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Views and Opinions.

Old Clothes.

The other day the Archbishop of Canterbury explained to a Kentish audience why clergymen wore their peculiar dress. He admitted that it had neither beauty nor obvious utility. "They do not," he said, "wear that dress because they think it is beautiful or comfortable, but because they find no reason to alter a custom which existed 100 or 150 years ago." We believe that the dress of the higher clergy goes back much farther than a mere 150 years, but the explanation is true in essence. The only reason for the dress of the bishops and archbishops is that it was worn a long time ago. The dress is not comfortable, it is not beautiful, it is not cheerful, it is simply old. And that is a reason that would carry conviction in no other direction save religion. A little more than 150 years ago our ancestors were still wearing knee-breeches and flounced coats with powdered wigs, etc. But no one would think that an adequate reason for walking down Oxford Street to-day in such a get-up. When our forbears wished to go on a journey they went on horseback or in a lumbering stage-coach, but we do not follow their example. We travel more rapidly and with greater ease. In all ways we pride ourselves on being up-to-date. The care of the clergy is to be out-of-date. In secular affairs we look to the future; in religious ones to the past. In secular matters we hope that our children will know more than we know, will do better than we do. In religious affairs the chief anxiety appears to be to take care that they shall not know more than we know, or act more wisely than we do. In religion we consecrate the follies of the past in order to perpetuate its stupidities.

* * *

Religion and the Past.

Now there is nothing religiously unusual in hanging on to the past in dress, language, or ceremonials. The custom is world-wide. Among the most primitive savages we find the medicine man wearing a distinctive dress, which, although it may not be called old-fashioned, is peculiar to his priestly functions. The Jew says his prayers in Hebrew and the Catholic prays to his god in Latin. In the English Church, while the language of the country is used when ad-

ressing the deity, it is in a form such as no one uses nowadays. Some time ago there was a proposal that the Bible should be printed in the vernacular, but the suggestion was ruled out by the orthodox on the ground that it would "desecrate" the sacred volume. It is held, apparently, that in some way God would be displeased if he were spoken to in the same language that one uses when speaking to one's fellows. With other peoples, more primitive in their general civilization, although acquainted with the use of metals, stone or flint knives are used in religious ceremonies, thus carrying us back to a time when metals were unknown. The Jew, again, persists in killing animals for food in a special way, the only reason being that it is the way in which his semi-savage ancestors in biblical times killed their animals. In every way and with every religion there is this constant harking back to older times, a perpetuation of old customs, old dress, old forms of speech, and of necessity old forms of thought. Every parson is a high priest of the out-of-date.

* * *

Religion and Civilization.

The phenomenon is too wide-spread to be accidental, and a very obvious fact in connection therewith is that all religion—so soon as we have advanced beyond the most primitive stages—belongs to the past. Comte was right when he said that the fetishistic age was the creative age of religion. After that there is nothing but elaboration and modification. There is not a civilized race or nation in existence that created the religion it holds. Always it has come down to it from the past, something it has inherited as it has inherited its language, or its dress. More than that, it is almost unthinkable that any civilized people would have elaborated a religion for itself in the absence of the legacy the past has given it. There is nothing that is born of our modern knowledge and thinking that would suggest the existence of a God, still less such fantastic absurdities as a saviour-god, or a miraculous birth, or any of the other stories that go to the make-up of the Christian religion. All these stories and beliefs bear upon their faces the manner of their origin, and the nature of the causes that brought them into existence. Civilization tends to rob these beliefs of all natural reality. It takes from them the support of contemporary life and thought, and their supporters are driven to modify them first in one direction, then in another, and when the pressure gets very severe to reject them altogether. In certain directions this process is now complete, at least so far as large sections of the public are concerned. The belief in an eternal hell, in witchcraft, in miracles, so far as large numbers go, belongs to a closed chapter of religious history. The curious thing is that these same people do not realize that the fate which has overtaken the beliefs rejected await those retained. At all events it is clear from a study of the history of mankind that civilized man does not create his religious beliefs. His work is not to discover gods but to bury them. Civilization is the great deicide.

Life and Environment.

The life of an idea, like that of an organism, depends upon an adjustment to environment. So long as the environment remains constant we see that forms of life alter but little, but any change in the surroundings involves a corresponding change in their structures or functions—or their disappearance. There are, indeed, only two ways in which life can be maintained. One is for the organism, or the belief, to adapt itself to the environment, the other to adapt the environment to the organism, or the idea. In the case of religion in general and Christianity in particular we can see both these methods at work. In the practice of persecution, with its elimination of the heretical and the suppression of mental independence in society at large, we can see the attempt to breed a type of mentality that is favourable to Christian teachings. There is the elimination of one type and the attempted standardization of another. Strong as the Church was, however, it was never quite able to maintain this policy in all its perfection. And so we can see coming into operation with increasing prominence the attempt to cultivate religion by the creation of an artificial environment. The marking off of religion from the rest of life, the use of a special language, a special dress, a special time set apart, all mean the recognition of the truth that when Christian ideas are exposed to the full play of modern life and thought they inevitably wither and decay. The quarrel over religious instruction in the schools is a first-class example of this. Here it is usually overlooked that this topic is quite a modern one. In mediæval times the Church showed no special anxiety to give religious instruction to children. There was no need for it. Then Christian teachings were generally in agreement with the social and intellectual environment, and the environment itself helped to enforce the teaching. But as times changed the gap between the religious teaching and the environment widened. While the Church taught one thing life itself was busy teaching another, and the child became an object of solicitude to the Church because if it were allowed to grow up freely the priest knew that its control by him would be impossible. The demand for a "religious atmosphere," the claim that children must not be allowed to grow up without definite religious instruction, are so many proofs that life itself is fighting religion. If religion is to continue it is driven to attempt the perpetuation of a social environment that has practically disappeared.

* * *

The Conservatism of Religion.

The Archbishop of Canterbury was thus giving utterance to a much deeper truth than he saw when he defended the wearing of a special dress by the clergy by saying that it was carrying on an old custom. Only he might have gone further and have said that religion itself is an old custom, and that the reason he gave for continuing the dress of the clergy is the reason why religion is still with us. It began amid conditions that no longer exist, and it strives to revive these conditions wherever it is possible. That is why in religion we speak a language which belongs to the past, voice ideas that belong to the past, wear a dress that belongs to the past, and place the golden age of religion in the past. If religion is to live the past must be in some way perpetuated, and that is also why religion has in all ages shown itself inimical to advanced and to new ideas. It must fight them or die. The Archbishop and his dress is typical of the place which religion holds in present day society. It can justify its existence only so long as men agree to wrap the living present in the grave clothes of the dead past.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Persecution.

THE Bishop of Gloucester exemplifies his Christian charity by hating the Turks and denouncing their religion. Prior to his elevation to the episcopal bench, Dr. Headlam was in the habit of giving vehement expression to his unlimited contempt of that nation, and soon after the burning of Smyrna he preached a fiery sermon in which he held the Turkish Army responsible for that dreadful calamity, and severely blamed the British Government for showing any tenderness towards such wicked people, and solemnly warned it against making any concession to them. Even as Bishop the same spirit of bitterness is within him and has just found fresh outlet in another discourse preached in Canterbury Cathedral and published in the *Guardian* of July 20. This sermon is entitled "The Near East Persecution," though fully one half of it is devoted to a violent attack on the present Russian Government. He seems to be animated by an ineradicable prejudice against the whole non-Christian world. In his estimation Christendom is vastly superior in every respect to Heathendom. That we do not misrepresent him is amply proved by the following extract:—

There is a Christian world, and there is a non-Christian world. And to us, at any rate, it seems—and everything makes us believe that we are right—that whatever its defects, however inadequately it may present its principles, the Christian world stands for a higher moral, spiritual, and social standpoint than the non-Christian world.

This is a sheer assertion, unsupported by a single authenticated fact. The Bishop utterly ignores the testimonies of such well-known men as Eugene Simon, Professor H. A. Giles, Chester Holcombe, Major Henry Knollys, H. Fielding, and many others, nearly all of whom lived for many years in Heathen lands, about which they have published books of considerable value; and everyone of those named contradicts Dr. Headlam's statement. Curiously enough, his lordship admits that "what has happened in the last few years is that the Christian world has suffered very serious damage," but of course without losing its undoubted superiority.

Dr. Headlam imagines that he establishes the truth of his assertions by his representation of the existing state of things in Russia and Turkey; but in reality he does nothing of the kind. Beginning with Russia he merely repeats already completely exploded lies about that vast country. Believing the horrible stories that were almost daily being retailed in the British Press, both religious and secular, about the savage persecution of Christianity by the Soviet Government, he comes to the conclusion that there is no religious liberty in Soviet Russia. He inserts what he calls "a description of the trial of Archbishop Cieplak by an eye witness"; but he omits to supply us with the name and position of the "eye-witness," or with any evidence of the accuracy of the "description." Now, while these awful tales about the persecution were being systematically circulated in the Press, Russia was periodically visited by responsible and impartial people who, though several of them disapproved of the Soviet Government, agreed in denying the truth of those tales. Among them was Mr. Lansbury, M.P., who, whatever opinion be held of his political views, is generally regarded, even by his enemies, as an honest and truthful man, and his declaration was that there was complete religious freedom in Russia. Later the Rev. Dr. Rushbrooke, a distinguished Baptist divine, paid Russia some visits in the capacity of an official representative of the Baptist cause; and at the last meeting of the British Baptist Union in London,

he was able to testify, though certainly no friend of Atheism, nor probably of a Communistic State, that no religious persecution was conducted by the Russian Government. Last of all we have the testimony of Bishop Blake who, accompanied by Dr. Hartman, went to Russia on a mission on behalf of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, and his report of the mission was published in the *Christian Century* for July 19. Then it appeared in the *British Weekly*, and last week in the *Freethinker*. For the Bishop of Gloucester's benefit it finds a fitting place in this article. Describing his mission Bishop Blake says:—

Fifty thousand Russian priests are doing their work as usual. I attended a service in the Cathedral at Moscow, where more than 10,000 people were present, and there was no interference of any kind whatever. I preached twice in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Petrograd to crowded congregations. Our people have carried on their activities throughout the revolution without any interference from the Government whatever, and their work is more prosperous than ever before. It is the universal testimony that more people are now attending the services of the Church than before the revolution.

A finer testimonial to an anti-Christian and Atheistic Government from a Christian minister cannot be conceived. Bishop Blake saw no sign of religious persecution anywhere, and his people who were there throughout the revolution saw none either. Has Dr. Headlam the audacity to maintain that Mr. Lansbury, Dr. Rushbrooke, and Bishop Blake are telling lies? Even Mr. Spurr, who hates Atheists with perfect hatred, is now forced to admit, though somewhat ungraciously, that "there is far more religious freedom in new Russia than is generally supposed."

Atheists are ardent believers in and zealous advocates of justice and fair play. Being firm friends of liberty they wholly disapprove of every form of persecution. That they desire and work for the destruction of supernatural religion is perfectly true, but their method is to achieve such an end, not by persecution, but by cogent argument, and by doing their utmost to disseminate natural knowledge. But the Bishop of Gloucester seems incapable of being in the least degree just to an Atheistic Government. Referring to the familiar report that "over 1,200 of the archbishops, bishops, and other clergy of the Russian Church have been put to death," he says:—

It is generally stated that this is done on political grounds, but as the teaching or promotion of the Christian religion has been made an offence by the Soviet Government, that is merely an evasion of the question. The political grounds upon which they were condemned was the fact that they taught and preached the Christian religion. Some of them were put to death after trial—or the appearance of a trial—others were simply murdered, often when they were protecting the altars of their churches from gross defilement.

Surely that extract is entirely unworthy of an Anglican prelate. Is the disgraceful statement made on the authority of a nameless eye-witness or witnesses, or is it the offspring of the poisoned imagination of the Bishop himself? The natural inference is that an Atheistic Government, of whatever form it may be, cannot speak the truth, with the result that the avowed grounds upon which it does anything are never the real grounds.

Bishop Headlam apparently believes in the actuality of every evil ascribed to the Soviet Government which in his eyes possesses no redeeming virtues whatever. Everything it does is wrong. Whether the confiscation of all Church property was just or unjust is no concern of this article; but the Bishop knows very well that confiscation of Church property is by no means a new thing in history. When

Henry VIII mounted the throne all cathedrals and churches and monasteries were the property of the Roman Catholic Church; but before he died all of them with all the lands attached to them had been confiscated, and the Church in England had been converted into a Protestant one, with the king as its head instead of the Pope. The Bishop knows further that in consequence of that conversion tens of thousands of people were cruelly put to death, both persecutors and persecuted alike calling themselves children of God and disciples of Christ. Nor were there any Atheists in power during those unspeakably dark and monstrosly cruel periods in the history of England.

Dr. Headlam says that the 121st Article in the Soviet Criminal Code runs as follows:—

The teaching of religion to children and minors in public or private educational establishments and schools is strictly prohibited, and is to be punished, by imprisonment with forced labour for a period not exceeding one year.

Well, there is nothing exceptionally terrible in that, is there? We are in full agreement with the Soviet Government on this vitally important subject. We are deeply convinced that to cram religion down the throats of young children, whether in government day-schools or in Sunday-schools, is a moral crime. All this, alas, is still lawful in this country; but is not the Bishop aware that there exists in our midst a Secular Education League, of which clergymen not a few are members? What this League, as well as the 121st Article in the Russian Criminal Code, aims at is the elimination of religious instruction from the schools.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Concluded.)

God's Gold.

When you kneel in front of a priest always keep your hands in your pockets. —Voltaire.

The tragedy of clerical poverty cannot be exaggerated. —The Bishop of Stepney.

THE inimitable Bishop of London once described the happy workers in the Lord's vineyard as belonging to "a rotten profession." This statement was so near the truth that it upset some of the Bishop's most fervent supporters, and his lordship was constrained to explain later that he had in mind only the material and financial point of view, and was not at that time concerned with other aspects of the case.

The plaint of clerical poverty is, however, largely a matter of heated rhetoric and special pleading. The Bishop of London himself is a bachelor with an income of £200 weekly, a sum sufficient to keep forty working-class families in comparative comfort. In addition, he has a palace and a town-house to live in, and he draws a comfortable sum yearly from the sale of his theological books. Nor do the Bishop's sainted colleagues, like King Nebuchadnezzar, eat grass. The Bench of Bishops receive, between them, £180,700 yearly, with handsome emoluments in the shape of palaces and palatial residences. Some of them are pluralists, and hold more than one position in the Church.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who look after the financial interests of the Church of England, control very large resources. For the year 1921 the receipts amounted to £2,652,000, and the expenditure to £2,391,000. The sum of £261,000 was balance forward. The Church draws vast sums from mining royalties, no less than £300,000 yearly being received from the County of Durham alone. Tithes are still exacted all over the country, and church rates are still levied.

The Church of England possesses property in the City of London alone worth over £2,000,000. Within the narrow confines of the City, excluding the much larger County Council area, £50,000 is spent on ministering to the spiritual needs of a small resident population of caretakers, policemen and their wives, and Jewish people. The latter, who form a large proportion of the total, never trouble the pew-openers. As an index of the work done in the City the summary of confirmations for one year, 1919-20, shows that in the East City sixty-two candidates were confirmed, and in the West City ninety were confirmed. Nor is this all, for recently the Church Authorities decided to sell nineteen derelict City churches in order to use the money so obtained in other directions.

This state of affairs in the capital of the Empire is not a solitary example of reckless expenditure. There is so much waste of man-power in the Church that it may truly be said to be the Church of the clergy rather than that of the people. There are no less than 1,877 parishes with a population under 200; and 4,802 with a population under 500. The total number of the Anglican clergy is about 25,000.

The clergy of the Church of England are not nearer the poverty line than millions of their countrymen. It is absurd to pretend otherwise. In so many parishes the parson with his big and expensive vicarage too often is a miniature reproduction of the bishop in a palace too large for him and for the times. The late Judge Rentoul stated that at the annual banquets given to the clergy at the Mansion House seventy-four bottles of champagne were drunk, costing about £40. He added that he actually saw those figures, and he was told that the amount was every year about the same. It is very appropriate that this same Mansion House should have been the scene of the Bishop of London's shrill complaint of the slow starvation of the wretched clergy.

Working people should be interested to learn that the most hideous of all known costumes—the episcopal war-paint—costs £200, and they may even think that a workman's wife could have stitched together something as good at less cost. Episcopal palaces are not kept up on a few pence. "The stair carpets at Farnham Castle are measured by miles," moaned old Bishop Thorold. "My episcopal income goes in geraniums and pergolas," complained Bishop Stubbs. It is, indeed, a far cry from the legendary fishing nets of the original disciples to Lambeth Palace, with its guard-room, Fulham Palace, with its pleasure grounds, and Farnham Palace, with its deer-park, and Wells, with its moated garden.

The clergy are not starving, and they must sometimes smile behind their dainty lawn-sleeves at the credulity of laymen. Clerical wills reveal a little of the truth. A recent Bishop of Colchester left estate of the value of £60,848. Bishop Creighton, who was as tearful as the Bishop of London concerning the fearful struggles of the clergy, left £29,500. Archbishop Tait left £35,000, and Archbishop Benson a similar sum. The biggest episcopal estate of recent years was that of Bishop Walsham How, who left £72,240. A good second to this was Bishop Tufnell's £65,800. Bishop Phillpott left £60,000, while Archbishop Thomson left £55,000, and Bishop Trollope £50,790. Compared with these sums, the £19,361 of Bishop Goodwin, the £10,000 of Bishop Tozer, and the £12,605 of Bishop Pelham seem quite modest.

The plain, blunt truth is that the Established Church is practically a branch of the Civil Service. It simply absorbs so much money, and so many offices and dignities, and forms a means of livelihood for the sons of the governing class who are unfitted to enter the Army, Navy, or Government service. The clergy, as a body, are a caste apart, an anachronism, in a civilized

community. Their doctrines are simply disguised barbarism. A clerical caste should have no room in a democratic country. The Bishop of London's shrill cry of clerical starvation is pure camouflage. The priests' robes cover the huge imposture of an organized hypocrisy. Pretending to be the good and faithful ministers of the Gospel of Poverty, these petticoated priests are but the agents of the wealthiest Church in the world, and the obedient, humble servants of Plutocracy.

MIMNERMUS.

Luther and the Bible.

Protestantism has made no converts to speak of in Europe since the sixteenth century.....the many millions who in Catholic countries proclaim their indifference to their religion either by neglect or contempt, do not swell the congregations of Protestant Church or Conventicle. Their objections to the Church of Rome are objections equally to all forms of dogmatic and doctrinal Christianity. And so it has come about that the old enemies are becoming friends in the presence of a common foe. Catholics speak tenderly of Protestants as keeping alive a belief in the creeds, and look forward to their return to the sheep-fold; while the old Antichrist, the Scarlet Woman of the Seven Hills, drunk with the blood of the saints, is now treated by Protestantism as an elder sister and a valiant ally in the great warfare with infidelity.—Froude, "Short Studies on Great Subjects," Vol. II, p. 159.

MANY contradictions are to be found in the teachings of Luther, as Catholics are fond of pointing out, and none more than in his teachings regarding the Bible. These contradictions were caused by changed conditions and circumstances. Luther at the commencement of his conflict with Rome took his stand upon the Bible. Upon every occasion that he appeared before Legate or Diet his cry had been: "Show me in the pages of the Bible that I am wrong, and I will submit." In his reply to King Henry VIII, Luther says: "Against all the arts and words of angels, men and devils I set the Scriptures and the Gospel.....Here I take my stand, and here I defy them." Here, Luther declared, he "stood upon his rock," and surveyed Henry VIII twaddling like "a silly fool." Furthermore, he declares that the Bible may be interpreted by everyone, even by the "humble miller's maid, nay by a child of nine if it has the faith."¹

But when the common unlearned people took Luther at his word, and began to interpret the Bible without the aid of priest or Church and other teachers, and sects began to arise, like the Anabaptists and Antisacramentarians, then Luther altered his views, and we have the following:—

The preacher or teacher may indeed read the Bible through and through as much as he chooses, but he will sometimes be right and sometimes be wrong, if there be no one there to judge whether he is doing it well or ill. Thus in order to judge there must be skill or a knowledge of tongues, otherwise it is all to no purpose.

As Grisar remarks:—

Luther's self-contradiction in speaking, first of the great clearness of the Bible, and then of its great obscurity, cannot fail to strike one.²

Moreover many of his opponents among the Catholics and Jews were quite as skilful in "a knowledge of tongues" as Luther was. Luther himself learned Hebrew from a Jew at Rome. In the end he claimed private enlightenment, or inspiration, as to the meaning of the Scriptures, all those disagreeing with him

¹ Grisar, *Luther* Vol. IV, p. 389.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 394.

being either fools or madmen, and in any case heretics:—

Even with the "plain, arid Scripture" and a clear brain it may easily happen, as he says, to a man to fall into danger through the Bible, by looking at it from "his own conceit.".....All heresy seems to him to come from Scripture and to be based on it. There is no heretic, he says in a sermon in 1538, who does not appeal to Scripture; hence it came about that people called the Bible a heresy-book. The "heresy-book" was a favourite topic with him.

Luther further declares:—

"Thus it is true what people say, viz., that Holy Scripture is a heresy-book, i.e., a book that the heretics claim for themselves; there is no other book that they misuse so much as that book, and there has never been a heresy so bad or so gross that it has not sheltered itself behind Scripture." These preachers from among the fanatics, he says, boast of the voice of God and the Spirit, but they are never sent; let them prove by miracles their Divine mission!..... The Spirit alone taught man how to understand the Scriptures, now that man owing to original sin, was quite unable to grasp even the plainest passages. "In it [the Bible] not one word is of so small account as to allow of our understanding it by reason." Only by virtue of the higher light by which he understood Scripture could a man "impartially prove and judge the different spirits and their doctrines."³

It will be seen that Luther had travelled a long way from the standpoint that the Bible could be interpreted by the miller's maid, or a child of nine; and calling upon his opponents to perform miracles in support of their doctrines was rather uncalled for considering that Luther performed no miracles in support of his.

That Luther dealt somewhat freely with the Bible is true, but his criticism was not, like our modern criticism, based upon scientific and learned historical arguments, it was doctrinal. For instance he rejected the Epistle of James, and spoke of it as an "Epistle of Straw," because it says nothing of Christ and Justification by grace. He also took exception to the Epistle of Jude, to Hebrews, and the Book of Revelation. "He cares little whether a writing is apostolic or not," says Grisar, "what he wants to know is whether its contents agree with what he has perceived to be the kernel of Scripture."

With the Old Testament he acted still more freely. In answer to the fanatics he says: "Don't bother us with Moses." And again: "Of what use is it to us that Moses and the Law say: This shalt thou do, this would God have of thee? Yes, good Moses, I know this well and indeed it is indeed quite true. But do you tell me how it is that, unfortunately, I neither keep it nor am able to keep it?"⁴ Of Abraham he says: "Abraham must have had a bad time when he was told to kill Isaac. If he had given me such an order, I should have disputed the point with him." Of Jonah he says: "The story of Jonah is more incredible than any poet's fable. If it were not in the Bible I should laugh at it. He was three days in the belly of a great fish. Why, the fish would have digested him in three hours, and converted him into its own flesh and blood. The miracle of the Red Sea was nothing to this. The sequel, too, is so foolish—when he is released he begins to rave and expostulate, and make himself miserable about a gourd. It is a great mystery."⁵ Of the building of Solomon's Temple, as related in the first book of Kings, he says:—

We shall have much trouble over this horrid building. I should like to know where the seventy or

eighty thousand carpenters with their axes came from. Did the whole land ever hold so many inhabitants? It is a queer business. Maybe the Jews corrupted the text. They cannot have had any carts but must have carried everything. I wish I had done with the book. I am a very unwilling builder at Solomon's Temple.⁶

The translation of the book of Job gave still more trouble. Luther tells us that Melancthon, Aurogallus, and himself, "were sometimes barely able to get through three lines in four days." In a letter to Spalatin he says:—

Job gives us much trouble owing to the exceptional grandeur of his style; he seems as reluctant to submit to our translation as to the consolations of his friends; he refuses to march and wants to remain for ever seated on his own dunghill; it almost seems as though the writer of the book had wished to make a translation impossible.⁷

Some of Luther's profanities equal, if they do not excel, any of those for which the late Mr. Gott was imprisoned. When the old question was asked why God made man at all if he knew that he would fall? Luther answered that:—

A great Lord must have vessels of dishonour in his house as well as vessels of honour. There were fellows who thought when they had heard a sermon or two, that they knew everything and had swallowed the Holy Ghost feathers and all.⁸

Replying to Carlstadt, who said he could not conceive how the body of Christ could reduce itself into so small a compass in the Sacrament, "Luther," says Michelet, "makes use of this almost incredibly daring buffoonery. 'You think, perhaps, that Christ, having drunk too much at supper, muddled his disciples with unnecessary words.'"⁹

To Luther, God seems to have been nothing more than a magnified man. He speaks of him in this fashion:—

God has now and then a fine game of cards, all of them court cards, kings, princes, and so on. He deals them out, and plays them against one another—the Pope against Luther, for instance; and by and by, as children do when they've been fighting at beggar my neighbour for a long time without results, gets tired, and throws the cards under the table.

Which may be very good fun for God, but not very consoling for us.

W. MANN.

TRANSLATING THE BIBLE.

Apropos of Eskimo, I once heard a missionary describe the extraordinary difficulty he had found in translating the Bible into Eskimo. It was useless to talk of corn or wine to a people who did not know even what they meant, so he had to use equivalents within their powers of comprehension. Thus, in the Eskimo version of the Scriptures the miracle of Cana of Galilee is described as turning the water into *blubber*; the eighth verse of the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of St. Peter ran: "Your adversary the Devil as a roaring *Polar Bear* walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." In the same way, "a land flowing with milk and honey" became "a land flowing with whale's blubber"; and throughout the New Testament the word "Lamb" had to be translated "little seal" as the nearest possible equivalent. The missionary added that his converts had the lowest opinion of Jonah for not having utilized his exceptional opportunities by killing and eating the whale.—From "The Days Before Yesterday," by Lord Frederick Hamilton.

⁶ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, p. 501.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 497.

⁸ Cited by Froude, *Contemporary Review*, July, 1883.

⁹ Michelet, *Life of Luther*, pp. 160-161.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 395-6. ⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 455.

⁵ Froude, *Contemporary Review*, July, 1883.

About the Holy Bible.

III.

(Concluded from page 503.)

Is it not wonderful that the creator of all worlds, infinite in power and wisdom, could not hold his own against the gods of wood and stone? Is it not strange that after he had appeared to his chosen people, delivered them from slavery, fed them by miracles, opened the sea for a path, led them by cloud and fire, and overthrown their pursuers, they still preferred a calf of their own making? Is it not beyond belief that this God, by statutes and commandments, by punishments and penalties, by rewards and promises, by wonders and plagues, by earthquakes and pestilence, could not in the least civilize the Jews—could not get them beyond a point where they deserved killing? What shall we think of a God who gave his entire time for forty years to the work of converting three millions of people, and succeeded in getting only two men, and not a single woman, decent enough to enter the promised land? Was there ever in the history of man so detestible an administration of public affairs? Is it possible that God sold his children to the king of Mesopotamia; that he sold them to Jabin, king of Canaan, to the Philistines, and to the children of Ammon? Is it possible that an angel of the Lord devoured unleavened cakes and broth with fire that came out of the end of a stick as he sat under an oak-tree?⁵⁷ Can it be true that God made known his will by making dew fall on wool without wetting the ground around it?⁵⁸ Do you really believe that men who lap water like a dog make the best soldiers?⁵⁹ Do you think that a man could hold a lamp in his left hand, a trumpet in his right hand, blow his trumpet, shout "the sword of the Lord and Gideon," and break pitchers at the same time?⁶⁰

Read the story of Jephthah and his daughter, and then tell me what you think of a father who would sacrifice his daughter to God, and what you think of a God who would receive such a sacrifice. This one story should be enough to make every tender and loving father hold this book in utter abhorrence. Is it necessary, in order to be saved, that one must believe that an angel of God appeared unto Manoah in the absence of her husband; that this angel afterwards went up in a flame of fire; that as a result of this visit a child was born whose strength was in his hair?—a child that made beehives of lions, incendiaries of foxes, and had a wife that wept seven days to get the answer to his riddle? Will the wrath of God abide for ever upon a man for doubting the story that Samson killed a thousand men with a new jawbone? Is there enough in the Bible to save a soul with this story left out? Is hell hungry for those who deny that water gushed from a "hollow place" in a dry bone? Is it evidence of a new heart to believe that one man turned over a house so large that over three thousand people were on the roof? For my part, I cannot believe these things, and if my salvation depends upon my credulity I am as good as damned already. I cannot believe that the Philistines took back the ark with a present of five gold mice, and that thereupon God relented.⁶¹ I cannot believe that God killed fifty thousand men for looking into a box.⁶² It seems incredible, after all the Jews had done, after all their wars and victories, even when Saul was king, that there was not among them one smith who could make a sword or spear, and that they were compelled to go to the Philistines to sharpen every ploughshare, coulter, and mattock.⁶³ Can you believe that God said to Saul, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling?" Can you believe that because Saul took the king alive after killing every other man, woman, and child, the ogre called Jehovah was displeased and made up his mind to hurl Saul from the throne and give his place to another?⁶⁴ I cannot believe that the Philistines all ran away because one of their number was killed

with a stone. I cannot justify the conduct of Abigail, the wife of Nabal, who took presents to David. David hardly did right when he said to this woman, "I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person." It could hardly have been chance that made Nabal so deathly sick next morning and killed him in ten days. All this looks wrong, especially as David married his widow before poor Nabal was fairly cold.⁶⁵

Notwithstanding all I have heard of Katie King, I cannot believe that a witch at Endor materialized the ghost of Samuel and caused it to appear with a cloak on.⁶⁶ I cannot believe that God tempted David to take the census, and then gave him his choice of three punishments: First, seven years of famine; second, flying three months before their enemies; third, a pestilence of three days; that David chose the pestilence, and that God destroyed seventy thousand men.⁶⁷ Why should God kill the people for what David did? Is it a sin to be counted? Can anything more brutally hellish be conceived? Why should man waste prayers upon such a God?

Must we admit that Elijah was fed by ravens; that they brought him bread and flesh every morning and evening? Must we believe that this same prophet could create meal and oil, and induce a departed soul to come back and take up its residence once more in the body? That he could get rain by praying for it; that he could cause fire to burn up a sacrifice and altar, together with twelve barrels of water?⁶⁸ Can we believe that an angel of the Lord turned cook and prepared two suppers in one night for Elijah, and that the prophet ate enough to last him forty days and forty nights?⁶⁹ Is it true that when a captain with fifty men went after Elijah, this prophet caused fire to come down from heaven and consume them all? Should God allow such wretches to manage his fire? Is it true that Elijah consumed another captain with fifty men in the same way?⁷⁰ Is it a fact that a river divided because the water was struck with a cloak? Did a man actually go to heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire, or was he carried to Paradise by a whirlwind? Must we believe in order to be good and tender fathers and mothers, that because some "little children" mocked at an old man with a bald head, God—the same God who said, "suffer little children to come unto me"—sent two she-bears out of the wood and tare forty-two of these babes? Think of the mothers that watched and waited for their children. Think of the wailing when these mangled ones were found, when they were brought back and pressed to the breasts of weeping women. What an amiable gentleman Mr. Elisha must have been.⁷¹

It is hard to believe that a prophet by lying on a dead body could make it sneeze seven times;⁷² or that being dipped seven times in the Jordan could cure the leprosy.⁷³ Would a merciful God curse children, and children's children yet unborn, with leprosy for a father's fault?⁷⁴ Is it possible to make iron float in water?⁷⁵ Is it reasonable to say that when a corpse touched another corpse it came to life?⁷⁶ Is it a sign that a man wants to commit a crime because he refuses to believe that a king had a boil and that God caused the sun to go backward in heaven so that the shadow on a sun-dial went back ten degrees as a sign that the aforesaid would get well?⁷⁷ Is it true that this globe turned backward, that its motion was reversed as a sign to a Jewish king? If it did not, this story is false, and that part of the Bible is not true even if it is inspired.

R. G. INGERSOLL.

Humanity alone founds charitable institutions; religion only adds a chapel and a priest—that is to say, an additional expense.—*Rivarol*.

How is it? Is man only a mistake of God? Or is God only a mistake of man?—*Nietzsche*.

⁵⁷ Judges vi, 21.⁵⁸ Judges vii, 5.⁵⁹ 1 Sam. vi, 4.⁶⁰ 1 Sam. xiii, 19, 20.⁵⁸ Judges vi, 37.⁵⁹ Judges vii, 20.⁶⁰ 1 Sam. vi, 19.⁶¹ 1 Sam. xv.⁶⁵ 1 Sam. xxv.⁶⁶ 2 Sam. xxiv.⁶⁷ 1 Kings xix.⁶⁸ 2 Kings ii.⁶⁹ 2 Kings v.⁷⁰ 2 Kings vi, 6.⁷¹ 2 Kings xx, 1-11.⁶⁵ 1 Sam. xxviii.⁶⁶ 1 Kings xviii.⁶⁷ 2 Kings i.⁶⁸ 2 Kings iv.⁶⁹ 2 Kings v, 27.⁷⁰ 2 Kings xiii, 21.

Acid Drops.

We frequently come across people who, although claiming to be Freethinkers, are always ready to tell us that our militant anti-religious propaganda has no reason for its existence. In the time of Bradlaugh and Foote, we are assured, the National Secular Society had its work cut out of it; it was a force to be reckoned with. But now the raging beast of religion has become a tame domestic animal, and we may go about our business without fear of its claws. Such people are really playing the Church's game. The priests of all religions are a wily set, they lie low and say nothing, just waiting for us to slacken our energies. They are adepts in underground methods of propaganda. If they cannot reach the men they get hold of the women whose emotions are so often at a loose end. In this they show more wisdom than we English Freethinkers, who unlike the Continental Freethinkers, seem content to ignore the other sex.

If we but take the trouble to look abroad we find that the forces of religious intolerance and reaction have been in full play since the war. In Alsace-Lorraine, as our contemporary *L'Antireligieux* notes, the Catholics and their priests are strenuously opposing the diffusion of the French language under the pretext that it represents "irreligion, Paganism, immorality, and Freethought." These sometime sturdy patriots are now out-and-out partisans of the language which they used to tell us was the Devil's own tongue. They are openly anti-French; they have the newspaper press in their hands, and have formed an association of fathers and mothers of Christian families for the preservation of the Christian school.

In Alsace, remarks our contemporary, the Catholics intrigue and organize. In Italy, they triumph, for Mussolini is their man. He cannot govern without them, and is continually making concessions to the popular party (the Catholics). To curry favour with the mob of priests and their followers he attacks the Freemasons and excludes them from the *Fascisti*. The Church applauds his open intolerance of criticism, his frank admission that if he cannot rule with the assent of the people, he will use the regiments by which he is surrounded, for religion has always been the sworn enemy of liberty and democratic government.

It is incredibly stupid to think the militant propaganda of Freethought is not as much needed now as it was forty or fifty years ago. The forces of ignorance, superstition and intolerance are just as active and just as strong. Slackness on our part and some unforeseen combination of circumstances might land us where Italy is to-day, away back in the barbarous Middle Age. Even here in England, the home of liberal ideas, there are now not a few who would welcome a dual dictatorship of wealth and religion. But if we get a Mussolini—we shall deserve him.

Lies told by Christians about Freethinkers are the hardest of all lies to kill—probably because the majority of Christians look upon lying for the glory of God to be quite excusable. At any rate a correspondent sends us a religious leaflet, published by Pickering and Inglis, a religious leaflet, published by Pickering and Inglis, Bothwell Street, Glasgow, in which the good old Christian lies about the death-beds of Voltaire and Paine (spelled Payne) are repeated. Paine is made to cry out, "Jesus Christ, help me," and Voltaire, "I am lost! Oh, that I had never been born!" The historian of the future will probably reflect upon the curious morality of Christianity as one of the most wonderful things that comes under his survey.

The Rev. Harris E. Kirk, D.D., of Baltimore, U.S.A., is now in London, preaching in Westminster Congregational Church. Like most clergymen, Dr. Kirk is guilty of deliberately misrepresenting his opponents. In a sermon published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of August 9 he avers that "Modern Rationalism as a rule is not

rationalism at all, but impressionism." Only a man who is grossly ignorant of Rationalism could frame such a definition of it, because there is not an atom of truth in it.

Dr. Kirk asserts that Rationalism "usually starts with assumptions, involves itself in phrases and slogans, and then proceeds quite illogically to set up a series of affirmations and denials which only require the criticism of sound reason to effectually set them aside." All this is peculiarly applicable to theology, and not at all to Secularism. In theology the existence of God, Christ, the spiritual world, and the human soul is nothing but an assumption of blind faith which only requires the criticism of sound reason to effectually set it aside. Atheism rests not upon assumptions but upon facts which completely invalidate the assumptions of theology.

The facts upon which Rationalism, Freethought, or Secularism are built are the facts of evolution, and in particular the facts of human history. These facts go far towards a demonstration of the non-existence of a Supreme Being and of the inutility and untruth of the Christian religion. Preachers dare not look these facts in the face, because familiarity with them, as Newman well knew, inevitably leads to Atheism.

Dean Swift's fantastic "Gulliver's Travels" has been filmed. After this, some of the Bible yarns should be easy for the cinema producers, especially the "Rib Story," and "Noah's Ark."

The London County Council has rejected a proposal to place a memorial tablet on the house at Putney for so long occupied by the poet Swinburne. This is as curious as the refusal of the Westminster Abbey authorities to find room for the poet's remains. They pretended that the Abbey was full, and later found room for an arch-deacon's wife's burial.

Clergymen, it seems, are very absent-minded. At a recent Synod over 350 of them attended at St. Alban's Cathedral. Many left articles behind which are still unclaimed, and others carried off things which did not belong to them. The clergy were not so absent-minded during the late war. They preferred to hold the girls' hands to doing the fighting.

The Rev. C. F. Aked, once of Liverpool, now of the United States, is paying England a visit, and his report on the conditions of religion, do not quite square with some of the reports we have about a revival of religion on the other side of the Atlantic. Not many of us will be surprised, as the same cry is continually being sent up by certain clergymen here. With the churches becoming emptier and emptier, and the average man or woman showing less interest in Christianity, we have a number of "faked" revivals, and many assertions that the growing generation is taking renewed interest in religious questions, etc. Presumably these tales have their uses, and we are suspicious that they are often intended to serve as a spur to the wealthier members of the Churches to be more generous in their giving. And when there is any particular end to be gained the clergy are never very scrupulous as to the means they employ.

According to Dr. Aked "Hundreds of Churches in America have frankly abandoned Sunday evening service, and hundreds of others make use of sensational moving pictures to attract people to the services." He also says that "the present religious disinclination is a tragedy, and I see no signs of a religious revival." The word "tragedy" must be taken with reservations. It is probably a tragedy from the point of view of the parson who sees his audiences steadily dwindling and his hold on the people crumbling, but from the point of view of the community it may well be taken as a sign of health. When one thinks of what the average parson is, and then reflects on what a public would be like that depended

upon the parson for intellectual and moral guidance, there seems little to mourn over the fact that men and women are learning to do without the priest.

There is one, unconsciously, humorous touch in Dr. Aked's remarks. He says that in some towns in the States the competition between the churches and the cinemas is so keen that the latter are endeavouring to obtain State aid to secure fair play for their industry. That is giving the Churches a taste of their own medicine. The Christian Church has always been ready to invoke the State to prevent competition; it will be interesting to note how it relishes this policy used against it.

Randall, by Divine Providence Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of all England, says that "the Cross of Christ is a fact." As the fragments scattered through European churches would make a cross as high as the Nelson Column, we feel inclined to agree with the Archbishop.

The Rev. T. H. Jackson, of Fulwell, sold ice-cream from a barrow for church funds. We wonder if the church choir sang: "From Greenland's Icy Mountains."

Professor Arthur S. Peake, D.D., is one of the greatest and most popular Methodist theologians, and in the *Christian World Pulpit* for July 5 there appeared a sermon by him entitled "The God Whose Name is 'I Will Be,'" based on Exodus iii, 14. Curiously enough, Dr. Peake assumes the historicity of the alleged dialogue between Jehovah and Moses as related in that remarkable chapter; but no assumption could be more laughably puerile. As a matter of fact, it is a dialogue which is not one whit more historical than are the twenty-five dialogues between the Deities so eloquently described by Lucian. Jehovah was fully as fabulous a being as Osiris, Adonis, or Mithra, and was looked upon by primitive Jews, and by the majority in much later times, as one of many.

To Dr. Peake, however, Jehovah and the Christian God are identical. God's most suggestive name is not, "I am that I am," but "I will be what I will be," which means, according to this famous divine, that nobody can tell what God will be to-morrow, or that what he was in the past is no reliable indication of what he will be in the future. What we know is that judging by the deeds ascribed to him in the Old Testament, Jehovah's past was anything but creditable to him, many of them being quite impossible except to a monster.

In the opinion of some of our friends Miss Sybil Thorndike is the only intelligent actress we have. With our comparative ignorance of the modern stage we are prepared to accept this judgment as probably correct although we understand that there are critics who hold that her big reputation is largely based on what Dr. Johnson called "repercussion by idiots." However that may be, it is not as an actress or a theatrical temperament that we are bringing her name into our "Acid Drops," but as what the *New Age* calls "the best known Anglo-Catholic in the world." Of course she may be all her friends say of her—the only English actress, and (perhaps) the best known Anglo-Catholic in Europe, or even the world—but we are afraid that her opinions on religion are not commensurate with her theatrical and Anglo-Catholic reputation. They are amusingly vague. We are told that they explain the tremendous appeal which the Anglo-Catholic Congress is having for women at home and overseas, although really they explain nothing. They are merely evidence of the impulse to emotional satisfaction which all of us experience whether we are Atheists or Anglo-Catholics. "The Church," says Miss Thorndike, "sweeps the majority of people clean out of the world." We doubt it, for most people contrive to serve two masters pretty comfortably. And then the Church is not the only way of escape from the world; there is the way of escape held out to us by poetry or music.

When the Catholic is weary with the world's intolerable burden his emotional tension is relieved by the symbolic drama of the Mass. In similar circumstances the Freethinker will turn with the certainty of an equal emotional satisfaction to "Antigone" or "King Lear."

Miss Thorndike is intelligent enough to see that the stage must not connect itself with any particular mode of thought. Its business is not to point out the way; it presents life exactly as the artist sees it. But she tells us it "raises a question to which the Church claims to supply the answer." Unfortunately we are not told in what way the Church answers, or claims to answer the questions raised by Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Shaw, by the Stratford Shakespeare and Euripides. All it does is to present its united vision of life in a symbolic form which appeals to pure emotion. Miss Thorndike says:—

I myself find in the sacraments of the Anglo-Catholic Church something of the same satisfaction of emotion that I have experienced in *The Trojan Women*, and in certain of Shaw's play's, such as *Candida* and *Major Barbara*. You are at a tremendous height of living and you want something to satisfy it, something purely symbolical, just like the Welsh preachers who get so emotional that they don't know what to do with themselves, and they go on and on until they have no means of expressing their emotional experience, so they come to a perfectly formal monotone. There are some emotions which can only be satisfied by a formal design or symbol. The Church has the greatest symbol.

The drama of the Mass is a splendid piece of stage craft when the actors are good and the setting impressive. It moves even those who stand far outside the Church. It may be just this side of Catholicism that has attracted the artist in Miss Thorndike, for the intellectual appeal seems not to have reached her. She is a bundle of vague emotions, well meaning certainly, but hopelessly inconsequent. For her, Mr. Shaw is the most religious of human beings, a sort of Atheistic saint we suppose, and Mr. Galsworthy is equally religious because he has a "tremendous feeling in life." That is always the worst of being tremendously in earnest; some muddle-headed person is sure to come along and tell you that you are fundamentally religious. It is only the Voltairian sceptic like Anatole France or Rémy de Gourmont who escapes this sort of insult. Irony is the most effective weapon we can use in our warfare with foolishness and superstition.

Miss Thorndike seems to be an Anglo-Catholic Agnostic, if that is possible. She avers "that we do not know what God is, whether a Force or whether He be." If she doesn't know where she is on the most important point, she may be a great actress, a world-famous Anglo-Catholic, but she is certainly not a credit to the enterprising Jesuits who converted her.

The Rev. A. C. Dixon, D.D., is an American Baptist minister, who for a few years occupied the pulpit of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, and gained notoriety as a violent calumniator of dead Freethinkers, such as Paine and Ingersoll. Dr. Dixon belongs to the theological faction known in America as Fundamentalists, who are extreme literalists. He attended the meetings of the Baptist World Alliance recently held at Stockholm, and dissatisfied with the "Declaration of Principles" submitted by Dr. Mullins, obtained permission to move the following resolution: "We confess our faith in the whole Christ in the whole Bible for the whole world," to which he wanted to speak for thirty minutes. Dr. Dixon was evidently anxious to tie the Baptist World Alliance down to his own narrow and obsolete theology. The time allowed him was fifteen minutes, and because he exceeded that limit the audience howled him down, and his silly resolution, defended by a sillier speech, on being put was lost. To-day he is a man with a grievance, and in a letter to the *Christian World* of August 9 he declares that if he had had fair play his resolution "would have been adopted by a large majority." After all, even the Churches are slowly abandoning the extreme positions which they once occupied.

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.

J. BREEZE.—Thanks for note. Papers have been sent.

C. F. M.—We know the edition of Shelley's poems, but it is such a villainously small print one would suspect the publishers had some design on the eyesight of the nation.

A. HOGAN.—Pleased to hear of the successful meeting on Newcastle Town Moor, addressed by yourself, Mr. Carlton, and Mr. Atkinson. We have very pleasant recollections of the Town Moor as a meeting place. Owing to the holidays we presume, your letter did not reach us till after we had gone to press with last week's issue.

M. BEESLEY.—We should like to see something done on the lines you suggest. If we could only get properly hold of the children we should be doing permanent good. And our aim, after all, is only to keep the young mind free from the prejudices which theological instruction imparts. Our only desire is to give the child a chance.

L. MASON.—Thanks for suggestion. We shall be issuing something of the kind shortly. We hope that your attempt to get new readers will prove successful.

A. W. COLEMAN.—A sub-editor would, as you say, take some of the burden off our shoulders, but that is an expense we cannot afford at present. It is no light task to run a weekly paper single-handed week after week, writing articles, paragraphs, and looking after the general management in addition to other writings and lecturing, but we see no way out of it at present. We are always hoping for better and easier times. Perhaps they will come one day—or we may have done something to bring them nearer for our successor. Our chief trouble at the moment is the heat.

V. C. (S. Africa).—Next week.

C. H. Groun.—Your letter of September last came to hand. Acknowledgment must have been overlooked. Present held over till next month.

R. ALLEN (N.Z.).—Received. Acknowledgment held over for the moment.

A. L. SUMNERS.—Your letter only reached us as we are finishing off this week's paper—too late for the present issue.

TAL WILLIAMS.—We are very sorry to hear of the death of Mrs. Laughlarn. We have a very lively recollection of the lady, and share your appreciation of both her mental abilities and her character. Please give our sincere sympathy to Mr. Laughlarn. Mr. Cohen is writing you on the other matter.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

It is one of the paradoxes of the intellectual life that the tough-minded Freethinker should have a warm place in his heart for tales of mystery and imagination. It is quite wrong to suppose that he makes cold and common-sense the measure of all things. He is aware that even the impossible is true if the artist has the power to compel us to see it from his angle of vision. He finds more of pleasure (and of profit if he must be utilitarian) in one of Mr. Algernon Blackwood's weird stories or in Mr. E. V. Odles thought-provoking fantasy, *The Clockwork Man*, than in the whole range of analytico-realistic fiction from Stendhal to Henry James.

It was with this sort of prepossession, a natural good-will towards imaginative fiction, that we sat down to enjoy a little story which has just reached us. Its title is: *The White Witch*, by Elizabeth Lechmere (Blackburn Scott-Cowell, rs. net). Frankly we were disappointed. Miss Lechmere calls her little story a "weird romance," and the adjective may satisfy her unsophisticated imagination, but that is not the one we should apply to it. The epithet ingenuous or naïve would fit it better. She seems to have got hold of the semi-scientific notion of ancestral memory, and inscribes as an epigraph for her story a sentence by Carus of the *Monist*. "We may compare the hemispheres of the brain to a globe upon the wall of which all the memories of former experiences are written." As amateurs of the romantically weird we have nothing against the hypothesis. All we expect is that the writer will give us the genuine æsthetic thrill, and of course will not let us down. We can imagine what Mr. Blackwood or our friend Mr. E. V. Odle would have made of it. But Miss Lechmere, we are sorry to say, has not mastered the alphabet of her art. She cannot make us feel that what is happening to Karl Roden and his lady love. The white witch really happened to them in another existence. Karl Roden, who is the son of an American multi-millionaire, and a portrait painter of genius, buys the ancestral castle of Heidelberg. Among the pictures he finds one that is dim with age. It is apparently the portrait of a beautiful woman. He has it cleaned by an expert, and immediately recognizes it as his own work. "Why, man," exclaims the incredulous expert, "it is the work of a great artist. I can find no name, but there is an hieroglyphic mark, and it is dated 1000 B.C. in the most ancient Greek figures." Of course it is not impossible. Roden may have been a portrait painter in an earlier avatar, but we doubt if he would have dated his picture 1000 B.C. This is a bit too steep even for those of us who willingly grant the utmost licence to the imagination. The lady of the portrait turns out to be the only daughter of the House of Heidelberg, who just escapes burning at the hands of Russian peasants. She is rescued at the last moment by Karl, whom, of course, she marries. Whether they made a practice of burning witches in Greece at the early date of 1000 B.C. is more than we are able to say with our present knowledge of history; but Miss Lechmere, at any rate, has not the power of imagination to compel us to believe in her notion of ancestral memory. We recommend her to study diligently the writers we have mentioned to whom she will be wise if she adds Poe and Hawthorne. She has a certain talent, but it will come to nothing if it is not sedulously cultivated and carefully trained.

We see that the *Clarion*, which was announced to suspend publication this week, is to continue in existence for a few weeks longer. But the present proprietors announce that they cannot bear the burden longer, and suggest that the readers shall take it over. We know from hard experience what it means to carry on an unpopular paper in these times, and we are not surprised that some shrink from the burden. There is also something in the suggestion that the readers should take over the paper and make themselves responsible. We do not know but that we should be relieved if our own readers felt that way inclined with regard to the *Freethinker*.

Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other.—Bacon.

We have had now nine very strenuous years, and should not mind spreading the worry and work over a larger area.

An effort is being made to open a Branch of the National Secular Society in Bolton. Some names have already been brought together, and there must be many more in the district who would like to lend a hand. Those interested will please write to Mr. H. Prince, 152a Deansgate, Bolton.

Despite the intervention of Jupiter Pluvius, Mr. Whitehead had a fairly successful week at Nelson, resulting in the formation of a New Branch of the N.S.S. On Monday 13 he commenced at Birmingham where the local "saints" have made extensive preparations and are looking forward to a good fortnight. A little bird has whispered to us that the new Birmingham secretary, Mr. John Collier, has even given up his holiday to devote time to the mission. Such unselfish devotion will, we hope, reap a reward in a great increase of members and local interest in "Bum."

Mr. Samuel Holman, with the help of a few local friends, has for some weeks been holding open-air meetings on Sunday evenings on the Common at Pontypridd. There are good audiences gathered each week and there seems to be plenty of questioning and discussion. This is all to the good, and we see the meetings are to be continued every Sunday for the present. The meetings commence at 7.30, and to-day (August 19) Mr. Holman will speak on "The Bible and Morality." Local friends will please note.

Spiritualism and the Bible.

I HAVE often wondered who reads the interminable number of books on the Bible which pour unceasingly from the Press. Take up any number of the *Times Literary Supplement* and you will see lists given every week of works on Theology and Religion which would take a year's hard reading to get through. Who does read them? Who buys them? Do their writers really imagine the world is gasping for works which prove without the shadow of a doubt that the fish which swallowed Jonah was *not* a whale? Is it seriously maintained that the progress of civilization is advanced or retarded according to the way in which an obscure text or narrative in the Gospels is interpreted? Yet thousands of clerical writers and religious laymen every day feel absolutely compelled to add their quatum of theological works, the greater part of which are foredoomed to utter oblivion, and it seems incredible that any market could possibly be found for them.

There are a few clearly defined modes of Biblical interpretation. The first is to take the Bible as a repository of unerring historical truths, the view of Jews (except the New Testament), Roman and Anglo-Catholics, Kensitites, and most of the other Evangelical sects, and lots of "unorthodox" people who only differ from each other on the actual meaning of such words as "soul," "hell," "Sabbath," etc. Among these believers are of course many who are not keen on defending every incident in the Bible, but who take it "as a whole" to be the Truth with a capital T. But the number of dissenters is very large, and a discussion between a Christadelphian, a Swedenborgian and a Johanna Southcotean, provides that humorous touch so keenly felt by such profound thinkers as the Bishop of London and Mr. Hillaire Belloc as not conducting to the dignity of either religion or God. The "freak" interpretations are so numerous that it is quite impossible to touch upon them all here. The most interesting is perhaps that

contained in the mystic work of the Jews called the *Zohar*. This is really an extraordinary book carefully hidden from the greater number of Jews for two reasons. The first is that one must be an indisputably "holy" man to be permitted to study it, and the second is that, as it is founded on a fantastic scheme of numbers based on the fact that Hebrew letters do duty as figures, the literal interpretation of Moses' "history" falls to the ground and the untutored must not be allowed to learn such rank heterodoxy. Then we have quite a large body of men and women who can prove from the Bible that the British people are really the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, and their works are monuments of misplaced insanity.

The Freethought criticism ranges from the more or less mildly critical, such as Paine's, to the iconoclastic Edwin Johnson's, who in his *Rise of Christendom* claims that Judaism and Christianity are merely offshoots of a heretical Mohammedan sect not older than about A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1200. Then there are the Astro-Myth theories of Dupuis, Volney and Robert Taylor, the allegorical meanings given by "John Mysticus" in *The Gospel Drama*, and the phallic explanations so convincingly put forward by Mr. J. B. Hannay in a series of works that deserve far more publicity than they have—all these, and a host of other works to prove that the Bible is a handbook of temperance, of vegetarianism, of socialism, of everything you like, are but a fraction of the enormous amount of literature the Bible has produced.

It cannot therefore be a matter of surprise to find that at last a book should be published which proves beyond all cavil that the Bible is spiritualism from beginning to end, and that if it were not for spiritualism there would be no Bible. In *Ancient Lights*, by Mrs. St. Clair Stobart (the Lady of the Black Horse in Serbia at the beginning of the war), you will find the position put with the same amusing dogmatism which is so characteristic, say, of Mr. Chesterton defending the Roman Catholic Church against Atheists and Jews—his two *bêtes noires*. Mrs. Stobart does not in the least think it is her duty to defend either the historical accuracy of the Bible or even the truth of Spiritualism; her book has no message for those "who do not believe and who do not wish to believe in the existence of spirit, soul, or an after life, for those who reject both God and the Devil." Well, this is a pity, because one would have thought these were the very people she would be out to convert. It is clear, however, that she prefers railing at the Church for not admitting that she and the Spiritualists are right, and she obviously feels quite certain that she has at last solved the Biblical enigma. If she is right nearly the whole of the output of Biblical literature of 2000 years is so much scrap paper. All the vast commentaries and dictionaries of the Bible represent so much wasted effort. The only book in the world so far published that has got the truth is *Ancient Lights*. It is a wonderful position, and Mrs. Stobart ought to join those other gifted ladies, Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, Madame Blavatsky, and Johanna Southcote, who were all just as sure they also had found the truth.

It is impossible in a short review of this kind to take up the position Mrs. Stobart maintains, point by point. In reading her book I could have filled each page with a dozen query marks. Let me just touch upon one or two questions raised by the eminent authoress.

First, Mrs. Stobart is quite sure that when the Bible talks about the "Lord" or "God," or the "Lord God," it does not always mean what religious people mean by these words. The "Lord" may just as easily mean an evil spirit or a good spirit as the "God of the Universe." This is very convenient and disposes once for all of those wicked Freethinkers who have maintained in the past that the "Lord God" of

the Bible was not particularly moral in our sense of the word. For example, Mrs. Stobart tells us that Moses was a great psychic—I think second only to Jesus, who was the greatest, of course, that ever lived—but “it came to pass by the way in the inn the Lord met him and sought to kill him.” Says Mrs. Stobart:—

“The Lord” here was evidently some evil spirit who wanted to frustrate the undertaking—an interesting proof that “the Lord” who manifested was not always the same good Lord, or spirit. The situation was only saved by Zipporah, Moses’ wife, who knew by instinct the right though drastic thing to do, and did it. She offered a peculiar sacrifice to propitiate the murderous spirit.....

Why a brutal circumcision should be required by an evil spirit as a propitiation we are not told, but Mrs. Stobart is quite sure about it. At all events, she has saved the true “Lord’s” reputation, and that is something. Not that she is always so considerate of His reputation, for in commenting on Numbers xi, 25, she tells us: “The fact being that, as even the Lord had to learn, prophets or psychics cannot be produced to order.” It is quite refreshing to learn that after all the Lord can’t do everything and has to learn something—though I suspect if the late Mr. J. W. Gott had said it, Mr. Justice Avory would have fainted on the bench at the terrible blasphemy.

Mrs. Stobart, of course, believes in *everything* in the Bible—nothing is too silly or outrageous. There is even a complete chapter on Balaam and the Ass, and her explanation is just as feasible as any other, though she keeps on repeating, if you do not accept her interpretation, then the Bible is so much gibberish and would never have been written. If she were told seriously that her own exposition was just as much gibberish she would be greatly astonished, but the way she coolly adopts the whole of spiritualistic terminology and claims it is all in the Bible is delightful. Do you want ectoplasm?

The pillar of cloud by day was an ectoplasm screen to hide the materialized and radiant spirit from the multitude, and the pillar of fire by night was a psychic light, displayed by the spirit, which would be visible at night.

In an appendix Mr. Hewat McKenzie tells us that “ectoplasm can be drawn from the physical organism in a vaporous state”—but it would be quite useless to ask Mrs. Stobart to tell us from whom the ectoplasm forming the pillar of cloud by day was drawn and the quantity required. It must have been some cloud, anyhow.

Materialization? Well, you have it in Saul and the Witch of Endor. Dematerialization? Elijah, of course. Levitation? The stone at the mouth of the tomb of Jesus. And so on. It is all in the Bible, and the Bible cannot be explained any other way. Moreover we at last get to know what sinning against the Holy Ghost is. If you refuse to do what has been psychically revealed to you by the *true* Lord—that is sinning against the Holy Ghost and the “true” God will never forgive that. It’s death every time. Even if you ascribe to Beelzebub the power that comes from the Holy of Holies—that’s sinning against the Holy Ghost, and nothing can save you from the death penalty. As we are told on page 152 of *Ancient Lights*, “It is an arresting thought that if, as psychic students believe, these ‘things of the spirit’ be true, then a large portion of mankind are under this condemnation of sinning and blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, which is trying to make His voice heard amongst us.”

As I have been guilty of this awful sin more times than I can count, I ought to be in a blue funk, but, alas, I do not feel any more afraid now than when

Mr. Chesterton’s co-religionists threaten me with eternal damnation in a roaring Hell of Eternal Fire. What a pity that so many of these people who bring forward a new explanation of the Bible will threaten such dire penalties if we do not hearken to them.

The way Mrs. Stobart settles Bible difficulties commands my devout admiration. Jesus tempted in the wilderness was of course the work of the chief Devil himself—it is delightful to come across a genuine believer in the king of demons these blatant materialistic days. It would have been *infra dig* for a lesser spirit trying out Jesus. Cursing the fig tree is a “refreshing incident which shows how human Jesus was.” It was an “act of benevolence” on Christ’s part. The tree had deceived him and other travellers, and “would, if allowed to persist, deceive more in days to come; therefore, as it was barren, it was probably kinder to destroy it.” This is a gem, but I regret to say that Mrs. Stobart does not know how the withering was accomplished, though what is called “casting the evil eye” is probably the explanation. Quite probably. As for the signs that follow “them that believe,” Mrs. Stobart believes them all. The laws controlling the taking up of serpents and drinking deadly things are “well known to occultists.” Yet the way in which spiritualists and Christians generally shy at drinking a gallon of strong nitric or sulphuric acid as a midday thirst quencher, to say nothing of refusing a pound or so of strychnine in sandwiches for lunch, is remarkable. What marvellous supernatural feats we are always reading about but somehow never see performed! I wonder why?

Now without wasting any more time on *Ancient Lights*, I will guarantee to prove the Truth of any story in the *Arabian Nights* or in *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, or in the *Koran*, or in any of the Hindu Sacred Books precisely as Mrs. Stobart has proved the Truth of the Bible. I have no need to deal with the authenticity of the story of Aladdin for instance, nor the “facts” of Spiritualism. All I need do is to proceed exactly as Mrs. Stobart does—for example, insist that the Wicked Magician must have been psychic, otherwise he would never have known of the Wonderful Lamp, and if you disbelieve this, I merely retort that the story would never have been written had he *not* been a psychic. As for the lamp, I insist that it must have had a Genius to go with it, otherwise the story would be simply gibberish. Aladdin’s Lamp without the power of ordering what you liked and getting it, is unthinkable, and ectoplasm, levitation, materialization, clairvoyance, and clairaudience, fully explain all the other difficulties in Aladdin. And remember I assume the existence of Aladdin just as Mrs. Stobart assumes the existence of Adam, Abraham, Balaam and his Ass, and all the other Bible heroes. And if you do manage to point out something I cannot explain, well, that is *your* funeral, not mine. Why, I am sure one could prove the absolute Truth of *Pickwick* with Mrs. Stobart’s dashing methods.

Ancient Lights has a preface and an introduction by Sir Oliver Lodge, and they prove shining examples of an eminent man of science floundering about hopelessly in an honest attempt to recommend the book. He anticipates “some fault-finding,” but trusts the great minds of the Church will “recognize the earnestness of the writer.” Schiller has well said, “Mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens” (Against stupidity the very gods themselves contend in vain), and the more I read books to explain the Bible the more I am convinced of the truth of the famous aphorism.

There is one request I should like to make Mrs. Stobart, if she ever sees this review. It is to get together Mr. John Kensit, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, and Canon Barnes, and have a heart-to-heart discussion

with them as to what the Bible really does mean. Would I be permitted to be a respectful listener?

The fight is not over yet. And it will not be so long as people refuse to see that the Bible is simply a collection of fairy tales and folk-lore, written for the most part by credulous frightened poets and prophets. Whatever truth there may be in the historical parts is a matter for investigation, but that is all. We refuse to allow the rest to dominate our lives, and we come out into the fresh open-air of Freethought and Secularism with thankful hearts to our brave pioneers. What a relief!

H. CUTNER.

A Change of Heart.

MR. LLOYD GEORGE, addressing a meeting recently at Westbourne Park Chapel, London, told his audience that the real trouble of the world was the enthroning of force above right. He said they might set up Leagues of Nations, pass Conciliation Acts at home and establish Hague Tribunals abroad, but none of these would be respected until there was a new temper in the world, and that temper had to be created by religion.

Other authorities tell us that the real trouble of the world—the root of all our economic and social difficulties—is greed. They point out that everyone is striving to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market—to make profits in excess of all that is fair or reasonable. The labourer restricts his output in order to sell the smallest possible amount of his labour for the largest wage he can obtain; the capitalist corners commodities whenever possible, and raises prices; and finally those pillars of financial integrity, the Directors of the Bank of England, scenting a rising demand for their own particular speciality—financial credit—put up the Bank Rate. And they proceed to argue that the system under which we live would yield satisfactory results if only greed could be eliminated from human nature.

Other authorities again, discover the roots of the world's troubles in various factors and conditions, but there appears to be substantial agreement amongst them all that a "change of heart" is necessary. They leave us to infer that the "scheme of things" is on the whole blameless, and only man is vile.

Before accepting either diagnosis or remedy, let us glance at that part of the scheme of things which most intimately concerns us all—the part which embraces the production and distribution of the goods and services which we all need—and note the part played by greed, or profiteering, in it.

It is, of course, perfectly true that one of the outstanding defects of the capitalist system is that the general level of prices rises approximately to absorb any increase in effective demand unaccompanied by goods upon the market, assuming always competition to buy and not to sell. In other words, profits are taken upon every possible occasion. But profits, even excess profits, are distributed as purchasing power to individuals or groups, and form effective demand for goods and services.

Now the New Economists, as a result of their recognition of the dynamic nature of the problems of industry and finance, have demonstrated that the purchasing-power distributed by the productive system is only able to buy a fraction of the product when marketed. The difference has to be made up by credit—distributed as wages and salaries—issued in respect of future production. Broadly speaking, goods on the market can only be sold as a result of making more goods. These goods will be of two varieties, ultimate products and capital goods. The

capital goods enable larger quantities of ultimate products to be made with the same amount of human labour. Now the ultimate consumer does not purchase capital goods, but the prices of these capital goods go into the prices of ultimate products, and although each unit of these may be cheapened the total price of the ultimate products can only be liquidated by a larger draft on future production.

And when we realize that this draft is largely, and increasingly, taking the form of bank loans, it becomes plain that industry as a whole only develops and expands by heaping up debt.

If now we could imagine a state of affairs in which everyone was engaged in some form of industrial service, and remunerated by the industrial system in the form of wages and salaries, and all goods and services sold at actual cost; so that the only profits were individual profits and were represented by the excess of the wage or salary over the cost of living at an agreed standard, how would this affect the economic difficulties just presented?

Granted that selling at cost would prevent prices rising as at present, due to inflation, the main defect—that production can only be purchased by credit issued in respect of future production—remains untouched. The draft on the future must continue to increase with every advance in applied technology. The end is the same even if profiteering is eliminated; either goods accumulate beyond all possibility of purchase at home, or individuals must drop out of industry and lose purchasing-power. In the first event, the struggle to sell the surplus goods abroad leads to international friction, and finally war; in the second, the widespread unemployment leads to revolution at home.

No amount of altruism and benevolence amongst business men can stave off the inevitable crash. The present system of charging all costs into prices, and of granting to banking institutions the monopoly of the issue of new money in the form of loans to industry, necessarily results in piling higher and ever higher the load of debt under which industry is even now collapsing.

And when we realize that every transaction of our ordinary daily business only serves to hasten the arrival of this collapse, we see that, just so long as the ordinary business man has no option but to do his business under the existing system of credit issue and price fixing, so long will all his efforts to improve the relations between the various parties in industry, and to advance the welfare of his fellow industrialists, be stultified and baulked at every turn.

No change in the moral relationship between either the captains of industry or the rank and file can possibly render a radically defective system operative at all, continuously, much less operative with efficiency.

The appeals for goodwill, brotherliness, unselfishness—the new temper—only serve to draw the discussion of the maladies of this civilization right away from those underlying causes which it should be the object of all discussion to bring to light.

Furthermore, the parliamentary debates on capitalism versus socialism only serve to draw a red-herring across the trail. It is quite probable that the administration of industry under a socialist régime might effect beneficial results in many directions; the question turns largely on the general culture-stage of the community—on such factors as its habits and traditions, its class and caste distinctions, its capacity for co-operation and its ideals of social service.

But whether industry is administered by private individuals for private profit, or by State-appointed officials for the benefit of the State, is a matter of relative unimportance so long as the banker remains

in control of credit-issue and the producer in control of price-fixing, *under the existing rules.*

No change of heart, no new temper, whether brought about by religious or other means, is going to have any appreciable effect on the ultimate issue.

But the demand for this change of heart, this new temper, does vitally affect the whole community in this respect, that it concentrates attention on side-issues, that it diverts the energy of social reformers into unproductive channels and blind alleys.

But what do the advocates of this remedy understand by a change of heart? Do they mean a new orientation of the individual to the moral interpretations of conduct? Will such change of heart make it plain that, for instance, to corner a commodity and prohibit its sale except upon terms profitable to a trade combine is no whit more reprehensible than to commandeer the first day of the week and prohibit its use except upon terms favourable to a religious vested interest? Will it, for instance, draw any ultimate distinction between obtaining money from the public by the sale of shares on the strength of an imaginative prospectus and extorting "fire-insurance" premiums from the faithful on the strength of imaginary "mansions in the skies?" One fears not.

No. The heart may be left for the present to deal with its proper function of the circulation of the blood. What is required is some hard thinking that will produce a change in our cerebral tissue, and make us realize the necessity for modifying determining conditions in our environment as a prelude to raising the moral standard of human nature.

A. W. COLEMAN.

More Truth Than Poetry.

AN ancient blue law advocate

Whose face was long and thin
Admonished me to shun the fate
Reserved for those who sin:
"My son," said he, "give heed to me,
Or else relinquish hope;
I'll tell you just how things are run
Within that realm beyond the sun;
I have authentic dope.

"Suspicious spies are everywhere
Within the gates of pearl;
No boy can ever manage there
To whisper to a girl;
Sports and divorce are barred, of course,
And let me make this clear:
In heaven they draw strict racial lines,
And hung on all the walls are signs
That read: 'No laughter here!'

"A fence extends across the place,
Dividing sex from sex;
No man may see a woman's face
Or gaze at legs or necks;
The curfew rings at 8, and things
Are then made tight and fast;
On Sundays every man must wear
A dark expression of despair
And grieve about his past."

"How can you wish," I asked, "to go
To such a dismal spot?"
"Your question goes," he said, "to show
Your lack of serious thought;
For can't you see that it must be
A heavenly thing to dwell
Where pleasure's something no one knows.
Except when thinking of the woes
Of those who writhe in hell?"

Detroit Times.

S. E. KISER.

Correspondence.

"THE PASSING OF THE SOUL."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The ability and erudition of Mr. W. Mann fail to make him convincing on the subject of "The Passing of the Soul" (*Freethinker*, August 5.) He tells us that the "vast majority" of Spiritualists are ex-Christians, *i.e.*, Freethinkers. Could Spiritualism have any higher credential?

He next says that what these Freethinkers "wanted" was assurance of future life. What is the evidence? There is evidence enough telling against it. Conan Doyle, for instance, was not itching for anything other than Materialism, which quite satisfied him until the case for Spiritualism proved overwhelming.

Mr. Mann goes on to say: "If people became convinced that there was no future life, nothing to gain and nothing to fear after death, they would not care twopence whether there is a God or not." Does this imply that, if *not* convinced, people will be apt to hanker after a God? Well, Mr. Mann states that "many of the Spiritualists" are, just what? Of the don't-care-twopence type; while even "those who have a God scarcely ever mention him, and never allow him to intrude into the séance room."

Mr. Mann proceeds: "It is the marrow-bone of immortality that the believer is "after all the time." Which believer? He quotes Cannon Liddon. But no one disputes the *Christian* bias in favour of immortality. The whole point is whether Freethinkers investigating Spiritualism have been and are biased when conducting *their* enquiries.

Mr. Mann quotes Mr. Archibald Weir, M.A., and others in proof that some (including many of the salt of the earth) hope death ends all. He does *not* quote any remarks in an opposite vein by persons investigating Spiritualism. He might, perhaps, find one or two somewhere. He might also come across notes of alarm and dismay at many of the things which Spiritualism proves. Such things are not all, like the marrow-bone, "very soothing."

Mr. Mann says science will "explode this myth of a future life. It has done so already for multitudes, and the coming generation will follow." The only evidence he adduces is the aforesaid distaste for immortality exhibited by many truly good people. If it be that Mr. Mann regards this as a piece of really *scientific* evidence that there is no future life, how does he regard the evidence of a desire *for* immortality? Orthodox believers have for generations adduced this desire as proof (or as at least one confirmatory proof) of the thing they do desire. And will not "the coming generation follow" *them* too? Is all this really science? If the wish is father to the thought, is the thought presumptively the mother of the truth?

O. D.

ROME AND THE CHILD.

SIR,—Allow me to point out that in "Rome or Atheism" (*The Freethinker*, August 12, 1923, p. 509) Mr. Leonard Mason states: ".....the Catholic child is deprived of the confidence and advice of his parents, as it is forbidden to speak of what occurs in the confessional."

It should be observed that the seal of confession is binding *on the priest*, but *not* on the "penitent." Most boys, however, will refrain from speaking to their parents on certain matters, but that has nothing to do with their religion.

Holland.

W. POWER.

THE DOUGLAS SCHEME.

SIR,—The letter of Mr. W. W. Kensett in your issue of August 12 raises questions which it would be impossible to deal with adequately in your correspondence columns. The somewhat elusive conception of the payment of wages to machines would involve a technical discussion more appropriate to such a magazine as, for instance, *Credit-Power*, published monthly from 70 High Holborn, W.C.

There is no occasion, however, for your correspondent to search so far afield as Mars. May I, instead, refer him firstly to *Economic Democracy*, by Major Douglas, page

61, which deals in detail with the cost-accounting accompanying the manufacture of a steel bolt and nut; and secondly to *The Control and Distribution of Production*, by the same author, Chapter I, and particularly pages 16 and 17.

I am sorry that Mr. Kensett has misunderstood me in regard to "claims upon goods." By "claims upon goods" I meant money.

Your second correspondent raises the interesting question of the effect upon a community of the receipt of reparations in goods and services. This, and the nearly-related question of the effect of greatly increased leisure consequent upon efficient production and distribution, merits treatment at greater length than is possible in a letter. For the moment it may suffice to say that the Douglas scheme anticipates the gradual replacement of the wage, to a considerable extent, by the dividend.

I fear I must join issue with Mr. Barnard as regards what he terms the quintessence of the Douglas scheme. Douglas most certainly does not propose to issue credit or currency *ad lib.*, nor does he propose to keep prices steady, and he advocates the socialization of credit as distinct from the nationalization of banking.

If one may attempt the difficult and perhaps dangerous task of condensing into a few words the essence of the Douglas scheme, I would suggest the following summary:—

A government may safely, and should, issue financial credit to the limit of its real credit, and should distribute this amongst consumers by a financial mechanism which would *regulate*—not *fix*—prices at a fraction of cost, which fraction would be virtually a measure of our economic behaviour, good, bad or indifferent, as a community.

I agree that Norman Angell is right—war cannot be made to pay. Under the Douglas scheme, successful war would be by far the most expensive and ruinous method of obtaining real wealth that any community could possibly devise.

Under the existing system, war is the only customer which can absorb the whole community into the productive system under conditions of full time and high wages.

A. W. COLEMAN.

In Trafalgar Square.

A SLENDER column reaching to the sky,
Bears one of England's heroes far on high,
While at its foot four lions stand in stone,
To ward the platform of his pillar'd throne.

These beasts and this great hero, with blind eyes,
Calm, unseeing, untroubled by surmise,
Hear not the voice of the unnumbered's plaint,
But, passive, heed the voice like any saint.

And they, whose lives are lighted by no glory,
Cry to the passing world their uncouth story.
See twisted hands and gaunt unhallowed features!
Whence came these sordid, ill-begotten creatures?

They are the numberless, out of the sod,
Formed by some hurried, careless fingered God;
Starved, clumsy-gestured, they mouth out their wrong,
And in our ears it sounds like some old song.

Whose words we know so well, we do not heed,
But hear in passing, while we pass at speed.
We could not stay to hear, for these are bound,
And we are free, a difference profound.

They are not as we are, but an offence,
As we to them—for us there's no defence;
We simply will not listen—will not right,
These heroes are but ugly to our sight!

They do not speak our speech, nor courteous send
A mannered man of our kind, to pretend
That all is well with them, save that we ought
To do all that we promised when they fought.

A slender column reaching to the sky,
Bears one of England's heroes far on high,
While at its foot four lions stand in stone,
To ward the platform of his pillar'd throne.

G. E. FUSSELL.

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.

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INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No meeting.

OUTDOOR.

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

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

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 6—10, Mr. Saphin, Mr. Blady; also every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 6—10. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.

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

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

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission: 11, Piddock Street, off Lodge Road; 6.30, Bull Ring. Monday, August 20, Corner of Alum Rock Road and Anthony Road; Tuesday, August 21, Barton's Arms, Aston; Wednesday, August 22, Golden Hillock Road (Park Gates); Thursday, August 23, Washwood Heath (Fox and Goose); Friday, August 24, Six Ways, Erdington. Each evening at 7.30.

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