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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Faith and the Sick.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	113
<i>Values Transvalued.—John H. Warren</i> - - - - -	114
<i>“Does Prayer Change Things?”—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	115
<i>Victoria the Virtuous.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	116
<i>Were the Jews Savages?—J. M. Wheeler</i> - - - - -	117
<i>Letter to Aunt Muriel.—H. Barber</i> - - - - -	118
<i>The Art of Mona Lisa.—Andrew Millar</i> - - - - -	122
<i>The Stage.—Vincent J. Hands</i> - - - - -	123
<i>A Genial Prelate.—C. Clayton Dove</i> - - - - -	124
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### Faith and the Sick.

Four years ago the Lambeth Conference passed a resolution requesting the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a committee “to consider and report as early as possible upon the use with prayer of the Laying on of Hands, of the Unction of the sick, and other spiritual means of healing.” That Committee which was composed of seven bishops, eight other clergymen, and six doctors, has just issued its report, so that it cannot be accused of having hurried the matter. We will deal with the report presently, but the appointing of such a committee is in itself curious. For the Christian Church is fully committed to the belief in the “spiritual” cure of disease. It is the teaching of their “sacred” book, and the Church itself contains instructions, centuries old, for the laying on of hands, the administration of Unction, etc. There is, in short, not one of the things about which the Committee were to enquire which are not part of the historic teaching of the Church. What, then, was there to enquire about? Was it to find if there was any truth in “spiritual healing”? That would mean that after teaching it as true for over nineteen centuries the Church is now going to see whether it is really true or not. And does anyone imagine that a committee composed of fifteen parsons to six doctors would declare the teaching to have nothing in it? Really, the clergy are not built that way. It would have meant an open confession that the Church had been teaching for centuries a lie. And when did the Church admit that of the many lies it has taught? It taught the reality of demoniacal possession, but it never formally admitted that it had been teaching a lie. Neither did it do so in the case of witchcraft; for which fancied offence many thousands of men, women and children were put to death. In all these cases the policy of the Church has been to quietly drop a doctrine when it could no longer safely be held, or else to discover some hidden “spiritual” meaning when the plain one became impossible.

### Mind Cure and God

There has been considerable discussion on this question of “spiritual” healing, and with the usual confusion as to the points at issue. The real implication

of the doctrine, so far as the Christian Church is concerned, is that the cure of sickness rests with God, and that this cure will be effected as a consequence of an appeal to God, or by a miracle performed through the laying on of hands. To cite in support of this claim cases where suggestion in one form or another has had the effect of removing some functional disorder, or where the stimulus received is from faith in some proposed cure, or to cite the influence of mental states generally improving the health of the patient, is quite beside the point. No one denies that these things occur. The Materialist admits them cheerfully. But what the Christian faith-healer believes is that the cures are effected directly by God himself. The motive force here is not the faith of the individual in the nostrum prescribed, whether it be a drug or bread pills, or prayer, the cure must come direct from God as an actual fact. If “God” becomes no more than a name for anything in which the patient has faith, and if that is quite clearly realized, the Christian statement breaks down. We do not ask for proof that mental states have an influence on bodily ones, that is only the other side of the statement that bodily states have an influence on mental ones. What we are looking for is some proof of the age-long Christian teaching that disease is sent by God for our benefit, and that it may be cured by the direct action of God in answer to our prayers. The Committee, in paying attention to what is called “mind cures,” was only throwing more dust in the eyes of its dupes.

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### Demonism and Disease.

The Committee says: “The science of medicine was still in its infancy among the Jews. There was a tendency to regard all diseases as directly inflicted by God or by evil spirits.” A tendency! It was not tendency at all, it was an actual fact. There was practically no other theory of disease—there is no other theory of disease among savages now; there was no other theory of disease among savages then. Take the following from the order for the visitation of the sick, issued by the Archbishop’s own Church. The visiting minister is told to say to the sick man:—

Dearly beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining—as youth, strength, health, age, weakness and sickness. Wherefore whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly that it is God’s visitation. And for what cause soever this sickness is sent unto you; whether it be to try your patience for the example of others, and that your faith may be found in the day of the Lord laudable, glorious, and honourable to the increase of glory and endless felicity; or else it be sent unto you to correct and amend in you whatsoever doth offend the eyes of your heavenly father

There it is, plain and plump. Whatsoever the disease is it is sent by God. It may be that you are suffering from cancer in order to be an example for others, it may be that God is only seeing how strong your faith is in him, but you may know certainly that it comes from him. Yet the Committee says there was a



tendency that way among the ancient Jews! It was not a tendency, it was an established theory in both the Old and the New Testament. There is no other theory of disease there. It is the theory that was taught for centuries by the Church, and we should like the Archbishop to face this simple straightforward question. Was the Church right when it taught that all disease came from God and would be removed by the direct action of God? If it was not right in so teaching, was it not teaching a lie during all the centuries of its existence, and did it not lay down a lie in its own prayer-book? We have not the least expectation of getting a reply. Convicted imposture usually finds its best refuge in silence.

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#### The Trade in Credulity.

Meanwhile, in virtue of the atmosphere created by the Church, "spiritual" mountebanks, revivalists, with a keener eye to crowds and kudos than anything else, find it the easiest thing in the world to prey upon the ignorance of a Christianity-soaked public. At the one extreme we have the Roman Catholic Church with its pilgrimages to Lourdes and elsewhere, extremely profitable to the Church if not to the patients, and who, on the strength of a few doubtful cures of hysterical sufferers, perpetuate the grossest forms of superstitions. And at the other end we have travelling evangelists conducting "healing missions," who provide us with highly questionable statistics about the number of people cured through their ministrations. And in these latter cases it is not uncommon to find clergymen backing these men up, as they backed up the neurotic Evan Roberts and the unscrupulous Torrey, for the sake of the little temporary popularity it may bring them and their business. One of these travelling healers, a Mr. Hickson, after practising in a mild way in this country, visited South Africa, and afterwards, I believe, Australia, where he was taken up by the clergy, held numerous meetings, and the public was duly regaled with the usual list of cures. The suspicious thing is that these cures are seldom or never brought to the test of skilled observation or examination. In one case, that of a Rev. G. S. Price, who conducted a campaign in Vancouver, an enquiry was set up, with not very cheerful results for the missionary. The Committee, composed of doctors, clergymen, lawyers, and others, was set up, and traced and examined some hundreds of cases that had been treated by this Mr. Price, or, to speak theologically, by God working through Mr. Price. The results proved that Mumbo Jumbo, working through Jack the Ripper, would have done quite as well. Of the hundreds of cases examined, the Committee found not a single instance of a cure of anyone suffering from an organic disease. The only ones so afflicted who claimed to be benefited by the prayers and the anointing showed no greater improvement than could be accounted for by a more cheerful mental outlook induced by their beliefs. On the other hand, twenty-nine died after treatment, and five went insane. There were only five cures found, and these in every case were purely functional disorders that could have been cured by suggestion from anyone. One case the Lord, and Mr. Price, had been praised for curing was that of a man who had been for years suffering from what he called "internal goitre." His cure had been advertised as a case of goitre cured. Under examination he said that he had never consulted a doctor, but he knew he had "internal goitre," because of the sensation he had of a lump in the throat. As this is a well known form of an hysterical affliction—there never was, of course, goitre present—his case offered no difficulty to the medical men present. Most of them would have cured scores of such cases in the course of their ordinary practice.

Many of the cases were pronounced cured by the healer, but enquiry showed they were as bad as ever, and often suffered from intense depression as a consequence of their failure. One wonders why men and women who follow the comparatively harmless profession of fortune-telling are prosecuted by the law and men who so trade upon the ignorance and the illnesses of their fellows escape scot-free. It evidently makes a world of difference whether one swindles in the name of Jesus or just in an ordinary secular way.

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#### Thanks to the Clergy.

Now there are two other things to be said before leaving this aspect of the subject. The first is that this preying upon the ignorance of weak-minded men and women would be impossible to-day but for the atmosphere which the Church has created, and which it has worked so hard to perpetuate. That is the soil in which the seeds thrown by these travelling religious mountebanks takes root. And even to-day much might be done to check this imposture if the clergy would only speak out against it. They are the ones who can get at the dupes. We cannot. Men and women who imagine themselves suffering from some dire complaint and go to Jesus, via Hickson and Price, to be cured do not read the *Freethinker*, and they do not attend Freethought lectures. They go to church or chapel and get their the frame of mind upon which the travelling evangelist works. And even when the clergy know that the whole matter is an imposture, that the evangelist is only trading upon the ignorance of those who listen, they will remain silent. They are satisfied it will help to strengthen the religious conviction of some, and that is enough. So long as they get a share of the profit, nothing else appears to matter. In any case, it is unsafe to draw critical attention to the subject. For, after all, these Sequahs of the theological world are only placing the historic teaching of the Christian Church before the people. It is part and parcel of the Christian religion that all disease comes from God and may be cured by God. It is a doctrine that comes from the savage conception of things, it is current among savages all over the world, and it is the doctrine of the New Testament Jesus, of the Bible throughout, and of the Christian Church. That the Church has officially grown sufficiently ashamed of this teaching to force it into the background, does not alter that fact. Religion is not completely immune to civilization, it is only strongly resistant, with an ever present tendency to revert to the primitive type.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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#### Values Transvalued.

WISDOM and learning, hardihood and skill,  
I garnered them for years unceasingly;  
Though not as grist to feed my pleasure-mill,  
Nor yet, not owning Life as held in fee,  
As wherewithal God's earthly war to share,  
But as the price of Power. As end befell,  
The Power I bade for, having reached Fate's fair,  
Fate's crazy partner Chance refused to sell.  
But Chance thrust on me what might not be bought,  
By me or any man. He gave me Love.  
Then, having that, a different Power I sought.  
Chance now said Fate my barter's worth might prove  
—And glad am I I had the price to pay—  
Of Power to smooth a gentle woman's way.

JOHN H. WARREN.

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Freethought removes the Christian cataract from the eye of Intellect.—D. P. Stickells.



## "Does Prayer Change Things?"

DR. BURNETT is by no means blind to the stupendous difficulty of showing clearly where and how prayer does come into the scheme of things. The difficulty is accurately stated by himself in the following pertinent question: "If my goodness is an expression of God, why pray? Why pray when what I need is to develop what is inside myself? Why look for outside help when all I need is a little clearer self-knowledge and self-stimulation?" These questions express in the preacher's own words the fundamental objection to prayer, and we shall now critically examine his valiant attempt to rebut it. Curiously enough, Dr. Burnett begins his reply by asserting that "great as our power may be we did not make ourselves." Of course not, and we have never met anyone who believed that we did. Then the preacher adds: "A process that neither we nor the first human being that ever came into existence originated, brought us forth." "Nor did we make the world." Dr. Burnett emphasizes our utter inability to interfere in the slightest degree with the operation of natural laws, saying: "A fly on the track might as well hope to stop the twentieth century, limited, as a human mind to obstruct the ongoing of the great natural processes." Here we have a positive assertion of the uniformity and absolute unchangeability of the laws of Nature. After giving definite expression to this great scientific truth, Dr. Burnett proceeds to contradict himself by saying that "God is in us as a sense of truth, a perception of what is right, and also as a sense of the ideal." It never occurs to him that when he says that the "sense of the ideal is God within us" he is merely romancing. It is perfectly true that we did not create Nature and her laws, but it is equally true that we have created God and the so-called method of Divine Government. Let us permit Dr. Burnett to state his case in his own words:—

Yes, that sense of the ideal is God within us. But it does not encourage self-assertion and pride. Rather it makes us ashamed of our actual achievements. It does not tell us that we ought to be satisfied with our actions; it tells us that a chasm yawns before our real selves, and what we ought to be. And so the proper mood in the presence of the highest ideal is reverence, penitence, longing. In other words, the proper attitude is prayer. If instead of praying we assert ourselves, the peril is that this lower self is the one that will be asserted; that the hardness of self-contentment will settle upon us and the ideal will fade, and that at the last we shall be without the sense of perfection and of God. *That would be a terrible tragedy for any person. Only prayer can keep us from petrification.*

The italics are our own, and their object is to emphasize the complete falseness and absurdity of the two concluding sentences in that extract. In the first place it should be noted that the lessening and fading of the ideal and of the belief in God is a process through which many Christian believers often pass, and in the second place it cannot be denied that there are hundreds of thousands of men and women who, in the absence of belief in God, cherish a high and noble ideal for the realization of which they employ their utmost endeavour. Surely there is no tragedy in this; but to claim that "only prayer can keep us from petrification," is to be guilty of high treason against human nature; the truth being that only sincere prayer can weaken our sense of self-reliance.

Now, what is it to pray in the Christian sense? Dr. Burnett informs us that when a man feels with deep regret that he is not so good as he ought to be, or when in the presence of somebody who brings home to him how much less good he is than he ought to be, "the only true thing for him to do is to feel self-reproach, and with all his soul to wish he was better. The only true

thing for him is to pray." But what is it to pray? The preacher delays his answer.

"The only thing for any sincere man to do in the presence of Jesus is not to assert himself, but to confess his own failure and to humbly, eagerly desire to be more like the perfect Master. To assert himself in the presence of the perfect—God, manifest in the flesh—would mean a hardening of conscience. To confess his failure would mean moral sensitiveness and spiritual growth." Here follows the strangest definition of prayer ever attempted:—

To be as plain as possible; the heart of prayer is this passionate striving to be more like God, to have more of his grace and power in the life. To turn the energies of life to the highest things, that is prayer. The pathetic thing is that many people turn their highest energies to lesser things.....How many cultured women are really praying for social prestige. They may say other forms of words, addressed to God, but the force of their lives is going to the climb for social position. Your magnate, burning his powers out to corner the market, is praying. Your student, working late into the night, while he forgets everything else, is praying. Your athlete, training to win a contest at any cost, is praying.

Thus the preacher works his way up to what he regards as the true definition of prayer. At this stage prayer is "fellowship with God; the purifying and strengthening of personality in its inmost nature."

What is the good of prayer? Our preacher is sure that it results in "an increase of personality." Dr. Burnett is convinced that not one of the practical problems of life will remain unaffected by this increase of personality. Our contention, on the contrary, is that no increase of personality is the reward of praying, and that not a single practical problem has ever been solved by prayer. We are at last face to face with the question that gives title to the discourse, namely, "Does Prayer Change Things?" Every statement in answer to that question is open to a serious challenge. Take the following: "To-day he rules by love over greater empires than ever acknowledged an earthly ruler's sway, and the wisest ones of earth confess that his teachings are the only hope of the world." That statement is wholly false to its very core. Does Christ rule in love over troubled Italy, which is at the mercy of a powerful Dictator; over Secularist France, where Secular Education prevails, where the Church has been disestablished, and where the majority of the rulers are non-religious; over Spain, where corruptions of the deepest dye held sway in all departments of the State, and where a few dictators are endeavouring to set things right? Or take the British Empire, and can anybody in his senses honestly aver that it is ruled in love by Christ? Certainly not. Why, the British Empire, composed of a conglomeration of nationalities, creeds, and religious rites and ceremonies, over none of which does Jesus Christ rule in love and peace.

Dr. Burnett is an obstinate and incorrigible champion of praying and calumniator of non-praying people. According to him "life moves in a swift succession of events, every day bringing something new. Our reactions come swiftly and, once made, pass largely out of reach." Then he asks:—

Are they the reactions of sound personalities devoted to the will of Christ, or of indifferent worldlings following some will-o'-the-wisp of pleasure or temporal advantage? So much depends on it. And it depends on prayer. Does prayer matter? Does prayer change things?

What a horrible delusion it is to declare that all sound personalities are devoted to the will of Christ, while all others are likened to "indifferent worldlings following some will-o'-the-wisp of pleasure or temporal advantage." Only those who are hopelessly blinded by prejudice to the real facts of life are capable of talking such arrant nonsense.



To exert a beneficent influence over others, we are told, we must have an "overplus of spiritual strength and peace. And there can be an overplus if we pray." We deny the truth of that statement without the slightest hesitation. Whatever prayer can or cannot do, it certainly cannot convert natural weakness into strength. There are people to-day who believe that prayer can heal the sick, aided by holy unction. Recently a child died after being duly prayed over and anointed, because the parents believed in the healing efficacy of prayer as described in St. James's Epistle. The parents were prosecuted, found guilty of neglecting the child by not calling a properly qualified medical practitioner, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The fact is that the belief in the efficacy of prayer is a delusion and a snare, and able men like Dr. Burnett are being led astray by it. Strong personalities, whether they pray or not, exert an influence for good over weaker ones; but Dr. Burnett failed to adduce a single evidence of prayer changing things. It is well known that love, neither Pagan nor Christian, but purely human love, sweetens, ennobles, and beautifies life, and renders it life's most potent servant. As the poet puts it:—

The perfect poise that comes of self-control,  
The poetry of action, rhythm, sweet—  
The unvexed music of the body and soul  
That the Greeks dreamed of, made at last complete—  
Our stumbling lives attain not such a bliss;  
Too often while the air we vainly beat  
Love's perfect law of liberty we miss.

The mightiest power in the world is not prayer, but Love—Love sweet and sweetening, pure and purifying. Love illumined by reason and chastened by common sense, is absolutely irresistible, and will yet lasso the whole human race into strong and beautiful Brotherhood which will put an end to bloody war and set up the reign of universal peace and goodwill.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Victoria the Virtuous.

By the grace of God, defender of the Faith.—  
*Inscription on the Coinage.*  
The carpenter said nothing, but the butter's spread too thick.—*Alice in Wonderland.*

SOME years ago a popular steel-plate engraving depicted Queen Victoria handing a handsomely bound Bible to a coffee-coloured and scantily-clad chieftain, and remarking: "This is the source of England's greatness." This sentimental and entirely imaginative work of art should have been used as a frontispiece to Mr. Lytton Strachey's *Life of Queen Victoria*, which is one of the most amusing and instructive pieces of biography issued for many a day. Mr. Strachey is not only a picturesque writer, but he possesses the gifts of a mischievous humour and a discreet malice, which are the delight of our French neighbours, and which makes his book a delightful oasis in the desert of respectable biography. From the first page Mr. Strachey is very entertaining. King George III could not by any flattery be described as a handsome man, but Mr. Strachey will have it that the infant Queen resembled "King George in petticoats." Nor do the other members of the then Royal Family escape caustic criticism. William the Fourth is described as "a bursting, bubbling old gentleman, with quarter-deck gestures, round, rolling eyes, and a head like a pineapple." The young Queen's uncles fare as ill. They are described as "nasty old men, debauched and selfish, pig-headed and ridiculous." The natural inference is that, amid such a galaxy of ugliness, the frequenters of the Court considered the young Queen a very Venus.

The old Duchess of Kent, the Queen's mother, was ever solicitous that her daughter, Victoria, should grow

up into a Christian monarch; and no one can deny that she succeeded admirably in so training her. Unfortunately, the Queen had the defect of her qualities in a very marked degree. In addition to being very pious, she was very narrow minded, very strict, very old-fashioned, and very opinionated. In one of her letters she said:—

The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking the mad, wicked folly of "woman's rights," with its attendant horrors, on which her poor, feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety.

On another occasion the Queen bursts out: "Lady—ought to get a good whipping." Indeed, although Victoria lived to extreme age, she never realized that women were human beings. It is curious to remember that, in spite of her Puritanical prejudices, she lived to witness the awful spectacle of her eldest son as a witness in a divorce case, a tribulation spared to Albert the Admirable. The Queen was greatly perturbed. In her hour of need she turned to the Press for consolation, and wrote to Mr. Delane, of the *Times* newspaper, asking if he would:—

Frequently write articles pointing out the immense danger and evil of the wretched frivolity and levity of the views and lives of the higher classes.

A courtier to the finger-tips, Mr. Delane did write one article five years afterwards upon this very subject; but, apparently, too late to achieve the salvation of the British Aristocracy. Mr. Strachey's sighs are almost lyrical:—

Ah! If only the higher classes would learn to live as she lived in the domestic sobriety of her sanctuary at Balmoral.

The Queen was married to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, who was, if possible, more pious and doctrinaire than his devoted wife. He designed workmen's cottages, and conceived the idea of International Exhibitions in order to foster friendship among nations. Albert the Good, as he was styled, died of typhoid fever, and his widow survived him forty years. During the whole of that lengthy period she mourned his loss. For four decades a picture of her husband, taken after death and framed with immortelles, hung over her bed. His room was kept as he left it last, and servants were actually employed in laying out his clothes as if he were still alive. To the outside world the Sovereign's grief was expressed in marble and metal in Kensington Gardens in a design somewhat resembling a dinner-cruet. It was a fitting apotheosis of a period without parallel in English history.

Remembering the journalistic junketings of the two Jubilees, it is astonishing to reflect that the old Queen was very ordinary and most commonplace. This is revealed on every page of her book, *My Diary in the Highlands*, an essay in literature which not even the skilled assistance of Arthur Helps could rescue from muddle-headed mediocrity. What is even more astonishing is that Privy Councillors, statesmen, generals, admirals, and rational and educated human beings should have worshipped such a woman and conducted themselves in a humiliating fashion before her. It is true, Gladstone held his head high, but the Queen complained that "he talks to me as if I were a public meeting"; and always dislike him. The wily and unscrupulous Disraeli fawned upon her, and laid the flattery on with a trowel; but his position was not so secure as his rival's, and he was gratifying an ambition. Perhaps we had better not be too ready to sneer at the old queen, but reserve those marks of affection for the Victorians. They were self-sufficient people and deemed themselves the heirs of all the ages. And now their age is a synonym for a narrow and conventional view of life, and justly regarded as the last phase of Feudalism.

MIMNEMUS.



## Were the Jews Savages?

### II.

(Continued from page 107.)

THE use of the stone knife in circumcision by Zipporah—note that in this old story it is the woman performs the rite—as well as the knives of flint used by Joshua and by later Jews,<sup>1</sup> is significant as a lingering relic of the stone age, like the command to build the altar of unhewn stone (Ex. xx, 25). It is also significant that Jahveh preferred to dwell in a tent even when a temple was offered him.

Joshua and David showed their brutality by houghing horses (Josh. xi, 9, II Sam. viii, 4). Of the savage practice of mutilation in warfare we have instances in the case of Adonibezek, whose thumbs and great toes were cut off by Judah (Judges i, 7), and of Nahash the Ammonite, who offered terms on condition of his opponents losing their right eyes (I Sam. xi, 2). The horrible story of the Levite and his concubine, whose body he cut up into twelve pieces and sent into all the coasts of Israel, is another significant item (Jud. xix, 29).

It would be difficult to find a worse instance of savage barbarity than that recorded of David's treatment of the people of the cities of Ammon; how he brought them out and "cut them with saws and harrows of iron and with axes," and "made them pass through the brick-kiln" (I Chron. xx, 3; II Sam. xii, 31). The purchase of Saul's daughter with one or two hundred foreskins of the Philistines (I Sam. xviii, 25-27; II Sam. iii, 14) is another fact throwing a flood of light upon the savage nature of early Jewish customs.

When the Jews took a wife they put a ring through her nose (Gen. xxiv, 47), and these ornaments continued till the days of Isaiah (iii, 20). Prov. xi, 22 seems to glance at this "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman without discretion." So God says to Jerusalem: "I put a ring upon thy nose, and earrings in thine ears" (Ezek. xvi, 12).

Another custom suggestive of savagery was the eating of raw flesh. Thus we read of Saul's army that "the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew them on the ground, and the people did eat them with the blood" (I Sam. xiv, 32), and there are various references to these blood pollutions scattered through the books, while even the late Wisdom of Solomon (xii), refers to the devourers of men's flesh.

The early Hebrews were much given, like existing savages, to the use of charms, amulets, etc. They had functionaries who corresponded to medicine men—men having "familiar spirits," "wizards" (Isaiah viii, 19) and others, originally called seers but afterwards prophets (I Sam. ix, 9), to whom were made presents in return for information, even when seeking lost asses. The story of Saul resorting to the witch of Endor, and the injunction "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," alike betoken early superstition.

The practice of sacrificing hair for the dead is frequently referred to. Hair was a representative, substitutionary offering, as among Pagans. The constellation Coma Berenices, is supposed to represent the hair of Berenice, who, when her husband and brother Evergetes went on a dangerous expedition, devoted her hair to Venus for his safe return. Plutarch (Theseus, c. 5) says, "It was the custom for those who arrived at man's estate to go to Delphi, to offer their first fruits of their hair to Apollo." This was

probably a modification of an earlier initiatory rite indicated also in the practice of tonsure. Hair was the sign of virility. Hence its length was a measure of dignity, and the horror of plucking at the beard. Hence, too, Paul's injunction that women shall cover the hair or wear an amulet on her head "because of the angels" (I Cor. xi, 10). Isaiah threatens that the Lord will shave with a hired razor—(vii, 20)—a passage that should be read in the Douay version. From the repeated injunctions against making cuttings in the flesh Lev. xix, 28; xxi, 5; Deut. xiv, 1), we may judge that gashing, if not tattooing, was not unknown even in the late times of the Deuteronomist.

In the earliest pictures we have of Jews they are in the pastoral stage, having bows and arrows for hunting, with which, as in the case of Esau, they supplemented their simple food supply. Cain is described as a tiller of the ground. His parents, the first pair, are represented as living in a garden without clothing, habitation, arts, or information. Water and fruit are their sources of life renewal. The first handicraftsman mentioned, Tubal-cain (? a Hebraising of Vulcan), is a worker in metal. The common name for workman, *chârash*, means the worker in hard materials, while the word for arrow (*chatz*) and gravestone (*chatzatz*) are both related to *chatzatz*, to cut. The first real workman was he who got a cutting instrument, first of stone, then, after long ages, of metal. We find little evidence of the Jews having reached the agricultural stage until their settlement in the land of Canaan. The patriarchs are herdsmen, dwelling in tents and moving from place to place to find fresh pasture. In this nomadic life we may find indication of an earlier stage in which the tribe lived chiefly by hunting, the domestication of cattle being only partially attained. As in the Rig Veda the chiefs are "possessors of cows." Their sons and daughters, even in the case of the most wealthy, attend the flocks. There is no indication of any such subdivision of labour as we know obtained in Egypt prior to the time of Abraham. No passage points to the existence of such primitive trades as those of mason and carpenter. On the contrary, it would appear that these occupations formed part of common domestic work. Even in the time of David they had to send to King Hiram for masons to build a house. A little prior we read that "there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel" (I Samuel xiii, 19), which, even if an exaggeration, probably reflects some truth. In the time of the invasion we read that "the Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron" (Judges i, 19). Yet almost suddenly, in the days of Solomon we find tents replaced by palaces, and pastoral and agricultural life by commerce. The evidence of language shows that a similar evolution from pastoral to agricultural and thence to commercial life is traceable among Aryan peoples. There is the negative evidence from the non-possession by the different nations of a common vocabulary for agricultural occupations, while those for cattle are similar, and there is the positive evidence from institutions. In the Rig Veda cattle are the great means of subsistence, and kings are cow-owners, and their assembly meets in the cowshed. So in Ireland the chief is rich in sheep and oxen. The connection of *pecus* and *pecunia* suffices to show that wealth and cattle were formerly synonymous. In the Psalms we find as an exaltation of the power of Jahveh: "The cattle on a thousand hills are thine." "A living man," says the Havamal of the Edda, "can always get a cow." So said Rob Roy:—

For why, because the bad old rule  
Sufficeth them, the simple plan  
That they should take who had the power  
And they should keep who can.

<sup>1</sup> Josh. v, 2. According to the Septuagint version (Josh. xxiv, 31), the stone knives with which Joshua circumcised the children of Israel were afterwards found in his tomb.



Concubinage was usual in the patriarchal period, and the concubine might be dismissed at any moment. The husband was addressed as *lord* by his wife, and, indeed, the very term for husband, *baal*, is the same for lord and master. Women were employed in preparing meals, tending flocks, drawing water, and grinding corn. That these tasks devolved on the females because of their being laborious is proved by the fact that this was the work to which slaves and captives were put. (See Jud. xvi, 21). Women, in default of having sons, were inherited by the brother of their husband, and a man had the first right to marry his cousin. Kinship was less regarded when not on the mother's side, and marriages were permitted which are now deemed incestuous by all civilized people.<sup>2</sup> Polygamy prevailed. Marriage was usually by purchase, though there are traces of the prior stage of capture, still maintained in war. The prophetess Deborah promises "to every man a damsel or two." As shown by Dr. Robertson Smith, in his work on *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, Jacob's was a *beena* marriage (*i.e.*, one in which the husband leaves the family and passes into the family of his wife, an earlier form than that of purchase). This is probably alluded to in Genesis ii, 24. When Abraham sought a wife for Isaac, his servant expected the condition would be made that Isaac should settle with her people. Kinsmen were bound to see that the family was maintained, and allied to this custom was the institution of the *goel*, or blood avenger, recognized in the Deuteronomic law, as late as the time of Josiah (Deut. xix, 6). We have, too, the *wergild*, or joint responsibility for murder (Deut. xxi, 1-7); and in the case of Achan, not only is the criminal, but his sons and daughters, slaves and cattle, were burnt (Josh. vii, 24-25). Traces of the totem system of kinship may be found in the zodiacal crests or badges alluded to in Gen. xlix. Horite clans were called after Shobal, the lion. We find Zibeon, the hyena; Anah, the wild ass; Dishon, the antelope; Rachel, the ewe; Leah, the wild cow; Caleb, the dog; Doeg, the fish, etc. German Jews still frequently have such names as Bar, bear; Hirsch, stag; and Loewe, lion. It has been conjectured that the origin of prohibited food arose as a totem taboo; and totem marks are supposed to be referred to in the Song of Moses (Deut. xxii, 5). Mr. J. Jacobs (*Archæological Review*, May 1889) allows that there are indications of totems in the names of the Edomite clans (Gen. xxxvi) and survivals in the names of the Israelite clans, their forbidden food, personal names, tattooing, family feasts, and blood avengers. Jewish tendency to animal worship is instanced in the story of the golden calf, in the making of golden calves by Jeroboam, and in the worship of the brazen serpent said to have been made by Moses, to which incense was offered down to the time of Hezekiah. It is noticed both by Isaiah (lxvi, 17) and Ezekiel (viii, 10-11).

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Continued.)

## Letter to Aunt Muriel.

### IV.

I INDICATED in my last letter, Aunt, why many who must have come to see the falsity of the popular creed do not give it up. They cannot bring themselves to admit they have been the dupes of the Church. Your parson pushes his advantage here. "Ah! my dear lady, these Freethinkers are so clever. You and I, and the millions who think as we do, are all fools. You see religion playing its part in every department of life.

That is nothing. The witness of the Holy Spirit"—here a downcast, undeserving look, as if he had lost twopence and found a ha'penny—"the witness of the Holy Spirit doesn't count. But let them talk. I am not giving up my only solace." He doesn't remind you, Aunt, that he makes a very comfortable living vapouring about his solace, while you have the honour of helping to keep him.

What avails this solace when it comes to the test? Let us take a few cases. You will remember, Aunt, when your niece, A—, was on a visit to London one treacherous autumn, that her son, not quite three years old, was suddenly taken with bronchitis and croup. Two days, and the doctor pronounced the case hopeless. I was present when the little lad was dying. A— said to him: "Stanley is going to Jesus. Does Stanley want to go to Jesus?" Direct and true came the answer: "No! Stay with Mamma!"

Some years later A—'s husband was dying. The doctor told her that another four-and-twenty hours would see the end. A— (she told me herself) went to the dying man and began about "the Saviour." He, a Wesleyan Methodist all his life and many years a Sunday-school superintendent, exclaimed: "I'm not going to die!"

Take the case of your nephew J— and his father, Aunt. The father, a life-long Methody, was dying in agony from a disease of the liver. I was present. J— was endeavouring to console him with passages from the Bible "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." . . . "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." For answer, the groans of the dying man spoke unrelieved agony. I question, too, if his son understood the images which the Hebrew writer employs here. One who "walks through the valley of the shadow of death" (truly a great metaphor) is not one dying, but one moving in mortal danger—a physician attending a case of typhus, or a soldier on the battlefield. And for the other Bible passage, what "comfort" could anyone expect a dying man to get out of a "rod" and a "staff"?—unless, indeed, being so wooden, they made him laugh. Thus are ignorance and undiscernment, with that crude assurance of the orthodox, thrust upon the dying for solace. There is no evidence that the dying want it; the evidence is the other way. But it supports the conceit of the orthodox.

Troubling, with their chatter vain,  
Ebb of life and mortal pain.

J— came to see me when I was lying in hospital twelve months back. "What Bible passages of which he misconceives the purport," I laughed to myself, "is he bringing me?" He brought some delicious new-laid eggs. They were worth a cartload of Bibles.

Look, Aunt, at the doctors who dispense this solace—the petticoated Jacks who carry about the titty-bottle of faith; whose one public concern is to uphold the Church superstition, authority, benefices; who, with their cock-and-bull story of a Virgin Birth, discredit human parentage; who picture death, the simple ultimate fact of all individual life, as a terror of bogeys lurking in the dark; who capture the babies at the font and the children in the schools to ensure a congregation of doped and visionless beings in the churches.

What is it you plead for them, Aunt? "They must live"? Hang them, I say. Let them turn honest!

H. BARBER.

And who knows but what death and the preparation for it might be as easy, if only the doctors and the sky-pilots would hurry up and tell us something really useful, instead of spending their time in vivisectioning the wretched animals or by mumbling over ancient creeds.—Edward Carpenter, "The Drama of Love and Death."

<sup>2</sup> See Old Testament Marriage in *Bible Studies*.



## Acid Drops.

Some of the clergy are evidently hoping to get something from the present Government on behalf of religious instruction. We are judging from the number of "demands" that have been put forward lately by different religious bodies, who are probably counting on the fact that the Labour Government, with its mixture of Sunday school preachers, may be willing to placate the Churches on account of the organized religious vote. We trust they will prove mistaken on this point, although unless Freethinkers, inside and outside the Labour Party, show themselves insistent on this question they may well wake up one day and find that they have been sold to a political emergency. We have no desire that the Labour Government, or any other Government, should undertake a campaign against religion. That is entirely outside its province. But it should do something to emphasize the principle of Secularization in all branches of State activity. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald we were glad to see affirmed this when taking his seat in Parliament, and we hope the action was not lost on certain of his followers.

One of these "demands" has recently been formulated by the Vicar of S. Mellitus's, Hanwell. This gentleman belongs to the "Parents Rights and Church Schools Emergency League," and he demands that "the right of every child to definite religious teaching as the foundation of education.....the religious lesson to be entrusted only to qualified teachers who believe what they teach." He also demands the "maintenance and extension of Church Training Colleges." Of course, when the vicar claims the right of every child to definite religious teaching, he only means definite Christian teaching. We do not for a moment believe that he would agree to the State giving definite religious teaching on Mohammedanism, or Judaism, or any other ism. And yet, if the child has a right to demand from the State a religious teaching which follows what its parents believe, we fail to see why the State should not teach any religion that is asked for. All or none, would be the only logical rule for the modern State. We are quite certain it will not teach all, and the only just way apart from this is to teach none.

Writing of Tennyson, Mr. George Moore states: "The Victorian could never reconcile himself to finishing a poem without speaking about the soul." Professional religionists excel even the illustrious poet; they can build churches on an abstraction.

The *Bangkok Times* reprints the following New Year's card, sent out by a Singapore firm of Bombay merchants to a Penang house: "May God help the nations of the world to establish everlasting peace and harmony; and raise the price of rubber." That is deliciously frank, and people in their petitions to God do not usually express themselves so plainly.

Dr. James Sibree, in his *Fifty Years in Madagascar*, says: "When the Queen of the island was converted to Christianity in 1869, soldiers were sent round the villages to bring the people to church, and heavy fines were inflicted for non-attendance." This kind of thing has occurred more than once in the history of Christianity; and, after all, the New Testament does say "compel them to come in," and the untutored mind is apt to take it that it means what it says.

An appeal on poetical lines is being made by the Raleigh Park Baptist Church, Brixton Hill. It is not pitched on the level of Milton or, on the other hand, is it much lower than the depths of Harold Begbie. The writer of it was evidently inspired with the lilt of that song entitled "Boys and girls come out to play." Whether it will have any claim to be included in an anthology of primi-

tive choctaw we must leave readers to judge, but this is the fungoid growth that can find shelter in a society which Nietzsche's "first men" would wish to see better.

Come boys and girls of every sort,  
If you are poor it matters naught;  
Clothes may be fine or full of holes  
But Jesus looks into our souls:  
And He will teach you how to live  
And will your darkest sin forgive,  
For He hung on the cruel cross,  
To save us from eternal loss.

It sounds like the Salvation Army, but it is not good enough for children, as the Brixton Hill poet has left out any mention of pocket-knives, apples, games, dolls and parties.

The February issue of *Humanity*, the Positivist Review, contains much interesting and instructive information, and includes Bishop Butler's famous quotation:—

After all, things are what they are and not other things, and their consequences will be what they will be; why, then, should we deceive ourselves?"

Many people may have been under the impression that Dean Inge was a follower of the Carpenter of Nazareth, but it is erroneous—he is only a journalist writing from the pulpit. The Bishop anticipated the Dean.

What is denied the Army and Navy is conceded to the inmates of Duncutha Convalescent Home. Church-going is now optional, and this decision was carried by fourteen votes to nine at the Glasgow Parish Council. And the answer to Macduff's "Stands Scotland where it did?" is, that the land of cakes made progress at Glasgow.

When the history of the world comes to be written impartially it will be seen how much fox-hunting gentry have contributed to the emancipation of man from the ape and tiger stage. In that great organ of public opinion, the *Daily Mirror*, published presumably for those who cannot read, one may see a splendid picture of a ritual on the level of Central African savages. Master Eddie Rothschild, at the Whaddon Chase Hound's meet, is having his cheek dabbed with the blood of a fox. The young be-spectacled gentleman, wearing a hat several sizes too big, does not appear to be taking much interest in the operation; the horses, with four legs each and no soul, are looking away, and the photograph inclines one to think that Dean Swift knew what he was writing about in his *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*.

Mr. C. R. Boyd Freeman, in his novel *By Thor, No!* appears to have had a fine fling at High Church clergymen, ritualism and the other trappings that would call for a public enquiry among any nation that had not been subjected to the terrors of religion. The six shilling novel, like the threepenny *Freethinker*, finds its way into many and varied places, and it may be possible some day to see a full-blown Atheist on the stage as a central character. This would demand a playwright of no small ability—and courage—but the subject is worthy of it. *Cyrano de Bergerac* came near to this description, but it was presented at the conclusion of the war when the public taste or pay-box demanded the twin-bed plays. What a fine dramatic gesture the Labour Party could have made over the question of Court dress. Instead of compromising with knee-breeches, the Party could have made a beginning with John Davidson's *Zero Man*, and with one stroke killed the superstition of clothes. In the meantime we must be content to believe with Mactertluff, that we are all naked under our clothes—although appearances at many Court and public functions are against us.

There has been another revival in South Wales, this time conducted by a Mr. David Mathews, and the usual stories are being told of the crowds who are converted amid scenes of great emotion, etc. If all the stories one



has read during this last ten or twelve years of conversions in South Wales there should be none there by now but very ardent Christians. The surprising thing is the way in which the same yarns about conversions are swallowed time after time, as though they had never before been heard. And we are also surprised that decent Welsh folk do not make some sort of a protest in the public press against the Welsh people being held up before the world as though ninety-five per cent. of them were incipient lunatics. It is astonishing what the world will stand in the name of religion.

A *Daily News* review of the life of W. H. Hudson—the well-known naturalist—by Morley Roberts, cites Hudson as saying of the doctrine of immortality:—

I have no belief in it; none. What I want is just life. I want to live.

Hudson knew what he wanted, and few others do. There are hundreds of thousands who tell you that they want to live after death, when they really want nothing of the kind. What they want is what Hudson wanted—to live. And even the desire for life would be exhausted if they lived long enough. But the fancied desire for a life hereafter is no more than a misinterpretation of the basic desire to live, and if that could be gratified to the point of satiety one would shrink from the prospect of an eternal life as they would from an eternal dinner or an eternal anything else.

In one of the main thoroughfares of Peckham last week we observed outside a large Dissenting Church (they don't call them Chapels nowadays) the announcement that a certain parson was going to give an address on "Should Christ fail us." Ah, there's the rub! But on the other side of the announcement board were these words, in large letters: "Let us be happy"; but how on earth could any of the members of the congregation be happy if they contemplated for a single moment how many of their friends and neighbours were running the risk of damnation if their miserable and hopeless creed were true. These Christians are thinking of their own petty souls alone—Christianity is a selfish creed.

Many years ago a friend of ours saw *Quo Vadis*, and his sole impression of it was that he liked the roaring of the lions. In Rome the other day, when attempting to film this play, a lioness mauled one of the actors so badly that he died. Even the Lord seems neutral in religious propaganda, and this is a matter that should be passed on to the advertisement section of an organization that cannot produce a pair of bootlaces.

The Rev. Arthur Dakin, Doctor of Theology, not to be confused with doctors who cure people suffering from real pains, has had a call. He is leaving London, and his swan song is a column in the *Star*. According to his testimony, religious leaders find that it is little use trying to impress men in the City, where they are too busy to be stirred. The suburbs likewise show a similar lack of enthusiasm, and the missionary trade is also bad. It would appear that the markets for religious enterprise are becoming restricted, and there will soon be nothing left to do in the Lord's vineyards; the word-spinners will be forced to do some real work.

Mussolini, the Roman Catholic Church with the gloves off, states that "he will arm himself with a red-hot iron and burn the brood." The brood in question is a number of people who disagree with this dictator. Mussolini, Birkenhead, and Churchill, whether they know it or not, are speaking a dead language, and the tottering state of the Spanish Directory, together with the unstable conditions of Europe, should make users of this kind think twice before they speak, and then remain silent.

The *Church Times* says that Lenin and his associates

were worse than irreligious, they were "blatantly atheistic." We are not quite sure what kind of Atheism "blatant" Atheism is, but it appears to be the equivalent of outspoken Atheism. And the *Church Times* is naturally shocked at that. It disturbs Christian impudence to find an Atheist who is not afraid to proclaim it to the world. And one wonders why a man should not be blatantly Atheistic as well as blatantly Christian? For our own part we delight in seeing a man outspoken, whether we agree with his opinions or not. For the great trouble with the world at present is that so many people have no opinions at all—they are a bundle of mere prejudices. And so long as a man has an opinion there is hope of him. But there is no hope at all for the man who has no opinions of his own. A man with a wrong opinion may worry along till he gets a right one, but a man without an opinion will remain a fool till the end of the chapter.

Following the note of last week on the case of Mr. W. Harnett, claiming damages for wrongful detention in a mental home, in which part of the defence rested on the contention that he was religiously insane, the following occurs in a report of the case:—

Dr. A. C. Morton, of Aylsham, in one report to the Commissioners, said Mr. Harnett has some religious mania because he stated he would give up his farm (bringing in £1,500 yearly) and devote all his time to the saving of souls.

His lordship enquired whether the intention to give up the farm and go preaching made the man one who could be described as a lunatic?

Witness: I should say so, if his form of profession was a paying one. (Laughter.)

His Lordship: Then are all people who have an enthusiasm for religion suffering from religious mania?

Dr. Morton: I believe many of them are.

We commend this medical opinion to some of our pious readers.

The *Church Times* thinks this is an example of medical intolerance. It would, of course, be a rash conclusion that every one who feels an itch for preaching is suffering from some form of religious delusion. All the same, there can be no serious question that a very great many cases come under this category, and these will include some of the greatest names in the history of religion. No one who does not fog his mind with idle talk about mysticism will doubt that those who have taken up with the religious life as a consequence of hearing angelic voices, or seeing heavenly visions, etc., would have been certified by almost any medical man of to-day as suffering from some form of hallucination. The sight of heaven and commerce with God is made very easy if one starves or tortures oneself, or if the abnormal arises without conscious effort. Incidentally, the Church has always recognized this by teaching that indulging in "carnal" appetites closed the gate of heavenly visions. A healthy body offers no chance of heavenly visitations.

In reviewing *Havoc*, a war play, Mr. A. J. Cummings, in the *Daily News*, states that the soldier in battle thought not at all about woman, God, or devil. It is better late than never to hear this truth and the pious *Daily News* makes a very good frame for the picture, although we object to the name of woman being placed in the company of two abstractions.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is really the last word in credulity. His latest is that of interrogating a little girl on the existence and nature of fairies. The little girl is reported as saying that fairies are "the little lives that have never had the earth life. They have wings because they have never had the earth life and they don't understand how to gather the electrons, so God supplies them with wings to propel them." Sir Arthur is quite ready to swallow any amount of this kind of drivel and can apparently get publishers to issue it. It is enough to make one despair of human reason.



## 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.

J. LATHAM.—The issue of a series of postcards with portraits of distinguished European Freethinkers of historical note is worth considering. We will see what can be done in the matter. Hope to hear better news when you write again.

W. MERCHANT.—Shall be pleased to send copies of the *Freethinker* whenever you are ready.

E. FOULKES.—Joining the N.S.S. is a new year resolution of the right kind. We have many overseas members, and should like more.

ATHOS ZENO.—MSS. to hand. We have had many expressions of pleasure and appreciation of your articles from readers. Mr. V. J. Hands does not, we believe, belong to Leeds.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—L. W. Mann, 7s. 6d.

R. SMEDLEY.—Provided the term Utility is used within the sense dictated by a study of evolution, one may accept that as a sound working basis for morals. With regard to the question about the character of Jesus. The question of whether Jesus was a good man or not is not of very great importance in itself. To the Christian religion he is more than man; he is a God, and his assumed goodness is only used as a means of keeping the belief in the divinity of Jesus alive. Apart from this there is no greater interest in determining whether Jesus was a good man than there would be in dealing with any other character of antiquity—actual or imaginary.

A. THOUMINE.—Thanks for cuttings, but we do not quite get the "hang" of the discussion. This is doubtless due to our ignorance of local affairs and circumstances. You have touched our weak point. Shall be very glad to have the old French Bible you mention.

C. SEMMENS.—We have tried several times something on the lines you suggest, but the results were not very encouraging. Perhaps if you were to insert a note in the paper you might get a reply. If we can bring Freethinkers overseas into touch with those at home we are always pleased to give what help we can.

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 do not know who is responsible for the statement, nor do we know with what intention it is made, but from a letter received it appears that certain misstatements are afloat concerning the late George Underwood's connection with the *Freethinker*. He is represented as having been a kind of sub-editor or literary editor of this journal. Neither statement is correct. Mr. Underwood's sole connection with the *Freethinker*, and with the Freethought movement, consisted in his writing an occasional article for this journal during the past seven years. Without making an exact count we should say these amounted at most to twenty articles in the course of a year. Payment was made for all these contributions—not, of course, on an extravagant scale, our resources do not admit of that, but on as liberal a scale as that paid any other contributor of the same character. And some occasional contributors are not paid at all. We note this last fact appreciatively, as will also our readers. But we hope that what we have said concerning Mr. Underwood will be sufficient. For the rest we should be obliged if anyone could tell us from what source the statement alluded to comes, and why it was made.

Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow to-day (February 24) and will lecture in City Hall Saloon at 11.30 on "The Making of Man," and in the evening in the large City Hall at 6.30 on "Why Not Secularize the State." Admission to both meetings is free, but there will be a silver collection. We regret to hear that the Glasgow Branch, in common with others, has been feeling the effects of the bad trade on its finances, and we trust that those who attend the meetings will bear the fact in mind. A burden becomes negligible when it is spread over many.

We have now received a number of addresses indicating where some of our readers get their copies of the *Freethinker*. But we want more before the list is anything like complete, and before we can start operations. All our friends have to do is to put the name and address on a postcard with, if possible, the number of copies taken weekly by the newsagent. We are starting at once with one plan in the Midlands to see what can be done to increase sales, and we are hoping for good results. Of course, the experiment is only on a very modest scale, since it involves some outlay, and in that direction necessity imposes caution. But we are doing it to the limits of our opportunities, and as these increase our efforts will increase also.

Some of our readers, we are very pleased to say, are taking the matter very earnestly. Mr. W. G. Davis makes a suggestion which if adopted would be sure to do good. Following the example of some American friends, he suggests that about a dozen ladies and gentlemen should once a month convert themselves into a parade through one of our principal thoroughfares each bearing a sandwich board advertising the *Freethinker* and at the same time distributing literature to the passers by. Mr. Davis kindly offers to bear the whole cost of preparing the sandwich boards, and we are quite certain that this would make a first class advertisement for the paper. The only question is whether we could find enough to undertake the task. Ordinary paid sandwich men would not do nearly so well. The public take very little notice of them. But a dozen men and women who were obviously not



doing the parade for payment would be bound to attract attention to them and to the paper. We must leave this with our readers. If we had enough volunteers a meeting could be arranged at this office and the details arranged. It would be something to look forward to for the summer months.

Mr. Cohen had two very good meetings at Weston-super-Mare on Sunday last. Mr. Ford took the chair on both occasions, and there were many questions at the close of each lecture. There has been a marked change in the bearing of the attendants towards Freethought of late, and the vast majority of those present listen now with marked appreciation. It is an example of what may be accomplished in the most unpromising circumstances by persistent propaganda. We hope before long to see a Branch of the N.S.S. started in Weston-super-Mare. There are plenty there to run it if they can only be induced to come forward.

Mr. C. E. Williams will be the lecturer at the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, Birmingham. His subject will be "The Garden of the Gods," and the meeting commences at 7. Birmingham friends will please note.

We are asked to announce that the West Ham Branch will be holding a Social evening at Earham Hall, Earham Grove, Forest Gate, on Saturday, February 23, at 7. Admission is free, and all Freethinkers and their friends are welcome.

There appears to have been some confusion with regard to Mr. Moss's lectures at Plymouth, and this must have got in the way of the advertising. We are the more pleased to learn from the local secretary that the meetings were well attended and that Mr. Moss's addresses were much enjoyed by those present.

## The Art of Mona Lisa.

I AM not an omnivorous reader, though those who see and read my articles in the *Freethinker*, and who lend me books, might think so! Nevertheless, I envy the omnivora, and hope their mental digestion remains unimpaired, their intellectual nourishment wholesome. I do not envy the art of Mona Lisa, though I sometimes envy what she earns by it—Mona Lisa is the name I have chosen for a very popular lady writer, well known to Freethinkers—and to millions more who do not think at all. Mine is also a composite criticism, for the gifted authoress is one of a numerous school, but of which Mona is the acknowledged chief. I am, as said, not envious, and—

I write not in scorn, but in sorrow.

Yet I have laughed consumedly,—I fear, conceitedly— at the style and "situations" of Mona's art—tragic and terrible, but trite and obvious, crudely artificial, damnable—but of this, later. I was talking with some friends about the kind of books that attracted me, human situations, extremities especially, real and romantic, such as are found in *Monte Christo*, *Les Misérables*, *The Wreck on Disappointment Island*, etc., when my friends all agreed in recommending *Vendetta*, by Mona Lisa. But I was prejudiced, and told them so; still they insisted warmly: "Read *Vendetta* and you'll change your opinion, see if you don't." So I agreed to read the book—a rash and quixotic compliance—and now I must tell my friends what I thought of it:—

If you have tears prepare to shed them now.

It was the story of a Venetian nobleman—nothing less would suit our authoress and her readers—I can scoff in safety in these pages, for Mona would never condescend to read the *Freethinker*—a Venetian nobleman, hard to please with a woman, sees at last the one and

only, an angel face, in a crowd; a countess, also, of course, whom he marries, who turns out faithless and a devil's angel, but alluring and bewitching to the last—it is all so original! What unheard of situations. What subtlety of art! The poor husband's co-betrayer is his only and bosom friend. There is an illegitimate and lovely child of the marriage, who mercifully dies before the horrors reach her, and the poor father is afflicted with merciless grief and meditates merciless revenge. This child incident might have been made the central and culminating theme, and Marie—I mean Mona—almost touches here the modesty and majesty of nature, but nowhere else. The cholera rages in Venice, the Count is stricken in the street, he is coffined in a trance, and placed in the family vault, he awakens in his cheap coffin and is able after much breathless struggle and horror to kick his way out into the little less horrible gloom of the vault.

Another coffin falls with his own and bursts open, revealing a bandit's hoard of jewels, etc. He gloats over them a while and finds a secret way out—you see he was fully restored to health as well as life—Mona's breathless readers could not be supposed to have patience for a slow and natural recovery—no, the tale must hurry on to its awful conclusion—and Hey, Presto! we have another *Monte Christo*, only educated before his incarceration! He seeks out his wife and her paramour, and with much slavish but crude imitation of Duma's hero, plays the villain for a while in the guise of a friend. He kills the false friend in a duel (after exposing him at a stately banquet) still faithfully following after—but a long way after—the inimitable *Count* of Monte Christo. He remarries his false wife and, as a honeymoon treat, drags her away to the Mausoleum and there, in the Cymmerian gloom, lighted only by a taper, tells her, in stagey interminable melodramatic fashion, the tale of his adventures and wrongs and of her perjury. It is, of course, all bathos and bunkum, and is mere repetition, but dear to Mona's readers as millions have testified. I was present in imagination at this last scene of a great book, and all the gloomy corners of the crypt echoed with my explosion of laughter. Such may have been the cause of the earthquake that followed—the woman had to be disposed of in some fashion—a huge block of stone was dislodged from the roof and fell upon and "squashed" the hapless female. One lily-white hand and wrist protruded, fluttered a moment, and was still! Surely "the most unkindest cut of all."

Edmond Dantes in his prison of the Chateau D'If, his education by his fellow-prisoner, his escape, his find of vast wealth, his inexorable vengeance upon his wrongers, etc., may smack of the improbable and fantastic, but it is perfect art and perfect philosophy, true to nature, as we say, pleasing to the senses as grand opera, while the story under review is crudest pantomime. We cannot allow Mona and her kind even the excuse of "writing for a living," for, no doubt, the modern Swan of Avon takes her "art" seriously and gives the best she has, which is her and her public's chief condemnation. Well, well, we are glad Mona is not a Freethinker. If she were we might expect better things. In the book under review she has one slap at "us" in the phrase: "The blatant boasters of no religion." Highly original also, is it not, and refined and charitable? Mona, it is to be presumed, maketh much money and lives in state. We hope she will never come down in the social world. We fear she will never ascend in the intellectual, but, within her limitations, we wish the lady well, and so, like Burns,

Abjuring a' intentions evil,  
I quat my pen.

ANDREW MILLAR.



## The Stage.

She's the ash-heap of the 'opeless, she's the dust-bin of the damned,  
 She's the 'ome of every failure 'neath the sun;  
 If the vicarage has chucked yer,  
 Or your finals you 'ave mucked, yer  
 Seem to fancy that the Stage is easy won.  
 For she's got a fascination; 'taint the lustre, or the light—  
 Don't we know 'er cheeks are painted? Do we care?—  
 'Taint the glamour, or the glitter;  
 It's the taste of sweet and bitter,  
 Its the—Gawd knows what it is—but still, it's there.

—Hugh. E. Wright.

THERE are, surely, few of us who have not felt at some time or other the glamour of the stage; in fact, to be "stage-struck" is almost a normal phase of adolescence. Visit the gallery of any theatre, and you will see—if you have a discerning eye—factory-girls and servant-maids; battered drudges and hilarious flappers, gazing with eyes of wistful longing on the phantom figures beyond the footlights. Truly a fertile field for the student of human nature. A stage within a stage; a shadow-show within a shadow-show! I remember well a tired-looking shop-girl once turning to me, as the curtain dropped upon a famous star, and exclaiming in a tremulous voice: "Aint she lovely!" It touched me strangely. I felt that here was someone whose poor stunted soul had never been quickened by the joy of life; a being into whose dull and uneventful life romance had never crept. There is, surely, nothing more pathetic than the sight of a high-spirited maiden or youth on the threshold of life, eager for romance and adventure, anxious for a fuller life, and yet denied it by being subjected to a heartless and monotonous routine that deadens their sensibilities and stifles their affections. Small wonder that the call of the stage, with its false glamour, proves too potent for the more headstrong among them; and that they follow a will-o'-the-wisp that leads too often to disillusionment and disaster, and too seldom to happiness and success. For behind the garish lights and painted scenery there is a degree of sordidness and precariousness of livelihood that is scarcely to be met with in any other walk of life.

The above reflections were suggested by a volume of *Stage Rhymes* that adorn my bookshelf, and which were written by the actor-poet, Hugh E. Wright. Mr. Wright has, in his rhymes, expressed the pathos and humour inseparable from the theatrical world better than anyone I know. One feels in reading them that here is someone who *understands* all that is summed up in the phrase "the Profession" ("The Profession!—My Gawd! Wot a game!"); and who renders articulate the thoughts of all who have come into contact with the inner life of that great Bohemian crowd who spend their lives in ministering to our pleasures.

A few weeks ago I was present at a dinner given by a theatrical company to their artists prior to dispersal after the Christmas Pantomime. What a change was here! Clowns without their motley; fairies in mufti; "wealthy barons" in cheap ready-mades; and chorus-ladies with care-worn features, wondering how long it would be before their agents secured them their next "date," and whether their savings would last out. Soon they will be pestering their agents again, of whom Mr. Wright says:—

He can waft you up to Heaven with a word;  
 He can drag you down to Hades with a nod;  
 And to look at him its patently absurd  
 He should have the power to damn you, like a God!  
 You hang about his office, near the stair—  
 (Will the weary hours of waiting never end?)  
 And every one you ever knew is there;  
 And each has "just popped in to see a friend."

That woman over there! (Don't talk so loud!)  
 The woman with the peroxidized hair,  
 Which—if she could afford it—would be grey;  
 For weeks and weeks I've seen her sitting there—  
 Mind you, she's fifty now, if she's a day;

Then the "sad-eyed comedians," with their hoary jests, at which "some buried Cæsar's head with laughter bowed," are made to sing:—

We are High Priests at the Altar of the Utterly Inane,  
 Where the great, grim God of Laughter sits and grins,  
 And we sacrifice our brain—if you can grant us any brain—  
 For the favour of the Public, for our Sins.  
 In a pair of baggy trousers, with a nose encarnadined,  
 So we pay our homage nightly—even twice, [weaned,  
 And the great, grim God of Laughter who saw Punchinello  
 Grins a little, and accepts the sacrifice.

The precariousness of the theatrical life is the dominant note throughout, even when "stars" are the theme, thus:—

I have seen her billed on the hoardings,  
 And gazed on her form divine;  
 I have read of her weekly income,  
 And wished that the half were mine.  
 But I'm game to bet, that she can't forget  
 How the ladders would come in tights;  
 And the dresser went out—for a glass of stout,  
 For a treat, on Saturday nights.

Beneath the gay camaraderie of the profession one can always detect this tragic note; it is the cause of much of the superstition that is so prevalent in theatrical circles, as it is the cause of the tender ardour that always characterizes the friendships of they who live in this strange atmosphere of airy make-believe and brutal reality. Quite recently a friend of mine, a singer of some eminence in the profession, told me of the pathetic appeals she gets from a down-and-out comedian who first put her on the path to fame and fortune. Asked why he did not try his luck in some other direction, seeing that his talents have no longer a commercial value, she shrugged her shoulders. The answer is put characteristically by Mr. Wright:—

Woo 'er and win 'er and lose 'er again;  
 If 'e'd the option who'd choose 'er again?  
 I would for one of us—  
 Each Mother's son of us—  
 Love every hour of 'er,  
 Know the full power of 'er  
 Woo 'er again and she'll break you again;  
 When you're just 'opeless, she'll take you again  
 Back to the heart of 'er—  
 Aint that the art of 'er?  
 Gawd! She's a Lady—the Stage!

One closes this volume of rhyme with a sigh; but with an increased understanding of the difficulties, the trials—yes, and the temptations—encountered by those who battle with the grim God Fortune in order to render pleasant the leisure hours of we whose paths are set in less romantic but less hazardous places.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

The war did not change men's minds in any such impossible way. What really happened was that the impact of physical death and destruction, the one reality that every fool can understand, tore off the masks of education, art, science, and religion from our ignorance and barbarism, and left us glorying grotesquely in the licence suddenly accorded to our vilest passions and most abject terrors.—Bernard Shaw, *Preface to "Heartbreak House."*

He who acts is the only splendid Man.  
 Who works for him or holds a torch is brave;  
 Nay, one who merely listens at the door  
 But wills the deed, abashed receiveth praise.  
 Naught save true valour, needed through long years,  
 Can shake the world or free a soul from pain.

—T. Sturge Moore.



## A Genial Prelate.

MR. JOHN STILL, M.A., who became Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity at Cambridge in 1570, and was raised to the bishoprick of Bath and Wilts in 1593, published in 1575 one of the best comedies to be found in this or in any other language. The title page is as follows :—

A Ryght  
Pithy, Pleasaunt and me  
rie Comedie : In  
tytuled *Gammer gur  
tons Nedle* : Played on  
Stage, not longe  
ago in Chri  
stes  
*Colledge in Cambridge.*  
Made by Mr. S. Mr. of Art.  
Inprinted at London in  
Fleetestreat beneth the Con  
duit at the sign of S. John  
Evangelist by Tho  
mas Colwell.

Here is an outline of this interesting play :—

Act I.—Diccon "the Bedlam," returning from a long tramp, enters Gammer Gurton's cottage and finds her and her maid, Tyb, carrying on as if they had lost their wits. He cannot for the life of him make out what is amiss; and takes the opportunity to slip off with a piece of bacon, saying that it

Shall serve for a shoeing-horn to draw on two pots of ale.

He then meets Hodge, Gammer Gurton's hind, who is returning with breeches torn and soiled from the task of hedging and ditching. He bemoans his sad case, as he has only another pair and they are rent on the spot where boys are birched. Diccon tells him of the confusion at the Gammer's, but he also cannot guess what is the matter. Approaching the cottage, he meets Tyb, who exclaims :—

Gogs breade, Hodg, thou had a good turn thou warte  
not here this while!

I had been better for some of us to have ben hence a myle!  
My gammer is so out of course and frantyke at ones,  
That Cocke, our boy, and I poor wench, have felt it on  
bones.

Hodge asks if the Gammer has had a fall. Tyb replies that something far worse has happened. Then the truth escapes :—

*Hodge* : Gogs wounds, Tyb, my gammer has never  
lost her neele?

*Tyb* : Her neele.

*Hodge* : Her neele?

*Tyb* : Her neele. By him that made me, it is true  
Hodge, I tell thee!

*Hodge* : Gogs sacrament, I would rather she had  
lost tharte out of her bellie.

Tyb then tells him that the Gammer, having sat down to sew a patch on the seat of his breeches, suddenly espied Gyb, her cat, over head and ears in the milk-pan. Thereupon she threw down her sewing, seized her stick, and made for poor Gyb, who forthright took himself off into the street.

When she went back to sew, her needle was gone, and never a wight has had sight of it since then. At this report, Hodge, who has not a pair of whole breeches left in the world, lustily bemoans his fate. The Gammer appears and exclaims :—

Alas, Hoge, alas! I may well curse and ban  
This day, that ever I saw it, with Gyp and the milke-pan!  
For these and ill-lucke together, as knoweth Cocke, my  
boye,  
Have stacke away my deare neele, and robd me of my  
joye.

My fayre, long strayght neele, that was my only treasure!  
The fyrst day of my sorrow is, and last end of my pleasure.

Hodge rates his mistress soundly, complaining that whilst he has "to dig and delve," and do "a hundred thinges," she and the others "syt idle at home, and cannot keepe a neele." The Gammer replies that the milk wasted by the cat was Hodge's portion, and that it was in trying to save this that she had lost her precious needle. Hodge, who finds cold comfort in these words, exclaims :—

The devill he burst both Gib and Tib with all the rest.  
Cham [I am] always sure of the worst end, whoever have  
the best.

After much vain searching and many farcical incidents, the Gammer says :—

Downe, Tyb, on thy knees, I say! Downe Cocke, to the  
ground!

To God I make a vowe, and so to good St. Anne,  
A candell shall they have a piece, get it when I can,  
If I may my neele find in one place or the other.

After this they all proceed to look for the needle; and during their search meet with a variety of accidents that would much increase the gaiety of the reader if the space at my disposal allowed me to provide a record.

Act II.—This opens with a merry song in praise of beer, and with a scene at the ale-house, where Hodge, finding Diccon, relates his misfortunes, telling how he has lost his dinner by the cat drinking his milk and eating his bacon; and how his wardrobe is suffering from the loss of Gammer Gurton's needle. Diccon fools him by pretending to call in the aid of the devil to find the missing implement; and then fear causes poor Hodge to suffer a humiliating disaster not unfamiliar to students in the claws of ruthless examiners. After expressing his opinion that the company of Hodge is no longer desirable, Diccon goes to the house of Dame Chat and offers to tell her a secret if she will keep it. Upon her solemn promise, he discloses that Gammer Gurton has had a loss :—

Her goodly faire red cock at home was stole this night;  
and he adds,

Tib hath tykled in the Gammer's ears that you shoulde  
steale the cocke.

Forthwith, Dame Chat forgets her promise, and in language which, according to a benevolent fiction, no ladies of to-day, except those from the purlicus of Billingsgate, ever employ, she threatens vengeance upon her accuser. Diccon urges the promise of confidence, and asks the irate Dame to await the arrival of the Gammer, who will not delay to make the charge in person. She agrees to this and rewards him with a cup of her best ale. Diccon then goes out and again fools Hodge with the devil. Later he meets Gammer Gurton, who is still in search of her needle. He condoles with her, and then observes that he suddenly remembers having seen a needle picked up at her door by one of her neighbours. "Which," asks Gammer Gurton; "Dame Chat," replies Diccon. Thereupon the Gammer is about to depart at once in pursuit of her stolen property; but Diccon perfidiously detains her with an apocryphal narrative of how he rebuked Dame Chat, and how she reviled him, and likewise applied to the Gammer a certain designation which it is to be hoped was as little deserved as appreciated. The Gammer can now be kept back no longer, but sets off in fury, after promising to say nothing of Diccon and to reward him if she recovers her needle. Diccon soliloquises over the success of his stratagem; and then departs to find his cronies.

Act III.—Gammer Gurton meets Hodge and tells him that her needle was stolen by Dame Chat. Hodge, swaggering now that the supposed danger is past, tells her that Diccon introduced him to a most horrible fiend, who did not frighten him at all, and from whom



he heard the same thing about Dame Chat and the needle. Gammer Gurton, accompanied by Hodge, now proceeds to the house of Dame Chat, who receives them standing on her guard and her doorstep. The scene is long and delightful. As Gammer Gurton speaks of having come to get back her "own," but does not say what this is, Dame Chat naturally supposes that the vanished cock is the object in question. The misunderstanding continues till the original topic is obscured by a cloud of digressions which the ladies make with reference to each other's past history and personal traits. Appellatives derived from the inferior creation are mutually applied, after which the armament inherited from the same source is brought into operation. Caps, caul, and tresses are sent flying; smacks resound; and gore streams from bites and scratches. The combatants fall in turn. Finally, Dame Chat retires, and her adversary, though again on the ground, claims the victory. Hodge, whose fear during the fight has menaced him with a return of his previous disaster, now boasts his valour, but is derided by his mistress. She herself, content with her laurels, proposes to end the affair by diplomacy. Dr. Rat, parson of the parish, is, as she reminds Hodge, "a man esteemed wise"; and she will get him to shrive Dame Chat and to make her do penance. Hodge approves this plan, and the Gammer sends her boy, Cocke, to fetch the Doctor, adding he will be likely to find him at Hob Fylcher's, where "there is the best alo in town."

Act IV.—Dr. Rat, grumbling to himself because his parishioners will not leave him time "to drinke two pots of ale," and because slackness to answer their calls may loose him "a tythe-pyg, or a goose," arrives at Gammer Gurton's in no good humour. Between the parson and the Gammer occurs a brief dialogue, one of the most interesting and characteristic of the play. She tells him of her loss and refers him to Hodge for the complete story. Hodge gives this lucidly in twenty-four lines, everyone of which ends with the interrogation "See now?" The Gammer confirms the truth of this narrative; and Dr. Rat expresses his desire to reconcile her with her neighbour; but prudently asks if she is quite sure that Dame Chat took the needle. The Gammer, who sees Diccon approaching, points him out as a witness, Dr. Rat then asks if Diccon will swear that he saw the theft. Diccon cleverly avoids the part of a perjurer; and convinces them that if they will but listen in secret whilst he speaks with the Dame they shall learn how the matter stands. Departing to make the necessary preparations, he visits Dame Chat, and in course of conversation informs her that Hodge is about to wreak vengeance in the night upon the denizens of her hencote. He now comes back and says that he has seen the Dame sewing with the stolen needle; and that if Dr. Rat will but conceal himself in her hencote he shall learn the truth with his own eyes and ears. The Doctor falls into this trap; and the Dame and her wenches, who are lying in ambush for the poultry-thief, belabour his reverence soundly in the dark. He escapes with sore sides and a broken head, vowing in great wrath that he will set "Master Bayly after these murderers."

Act V.—The Bailie, who appears to have descended in a straight line from the gentleman who held the town-clerkship of Ephesus in the days of St. Paul, declines to be carried away by the vehemence of the Doctor, and points out to him that anyone who invades his neighbour's hencote in the night should not complain if he receives a drubbing for his indiscretion. He agrees, however, to call Dame Chat; and, upon her arrival, states the mishap of the Doctor, requesting her to explain it. In language nude of respect, Dame Chat replies that seven weeks have taken flight since she last saw the Doctor; that his tale is a trumpery;

and that he has frequentations at the other end of the town where he probably received his present arrangement. Then, after some judicious questions from the Bailie, she acknowledges that "a good philup" has been recently given to an intruder within her hencote, who, however, was not the plaintiff. The Bailie then presses to know who was the injured person; and poor Hodge is accused, Dame Chat protesting that the state of his head will prove the truth of her words. Hodge appears, wearing the breeches that Gammer Gurton was mending when she lost her needle. He swears that his head is intact, and that nobody dare touch it—the first of these assertions being a good deal more self evident than the last. Dame Chat still persists in her story; and Hodge, loosing his temper, gives her the lie, and bids her return what she stole from his mistress. This reminds the Gammer of her loss, and she brings it to the notice of the Bailie. Hot words then pass between her and Dame Chat, who tumble again into a ludicrous misunderstanding about the nature of the article in dispute. Finally, Dame Chat says she never stole the cock; to which Gammer Gurton replies that she never accused her of stealing the bird, for it is still at home, alive and crowing. Her needle is the thing that she has lost, and will have back. Dame Chat says that this is the first news she has had about the loss of the needle. The Bailie intervenes to know who has been telling tales. The Dame and the Gammer allege Diccon as their informant. Then the eyes of Dr. Rat are opened; and he exposes the perfidy of Diccon with an energy of language not reached by any of his hearers. The Bailie, who says that he expected a turn of this kind, orders Diccon to be fetched. That worthy sustains the attitude subsequently adopted by Madame de Maintenon, who said she had not repented. All the sufferers pour the vials of their wrath upon his unkempt head. The Doctor, whose own is broken, will have him sent to "the gallous"; but the women, God bless them, relent; and the Bailie finds a solution worthy of Solomon in the days before the ladies had occasioned his decrepitude, says he to the culprit:—

Then mark ye wel; to recompence this thy former action,—

Because thou hast offended al—to make them satisfaction,  
Before their faces here kneele downe, and I shall thee teach,—

For thou shalt take on othe of Hodges leather breache :  
First, for Master Doctor, upon paine of his curse,  
When he wil pay for al, thou never draw thy pursse,  
And, when ye meet at one pot, he shall have the first pull,  
And thou shalt never offer him the cup but it be full;  
To good wife Chat thou shalt be sworne, even on the same wyse,

If she refuse thy money once, never to offer it twice,—  
Thou shalt be bound by the same here, as thou dost take it,

When thou maist drinke free of cost thou never forsake it;  
For Gammer Gurton's sake, again, sworne shalt thou bee  
To help hir to hir nedle againe, if it do lie in thee,  
And likewise be bound by the vertue of that  
To be of good abering to Gib her great cat;  
Last of al, for Hodge the othe to scanne,  
Thou shalt never take him for fine gentleman.

Diccon obeys by giving Hodge "a good blow on the buttock." Hodge yells in a manner apparently unjustified even by such rough treatment. Then, in a dialogue, the skilfulness of which is unsurpassed even in French literature, the truth comes out, and with it Gammer Gurton's needle, which, it appears, that in her confusion she had left in the breeches of Hodge at the very place to which Diccon applied his lusty palm in taking his solemn oath and attestation.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

From its response to the allurements of tinsel magic and mystery, we may take the measure of the intellect of individual or class.—D. P. Stickells.



## Correspondence.

## AMERICAN RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I can assure Mr. Merchant that I am not at all "horrified" by the opposition offered in some of the legislatures of the States to the teaching of evolution.

Neither am I "distracted" over the possible annihilation of evolution. If I might describe my feelings upon the matter I should say they consisted more of amusement, not unmingled with contempt.

The idea that the action of legislative bodies in some of the States of America could annihilate the idea of evolution, is an idea that could only arise in Mr. Merchant's country.

Mr. Merchant wishes to side-track the points in dispute into a discussion of the theories of Hegel, Galton, Mendel, and Weismann. I am not going to do anything of the kind. What I said was that no English audience would tolerate the vulgarity and buffoonery of a Billy Sunday; and that no public body, with the exception perhaps of the Salvation Army, would entertain and vote upon a condemnation of evolution, as did the legislatures mentioned.

Mr. Merchant politely and courteously concludes: "My only wish is that we were some thousands of years behind our brethren beyond the sea when I visualize the British Empire tottering to its fall; not because of dissension in its own colonies, but that a lower strata of the electorate in old England itself is taking over the reins of government." Sounds more like the sentiments of some old German Junker, than those of a democratic citizen of the free and independent States of America, doesn't it?

W. MANN.

## "THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOST."

SIR,—Mr. J. P. Carter commences his letter by saying: "I quite agree with his [Mr. Power's] dictum, 'Such mistakes—which are irritating—might easily be avoided.'" [The *Freethinker*, February 17, 1924.]

I called attention to two mistakes only. At the end of his letter Mr. Carter concludes: "I feel constrained to agree with Mr. E. Egerton Stafford in his *The Myth of Resurrection* where he calls 'Maundy Thursday' Holy Thursday, and the Host a 'symbolic dead god.'" The very mistakes to which I referred!

Now *which* does Mr. Carter agree with—Mr. E. Egerton Stafford or myself?

Mr. Carter remarks that he has always known "Maundy Thursday" as Holy Thursday. To make doubly sure, he questions his wife and two sons, and also avowed Roman Catholic friends, and received the one and only reply: "Holy Thursday" is "Maundy Thursday," and falls in Holy Week.

In Pear's *Cyclopaedia* "Ascension Day" is spoken of as "Holy Thursday." Mr. Carter thinks this is evidently incorrect. Let me now quote from *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* (W. and R. Chambers, Limited, London, 38 Soho Square, W): "Holy Thursday, the day on which the ascension of our Saviour is commemorated, ten days before Whitsuntide. Maundy Thursday, the Thursday in Passion Week. Passion Week, name commonly given in England to Holy Week, but according to proper rubrical usage, the week preceding Holy Week."

As far as regards small and capital "H," the word "host" is spelt with a small "h" *before* consecration, and with a capital "H" *after* consecration.

At the communion of the priest he reminds himself that he receives the Body and Blood of Christ—Mr. Carter inserts the word *only*, and says "that he receives *only* the Body and Blood of Christ," which statement is incorrect. (The italics are mine.)

Mr. Carter says "divinity only is associated with the wine and water." The Penny Catechism says: "The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, together with his Soul and Divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine."

Are we to assume that the large Host, from which the priest communicates himself, is of different quality to the small Hosts, with which he communicates the people? Again, the Penny Catechism says "Christ is received whole and entire under *either* kind alone. (The italics are mine.)

W. POWER.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

## LONDON.

## INDOOR.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, "Municipal Trading: Is it a Success?" Discussion opened by Alderman F. L. Combes.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 11, General Meeting; 7, Mr. A. Brown, "Some Popular Fallacies."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, J. T. Murphy, "Problems of the British Empire."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Upton Labour Party Hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park, E.13): 7, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "Christian Art and Ritual."

## OUTDOOR.

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

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. E. C. Williams, "The Garden of the Gods."

BOLTON SECULARIST SOCIETY (Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street): 2.15, Mr. W. Addison, "New Ideas of the Day."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, Saloon): Mr. Chapman Cohen: 11.30, "The Making of Man"; (City Grand Hall): 6.30, "Why not Secularize the State?" (Silver Collection at each meeting.)

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, Lowerhead Row): 7, "A Mock Trial."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Professor Robert Peers, M.A., "Religion and Economic Progress."

HUCKNALL, NOTTS (Adult School): 10, Mr. Vincent J. Hands, "Religion and Sex." Discussion.

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

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