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Views and Opinions.

Charlie Chaplin and the Church.

There is a Congregational minister at Hull named J. G. Patton. There is nothing remarkable in either of these circumstances, but this particular servant of the Lord has distinguished himself by an attack on no less a person than Charlie Chaplin. Mr. Patton heard that in the new film play Charlie actually dressed himself up as a clergyman, conducted a mock service in a chapel, and delivered a burlesque sermon on David and Goliath. So Mr. Patton hied him to the cinema to see for himself, and trusted to the Lord to forgive him for indulging in such a dissipated evening. It was all in the service of the Lord. And, having seen, Mr. Patton unburdened himself in the columns of the *Hull Daily Mail*, demanding the suppression of the film as an outrage on the religious feelings of the community. It is, he says, "a scandalous breach of public irreverence"—that is a bit mixed, but one sees what he means. One can only marvel that Mr. Patton did not arm himself with a brick and hurl it at "the breach of public irreverence." That he did not do so must be put to the credit of religion. The influence of Christianity is notorious in developing self-control, charity towards others, and readiness to sink one's own feelings, and never was this power more clearly demonstrated than on the evening when Mr. Patton went to see "The Pilgrim." A comedian, playing the part of an ex-convict, posing as a minister, with a deacon who carries a bottle of whisky in his pocket, a parson who is concerned with the collection and who wishes to help himself to the contents of the boxes! It is monstrous. Mr. Patton knows, as we all know, that no minister who was known to help himself to the contents of the collection boxes would be permitted to officiate; no deacon who was known to carry a bottle of whisky to church would be permitted to carry out his office. Inmates of prison cells do not officiate in the pulpit. Inmates of the pulpit do sometimes spend a season in the cells, but that is quite another matter. No wonder Mr. Patton demands "The Pilgrim" to be suppressed.

* * *

Religion and the Public.

Let us take Mr. Patton seriously and seriatim. Religion, he says, is the most private of all human

emotions and principles. With our opinion of religion we agree that it ought to be quite a private matter, but is it so? Does Mr. Patton really believe it is? We doubt it. As a matter of fact there is nothing that is so made the subject of public parade as is religion. It is professed in public, and it is practised in public. Willy-nilly every member of the public is made to pay towards its support. It enters into public ceremonials. Christianity is proclaimed as the religion of the State, it is established in the schools, in Parliament; even the salary paid the king is dependent upon his profession of a particular form of Christian belief. How, then, can religion be a private matter? Mr. Patton and his kind insist on almost every occasion that religion is the most public of matters, and yet when people are found laughing at a presentation of a religious service and at a man dressed in clerical garb, he whines for the protection of the authorities against such an outrage because religion is a private matter! If it is a private matter the authorities can have no concern with it one way or another. An attack upon the character or the honesty of a religious person is one thing and that might well come within the purview of the law of libel, but an attack upon religious beliefs—that is quite another question. What Mr. Patton says in substance is that when it is a matter of training the children of the country to become customers of the clergy, when it is a question of getting public appointments, or of asking for public subscriptions, then religion is a public matter. But when it is a question of presenting religious forms and ceremonies in such a way that people will laugh at them, then religion is a private matter and the law should step in. That is quite a Christian attitude, quite in accordance with the cowardice that to-day goes hand in hand with professional Christianity.

* * *

The Test of Ridicule.

What shocks Mr. Patton is that a church service is made the subject of a burlesque. He says:—

The crux is the introduction of a religious service.....Congregation, pulpit, Bible, choir, and comedian-jail-bird pastor, all are present. A hymn is announced after a shocking scene of the pastor mistaking the church for a police court and attempting to on the Bible to take the oath before the jury (the choir). A sacred tune is played by the cinema organ. The pastor makes a feint to light a cigarette in the pulpit. There is a sermon on an Old Testament theme expressed by the preacher in the grotesque and exaggerated style of the notorious comedian.

One can picture Mr. Patton almost choking with indignation at the sight of such scenes, and yet one ventures to ask, why not? Suppose it had been a picture—there are such about—depicting an Atheist who is guilty of all sorts of foul wrong as a consequence of not believing in Mr. Patton's fetish. Would Mr. Patton have seen anything reasonable if an Atheist had been foolish enough to demand that the film should be suppressed? We fancy not. What is Christianity, anyway, that no one should be permitted to bring it into ridicule, if they feel so inclined, and why

should not a church and a "sacred" hymn be used by a comedian if he feels minded to do so? Mr. Patton would probably reply that Christians do not like it. To them these things are not subjects of a comedy. That may be quite true, but between not liking to do a thing oneself and preventing other people doing it who do like it there is a world of difference. I do not like to see grown up men and women making themselves—to me—ridiculous by offering up prayers for fine weather or for a good harvest, or going through the cannibalistic ceremony of eating the body and drinking the blood of Jesus Christ. But I should never dream of asking the law to suppress these people or prevent these practices. I have not the slightest liking for the mixture of savage beliefs, barbaric practices, and mediæval intolerances that make up Mr. Patton's religion, but I hope I should be among the first to protest against anyone interfering with Mr. Patton in this matter. Why cannot Mr. Patton forget his religion for a while and behave like a decent, sensible, and liberal-minded human being?

* * *

The Taste of Christians.

Mr. Patton supplies an answer to this question. He says, "Religion in itself, its worship, its subjects, and its divine things.....by all the standards of taste, has been considered as lying outside the regions of burlesque and parody. Even the law has been invoked to secure this immunity in the interests of public sobriety." By all the standards of taste! What Mr. Patton means is by Christian standards of taste—and even then so far only as it concerns their own beliefs. When do they hesitate to ridicule the beliefs of non-Christians? And who invokes the law to step in and protect Christians from the laughter of others? Christians. The poor man is so wrapped in his mantle of Christian egotism that he appears to imagine there is no taste outside Christian taste, and none that needs to be bothered about but those inside his own Church. Of course, the law has been invoked to prevent people saying what they thought about Christianity in the way that seemed best to the one who was saying it. That is something that Mr. Patton ought to be ashamed of, not make it a boast. And as an argument, how contemptible! A Christian makes a law that lays down *his* standard of taste as an arbitrary rule for other people. And when the others object, he replies that it has been settled by all the standards of taste, and there is no more to be said about the matter. It takes a Christian preacher to maintain a grave face when stating so ridiculous a proposition. There is and should be a standard of taste in discussing matters of public interest. But that is not what the Christian wants. What he desires is to establish and enforce a rule of controversy that applies to his own religion alone. It is another example of Christian egotism in action.

* * *

The Fatality of Laughter.

There is a world of significance in one remark of Mr. Patton's. It is the only one that does show common-sense, and we are afraid it is accidental. He says, "There are some things that it is fatal to laugh at." It is true he adds fatal for society, but that does not alter a bit what he has in mind. It is fatal to the belief in God, the divinity of Jesus, miracles, parsons, and church services, etc., to laugh at them. So says Mr. Patton, and I for one cordially agree with him. But a wiser man might ask himself the further question, "Why is laughter fatal to some things?" The love of man for a maid has been as much a source of laughter as anything in the world. It is not fatal to the love of man and woman. Married life is a prolific cause of laughter and jokes, so are many other of the

dearest and the most valuable things man has, and for which he will give the last drop of his heart's blood. Where the thing is valued for itself, and where there are no painfully tragical memories associated therewith, no one objects to it being made the subject of laughter, or even of burlesque. In these connections laughter is veritably akin to tears. Why, then is laughter fatal to Mr. Patton's religious beliefs? Why is he afraid that God Almighty will be unable to stand up against the burlesque of Charlie Chaplin? Well, it appears to me the reason that makes all shams, absurdities, and frauds, dread ridicule and burlesque. These break through the stereotyped solemnity which is the greatest protection an absurdity can have. Laughter is free, democratic, it brings men and things down to a common level. Solemnity is exclusive, it sets up walls between people, and keeps them from seeing each other as they really are. I agree with Mr. Patton that to some things laughter is fatal. It will prove fatal to the absurdities that are enshrined in his religion, and Mr. Patton knows it. You cannot believe to-day in miracles or in the power of prayer if you once give play to your imagination and your sense or humour. All the clergy are as well aware of this as we are. That is why they implore us to be solemn. There is nothing like the laughter of the wise for clearing away the folly of fools, or exposing the trickery of knaves.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Christians and Secularists at the Graveside.

I HAVE been at the graveside many thousands of times in company with St. Paul, and I have been several hundred times in company with Epicurus and his celebrated follower Lucretius. Chapter twenty in Mr. Scott's most interesting little book, *Nevertheless We Believe*, is entitled "At the Graveside in Company with St. Paul," and it is to a critical examination of the various strange claims made in that chapter that I intend to devote the present article. This is a chapter that derives its main interest from the metaphysical conjectures in which its author indulges with such fervent zeal. Paul is imagined to be present at a twentieth century funeral, to which he has come from his Roman prison, "to instruct us and to comfort us with what has been revealed to him of the departed, their dead bodies, and their living souls. Mr. Scott says:—

We have learned from him, I think, that what we cover up in graves is done with, it is dissolved. Is, then, the departed one a frail ghost now, a disembodied soul? No, the departed one is embodied, must be embodied. Here Paul is in accord with what modern thought conceives of that indissoluble fusion, body and soul; a soul without a body is only a phantom of thought. The departed one cannot be without a body. Is it then a body of flesh and blood? No, says Paul, it is what we can only call "a spiritual body." What relation has this spiritual body to that which we know as the body of this present life? It is a development of this body, it grows out of this body. How does it thus develop out of this body? Paul cannot say. But, says he, it must be so. Why must it be so? Because it was so with Jesus Christ when he "rose from the dead." Indeed, all that Paul believed in this matter was derived from his meditation on the manner of Christ's resurrection. He brooded on the resurrection of Christ and thence came this winged revelation of his.

Whether this was Paul's doctrine of the resurrection or not we cannot tell. It is a metaphysically subtle tenet to say the least, and the more one thinks of it the more puzzling it becomes. Of course the more we meditate upon the subject the more inconceivable it

becomes. A spiritual body ought to be as invisible as the Holy Ghost, but a body in the process of becoming spiritual we are unable to describe. I dare say no body has a chance to behold it after the earthly and heavenly in it have completely separated. In any case, the New Testament does not even attempt to explain or justify the mystery. Mr. Scott thinks that Paul did not regard the risen Christ "as a resuscitation of flesh and blood, with the breath restored to the lungs and the muscles to hands and feet." There is a radical change of some sort, but "Paul did not know what it was."

Paul, we may believe, had heard of the vacant tomb of Christ. What, therefore could have happened in the resurrection of Christ but this: that the spiritual body had developed out of the body of earth, that the earthly body had been transformed, absorbed, transmuted, assimilated and changed within Christ's spiritual body?

That extract throws no new light whatever upon the subject, but rather adds to its mysteriousness and impracticability. Mr. Scott, evidently, is of opinion that Christ himself clearly saw in the resurrection of himself something similar to what would doubtless happen at the resurrection of his people. His language is most remarkable:—

Paul came in the end to believe that as soon as the disciple dies he is "clothed upon," as he puts it. He lives on in all the real fulness of his being, a body and soul in one; he passes integrate to the presence of Christ. He does not pass thither as a disembodied spirit, leaving what we call his earthly body behind. He passes embodied in what Paul calls a spiritual body, which has developed out of, and in which has been transformed and transmuted the earthly body (p. 167).

To the natural man all that process is utterly inconceivable. Science knows absolutely nothing about it, despite Mr. Scott's eloquent description of it. Science and the "spiritual" are utter strangers to each other, and science and "theology" are equally unknown to each other; and the truth is that Mr. Scott is talking with the utmost assurance of things he knows absolutely nothing about. He cannot even tell us what a spiritual body is. He admits that even "Paul did not know what it was," and more than that "he could not know what it was." Furthermore, this strange inconceivable process takes place only to those who die "in Christ," whatever that may be. What happens to those who die "out of Christ"? Are they annihilated, or do they remain in their natural, unspiritual condition? We all know that in all ages they have been enormously in the majority. But here is another curious difficulty thus stated by our author:—

If yonder spiritual body "in glory" is, in some way, the body in which I live and move to-day, what can we make of the bodily shape of the disciple which we enclose in a coffin and lower into the grave? Shall I then have, in some way, two physical bodies, the physical body laid in a grave, and the physical somehow transformed within the spiritual body? The answer to that question, I venture to think, is this: "All that this present body really is, in its amalgam with the soul, passes at death in the transformed or spiritual body; what remains and is buried is something else, it is the merest relic, it is a vacant and negligible husk (p. 167).

There is certainly a scientific sound about that remarkable extract, but the author fails completely to cite a single example in Nature of the transformation he describes. He simply ventures to assume that Paul had some such process in his mind when he wrote I Cor. xv, 35-58, and so he doubtless had; but he knew no more about Nature and her processes than Mr. Scott does to-day, whose object is "to construe the Faith in terms of modern thought." As a matter of

fact, Mr. Scott does not even attempt to prove his theory from science, well knowing that Nature could not furnish a single instance of the operation which he describes with such a scientific air. He is much more like a schoolman than a modernist speaking in terms of modern thought. He is sensible of the fact that "it is very difficult to picture this to our minds or imaginations"; but why is it difficult? Because Nature presents us with not a single case of the kind. As presented to us in Nature, death is the end as birth is the beginning of individual life. Nature knows nothing about immortality, and seems to have made absolutely no provision for it. To all appearances the death of a human being differs in no essential sense from that of a frog, and nobody imagines that a frog is to survive death; and the question naturally emerges, why should a human being inherit endless life? There is nothing whatever to show that man is exempt from the otherwise universal law of death which is at work throughout the length and breadth of the universe, and which no power known to us can overthrow. Our author says that "the soul must have some form in which to be and act; a body must have some soul to inform it and make it real." The writer proceeds thus:—

Paul saw this. He saw that if you could separate soul from body, neither would be itself. The body would decay and pass away; the soul would become, at most, an unconscious and comatose thing. At one time he actually thought that this is what happens to the Christian at death. He was content to think of the dead Christian like this because he believed that, any day, Christ would return in heavenly power and restore in immortal life the unity of body and soul. But Paul might not tolerate this situation when it became clear that Christ's coming was being more and more delayed. He changed the picture in his mind of what happens at death. He now declared the soul at death immediately and consciously passes to Christ. But does it pass thus in a disembodied state? Paul could not believe this. It must have a body. He could not tolerate the thought that at death he would be what he calls a "naked" soul (p. 163).

Such is the theory of the Resurrection formulated and explained by Mr. Boyd-Scott. *Nevertheless We Believe* is a book destined not to be soon forgotten. Whilst many Christians will find it the means of confirming them in their Christian beliefs, many thousands more will experience a deepening and multiplying of their doubts, a welcome result of such studying. I have derived great help from it, and it is with pleasure that I acknowledge the profit and delight from my perusal and study of the book. J. T. LLOYD.

The Madman.

IN my mind is a fire that burns,
And burns up the knowledge it knows,
Leaving me in the dark place with
The grey ash of a dull repose.

The flame when it glows is brilliant—
I become God in its light—
A worker of wonders, magic,
For a moment, before the night.

They call it "Another attack,"
Say, "How much more frequent they are!"
How can they see the wonder,
When their God is away so far?

I am God, Nothing, Not normal,
But all that they know is the last,
And they bolt the door and padlock,
So the world shall not go too fast.

For I know things they shall not know,
And that is the cause of their hate;
I have seen things they shall not see,
And that set the seal on my fate.

G. E. FUSSELL.

Dickens and Dogma

Vain are the thousand creeds
Worthless as withered weeds,
That move men's hearts; unutterably vain;
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main.

—Emily Bronte.

In an interesting article on "Dickens and the New Testament," the *Daily News* (London) refers to "a simplified version of the Gospels" prepared by the great novelist, a work which is said to be unpublished. Curiously, the chief Nonconformist daily paper improves the occasion by adding that Charles Dickens told "each of his children in turn" to "study the New Testament as the one unfailing guide in life." Not a word is said as to Dickens' real opinions on religion, and the many thousands of readers of this Christian newspaper are led to infer that this master of literature shared the theological opinions (if, indeed, they deserve such a name) of the unthinking crowds who take their religious opinions at second-hand.

As Charles Dickens was the first editor of the *Daily News*, this is scurvy treatment from his journalistic successors; and it would scarcely have won the approval of the austere and high-minded Harriet Martineau, who for so many years contributed to its columns. Christians so frequently have no conscience in matters of this kind, and abhor truth as much as their legendary Devil is said to hate holy water.

The plain truth is that Charles Dickens was a Unitarian, and, therefore, anathema to all the Churches of Christendom. We must, however, "speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us." For some considerable time Dickens attended Little Portland Street Unitarian Church, where he had sittings and subscribed to its funds. Even in the Unitarian fold, Dickens "wore his rue with a difference," and was latitudinarian among broad-minded people. When that stalwart Freethinker, Robert Morrell, founded the National Sunday League, Dickens did not, like so many gentlemen, look on at the tumult from his club window, but took an active part in the then unpopular movement. He not only helped the Sunday League with money, but he worked for it, giving public readings from his own works on its behalf. Nor was this a sudden benevolent impulse on his part, for Dickens wrote a lively pamphlet, entitled *Sunday Under Three Heads*, in which he lashed the then Bishop of London for his obscurantist and uncivilized views regarding Sunday recreation for working people and their families. It is one of the strongest pieces of invective from this master of quips and fancies, and, evidently, he had his heart in the work. For, remember, Dickens was as ardent a Radical as Cobbett, and equally a hard hitter.

Nor is this, by any means, all. Dickens was very heretical, and, had he lived in the Ages of Faith, would have experienced the full force of Christian charity, tied to a stake at Smithfield. He had a very strong aversion from all dogma, and described himself as "morally wide asunder from Rome"; while of Puritanism he was an uncompromising opponent, as "Chadband," "Stiggins," "Pecksniff," and other characters in his incomparable novels bear ample witness. Even in the *Pickwick Papers*, the most light-hearted and irresponsible of his many books, written with all the zest of early manhood, he lashes religious hypocrisy with all the skill and abandon of a Moliere.

Mission work has ever been a plank in the Christian platform, but Dickens treats it with high-sniffing and lordly contempt. He writes: "So Exeter Hall holds us in mortal submission to missionaries, who (Livingstone always excepted) are perfect nuisances, and leave every place worse than they found it."

This anti-theological attitude found expression in

his own home. An amusing instance of the great novelist's playfulness with regard to Orthodoxy was his naming a dummy book in his own library *Evidences of Christianity by Henry the Eighth*. Keen critics, indeed, have always noticed the strong strain of Secularism in Dickens' writings; and Matthew Arnold, in his delightful book, *Friendship's Garland*, pictured himself taking his foreign friend, Arminius, to the House of Commons to hear the pious Sir William Harcourt "develop a system of unsectarian religion from the life of Mr. Pickwick." Dickens abandoned all church attendance for years before his death, but it is abundantly clear that all his sympathies were in favour of a mild Unitarianism, which a witty divine once called "a feather bed to catch a falling Christian."

The general public are too busy earning their living to know all these things; but the gentlemen of the Press in the *Daily News* office, once Dickens' own office, should be better instructed. Apart from journalists, John Forster is the worst offender. Forster was Dickens' own familiar friend, yet, in his life of the novelist, he writes deliberately: "Upon essential points he (Dickens) had never any sympathy so strong as with the leading doctrines of the Church of England." This is nauseous nonsense, and shows clearly what Jesuitry Christians permit themselves in the cause of their faith. Forster found Truth at the bottom of a well, and he padlocked the lid to keep her in that place. Fortunately, we have learned a great deal since Forster's very respectable *Life of Charles Dickens* first cumbered the shelves of the circulating libraries. Despite Christian efforts at camouflage, Charles Dickens was a heretic, and if there is an atom of truth in their dogmas, he is spending an unhappy eternity in the company of all the Freethinkers since the dawn of the Christian creed.

MIMNERMUS.

John (Lord) Morley as a Freethinker.

II.

(Continued from page 620.)

MR. MORLEY pays a very high tribute to Diderot's herculean labours on the Encyclopædia, for which he received—this mercenary Atheist!—the prodigal salary of about £130 a year. It was a project that "rallied all that was then best in France round the standard of light and social hope." Mr. Morley concludes his able, instructive, and beautiful chapter on the Encyclopædia with the following passage, which is a good specimen of his best style:—

As I replace in my shelves this mountain of volumes, "dusky and huge, enlarging on the sight," I have a presentiment that their pages will seldom again be disturbed by me or by others. They served a great purpose a hundred years ago. They are now a monumental ruin, clothed with all the profuse associations of history. It is no Ozymandias of Egypt, king of kings, whose wrecked shape of stone and sterile memories we contemplate. We think rather of the gray and crumbling walls of an ancient stronghold, reared by the endeavour of stout hands and faithful, whence in its own day and generation a band once went forth against barbarous hordes, to strike a blow for humanity and truth.

The last chapter of Mr. Morley's book on Diderot closes with a translation of one of the great Frenchman's noblest pieces of writing. Diderot had been pleading for that fecund immortality which prolongs our personality in the grateful memories of those who come after us. His friend Falconet had replied in the

spirit of another Frenchman who, on being told he should do something for posterity, inquired what posterity had ever done for him. Diderot, "with redoubled eloquence, rising to his noblest height," replied as follows:—

The present is an indivisible point that cuts in two the length of an infinite line. It is impossible to rest on this point and to glide gently along with it, never looking on in front, and never turning the head to gaze behind. The more man ascends through the past, and the more he launches in the future—the greater he will be.....And all these philosophers, and ministers, and truth-telling men, who have fallen victims to the stupidity of nations, the atrocities of priests, the fury of tyrants, what consolation was left for them in death? This, that prejudice would pass, and that posterity would pour out the vial of ignominy upon their enemies. O posterity, holy and sacred! Stay of the unhappy and oppressed, thou who art just, thou who art incorruptible, who avengest the good man, who unmaskest the hypocrite, who draggest down the tyrant, may thy sure faith, thy consoling faith, never, never abandon me! Posterity is for the philosopher what the other world is for the devout!

It is reasonable to assume that Mr. Morley shares this noble sentiment with Diderot. He also looks for no supernatural immortality, but aspires to join "the choir invisible whose music is the gladness of the world." He labours for the future by serving the present; and doubtless the hope of brightening and elevating, however little, the life of unborn generations of his fellows, is to him an ample substitute for the more selfish inspirations of faith.

In the course of his monograph on Diderot, Mr. Morley pens some incidental observations, which are well worthy of notice. Holbach had said that "the dogma of the spirituality of the soul has turned morality into a conjectural science," and that "man will always be a mystery for those who insist on regarding him with the prejudiced eyes of theology." In relation to this Mr. Morley writes: "It is certainly true as an historical fact that the rational treatment of insane persons, and the rational view of certain kinds of crime, were due to men like Pinel, trained in the materialistic school of the eighteenth century. And it was clearly impossible that the great and humane reforms in this field could have taken place before the decisive decay of theology."

Holbach had remarked that it was useless to object that man's mechanism still left his "soul" a mystery, for everything is a mystery at bottom, since we can never explain a first principle even in pure physics. Man must be satisfied to know what is possible. He must also be content with his lot on earth. The cosmos is perpetually changing, and why should man, the insect of a day, expect his species to be exempt from the universal law? Mr. Morley's observation on this point is worth quoting in its entirety:—

We may pause for a moment to notice how, in their deliberate humiliation of the alleged pride of man, the orthodox theologian and the Atheistic Holbach use precisely the same language. But the rebuke of the latter was sincere; it was indispensable in order to prepare men's minds for the conception of the universe as a whole. With the theologian the rebuke has now become little more than a hollow shift, in order to insinuate the miracle of Grace. The preacher of Naturalism replaces a futile vanity in being the end and object of the creation, by a fruitful reverence for the supremacy of human reason, and a right sense of the value of its discreet and disciplined use. The theologian restores this absurd and misleading egoism of the race, by representing the Creator as above all else concerned to work miracles for the salvation of a creature whose understanding is at once pitifully weak and odiously perverse, and whose heart is from the beginning wicked, corrupt, and given over to reprobation. The difference is plainly enormous. The

theologian discourages men; they are to wait for the miracle of conversion, inert or desperate. The naturalist arouses them; he supplies them with the most powerful of motives for the energetic use of the most powerful of their endowments.

Mr. Morley thinks that Holbach was "too sweeping in denying any deterrent efficacy whatever to the fires of hell." "But," he adds, "where Holbach found one person in 1770, he would find a thousand in 1880, to agree with him that it is possible to think of commendations and inducements to virtue, that shall be at least as efficacious as the fiction of eternal torment, without being as cruel, as wicked as infamous to the gods, and as degrading to men." This is strong, though not *too* strong, language; and we may fairly take it as expressing Mr. Morley's own convictions.

While judiciously not siding with Holbach's absolute negation of God, Mr. Morley writes in a manner which proves at least his Agnosticism; an Agnosticism, it may be said, which is really philosophical Atheism. The Theists, he observes, would be wise to "keep clear of pretensions to *prove* their master thesis." "They might have been content," he adds, "to keep it as an emotional creation, an imaginative hypothesis, a noble simplification of the chimeras of the primitive consciousness of the race." No evolutionist could go farther than that. Waiving the epithet "noble," the most thorough-going Atheist would be satisfied with this view of Theism.

Mr. Morley has penned a noble plea for free thought, true speech, and honest action in his essay *On Compromise*, which is a valuable supplement to Mill's essay *On Liberty*. He scourges the indifferentists and hypocrites as well as the bigots. "It is justly said," he remarks, "that at the bottom of all the great discussions of modern society lie the two momentous questions, first whether there is a God, and second whether the soul is immortal." In relation to these problems, Mr. Morley is obliged to pass the following censure on modern society:—

Now, in spite of the scientific activity of the day, nobody is likely to contend that men are pressed keenly in their souls by any poignant stress of spiritual tribulation in the face of the two supreme enigmas. Nobody will say there is much of that striving and wrestling and bitter agonising, which whole societies of men have felt before now on questions of far less tremendous import. Ours, as has been truly said, is "a time of loud disputes and weak convictions." In a generation less deeply impressed by a sense of intellectual responsibility this could not be. As it is, even superior men are better pleased to play about the height of these great arguments, to fly in busy intellectual sport from side to side, from aspect to aspect, than they are intent on resolving what it is after all, that the discussion comes to, and to which solution, when everything has been said and heard, the balance of truth really seems to incline. There are too many giggling epigrams; people are too willing to look on collections of mutually hostile opinions with the same kind of curiosity which they bestow on a collection of mutually hostile beasts in a menagerie. They have very faint predilections for one rather than another. If they were truly alive to the duty of conclusiveness, or to the inexpressible magnitude of the subjects which nominally occupy their minds, but really only exercise their tongues, this elegant Pyrrhonism would be impossible, and this light-hearted neutrality most unendurable.

Another class of culprits condemned by Mr. Morley are the "men of the world," who laugh at religious superstitionists, yet bow down before a still less respectable tyranny.

The man of the world despises Catholics for taking their religious opinions on trust and being the slaves of tradition. As if he had himself formed his own most important opinions either in religion or anything else. He laughs at them for their superstitious

awe of the Church. As if his own inward awe of the Greater Number were one whit less of a superstition. He mocks their deference for the past. As if his own absorbing deference to the present were one tittle better bottomed or a jot more respectable. The modern emancipation will profit us very little, if the *status quo* is to be fastened round our necks with the despotic authority of a heavenly dispensation, and if in the stead of ancient Scriptures we are to accept the plenary inspiration of Majorities.

This is well expressed. It states an important fact, and conveys a wholesome warning. Majority votes are not solutions; they are only compromises. They decide what shall be done at the moment. Nothing more. Counting heads is a passing expediency; in the long run they have to be weighed—which is a more difficult operation. Problems, in short, are not solved by voting, but by investigation and discussion. The man who is in a minority of one to-day may turn out to be entirely right to-morrow. Authority, therefore, especially the authority of numbers, should never be recognized in the High Court of Reason. We must give and take in the world of practice; in the world of thought every brain should be an absolute sovereign. Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Grundy should be kept off with deep moats and strong drawbridges. G. W. FOOTE.

(To be Concluded.)

A Question Asked at Bangkok.

IN case the reader has forgotten the geography he loved (or hated) at school, I may say at once that Bangkok is the capital of Siam, or the "Kingdom of the Yellow Robe," as it has been called in recognition of its numerous Buddhist monks. It has many gorgeous temples. It is also the home of the famous white elephants, which, though precious when offered as gifts, are yet somewhat expensive to maintain; hence our everyday joke about inconvenient "White Elephants." Now, this custom of keeping white elephants might seem to indicate that the Siamese are apt to put up unquestionably with things they may not really want. I do not know. But I know that, at a conference held at Bangkok city not long ago, a very useful and timely question was raised.

The meeting referred to was the First Conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies, the delegates attending from Siam, China, Japan, India, Dutch East Indies, and the Philippines, as well as from the League of Nations Health Department; Sir Claude Hill (whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Bombay in 1913) presiding over the eight sessions.

It seems unnecessary to praise the admirable labours associated with the Red Cross movement since its beginning in 1863. I will merely instance two of the newer phases, namely:—

(1) The Junior Red Cross, an enterprise whose headquarters is in Washington, U.S.A., and the object of which is to enlist the activities of the millions of school children all over the globe in works of mercy, and particularly in succouring children who suffer from disease or hunger.

(2) The enlargement of the original battlefield work into a general system of promoting public health in every country, especially in the more backward regions. In China, for example, great efforts have been made to combat cholera; and, in passing, I may note an amusing incident in a health procession conducted through the streets of Foochow. Some of the organizers dressed up as big flies. They would halt at places where flies were swarming, and make three bows, while the people wondered why they did so. Then up came men with megaphones, shouting the

explanation in these words: "These flies are very grateful to the people who provide them with such fine breeding places, where they may go to lay their eggs later and provide you with additional millions of flies, which will in time spread cholera!"

In the course of the conference, a delegate who knew the Red Cross movement in the island of Java, where the inhabitants mostly profess the religion of Muhammad, raised the question to which I now wish to draw attention. He said the Cross was a Christian symbol, and it was not a symbol acceptable to followers of the faith of Islam. Of course, we all know that Turkey uses the Red Crescent as its sign of ambulance; but apparently the Crescent is not so employed in Java. Hence the difficulty.

Sir Claude Hill commented on the point, first of all stating that in India, where the Muhammadans numbered some sixty-five millions, the Cross had been acquiesced in. Then he made the following interesting observations:—

The International Committee at Geneva, when they got together and succeeded in getting the Red Cross movement inaugurated, did not describe it as a Red Cross movement in virtue of the fact that the Cross was the emblem of Christianity at all. It was simply the inversion of the Swiss national flag, which is a white cross on a red ground, and it was inverted out of compliment to the Swiss people, and given the title of the Red Cross. This was done on no religious grounds but out of compliment to the inaugurators of the movement. I am perfectly certain that everybody in this room will agree that the Red Cross symbol stands for humanitarian effort and service, quite independently of any religious connotation at all.

Sir Claude Hill added:—

The Cross as an emblem antedates Christianity. Going back to early times, it was a Phallic emblem. It is the Arabic *plus* sign. It is, therefore, from the point of view of humanity at large, an emblem connoting a great deal besides being the emblem of those of us who are Christians.

For my part I am prepared to say that what is good enough for the Muhammadans of India and Java is good enough for me. In any case, the Red Cross is now so firmly established in practice that it would not be worth while to disturb the symbol. It is however, of no small consequence to insist, with Sir Claude Hill, that the Red Cross has no connection with the Cross of Catholicism and the Methodists. The compassionate service which it represents is human purely and simply, and the Ambulance Wagon is not the Chariot of God.

I trust it will not be thought out of place if I close this note with a reference to the League of Nations. I am an enthusiastic supporter of the League and its Covenant, though I freely admit the need for improvement of the machinery at Geneva. I shall not try to swim across the English Channel because the machine called a passenger-steamer makes me seasick; nor do I advise abandonment of the League method because it recently faltered before the problem of the Italian-Greek crisis.

But I detect, in some quarters of the British public, an attempt to suggest that the League is a special expression of the Christian Gospel, and that the Churches and Chapels should put forward claims accordingly. If Churches and Chapels repent of their past gross neglect of international questions and of the societies which stood for arbitration, well and good. I congratulate them and bless them. But they must not put on any sort of exclusive air and self-satisfied smile, as if intimating that men and women outside their

¹ The chief inaugurator was Henri Dunant, a Swiss citizen, who died in 1910.

sacred borders were a kind of inferior members of the League of Nations Unions and Societies which have happily arisen in European and other countries. The League is for mankind, and not for theological cliques. It welcomes the Jew as much as the Catholic. It beckons the Unitarian as eagerly as the Anglican. It invites the Pope and the Atheist to co-operate.

F. J. GOULD.

The Old Seaman.

Nor loverwise he viewed the distant sea,
That stern old mariner with face aflame;
But as one puzzled at a mystery—
A tune lost past recalling or a name
Memory stumbles at. His searching glance
Swept the wide sands to where the wavelets white
Scampered and tumbled. There was strange romance
In his blue eyes and his red beard so bright;
Hint of wild seas and nights of dreadful doom;
Of coral islands, where the palm trees sway,
Where ever one can hear the low dull boom
Of gliding breakers. There, perchance, he lay
Many a tropic night in soft brown arms,
And clasped her firm round limbs in strong embrace,
While she, enraptured with his alien charms,
Pressed ardent lingering kisses on his face.

Perchance the cold white weariness he had seen,
Of arctic lands where life can scarce draw breath;
Where Nature doffs her mask of merry green,
And shows beneath those steely eyes of death;
Where palest, loveliest, most ethereal blue
Gleams through the towering iceberg's chalky side,
And ever-watchful whalers plough anew
The ever-dreaded sea where Franklin died.

It seems I quite mistook his history;
For when I talked he answered never a word
Of strange far lands or cities oversea,
Of love-making ashore or work aboard,
But babbled ceaselessly of sheep and kine,
Of harvest lore, and how we needed rain
So badly for the crops. He seemed to pine
For some sweet rural Marjorie or Jane
Who'd stirred his heartstrings forty years ago—
And jilted him. He said the home-brewed ale
Was stronger then than any we can show
In these sad days. He once drank up a pail
Refilled three times—thus winning half-a-crown
And the beer free. He wouldn't like to say
But that in Newbridge at the "Rose and Crown"
They talked about it still on market day.

JOHN ERNEST SIMPSON.

Acid Drops.

Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith, the novelist, is evidently a lady who does not believe in taking risks—where religion is concerned. At the Plymouth Church Congress she demanded that children be confirmed at an earlier age than is at present the rule. It must not, she said, be delayed until they begin to doubt. From a Christian point of view the advice is quite sound. If you wait with Christian teaching until the boy or girl is old enough and informed enough to doubt the case is hopeless. To make people Christians you must catch them while they are young—the younger the better. The parson's rule should be "get in first, before they begin to think." If you could stop them thinking altogether so much the better. But as that is not always possible, the next best plan is to see that what little activity is displayed by the brain is done along safe lines. Miss Kaye-Smith is dead right. Get the children before they are old enough to think, and make Christians of them. Then if you can stop them

thinking too much afterwards, or keep their intelligence at about the level of an educated ape, they will remain genuine Christians, and the highest offices in the Church will be open to them.

Some of our police court functionaries have peculiar ideas of things. The *Leeds Mercury* publishes a report of a case of a man charged at Bradford with having assaulted his wife. The magistrate, Mr. George Wilkinson, let the man off on condition that he went to the chapel regularly. We suggest that a couple of medical men might do well to enquire into the state of Mr. Wilkinson's mentality.

If America as represented by Mr. Jennings Bryan regresses in its attitude towards Darwinism, that land of liberty progresses in another direction. The Barling Bomber is the name of America's giant triplane. This enormous machine has a petrol capacity of six tons (2,000 gallons) and can carry a bomb load of ten thousand pounds; and it travels at a speed of ninety miles an hour. It seems a doubtful point whether America as represented by Mr. Jennings Bryan is in a fit state to examine Darwinism; and the invention of this triplane for the saving of America's soul, precludes any weight attached to the rejection of Charles Darwin's life work. Now if he had discovered poison-gas.....

There would be something radically wrong if our bishops attacked anything of importance. The low estimation of the public by newspaper mongers is notorious. Every placard, except on rare occasions, confirms the religious hypothesis that man is a fallen creature. The *Illustrated Sunday Herald* is well to the front with the life story of Mme. Falmy which is of as much consequence to human affairs, human welfare, and human progress, as a dead leaf that falls from a tree—or perhaps less. Possibly Freethought has much to be thankful for in standing without the support of the Free Press. For one story of this kind, any of our readers could find among their acquaintances, human epics that would send the Priest and Press maligners of man to their rightful destination.

Mr. Joseph Humble, consulting engineer, describes the Maltby explosion as an act of God to straighten us up. This must be his own opinion, but theology from an engineer is greater nonsense than that which we receive from the Bishop of London. The latter gentleman is in the trade, and Mr. Humble will be well advised to leave the name of God out of the engineering vocabulary.

The late right-reverend Father-in-God, the Bishop of Islington, left estate of the value of £78,661. We tremble to think where he is spending eternity.

The fire insurance on buildings in London totalled £1,700,000,000, Major Salmon, managing director of a large firm, told the Rotary Club. Insurance against fire in the next world costs nearly as much.

The Church of the Holy Virgin at Jerusalem has been robbed of its jewels, silver lamps, and ikons. This is one of the show places of the Holy Land, and is alleged to be built over the tomb of the Virgin. It seems to be high time some of the angels were sacked. Such dereliction of duty is culpable carelessness.

We notice that Mr. H. H. Slessor is to give an address on "The Summons to the Kingdom of God." As Mr. Slessor was *not* recently summoned to Parliament we trust he will find consolation in chewing wool of this kind. If we must make a choice between preachers and music-hall artists for Parliament we will have the latter; they at least smooth out wrinkles from the human face, and in a subtle manner say "Yes" to the only life we know.

It would appear that the bishops are getting more lime-light than is healthy for them, and for that reason we are pleased. Bishop Welldon is publicly called to justify his salary by underpaid school teachers, and he may be sorry that he took upon himself the position of a modern Savonarola. The Robots in R.U.R. spared the man who worked with his hands. This was most extreme, but there may come a time when bishops will be asked, "What do you do?" and when the question is answered, they might be told that the human race will take the consequences if they don't do it.

The Bishop of Exeter has exclusive information to the effect that "Christ never meant us to live in such misery." This is a statement that neither stands, sits, nor lies down. It is theological muzziness. As theosophical wind-bags might learn to scrub floors, so might the Bishop of Exeter leave Christ out of the question, and vow never to sleep until 14,000 people in Bradford had decent accommodation instead of living as at present in 3,700 houses condemned before the war as unfit for human habitation.

The Rev. C. T. Collings of St. Paul's, Lambeth, is an agitator. He wants a trade union rate of wages for members of the fraternity. The very matter stated condemns the profession. Why don't they pray for it, instead of copying working men who have been clouted on the scone for asking for less! Doth God care for Oxen? By asking them to pray for it, we are afraid that we assume their worth, but begging and question begging is theology in a nutshell. Let us hope that they will soon go on strike and prove their indispensability.

We have commented several times on the established lying that is current in connection with Christian preaching, and a friend sends us a small tract, issued by the "Bible Truth" Society which illustrates what we have said. The tract is called "A God Who Counts," and it tells of some mission workers who were in need of £50—for their mission of course; these mission workers never require money for themselves, but only for the expenses of the mission. And if what they require for themselves comes under the head of expenses, who shall complain? So it happened that these missionaries wanted £50. Being Christians they did not ask anyone for it, they simply prayed to the Lord, and at once a cheque for £5 was sent them—not by the Lord, but by an elderly Quaker lady. The next sum they needed was £20 os. 9d. Again they prayed and again the Lord replied, by deputy. A letter was received containing a cheque for £20 with nine stamps. The way the Lord throws other people's money about is marvellous. If we could only pay our bills in that way, by cheques drawn upon other people, we should not hesitate at anything.

Now just imagine the amount of sheer, deliberate lying that goes to the manufacture of this tract of the "Bible Truth" Society! And bear in mind also that it is only one out of thousands of similar lies that are told by Christian preachers and writers in and out of the pulpit. Nineteen-twentieths of the stories of experience with unbelievers, of the death-bed scenes at which churchmen assist, are deliberate lies. And yet no one thinks the worse of the people who tell them. If a politician went about telling similar stories of his opponents and of his work he would be hounded out from even political life. But it does quite well for the pulpit. Quite candidly, and with the utmost seriousness, if there is a religion with a worse moral influence than Christianity we have yet to come across it.

Dr. W. A. Potts, of Birmingham, says it was found in Scotland that three times as many offences were committed by children on Sundays as on other days. A few years back whistling on the Sabbath was a serious matter in bonnie Caledonia.

Bishop Welldon considers that the salaries paid to

school teachers are excessive. He has never raised his hands in astonishment at the salaries paid to the Bench of Bishops, and the other ecclesiastics of his Church. Nor does he notice that he pays his own servants more than most school teachers earn. Let him find out what salaries are paid to teachers in Church Schools.

In a leading article on the present position of Spain, the *Daily Mail* says that Spain is convinced that the country is being drained of blood and treasure for the Morocco adventure in order that gold and iron mining concessions acquired by the Jesuits, and shared by them with politicians, may be made to render good dividends. This is a very striking example of God and Mammon running in double harness.

"The law is Satan's law, and I cannot obey Satan," was the reply of Sydney Overbury, leader of the Beeston Brotherhood, when summoned at Pontefract for not sending his child to school. A hard-headed Bench sent the child to an industrial school.

Abyssinia is a Christian country—of a kind—but we know that the only thing the varieties agree in is the collection of funds. At the same time, it is perhaps the only State in which slavery continues as an institution. This fact will not be so surprising to Freethinkers as it may prove to more pious moralists, since we remember that the African negroes were shipped (under appalling conditions) by Christians to Christians in the American continent. But we are entitled once again to question the value of religion as a humanitarian influence.

There is apparently some good reading in Professor Lévy-Bruhl's book entitled *Primitive Mentality*. The Mosutos, savages, as we poison-gas hypocrites call them, might teach some of our religionists a few lessons in reasoning:—

In the midst of the laughter and applause of the populace the heathen inquirer is heard saying: "Can the God of the white men be seen by our eyes? and if God is absolutely invisible, how can a reasonable being worship a hidden thing?" "I will go up to the sky first," said a Mosuto, "and see if there really is a God, and when I have seen him I'll believe in him."

Again, hear these benighted heathens, who are unable to kill two millions of their own kind in four years:—

When a missionary was preaching the Gospel to some heathen he pointed to the New Testament in his hand, and observed that he was only repeating what the Word of God said. On that one of his hearers snatched the book from the missionary's hand, and putting it to his ear exclaimed, "It is a lie; I am listening carefully, and the book is not saying anything at all," at which there were roars of laughter and mocking gibes.

Now that the Bishop of London has returned from Hyde Park the *Times Literary Supplement* had better be careful, or this Galahad in gaiters will be in conflict with these statements detrimental to the interests of the religious export trade.

A hundred and twenty-four organ pipes have been stolen from the Church of St. John, Newington, Hull, during the absence of the Vicar on holiday. Bridal couples will have to go elsewhere for "fully choral" services.

Miss Helen Jerome, an American writer, says "Humanity is more than a poultry farm or peacock alley." Christian clergymen, however, assure us that it is a collection of "miserable sinners."

A London newspaper complains bitterly of the enormous number of able-bodied beggars. The paper, however, makes no mention of the 50,000 clergymen in this country.

Our Sustentation Fund.

WE continue to receive many congratulatory letters on the success of the *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund, and the letters to hand bear strong testimony to the affection in which the paper is held and the appreciation of its value to the Freethought Cause. For our own part we believe that we did not over estimate its value when we said that without the *Freethinker* militant Freethought in this country would be almost helpless. Freethought in itself is too great a thing to be dependent for its existence upon any one paper, or person, or organization, but these do determine the extent to which Freethought permeates the thought of the people and so influences the course of our corporate existence. The Churches know that with the *Freethinker* out of the way their greatest articulate danger would be removed. That is why they dislike us so heartily, and why they apply the boycott so energetically. We have always appreciated the implied compliment in Christian hatred.

"You deserve and will receive all the financial support necessary to enable you to carry on your work effectively and with a minimum amount of worry," writes Mr. W. B. Columbine. Says "Sansfoi," "I admire and honour you for your indefatigable efforts in keeping the flag flying. Your self-denying work in fighting for the mental freedom of mankind demands the help and encouragement of all Rationalists. I wish the N.S.S. could send a few missionaries to this benighted part of the world." The N.S.S. could send missionaries, it is almost entirely a question of finance. That is a matter on which we shall have to enlarge next season, there are endless developments in this direction.

Bishop Montgomery Brown, whose name will be well known to readers as the author of *Communism and Christianity*, sends a cheque for twenty-five dollars, and says: "Your appeal on behalf of the *Freethinker* Sustentation to hand, and Mrs. Brown and I are giving ourselves the pleasure of sending a cheque for twenty-five dollars, and of promising as much more for each of three months to come, so that our contribution will be in all 100 dollars in American money. If you must die young, you may die in peace, for you are doing a whole life's work every year in keeping up the *Freethinker* and in contributing to it as you do."

Mr. Clifford Williams, President of the Birmingham Branch, writes: "It must be exceedingly gratifying to you to have such a demonstration as has been witnessed since the opening of the Fund. It is a collective demonstration of loyalty and appreciation to yourself, and of fidelity and interest in the Cause from all ranks of the Freethought Party." We assure Mr. Williams and others that we do thoroughly appreciate the way in which what we have done is regarded, and take it as an incentive to renewed effort.

Mr. W. Howells, who is, I fancy, a comparatively new reader, says: "You deserve all the support that we can give you.....I hope to live long enough to be able to contribute as much as I did to help to keep the people in the dark during my so-called orthodox days. Now that is finished I am practically free and determined to do what I can for Freethought. I wish you success, and am looking forward to the time when the load on your shoulders will become lighter."

If we were to parade our converts as Christians do theirs, what a list might we not publish?

Third list of acknowledgments: Previously acknowledged, £340 os. 6d. W. B. Columbine, £25; W. Forgie, 2s.; The Sarsfield Family, 15s.; M. Sowden, 2s. 6d.; H. H. Hurrell, £1 1s.; A. J. Watson, 5s.; Alan Tyndal, 2s. 6d.; Freethinker, £1; E. Lyons,

2s. 6d.; F. R. Gubbins, 10s. 6d.; J. J. Oult, 5s.; A. W. Freer, 5s.; D. D. (Chelsea), 2s. 6d.; Postman, 2s. 6d.; C. E. Hickman, 10s.; D. Wright, 2s. 6d.; J. and E. Hartgill, 10s.; A. B., £1; J. Neate, £1; Wallace Allan, £1; R. B. Harrison, 5s.; E. Cottrell, 2s.; J. H. English, 2s. 6d.; "Sansfoi," £2; T. Fisher, 10s.; N. Richardson, £1; T. Robson, 10s.; Mrs. Napier, 5s.; J. Harvey, 5s.; G. Saunders, £1; J. Robertson, £1; A. W. B. Shaw, £5; W. H. Hicks, £2 2s.; John Foot, £1 1s.; Clifford Williams, £1; W. Owen, £1; W. D. Corrick, £2 2s.; H. J. Waters, 10s.; H. Organ, 2s. 6d.; Soranite, 2s.; Recruit, 1s.; J. Burrell, 2s. 6d.; A. Brooks, 5s.; H. Holt, £2 2s.; H. Spence, 5s.; A. Firth, 10s.; W. Challis, 5s.; R. Risk, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. H. E. Shepherd, 2s. 6d.; J. Russels Phillips, 10s.; D. McDiarmid, 5s.; J. Sturrock, 5s.; J. W. Robertson, 5s.; W. McK., 5s.; C. Clayton Dove, £2 2s.; Mrs. S. M. Peacock, £2; A. Lane, 10s.; Robson Paige (second subscription), 2s. 6d.; E. Snelling, £1; Mrs. J. Shorter, 5s.; E. H. Hassell, 5s.; Themistocles, 18s.; F. E. Becker, 19s.; Bishop Montgomery Brown, £5 10s.; W. K. Huty, £2. Total, £414 3s. 6d.

Corrections: "W. Watter, £5," in last week's list, should have been W. G. Walter, £5. R. M., 5s. (omitted).

We shall be obliged if subscribers will point out any omissions or inaccuracies that appear.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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.

E. ROLPH.—The ex-Councillor who stated, on the authority of the nurse who was with Charles Bradlaugh, that the great Atheist died a Christian, is either simple or a liar. The combination of the two is not uncommon with very ardent Christian believers.

MRS. C. KING.—As you know there is a God we feel that such knowledge demands silent admiration, not controversial speech. We do not see the distinction between Christianity and Churchianity. The latter is the former in operation.

J. THOMPSON.—Glad to welcome you as a member of the N.S.S. Thanks for good wishes for the *Freethinker* and its staff.

"THE SARSFIELD FAMILY."—Four copies of the paper in one household is excellent. Leaving the extra copies for others is an excellent plan and one that frequently brings new readers.

S. MUSTY.—Delighted to receive a family subscription for reasons that are not in the least connected with finance. It is an indication of promise for the future. We are flattered by your high opinion of *The Other Side of Death and Theism or Atheism?* We do not know any way in which we could have better spent our life than in the way we have done.

W. H. HICKS.—Pleased to know that you look forward to the weekly visits of the *Freethinker* with so much pleasure. Thanks for cheque.

N. RICHARDSON.—We have been asked by a number not to close the Fund too early, and while we do not desire to keep it hanging on indefinitely it will be open long enough for all to subscribe who wish to do so.

WALLACE ALLAN.—Thanks. Shall appear soon. We should be glad to see an article from your friend.

J. ROBERTSON.—Hope to see you at Glasgow. Sorry to hear of your illness.

H. DAWSON.—The figures were not ours, and we took them to cover the number of Freethinkers who might reasonably be expected to join in a concerted movement for pushing the *Freethinker*. In the wider sense we should say there would be quite 3,000,000 of unbelievers in this country. With the majority the power of social convention seems too much for their mental health.

A. W. B. SHAW.—We see no cause for your belittling your help. If all were as ready as yourself we should be in quite a flourishing condition. The high estimation in which the *Freethinker* is held by yourself and others repays us for anything we have done or may do.

A. D. CORRICK.—We shall be pleased to send them out if you will let us have the names and addresses. Delighted to have your appreciation of the paper.

II. G.—Please don't give us away, or we shall have several million infuriated Scots and Welshmen down upon us. We will try and remember in the future that England is an island surrounded—or shall we say submerged?—by Scotch and Welsh.

JOHN FOOT.—Very sorry to hear of your illness, shall hope to hear soon you are about again, and perhaps to meet you in the flesh. We intend using your comments on the Bishop and Bethnal Green. Mr. Lloyd's pen will still remain active even though the amount of travelling he does is limited. We share your high opinion of his work for Freethought.

M. BARNARD & "CINE CERE."—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.

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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 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

A slip of the pen in last week's issue made us announce Mr. Cohen's lectures to-day as being delivered in Salford. They will be delivered in the Town Hall, Pendleton. In the afternoon at 3, the subject will be "A Search for God," and in the evening at 6.30, "Freethought, the *Freethinker*, and the Churches." Good meetings are anticipated, and we hope these anticipations will be realized. Manchester friends will please note that a Swinton or Pendlebury car from Deansgate will set them down at the door of the Town Hall. Next Sunday, October 14, Mr. Cohen will visit Glasgow. This will be the first special lecture of the season, but the Branch will have a musical evening to-day (October 7) in the Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street.

Disgusting as it must be to all right thinking persons we were not very greatly surprised to find that a religious service was held over the body of Lord Morley. According to the newspapers the clergyman officiating did so at the request of Lady Morley, who left it to his taste and discretion to arrange the service. All we can say is that very little taste was shown in permitting a clergyman to officiate over the body of a man who was by conviction in direct opposition to the views held by every Church in Christendom, and appeared to have a genuine contempt for the position and function of the parson of the modern Christian Church. Legally, Lady Morley had the fullest right to have over her husband's dead body whatever service she felt inclined to order or permit. Morally, such a service is an insult to the memory of the dead man and a disregard of every canon of intellectual

integrity. Nothing could be more disgusting than a clergyman mouthing a religious service over a man who believed in neither a God nor a soul, who held that the whole of the Christian religion could be explained out of existence, and who looked forward to the race being one day civilized enough to replace the worship of God with the service of humanity. Perhaps if prominent Freethinkers made their opinions more fearlessly known while they were alive there would be less liberties taken with their bodies after they are dead. A religion that developed a sense of self-respect would decline to lend itself to such miserable tricks.

The newly formed Bolton Branch of the N.S.S. held its first meeting on Sunday last in the Co-operative Hall. Mr. Finlon lectured on "Co-operation in Relation to Freethought." To-day (October 7) the speaker will be Mr. J. Paulden, who will lecture on "The Sources of Political Power in their relation to Freethought"; the time is 10.30. We hope that all Bolton friends will be present and bring someone with them.

The open-air work in London is nearing its close, and in South London the Branch concluded its open-air meetings with a demonstration at which Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner was one of the principal speakers. We are glad to learn that the attendance was a very large one, and that the speeches were listened to with attention and appreciation. The Branch will continue its work during the winter, particulars of which will be found in our Lecture Guide column.

The Bethnal Green Branch has decided to carry on its lectures in Victoria Park during October, Mr. Corrigan will be there every Sunday at 4. Finsbury Park has also come to the same conclusion, and North London Freethinkers will have an opportunity of listening to-day to Mr. A. B. Moss. Mr. Rosetti and Mr. Whitehead will lecture there on the following Sundays. Particulars will be found week by week in the Guide for meetings.

North London has had a very successful season in Regents Park, and now resumes its indoor meetings at the St. Pancras Reform Club. The Branch is arranging a series of open debates, the first of which will take place this evening (October 7). North London Freethinkers should do what they can to support these meetings and advertise them among their friends. The subject for discussion to-day is "The Limits of Parental Control in Matters of Religious Opinion." That topic should prove of special interest to women.

We have before called attention to the fact that Mr. F. Coombes, of 7 Kentish Town Road, opposite the Camden Town Tube Station, makes a point of displaying the *Freethinker* and other of our publications. He will obtain any pamphlet or book to order, and Freethinkers in the locality might make it a point of calling at his shop. He also carries on the business of a tobacconist.

Mr. Whitehead has concluded his "mission" at Plymouth, and reports good meetings during the past week. The fact that his visit coincided with that of the Church Congress was, as our religious friends would say, "Providential." It is at least as good an instance of providential action as we have come across, and the meetings will have lost none of their usefulness on that account. Messrs. Hicks and Churchill officiated as chairmen at the meetings.

Mr. Lloyd had, as we expected, capital meetings at Failsworth on Sunday last. During the evening the meeting had an added interest given by Mr. Lloyd "naming" an infant, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. Both parents are members of an old family of Failsworth Freethinkers, and we trust the child will grow up true to the principles of its parents. It will be no fault of theirs if it does not.

Human Systems.

Ah Love! could you and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

THE old Persian philosopher's longing for complete envisagement of the scheme of things is doubtless as intense to-day as it is impossible of attainment. Still its sorry nature is evident enough from a glance at the economic, industrial and social conditions on all hands, and it may not be amiss to consider what appears to the writer to be one of the most salient defects in the scheme of things at present.

This is the assumption, scarcely questioned outside the ranks of the New Economists, that only the labour of individuals entitles them to purchasing-power. It is, in the words of Major Douglas, "the root assumption of a world-philosophy, which may yet bring civilization to its death-grapple," and which "denies all recognition to the social nature of the heritage of civilization."

To anyone who will investigate this heritage—who will trace the long history of the discovery and the harnessing of the forces of Nature, culminating in such every-day wonders as electric light and power, railway and motor transport, steam ships, aerial craft, X-rays, "Yeoman" wheat, anaesthetics and aseptic surgery, wireless telegraphy and telephony—to mention but a few modern triumphs—it would appear that, if man is "the heir of the ages," this inheritance is a legacy which should render him wealthy beyond measure.

In the days, not so very long ago, before the use of solar dynamic energy—in the form of water-power and the various kinds of heat engines—it was possible by the aid of human muscular energy to produce goods and services sufficient to provide a standard of living in many respects more tolerable than obtains to-day, when the energy available is thousands of times greater.

Surely the men and women of to-day, with the skill to apply all this energy, should be able to satisfy the normal requirements, and partake of the luxuries of life to an extent vastly beyond that possible even one hundred years ago. It is true, of course, that we have "the pictures" and the *Daily Mail*, but.....

To come down to the individual; if the out-of-work ex-Service man, tramping the countryside in the vain endeavour to obtain purchasing-power by the sale of a few packets of shop-soiled stationery, is one of the heirs of the ages, there should be somewhere a legacy due to him as an individual. But he is quite unable to materialize it—to translate it into wealth in any shape or form. Unless, perchance, the Goddess of Fortune should admit him to the ranks of those favoured beings who toil forty-seven hours per week for a wage!

We are not infrequently told that unless we all work with much greater keenness and ability, and strain every nerve to improve our industrial output, we shall fail to maintain the bulk of our population at much above starvation level. And this, forsooth, is the outlook for the people of an empire which possesses not only all the raw materials and other resources necessary for the highest degree of civilization, but plant, skill and intelligence of no mean order.

Why—in the name of all that is ludicrous, why—should we "strain every nerve" when the most conservative experts admit that less than three hours work per person, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, per day, efficiently organized and intelligently co-ordinated, will be ample to provide our whole population with all the necessaries and very many of the luxuries of life?

If, then, we insist upon work, as conceived by the modern Labour leader and capitalist alike, as the only title to purchasing-power, we get a state of affairs in which the making of work is a desirable end in itself, so long as purchasing-power can be distributed thereby. We get a state of affairs in which one section of the community profits by the losses of another section. For instance, when anyone accidentally breaks some article—let us say a dish—it is not uncommon, after the first momentary annoyance, for such a person to observe, by way of consolation, "Ah well, the folk who make dishes have got to live; it's an ill wind, etc." Now the replacement of that dish by a new one necessitates the expenditure of energy-units on the part of a number of persons, and unless those persons enjoy making and transporting dishes, and prefer this method of occupying their time to any other, this expenditure of energy is a misfortune; and a rational economic system should account it a loss to all concerned and a gain to none.

Further, this insistence on human labour renders scientific discovery, as applied to industry, the deadly enemy of the worker, since it aims at displacing his efforts by those of machines, and utilizing other and mightier sources of energy than are available in human muscles. Let no one imagine, however, that this is an argument for a return to the pre-machine age. To occupy ten hours with human labour over work which a machine can accomplish in ten minutes is patently absurd. It would amount to the surrender of our inheritance. Moreover, we shall be told that the use of the machine frees the worker for other enterprises. If these enterprises were of his own volition, well and good; but under the existing system the worker either finds himself tied to the machine for as long hours as he worked previously, or squeezed out of industry and then denied purchasing-power because he does not work.

A "sorry scheme of things" indeed! Is it, however, necessary to "shatter it to bits" before we can "remould it nearer to the heart's desire"?

Mr. G. B. Shaw, in *Major Barbara*, makes one of his characters, Andrew Undershaft, say:—

What do we do here when we spend years of work and thought and thousands of pounds of solid cash on a new gun or an aerial battleship that turns out just a hairsbreadth wrong after all? Scrap it. Scrap it without wasting another hour or another pound on it. Well, you have made for yourself something that you call a morality or a religion or what not. It doesn't fit the facts. Well, scrap it. Scrap it, and get one that does fit. That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities, and its old religions and its old political constitutions. What's the result? In machinery it does very well; but in morals and religion and politics it is working at a loss that brings it nearer bankruptcy every year.

In passing, one might observe here that engineers are not quite the ruthless individuals which Mr. Shaw portrays. Any body of engineers who designed and built a complex machine with a margin of failure so small as almost to spell success would certainly not scrap it. They would probably run an exhaustive series of trials with it, and the experience obtained as a result would be reflected in the designs for subsequent product.

But this by the way. What is of vastly more importance is the lack of sufficient distinction between systems and products of systems. You can scrap a steam engine and dynamo, but you cannot scrap, out of hand, the systems of mechanical and electrical engineering of which they are a product.

With systems, whether economic, financial, political or religious, it must be realized that, so long as they

serve a definite human need, any attempt to scrap the system is perilously likely to end in scrapping humanity, or that portion of it served by the system. And though some of our Communist friends have been credited in certain quarters with considerable ambitions in this respect, still the policy of scrapping the human race as a solution for all its ills—albeit a complete and final solution—has so far failed to elicit any widespread enthusiasm amongst social reformers in general.

There are only two courses open. Either the need must be eliminated or the system *modified*. The first alternative, which is the Freethinker's objective in respect to religious systems, is obviously ruled out in relation to the economic system, and we are faced with the problem of introducing modifications into the existing system which, without any dislocation, will enable it to function efficiently.

Those who have examined the proposals associated with the name of Major Douglas must surely have been struck with the insignificance of the modifications in relation to the magnitude of the benefits to be obtained. These proposals do not contemplate any sudden changes in either the methods or personnel of production, and even existing banks would find their services valuable. The vital modification lies in the manner of issuing credit, and existing institutions can be utilized to this end to a considerable extent.

This great social inheritance to which we are heirs represents an enormous capital upon which a dividend can be paid to all shareholders. The mechanism for accomplishing this—for gradually supplementing, and to some extent supplanting, the wage by the dividend—is a technical matter, and does not for the moment concern us here.

What we need to realize is that if fifteen persons can supply all the requirements of one hundred, then the sensible thing to do is to arrange that the fifteen persons best qualified to undertake the supply shall do so, upon mutually satisfactory terms. Then, having ensured that the hundred persons shall have the goods and services which they need, the manner in which the eighty-five may elect to occupy their time should be left to those eighty-five to decide. But it is absurd to prejudice the efficiency of the productive machinery by any attempt to insert these eighty-five persons into the mechanism.

If we are fully to utilize all our resources we have to recognize that there is simply not room in industry—by which is meant co-operative industry financed from public credit—for more than a fraction, and a decreasing fraction, of the community.

This great legacy of the past can be materialized to all in the present through the application of the social credit principles. In the words of Major Douglas:—

The community creates all the credit there is; there is nothing whatever to prevent the community entering into its own and dwelling therein except it shall be by sheer demonstrated inability to seize the opportunity which at this very moment lies open to it; an opportunity which if seized and used aright would within ten years reduce class-war to an absurdity and politics to the status of a disease.

A. W. COLEMAN.

There is a French *mot* to the effect that the prime use of language is to disguise thought—that is to deceive one's neighbours as to one's real opinions. It could have been said with at least equal accuracy that one of the functions of language is to hide from oneself what one's actual opinions are. To myriads of people the use of certain stereotyped words serves to hide the fact either that they have no genuine opinion at all on that particular subject, or that the opinion expressed is not the only one they hold.—*Peter Simple*.

Correspondence.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The question asked by your correspondent, "A Seeker After Truth," is fair enough to deserve an answer. It is admittedly not easy to contemplate rationally the attributes of a Divine Being, but those Freethinkers who seriously study the universe would do well to think both freely and long before they assume the responsibility of denying the existence of any Designing and Guiding Mind. My answer to the question raised, about how perfection can be ascribed to a Being free from the slightest tendency to wrong-doing, is answered I think by claiming as reasonable the proposition that a man can only be said to have become perfect, when, notwithstanding his power of going wrong, he never exercises that power, but always and under all circumstances acts rightly. It is not the physical impossibility of going wrong, but the utter moral security of never utilizing it, that constitutes what to all of us must seem an unattainable perfection.

The subject of a further question, about ecclesiastical or hierarchical versions of Christianity, I have dealt with sufficiently in the concluding section, especially the concluding chapter, of *Man and the Universe*.

OLIVER LODGE.

QUESTIONS.

SIR,—I have been greatly interested in a copy of the *Freethinker*, sent to me anonymously through the post, and I shall take the paper every week now and henceforth. On a second-hand bookstall, this afternoon, I came across and bought a copy of Mr. Bradlaugh's *Doubts in Dialogue*, and have been much interested in reading the dialogue between an Atheist and a Pantheist, as Pantheism is somewhat fashionable amongst certain people who desire to pose as "advanced thinkers" without incurring the odium of "being Atheistic." On page 51 of *Doubts in Dialogue* the Pantheist says, "Spinoza maintained the infinity of intelligence; do you contend that infinite implies unconditional?"

The Atheist (Mr. Bradlaugh) replies, "Yes, and I affirm that it is impossible to think intelligence, except as characteristic or characteristics of organism or organisms. Nor is it possible to think infinity as perceiving there would then be *no distinguishment between perceiver and perceived*."

I have underlined the last few words because my difficulty is that I myself, as an organic unity *can* and *do* perceive *my own limbs*. If I had my legs cut off I might survive and survey *my own arms*, and also *my legs* (if they were mummified). I should be very grateful to you if you could kindly, through your "Answers to Correspondents" column, give me a little help in my thinking on this subject of personality—personality, despite accident and change. My question is, what is the *I* which can survey *my own limbs*, whether attached to the trunk or detached by accident? Thanking you in anticipation,

ELEMENTARY STUDENT.

[It is impossible to answer the questions put in the above in a couple of sentences. To attempt to do so would only lead to misunderstanding. But we may say two things. First, conscious personality centres in the fact of memory. When we say, "I am the same person that previously existed," all we mean is that we have a memory of previous states of consciousness. Where there is an absence of this kind of memory the experiences passed through form no part of our conscious selves. And in cases of disease where the memory of the past is destroyed, a new personality has to be created or built out of new experiences. With regard to the quotation from Spinoza it does not quite correctly give Spinoza's position. What he argued for was one substance with infinite modes. We know two of these modes. One of these is extension, perceived now as matter and now as motion, the other is mind. But the Spinozic "mind" has nothing to do with immortality. It is a mode of substance, and substantially that is the Atheistic position. Spinoza's own description of what he means by infinite applied to his "modes" is "having no limit." This is a big subject to put in a few lines, but we have done our best.—EDITOR.]

THE VALUE OF SNOBBERY.

SIR,—I am more pleased by Mr. Hands' letter than I have been by anything for a very long time. And so he thinks wearing a camisole over dirty underclothes an artless deception, and no evidence of snobbery. Well! Well! It is quite a different thing from wearing "plus fours" if one does not play "golf"—I believe that is the accepted pronunciation. I am glad he sees snobbery is on the increase as I believe it to be. I dislike it, but I think it possible that it is an evidence of a really useful emotion given a perverted expression by the false standards of the time. Of course the article was intended satirically to emphasize that point of view.

I must thank Mr. Hands for the mighty compliment implied in the "soft impeachment" of his last paragraph, but I hesitate to accept it—such is my modesty.

G. E. FUSSELL.

THE DEVIL'S CHAPLAIN.

SIR,—I was interested to read Mr. Cutner's comment on my "biography" of Robert Taylor published in your column. I have not the *Diegesis* by me as I sent it some few months back to Sir Walter Strickland in Mexico. Perhaps when he sees this discussion, he will say whether my impression is correct or not. My impression is that Taylor *does* collect, in the *Diegesis*, a vast amount of data in support of the astro-myth theory and his contention that the personality of Christ is a plagiarism from Pagan saviours. His *Devil's Pulpit*, whilst racy in parts, and forced in its humour in other parts, is much inferior. It argues brilliance but sometimes suggests shallowness. The *Diegesis* is less racy, truly learned, and reveals depth. I am quite sure my impression is correct, for I have studied the *Diegesis* often and have consulted it at distances of months and years, in quite different moods, always with the same result and conviction.

Mr. Cutner doubts if the *Devil's Pulpit* would stand the test of modern criticism. In the main, yes, as to its conclusions, though its style is not too pleasing always. I was much interested—I believe modern affectation uses the word "intrigued"—to note in re-reading Eusebius that he, with some other apologists, contended that *not* only "Christ!"—which is a title or office and need not relate to any one person—but also "Jesus"—which is a name—was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and he has a great chapter identifying "Jesus" with "Joshua." It is obvious that Taylor, who founds his theory partly on parallels like this, is interpreting the views of the Church Fathers and not wresting facts from their context.

I quite agree, and emphasize again the fact, that no Christian apologist has ever answered Taylor's smashing indictment of the Christian religion. That does not affect the question whether a man called Jesus Christ ever existed. Taylor actually attacked the finished Christ myth, the half if not completely deified saviour of the sixth century. This Christ had been grafted into the Pagan deities. But he does not grapple with the growing conception of Jesus's character, with the person whom the earlier Christians and the heresiarchs believed in; a quite different individual. I quite agree that even this Christ never existed; but, as I have shown elsewhere, finally we all become myths. Orthodoxy on the one hand, Christ Church established, and Taylor, the Free-thought critic on the other, agreed on a certain conception. The one side said this Christ had existed, and Taylor, with much wealth of learning, and rigor of reasoning, showed that no such person ever could have existed. Posterity will applaud Taylor.

As to the Nazareth and Bethlehem births, seeing that the latter is founded on a forgery, and supported by a lie, it is obvious that there never was a Bethlehem birth. In the pamphlet from which Mr. Cutner quotes I trace the date of this invention. The Nazareth birth is more reasonable as it is not strained to support a miracle and does not rest on a forgery. I am open to believe that also never occurred if Mr. Cutner wishes to convert me. I have no bias in the matter. But I do not wish to spoil sound criticism by unnecessary scepticism.

I regret all my copies of the pamphlet are in Glasgow

and I cannot correct Mr. Cutner's excerpts. In essentials they are correct. But I do not contend that Jesus was a Communist and Anarchist. I say something very like that, but there is a difference and a distinction.

Personally, I would like to have a friendly discussion on the public platform with a fellow Freethinker as to whether a person called Jesus Christ did live. It is obvious, I do not mean a God, only a man. I think the discussion could be interesting in the scholarship, the thought, and the research it would open up, rather than for the actual value of the immediate subject of debate. No Christian could discuss the matter with scholarship or usefulness, but we might do so ourselves. I am prepared to uphold the affirmative.

However, whether Jesus lived or not, the religion associated with his name is of no importance, and Atheism is the proper foundation of all healthy intellectual activity.

GUY A. ALDRED.

Church Windows.

GIVE me the sunlight,
Or I feel me half-dead.
Holding myself erect,
Among living things shall I ramble,
Not amble
Along like some timorous insect,
Or being, bowed with a fearsome dread
Of a Judgment shamble.....
Slinking around as I tread.
I hate church windows at sight
Or symbol-thought of them;
They seem to sicken the sight
Of those mortal men
And women
Who spread
Themselves couchant within
Each musty, mirky house of prayerful meeting
They frequent: each sheep-fold for fearsome bleeting.
Over conscious of each silly sin
They imagine
The Unknown and Unknowable
Will prove pardonable.
There they're bowing to god or gods they claim
Of holy grace and holy name,
Asking in tones of fearful dread
Forgiveness of the Sin.....
The vital sin of living, daring to live, and condemn
Those who, like I, ramble without,
And find more sanity in the Sun;
More real health and fellow-feeling and joy where'er
Than in [he glows,
The church encircled by angel-scattered windows.

C. B. WARWICK.

Obituary.

On Thursday, September 27, the remains of our old and valued friend and co-worker, Mr. Frederick Wood, were cremated at West Norwood Crematorium, when a large number of relatives and friends, as well as representatives of the Cab Drivers' Union, the South London Secular Society, the National Secular Society, and other kindred bodies, attended to pay their last token of regard for one who, in life, had done all in his power to promote the happiness and well-being of his fellows. Mr. Frederick Wood in his early life was a cab driver, and in the 'eighties had on many occasions driven the famous Charles Bradlaugh to the Hall of Science during his great Parliamentary struggles and used to tell how when Bradlaugh tendered his fare, he Mr. Wood begged of the great Freethinker to keep it to "fight the bigots" with. Although in later years Mr. Wood changed his occupation, he always kept up his connection with the cab drivers and was a generous supporter of their Union, and it is no wonder, therefore, that on the occasion of his funeral a large number of Taxi's followed the carriages

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