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Views and Opinions.

Helping the Weak.

There is a good story told by Heine of the reason why Immanuel Kant, after destroying, by the use of "pure reason," every possible proof of the existence of a God, reintroduced deity by the aid of "practical reason." Kant, it appears, had an old servant who used to accompany him in his walks and carry the philosopher's umbrella. Now Kant, says Heine, had stormed heaven, put the garrison to the sword, and left the ruler of the world senseless in his blood. There was no more fatherly goodness or future reward for present privations. The immortality of the soul is in its last agonies, and poor old Lampe stands by with the umbrella under his arm as a sorrowing spectator. So Kant took pity, and said: "Old Lampe must have a God, or else the poor man cannot be happy, and people really ought to be happy in this world. Practical common sense declares that. Well, for all I care, let practical reason guarantee the existence of a God." As Kant said, so it was, and if God was not reintroduced into Kantian philosophy for the purpose of pleasing poor old Lampe, it came there for reasons not in the least degree more convincing, and which certainly would not reflect so much credit on the good nature of the philosopher. And after all, in modern times, if those dignified by the name of thinkers provide the world with its gods, they are usually supplied for the benefit of those who do not think at all. The Lampes of the world are quite numerous, and good nature would urge some people to provide them in a moderate degree of comfort.

* * *

Our Weaker Brethren.

I was reminded of Heine's story by reading the report of an address delivered by Canon Barnes to the Metropolitan Free Church Federation, on "New Knowledge and Old Beliefs." Canon Barnes confessed that he had been in Congregational churches and had listened to sermons in which "the entire absence of the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life has sent me away with a sort of weary chill." Like Lampe hugging his umbrella, disconsolate at the absence of his God, Canon Barnes is disheartened at the preacher who will not tell him that a resurrection is "sure and certain." It is not a question, appar-

rently, of whether the hope is reasonable, but merely that of getting the "hope" expressed by the preacher. And our High Anglican Lampe bursts out:—

I need a God who is our Father, who rules the world and loves men with a father's love. For me the universe is a sorry jest if I shall never know even as also I am known.

Poor Lampe! Even though promoted from the post of umbrella carrier in the streets of Königsberg to the position of an Anglican Canon, he remains unaltered. He is still miserable without his God, and he is looking round pathetically for someone who will provide him with one. I have not the slightest doubt but that he will be obliged. We have all sorts of charitable institutions, and we have also institutions of another order where those who are suffering from delusions or are the victims of fancied needs and imagined maladies may find themselves kindly treated and their disordered humours indulged. There are certainly indulgent philosophers in this world of ours who will not fail to find Canon Barnes in some sort of a God—particularly while the Canon and his kind have the power to make it more or less uncomfortable for those philosophers who can see no use and no reason for believing in this survival of primitive ignorance.

* * *

A Warning.

Lampe, in a servant's dress, felt miserable without a God, and out of sheer good nature Kant rearranged his universe so as to make him happy. Lampe in holy orders, more than a century later, does not invite compassion by merely looking uncomfortable, he demands that a god shall be provided for him. More than that, he demands that he shall live for ever. He says flatly that the universe is a sorry jest if he does not live for ever, and if he is never to meet and know the one who made it. That is a terrible indictment for a Canon of the Church to bring against the universe, and yet one would not be surprised if it survived. For there is always the danger of the best of us thinking we are indispensable. In the early days of the French Revolution some of the aristocrats thought they would teach the people a lesson. They decided on leaving France, and so give the common folk an object-lesson as to what they would be like without a nobility. It turned out to be quite wrong tactics. The people went on just as though the Marquis of Carrabas still lived in his chateau and still honoured them by accepting their homage and their taxes. So it is rather dangerous for Canon Barnes to so solemnly threaten the universe with his grave displeasure if it does not live up to his expectations. When nothing happens—nay, if we should happen to be better off without Canon Barnes' universe than we were with it—there may be an end to the Canon and his clan, just as the French people managed to exist without the Lord Marquis of Carrabas. And, after all, the universe did manage to exist somehow or the other, and for a considerable time, without Canon Barnes, and somehow or the other, one suspects, it will manage to carry on even though our Anglican Lampe sinks into the nothingness out of which he came. The Canon is not without

scientific knowledge, but he appears to still live in a mental atmosphere which believes the world to have been deliberately created for man—an hypothesis quite as reasonable when put forward by a flea as it is when set out by a human being.

* * *

An Exchange of Errors.

According to the *Daily News* summary of the address, Canon Barnes showed his audience that clergy and ministers had passed into a new world of thought. At this point we join issue. The position is not correctly stated. There is a new world of thought, but it surrounds the clergy and ministers, they are not in it. If they were, they could not remain clergy and ministers. It is not living in a new world, because instead of the frankly man-like god of the primitive mind one talks about a god who is the father of all, or refers to him as a creative force. It is not living in a new world, because in place of the definitely localizable heaven and hell of the mediæval Christian one speaks vaguely of an after-life without saying where it exists or what it is like. That is not a new world, it is the old one filled with perpetual fog; and if the fog could only be made to lift for a few moments Canon Barnes could not fail to recognize the familiar outlines of it. It is a current and popular delusion that it is a genuine advance to give up one form of an ancient absurdity and take another form of the same thing. But it is quite wrong. Tylor put the matter with deadly accuracy when he said that the fundamental division in the world of thought was represented by the natural and the supernatural. The precise form taken by either is of comparatively small account. It is not the kind of a god in which a man believes that is of moment, the important thing is whether he believes in a god or not. Merely to see that the god idea as presented by the people of a couple of generations ago is no longer tenable, while positing a god of a slightly less objectionable form, is only to indicate an ability to see the absurdity of yesterday without evidencing the capacity or the willingness to see the absurdity of today.

* * *

Our Barbarism.

Canon Barnes touches a more intellectually respectable note when he asks: "Are we safe from an irruption of intellectual barbarism?" He reminds us that it was an intellectual barbarism which corrupted the legacy of Greek thought before classical civilization was destroyed. It would have been more faithful to the facts had the Canon informed his audience that the intellectual barbarism which destroyed the better Greek and Latin thought was that which afterwards became known to the world as Christianity. It was the irruption of the comparative barbaric Eastern religious beliefs which undermined the prevalence of Greek and Latin culture, and so paved the way for its ultimate downfall. For there is no mistaking the fact that in every direction the Christian Church represented a reversion to a lower state of culture. This was true in medicine, in philosophy, in cosmology, and even in religion. Let anyone compare the arguments used by the better Pagan minds in favour of religious beliefs, and then contrast them with the arguments used by the best Christian writers, and he will at once see the gulf between them. A good way for the genuine student to measure the fall represented by the Christian leaders would be to glance through the twenty-four volumes published some years back under the general title of the Ante-Nicene Library. The collection consists of the writings of the early Christian leaders for the first three centuries of the Christian history. And I say without hesitation that twenty-four volumes of such unadulterated stupidity and

childish superstition are not to be found anywhere else in the world's history. They stand as a monument to the awful mental decline that was represented by the rise of the Christian Church. We are not quite safe from an irruption of intellectual barbarism, and one of the greatest dangers in this direction comes from Christianity itself. It is the master superstition of the West. Under its shelter there grows numerous subsidiary superstitions, and it is in line with the past history of Christianity, that should occasion serve, it would not hesitate to utilize them all as a means of crushing ideas which the Churches may be forced to tolerate, but which they hate none the less. There is only one sure way of guarding against an irruption of intellectual barbarism, and that is by killing the religious idea root and branch. CHAPMAN COHEN.

Did the Gospel Jesus ever Live?

IV.

THE CONCLUSION.

It is frankly admitted by the late Dr. F. C. Conybeare, in his *Historical Christ*, that: "In the Four Gospels all sorts of incredible stories are told about him—such as that he was born of a virgin mother, unassisted by a human father; that he walked on the surface of the water; that he could foresee the future; that he stilled a storm by upbraiding it; that he raised the dead; that he himself rose in the flesh from the dead, and left his tomb empty; that his disciples saw him so risen; and that he finally disappeared behind a cloud up into the heavens" (p. 2). These the author characterizes as "incredible stories." But, since the Gospels are full of such stories, one is anxious to know where the historicity comes in. To Conybeare, as well as to Schmiedel, the Gospel Jesus is only a man; and it is most curious to watch the method by which it is sought to establish his historicity. Dr. Conybeare observes on page 8 that there is one circumstance to which we must pay the closest attention—namely, that when two independent persons repeat the same tale the presumption is that it is true. "One man may well be in error, and report to us what never occurred; but it is in the last degree improbable that two or more independent witnesses will join forces in testifying to what never was." Funnily enough, however, Dr. Conybeare has already called the miracle of stilling a storm by upbraiding it an incredible story; and yet it is recorded in three gospels—those of Mark, Luke, and Matthew. The same thing is true of many other incredible stories, and on Dr. Conybeare's principle "it is in the last degree improbable" that they never happened. Even Matthew Arnold, who pretended to discover in the Gospels an exceedingly beautiful form of Christianity, completely repudiated the miracles therein recorded, saying that "the sanction of Christianity, if Christianity is not to be lost with its miracles, must be found elsewhere" (*Literature and Dogma*, p. 185).

Dr. Conybeare devotes eighty pages of his book to a vituperative attack upon the theories advocated by Dr. Drews, Mr. J. M. Robertson, and Professor W. B. Smith. The main contention of these well-known authors is that there existed in Palestine a secret society, which had its headquarters at Jerusalem, "in which Jesus or Joshua was the name under which they honoured the expected Messiah." It was a Semitic cult, though of its existence there is not the slightest trace in the Old Testament. Dr. Drews is not at all surprised at this silence concerning such a society, because "we are dealing with a secret cult the existence of which we can decide upon only by indirect means." Then he adds that its existence "can only be rejected without more ado by such

as seek the traces of the pre-Christian cult of Jesus in well-known places, and will only allow that to be 'proved' which they have established by direct documentary evidences before their eyes." Paraphrasing that, Dr. Conybeare says:—

We are to set aside our copious and almost (in Paul's case) contemporary evidence that Jesus was a real person in favour of a hypothesis which from the first and as such lacks all direct and documentary evidence, and is not amenable to any of the methods of proof recognized by sober historians. We must take Dr. Drew's word for it, and forgo all evidence.

But let our authors continue with their new revelation. By Joshua, or Jesus, we are not to understand the personage concerning whose exploits the Book of Joshua was composed, but a Sun-god. The Gospels are a veiled account of the sufferings and exploits of the Sun-god. "Joshua is apparently (why this qualification?) an ancient Ephraimitic God of the Sun and Fruitfulness, who stood in close relation to the Feast of the Pasch and to the custom of circumcision." (*Historical Christ*, pp. 16-17.)

As to the pre-Christian existence of a Jewish cult of Jesus with headquarters at Jerusalem, we are in complete agreement with Dr. Conybeare, though we entirely differ from him as to the historicity of the Gospel Jesus. It is to us a source of great delight to find that Mr. Robertson, in his latest work on the subject, does not use the nebulous argument based on the alleged pre-Christian existence of a Jewish cult of Jesus as Sun-god. *The Historical Jesus: a Survey of Positions*, published in 1916 by the Rationalist Press Association, is a masterly exposition of the myth theory, which denies all historicity to the Gospel Jesus. Professor Schmiedel's nine foundation pillars for a scientific Life of Jesus are in reality utterly valueless, because, according to the orthodox conception of Jesus, he was a Divine Person in whom were united two distinct natures, the Divine and the human, in consequence of which mystical union he came to be spoken of as the God-man. When in the New Testament he is called the man Christ Jesus, the meaning always is that he is God manifested in the flesh, which he used as the medium of self-expression, or that he was, as a Welsh poetess puts it, the man with the Godhead in him dwelling.

The truth is that the theory so skilfully built up and defended by Schmiedel and others, that the Gospel Jesus was only a mere man, has not a single leg to stand upon, and consequently breaks down at every point. It is easy enough to aliege that the Gospels abound in legendary matter, but if that be true no one on earth is equal to the task of separating legend from fact and present us with a truly human Jesus, even though such a being really existed, around whom legend succeeded in securely and undetachably winding itself. We repeat that even if such a being once truly lived, he is now absolutely and irrecoverably lost. There is, however, not even the shadow of evidence that he ever existed at all. Now the all-important question comes: Is there any evidence whatever that the God-man who through his death and resurrection became the saviour of the world ever lived at all, or still lives to fulfil his redemptive mission? To that question only one answer is possible, and it is of necessity in the negative. A few generations ago sermons were being constantly preached whose one topic was the ever-living and all-conquering Christ; but such sermons are seldom delivered to-day, because most preachers are fully aware that to the majority of congregations they would not be acceptable, and also that they would not ring true to themselves. Despite this fact, however, the apologists keep on crying out "Behold the Church, and the mighty work it has accomplished in the world!" Well, we have heard that cry and exhortation

innumerable times, and still find it to be wholly unconvincing. Granting that the Church has once in a while done some little good to a few individuals here and there, the truth remains absolutely undeniable that it has done infinitely greater harm, and on a vastly larger scale. This is sorrowfully acknowledged by those who still regard religion as the most important thing in human life. They do not hesitate to aver that organized Christianity is an egregious failure everywhere. Twelve or fourteen years ago the Rev. Dr. Meyer predicted that in a few months' time such a glorious revival of religion would take place as would surprise the world, when Christian converts would be too numerous to count. That glowing prediction has remained a dead letter to this day. At the commencement of the World War the Rev. Mr. Spurr asserted that it was a Divine visitation to bring the nation back to God, and unblushingly prophesied that it would sweep such wicked journals as the *Freethinker* and the *Literary Guide* off the face of the earth. Unfortunately for him, the war did not bring the nation back to God, nor did it kill the two newspapers by him disliked and condemned. As a matter of fact, the British nation was never farther away from God than it is at the present moment, nor were the forces of Freethought ever in greater prominence and penetrating the public mind and working therein like leaven with greater success.

What do these undeniable facts infallibly prove? Nothing less than that the Gospel Jesus and the Christ of the Church never lived at all, and that the hope of the world must lie not in any promised supernatural interference, but in the natural resources of humanity itself, rightly cultivated and brought into play. As Emerson tells us again and again, the mightiest power in existence is the proud sense of self-reliance in constant operation. Given fair play, this will yet transform the world and make it a delightful place to live in.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Freethought Pantheon.

Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,
For you a stately gallery maintain
Of gay and tragic pictures.—Wordsworth
E'en in their ashes live their wonted fires.—Gray.

To the meditative mind there is no better reading than a list of names of note. We can well understand the sober joy of the old historians who loved to grapple with the life-stories of the heroes of old. Even a gazetteer is a mine of suggestion, and in a London directory you can lose yourself among the strange lanes from Pic Corner to Hanging Sword Alley. A biographical dictionary, however, or an encyclopædia is certain to make large inroads on our time. Take, for example, Joseph Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. In it there are many hundreds of entries, taken from all ages and all countries.

Such a book is informative, and turns the handles of many doors. We turn a page and encounter the name of Charles Bradlaugh, as brave as any soldier who ever drew a sword. He fought a great battle for thirteen years against overwhelming odds, and his was the cool head and calm judgment of the great captains of men. He gave his life for Liberty, and our children's children will remember something of this Freethought leader when the names of his opponents are forgotten. A few pages further and there is the name of Richard Carlile. What an indomitable spirit does it not conjure up! Further, we see the splendid name of Edward Gibbon, the greatest of English historians, who in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* "sapped a solemn creed with solemn sneer." He walks for ever as to the clash of martial music under

an emblazoned banner. Without exploration we have found the magnetic and powerful name of Voltaire. What a man! His epigrams stung like wasps, and rankled for years. At sixty-four, when other men have declined into slippers ease, he was writing *Candide*, the wittiest book in the world. Writing *Œdipus* at seventeen, *Irene* at eighty-three, he crowded between these two masterpieces the accomplishment of a giant. And Edward Fitzgerald, the shy scholar, who turned the quatrains of old Omar Khayyam into an English masterpiece. "A planet larger than the sun which cast it," his friend Tennyson described it with pardonable exaggeration. The name of Thomas Paine is homely, but what a personality does it recall? A character of outstanding ability, a maker of nations, and far other than the Caliban of Christian charity.

There is a significant entry in the name of Catherine of Russia. How many innocent critics of Freethought realize that the evangel of Reason is of the widest appeal, ranging from kings to students. Catherine was a Freethinker in word and deed. When Denis Diderot was forced by poverty to sell his library, she bought it back for him and installed him as librarian. Another "intellectual" was Frederick the Great. What must it have been to have been present at those festal nights at Frederick's palace when the nimble wit of Voltaire challenged the choicest brains of Europe? It must have been an abiding delight like those ever-memorable nights at the "Mermaid," when Ben Jonson exchanged jests with the smiling Will Shakespeare.

The "intellectuals" of France are represented by a magnificent procession from Abelard to Anatole France. Who can see the name of Robert Ingersoll without a quickening of the pulse? He comes riding down the wind like a knight in shining armour to attack the embattled hosts of Superstition. And the lonely student, Charles Darwin, who turned "Adam" and "Eve" out of Eden, not with a flaming sword, but with a steel pen. Here is Harry Heine dying upon his mattress-grave in Paris with a jest upon his lips, and Percy Shelley, the sweetest-souled of our poets, whom Christians sought to deprive of his children, and imprisoned men for selling his poems. A sense of fellowship with the fled centuries invades us as we see the name of Giordano Bruno, one of the most fearless martyrs for Truth. And Time seems poised for a moment on his spread wings as we encounter the puissant personality of Lucretius, one of the sublimest poets who ever attuned his lyre under the eagles of Old Rome.

Names such as these are but sign-posts to meet the reader and direct him towards the catholicity and universality of Freethought. And, mind you, there are many hundreds of such sign-posts. "Wonderful" is the only adjective which will serve to describe this patient account of the men and women who have cares, not for the base things of life, but for intellectual honesty, written by a wise and careful scholar who himself emptied many an inkpot in the service of Liberty, and helped to lay the deep foundations of the future greatness of the human race. MIMNERMUS.

THE BREAKING POINT.

God the inscrutable,
Looked on complacently
The while young Denison
Slipped all his debts by a careful insolvency,
Broke his wife's heart and ruined the serving girl.
But lobster salad
And iced watermelon,
That was too much for even a godhead.
"I'll smite him for that,"
Quoth God the inscrutable.
And the wretch died in a torment
At two in the morning.

Tennyson and Swinburne on Religion.

EARLY in the year 1858 two Oxford undergraduates, staying in the Isle of Wight, called upon Tennyson at his home at Farringford. One of them, small of stature, but with a large head crowned with a mass of flaming hair, and distinguished by the exuberance of his gestures and speech. He confessed to being a poet: Tennyson, being favourably impressed with the visitor's modesty, and knowledge of the classics, pressed him to stay to dinner, says Mr. Fausset—

blissfully unconscious that the sacred walls of Farringford had harboured for a few brief hours a Bacchanal in demure disguise; for the decorous undergraduate was none other than Swinburne.¹

Tennyson himself, in recording the event, says:—

Young Swinburne called here the other day with a college friend of his, and I thought him a very modest and intelligent young fellow. I read him *Maud*; but what I particularly admired in him was that he did not press upon me any verses of his own.

Perhaps it was just as well, for we know the effect Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* had upon Tennyson when they were published eight years later; ever after the name of Swinburne was to him as a red rag to a bull, and he never mentioned him except as "Little Swinburne" or "Master Swinburne." At this time Swinburne was twenty-one, and Tennyson forty-nine.

There could scarcely exist a greater antithesis, in thought and feeling, than that which existed between the two poets. Tennyson's political ideas were those of the old landed aristocracy and the provincial squire. He hated and feared democracy; he took no interest in foreign countries or politics unless there was a chance of a jolly good war. How different to the cosmopolitanism of Swinburne in his *Litany of Nations*, where a verse is devoted to each nation, telling of its services rendered to progress and civilization. Several of his poems declare his Republicanism. In his stirring *Marching Song* he speaks of—

These princelings with gauze winglets
That buzz in the air unfurled,
These summer-swimming kinglets,
These thin worms crowned and curled,

That bask and blink and warm themselves about the world

Tennyson never rose above the conventional ideas of the average Victorian, and was always very careful not to offend the susceptibilities of Mrs. Grundy. "The friends of Swinburne," however, says Mr. Gosse—

were amply aware that, so far from avoiding all possibility of offence in this direction, he was prepared to turn the pudic snows of Mrs. Grundy's countenance to scarlet, and they had observed a certain impish gusto in his anticipation of so doing. He was even impatient to invade the Respectabilis in their woodbine bower and to make their flesh creep while he did so.²

But they hardly anticipated the storm of censure that broke over Swinburne's "radiant but mocking head."

On the other hand, Tennyson received all the honours and emoluments possible for a poet to gain. He received a civil list pension, was made laureate, and ultimately received a peerage, to say nothing of the approval and personal friendship of the old Queen, who even so far unbent as to tell the poet laureate that she could trace a physical resemblance between the late Prince Consort and Hallam, to whom Tennyson had dedicated *In Memoriam*; a resemblance to the German prince, however, which had never struck Tennyson.

¹ Fausset, *Tennyson—A Modern Portrait*. p. 214.

² Gosse, *Life of Swinburne*.

The *In Memoriam* elegies, originally consecrated to the memory of Arthur Hallam, came during the course of the seventeen years Tennyson was brooding over them, to embrace others matters theological and scientific. It must be said at the outset there is nothing original in the poem; in fact, there is nothing original in anything Tennyson wrote; he was far too timid and conventional to give birth to an original idea; he merely adopted and put into poetry the theological ideas of Carlyle as expounded principally in his *Sartor Resartus*, published sixteen years before *In Memoriam*. Tennyson and Carlyle were intimate friends, and their writings display the same mistrust of science, the same mistrust of human intelligence, the same appeal to the feelings of the heart, and of the emotions, to prove the existence of God as against the logic of fact and the revelations of science, and the same definite refusal to relinquish the dream of immortality. As Froude observed: "Tennyson became the voice of this feeling in poetry; Carlyle in what was called prose."

It is difficult for the present generation to realize the shock of apprehension and dismay with which the Victorians received the new revelations of science, which substituted evolution for creation, and, in the words of the geologist, Hutton, could "find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end" Which dethroned man from his proud position as the crown of creation, made in God's image, and placed him in proper position as an offshoot of the animal world, of no more value in the economy of Nature than the horse or the elephant. As for the existence of God and a future life, science knew nothing of them at all, and even traced out the evolutionary steps which naturally gave rise to these delusions. All this is familiar to us; you can even hear an emasculated and distorted account of it from the pulpit to-day. For the present generation has few illusions left to shatter; we have been through so much that we are resigned in advance to whatever the future has in store for us. It was different with the Victorians, as Mr. Nicholson observes:—

Even to question immortality, to face shrinkingly in the dark the new horror of nothingness, was mark enough then of a brave, truth-honouring man. To accept doubt as the only tenable position without a paling countenance was beyond the powers of any.

It was to the task of reconciling the new science with the old theology that Tennyson set himself in *In Memoriam*.

Tennyson discarded *in toto* the evidences for design in Nature of the Paley and Bridgewater school, and staked all upon the feelings of the heart. Instead of facts he offered emotions. And the troubled and bewildered Victorians received *In Memoriam* with thankfulness and joy. The old Queen told the poet that, "Next to the Bible, *In Memoriam* is my comfort," and what had received the seal of the royal approval was surely good enough to be read at home. The laureate had routed the rabble of scientists; he had solved the perplexing problem in a most satisfactory manner, so they bought *In Memoriam*, and Tennyson for his part bought Farringford.

His compromise, says Mr. Fausset—

satisfied for a time the selfish instincts of the favoured class to which he belonged; but it cannot bear the candid scrutiny of a generation which has reaped the bitter fruits of a high-sounding egotism and whose hopes have almost perished with their fears. . . . He had not vindicated the ways of God to man, but the right of the upper middle class to maintain a social and domestic Deity, which pleased them very well. He had sought, not universal, but local truth. His morality, we repeat, was dictated by his personal needs. It was a policy of fear and selfishness, pre-

tending to truth. Behind his stately affirmations of virtue there lurks a meanness. . . . Rarely did he fill the perfect chalice of his art with the crystal waters of truth.⁴

The same writer says that:—

He made faith and doubt live happily together by allowing them only to meet to pass pleasantries about each other. He sentimentalized the facts of science, as he did the dogmas of religion, to suit the conclusion he desired, which was, in truth, not the result of passionate insight or logical effort, but merely an emotional preference for the faith of his fathers. At the same time he avoided the charge of obscurantism by appearing to welcome and quote science without really facing the question whether she was foe or friend, or neither, to the higher hopes of man.⁵

Although Tennyson could provide a formula to others for maintaining religious belief, yet he could not allay the irrepressible doubts which arose in his own mind. In reading his deliverances upon religion, it is plain that it was the problem of immortality, of a future life, that fascinated him. In God he was not so much interested, except as the question of the existence of God affected a future life. Two months before the Queen conferred a peerage upon him she gave him an interview, and records in her diary that Tennyson—

spoke with horror of the unbelievers and philosophers who would make you believe there was no other world, no immortality, who tried to explain all away in a miserable manner. We agreed that were such a thing possible, God, who is love, would be far more cruel than any human being.⁶

Which in plain language means that God exists to guarantee us a future existence, if he does this, then he is a God of Love. If, on the other hand, God neglects, or declines to grant another lease of life after this, then he is not a God of Love, but a cruel monster. Again, Tennyson admits that we do not get the idea of a loving God from a contemplation of Nature. He says:—

God is love, transcendent, all-pervading. We do not get this faith from Nature or the world. If we look at Nature alone, full of perfection and imperfection, she tells us that God is disease, murder and rapine. We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us.⁷

Strange that the work of a God of Love should issue in such criminal characteristics! Again, he declared once in conversation:—

I should consider that a liberty had been taken with me if I were made simply a means of ushering in something higher than myself.

Which was an exceedingly selfish and egotistic sentiment, such as would have been impossible to men of the calibre of Paine, Bradlaugh, or Ingersoll.

(To be concluded.) W. MANN.

Free Thoughts.

I want the road of life made good the whole length, not the last half-mile, and want to make the whole journey with proper dignity and behaviour, not put on my good manners just as I reach the end.

Too many names have reached us on account of their disagreeable odour. It shows how poorly mankind has lived that so many bad men are remembered.

Truthseeker, New York.

L. K. WASHBURN.

⁴ Fausset, *Tennyson - A Modern Portrait*, p. 300.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

⁶ Fausset, *Tennyson*, p. 265-6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

William Blake and Mankind.

Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?—*Browning.*

ON the downward path of negation, life is like Peer Gynt's onion; it is illusion after illusion—a stripping off in the hope of finding something definite and final. In the physical world the body is a constant slave to the imagination, and the Book of Ecclesiastes is a triumphal march downwards. Your lover of fine food, fine dress, and all the delights of physical gratification sometimes rises to the level of Horace; he more frequently sinks into despair a victim of all the persecutions of the flesh to which appetite has led him. Our Nature poets chronicling the life of a gnat, a summer evening, or the beauties of spring, lack salt; we do not turn and return to a faithful word-picture—a picture in print, with the same delight that we read and re-read Homer. Homer embraces Nature and something more, and although Blake appears to revel in delicious sounds and the vocabulary of an artist, there are many hints in his *Poetical Sketches* that are sign-posts to the enunciation of something wider and deeper. In his *Imitation of Spenser* there is a couplet, like a flash of lightning on a dark night—

For Ignorance is Polly's leasing nurse,
And love of Polly needs none other's curse.

This from our physical man who could read a moral in the game of blind-man's buff. In the same style, the reader will find in *King Edward the Third* striking metaphors and allusions all pointing to the fact that the poet is reaching out for some more powerful instrument than blank verse or the conceit of a poet in search of rhyme. Sir Walter Manny's lines on the danger of the battlefield are complete in their description of warfare, ancient or modern; and two lines of Dagworth's express the longing of all those who have lived in the shadow of the King of Terrors. A youth was singing a ditty in the camp—

If he
Returned victorious, he should wed a maiden
Fairer than snow, and rich as midsummer.

Fear, misery, and despair are enervating; Heaven held out as a device is bound to be less effective as the lives of people become more worthy of living. Heaven may be founded on fear and ignorance. If Blake had only written his *Poetical Sketches* his place in the world of poetry would have been higher than that of John Clare, or Crabbe, or any of the Nature poets who mistake solitude for the whole of life instead of it being only a part, and, unrestrained, would lead the human race back to the fabled start, with the hygiene of Leviticus, and monotony that would eventually flatten the shape of the human skull to approximate to that of a rabbit. Country sights and sounds are beautiful; it is in the country where professional religion has the greatest hold on people; it is in the country where the marks of the galley-slave can be seen on the peasant's face; it is in the country where primitive thoughts and primitive living approximate to that of savages. It is in the country that the external world is master; the physical life is uppermost, and the slave sometimes loves his chains.

We do not find that Blake glorifies country life; he is only interested in the country's manifestation of seasonal beauty that the earth wears like a changing garment. For the country's beauty holds nearly all of us captive; some for ever, others for a little space in their development, and a few not at all. Nature is indifferent or antagonistic to Art, and to those who strive to make living an art, external Nature provoking the emotions only is relegated to its proper place, as Blake did, when he made it a small but necessary part in his artistic development.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Suggestions of a Cigarette Card.

The people of Tibet are most superstitious. It is the custom for almost everyone to wear charms. The Amulet-box illustrated contains small inscribed scrolls covered with magical characters. These magic formulæ are written and blessed by their Lamas. The scrolls are believed to be all-powerful spells for appeasing evil spirits, keeping the wearers from all physical harm, safeguarding them from every kind of danger, and protecting them from the blighting effects of the evil-eye. Many of these charm-boxes are of gold, elaborately chased, and encrusted with turquoise.

MUCH in little, one might say, but why Tibet only? It would be as true to say: "The people of England are most superstitious. It is the custom of almost everyone to wear charms." This is true of all classes, here and in America, wherever is a so-called civilization, the leaders, and presumably the cultured people of Society, being most addicted to the wearing of lucky stones, etc.—the observation is so trite it seems superfluous to repeat it, the prayer of Robert Burns having never yet been answered:—

Oh, wad some power the giftie gi'e us
To see oorsel's as ithers see us;
It wad frae mony a blunder free us
An' foolish notion;
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea' us,
An' even devotion.

This also is trite—because it is "eternally and sacredly true"—so wise and simple, also, one wonders did Burns originate the reflection as well as the apt expression of it. Which leads on to the query: What are the relative potencies of modern opinion and ancient survivals? But meantime we must forbear.

Multum in parvo, then, or as the opposite, little in much, as in the pages of John Ruskin. When I glanced at the card I was reading one of Ruskin's university lectures on religion and Art, and the short and the long of the matters in hand, like the ebon bird of Poe, kept beguiling my sad fancy into smiling. Accurate and universal as was the mind of Ruskin, and necessarily intellectually honest, he could not fail to express his clear convictions, if in some cautious, round-about, elaborate way and apologizing as he proceeded for certain "painful latitudes of expression"—outwardly apologizing, but inwardly, no doubt, firmly and inevitably grounded on a stainless integrity of soul, unmistakably, triumphantly clear, as in the following:—

For there are many religions, but only one morality. There are moral and immoral religions, each differing as much in precept as in emotion; but there is only one morality, which has been, is, and must be for ever an instinct in the hearts of all civilized men, as certain and unalterable as their outward bodily form, and which receives from religion neither law, nor peace, but only hope and felicity.

The "funny" thing is that college professors can utter such home truths with the approval of the clergy, learned societies, and the pious generally—but perhaps they do not understand what has been said, and are only impressed by who said it—such is fame, and such is reputation—but when a common or garden Atheist says the like, in language no less choice and eloquent, he is anathema! The short and the long of my modest article is that there may be a wealth of suggestion on a cigarette card, and much Freethought in the works of Ruskin, though obscured in the great quarry of his learning. Infinite are the felicities of related things. The more a man learns—really learns—the more inescapable becomes (for him) the Freethought position. Herein lies the strength and the prophecy of this purely intellectual movement, and without which all other movements are meaningless. . . .

The cigarette card has quite another, if any, significance for the little urchin in the street—it is the

"tract" that beguiles him towards the great church of Saint Nicotine—how alike are the methods of business and of piety!—with the urchin, however, it is not an intellectual, nor a religious, not even an artistic urge; imitation, custom, acquisitiveness, emulation, make him importunate; in Scotland, at least, the voice at your elbow, with business-like brevity and deference, asks: "Hae ye ony seegarette cairds, mister?" Here is not religion, but humanism. Puir wee sowl!

ANDREW MILLAR.

Acid Drops.

Commenting on the death of Lenin, the *Church Times* says that the lesson of his life is: "There can be no real progress without religion. There can be no enduring happiness for the common people if they are robbed of their faith." So far as the first part of this deliverance is concerned it is not quite so clear as one would wish that while the Russian people were blessed with a Church that ruled their lives their country was remarkable for the progress it achieved. Still, we have no doubt that there does exist with the *Church Times* a very vital distinction between tyranny and murder in the name of God, even accepting all the religious stories told about Russia to be nothing but the truth. As to the last part, it is significant to notice that it is the "common" people who must have faith. The superior classes may get along without it. That seems to us very like saying what the Russian leaders said—namely, that religion is the dope of the people. It is a dope which the "common" people need to keep them quiet. We have seen the same argument used on behalf of beer. A drunken people is never dangerous to vested interests, however troublesome they may be on occasions.

One day, we may not unreasonably hope, we shall get something of the truth about the Russian revolution and its effects on the people. At present all we can be sure of is that the British Press, secular and religious, has beaten the record in the matter of downright and deliberate lying. To read the religious papers one would imagine that a religious meeting could only be held in Russia in secret, and anyone found worshipping would be straightway hauled off to execution. But we know that all are free to practice what religion they please, and that what has occurred is the complete secularisation of the State. We know also that the wealth of the Church—actually State property—has been for the most part converted to secular uses, that religion has been abolished from all schools, and that some of the clergy have got into trouble for plotting with others for the overthrow of the established régime. All this emerges with tolerable plainness, and they are things which our own pious Press can never forgive. If all the executions and massacres placed to the credit of the Bolsheviks had been committed in the name of religion we should have heard little about them in the way of protest. But they are alleged to have taken place against religion, and that makes a world of difference. But we said at the time of the revolution that whether Lenin's ideas were good or bad—and we were far from endorsing them—the one broad fact emerging was that he was the one great man thrown up by the war period. He stood head and shoulders above the mediocrities who were dominant in this and the other countries engaged in the European conflict. Whatever may be true otherwise about him, that one fact remains, and nothing but sheer fanaticism or blind prejudice could fail to see that fact. And whatever Russia may become in the future, whatever form its constitution may ultimately assume, it will have to date its rebirth from him.

We were reminded of how much there is in a phrase by the heading "Foregleams of Christianity" to a review in one of the weekly papers of Mr. S. Langdon's *Babylonian Epic of Creation*. The author of the work points out that the ritual of the slain god who is resurrected from the tomb is in Babylonian mythology just as it afterwards appears in the

Christian myth. But it would not do for a reviewer to make this plain, and to point the obvious moral that Christianity in this, as in other things, was only repeating a portion of a general mythology. To have called it the origins of Christianity would have awakened suspicion, so "Foregleams" does duty instead. It helps to keep alive the very foolish notion that the people before Christianity were groping in the dark for a truth which was fully expressed in the Christian religion. Somehow or the other the established superstition must be maintained and the ignorance of the people kept untouched if it is at all possible.

On a sub-title in the film, "The Prisoner of Zenda," appears the following sentence: "God does not always make the right men kings." Is not this as much as to say that God sometimes makes mistakes, and cannot therefore be all-wise and infallible? How did such a sentence escape the film censor, and should it not be considered a mild form of "blasphemy"?

Mr. H. G. Wells, in his book on Sanderson of Oundle, gives a rapier thrust at tradition. He writes that the curriculum routine of the great public schools "had become so mechanical that it was done best by men who were intellectually and morally half asleep." This will not please those who form a little ring in the "trade of philosophy," and, at a venture, the name of H. G. Wells will go down to posterity when the little ring is forgotten in its attempts to clothe mankind with a ready-made suit from the Academy according to the directions of Pluto and Kipling's drum.

Mr. Wells has an affinity with Schopenhauer. The prayer of those in the trade of philosophy is "May each day bring us, as hitherto, new systems adapted for University purposes, entirely made up of words and phrases, and as a learned jargon besides which allows people to talk whole days without saying anything." Schopenhauer anticipated those delightful comedians who tell us in six volumes "Why Ice Melts in Spring," or the correct number of angels capable of dancing on the point of a needle.

A proposal has been made at Ashford that the local authority should sell for £30 the "tank" which was placed in the centre of the town as a war memorial. General G. A. L. Dumont, Military Attache of the French Embassy at Washington, declares that the dirigible is doomed, and all will meet with the same fate as the Dixmude Ennui and sapience, as it were. However, to cheer us in this wave of war depression, we learn that the United States Army Ordnance have developed a new and powerful gun capable of hurling an armour-piercing projectile of 1,560lb. a distance of 23 miles. The total weight of the gun and carriage is 700,000lb. We presume this weapon will be used for sparrow shooting until all ex-Service men are fitted up with artificial legs, and the common man in any country again deluded that it is heroic to kill other common men they have never seen.

Dean Inge's remedy for Bolsheviks is on a level with the historical remedy of his Church for all who thought differently. It appears too much to expect these days that the onus rests on him to destroy a bad idea with a good one. That task would demand thought and reason; and, as Rousseau pointed out in *Emile*, it is easier to strike a child than correct it. And whilst we are on the subject of killing, Dean Inge had his chance during the last war, and, like many other Pistols of warfare, prefers to kill them with his mouth.

The *Daily Chronicle*, in half a column, invites us to be impressed by the account of a clergyman, the Rev. H. W. Teasdale, who for fourteen years has been the Colonial and Continental Church Society's chaplain at the Swiss village of Leysin. This place is a centre for consumptives. We are unable to be impressed, when we remember the unselfish devotion of matrons, sisters, and nurses in our

own hospitals at home, their miserable remuneration, and the attitude of insurance companies towards them. Anyone would think that being an ordinary human person was *extraordinary* in a clergyman. How many of the brethren finish their days in the workhouse after following the lowly carpenter?

We are informed in the *British Weekly*, by Mr. Henderson, Mr. Clynes, Mr. Lansbury, Mr. Ben Turner, Dr. Haden Guest, Mr. Pethick Lawrence, Mr. Dunnico, and others, that Labour is attempting to put Christianity into practice. For those who can see the disastrous consequences of Christianity on the destiny of mankind this statement is about as clear as the mud that clings to the coast at Southend-on-Sea, and we await the discovery of the Capital Levy in the Sermon on the Mount.

There are wags even among reviewers. In the *Times Literary Supplement* a book entitled *Songs to Jesus*, price 1s., is dismissed with two lines: "It is not on the score of poetic originality that these sixteen poems may claim attention." If Christ had had a touch of Falstaff in him the world's history might have been read with less tears.

The *Church Times* says it could never understand the reputation of Dean Inge as a daring thinker or his claim to "out-spokenness." We do not find it difficult to explain the matter. The secret of it is that Dean Inge is a clergyman, and, as we have often said, there is no other profession in which a man may so easily gain a reputation as a "daring thinker," or a reputation for outspokenness. He has only to say that he does not believe in one or two stories that are intellectually on a level with "Jack and the Beanstalk," and at once the papers report him as though he were an intellectual Columbus opening up new worlds of profound thought. And if he says about religion a little of what almost every educated man knows to be the truth he is lauded for his frankness and his honesty. The dear *Church Times* should reflect that all things are relative, and a degree of mental honesty and ability that would be expected as a matter of course in other men is naturally regarded as worthy of special mention in the case of a clergyman.

Sir Archibald Hamilton has followed Lord Headley's example by professing the faith of Islam. We wonder if marriageable ladies in Society notice these trifles.

A golf club at Seattle, U.S.A., has appointed a chaplain to look after the spiritual welfare of its members. That chaplain ought soon to be in a position to compile a dictionary of swear-words.

We commend to our readers' attention a short and excellent article on Dean Inge in the *Daily Herald*, 7th ult., by one who was a Fellow with him at Oxford College. Mr. E. B. Bennet, the name of the writer, touches the spot in the Reverend Dean's sneer at the common people for mispronunciation. The writer says that this comes very badly from one who was beginning his education when common users were ending theirs. *Daily Herald* readers may see in time the amount of real help they can expect from professional followers of Him Crucified. Let the common men take heart. Their knowledge is taken from the book of life, and we have no doubt, if Dean Inge and his books on Plotinus were put on an island to-morrow, they could fix a washer on a leaky tap, sow and reap corn, sing, and drink ale and make love to their wives without assistance from this imitation of Dean Swift in everything but that great Irishman's common sense. Such people as the Reverend Dean make Heaven a very undesirable place—he might be there. And 'ow could 'Arry, the himage of 'is maker, 'andle 'is 'arp if 'is h's were not in their proper horder?

Dr. Dowse made a complete *volte face* after the death of his wife during her twelfth confinement. Tolstoy,

after reaching the age when men turn good, left his wife carrying away one of those brainstorms through speculation on the unknowable—to end miserably outside the sphere of human harmony. Religion in both cases appeared to be a case for the pathologist; it is a branch that will never be successfully grafted on to the family-tree of life that has its roots in the ground of common-sense.

A reviewer, in noticing a book published by the Christian Literature Society for India and Africa, reminds the authoress, Anstice Abbott, that she does not face the fact that native Christians very frequently bear the worst possible character with Europeans. It is just about time that the English public began to hear both sides of the missionary business—and dropped its donations instead into the boxes of our ex-Service musicians, who remind us at railway stations that we have had a lovely war.

The Liverpool Committee of the National Council of Social Service appears to be an amiable body of people with the economy maggot well lodged in its brain. The mouse of this mountain is that golf, football, tennis, and bowls take up too much space of the playing-fields in comparison with the number of players. As a remedy, the committee suggest the game of fives, which takes up 24 feet. The committee is to be admired for its modesty. It might have suggested shove-halfpenny as a jolly, invigorating outdoor game. It is also to be noted that these recommendations come to light *after* the institution of Sunday games. To follow this Pecksniff of economy we suggest that there would be more room on the earth if people had their feet cut off, and there would be more fresh air if each person breathed through one nostril.

Mrs Leonora Eyles, in her book entitled *Family Love*, has some plain words on religion, which Schopenhauer so splendidly defined as the metaphysics of the people. Mysteries are the chief thing she protests against; to call them "holy mysteries" makes them not better, but rather worse. She also protests strongly against the contradictions, the bewilderments, and the terrors which stand for Christianity. No, gentle reader, this is not an extract from the *Freethinker*. It is for the *Freethinker*, and is taken from the *Times Literary Supplement*, January 17, 1924. Verily, the world does move!

Mr. John Blunt, in the *Daily Mail*, discusses Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, and flappers. Behold the moulders of public opinion! Writing with a cudgel or a shovel, this gentleman of the free press states that the empty-headed pretty girl is one of the most unsatisfactory products of the age. This is where one may say that the *Daily Mail* is another. It is an organ of "public opinion," and, as one writer asserted, "the ideas of schoolchildren usually reflect the average of public opinion." Where will Mr. Blunt find his subscribing readers and supporters if the unsatisfactory products of the age were non-existent?

A change in the political world has kicked the daily papers into temporary sense. One can now look at some of their placards without feeling sick. When the *Daily Mail* announces "Fair Play," and Mr. Lovat Fraser's Sunday rattle states "Fair Play All Round," who cares whether they mean it? But they have said it, and at this rate of progress they may be readable by intelligent people in another hundred years. So much for public opinion that the papers profess to lead. We can imagine no greater punishment for a journalist than that of showing him what he wrote yesterday or last Sunday.

An English boy, sixteen years old, hanged himself in a barn of his employer, Benson Cox, a prosperous farmer; near Goderich, Ontario. At the inquest the coroner pointed out that the lad had no recreation except going to church and Sunday-school. And that is all that this Acid Drop need point out to those who wish to perpetuate savagery and superstition surrounded by a halo called religion.

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

To Correspondents.

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

E. S. HADLEY.—Sorry the answer to your inquiry has been accidentally delayed. There are, as was stated in the article, many clergymen who deny the actual truth of the story of the resurrection. Among these may be named Rev. J. M. Thompson, in his work *Miracles in the New Testament*; Dr. Hastings Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle, Rev. D. A. Major, editor of the *Modern Churchman* (the denial here is that the physical body of Jesus rose from the grave); the late Rev. Professor Downey, of Glasgow, in his *Jesus of the Gospels*. There are many others, who qualify their denials more or less, but the above will probably answer your question satisfactorily.

R. A. DOWNS.—Subscription for two copies of the *Freethinker* for 1924 received. We hope the extra copy will do its work well.

A. G. PYE.—It certainly is curious for a leading clergyman to cry out "I need a God," like a fractious child crying for a cake. But it helps to illustrate the mental quality of the pulpit nowadays.

J. IRELAND.—We should have no objection to reprinting "Solomon and His Women" if we were sure there was an adequate demand for it. But printing is a costly business nowadays.

R. J. MARRIOT.—You do well in protesting against the pandering of a political party to the clergy. Of course, your letter may go no further than the W.P.B., but it lets the editor know what some of his readers think about it.

"WELLWISHER" writes suggesting, as a means of getting the *Freethinker* into new hands, that those interested should send their copies when done with to an address selected from either the postal or the telephone directory. "Here and there," he says, "the seed will surely fall on suitable soil." We believe it will.

T. MAY.—Sorry we cannot find space for your letter. The God of the old Bible was originally a primitive tribal deity, of the same pattern as scores of other tribal gods found in all parts of the uncivilized and semi-civilized world.

P. BEDEHOUSE.—Your definition of religion as "the conception which man forms of the power that is the cause of his being," etc., would rule out all the lower religions. The primitive races neither think of their gods as creators nor do they believe in one "God" as the cause of what is. They are all pseudo-philosophic conceptions grafted on the original religious belief as knowledge makes it more or less untenable. It is absurd to define religion so that it may mean what one would like it to mean, and completely ignore its historical character and associations.

J. COLLIER.—Pleased to hear of the success of Dr. Higginson's lectures.

C. BUSH.—We quite agree with you that what we need to-day in the propaganda of Freethought is personal courage in advancing our views. Unfortunately, a great many appear to be under the impression that the chief thing is to be as

accommodating as possible. They have yet to learn the lesson that the Churches will be most dangerous when the danger threatening them is at its worst. A combination of the Churches, were it possible to-day, would soon put back the clock for at least a century. And stranger things than even that have happened in the history of the world.

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

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

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

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

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We wish to again impress upon our friends the need for seeing that when copies of this journal are ordered from their newsagent they get them. A recent incident emphasizes the importance of this. One large wholesale agent was compelled to send for a couple of quires in addition to his standing weekly order. Now we happen to know that the order for this particular number had been lying at the wholesale agent's office for several days before it was sent out. And one may assume that it was despatched reluctantly. In many cases where this delay occurs the local agent simply reports the paper as out of print, and the customer is content with the reply. The cure for this kind of thing is for anyone who orders the paper to insist on getting it. Failing to do so is just to help others in applying the boycott. It is very seldom indeed that the *Freethinker* runs out of print, and when it does there is always a notice of the fact in these columns. So the one rule is: Insist on getting the paper when ordered.

The Manchester Branch has secured a very comfortable meeting place in the Engineering Union Hall, 120, Rusholme Road. It will be holding fortnightly meetings there till the end of the season, and we hope that Manchester Freethinkers will give them their fullest support. There were moderate audiences at Mr. Cohen's meetings on Sunday last, but the Branch had made the fatal mistake of cutting down the advertising, which is usually the most expensive form of economy that one can adopt. If the public is to be attracted to meetings it must know of them. Of course, advertising should be done wisely, but it should be done thoroughly. There is only one more word to add, which is that advertising involves expense, but there are surely enough Freethinkers in Manchester to see that the necessary funds are forthcoming for this purpose.

At the present moment there is a man enduring six months in a Christian prison in this country for being foolish enough to trust God to do something in the shape of curing his child of diphtheria. We dealt with this case some weeks ago, and the article, revised, has now been issued by the N.S.S. as a four-page leaflet, under the title of *Peculiar Christians: Imprisoned for Praying*. This offers a good chance of friends doing a little quiet propa-

ganda. The tract, if we may venture to say it, is arresting, and calculated to set Christians thinking. The tract will be supplied at rs. 6d. per 100, and we invite as many of our friends as are interested to send for a few hundreds and get them into circulation while the case is "warm."

The Glasgow Branch is holding a concert party to-day in their usual meeting place, 297, Argyle Street. The concert is arranged by Mr. Lancaster, and that is a guarantee of its quality. The concert will commence at 6.30. We presume that admission is free.

Episodes.

I.

SHUFFLING along the gutter came a grey, wizened old man, clad in threadbare garments, and a battered bowler hat. The keen east wind piercing the rents in his frayed and mud-stained trousers revealed the dirty, unwashed flesh beneath. His age—well, anything over seventy. A strange human document whom all that looked upon might read. A product of civilization! A monument to the glory of commercial cannibalism! A spectacle for tears! He was singing, as well as his chattering teeth would let him; for the wise laws of this free country do not permit of begging, and unless one is a peer one must give "value" for money received. I fell to musing—as is my wont—and wondering what message, what consolation, Christianity had for this old man—for although the religion of the "man of sorrows" does not challenge the system that brings men to such a pass, it is, I know, rich in consolations. What then is his reward? Mansions in the skies? A heavenly crown, and eternal bliss in the after-life?

The After-life! "What wants this old man with an after-life?" thought I bitterly. "Is he, then, so enamoured of life that he needs must have another? Surely 'twere better far that he drop into oblivion. He has played his part; he has, for three-score years and ten, borne the fitful fever of life with a becoming fortitude. Let him then depart in peace. He despises your tawdry crown. He does not want 'another chance.' Let him pass!"

The tune that he was mumbling sounded strangely familiar. It was, I thought, a hymn. A hymn to touch the sympathies (and the pockets) of passing believers! As he drew near I caught the words that fell from his faltering lips—

Life after death, is in that word,
'Tis immortality.

I smiled ruefully, and dropped a copper into the battered hat.

II.

I sat back in my seat in the theatre and wondered what the parson on my right thought of it all. For here on the stage, amidst the gorgeous setting of an old-fashioned pantomime, was his stock-in-trade. Fairies, devils; immortals mingling boldly with mere mortals; witches, good and evil spirits, and all the outfit of a full-blown supernaturalist. What more could my clerical friend desire? And would he draw from them the same moral as I? I wonder!

Once upon a time (yes, let us endeavour to reflect the true spirit of the thing) this world was a stage for pantomime. There were good and bad spirits presided over by the Great Spirit Good, and the Great Evil Spirit. All the cast of mortals and immortals, fairies and witches were so mixed up that one couldn't really tell who was who, nor which was witch! Old women rode about on broomsticks and bewitched cows, raised storms, turned the milk sour, and generally made themselves a positive danger to human well-being.

Sometimes they would knock at the door and beg for food and shelter; and in some cases where they had been received kindly the good folk found out that they were not witches after all, but fairies in disguise—just as they do in pantomime.

Now, in that world (before the days of Darwin and others) my clerical friend would have played an important part. He would not be watching the play from the stalls, but would be on the stage acting as the chosen representative of the Great Stage Manager.

Alas! How times have changed. That pantomimic world has passed away for ever. Even my seven-year-old companion thinks the fairies on the stage are "silly"; and she has only *contempt* for the Devil in the red cloak who sings in such a deep bass voice. Surely, if my friend the parson has caught the moral of the play aright he must be feeling a trifle sore, and longing for the "good old days." I wonder!

Out of the land of make-believe into the world of reality. Leaving behind us the supernatural, we crowd out on to the pavement. Surely this world of reality is more wonderful by far than the miracles of the superstitious past. How tawdry are the miracles of pantomime, or the middle ages, beside the purring limousine that is waiting for the "principal boy," the electric signs, and the penny newspaper with the world's news.

"A wonderful world!" I reflect as I put up my umbrella. Taking my young companion by the hand, I step out into the drizzling rain. Beneath the light of a street lamp I catch a glimpse of a girl with thickly-painted lips and haggard, pathetic eyes. It was then I realised, like Gulliver, that I still lived in a Christian country!

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Christianity and the Mediæval Inquisition.

"Convince me," says Mill, "that the world is ruled by an Infinite Being of whom I know nothing except that his proceedings are incompatible with the highest known morality," and I will bear my fate as I may. But there is one thing that he shall not compel me to worship him. I shall call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply the epithet to my fellow creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."

"The moral degradation of worshipping an omnipotent demon through eternity might conceivably be more painful than any punishment in the demon's power to inflict."

—Benn.

THE Mediæval Inquisition is merely a very prominent aspect of the general conditions that obtained throughout Europe during the progress of Christianity from its rise to power until the forces of Free thought partly broke down the oppression that has always accompanied Christianity. Even in the early days of the cult, when it is said that the characteristic feature of the early Christians was their modest behaviour and humility of bearing, they manifested intolerance by the open and fierce fanaticism towards the State deities and their forms of worship, in utter defiance of any State law. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Christianity became the leading religion throughout Europe it displayed a degree of intolerance of opponents, even among themselves, greater than has been known to have existed in any other religion.

The Mediæval Inquisition was an institution founded for the purpose of preventing and destroying heresy. History tells us that it was in many instances very successful in this attempt. But history also informs us that it was by the instruments of cruelty and torture that success was obtained. Opinions differ widely in regard to the work performed by the Mediæval In-

quisition; one side saying that it was very useful and important, and the other saying that it was a thoroughly cruel and distasteful institution. The consensus of opinion favours the latter conclusion. We will attempt to give evidence in support of the latter view.

The Mediæval Inquisition arose, as did many other things, from the conditions created by the institution of Christianity. This institution has always assumed infallibility in regard to its origin, its authority and its function. It has always obstructed advanced thought in any age, and has demanded unqualified adherence to its authority. On account of this absurd and unreasonable position it has entirely misunderstood the sociological aspect of human life. Christianity has been so foolish as to assume that salvation hereafter is of far greater importance than present well-being. We have continually presented to us, throughout its entire history, rewards in the shadowy and uncertain future life as one of the tenets of its teaching, instead of the far more important and pressing need of moral success and victory in this life. Instead of intellectual life being allowed free expansion it has been cramped and retarded by ideas that might have answered very well 2,000 years ago but cannot find scientific support to-day. Apart from this, its claim to divine sanction for everything it cared to do or to ask for, had developed the expectation that all its demands should receive complete obedience. As a result of this Christian intolerance, the leaders of the Church became a hierarchy of absolute bigots and despots. This intolerance extended to all classes and conditions of society. Non-compliance with the clerical demands was tantamount to a disbelief in their chosen tenets, and the unfortunate objector was treated in the cruellest manner. In all directions an opinion that differed from the clerical expositors could readily be prescribed as heretical. And then followed the iniquitous repression and persecution that were such marked features of Mediæval Christianity.

The Mediæval Inquisition was brought into prominence when the Church commenced to suppress a system known as the Cathari or "the pure." This was a sect that lived a clean and blameless life; but it was opposed to the Church, and in consequence had to be suppressed. Owing to the influence of these and other heretics, dissent was increasing very rapidly throughout the whole of Europe. But it was in Southern France that the climax came. In the 12th century Pope Alexander III. instituted a crusade against heretics in Toulouse. On account of the failure of this crusade, Count Raymond, of Toulouse, was excommunicated. Later he made peace and was reinstated in the Papal favour. But he was unable to see why the Pope should exert such oppression on his subjects, and obeyed the Papal injunctions as little as possible. Later, in January, 1208, Peter of Castlenau, a Papal Legate, was murdered by a man in Raymond's Court. This provided an excuse for sterner Papal action. Raymond was accused of being an accomplice and was excommunicated a second time. He submitted to this foolish indignity, was duly flogged by those who professed the religion of gentleness, love and humility, and was afterwards absolved.

This was not the end of the matter; it merely aggravated the situation. The Church was further determined to proceed with its inquisitorial methods, and one of the greatest disgraces that ever happened in the name of even Christianity was the result. In July, 1209, the town of Bezier was stormed by the Papal forces and about 20,000 persons were brutally massacred. And by the end of the autumn in the same year no fewer than 500 towns and castles had been taken from so-called heretics.

Not content with these successes and acts of de-

pravity the Church continued its brutalities in the following spring, with the elder Simon de Montfort as their instrument. During this campaign many more towns were captured, and many innocent persons and acknowledged heretics were burned at the stake, this form of punishment previously having received the Papal blessing. It is recorded that at Lavaur in May, 1211, no less than 400 heretics were burned at once; the huge pyre giving rise to great jubilation among the vulgar and bloodthirsty Crusaders. But the inquisitors had been very vigilant in the meantime, and information had reached the Pope's ears that Raymond was not oppressing the heretics as he ought. This gave fresh grounds for another attack on him. He was duly called upon to account for his shortcomings and was again excommunicated. In consequence further military steps were taken by de Montfort, who succeeded in subduing the whole area, thus paving the way for the institution of the Inquisition, which proved itself to be as reckless as it was intolerant.

The institution of the Inquisition may be stated definitely as having taken place in the earlier part of the 13th century under the probable headship of Dominic; but this is not quite certain. But while there was no official recognition of the institution until ten years after his death, the organization had been gradually and surely developing. In constitution the Inquisition was a mixture of Dominicans and Franciscans. And, as usual in such cases, they could not agree. Later, the cruelty and zeal in heresy hunting of the Dominicans gave rise to the unenviable name "hounds of the Lord." From 1220 to 1230 the Inquisition elaborated a complete system of persecution. The most elementary and grotesque things were embodied in its regulations as evidence of heresy. According to these regulations the accused had to prove his innocence, not the accuser to prove the accused's guilt. Heretics were to be outlawed, all their property had to be destroyed or confiscated, and heirs were to be disinherited; the guilty had to be burnt alive. All in authority had to swear that they would do their utmost to exterminate the heretics at whatever cost. Heretical nobles had their lands forfeited, and independence of every kind was very rigorously suppressed. Such then was the character of the Christian Mediæval Inquisition, as it existed when, in 1227, it was officially placed under the control of the priests.

The famous Bull called *Ad Extirpanda*, of Innocent the Fourth, appeared in May, 1252. This example of Christian charity was a complete exposition of the laws and penalties of heresy. It ratified and expanded the existing laws and penalties, and also increased the vigilance against the heretics. State officials and all holders of public offices were compelled to co-operate in the suppression of heresy, and had to report at once wherever heresy was suspected. The State was to seize heretics and punish or torture them if they did not confess or betray their associates. In many instances persons were punished, or were accused by those who were seized by the merciless Inquisition, and who, to save themselves from the terrible torture, would almost make any accusation to free themselves. Later, in 1265, another Bull, from Urban IV. this time, confirmed the existing conditions, but extended the Inquisitorial powers to all countries. According to this Bull, all laws and statutes that interfered with the power of the Inquisition had to be ignored and their authors duly punished. It made the Inquisitors absolutely supreme, and gave them complete authority in every sphere. Even bishops had to obey the Inquisitors; and in important trials an Inquisitor was allowed to be present and was allowed to express his opinion on the sentence.

Of course, such tyranny was not accepted with popular fervour, but the plenary and despotic powers of the Inquisition made the bravest tremble. For the incessant vigilance of the organization searched out the most trifling instances of what was regarded as heresy, and the ignorant and unsuspecting victim was remorselessly and cruelly crushed. The Inquisition was an organization that touched every sphere of life; it dissembled; it practised all kinds of surreptitious dealing; it accused and punished without adequate evidence; it stole; it lied; it stooped to almost every form of clandestine vice; all for the Glory of God and the Church.

A. MITCHELL.

(To be Concluded.)

The Stuff They Are Made Of.

CURIOUS that I didn't feel a powerful sense of awe! I never thought of saying a prayer. I simply picked up the book and opened it. Yet nothing happened. Marvellous! It was the Bible. Strange, too, that the very first verse I gazed upon was not a command to amend my ways. That always occurs in stories and cinema plots. Instead, I read something about an angel smiting and killing a multitude. That "Seven at a blow" story of my childhood days seemed awfully tame by comparison, so I looked up all the references to angels in the dear old fairy book (revised version) with the idea of inflicting some of them upon an unwary Freethinker, say about the time he would want to go to bed. I'll do it, too. Perhaps you know him. He's the chap that goes to sleep at our branch meetings. All the other members dislike him, for his snores keeps *them* awake.

A peep into the dictionary informs us that the angel is a divine messenger. Cherubim and Seraphim are also angels, but of different types. I shall have something to say about these birds—or insects—later on. At present I want to say something about the earth-visiting kind.

In Art, the angel of the messenger type is depicted as a youthful figure, radiantly beautiful, clothed in flowing garments and possessing wings. This seems rather old-fashioned to me. I suggest that if angels are to keep in advance of the times, the H.T.O. (Heavenly Transport Officer) should issue to each an ether-plane. Wings are so hopelessly out of date.

Artistic representation of angels is so insistent that we never think of a wingless one. The idea is forced upon us in childhood, and remains with most people throughout their lives.

When I was a boy I was frequently told that an angel hovered over my head as I slept, watching and guarding me. This was my guardian angel. I supposed that what he or she had to do was to ensure me a sleep, dreamless or pleasantly dreamful. But often enough I had nightmares, and I feel entitled to conclude now that my particular angel—a very young one, perhaps—occasionally practised trial flights on the roof outside with another fledgling.

Everybody, so the sky-pilots say, has a guardian angel; but my! how they must sleep. Otherwise, how do you account for the thousands of accidents, fatal and otherwise, that occur every year? These certainly ought not to happen. The last fight I had, the other man won. I think the G.A.'s are misnamed. My opponent's guardian angel must have been awake. What about mine? "Ask of the winds that far and wide with fragments strew the sea."

According to the Bible, not all angels had wings. For instance, in the vision of Jacob a ladder was necessary for the celestial flying corps to ascend and descend from Heaven. You might say, "Yes, but

that was only a dream." But surely you remember that dreams and visions are the revealed word of God? And Christians must accept all things therein visualized as real, and, more than that, accept such presentments without question; for without faith we cannot live. This ladder, by the way, was a tall one, about—well, say about as tall as this Biblical story itself; anyway, it reached up to Heaven, and God stood at the top. It's hard, I know it's hard, beloved, to believe all that is mentioned, but that is merely because you've imbibed faith by the thimbleful. What you needed was a cask, or, better still, the Great Tun of Heidelberg. Faith, we are told, can move mountains. Some people, engineers for instance, prefer steam navvies; but what's the good of a steam navy when you're in a hurry to remove a mountain?

In the Book of Genesis Lot saw two angels, apparently wingless, and he invited them into his best parlour to have a meal. You deduce from the account that when angels are hungry they are more easy to satisfy than we might be. There was no chicken and ham for them, nor steak and chips; not even sausage and mashed. What they got was some unleavened bread. Literally speaking, that sinful old dinner-giver was a very poor lot. One would scarcely imagine, though, that angels required earthly food. I always thought that ambrosia was the stuff for an angelic luncheon.

Pardon a digression here, but later in this chapter something occurs—you can read it for yourselves—which, if introduced into any other book than the Bible, would cause it to be burned and the author promptly lynched. But we hear no howls of execration from the clergy and a pious laity about this; the howls are reserved for the unbelieving Secularist, whose clarity of mind the former ought to admire. Forming part of the same chapter is the pillar of salt episode. One requires more than the usual grain before swallowing that story. Read to the end and you will conclude that Lot and all his family were, vulgarly but descriptively speaking, a rotten lot indeed.

I'm skipping a few references now, for I want to tell you of the talking ass as mentioned in Numbers xxii. Let us, dear reader, proceed reverently. Remember the fate of scoffers. There was a chap called Baa-Lamb—no, that's not the name; I've got it!—a chap called Balaam, who went out riding one day on the back of another ass. God didn't want him to do this, and He was so angry that He sent an angel to prevent his progress. Part of the latter's outfit was a sword. That was only angelic vanity, though. The sword was never used. Well, along came the noble steed, but instead of keeping to the path, it suddenly turned into a field. Balaam was vexed. In his wrath he made the dust fly from the erring animal's hide, and turned it back into the path again. This path led between two walls, at the other end of which stood the angei, blocking the way. The inspired ass knew what to do, however, and crushed its master's ankle against the wall. It got another whacking for this, and then suddenly it spotted the angel. Down on the ground it fell under the harassed Balaam, who smote it once again. This seemed about the limit to the poor animal, so it opened its mouth in protest and said, "What have I done to thee that thou hast smitten me these three times?" You and I would feel surprised if an ass spoke to us. Was Balaam surprised? Not a bit. There must have been a fellowship of kir between them, for he merely replied, "Because thou hast mocked me. I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee." And the ass said unto Balaam, "Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee?" And he said "Nay."

Delightful story, isn't it? Our old friend Mun-

chausen might imitate, but the best of his stories is rendered insignificant by the overshadowing sublimity of this Biblical effort.

In the second Book of Kings we have the following account of the visit of an angel. The scribe has made somewhat of a hash of it, as you will see.

"And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and four score and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses." It is fairly easy to get at the number of the slain. All you have to do is to start at the end, go to the beginning, and finish in the middle. But as he (the angel) couldn't be "they," we are compelled to conclude that "they" meant the people who were slain who arose early in the morning, and on looking at each other found themselves, not merely corpses, but dead corpses.

The Christian reply to this trifling piece of leg-pulling would rightly be, "This is faulty translation." Only a fool would conclude otherwise. I agree; but it serves to illustrate this point: the Christian when cornered by argument tries the faulty hypocritical refuge as often as he thinks fit when he finds the unexplainable. I speak generally, of course. The educated cleric would usually use the well-known gag: "My son, the ways of God are inscrutable. It is not for us poor worms to question the wisdom of the Almighty."

We now come to another variety of angel mentioned once in the Old Testament. This is the fallen angel Satan. One of the "has beens." He of the goat's horns. The one who never had any use for coraplasters. Physically depicted in Art with the hind-quarters of a beast, similar in many respects to the Satyr of pagan times. Strictly speaking, he ought not, perhaps, to be on the list. But a reference to the Book of Job shows that he was present in Heaven when the angels came before God, so we must take him on trust. Now, to me, an Omniscient God could not possibly be tempted, yet in the chapter I have mentioned Satan tempts God to give him power to try the faith of Job. It implies that Satan is greater than God. Where, then, is God's omniscience? However, as someone else said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." "If there is time left thou shalt get a chance later on in the great pinnacle-balancing feat." ARTHUR ROGERSON.

(To be Concluded.)

Correspondence.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have put this question to a dozen persons, and obtained twelve different replies, several of which entirely missed the point; but the only one worth repeating was as follows:—"Religion is merely superstition systematized, organized, and provided with an ethical core—not always perceptible." Those who demur at this definition will perhaps kindly name any great religious system which is not permeated with superstition? An ecclesiastic apologist has explained to me that in mediæval times the intellectual few had to deal with a brutish, illiterate, turbulent majority, incapable of exercising self-restraint, and that the only possible way of humanly controlling them was to work upon their fears and superstitions. This explanation, although not precisely untrue, seems to suppress about ninety-ninth of the truth. Your readers will not need to be told that the Church has in the past acted gratuitously on the offensive far more often than on the defensive. Indeed, self defence is quite a new attitude—and a very promising one. E. G. ELLIOT.

SIR,—I have read with much interest and profit your

comments upon and criticism of Mr. Edward Clodd's letter to the *Times*. I have noted that only they who are avowed Atheists ever really abandon religion and the God idea, and that wherever these are retained, even in the most shadowy form, "religion" is applied in all sorts of grotesque ways, and the term "God" used with superlative looseness.

There may be another explanation of Mr. Clodd's attitude in the fact that he is now advanced in years, and that we are to have in his case a repetition of the mental changes of age in such instances as those of Romanes and the aged German Bauer. There can be neither disrespect nor discourtesy in such a suggestion, as it is founded on authentic psychological precedent. DAVID MACCONNELL.

BRASS TACKS AND THE CAPEK DRAMAS.

SIR,—We are not prepared to agree that Mr. Fussell has established his case, which was the negative influence of the Capek Dramas. These two plays, written by brothers of foreign nationality, to us had more implications, philosophical, psychological, and inspirational, than can be expressed in one or two words; and that your contributor did not catch the note they sounded was, to say the least, very disappointing. The tables of worn-out values were smashed because they did not mean what they stood for, and new values were written. *Life shall be above and of more importance than things*. This was defined or depicted. The stage is not the pulpit, thank the gods that be; and those who are content to believe that these two plays have only a negative influence will find themselves in strange company. This company will be composed of all those who value themselves above their own race and its noble potentialities. For me, sir, War, Religion, and the present Directors of Industry are the trinity which is pulling mankind on the wrong path. The Capek Brothers emphasized these ideas in the two dramas, and proved themselves to be the aristocrats or Nietzsche's first users of the new age. As such we introduced them to the readers of this paper.

They said "Yea" to life, but on a different basis than that of endless toil, periodic slaughter, and the nets of word-spinners who bungle this life in worrying about the next. That was a splendid affirmation, and humanly capable of being realised. If it is not freethought and positive we are left wondering as to what it was that annoyed a parson sitting near to us in the audience when the "Insect Play" spoke those truths that may close a chapter of history like a disorderly house, and open one that may be read without tears by our sons and daughters in the future. WILLIAM REPTON.

SPONTANEOUS GENERATION.

SIR,—I have just obtained Mr. Mann's *Modern Materialism*, and have found, on page 124, what appears to me a serious error, and which I believe I saw in his article when it appeared in your pages. I am now sorry that I did not call attention to it at the time, as I am sure that Mr. Mann desires to be correct.

He writes:—"If Dr. Bastian's experiments were what he claimed them to be, it is difficult to understand how it is that this (spontaneous generation of life) does not happen in the millions of tins of meat, fish, and milk which remain untainted indefinitely all the while air is excluded from them."

If Mr. Mann will again read Dr. Bastian's books on this he will find that this point has been fully dealt with, and if he will ask grocers and packers about it he will probably be surprised at the number of "blown" tins which are found in every batch. I have seen quantities of imported meat paste, which had been packed hermetically, disposed of as unfit for human consumption. Of course, I could not say that life had generated in them, but at least they were not "untainted." Dr. Bastian's claim that forms of life did actually occur in certain packages, especially when a suitable jelly was present, convinced me that under given conditions an organised form of life will be spontaneously produced at any time on the earth.

This being so disposes once and for all of the claim of the theologians that it is necessary for any being outside Nature to create living beings. E. ANDERSON.

THE MEANING OF BELIEF.

SIR,—In your criticism of Mr. Rogers, I cannot wholly accept your statement that "a person cannot believe in a thing without understanding it," though it does not affect the certainty of the non-existence of a personal God nor "of all that is called God and worshipped." The whole thing is so vulgar and stupid that were not the English muddle-headed people there would be no necessity for discussing the question at all. The verb to believe is used in two senses, and the sky-pilots make capital out of this to keep on working the adjustment. To believe a thing means to believe a statement about a thing, which is quite irrelevant. The two beliefs in question here are: (1) The belief in the *existence* of a thing or *that a thing exists*; and (2) the belief *in* a thing. Well, we *can* believe in the existence of electricity—*i.e.*, that it exists—though no one has the smallest idea *what* it is.

To believe *in* a thing merely means I find such a thing pleasant or useful. In the first case belief is practically conterminous with perception. Here and there deductions from facts are provisionally believed in, but the beliefs are *never* absolute, and, once abandoned, their folly is soon perceived. The personal soul situated in the pineal gland, phlogiston, imponderable fluids, etc., etc., are in the latter category; ether, the force of gravity, man in the Newtonian sense, the atom, in the former. A parson can say loosely, I believe in God—which in this case only means: I believe in fools believing in God because it is a good way to feather my own nest. If second-rate sciolists grudgingly concede a belief in God to fools, it is on the explicit condition that it is mere nothing altogether outside the sphere of reality. The moment the Christian driveller tries to explain Nature by God or deduce God from Nature, even the trimming English sciolist, if honest, would have to say with Lamark that he had no need of such a hypothesis.

The wise saw of the old Hebrew humbug was long ago detected by Indian philosophy, to say nothing of modern science, "The fool has said in his heart there is no God." Now the fiat of reason and science is that he is the fool who says there is one.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

La Paz, Mexico.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOST.

SIR,—The author of "The Myth of Resurrection" confounds "Holy Thursday" with "Maundy Thursday." [The *Freethinker*, January 27.] Holy Thursday is Ascension Day, and therefore does not occur in Holy Week at all. Moreover, according to Roman Catholic belief, the Host is not a "symbolic dead god," but a living Christ, present under the species of bread. Such mistakes—which are irritating—might easily be avoided.

Holland.

W. POWER.

"SOLOMON'S WOMEN."

SIR,—*Re* above, in your issue of January 20, should read: Line 6, sec. 1, "Three Hundred *conc.*" Line 6, sec. 2, comma after *Rather*. Line 3, sec. 6, *Crown and* sense.

H. BARBER.

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NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15, Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Discussion, "Is the Birth-Control Movement Satisfactory?" Opened by Dr. B. Dunlop.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9): 7, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "Christian Art and Ritual" (lantern illustrations).

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "The Truth about Tutankhamen."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Upton Labour Party Hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park, E.13): 7, Musical Evening.

OUTDOOR.

FINSBURY PARK.—II.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Marble Arch): 3, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

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GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Shop Assistant's Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 6.30, Mr. Lancaster's Concert Party. (Silver collection.)

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, "Jesus."

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