better than a Board School education. However, if reducing a small boy to tears by a story of the death of a man, the existence of whom is doubtful, Freethinkers will feel as well as know, the depraved and rotten standard of value at the base of Christianity. The side issue also of so many parsons buzzing round the *Daily Herald* may also speak eloquently; that paper would be on surer ground if it avoided the caresses of one known and labelled enemy of true progress—Christianity.

Many relics of the tenth century, including a saint's head, together with a quantity of gold and jewelled ob-

jects, have been stolen from Gnesen Cathedral, Poland. The saint ought to get after his own head, even if he is indifferent to money.

Australians have been amused by the evergreen *Sydney Bulletin*. The local clergy having issued prayers for rain, coupled with penitence for not having provided reservoirs, the *Bulletin* observed, caustically, that the advice of the clergy really means: "Pray less; dam more."

In some reminiscences of Sir Henry Irving, published in a contemporary, it is stated that his conversation was witty and Voltairean. A story is told of a Lyceum rehearsal of "Faust." Turning to the company, Irving shouted: "You are supposed to be in hell. Don't behave as if you were on a 'beano' on Hampstead Heath." On another occasion a parson was soliciting his aid for the Church and Stage Society. "I am interested in the Church and Stage," said the great actor, "but not the Church. She's quite old enough to look after herself."

In an article in the *Christian World*—in which he attempts to trace a similarity between God and ether (!)—the Rev. J. Marshall Robertson says:—

We live, science tells us, in an ocean of ether. It surrounds, saturates, penetrates, everything, including ourselves. It is this ether which carries the wireless message far and wide. Yet we never see the ether, never feel it, cannot know it through any of our senses. But it is there.

So is it with God. "In Him we live and move and have our being." That is literally true. We never see Him, cannot know Him through the senses. Yet He is there, in and through all. The parallel is extraordinarily complete, is it not? Near us all; as near the sinner as the saint. Yet some are in touch with Him and others are not.

The reverend gentleman has missed an important point. Science has discovered that ether exists; it has not yet told us that a God exists.

Five years after the war, and *a propos* of the taxi-cab murder, the *Daily Chronicle* says, "The truth is that sanctioned brutalities, inseparable from war, cannot but awaken savage instincts in the more primitive minded or criminally inclined members of the community." (The italics are ours.) It is good to see this truth pressed home, but readers will recall the fact that during the war, and while the Churches and the papers were busy dwelling upon the ennobling consequences of the war, the *Freethinker* stood almost alone in pointing it out, and warning the public of the consequences for which we might prepare. Now it is quite safe to say it. No wonder we had so many letters from soldiers in France and elsewhere saying that the *Freethinker* was about the only paper they got which seemed sane.

And even now, it will be noted, the *Daily Chronicle* only dares to say part of the truth. Sanctioned brutalities are inseparable from war, because war itself between modern States is a sanctioned brutality, and in the training of soldiers during the war every endeavour was made to develop the ferocity of the men. But the truth left unsaid is that war not only brutalizes "the more primitive-minded and criminally inclined," it has the same effect on all concerned. The orgy of hatred indulged in during the war, the partly manufactured atrocity stories—in which the late Lord Northcliffe played so prominent a part—designed to keep the hatred of the people up to boiling point, the delight in the slaughter of so many hundreds of thousands of people, the depicting of a whole nation as being made up—men, women, and children—of unadulterated brutes, are all part of the awakening of those savage instincts to which war appeals. We cannot repeat these truths too often, for it is only by making war appear before the people as it is in sober fact that it will be killed. While each country goes on talking of the evils of militarism in other countries and praising it in its own, we are only preparing the way for another catastrophe. The truth to be driven home is that

war is savagery, an appeal to the lower passions of the people, and that military life in all its forms is demoralizing. But unfortunately it is only unpopular papers like this one that dares to tell the people the truth.

Dr. Glover writes in the *Daily News* that it was the Christian part of the community that ended negro slavery. Dr. Glover is very great on the teaching of mental straightforwardness so we venture to suggest to him that in a community where the overwhelming majority calls itself Christian anything that occurs may be put down to "the Christian part of the community." But, in any case, seeing that it was the Christian part of the community which established negro slavery, and which fought for its perpetuation, and also that in our own case Christian slaveholders sold their slaves to the Government by way of liberation, there really does not seem very much for Christians to be proud of. And to that we need only add that the slavery established and maintained by Christians ranks as the most brutal in the history of the world. We venture to commend to Dr. Glover the reading of Mr. Cohen's *Christianity and Slavery*. He will find all the facts fully set forth therein.

Men of God sometimes tell the truth without knowing it. The Bishop of Zanzibar declared that "London is as Pagan as Zanzibar." The meaning of that charge is that after many centuries of unbroken and zealous effort Christianity has not conquered and won London yet. The Bishop has since altered the charge by extending it to "England" instead of "London," a change which only aggravates it. In either case, his lordship simply told the truth. The Christian religion is the most gigantic failure the world has ever seen.

From the *Sunday Illustrated*:—

Said the Bishop of Zanzibar,
"How wicked the Londoners are;
Though I preach and orate,
They will not fill the plate;
The Pagans were better by far."

Mr. Slessor, the Labour candidate for Central Leeds, evidently has a good opinion of the Anglo-Catholic movement. He states:—

The Anglo-Catholic movement supports any means, such as the erection of a crucifix in public places, which will bring people back to an understanding of the real meaning of the Church.

A general adoption of this would mean a little more discord, fights, and division in society, heresy hunting, and the usual religious brawls. If Mr. Slessor is fond of symbolism, here is something for him. *Mankind is now, at this moment, being crucified on the Cross of Finance.* When he replaces guff of the sort quoted, with *thinking*, he may command the respect and support of those who are interested in society *now*. At present, to continue the symbolism, Christianity will not even pull the nails out of the body of mankind. What position does it occupy with regard to housing, to education, to expenditure on armaments, to the merciless control of Finance? We trust that Mr. Slessor will wake up, or go down to the devils in politics we do know. Christianity assists in the crucifixion of mankind—if it did not, it is finished for ever. But there, Mr. Slessor, feeling is so much easier than thinking, isn't it? It is just possible that the traffic problem may prevent the erection of crucifixes, and sweethearts will use the cross to signify the usual meaning.

There was a strange procession through the streets of London during the Anglo-Catholic Congress. "One hundred clergy in cassock, surplice, and bisetta, and fifteen bishops, wearing caps and mitres, with the Russian patriarch in a crown and cape of purple velvet," marched in grand style to the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Among them was the Bishop of London, and when he passed "many people knelt on one knee to receive his blessing." Superstition is certainly with us still in all

its hideousness, and many bishops encourage and stimulate it. And, of course, superstition is of the very essence of the Christian religion.

"I am a spiritual pig-sticker. My duty is to ride after those spiritual road-hogs who go scorching along the road to heaven," says the Rev. A. W. Orr, Vicar of St. Paul's Church, Kingston Hill, Surrey. The difference between a "spiritual" and a material pig-sticker is all in favour of the latter. For the ordinary pig-sticker does it for the sport of the thing, but the spiritual pig-sticker gets paid for the job.

The *Healthy Life* remarks that while generous help was received from many quarters during "Animals' Welfare Week," "it is impossible to report so favourably about the part played by the Churches." We are not surprised. As animals have no souls, they were always outside the consideration of the Church. Paul asks contemptuously, "Doth God care for oxen?" and animals are worse treated in countries where the Church is strong.

The Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Hull, must be a man of unusual type. He has accepted a "call" to St. Luke's, Redcliffe Square, London, and he says that one of the reasons why he has accepted it is that the income is twice as large. That is quite a pleasant change from the usual hypocritical snivel about feeling a call from the Lord. We congratulate the Vicar on his rise.

It is shocking to the Christian mind to think that millions of Mohammedans venerate the Holy Carpet, alleged to be the one on which Mohammed said his prayers. Now if it had been a number of cheap painted dolls, before which millions of Roman Catholics kneel, or the "sacred" relics of some dead "saint," which so many of our High Churchmen are ready to say their prayers before, it would have been very different. If one indulges in these things one soon develops a nice taste concerning them. To the unregenerate outsider there does not seem much to choose between them, but then we cannot see any difference between an African medicine-man and the Archbishop of Canterbury. So perhaps we may not be an authority on the matter.

What notions of liberality some Christians have! The Rev. Studdert-Kennedy says that "it would be better for us to be honest Atheists than dishonest Christians." Imagine the state of mind of people who need pointing out to them that it is better to be honest than dishonest! And conceive the moral value of a public opinion which seizes upon an utterance of this kind as one of the important sayings of the week. It is things like these that show the thoughtful observer what a demoralizing creed Christianity is. Better be an Atheist who is honest than a Christian who picks pockets. And yet, if historic and genuine Christianity is correct, the latter may reach heaven and the former will be certain to go to hell. It was the thief on the cross that was promised heaven by Jesus—not because he had ceased to be a thief, but merely because he believed.

The *Guardian* is still serving out drivel with a liberal hand. As an argument for the existence of God, it says that "Conscience, Reason, and the sense of beauty cannot be accounted for without God." The writer appears to be blissfully unaware of the brain. So many religionists are, preferring to accept the aborigine's explanation of things rather than that of the scientific philosopher.

M. Anatole France, the world-famous satirist, is to visit England. Will he be mobbed by indignant religionists, whose beliefs he has so brilliantly commented upon, or (let us whisper it) will the divines clamour for the privilege of meeting him? We should not be surprised at the latter. We have heard of similar cases before.

Arthur Brisbane writes as follows in the *Detroit Times* :—

Trinity Church looks in on Wall Street and Wall Street looks in on Trinity Church.

And musing there, an hour alone, you realize that Christianity can be made as profitable as stocks if you know how.

Trinity Church says that its income for 1922 was \$1,249,870. Clergymen on the regular staff were paid \$78,758.34. Temporary clerical help got \$3,434.33, parish visitors and such, \$5,892.50. Music, musicians and choirs got \$50,864.46. Light and coal cost \$28,122.23; rent of a home for the chief clergyman, \$7,550.30.

That financial report, which is in heaven by now, must be interesting to the spirit that said :

"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

Seven thousand dollars for rent is a considerable improvement on a fox's hole, or a bird's nest.

One big item for insurance seems a sound investment. It would seem unwise to rely on a miracle or special Providence to protect that institution from lightning or ordinary fires.

That is what one might call a particular case with a very general application. For it applies to this country no less than to the United States, and to any country where Christianity has got itself firmly fixed in a position of power.

In reviewing a volume of legends of the Virgin Mary, the *Daily News* remarked that the volume was "a tissue of nonsense," worthless except "as illustrating to what levels of absurdity Christianity can be corrupted and degraded." We quite agree with the first statement, but quite disagree with the second. The legends of the Virgin Mary are not a bit more intrinsically absurd than the other stories that go to make up Christianity and those which are contained in the New Testament. What could be more absurd than to solemnly tell us of a man who transferred a number of devils from a man to some pigs, or of the same person curing a man of blindness by spitting on some dust and putting it into the afflicted person's eye? Are the legends of the Virgin Mary more absurd than the Christian doctrine of the Mass? The only distinction between these stories and the others is that one set is accepted and the other is rejected. Hobbes was right. Religion is superstition established. Superstition is religion disestablished. In religion that is the only distinction between true and false.

The Marionette.

MARIONETTE, in you I see
A mimic, microcosmic Me,
Who struts and poses, laughs and weeps,
Loves, and fights, and sulks, and sleeps.
You are I in all these things—
But you do not feel the strings!

From my toes and finger-tips,
From my ears and eyes and lips,
Tenuous threads run to my brain,
(The seat of Reason!) thence again
They pass, etherealized, to bind
My destiny to all mankind.

A million-million slender strands,
From alien ages, distant lands,
With cumulative, potent pull
Proclaim me glad or sorrowful,
And long-stilled heart-beats intertwine
Their one-time vibrant pulse with mine.

Gossamer shadow-tendons run
To me from Earth and Sea and Sea;
From mighty Mother Nature I
Still draw my primal energy,
Strive e'er so hard I never shall
Sever that cord umbilical.

JOHN ERNEST SIMPSON.

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.

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

To Correspondents.

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

L. MASON.—We are always glad to receive cuttings, and those of our readers who send them put us under an obligation. We cannot afford to employ assistants to collect items of interest, so that those who do collect for us may regard themselves as part of the unofficial staff. Article received. Thanks.

M. ATKINS.—We are really not interested in getting to heaven. From all we hear of the place and the company we fancy how to keep out is a more interesting study—certainly a more profitable one.

J. BRESE.—The article is very interesting and we will make enquiries and see what can be found out. We should much like to see a translation of Varoslavsky's book as we do not read Russian. Thanks for what you are doing with regard to the *Freethinker*. We know you never miss an opportunity in that direction.

R. C. PROCTOR.—We hear the news with great regret. Please accept our sincere sympathy. We make no charge for the insertion of obituary notices, or for anything bearing on the general work of the movement. Your P.O. has been handed to the Benevolent Fund.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: T. Dunbar, "In Remembrance, P. Walsh," 5s.

H. MARTIN.—Thanks. We are quite well, but a little tired. We don't like the hot weather, which is a bad look-out for the hereafter. In cold weather one can get warm, but when it is hot it is difficult to get cool.

C. BUDGE.—Copies of the *Freethinker* for distribution are being sent you. Hope they will do good.

A. B. MOSS.—Hope you will enjoy your holiday. If you can send us some of the sea breezes please do so.

S. SCOTT.—The instalment of the Taylor article was held over owing to want of space. Pleased to know that you think the *Freethinker* better than ever. Every new reader helps. The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):— One year 15s.; half year, 7. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

We have received a note from the Rev. B. G. Bouchier, of St. Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead, asking us whether we would send a representative to a conference in the Parish Hall, Child's Way, on July 23. The subject announced is "Why the Clergy Fail. How I, as a layman, would run a Church." We replied that we were not specially interested in running a church, either by laymen or by clergymen, but that if Mr. Bouchier and his congregation were genuinely interested in finding out why a growing section of the community were convinced that the Church had outgrown any usefulness it may ever have possessed, we should be pleased to arrange for a speaker.

Just as we are going to press we have a reply to hand from Mr. Bouchier who says that he quite likes the idea and would like to arrange for such a meeting. We can assure Mr. Bouchier that we should be willing to fix up such a meeting at almost any time; we think we could guarantee a good audience, and there should be a quite interesting discussion. It would at any rate be a new move, and a bold move on the part of the clergy to discuss such questions as those raised by Mr. Bouchier would raise them in the estimation of those who disagree with them, even though it failed to bring about agreement on points of belief. We shall hope to hear further from Mr. Bouchier on the matter.

The N.S.S. Mission conducted by Mr. Whitehead in Preston during the past fortnight has created something of a stir in that town and fully warrants an extension of his visit. He will therefore remain in Preston until August 5, speaking nightly on the Sessions Ground at 7.30, with a special "Freethought Against War" Demonstration on Sunday, August 5, at 3 o'clock.

We are asked to announce that owing to the unfavourable weather the last "Ramble" of the Glasgow Branch did not materialize. It will take place to-day (July 29). Those joining the excursion will please meet at Spurs Bridge at 12 o'clock, and will travel to Loch Libo. We hope that this time the weather will be in a better humour.

There is to be a demonstration in Manchester on July 28 of the "No More War Movement." The local Branch of the N.S.S. has been invited to send representatives and has accepted the invitation. The demonstration will be held in Platt Fields, and will be addressed by representative men of the scientific, literary, religious, and political fields. As things are it looks like either no more war or no more civilization. We shall have to choose one way or another.

We have readers in all parts of the world, and those in Victoria (B.C.) may be interested to learn that our old friend, Mr. George Wetherell, has opened a bookshop in Fort Street, where he intends to give Freethought a good show. We hope that the venture will succeed. Liberal minded booksellers perform a very useful, but not always recognized, function in the community.

Why was the human race created? Or, at least, why wasn't something creditable created in its place? God had his opportunity. He could have made a reputation.—*Mark Twain.*

The Devil's Chaplain.

(Continued from page 427.)

CHAPTER TWO.—DEISTIC PROPAGANDA.

ON quitting the Yardley curacy, Taylor accepted the offer, made by his brothers, of a monthly allowance, and retired to the Isle of Man. Here he obtained literary employment and, his mind running to despair and suffering, wrote, among other things, an essay in defence of suicide. The island was owned at this time by the Dukes of Atholl who vested absolute authority in Dr. George Murray, who was Bishop of Soder and Man, 1813-27. This worthy ecclesiastic fell foul of the subject and its treatment and at once summoned the offending writer before him. He informed Taylor that if he did not leave the island immediately he, the Bishop, had power to imprison him for life without being accountable to anyone. Taylor left by the first conveyance he could find and crossed to Whitehaven, where he found himself once more disowned by his family, moneyless, and almost friendless. He obtained a small loan from a friend and sailed for Dublin. Here he was successful in finding employment in the school of a Mr. Jones, at Rathfarnham.

After a time, he officiated in the Rathfarnham Parish Church, and was admired for his learning and eloquence. He made no attempt to disguise his heretical views and Archbishop Magee, discovering his retreat, at once excommunicated him and forbade any inhabitant of Rathfarnham to have any connection with or give shelter to Taylor under pain of suffering a like penalty.

Taylor now decided to propagate his deistic opinions and accordingly wrote and published several deistical tracts under the title of *The Clerical Review*. He rallied round him a number of supporters in Dublin and founded "The Society of Universal Benevolence." He obtained the use of a small theatre for Sunday morning lectures, but on the first Sunday the students of Trinity College wrecked the theatre. His friends compelled him to leave Dublin and subscribed his fare to London. He reached here in the summer of 1824, and on November 24 following, he convened the first meeting of the Christian Evidence Society at the Globe Tavern, Fleet Street. Under the auspices of this society ninety-five discussions were held at different centres in London. These discussions were opened by a reading from a standard work of Christian evidence. Robert Taylor delivered an oration criticizing the chapter read. Questions and discussion followed, and Taylor closed the proceedings by replying to the opposition.

These meetings proved a great success and in the spring of 1826, an old chapel was obtained in Founder's Hall, Lothbury. A more elegant one was purchased the following year in Salter's Hall, Cannon Street. Here Taylor delivered thirty-eight ethical treatises. On Tuesday evenings the discussions of the evidences of the Christian religion were continued at the Arcopagus, 86 Cannon Street, whence an invitation to all members of Protestant congregations to participate was issued. The manifesto containing this invitation challenged all clergymen, ministers, and preachers of the Gospel to come forward and establish, in free and open debate and inquiry, the contrary of the four propositions put forward by Taylor:—

- I. That the Scriptures of the New Testament were not written by the persons whose names they bear.
- II. That they did not appear in the times to which they refer.
- III. That the persons of whom they treat never happened.

In support of these propositions Taylor advanced the following proofs:—

I. That the Scriptures of the N.T., etc.—Because it cannot be shown, by any evidence, that they were "written by the persons whose names they bear"; and because it can be shown, by evidence both external and internal, that they were written by other persons. *By evidence external.* In the formal acts and edicts of Christian Emperors, Bishops and Councils, issued from time to time, for the general alteration, or total renovation of these Scriptures, according to their own caprice. And in the admissions of the most learned Critics and Divines, as to the alterations which these Scriptures have, from time to time, undergone. *By evidence internal.* In the immoral, vicious, and wicked tendency of many passages therein remaining, and by the insertion of others, whose only drift is to enhance the power of Kings and Priests.

II. That they did not appear in the times to which they refer is demonstrable. *By evidence external.* In the express admissions of Ecclesiastical Historians, of their utter inability to show when, or where, or by whom, this collection of writings was first made. And in the admissions of the most learned critics, as to the infinitely suspicious origination of the present received text. *By evidence internal,* in innumerable texts therein contained, betraying a comparatively modern character, referring to circumstances which did not exist till later ages; and quoting other Scriptures which had previously formed the faith of the first Christian churches, but which, without any assignable reason, or alleged authority, have since been rejected.

III. That the persons of whom they treat never existed; because demoniaics, devils, ghosts, angels, hobgoblins, persons who had once been dead, who could walk on water, ride in the air, etc., such as Satan and Jesus Christ, are the persons of whom these Scriptures treat; and that such persons never existed is demonstrable,—1st. From the utter incongruity of such figments with the innumerable laws of sound reason.—2ndly. From the total absence of all historical reference to their existence.—And 3rdly. From innumerable passages of these Scriptures themselves, which fully admit the merely visionary hypostasis of their fabulous hero. (See Luke ix, 29; Mark ix, 2; Luke xxiv, 31.)

IV. That the events which they relate never happened, is demonstrable (further that as a consequence of the preceding proposition) from the fact that some, many, or all these events, had been previously related of the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, and more especially of the Indian idol, Krishna, whose religion, with less alteration than time and translations have made in the Jewish Scriptures, may be traced in every dogma and every ceremony of the Evangelical mythology.

The orthodox reply to this invitation was to arrest Robert Taylor one Saturday evening on a charge of blasphemy. An indictment was obtained at the January Sessions, but the trial was removed from the Old Bailey to the Court of King's Bench, Westminster, through the prosecution obtaining a writ of *certiorari*.

GUY A. ALDRED.

(To be Continued.)

Parsons will always keep up their character, but as it is said there are some animals the ancients knew which we do not, let us hope our posterity will miss the black badger with tri-cornered hat. Who knows but some reviewer of Buffon or Pliny may put an account of the parson in the Appendix? No one will then believe it, any more than we believe in the Phoenix. I think we may class the lawyer in the same natural history of Monsters; a green bag will hold as much as a lawn sleeve. The only difference is that one is fustian and the other flimsy.—Keats.

Debt and Forgiveness.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

IN a previous article, dealing with the failure of the League of Nations to appreciate its main problem, the writer attempted briefly to present some of the arguments of the New Economists in relation to world-industry and world-finance. It was there seen that world-profit and world-debt are practically synonymous terms—are, in fact, retrospective and prospective views of the same thing. It may perhaps be of interest to follow the arguments in their bearing upon the subject of international debts and reparations.

Let us for a moment regard the world as composed only of debtor nations and creditor nations, and consider how reparations can be paid from the one to the other in the form of money.

In the first place, reparations must be paid either out of loans, raised internally or externally, or out of taxation in some form or other, and taxes are ultimately obtained from income whose source is either past profits or new credit-issues—that is to say, loans. So that a debtor nation must pay its reparations out of profits or loans raised.

The profits, it was seen previously, must be obtained competitively out of the world-pool of money in its various forms; and the loans must ultimately be repaid out of more profits similarly obtained if the debtor nations are to remain solvent and continue to pay reparations.

In so far as reparations are paid out of clear money profits they represent trade lost by the creditor nations to the profit-value of the reparations, and in so far as they are paid out of loans the debtor nations must engage in a further struggle to earn profits at their creditors' expense, in order to repay the moneylenders, or ultimately default.

If now we introduce a number of neutral nations, it becomes possible for the debtor nations to earn profits from these, but to the extent to which they do so the creditor nations are barred from earning them, and the final position as between debtors and creditors is substantially the same—namely, that creditor nations cannot take payment of their debts or reparations in money which is clear profit, and dare not take payment in goods, except to the extent of such few raw materials as they neither possess nor control. For to the extent to which they take other goods, unemployment must spread amongst those sections of their own populations who obtain their livelihood by the production of these goods.

Are creditor nations then faced with the position that willy-nilly, they must forgo their reparations? Is the state of affairs such that there is no alternative to forgiveness? Is it that the nations of Christendom, after centuries of preaching benevolence and practising exploitation—of proffering the Bible with one hand and extorting concessions with the other—must now perforce open this Bible, and read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Sermon on the Mount—must, in short, swallow their own medicine? Here, indeed, is a situation at which the old gods must rock with laughter. It would require the pen of a Gibbon adequately to convey the irony of it.

But, faced with it, Christians might claim that the teaching of the Church as to forgiveness of debtors was vindicated as an international ideal. Merely observing for the moment that no ideal qualities can be predicated of a policy to which there is no alternative, let us grant that this teaching provides the only policy which can be safely adopted under the existing economic and financial system. That is merely to say that it is fitted to the conditions which this system has brought about. But, if the system be unsound, the

very fitness of the policy to the conditions brings it under grave suspicion, considered as an ideal.

And that the system is fundamentally unsound there can be no manner of doubt.

We have a production system which, could it be left free simply to produce, is a very efficient one; our troubles arise from the circumstance that we have saddled this production system with the additional job of distributing the wherewithal to buy its product. And when it has to pay wages to machines, in the form of plant charge, in addition to paying wages to individuals, it is obvious that the purchasing-power in the hands of individuals cannot possibly buy the product in respect of which those wages were paid, and this inability increases as the machine-factor in industry increases.

Concurrently with our failure to grasp the dynamics of the economic system there is, firstly, a mental confusion between wealth and the tokens of wealth—between *actual* goods and services and *claims upon* these; and, secondly, a general assumption that, broadly speaking, the only title to purchasing-power lies in individual labour, whether the energy expended is directed to desirable ends or otherwise.

It is to these two causes that we must ascribe the inability of nations to accept reparations in kind. Rectify these defects and forgiveness becomes unnecessary; justice can assume its rightful place.

Then let us examine the Christian doctrine of forgiveness with a view to assessing its worth as a moral ideal.

In the Christian conception, man has strayed into iniquity and broken the laws of God. Thereafter he is a debtor, his soul is forfeit. Nevertheless, God will forgive him—as Heine said, "it is his trade." But the forgiveness is a dispensation of mercy; it must be begged as a favour, it cannot be claimed as a right. Here we have what is essentially the relationship between an oriental despot and his subjects—a slave-relationship. This relationship has always been partially disguised as one of love; but such love can have in it no fine quality of spontaneous affinity, it can but be that obligatory adoration which must have dominated the minds of those old dramatists who staged the command "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" amidst the thunders of Sinai.

As a moral ideal we desire not the cry of the slave for mercy, rather should we insist on the claim of the free man for justice—that justice which envisages mankind as a product of, and a factor in, an infinite series of determining conditions and inevitable consequences, and which is utterly remote from the ladling out of pains and penalties which passes under that name in our Courts to-day.

It would be easily possible, under a modified and enlightened economic and financial system, for nations to receive payment of debts and reparations in goods and services—in real wealth—and a standard of international justice might thereupon be reached enormously in advance of the standard to-day.

Humanity's ideal of justice is a higher one than the Christian ideal of mercy, and our most urgent need at this moment is for a financial mechanism that will so modify our economic system that justice shall have free scope to attain its ideal qualities.

This financial mechanism¹ has been so far designed that it is ready for putting into practice just so soon as our elected representatives realize the necessity for it. Modifications will doubtless be required in the mechanism as experience in its working is gained, but nothing stands in the way of its immediate application but our failure to realize that our present system is an anachronism.

¹ *Economic Democracy, Credit Power and Democracy*, by Major C. H. Douglas (Cecil Palmer).

It is the survival into the machine age of a system which possessed inherent defects even in those far away days when all craft was handicraft, and when tools and processes and co-operation were relatively insignificant factors in real credit.

To-day these defects have assumed such proportions that the system has become a dead-weight of reaction, crippling and stultifying all our efforts to attain real progress, and playing a part in the sphere of material social conditions more devastating than that played by the outworn ideals of Christianity in the sphere of morals.

A. W. COLEMAN.

Why England is "C3."

FEW of us realize, fortunately for our peace of mind, that nowadays with one mouthful of food we take it may entail fatal results! Yet that is quite true. Much of the widespread illness from which the community is at present suffering is directly due to the unclean milk supplies, the supervision of which by the authorities is remarkably lax, in view of the fact that a large percentage of English cows are known to be tuberculous. Dr. Howell, medical officer of Health for Hammersmith, says: "Unclean milk is a prolific source of infection. If people saw the milkers' hands, they would never want to drink milk again!"

And milk is only one of the numerous great risks we incur daily at the family table; almost all of our foods are highly adulterated, many to a most injurious degree. Custard powders are particularly notorious for their absence of the eggs which they are supposed to contain—made up for by questionable substitutes, needless to say. An official return of the Ministry of Health revealed the fact that one sample examined consisted of 100 per cent of starch!

Baking powders also are causing much anxiety. A doctor, lecturing at Bristol, said: "I analysed a sample of baking powder last week, and it contained *more than a quarter of its weight of Plaster of Paris*. This baking powder is on the market, and has been used by wholesale confectioners and bakers in their products."

Not long ago the Marylebone magistrate, Mr. d'Eyncourt, was compelled to condemn as unfit for food 190lb. of bread *contaminated with iodoform* (analogous to chloroform and used as a dressing for sores!) The district medical officer said that its "smell was like creosote."

In his annual report on the medical inspection of Bath school children, Dr. E. H. Milligan declared that the number of badly nourished children was increasing. "White bread and margarine appear to be the staple diet of the school child," he said. "Why on earth millers are allowed to go on making fine white flour and polished rice heaven only knows."

A London newspaper, with commendable enterprise, secured and submitted to a thoroughly scientific bacteriological examination, samples of the nation's milk, purchased in the ordinary way in various large towns. The result was startling and sensational, for not only was the filthy fluid found to be reeking with disease germs and most disgustingly dirty, but in many instances it was condemned by the analysts as "unfit for human consumption!"

Not so very long ago—and right throughout the war period, I believe—the Food "Control" inflicted on a long-suffering public all sorts of unsound foodstuffs, including immense quantities of obnoxious Chinese flour (also unfit for human consumption, in the opinion of medical men), compelling the bakers to mix with this rubbish a certain proportion of their ordinary flour. All over the country much illness ensued,

people breaking out in rashes, unhealthy sores and other skin diseases. The Ministry of Health conveniently ignored all protests and complaints, exposures in the Press, etc., although it has long been known that, with regard to the question of milk supplies, a large percentage of England's cows are tuberculous; and one case was reported, from the Cardiff district, where the cow was so badly affected that it *had to be milked on its side!* Major Ailwyn Smith, a Welsh surgeon, announced this in an address to members of the Cardiff Rotary Club.

The Medical Commissioner of Health for New York has even gone so far as to declare that "Not a single drop of milk sold in London, even in the baby health stations of that city, would be permitted to be sold in New York, even for cooking purposes."

The President of the Meat Traders' Federation, Mr. Adams, declared at Southport that "*at least 50 per cent of the dairyherds of this country were affected by tuberculosis.*" Perhaps that is why boracic acid is added to the milk—but what chance of health and constitution does the English infant get between the two evils?

And apart from the vile concoctions allowed to be sold to the British public in the form of patent "remedies," there is wholesale adulteration and poisoning of food going on. Mr. A. E. Moore, of the Incorporated Vermin Repression Society, says there is no mystery about food poisoning. "The Government," he declared, "allow the promiscuous sale for rat destruction of substances containing typhoid and aertryck—food-poison—bacilli. Ducks, fowls, and pigs eat the stuff placed down for the rats, and through the agency of those animals the germs are communicated to human beings."

Then there is that dirty and dangerous practice in our public-house bars of dipping the glasses into a tank of thick, stale, brown-coloured water, and serving customers with beer in such germ-laden utensils, without any attempt at first wiping them dry. Yet here is something far more unhealthy and offensive: At the Uxbridge Police Court, on November 16, 1921, a publican's daughter frankly admitted that it was *part of her duty* "to collect all waste beer left by customers, take it to the cellar, and put it back in the barrels!"

And who has failed to notice the careless manner in which sugar and other edibles stand uncovered on the tables of the popular restaurants of London and elsewhere? Often the lump sugar, supposed to be white, is black with dirt; and I have even witnessed members of a shop staff pick up pieces scattered about the floor and replace them in the basins!

Add to all this the awful conditions of overcrowding prevalent, the insanitary way families are existing (I will not describe it as "living"), through the deplorable lack of proper housing accommodation; the unwholesome atmosphere of our great cities of smoke and soot, due to burning (and wasting) the wrong kind of coals, and the injury to health and physique is intensified appallingly.

For years I have pointed out, through the Press, that the real remedy for the coal-smoke nuisance is *anthracite*, the smokeless coal, and its use in the domestic grate should be made compulsory here, as it is in large American and Continental cities. As the Americans say, the average Briton washes himself to death, but is a dirty breather—and the purity of the air is most important to health. An adult consumes 2lb. to 3lb. of food and 4lb. to 5lb. of water per day, but he breathes from 30lb. to 50lb. of air per diem, or more than four times the quantity of food and water combined! Fortunately, the authorities are at last waking up to this menace, and a Bill, based on the recommendations of Lord Newton's Committee on

Smoke Abatement, may shortly be introduced to Parliament.

Public authorities are now combining in an effort to check the increasing use of preservatives in food—*so devilishly cunning are these used that by their aid stale fish and meats can be rendered apparently fresh!*—generally boric and salicylic acids, sulphates, and formalin. These are all potent causes of indigestion, of course. Medical officers' reports are startling. In the case of some sausages examined, as much as 110 grains of boric acid to the pound were discovered; in margarine 175 grains were found; and the list of articles adulterated in this way includes ale, bacon, butter, cakes, dripping, cream cheese, dried and liquid eggs, dried fruits, ice cream, jam, meat pies, jellies, lemon squash, lime juice, mince-meat, meat, fish pastes, tripe, vegetables, and wines.

It is over twenty years since the Local Government Board appointed a committee to inquire into this scandalous contamination of foods, but the recommendations—by the best experts—have not yet been carried out!

There is small room for wonder that we have become a "C₃" population in all the disturbing circumstances, and the community urgently needs safeguarding by new legislation. We have an alleged Ministry of "Health," but what that mysterious Department does—except waste an enormous amount of taxpayers money—is not at all clear. Until the powers that be evince some regard for the common decencies of the people, we shall remain a happy-go-lucky, apathetic population (de)graded as "C₃."

A. LEONARD SUMMERS.

Book Chat.

A Note on Freethought and other Magazines.

One of the clearest indications of abundant vitality in any intellectual movement is an urgent impulse to varied expression. It is not, of course, that the movements are dissatisfied with their recognized and accepted organs, but their vigorous life is too full to be contained in one channel. Many of my readers will remember that in the great days of Freethought there were quite a number of monthly reviews, some of them remarkably solid and brilliant. I confess that I know of no greater pleasure than that of turning over the pages of such magazines as *The Liberal* and *Progress* (1879, 1887), into which G. W. Foote put some of his best work, and I cannot imagine any better present for an intelligent and ingenious young Freethinker than a set of *Our Corner*, which Mrs. Besant edited so ably in her unregenerate days before the gospel of theosophy was revealed to her in a vision on her way to the Orient. Afterwards came Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Free Review*, a solid and sometimes brilliant contribution to periodical criticism in various fields of advanced thought. Later still we Freethinkers were instructed, and at times entertained, by the naïve seriousness of Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner's *Reformer*. I do not suppose for a moment that these magazines had any financial success, indeed, I remember thinking that Mr. Robertson was lucky to find a purchaser for his *Review*; what kept them going was just the contagious enthusiasm and personality of the editors. The war, by increasing the cost of production so enormously, has killed off, or rather nipped in the bud, these vigorous and charming off-shoots from the parent-stem of Freethought. The *Adelphi* (monthly, 1s. net) of which two numbers have been issued, is well worth the attention of all Freethinkers who have a tincture of letters. Mr. Murry, the editor, it will be remembered, kept the *Athenæum* going when it was on its last legs, and edited it when it formed the literary section of the *Nation*. Then came the split, and Mr. Murry and his friends purchased the copyright in title of a review called the *Adelphi*. I can confidently recommend the new *Adelphi* to those who set the right sort of value on ideas and imagination in literature. They will be delighted

with Katherine Mansfield (a short story and extracts from a "Journal") and Gorkis' *More Recollections of Tolstoi*. They will also find malicious pleasure in a satire on the modern newspapers' stunts. It is called *The Press Goat*, By MZ4796 :—

The Press Goat was a system originated at the end of the war by a syndicate of the most powerful newspaper owners. They thought that after the mad days of the war the newspaper business would go to pieces. A certain X had a brilliant idea. He persuaded the proprietors to establish a common fund to pay grants to approved persons, who, in return, contracted to commit murders or other specified crimes within a given period, and give the first news of them to the syndicate..... Sometimes a victim was provided in another goat, sometimes he had to find his own. Thus for a £1,000 pounds a man could live luxuriously for a year and would be called upon for a murder.

The comment of the cynical student of the modern Press system is that he is not unprepared to believe even worse things about it, that if it does not stick at mendacity and blackmailing, why should it stick at arranging murders? This may not be the only reason; editors nowadays are not perhaps the ardent idealists they were in the 'eighties, and it may be that the readers also are below the standard of an earlier day.

Those of us who have the magazine habit are forced to turn to the more emancipated monthlies and quarterlies such as Mr. Middleton Murry's *Adelphi* and the *Criterion*, of which I had something to say a little while ago. In one of the numbers of the *Criterion* I was delighted to find an article by Mr. T. S. Eliot on Marie Lloyd, which would have taken G. W. Foote's fancy amazingly for it confirmed his enthusiastic appreciation of that unique mimic artist, and might well have appeared in a magazine under his editorship :—

I have called her (says Mr. Eliot) the expressive figure of the lower classes. There is no such expressive figure for any other class. The middle classes have no such idol; the middle classes are morally corrupt. That is to say, their own life fails to find a Marie Lloyd to express it; nor have they any independent virtues which might give them as a conscious class any dignity. The middle classes, in England as elsewhere, under democracy are morally dependent upon the aristocracy, and the aristocracy are morally in fear of the middle classes, which is gradually absorbing and destroying them. The lower class still exists. In the music-hall comedians they find the expression and dignity of their own lives.

But now to return to the subject with which I began these notes. Although we may look in vain for an English Freethought magazine we have no such difficulty in finding French or Belgian ones. I have before me the June number of an excellent little monthly called *L'Idée Libre* (75 centimes). It contains a lengthy and intelligent article on Remy de Gourmont by Han Ryner. Gourmont is a writer whom every Freethinker ought to read. He is much more of a liberator of thought than M. France. The worst of it is that there is so little of his work translated into English. *A Night in the Luxemburg* was once translated by Mr. Arthur Ransome, but certain injudicious remarks in the preface caused it to be withdrawn, and no other publisher has had the courage to reprint the version. It is a philosophic story in which the Christian religion is treated with an emancipated irony unknown to Voltaire or Renan. There is, however, a volume of Gourmont's essays in English which the curious reader can consult. *Decadence and other Essays on the Culture of Ideas* was published by Grant Richards last year. It will amply repay attention.

Another foreign Freethought magazine I would like to draw attention to is *Homo*, a monthly review of ideas and the arts, edited by M. Jean Maréchal, who is well known to readers of *La Libre Pensée*. It is a Belgian magazine appearing on the 15th of each month (1 franc), and is remarkably cheap in view of the present rate of exchange. In one number (April 15) we find an enlightening essay on the *Rationalism of Renan*, and M. Maréchal's recollections of the personality of the late M. Hins, for whose memory Freethinkers have the profoundest respect.

Those of my readers who have a working knowledge of French cannot do better than subscribe to these reviews. They will help them to many new and interesting points of view both in Freethought and literature. It is curious that relatively poor countries should be so much richer in ideas and idealism than we are. Perhaps it is that they do not measure all things in terms of money.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Poems in Prose.

THE EYES OF THE POOR.

You are anxious to know why I hate you to-day? No doubt it will be less easy for you to understand than for me to explain. For you are the most perfect example of feminine impenetrability I have ever known.

We had spent a long day together, and to me it had seemed short. We had promised each other that we would think the same thoughts, and that our two souls should be one. Not a very original dream, you will say; yet it has been dreamed by all men, it has been realized by none.

In the evening you were tired, and would sit down outside a new café at the corner of a new boulevard, still sprinkled here and there with plaster, but already displaying its incomplete splendour. The café glittered. The very gas burned with the ardour of a first performance, and lighted with its full force the blinding whiteness of the walls, the polished surface of the mirrors, the gilding of rails and cornices; the round-faced pages straining back as they held the hounds in leash, the ladies smiling at the falcons on their wrists, the nymphs, and goddesses carrying fruits, pasties, and game on their heads, the Hebes and Ganymedes offering tiny jars of syrups and parti-coloured cones of ice—the whole of history and mythology assembled to make a paradise for gluttons.

In front of us in the roadway was standing a middle-aged man with a tired face and iron-grey beard, holding by the hand a little boy, and carrying on the other arm a younger child not strong enough to walk. He had taken the nurse's place, and had brought the children out for a walk in the evening. They were all in rags. The three faces were extraordinarily serious, and the six eyes stared blankly at the new café with equal admiration, but different for each of them.

The father's eyes were saying: "How beautiful it is! How beautiful it is! I should think all the riches in the world must have found its way to these walls." The boys were saying: "How beautiful it is! How beautiful it is! But it is a place only for people who are not like us." As for the little child's eyes, they were too fascinated to express anything but stupid and complete joy.

The song-writers tell us that pleasure ennoble the soul and softens the heart. For me that evening the song was the right one. Not only was I touched by this family of eyes, but I felt ashamed of the glasses and decanters before us, far too much for our thirst. I turned to you, dearest, that I might read my own thoughts in you: I gazed into your eyes so strangely sweet, your green eyes that are the home of caprice, your eyes that are subject to our sovereign lady the Moon, and you said to me: "I cannot stand these people with their round, staring eyes. Won't you tell the head waiter to have them sent away?"

So hard is it to understand one another, dearest; so incommunicable is thought even between those who are in love.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

Obituary.

George Proctor, of Gainsborough, aged 66, on July 17, 1923, at Gainsborough.

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

The Secular Burial Service was read by Mr. R. Jones of Sheffield at the Sheffield Crematorium on July 20.—R. C. PROCTOR.

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.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park): Near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Bandstand): 6, Mr. J. J. Darby, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30 and 6.30, Mr. F. Shaller will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (12a Clayton Street East): 3, Members' Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble: Altrincham to Wilmslow.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Mr. F. Carlton, a Lecture.

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