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## Views and Opinions.

### Impertinent Piety.

A thing established is not bound to be objectionable, but it tends to become so. In the first place, it is very likely that because it has lived long enough to become established it has outlived some, if not all, of its usefulness. Conditions change, and the belief or the institution that was taken up on account of its utility acts itself as an agent of change that helps to put it out of date. That is one reason why we have so often the phenomenon of the Radical becoming a Conservative in his old age. He has not gone back; it is the age that has gone on and he has failed to keep pace with it. In the second place, the mere fact of establishment tends to breed a quite unnecessary feeling of superiority, and an air of condescension towards other things not so fortunately placed. What is at first accepted as a privilege, is next taken as a matter of course, and later demanded as a right. It is an insult to question its claims, while the power it wields provides numerous occasions for the exercise of what is little short of actual impertinence. It is, in fact, true of both individuals and institutions that power and privilege are things which very few are able to withstand. Hard as it is to suffer defeat, it is still more trying and still more a test of character to overcome the temptations provided by success.

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### Christians and Others.

Religion offers the finest field for the illustration of the truth of what has been said, as it does of so many other unlovely mental and moral qualities. Religious beliefs have been so long an established fact in social life that many honestly believe life to be impossible without it. It was for centuries regarded as a criminal offence to question its claims. Even when this is not legally punishable, it is considered "bad form," and results in social condemnation. The claims of others are first of all ignored, and finally treated as non-existent; a temper of mind is created which in its operations are little short of being actually impertinent. Christians, for example, calmly speak of this being a Christian country, and in practice ignore the fact that there are millions of other people who are not Christians, everyone of whom should have the same legal rights and the same social privileges as themselves. In the long-standing controversy over religious edu-

cation in the public schools, Nonconformists and Churchmen discuss the subject as though so long as they can agree upon the kind of religion that is to be taught in the schools, there is no need to trouble about other people. In the matter of the Blasphemy Laws Christians demand a special consideration for their own religious opinions which they would never dream of extending to other people, and are surprised when here and there are some who are driven to make a practical protest against such pretensions. There are scores of illustrations of the same kind that might be cited, and never does it dawn upon the Christian intelligence that in most instances this attitude is little better than a vulgar impertinence.

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### Unbelief and Morals.

A good illustration of this pious impertinence is found in a single sentence which reaches me in a report of a religious meeting held in the Queen's Hall, Blackburn. The speaker was dwelling upon the need of the town for Christianity, and he said there were large numbers of people in Blackburn who might be saved by the Gospel. These were "the wicked, the weary, the wretched, the doubtful, the agnostic, the sinful and the abandoned." I do not imagine for a moment that the speaker had any idea of the gross impertinence involved in the classification. This lumping in of the Freethinker with the wicked and weary and abandoned is quite common, and it serves its purpose. It helps to confuse, in the muddled mind of the general public, the Freethinker with all sorts of undesirable characters and unhappy states of mind, and in the end the average Christian takes it for granted that the man who is not a Christian must be of a lower type than himself, probably a bad man and certainly a wretched one. If a Freethinker were to lump Christians with criminals and undesirables, he would be told that he was indulging in vulgar abuse. But the Christian indulges in this genuinely vulgar abuse with the freedom established by long practice and because those who should correct him too often remain silent. For this habitual assumption of moral superiority appears to have a terrifying effect upon certain unbelievers. The gregarious instinct in them overpowers their individuality, and as they do not wish to be ranked—even in name—with an anti-social group, they remain silent where they should be vocal, and thus encourage the Christian in his impertinent arrogance.

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### The Superior Person.

In one of his books—the *Praeterita*, I think—Ruskin speaks of his immeasurable disgust on hearing a preacher in some miserable little chapel with a congregation of about forty, damning all who were not included in his own miserable following. No doubt the preacher was quite unconscious of the impudence of it all, as unconscious as is the man who comes round delivering tracts at one's door inviting us to strive to reach his own heights of spiritual and moral elevation. But the attitude is very common. The Bishop of London once said that when a man doubted the



truth of the scriptures he always looked back to some dark chapter in that man's life for an explanation; and some years ago the Rev. Dr. Horton suggested that all who did not believe in immortality should be banished from human society. And how often does one hear a Christian, with the air of one struggling to be impartial, saying that in his opinion there are some Freethinkers who are as good as Christians. The impudence and the egotism of it! And the Christian actually feels that he has proved his own worthiness by conceding so much. Or one meets with the Christian who professes his profound sorrow on hearing that one is a Freethinker. Both of these group well with the converted ex-convict, ex-drunkard, or ex-wife beater, praying that some poor lost brother may see the light and so reach the pinnacle of excellence that he has attained. They are all samples of the impudent egotism developed by Christianity. The majority of conscious Christians appear to move in an atmosphere of spiritual and mental superiority. The narrower, the more ignorant they are, the more certain they are of their incontestible excellence. In secular matters it is common to find the man who is ignorant, oppressed by his shortcomings. In religion ignorance serves only to give point and power to egotism. When Dickens drew the character of Uriah Heep he pilloried this type for ever. It is the type of the man who struts—or crawls—through life with his mouth filled with professions of meekness and humility, but with the underlying conviction of his own immeasurable superiority to all around him.

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#### A Psychological Product.

I once twitted a Christian with the impertinence involved in his unasked and unwanted concern for my spiritual welfare. He replied that every man was really his brother's keeper. I retorted that while that might be so, the Christian seemed to regard himself as everyone's warder. And that, I think, expresses the situation. The Christian persists in treating the rest of the world as actual or potential criminals, and himself as divinely commissioned to take them in charge. A very cursory examination of these people engaged in the work of "saving" others will show that with ninety-five per cent. of them the motive power is not so much the desire to elevate others as to minister to their own sense of importance. They are the salt of the earth, the light set upon a hill, the chosen people of the new dispensation. Psychologically, the "humility" of the Christian marks an egotism of the most profound description, and it is not without justification that the more thoughtful of the Christian leaders have constantly warned their followers against the sin of "spiritual pride." But, as is usual, it is those who need the lesson least who have taken it to heart. The coarse, the brutal, the unintellectual, have merely had their egotism and impertinence strengthened by their belief. They have accepted themselves as superior persons because they held a creed which damned thousands of better men than themselves, and have been strengthened in their impertinence by the identification, for professional purposes, of moral worth with intellectual difference. There is small wonder that with so lengthy a reign the impertinent egotism of the Christian has become so much a part of his nature that he is almost unaware of its existence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Did the Gospel Jesus ever Live?

### III.

#### ATTEMPTS TO RECONSTRUCT HIM.

As already intimated, taking the Four Gospels as they stand, there is no possible escape from the conclusion that their hero is a supernatural being, supernaturally born, whose brief life is crowded with supernatural performances, and whose death on the cross is rendered efficacious for the world's redemption by his supernatural resurrection from the dead and his ascension to the right hand of his Father in heaven as the World's Advocate. Out of such a portrait there naturally arose the doctrine of the proper Deity of Jesus Christ. Of course, there always was a minority that could not swallow such a dogma, insisting upon the absolutely undivided unity of the Divine nature. These people were the Unitarians of the early Church, who, while not rejecting the historicity of the Gospels, could not accept them except as interpreted into harmony with their conception of God. For long and painful ages the Trinitarians and the Unitarians indulged in the most tumultuous and tortuous disputes concerning the nature of the person and the purpose served by the life and death of Jesus. It was a mental battle, generally ending in physical blows. It was to put an end to this disastrous conflict that the first General Council was held at Nicaea. After the most angry discussions, often descending to bodily violence, the Trinitarians won by a snatch vote; but it was a short-lived victory. Ultimately, however, as a sect the Unitarians were crushed to death under the iron heel of the all-powerful orthodox Church.

Modern Unitarianism owes its origin to the Protestant Reformation, which was itself, though unconsciously, the outcome of the New Learning. The New Learning, which in reality was the Old Learning of Greece, Alexandria, and Rome, revived after a thousand years of suspended animation at the command of the Church, this New Learning began once more to shine upon a world enslaved and darkened under the tyrannical rule of an infallible priesthood with the result that in its light many naturally intelligent men were impelled to doubt and challenge the truth of the orthodox dogma of the Deity of the Saviour of the world. Two Socini, uncle and nephew called Laelius and Faustus, laboured hard, and, assisted by other leaders, they succeeded in disseminating the Unitarian dogma throughout Europe, especially in Poland, Transylvania and Italy. It also extended as far as England and America; but it was in Transylvania that it took the deepest root, where it still flourishes with one hundred congregations, under the supervision of a bishop. In America, Unitarianism has had great and distinguished men in its service, such as Dr. Channing and Theodore Parker, while in England its early advocates were Lardner (1730), Priestley (1767), and Lindsey (1773), some of whom had to endure severe persecution by the orthodox Church; but they were successful in making place for Unitarianism in this country. Lindsey voluntarily gave up a good living in Yorkshire, and came up to London, and gathered the first professedly Unitarian Church in the Metropolis.

Now, what is Unitarianism but one of the earliest attempts to reconstruct the Gospel Jesus on purely humanitarian lines? And there is no choice but to admit that it has been a practical failure. It has not caught on because it is at once uncritical and illogical. Unitarianism has reduced Jesus to the status of a mere man, whilst treating him as an object worthy of absolute obedience if not of positive worship. This glaring inconsistency was pointed out by Ralph Waldo Emerson eighty-six years ago. It will be remembered that

The widow had retired; she had been reading her book of *prêtres*, as everyone should do who has been cheating people all day long.—“*The Dog Fiend or Snarleywow.*” *Captain Marryat.*



Emerson himself began his public life as a Unitarian minister, though he was too broad-minded to remain for long in any dogmatic Christian or semi-Christian ministry. In the year 1838 he delivered an Address before the graduating class of the divinity school at Cambridge. It was one of the most arresting and courageous appeals ever made to young men about to become clergymen. We will take the account of it furnished by Dr. Henry Van Dyke, a well-known American Presbyterian minister and professor, in his article on Emerson in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Dr. Van Dyke says:—

His address was an impassioned protest against what he called "the defects of historical Christianity" (its undue reliance upon the personal authority of Jesus, and its failure to explore the moral nature of man as the fountain of established teaching), and a daring plea for absolute self-reliance and a new inspiration of religion. "In the soul," he said, "let redemption be sought. Wherever a man comes, there comes revolution. The old is for slaves. Go alone. Refuse the good models, even those which are sacred to the imagination of men. Cast conformity behind you, and acquaint men at first hand with Deity." In this address Emerson laid his hand on the sensitive point of Unitarianism, which rejected the divinity of Jesus, but held fast to his supreme authority. A blaze of controversy sprang up at once. Conservatives attacked him; Radicals defended him.

As a religious system Unitarianism is doubtless much superior to orthodox Christianity. There is no doctrine of the Atonement in it, nor of the forgiveness of sins through the merits of Christ's death. Ingersoll once attended a Unitarian Club dinner, by invitation, and gave an address, in the course of which he said:—

The Unitarian Church has done more than any other Church—and may be more than all other Churches to substitute character for creed, and to say that a man should be judged by his spirit; by the climate of his heart; by the autumn of his generosity; by the spring of his hope; that he should be judged by what he does; by the influence that he exerts, rather than by the mythology he may believe. And whether there be one God or a million, I am perfectly satisfied that every duty that devolves upon me is within my reach; it is something that I can do myself, without the help of anybody else, either in this world or any other (*Works*, Vol. XII., p. 148).

We are in complete agreement with Colonel Ingersoll. We, too, have great respect for the Unitarian Church and its ministers, who strike us as the most reasonable and fair-minded of all the clergy. But the great fault we find with Unitarianism in this article is that it claims to be founded upon the teachings of the New Testament, which is a claim it cannot justify except by a forced and false interpretation of those teachings.

Other attempts to reconstruct the Gospel Jesus have been made within living memory. In 1863 there was published one of the most charming books ever written, entitled the *Life of Jesus*, by Ernest Renan. Renan had been brought up in the Catholic Church, and was preparing to enter the priesthood when he was assailed by serious doubts, which prevented his becoming a priest. He was an incomparable literary artist rather than an exact critic, and everything he touched turned to poetry. He treats the Evangelists as fallible authors, and Jesus himself as by no means above making mistakes, and as lacking in strength of character. His Jesus was a lovable creation of his own imagination, and has, as one writer tells us, "The Celtic magic of ancient romance and the simplicity, the naturalness, the accent of veracity, which the nineteenth century prized so highly." But while all this is perfectly true, the fact remains that as a reconstruction of the Gospel Jesus, Renan's *Life of Jesus*

must be characterized as a woeful failure. The character of Jesus is most fascinatingly delineated, but it is not admirable and does not even remind us of the hero of the Gospels.

We now approach a really critical attempt to reconstruct the Gospel Jesus. Professor Schmiedel's article, *Gospels*, in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, is a masterpiece. In 1905 the same Biblical critic contributed a Preface to a little book entitled *Jesus*, by his friend, Dr. Arno Neumann, in which he repeats and defends the theory set forth in the *Encyclopædia* article. In his estimation the Gospel Jesus is and can be nothing more than a man, which is also the view held by Dr. Neumann, who endeavours to show how the Life of Jesus should be written. J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Continued.)

## The Making of Bigots.

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

DEAN INGE, in a sermon at St. Mary Abchurch, before a congregation of head-teachers attending the Headmasters' Conference in the Guildhall, London, spoke on the subject of religious education. The Dean said there was a system by means of which they might turn a child of twelve years of age into a perfect and finished bigot, and perhaps render him immune to all other influences for the rest of his life. This method inflicted a deadly injury on a child's mind. Such methods were best left to Communist Sunday-schools.

Like Voltaire's priest, Dean Inge feels it his imperative duty as a minister of the Church of God to pass on to others any troubles that come his way. In this instance he hands the burden to the unfortunate teachers, who are in so many instances simply under the thumb of the priests. He is also sorry for the wicked Communists, but not too sorry. He sees the mote in their eyes, but ignores the beam in the ecclesiastical optic.

Headmasters have much to put up with, but they are innocent of the charge of turning out "machine-made dogmatists of twelve." That sort of thing is done so much better by priests, especially priests of the Anglican Church, of which Dean Inge is so prominent a representative. Priestcraft is a sorry trade at its best, but it is seen at its worst in connection with national education. For every despised Communist Sunday-school there are a thousand schools in which the power of the priest is supreme and his word law. And every Church Sunday-school is a veritable factory of fables and hotbed of dogma and bigotry, for the undoing of future citizens.

There are twenty-five thousand priests of the Anglican Church, and it is interesting to know what are their ideas. Each one of these priests subscribes to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion on his ordination, and these articles are of the most extraordinary character. They include the belief that Christ went bodily to hell; that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost; that Adam was the first man, and that he ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which countless millions of human beings are damned to everlasting torture; that the Roman Catholic religion (the parent of the Anglican Church) is a vain invention of man; that the Hebrew Bible is the Word of God; and that King George the Fifth is the head of the Church of Christ. Nor is this all.

The Ecclesiastical Canons are still in force, except they conflict with the laws of the land, and the Law



Courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy, of whom, be it remembered, there are twenty-five thousand. The first dozen canons are aimed at Nonconformists, who are fellow Christians, and not Freethinkers. All but one of these first dozen canons ends with a curse, which is a distinguishing mark of vetebrate Christianity. If you deny the royal supremacy in Church affairs you are cursed. If you deny that the Anglican Church teaches the pure doctrine of Christ you are cursed. If you say that the Prayer Book is out of harmony with the Bible you are cursed. And so on, and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity, which thinketh evil of all men who do not trouble the pew-openers. But that the law of the land sometimes overrides these antiquated canons, everybody who refused to attend Church should be cursed, and the names read out in Churches. As for the wicked readers of this paper, their mild fate is contempt in this world, and damnation in the next.

This antiquated barbarity is the bedrock foundation of the Anglican Church, whose bishops legislate in the House of Lords, and whose priests spread their poison gas from twenty-five thousand pulpits, and an equal number of Sunday-school rostrums. It is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant people, should be taught such mischievous nonsense in language which leads them to believe, and is carefully calculated to that end, that millions of their countrymen are pariahs and outcasts. It is an insult and an affront to the spirit of Democracy, and how Free Churchmen can for a moment suggest union with such a body as the Anglican Church passes comprehension. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a petticoat priest. Free Churchmen of an older generation knew their enemies, and fought them stubbornly. Their degenerate descendants seem ready to sob their repentance on the priest's robes, and babble of re-union.

Dean Inge should know these things, for has he not signed his name to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion? Teachers in ordinary day-schools are engaged in a difficult and onerous profession, but, unlike priests, they do not pretend to be sacred persons, and a caste apart from their fellows. The fact is that in this country education has been hampered by the desire of the priests to ally religious teaching with the ordinary school curriculum. The most important task of Democracy is to free the schools from the domination of the priests and their barbarism.

MIMNERMUS.

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## The Blessings of God.

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A CITY Freethinker, perhaps suggesting a kindred spirit, sent me recently a copy of Hugh Macdonald's *Rambles Round Glasgow*, a charming, informative, if somewhat garrulous account of the city and its surroundings of some eighty years ago. Botanist, naturalist, antiquary, poet, philosopher, journalist, etc., all in some more or less parochial way, and mildly religious, the poor, hardworking, ill-paid literary enthusiast has produced a volume of sketches well worthy of a place in the library and in the heart of the citizen. A course of the *Freethinker* would have improved his style, but writing in the *Glasgow Citizen* of his day (or ours) he had a less exacting, if more restricted, medium of expression. Here and there the Rambler's "parochial prattle" is varied by legend and authentic story. The story of Lieutenant George Spearing, who fell into the shaft of a disused coal-pit, where he re-

mained undiscovered for seven days and seven nights, is so humanly interesting and so illuminative of the religious mind that it seems worth repeating here:—

On Wednesday, September 13, 1769, says the narrator (in the *Gentleman's Magazine*), between three and four o'clock, I went into a little wood (on Kelvin side) with a design of gathering a few hazel nuts.

I think I could not have been in the wood more than a quarter of an hour, nor have gathered more than ten nuts, before I unfortunately fell into an old coal-pit, exactly seventeen yards deep, which had been made through a solid rock. I was some little time insensible. Upon recovering my recollection, I found myself sitting (nearly as a tailor does at his work), the blood flowing pretty freely from my mouth; and I thought that I had broken a blood-vessel, and consequently had not long to live; but to my great comfort, I soon discovered that the blood proceeded from a wound in my tongue, which I suppose I had bitten in my fall. Looking at my watch, it was ten minutes past four; and, getting up, I surveyed my limbs, and, to my inexpressible joy, found that not one was broken.

Night now approached, when it began to rain, not in gentle showers, but in torrents of water, as is generally experienced at the autumnal equinox. The pit I had fallen into was about five feet in diameter; but not having been working for several years, the subterranean passages were choked up, so that I was exposed to the rain, which continued with very small intermission, till the day of my release; and, indeed, in a very short time, I was completely wet through. In this comfortless condition I endeavoured to take some repose. A forked stick that I found in the pit, and which I placed diagonally to the side of it, served alternately to support my head as a pillow, or my body occasionally, which was much bruised; but in the whole time I remained here I do not think that I ever slept one hour together. Having passed a disagreeable and cheerless night, I was somewhat cheered with the appearance of daylight, and the melody of a robin red-breast that had perched directly over the mouth of the pit; and this pretty little warbler continued to visit my quarters every morning during my confinement, which I construed into a happy omen of future deliverance; and I sincerely believe the trust I had in Providence, and the company of this little bird, contributed much to that serenity of mind I constantly enjoyed to the last. At the distance of about 100 yards, in a direct line from the pit, there was a water-mill. The flint-mill was still nearer. I could frequently hear the horses going this road to and from the mill; frequently I heard human voices; and I could distinctly hear the ducks and hens about the mill. I made the best use of my voice on every occasion; but it was to no manner of purpose, for the wind, which was constantly high, blew in a line from the mill to the pit, which easily accounts for what I heard; and, at the same time, my voice was carried the contrary way. I cannot say I suffered much from hunger. After two or three days that appetite ceased, but my thirst was intolerable; and, though it almost constantly rained, yet I could not till the third day preserve a drop of it, as the earth at the bottom of the pit sucked it up as fast as it ran down. In this distress I sucked my clothes, but from them could extract but little moisture. The shock I had received in the fall, together with the breaking of my ribs, kept me I imagine, in a continual fever; I cannot otherwise account for my suffering so much more from thirst than I did from hunger. At last I discovered the thigh-bone of a bull (which I afterwards heard, had fallen into the pit about eighteen years before me) almost covered with the earth. I dug it up, and the large end of it left a sort of cavity that I suppose might contain a quart. This the water gradually drained into, but so very slowly, that it was a considerable time before I could dip a nutshell full at a time, which I emptied into the palm of my hand, and so drank it. The water now began to increase pretty fast, so that I was glad to enlarge my reservoir, insomuch that, on the fourth or fifth day I



had a sufficient supply; and this water was certainly the preservation of my life.

At the bottom of the pit there were great quantities of reptiles, such as frogs, toads, large black snails or slugs, etc. These noxious creatures would frequently crawl about me, and often got into my reservoir; nevertheless I thought it the sweetest water I had ever tasted, and at this distance of time the remembrance of it is so sweet, that were it now possible to obtain any of it, I am perfectly satisfied I could swallow it with avidity. I have frequently taken both frogs and toads out of my neck, where I suppose they took shelter while I slept. The toads I always destroyed, but the frogs I carefully preserved, as I did not know but I might be under the necessity of eating them, which I should not have scrupled to have done had I been very hungry.

Saturday, the 16th, there fell but little rain, and I had the satisfaction to hear the voices of some boys in the wood. Immediately I called out with all my might, but it was in vain, though I afterwards learned that they actually heard me, but being prepossessed with an idle story of a wild man being in the wood, they ran away affrighted.

At length the morning, September 20, the happy morning for my deliverance, came; a day that, while my memory lasts, I will always celebrate with gratitude to heaven. Through the brambles and bushes that covered the mouth of the pit I could discover the sun shining bright, and my pretty warbler was chanting his melodious strains, when my attention was roused by a confused noise of human voices, which seemed to be approaching fast towards the pit; immediately I called out, and most agreeably surprised several of my acquaintances, who were in search of me. As soon as they heard my voice they all ran towards the pit, and I could distinguish a well-known voice exclaim, "Good God! he is still living!" Another of them, though a very honest North Briton, betwixt his surprise and joy, could not help asking me, in the Hibernian style, if I were still living. I told him I was, "and hearty, too," and then gave them particular directions how to proceed in getting me out. Fortunately, at that juncture a collier, from a working pit in the neighbourhood, was passing along the road, and, hearing an unusual noise in the wood, his curiosity prompted him to learn the occasion. By his assistance and a rope from the mill, I was soon safely landed on *terra firma*. The miller's wife had very kindly brought some milk warm from the cow: but, on my coming into the fresh air, I grew rather faint and could not taste it. Need I be ashamed to acknowledge that the first dictates of my heart prompted me to fall on my knees, and ejaculate a silent thanksgiving to the God of my deliverance, since, at this distant time, I never think of it but the tear of gratitude starts from my eye?

Such is the quaint, unvarnished tale of this simple and gallant gentleman's terrible experience and "miraculous" escape; such his simple and sublime faith in the God of his deliverance; such the pious magnanimity of soul that never dreamed of weighing the misfortune against the deliverance; in such an unquestioning spirit—happy condition! the faithful sing:—"Praise God from whom all blessings flow"; only the querulous Freethinker asks whence the calamities come, and finding no answer forms his own opinion; and he is charitable, he would not deny any man, in his extremity, any comfort, however irrational, from any source, real or imagined; it is his misfortune, not his fault, that the divine debit and credit is all too nicely balanced in the ledger of his brain; it is not that he sees too dimly, but too clearly, that makes him an Atheist.

"Though he slay me yet will I trust in him," says heroic faith. The poor lieutenant was still more severely tried: wrongly doctored, one of his legs mortified, and had to be amputated; but, after all, the good

gentleman was able to conclude his story with the words: "To this day I bless God I do enjoy perfect health, and I have since been the happy father of nine children." But perhaps the cheerful spirit and the good constitution were the real Providence: we have known these to be the like Providence of the confirmed sceptic.

ANDREW MILLAR.

## At the Dance.

The cymbals crash,  
And the dancers walk,  
With long silk stockings  
And arms of chalk,  
Butterfly skirts  
And white breasts bare,  
And shadows of dead men  
Watching 'em there.

—Alfred Noyes.

LIKE many omnivorous readers I am given to *musings*, and, in the midst of the most distracting circumstances, can subjectively withdraw myself from mundane affairs and remain engrossed in my own thoughts:—

The world forgetting; by the world forgot.

A useful habit when one is engaged in monotonous and distasteful work; or being bored stiff by neighbours who *will* give you their views on the fiscal question; but apt to be dangerous when crossing the Strand!

The reader who is at all conversant with the modern terpsichorean art will, however, admit that it is a feat of no little difficulty to throw oneself into a trance state whilst a jazz-band is inflicting an ear-splitting "rag" on a ball-room full of revellers. How I came to do it, therefore, is somewhat of a mystery. Maybe I had danced myself dizzy, and so lost rational contact with my surroundings, or perhaps the delicate perfume in my partner's hair had stolen across my senses and momentarily deprived me of the faculty for coherent thought. At any rate the room full of dancers suddenly became blurred and indistinct; if I was conscious of them at all it was only as phantom figures in a shadow-box; whilst even the jazz-band blaring out, "Yes! We have no bananas" became as dim and distant as the "horns of Elf-land faintly blowing." My feet moved, and my shoulders swayed mechanically, as I traced in my mind's eye the evolution of the dance, and sought to arrive at some conception of its meaning and significance. Dancing, thought I, probably had its beginning in the jubilant antics of our pre-human ancestors. Later on, primitive man would—as anthropology reveals—celebrate his victory over his enemies by a war-dance not really unlike our modern fox-trots.

It was a fascinating thought, and for the moment I returned to contemplate the present scene, where:—

Fat, wet bodies  
Go waddling by,  
Girdled with satin,  
Though God knows why;  
Gripped by satyrs  
In white and black,  
With a fat, wet hand  
On the fat, wet back.

I smiled! How foolishly respectable we all were. Even the "ox-eyed matron" with the painted face and flapper-like smirk, who was throwing herself about as if she was a Babylonian slave, was too respectable to be interesting. Of course, she *thought* she was the very incarnation of abandonment. Poor dear! she was "naughty" only in intention; fed up with the common round and daily task, and choosing this method of showing what a "devil" she would be, if only—well, if only she had the courage. How different the scene on Armistice night when—but I digress.



Has it ever struck you, gentle reader, how aptly dancing expresses the spirit of the time? The fox-trot, one-step, and tango, how admirably they reflect the unrest of these post-war days. They are neither graceful nor disgraceful, but just boisterous expressions of a period of transition, and will pass away when life returns to the normal. How admirably the Roger de Coverley and stately Minuet reflected the spirit of the staid Georgian and Early Victorian eras. The days of crinolines and side-whiskers (strange, is it not, that those side-whiskers did not inspire the thought of our monkey ancestry?), of smug respectability and pious hypocrisy. How shocked they would have been at the short-skirted, bobbed-haired, corsetless brunette who confided to me (to the music of the band) that she didn't "give a good gosh darn!" The war-dance, the minuet, the fox-trot, all reflecting the spirit of their age.

After all, the most pregnant teaching of evolution is that the most trivial and apparently unconnected facts and incidents assume a wider and a deeper significance when viewed in their relation to the evolutionary process as a whole. Nothing happens haphazard. Nothing is isolated. Blaise Pascal tells us that: "The whole succession of men throughout the ages should be considered as ONE MAN ever living and constantly learning"; and when one views life from this standpoint it not only lights up one's understanding, but enables us to view the drama of life with ever-increasing wonder and delight.

As we wended our way homeward in the small hours of the morning, I still mused.

"Penny for your thoughts!" exclaimed my companion.

"I was thinking of a poem," I replied, and quoted:

Then suddenly the tune went false,  
The dancers wearied of the waltz;  
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl,  
And down the long and silent street  
The dawn with silver-sandalled feet,  
Crept like a frightened girl.

"Oh, I say! What rot," she exclaimed impatiently. I chided her not. Of what use is it to rebuke the Spirit of the Age?

VINCENT J. HANDS.

## Pious Hypocrisy.

MAHOMET.—Thus saith the Lord.

SERGIUS.—He hath said many things which nobody minds.  
—W. S. Landor: *Imaginary Conversations*.

THIS is an age of weak faith and strong profession. The grand alternative "Believe or be damned" is changed to "Conform or be ostracized." You cannot tell what a man believes from the Church he attends or the creed he subscribes. It is an understood thing that practice does not indicate conviction, and an equally understood thing that no one must say so. Hypocrisy reigns everywhere; it is cultivated as a virtue, and dignified with fine names. To have an intellectual conscience is to insult one's neighbours. There is no honesty required, or even desirable, except that which keeps us out of the police-court and the black list of "society." Every sincere man who refuses to countenance a fashionable lie is regarded as a vulgar person who should be banished from the company of gentlemen, and he may consider himself fortunate if he is not left a prey to the wild beasts of persecution.

We need not believe, but we must pretend to. We may reject every doctrine of Christianity, but we must still call ourselves Christians. We may disbelieve any portion of the Bible, but we must still call it the Word of God. We may despise the priests, but we must

still maintain them as part of the established order of things, and show them an outward respect.

This is the creed of men of the world and that of piety is no better. Where is there any vital faith? The Bible is said to be God's word, the treasury of truth, the depository of morals, our guide in life, and our consolation in death. But whose practice conforms to this belief? Ask any Christian to carry out the injunctions of God, and he will tell you, with a bland smile, that times have changed, that what is lawful is not always expedient, and that even religion must be interpreted by common sense. We agree with him, and we are anxious to know why he calls us "infidels" for acting in the same way.

Nine-tenths of the Old Testament are quietly ignored and at least three-fourths of the New. The Mosaic law and the Mosaic cosmogony share the same fate, and no one tries to live by the Sermon on the Mount. God the Son said, "Swear not at all," yet oaths are taken in Parliament and in every court of the land. Pious people fly in the face of Jesus Christ six days out of every seven. They do not sell all they have and give to the poor; they do carry purses and keep plenty of scrip; they take thought for the morrow; they lay up treasures on earth, and use camphor against the moth and policemen against thieves; they consider very deeply what they shall put on; they do not give to everyone that asks; they will not give you their cloaks if you steal their coats, nor turn the other cheek when one is smitten, nor go with you two miles after being compelled to go one, unless you carry them; and, although they pray, they expect no answer, but leave the healing of the sick to the doctor, and the removal of mountains to the railway navy. To conclude the farce, they go to church on Sunday and confess themselves miserable sinners, yet if you were to call them so on Monday morning they would knock you down.

Christianity is declared to be part and parcel of the law of the land. The man who first said so meant it, and consistently burnt witches to death. Those who say it now do not mean it. They know that Jews sit in Parliament and help to make our laws, and that the name of Christ has long been swept away from our public proceedings. All they meant is that the fiction shall be upheld in order to punish honest men who have the courage to ridicule their hypocrisy.

The Bible is very little read. Millions of good Christians find the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Police News* more attractive. It is never quoted in Parliament, in Town Councils, or other public bodies. When any subject is being discussed, no one ever thinks of asking what the Bible says upon it. In every case it is *shelved*. It is becoming more and more a fetish, to be revered but not studied, and the fate of Uzzah is threatened to all who approach it rashly. But Freethinkers are not easily frightened. They mean to destroy the fetish, and they will succeed.

A grave responsibility rests on all men in this age. When imposture is rife and hypocrisy persecutes probity, whoever is not for Truth is against it. Let all honest men come out of the camp of the wicked, and be no longer participators in their iniquity.

Meanwhile let the true Freethinker stand erect like a man; look every lie, however respectable, in the face; tell it plainly what it is, and smite and spare not.

This may be called eccentric, self-opinionated, or perverse. No matter. The soldier of truth and honesty must expect hard names when he is not taking hard blows. There was a time when he faced nearly certain death or disablement. He need not tremble at angry language now. Nor is he so lonely a fighter as he was. Thousands are with him in sympathy, if not in open effort. Moreover, he has many comrades standing around him in the struggle. It is no longer



a case of the world against one man, or of a multitude against a handful. Freethinkers in the thick of the great battle feel that they are winning. Their victory is only a question of time. It may be years, it may be generations, it may even be centuries, but the end itself is certain, however long it may be deferred. And the army of superstition is just as sure of this in its heart of hearts. Its leaders do not say so; they never will say so; no one could expect them to say so. But they fight like men who are losing. They fight going backwards. They know they are retreating. They are always on the defensive. Sooner or later they feel they must be beaten. All they are concerned to do is to keep the field as long as possible. For it pays them still. And this is nearly all there has been in religion for the last hundred years.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Solomon's Women.

King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for wisdom.—(1 Kings, ch. x.).

He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines.—(1 Kings, ch. xi.).

HALF of the Bible-wigs

Wondered and wondered :

"Solomon's women

Walk in by the hundred!

Seven hundred wives!" ("The crush!")

"Three hundred come—" ("Hush-hush!")

"Well! take the Holy Book!

Total, ten hundred"

"Forward, the Skirt Brigade!"

Was our old Sol dismayed?

(Who says the scribe had been drinking and blundered?)

Ours not to ask if kings

Do such debasing things;

Rather a wonder springs

How old Sol kept it up:

Think, sir! Ten hundred!

Women of Sidon,

Women of Moab,

Women of Edom,

Wrangled and thundered.

"Never a turn," cries one,

"Till ten times round the sun

Earth in her course has run!"

Burst then a deep "O hell!"

From the ten hundred.

Cock'd with disdain in air,

Noses sev'n hundred there

Sniff'd at the royal fare:

"Wives to take turn!

And those common three hundred!"

Scorn through decorum broke:

"Puissance of kings! All smoke!"

Princess and cow-girl

Made of old Sol a joke

(Nobody wondered):

Sol had his fill, but not—

Not the ten hundred.

Women by night with him,

Women at morn with him,

Sapping the life of him,

Wheedled and plundered.

Plain folk, as day on day

Pass'd, saw the king decay

— Slave, at the strumpet's beck;

Then, when the end was come,

Buried the poor old wreck,

All that was left of him

From the ten hundred.

ENVOI.

Wisest if he of kings,

Kings must be stupid things,

Crown an sense sundered.

.....What's that, Aunt?—"bet your hat

Sol's royal charge fell flat?"

—Ask the ten hundred.

H. BARBER.

### Acid Drops.

Mr. Robert Blatchford has severed his connection with the *Sunday Chronicle* and the *Sunday Herald* as a protest against the syndicalization of the Press. There is no doubt that the gathering of the principal British papers into two or three hands represents a very grave danger to the public. In these days when everyone can read, and nearly everyone has a vote, it is, above all things, important that the opinion which expresses itself in public life should be well informed and solidly based. But for large numbers of people their only means of forming an opinion is apparently through the channels of the newspapers. And what kind of a public opinion are we likely to get when a handful of men own the principal papers and shut or turn on whatever they please? The men and women whom we see day after day in tram, bus, and train, reading the newspapers, seldom dream that, various though the names of the papers may be, the selected news and the special articles all emanate from the same source. It is a process of "doping" public opinion far more effective than that adopted by the mediæval Church.

For much of this we have to thank the late Lord Northcliffe, who, more than any other single man, is responsible for the gradual degradation of the British Press, and who, it should be borne in mind, received special eulogies from the highly-placed clergy, including a special service in Westminster Abbey. He saw that the way to get large circulations was—to use the phrase attributed to him—to write for servant girls. Writers were well paid, provided they wrote to order and did the right kind of work. The papers under his control became scrapper and scrapper, the news less and less reliable, the leading articles shrank to a replica of *Tit-Bits*, and the lowest standard of public intelligence taken as a guide for those who wrote. The consequence was that other papers in the race for large circulations, which meant a contest for advertising revenue, followed suit, and the majority of British papers entered into a contest as to which could write the most trash as though it were the most profound philosophy. And the poor uninstructed public submitted to it all.

The next step was to buy up paper after paper, and by this means own the power to form a public opinion which fed mainly upon newspaper scraps. In the rush to and from business, or in the intervals of meal times, men and women devoured a leading article of about thirty or forty lines, and imagined they were acquiring information. Or they saw the same statements repeated in several papers, and were unaware, or never remembered, that this same opinion had been ordered from headquarters, and was a mere gramophone of what men of the Northcliffe breed wished the public to think or thought it well for them to know. To-day public opinion is about as ill-informed as it could possibly be. It is within the power of the Press to almost exclude from the mass of the people knowledge of things they ought to have, and to give them all sorts of false ideas of what is going on around them. We should like to see other writers of repute follow Mr. Blatchford's example. As it stands, the newspaper probably does as much harm as good. It does not act as a channel for the expression of genuine opinion, and in a vast number of instances even its news, through a process of compression and elimination and addition is suspect. And the worst of it is that the great cost of printing and publishing to-day acts as a deadly drag on any paper that strives to live up to the better traditions of the Press.

Canon Langden declares that Irreligion and Atheism stalk's God's own England unabashed. Arm-in-arm, we presume.

The Rev. A. Sharpe, of Davenport, appears to dislike Russians as much as Napoleon did. He says these



naughty people have abolished Sunday and set up "an Atheistic theatre." If the reverend gentleman believes all this, he will believe anything.

Folkestone has been in the throes of a controversy as to whether Punch and Judy shows should be permitted near a War Shrine. At the Town Council meeting it was decided by a majority of eight that they should be, a member remarking that children's laughter was not an unforgivable sin. Hear, hear!

Judge Scully, at Marylebone County Court, decided that he could not give an order for possession of premises occupied by Christian Scientists because it was not a business. We should say it depends upon the Christian Scientists. There seems no doubt but there is a good deal of shrewd business in some of its departments.

The *Daily Herald* states that "God's curse will assuredly rest in one form or another on all who perpetuate evil passions." This is the vocabulary of the Dark Ages, and appears both ridiculous and monstrous at a time when wireless invention will give the boot to lying newspapers, and when each individual can broadcast himself; we also wish the bishops joy when in the north they speak of a religious revival in the south. Their utterances will be checked in a few minutes, and they will have to acquire the habit of precision. With a little thought the sentiment desirable of expression by the leader writer might have been presented with a cleaner face, but thinking to some people appears to be prohibited when the name of God is mentioned.

It is refreshing to notice many people in public reading papers dealing with wireless matters. This is a proof that the public do not get what they want in the form of so-called newspapers which are chiefly drapers' catalogues disguised. We wonder whether the development of wireless invention will altogether please the clergy; at any rate, they had better make the best of their innings, for individual broadcasting will just about put paid to their prehistoric deliverances.

From statistics it appears that Shipping Lords made 262 millions in 26 months. But what does that matter when there is a contemplated re-union of two big commercial companies intent on saving our immortal souls?

Writes one pious Churchman in that ecclesiastical journal and fogleman of Drapers' Sales, the *Daily Mail*: "People want to go to Church on New Year's Eve." And many slaves to the Devil of Industry want to go to sleep but cannot for bell-clanging and other savage customs.

Proofs of religious truth are accumulating. In Elyria (U.S.A.), the Rev. Dr. Neighbour exhibited in his Church a picture of God sitting "upon an actual throne, with a rainbow encircling a sea of glass, and a vast throng of angels all around him." Dr. Neighbour says he has evidence that God still speaks to his followers, for he had an actual message telling him to preach on the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Dr. Neighbour is still at large and is still permitted to vote.

The total make of gas in the British Isles during 1922 was 265,000,000 cubic feet. This takes no account of the "gas" coming from the thousands of pulpits.

In a letter to his parishioners the Rev. R. S. B. Proby, rector of Hilperton, Wilts, says if men would accept lower wages there would be far more work for all. The reverend gentleman should urge the suggestion on the Bench of Bishops, whose salaries range from £10,000 to £2,000 yearly.

There is a very active controversy going on in America in connection with the action of certain clergymen who have actually reached the position of denying the truth of the story of Old Mother Hubbard—we beg pardon, we mean they do not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. One point made against the heretics is that they have no right to retain their Church and salary if they do not believe in the doctrines. And on that point we agree with them. A parson who does not believe in the established doctrines of the Church and is still drawing payment from the Church is simply obtaining money under false pretences. It would be called that in connection with any matter except that of the Christian religion.

We emphasize the last point. If I gave the average clergyman a commission to do something for me, with a promise of payment, he would either do what he undertook to do, or he would think of himself as a swindler. Why does he not act in a similar manner with regard to religion? It must not be assumed that clergymen are, in the mass, very much different from other men. The difference in behaviour arises from the simple fact that a parson is never brought up to apply the same rules of conduct to religion that he does to other matters. And genuine religious belief being so extremely difficult in a civilized country, the only way in which very many can continue to profess it is by indulging in a process of "re-interpretation," which means making Christian doctrines mean something entirely different from what they originally meant. This has now gone so far that the average Christian preacher has lost all sense of rectitude in the matter and feels quite at liberty to make Christianity mean whatever it occurs to him to make it mean at the moment. Men of a healthier mental and moral type have simply left the Church when they found they could not preach its doctrines. Unfortunately, this has the effect of leaving the field clear for those of a poorer type. If we could only get the clergy to practice the intellectual morality of even the average business office we should begin to see things.

"When Christian ethics becomes a plank of a political platform, I know which Party will stand on that plank," says Mrs. W. Cormick, of Glasgow. And we know which Party will fall off that plank.

A bishop of a far-off colonial diocese started a £50,000 fund for his dusky co-religionists, and announced that he meant to stay in England until he got the cash. People who had visited his diocese said that he was a good judge.

## How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. And the paper and the Cause is worthy of all that each can do for it.



## The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

### To Correspondents.

MRS. A. CAPON.—Thanks. We hope we have placed your contribution as desired. If not, please advise.

D. SLAVIN.—When we speak of a man's spirit living after he is dead, we mean no more than that the influence of his life does not cease with his interment. Life is a continuous stream, and bears traces for good or ill of all that goes into it.

SINE CERE.—We agree with you that the sight of the people following certain established rules like so many "dumb, driven cattle" is appalling. But after all, there is some hope in seeing that the cattle are getting a little more restless than used to be the case. People are not quite so sheep-like in their mental attitude towards authority as they were. The questioning spirit is abroad, and it is bound to do good.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—E. Wright (N.Z.), 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. Capon, 5s.; H. Dell, 2s.

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.—Received, and shall appear. Thanks.

R. H. LOVEKIN.—We are obliged for what you are doing to introduce the *Freethinker* to new readers.

L. BILLINSOHN.—Thanks for your poem; but although the idea that is intended is quite a good one, it is hardly suitable to the pages of the *Freethinker*. Yes, one would think that if there is a special providence the least it could do would be to look after its own.

Y. OYAMA.—We are pleased to know that in spite of the destruction of your house and belongings you found your family safe on your return to Japan. We shall hope to see you again one of these days in England.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

Owing to a little trouble in the composing room, we are obliged to hold over several letters, replies to correspondents, etc., as well as some paragraphic matter that would otherwise have appeared. The hindrance

occurred on publishing day, which made these postponements unavoidable. We know we shall have the indulgence of readers in the circumstances.

The Secular Society's Annual Dinner at the Midland Hotel on January 8th went with its accustomed smoothness and enjoyability. The numbers were slightly in excess of last year, although at the last moment some were prevented, by illness and other causes, from being present. Among the visitors from the provinces were Mr. Palphryman, of Liverpool, and that sturdy old Freethinker from Grimsby, Mr. G. Alward, who at eighty-one, with his vigorous and healthy appearance, is a proof that whatever else Freethought may do it is not calculated to lead one to an early grave. One regretted the absence of such familiar figures as Mr. and Mrs. Fincken, who were kept at home through illness in the family, but they were represented by two of their sons.

The speeches were brief, but to the point. The President briefly reviewed the aims and the position of Freethought, and after an interval of song the toast of the National Secular Society was proposed by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and responded to by Mr. A. B. Moss. Mr. Alward then gave the company some of his experiences of the leading Freethought speakers during the earlier part of his life, which are now only names to the younger generation of Freethinkers. The other toast of the evening was that of "The Visitors," proposed by Mr. R. H. Rosetti in a brief but pointed way, and replied to by Mr. George Bedborough in a very racy and interesting speech—just the kind of speech that suited the occasion. The musical part of the programme was on the usual satisfactory level, and the audience greatly enjoyed renewing their acquaintance with Mr. Will Edwards, who proved himself to be as fresh and as entertaining as ever. Altogether a very successful evening, reflecting credit on the Secretary and Miss Kough for the work involved. Successful dinners, like success in other directions, do not come without effort.

We have received a number of letters dealing with our comments on the proposal that the *Freethinker* would do better under some other name, and also on our remarks on Mr. Clodd's letter to the *Times*. We have not sufficient space to publish these, but we print in another column the only two which are in antagonism to what we had to say. One is from Mr. Clodd, to which we propose replying next week; the other is from an old friend who has the interests of the paper at heart. And what space we have to spare must first of all be given to those who disagree rather than to those who agree. And this without undervaluing those who have written letters of approval. We may quote from some of these next week.

Those of our readers who are interested in pushing the sales of the *Freethinker* will be pleased to learn that one day last week the names of five different persons were sent in asking that specimen copies of the paper might be sent. These were duly sent and resulted in the receipt of four annual subscriptions being sent along. Of course, all addresses sent do not produce such good results, but they do help to underline our contention that the great need of this paper is to be better known. If only that long looked for millionaire would come along with the means for conducting a good publicity campaign, our troubles would be at an end. We should doubtless find other troubles, but we should be rid of the most miserable of them all.

The West Ham Branch has arranged a "Ladies' Evening for to-day (January 20th) at the Upton Labour Hall, 84, Plashet Road, Upton Park. The subject is to be "The Church's Spiritual Dope," and the speakers will be Mrs. H. Rosetti, Mrs. E. Venton, and others, with Mrs. Quinton, jun., in the chair. The meeting commences at seven. East London Freethinkers will please note.



## The Myth of Resurrection.

### III.

(Continued from page 27.)

DETAILED knowledge of what took place in the inner sanctuary of the Eleusinian Mysteries is not available, but it is generally admitted that the ritual performance was symbolic of the procreative activity of nature and that it had a profound significance with regard to the immortality of the initiated :—

The rites consisted of dramatic representations of the rape of Proserpine, daughter of Ceres, goddess of the vegetable kingdom, of the fields, and labour, who was supposed to preside over the cereals and other alimentation of man (*Ancient Lowly*, by Osborne Ward, p. 52, Vol. I).

The celebrations lasted for nine days, and games, including bull-fights, took place on the way from Athens to Eleusis, if not in Athens itself. To the games the slaves appear to have been admitted, and they also took part in the procession which marched from Athens to Eleusis, feeling no doubt much of the enthusiasm of the event and showing at times a measure of hostility towards the more favoured who were to be admitted into the Eleusinian temple, where they were to receive initiation into the mysteries, which involved an assurance of immortal life. For the slaves there was no life to come :—

The working man was too low in the estimation of the devotees of the Pagan temple to be the possessor of an immortal soul. The world at that period was divided into two classes, the pious and the impious, which means the nobles, born of the gods and entitled to go back to the gods, and the earth-borns, doomed to delve for their masters and at death go back to the earth (*Osborne Ward, Ancient Lowly, Vol. I, p. 57*).

But, doubtless, the working men or slaves had their own craving for immortality and, aspiring to be on a par with the wealthy in that direction, put their own interpretation on the myth of Demeter and Persephone, and found much comfort in the belief that as Persephone, or the corn-spirit, returned to life year by year, so they would live on in a newer and better life. It had been better if the slaves had taken the aristocrats at their word and rejected religion altogether as something too sacred for those born in lowly estate. They would thus have saved themselves from coming under the mystifying influence of the idea of immortality, or any other religious idea, and having cleared their minds to face the facts of life, would have rendered themselves less liable to exploitation.

On the second day of the Eleusinian festival the initiated marched in a body to the sea, where they were purified by baptism, an old and convenient method of washing away the sins of the devout.

The third day is believed to have been a day of fasting, at the end of which a "frugal meal was taken, which consisted of cakes made of sesame and honey" (*Smith's Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antiquities, Art. "Eleusinia"*), although Osborne Ward describes it as a day of feasting.

On the fourth day there appears to have been a procession in which pomegranates and poppy-seeds played a symbolic part, and the poppy-seeds were administered to the initiated to stupefy them as Persephone had been stupefied by the influence of the narcissus, when she was abducted to the under-world by Pluto. In this way the initiated came into sympathetic contact with the corn-spirit, or cereal goddess, and no doubt in some mystic way shared in her revitalizing power.

There seems to be some doubt as to the day on which a great sacrificial rite was performed, and as to the

nature of the victim ; but on the fifth day a torch-light procession into the temple at Eleusis took place as a symbolic representation of the search of Demeter for her lost daughter Persephone. This performance was carried over into the following day when the initiated, coming out of the temple into the open road, carried a statue of Iakchos, son of Demeter, bearing a torch in his hand in view of the following multitude. Midnight of the sixth day was spent by the devotees at Eleusis, where a solemn oath was again taken and a fearful dramatic spectacle was displayed in the vestibule of the temple after the initiated had been dispersed :—

The assembly was suddenly enveloped in darkness, lightning flashed, thunder rolled, and unearthly noises resounded through the apartment, while monstrous forms appeared on all sides, filling the mystæ with horror and consternation. This scene of darkness and confusion has been supposed to symbolize the chaotic state of primitive matter before the work of creation introduced order and beauty into this lower world. The scene now suddenly changed, and the Mystæ, led by the Hierophant or Mystagogus, were admitted into the inner temple or sanctuary of Demeter, which was most brilliantly lighted up for the occasion, and where stood the statue of the goddess splendidly adorned. Here the initiated was dazzled with the brightness of the light which shone everywhere around him, and his ears were saluted with the sweetest and most harmonious sounds ; a myrtle crown was placed upon his head, and under the magical influence of what was termed a state of *Autopsia*, he beheld the fairest and most enchanting scenes, while a thrill of indescribable enjoyment passed through his soul—the foretaste of future and eternal bliss (*Gardner's Faiths of the World, Vol. I, pp. 810-811*).

The seventh day of the festival was occupied by the initiated returning to Athens and indulging on the way in an exchange of jest and merriment with those who went by. The eighth day appears to have been for the benefit of late-comers who were unable to be initiated on the sixth day ; and the ninth day saw the close of the Eleusinia in the performance of a mystic ceremony and the uttering of equally mystic words.

If any Christian believer in resurrection and immortality doubts the fact of an ancient Greek's being able to deduce a doctrine of resurrection and immortality from the myth of Demeter and Persephone, let him ponder the following from Tertullian :—

The rays of the stars are rekindled, which the morning glow had extinguished. The absent constellations are brought back, which the destruction of time had taken away. The mirrors of the moon are re-adorned, which the monthly number had worn away. The winters and summers revolve, and springs and autumns, with their own powers, habits, and fruits. Earth receives instructions from heaven to clothe the trees after they have been stripped, to colour the flowers afresh, again to bring forth herbage, to exhibit the same seeds that had been taken away, and not to exhibit them before they are taken away. Wonderful procedure ! From a defrauder to become a preserver ; that she may restore she takes away ; that she may guard, she destroys ; that she may retain entire, she injures ; that she may increase, she consumes. And nothing perishes but for salvation. Therefore, this whole revolving order of things is an attestation to the resurrection of the dead..... Nor doubt that that God will be the reviver of the body whom thou knowest to be the restorer of all things. (Quoted by Neander in the *Antignostikus* appended to *The Planting and Training of the Christian Church, Vol. II, pp. 485-486* ; Bohn's Ed. 1864).

Thus could an educated Christian and advocate of organized religion reason on doctrine considered to be essential to man's welfare.

In the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis we again have the idea of resurrection and immortality, as re-



vealed to mankind by a divine being who took upon himself the form of man and thus visited the earth.

After proving himself to be the benefactor of man, he was put to death; but the faithful believed he rose from the dead and that they, too, would go to live with him in the "Paradise of the Blest" if, during this life, they carefully followed his teaching and example.

According to myth, Osiris married his sister Isis while on the earth, and together they spent much time, as king and queen of Egypt, doing public work to improve the lot of man. Osiris taught agriculture, while laws were invented by Isis, and they instructed men in the building of temples, and in the worship of the gods. Osiris and Isis were patrons of the artists, and took a keen interest in their work.

During the reign of Osiris and his queen, the making of weapons and agricultural implements from iron was introduced, and gold was used in the temples. The great but beneficent monarch went forth to subdue the nations in the interest of civilization, and men and women were taught the planting of the vine and sowing of grain. But Typhon, the brother of Osiris, tried to usurp the throne of Egypt during the absence of Osiris, and was prevented doing so by Isis. Typhon then sought means of accomplishing the downfall of Osiris, and succeeded in doing so by persuading him to enter a coffin or sarcophagus, which was brought into a banquet-hall and promised to the one whose body would fit into it with as little waste of space as possible. All the guests, who tried to win the prize, failed as it had been made to measure according to Typhon's instructions. Consequently, when Osiris got inside the coffin he fitted exactly, and the lid being immediately fastened over him, he was thrown into the Nile by the followers of Typhon.

Isis made a long search and ultimately found the body of Osiris, after it had floated down the Nile. Isis then concealed the body in a forest, but it was discovered by Typhon, who cut it into fourteen pieces and scattered them in various directions.

The devoted queen again made tedious search and succeeded in finding thirteen pieces, the genitals having been eaten by the fishes. After replacing the missing part with a counterfeit in wood, Isis buried the body of Osiris at Philæ, and erected a temple. According to one form of the Osirian myth, Isis fanned the dead body of Osiris with her wings after it had been put together, and thus brought Osiris to life. He then reigned as king over the dead, and became chief judge of the departed who were tried in the "Hall of Two Truths." Osiris became identified with Hades, Serapis and Rhadamanthus as king of the dead, and in Egyptian belief his power over death enabled him to renew the vitality of nature. He thus became the assurance of immortality to the individual believer. Every embalmed corpse became an "Osiris," and just as Christians believe they are to become united with Jesus in death, so every faithful worshipper of Osiris believed that in the grave he would become united to Osiris and partake of that deity's immortality.

Whether we take Osiris to have been a solar or a vegetation deity or, perhaps better still, a combination of both, the outstanding ideas of his worship are those of vitality, resurrection, and immortality.

Year by year he renewed the vegetation of Egypt, and in that renewal made manifest his own immortality; and in far off days, when incarnate in human flesh, he taught the arts of agriculture. But, who was more likely to do this than the sun-god, giver of all life, to the mind of the ancients, even though at times he appeared to scorch and blast almost every living thing on the face of the earth?

Is not the life of the vegetation, the corn and the barley, etc., in large measure but the incarnation of the sun; and, if in one aspect Osiris killed himself

when the days of the year were at their hottest, by destroying the vegetation, what was there to prevent his reappearing in renewed life, when the vegetation began to sprout forth the next year? It is the old myth of the father-god killing himself, in the guise of his own son, for the salvation of mankind after having blasted the earth with all manner of evil. Just as the "All-Father" of the Christian myth masquerades and kills himself as his own son.

The idea of vitality was no doubt impressed upon the Egyptian believer by the phallic incident of the myth, wherein Isis is represented as replacing the missing genital organs with a wooden image, when the body of Osiris was being put together after the finding of the scattered parts. And the importance of the male and female aspects of nature is brought out in the close relationship of Isis and Osiris. Especially as the relationship between the god and goddess is represented as not being a merely abstract one, but Osiris is made to marry his own sister Isis, and the fruit of the marriage is the sun-babe Horus. Nor must it be forgotten that the male and female elements have been represented by the divine beings of many nations throughout the world. To quote the author of *Morals and Dogma*:—

In Egypt they were Osiris and Isis: in India, Mahadiva and Bhavani: in Phœnicia, Thammuz (or Adonis) and Astarte: in Phrygia, Atys and Cybele: in Persia, Mithras and Asis: in Samothrace and Greece, Dionusos or Sabazeus and Rhea: in Britain, Hu and Ceridwen: in Scandinavia, Woden and Frea: and in every instance these Divinities represented the Sun and the Moon (p. 377).

To which we must add Jesus as the sun and Mary as the moon, or Queen of Heaven. For, as Hannay remarks:—

The Virgin Mary is impregnated by the spirit of God, which is partly the Son, and so the Son is his own father and suckled by his wife (*Symbolism in Relation to Religion*, p. 136).

The idea of resurrection was impressed upon the Egyptian believer not only by the bringing to life of Osiris, after he had been killed by Typhon, but also by the myth of Isis having brought to life a child who had been killed by the poison of a scorpion; a miracle which she again performed on her own son Horus. Like Demeter in search of Persephone, Isis in search of Osiris was made nurse to the child of a king, and would have made the child immortal, by purging him in fire, had not the queenmother watched the operation and cried out on seeing the flames around her son.

In his solar aspect, Osiris underwent death and resurrection twice a year, and the myth of these performances having been confused with the myth of his sojourn on earth, he is represented as having died in the twenty-eighth year of his life.

On this I quote a Masonic work called *Morals and Dogma*:—

Typhon, his brother, the type of darkness, drought, and sterility, threw his body into the Nile; and thus Osiris, "the good," the "Saviour," perished, in the 28th year of his life or reign, and on the 17th day of the month Athor, or the 13th of November. He is also made to die during the heats of the early summer, when, from March to July, the earth was parched with intolerable heat, vegetation was scorched, and the languid Nile exhausted. From that death he rises when the Solstitial Sun brings the inundation, and Egypt is filled with mirth and acclamation anticipatory of the second harvest. From his wintry death he rises with the early flowers of spring, and then the joyful festival of Osiris found was celebrated (p. 589).

In the religion of the Parsees, the resurrection of man is the ultimate outcome of the triumph of Ormazd over Ahriman, and the souls of men being thus made



immortal are weighed in the balance of justice and assigned a place in the future world according to whether they have been good or evil in this life. While in the cult of the Persian sun-god, Mithra, which became so widespread in the Roman Empire, a ritualistic mourning, searching for, and finding the slain saviour-god, who had come to life by he was found, formed a most important part of Mithraic ceremony.

Similar mythic ideas of Resurrection are to be found among the ancient peoples of America. To the Aztecs, the kingdom of death was not the end of all life; it was but a kind of parting of the ways. Those who failed to attain to wealth or social distinction in this life went to Mictlan, the Mexican abode of the dead, presided over by a god whose name was also Mictlan. In this new land, life was not one of torture but a journey beset with many dangers. In order that they might cope with the various dangers, the dead were supplied with food, drink, and amulets; these being buried with the corpse. Of what ultimately happened to the dead of the lower classes, on their reaching the ninth division of the under-world, the Mexicans had no knowledge.

Those who were more fortunately placed in life, or came to what was conceived to be a meritorious end, went to a land of joy, in the future world. If, in life, the offerings of the better-class Mexicans had brought them into close connection with the god whom they worshipped, then they went to his abode after death. In the case of the rain-god Tlaloc, the worshippers went to his abode in the clouds at the top of the highest mountain, where they were cooled and refreshed in the wonderful garden from whence flowed the waters of the world. In this garden they indulged in games and feasting; but at times they could return to the earth and attend the festivals held in honour of their god. To Tlaloc went those who were sacrificed to him, and those who were drowned, or killed by lightning.

The souls of the priests and the aristocrats, who had by word and deed, won the approbation of the gods, went to the highest heaven, which was that of the sun and his incarnations Huitzilopochtli, Tezcatlipocá, and Quetzalcoatl. So, also, those who were killed in battle found their way to the kingdom of the sun-god; and thus many went to heaven who would otherwise have been excluded owing to their lowly condition in life. To these were added all who, as prisoners of war, had been sacrificed to the sun-gods; all who had fallen in religious struggles; and women who died in child-birth.

A life of everlasting pleasure was their reward, and they enjoyed the song and the dance, as they accompanied the sun on his journey. When the sun went to sleep in the west, they, too, indulged in the holy sleep and became refreshed and renewed in strength.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

(To be Continued.)

Be free, all worthy spirits,  
And stretch yourselves for greatness and for height,  
Untruss your slaveries; you have height enough  
Beneath this steep heaven to use all your reaches:  
'Tis too far off to let you, or respect you.  
Give me a spirit that on life's rough sea  
Loves t'have his sails fill'd with a lusty wind,  
Even till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,  
And his rapt ship run on her side so low  
That she drinks water, and her keel plows air.  
There is no danger to man that knows  
What life and death is; there's not any law  
Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful  
That he should stoop to any other law.  
He goes before them and commands them all.

—George Chapman.

## Funeral of Mr. James Partridge.

ON Wednesday, January 9, a large and representative body of Birmingham Freethinkers assembled at Lodge Hill Cemetery to pay a farewell tribute of respect and affection to James Partridge, whose death was announced in last week's *Freethinker*. The large company on so bitterly cold a day was in itself a testimony of the esteem in which Mr. Partridge was held. The service was held in the cemetery chapel. Mr. Clifford Williams, the President of the local Branch, delivered a very eloquent tribute to his late colleague, and Dr. Higginson contributed a short speech, praising the steadfastness, the tolerance and the generosity of James Partridge. Mr. Cohen then delivered a brief address, endorsing and emphasizing all that had been said. From the chapel the mourning party slowly went its way to the grave side, where a few words of final farewell were spoken by Mr. Cohen, and all took their leave of the remains of one of the most steadfast workers that Freethought had ever had in its service. Miss Alice Baker, daughter of that fine old Birmingham Freethinker, Daniel Baker, was among those at the grave side, and Mrs. Partridge went through the whole of the ceremony with a courage that was beyond praise. We can here only re-echo the words of Mr. Clifford Williams, that James Partridge, little in body, but great in spirit, will live for long in the memories of those who value unswerving and unselfish labour in the best of Causes.

## Correspondence.

MR. EDWARD CLODD'S LETTER TO THE *TIMES*.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Referring to your comments on "True Religion," Viscount Morley said in an article on "Democracy and Religion," in the *Nineteenth Century* of April, 1906, that "if we want a platitude, there is nothing like a definition. Perhaps most definitions hang between platitude and paradox. There are said to be ten thousand definitions of religion." The Rationalist Press Association added one more to the number. It falls in with what appears to me as "true religion":—

WHAT IS RELIGION?

BELIEF WITHOUT EVIDENCE IS NOT RELIGION.

To love justice and mercy, to pity the suffering, to assist the weak, to forget wrongs and remember benefits, to love the truth and liberty, to cherish wife and child and friends, to make a happy home, to love the beautiful in art and in nature, to cultivate the mind, to be brave and cheerful and to make others happy, to fill life with the splendour of generous acts and the warmth of loving words, to discard error and destroy prejudice, to receive new truths with gladness and to cultivate hope; to do the best that can be done, and then to be resigned.

THAT IS RELIGION.

As to your criticism on my use of the term "religious instinct," I admit its justice. As I have said to Mr. Watts (to whom I am indebted for a copy of your issue of the 13th instant), I used the term loosely, not in its biological significance. Religion is derivative, not primary, but, as Mr. Hugh Elliot puts it in his *Human Character*, it is entitled to be regarded as one of the major passions of mankind" (p. 86). Human nature is unalterable, and the art of life is not to make nice issues of what is irremediable.

EDWARD CLODD.

[Absence from London during the week-end, which involves the handling of extra matter on publishing day, prevents our replying to Mr. Clodd here. Beyond saying that Mr. Clodd does not deal with the main points raised in our notes, and does not, in our opinion, justify his use of the word "religion," we must leave the subject till next week. The subject will not lose its interest through the slight delay.—EDITOR.]

SIR,—The form of Mr. Clodd's exposition of his views rather stimulates attack from the uncompromising fighter. The substance of his case seems to me perfectly defensible. As a humble admirer of one who has done good work for our Cause, I feel bound to express my personal opinion in favour of his policy, although I am, of course, unable to commit anybody except myself.



We might debate for centuries the proper or improper use of the word religion, without making the slightest progress. It is a question of taste. True religion is defined in the Epistle of James in language which Ingersoll, Shelley and Thomson (B.V.), would have accepted as valid. Paine had no hesitation in describing his own religion in the simple words, "to do good." Surely all Freethinkers believe in "the religion of humanity!" This may be "loose thinking," but there seems no gain in discarding a word in common use, a word with a far-reaching history, and a word which need not denote any objectionable theory.

If the logic of the foregoing paragraph is admitted, there could not be any objection, but quite the opposite, to the cultivation of the religious instinct. There is no more a religious instinct than there is an artistic instinct, but both terms, while lacking scientific authority, possess colloquial merit. They convey a definite meaning, if not an exact one. We don't really "live by admiration, hope and love"; but who is going to condemn Wordsworth for a fine phrase because, while explanatory, it is not precise?

It must also be borne in mind that Mr. Clodd was asked by an editor for his co-operation "in establishing true religion" in the schools. Would you have had Mr. Clodd state that he was in favour of false religion only?

The wisdom, or otherwise, in agreeing to a compromise depends on the nature of the compromise. Some compromises are perfectly fair, and only a bigot would object to every form of compromise. The disaster of 1870 will only be repeated if Freethinkers are ignored again. As a compromise between the various Churches the 1870 abomination was admirable; much as the Treaty of Versailles might have represented a compromise between England and France. It is the victim who suffers from the resultant injustice. The question for the citizen of today is not whether such and such a compromise will suit the high contracting parties, but whether education and the children to be educated will gain or lose by a wise and brave attempt to end the sidetracking of knowledge.

If you are right that Mr. Clodd's proposition would give the enemy all that it asks, it would not be a compromise, but an unconditional surrender.

What is the position of the Rationalist who loves education and truth? He finds himself in a land where for many centuries a special book has been held sacred, and where in evolutionary stages of our progress the moral teaching of men has had the idea of religious sanction always at its back. In order to free our morality from a questionable and decaying theory of its origin, we must endeavour to explain rather than discard the source of man's earlier aspirations towards goodness.

Mingled with our morality a whole host of superstitions, some innocuous and others wholly evil, await the wise pruning and separating and relegating to their rightful place as history, folk-lore and myth. Any violent surgery, any indiscriminate destruction, while it may pander to our iconoclastic conceit, will confuse and stultify all our moral aims in large areas of inadequately educated people.

The other side of the "compromise" ought to be considered. If there is any hope of Mr. Clodd and his co-workers' success, it would indicate that the powers at present maintaining old theologies were willing to become rational. It may prove Mr. Clodd's optimism; it should not be quoted as evidence of his perversity that he is willing to join hands with rational religionists.

The world of Freethought (in its true sense) would gain enormously by two conditions which I suggest as essential to any educational "compromise." The first is that Christianity must take its place as one of the religions of the world instead of demanding to be taught as the one and supreme religion. The second condition is that the teacher's qualification shall be absolutely independent of creed; that is to say, an Atheist teacher should be considered as capable of teaching religions (not religion) as a believer in one of these religions. Subject to these conditions I heartily wish Mr. Clodd could attain success in his endeavours. That success seems to me of little immediate probability, but the effort is worthy of a great Freethinker like Mr. Clodd.

EVAN BROWNTON.

## THE FREETHINKER.

SIR,—I think I am fairly tolerant as a rule, but there are times when the prejudice against Freethought—or, indeed, against Truth in any form—is so grossly apparent that I cannot "contain myself." May I take up a few moments of your valuable time in telling you of just such an incident which occurred recently?

A new, but regular and enthusiastic, reader of your admirable paper—I thought I would "help the Cause" by passing it on to an acquaintance. To read, thought I, will be to buy.

When, a few days later, it was returned to me I waited in vain for the praise which *should have been* forthcoming. As it did not come I ventured to ask him how he liked it.

"Oh, I like the first writer very well," was the reply. (So you're alright, you see!) "But," he continued, "I thought the other writers—er—a bit common, you know—"

"I don't," said I.

I might—perhaps I *should*—have said more, but, oh, what's the use? Will people ever look at things with an open mind? Will merit *ever* be the standard by which a journal is judged?

It is said, with some justice I admit, that the American's god is Money; it might be said with equal justice, that the god of a certain class of Englishman is gentility.

Surely if ever plain speaking was necessary, it is necessary to-day in dealing with the hypocritical nonsense delivered every Sunday from thousands of pulpits by men sufficiently educated to know better. Yet the plain facts are called "common"! I only wish the truth was a bit more "common"; at the present moment it seems to be about the most uncommon thing in the world.

I think that, considering the temptations they are put to, the talented contributors to the *Freethinker* are miracles of restraint. The worst of it is, that the plain speaking which is a vice with a Freethinker would be a virtue in an orthodox writer. Can it be a case of sour grapes?

Plain speaking and the clergy are almost complete strangers, but for sheer, downright vulgarity give me a Salvationist. Or, better still, our old friend, Billy Sunday. If Col. Ingersoll or Charles Bradlaugh had lowered themselves ("gentlemen" in the best sense of the word, as they were) to use the same language as is used by this pious Christian, what an uproar would have occurred!

I give here an extract from Sinclair Lewis's clever study of American life, *Babbitt*, which may be of interest to your readers. I have had the somewhat doubtful pleasure of hearing B. S., so can testify to its almost uncanny accuracy of manner.

An expense fund of forty thousand dollars had been underwritten; out on the County Fair grounds a Mike Monday Tabernacle had been erected to seat fifteen thousand people. In it the prophet was at this moment concluding his message:—

There's a lot of smart college professors and tea-guzzling slobs in this burg that say I'm a roughneck and a never-wuzzer, and my knowledge of history is not yet.

Oh, there's a gang of woolly-whiskered booklike that think they know more than Almighty God, and prefer a lot of Hun science and smutty German criticism to the straight and simple Word of God.

Oh, there's a swell bunch of Lizzie boys and lemon-suckers and pie-faces and infidels and beer-bloated scribblers that love to fire off their filthy mouths and yip that Mike Monday is vulgar and full of mush. Those pups are saying now that I hog the gospel-show, that I'm in for the coin. Well, now listen, folks! I'm going to give those birds a chance! They can stand right up here and tell me to my face that I'm a galoot and a liar and a hunk! Only if they do—if they do!—don't faint with surprise if some of those rum-dumm liars get one good swift poke from Mike, with all the kick of God's Flaming Righteousness behind the wallop! Well, come on, folks! Who says it? Who says Mike Monday is a four-flush and a yahoo? Huh? Don't I see anybody standing up? Well, there you are! Now I guess the folks in this man's town will quit listening to all this kyoodling from behind the fence; I guess you'll quit listening to the guys that pan and roast and kick and beef, and vomit out filthy Atheism; and all of you'll come in, with every grain of pep and reverence you got, and boost all together for Jesus Christ and his everlasting mercy and tenderness!"

VICTOR WM. PARKER.



### The Assumption.

The doctrine of the Assumption (of Mary) places Womanhood, body and soul, in heaven. Heaven wasn't quite heaven to God till he got a perfect woman there." Remark of a Romish priest in a Catholic novel, *The White-Handed Saint*.

The Jews believe that God is a bachelor.—*Freethinker*, November 18.

God sat on his throne on high,  
Before Creation's dawn appeared :  
All down the countless ages sat,  
A Being to be greatly feared.

The hosts of heaven with sacred zeal  
Made one continuous concert long ;  
The morning stars sang evening hymns,  
And angels danced to harp and song.

Still time grew heavy on His hands ;  
He wearied of these virtuous hosts,  
And longed to clear the heavenly court  
Of all its motley spooks and ghosts.

His heart and soul for something craved  
To fill the void he somewhere felt :  
The throng divined his altered mood  
As at his throne they humbly knelt.

Had some Bethsheba at her bath  
Her luring spell upon him cast,  
To sew the seeds of dire discord  
And wreck the happy home at last ?

Old Satan laughed a long loud laugh  
To see his ancient foe distraught,  
And chuckled as he thought of all  
The evil that fair Eve had wrought.

And lo! upon a day there came  
A maiden-mother from the earth,  
Retaining still the flesh and blood  
That nature blessed her with at birth.

God looked upon her face and form;  
Pronouncing both divinely sweet ;  
And marvelled much and stared the more  
At sight of two small dainty feet.

And taking Mary by the hand,  
He waltzed her round in wildest glee.  
" Ah! now I know the reason why  
Heaven never was heaven before to me."

Now Mary rules the roost above,  
And God and Christ take second place ;  
Which shows what mischief lurks behind  
A petticoat and a woman's face.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

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

### LONDON. INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, Mr. Harris, a Lecture. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15, Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate—"That Maternity should not be governed by Marriage Laws." Affirmative, Mr. D. Gifford; Negative, Mr. T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. E. C. Ratcliffe, "Life."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, M.P., "The Morals and Economics of the Ford Car."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Reason and Faith."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Upton Labour Party Hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park, E.13): 7, Ladies' Evening. Speakers: Mrs. H. Rosetti, Mrs. E. Venton, etc., "The Church's Spiritual Dope."

### COUNTRY. INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Shop Assistant's Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 6.30, Mr. Dickson, "Reason, Truth—The only Philosophy."

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, Lowerhead Row): 7, Mr. W. Walker, "Our Economic Imbecility."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. R. Neft, "Human Nature."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S.—Discussion Circle meets every Friday at 7.30 at the Labour Club, 6, Richmond Street.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Elysium, High Street): 7, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "The Wonders of Ancient Babylon." (Lantern Lecture.)

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