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## Views and Opinions.

### Devil-dodging and Disease.

Last week we were dealing with the recently issued report of the Archbishop's Committee on the subject of "Spiritual Healing." In this matter the clergy are in a very difficult position. The invariable teaching of the Old and New Testaments and the age-long teaching of the Church commit them to the belief that disease is due to supernatural agency, with the logical deduction that it is to be cured by supernatural means. That, as we said, is the universal belief among savages, who to-day duplicate the teachings and practices of the Bible. It is this that makes the primitive priest literally the primitive medicine-man; he is the one who by exorcism gets out of the body of the sufferer the evil spirit that is tormenting him. Anyone who cares to take from almost any reputable book of travels a description of the proceedings of a savage medicine-man treating a sick person or casting evil spirits out of one suffering from epilepsy or insanity, will have a perfect replica of the New Testament Jesus casting devils out of those who came to him for treatment. Anyone who reads the New Testament to discover what it actually teaches, and not to find in it something that suits the immediate purpose in view, will soon discover that the comment on Jesus, "He went about doing good," refers very frequently to his work as a medicine-man casting out evil spirits from sick persons, and not, as Mr. George Lansbury would have us believe, to prepare for the advent of the Labour Party. And one would vastly like responsible Christians to honestly face the question of whether Jesus really understood the nature of the complaint from which the people before him were suffering? If he really believed that the epileptics he saw were actually possessed of devils, in what respect was he the superior of the savage who to-day acts upon the same theory and seeks to get rid of the possessing devils by New Testament methods? And when we are told of the great good done by Jesus and by the influence of Jesus, might it not be as well to remember that it was his name which gave sanction to the horrible brutalities practised upon lunatics for ages, and which also sanctioned the opposition of the Christian Church to the development of medical science.

### Science in Antiquity.

Christian preachers and writers have worked so hard and for so long at dispensing the sentimental rubbish associated with the name of Christianity, and it has been able to make it so unpleasant for such as told the plain truth about it, that it is not generally recognized that Christianity, even on the field of religion as well as in other directions, represented a reversion to a lower type of things than that prevailing in the ancient civilized world. And nothing shows this more clearly than the question of the relation of Christianity to medical science. In Greece the better thinkers were definitely propounding the doctrine that all disease, bodily and mental, was to be regarded as disorders of the organism. In Egypt the tetishistic theory of disease was being steadily discredited, and one department of the celebrated Museum in Alexandria was devoted to medicine. Rome also had its schools of medical practitioners, and reference to such a work as that of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, is enough to show the ideas afloat in his time. And, to give all the ancient civilized world had its hygienic precaution in the universal use—even among the poorer classes—of the bath. There were numerous in both Greece and Egypt, they were still more numerous in Italy. They were within the reach of all, for those who could not pay the small sum demanded could use them without payment at all during certain hours of the day. It is a curious commentary upon this that when the old Roman Bath was reintroduced, from Mohammedan countries, into Christian Europe its origin was so forgotten that it established itself as the Turkish Bath. And the first public bath was not opened in England until the first half of the nineteenth century.

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### Back to the Savage.

The Christian dominance led the civilized world straight back to savagery. The medicine chest carried about by Jesus held but one ingredient—faith. He gave his followers the power to cure disease and to cast out devils "in my name"—precisely as the savage "Shaman" initiates the novice into the work of mastering the demons. If material agencies were used it was only as a medium for the supernatural power, as when Jesus cured the blind man by taking some earth, moistening it with spittle, and smacking it on the afflicted one's eye. In recalling these facts one may set it down as a characteristic piece of Christian dishonesty to be told that there has always been an intimate connection between the Christian Church and the healing art. What the Christian Church has understood by the healing art—until a more common-sense view was forced upon it—was the practice of magic and the appeal to God. The priest was the only doctor required; and disease supernaturally induced was to be supernaturally removed. The theory had all the logic of an ignorant child, and exhibited all the mentality of a savage. As Lacroix well put it: "Christ, healing the sick by the laying on of hands, restoring sight to the blind, and making the lame walk by an appeal to God, and raising the dead in the name of the Father, seemed to intimate to the



world that prayer and faith were the best remedies against human ills." One really ought to remember these things when inclined to gush over the beautiful and uplifting influence of the meek and lowly Jesus.

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#### Christian Medicine.

The influence of Christianity was not long in showing itself. The scientific study of medicine became an act of blasphemy against God. St. Augustine denounced "men called anatomists, who inhumanly pry into the mysteries of the human body." Tertullian denounced dissection as a profanation of the temple of the Holy Ghost. The greatest Christian writers were quite agreed that all disease was caused by demons. One by one the centres for the study of medical science were closed. The medical schools at Treves, Arles, Bordeaux, Athens, Alexandria had weathered the storm of the Barbarian invasion, it was left for the followers of the "Divine Healer" to either close them or to make them useless. The treatment of disease became a trade for monks and priests, notwithstanding the fact that the rules of their orders often prohibited a scientific study of the subject. The Council of Le Mans (1248) and the Council of Rheims (1119) interdicted the study of medicine by monks. The Council of Bezers, at the time when the only physicians of note in Christian Europe were Jews, prohibited them attending Christians. The Dominicans in 1243 banished all books of medicine from their monasteries. Innocent the Third forbade physicians practising save under the supervision of an ecclesiastic. Boniface VIII interdicted surgery as being Atheistical. The treatment of disease became a very profitable monopoly for the Church. There was a saint for every disease: St. Gall for tumours, St. Valentine for epilepsy, St. Gervase for rheumatism, St. Appolonia for toothache, and so forth. And there were, of course, cartloads of relics with their miraculous properties for banishing disease. It meant profit to the Church; the priests were applying the principles enunciated by the New Testament Jesus. The influence of the "Divine Healer" was making itself manifest.

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#### Obstructing Providence.

But it would be quite inaccurate to put down the trust of the Church and the people in relics as a cure for disease to the mere appetite for profit. That naturally made the trade more seductive, but it was really based upon a firm conviction that disease was, both as to cause and cure, a matter of supernatural agency. In the same way that the theological opposition to birth control to-day is based upon the belief that God sends children, and that to control their appearance is an interference with the designs of the Deity, so the same view was held with regard to interference in matters of disease. Diseases were sent by Providence for our correction, and it was frustrating its designs to prevent its occurrence. This, indeed, was the avowed basis of the theological opposition to inoculation. It was said that smallpox was "a judgment of God on the sins of the people, and to avert it is but to provoke him the more." Opposition to the use of anæsthetics in the case of child-birth is a classic instance of the same delusion, and it was most violently manifested in Scotland. It was said that God had decreed a curse upon women in child-birth, as laid down in Genesis, and it was blasphemous to seek to remove it. There is at least one instance in Scottish history (1591) of a woman being burned alive for having sought the help of one Agnes Sampson in order to relieve her pains on the birth of her two sons. She was executed on the Castle Hill in Edinburgh. But it was within sight of our own day, with the advocacy of anæsthetics in obstetrical cases

by Sir J. Y. Simpson (1847), that the fight recommenced. To the advocates of the retention of the genesaic curse on women, Simpson retorted that God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam before he performed the surgical operation which led to the creation of women, and suggested that this was the first recorded case of chloroforming. Nor in this matter was there anything to choose between Catholic and Protestants, and although there was, as a matter of fact, more support for the scientific view as time advanced among the latter than among the former, this can scarcely be placed to the credit of their religion. It was because the revolt from the elder Church made some more sensitive to the influence of more rational thought. The greater the play of acquired knowledge, the wider the limits of mental freedom; the weaker the power of genuine Christianity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Christ and the Church.

THE Rev. Leyton Richards, M.A., is an exceptionally able man, held in high esteem by all the Free Churches of this and other countries. He thoroughly disapproved of the late war. He was then minister of an important church near Manchester, and on learning that the majority of the members disagreed with his views on the war he had the courage to tender his resignation, which was regretfully accepted. He continued to give expression to his anti-war convictions. When the Fellowship of Reconciliation was founded Mr. Richards was appointed its secretary. It started in a small way, but is now very strong, with numerous members from Free, Anglican, and Catholic Churches. After a long interregnum of faithful service in various churches, he has at last settled down as pastor of Carrs Lane Congregational Church, Birmingham; a church rendered famous by such pulpit giants as Dr. Dale, Dr. Jowett, and Mr. Berry. As minister of this historic church, Mr. Richards delivered his first sermon on February 3, entitled "Concerning Christ and the Church," which may be read in the *Christian World Pulpit* for February 14. "Concerning Christ and the Church," is a Pauline quotation found in Ephesians v. 32. First of all Mr. Richards pronounces an eulogium upon the Church. In his eulogium the Church is treated as an "undoubted factor in Western civilization. Without it Western history might not have been." There are believers who cannot go that far, and the last statement quoted is absolutely incapable of verification. "It is often ignored, scorned, spurned, and yet if the Church disappeared it would be missed even by those most indifferent to its message and its service." Mr. Richards declared that "Jesus was the Founder of the Church; of that there is no doubt." That is not true. Even Anglican divines, not a few, cannot find in the Gospels the slightest trace of the alleged fact that the Church was founded by Jesus.

Assuming the historicity of the Gospel Jesus, nothing is more patent about him than his lack of confidence in the truth of the Jewish religion. Its rigid Sabbatarianism was an abomination in his sight. His attitude to the Sabbath is anything but shared by his twentieth century disciples. It is also equally certain that he attached very little value to the sacrificial and ceremonial system so prominent in one version of Judaic religion. In fact, the Gospel Jesus was a religious revolutionist. As Mr. Richards says:—

You cannot read far in the Gospels without discovering he was a nonconformist. He did not observe all the cumbersome details of religious ceremonial which had been evolved down the centuries by ecclesiastical pundits. He even encouraged his disciples to disregard certain detailed formulæ and regulations,



always with this qualification: "Not for the mere sake of being a revolutionary or a rebel." There was nothing of that in Jesus Christ. He did encourage these things in so far as they were a barrier—and they often were—to real religion, or to the supplying of human needs.

Mr. Richards takes it for granted that the Gospels are historical documents, and he delves in them for every allusion to or statement of his agreement or disagreement with the religious beliefs and practices of his time.

Of course, Mr. Richards is aware that most of the passages he quotes are pronounced purely legendary by Professor P. W. Schmiedel and his school; and in Dr. Arno Neumann's *Life of Jesus* they do not appear. If Mr. Leyton Richards had accepted the conclusions of the latest criticism, he could not possibly have preached the sermon now before us. To Mr. Richards, Jesus is Divine, and religion is rooted and grounded in the Divine. He says:—

We are familiar with the words "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church." But there is a subtle distinction in the Greek that is not preserved in the English. It is a great pity it is not preserved. Thou art Peter, "Petros," a fragment of rock, and upon this "Petra," the bedrock from which the fragment is broken, upon that—not upon Peter, not upon the fragment, not upon "Petros," but upon "Petra" I will build my Church. Peter had just confessed Jesus as the Son of God; his human nature had adored the Divine in Jesus. Deep had called unto deep, and the human heart of Peter had responded. Then said Jesus, on that human nature, of which thou art a fragment, I will build my Church. Upon human nature responsive to the Divine in Christ, adoring God in Christ, it is founded.

As an exegete Mr. Richards deserves great praise; but unfortunately the text he expounds is not recognized as a genuine part of the teaching of the Gospel Jesus. Jesus never called himself the Son of God; never once pretended to be a Divine Being. If this is true, if the Gospels are largely mythical and legendary, it necessarily follows that all their passages about God, Christ and religion are wholly valueless. But Mr. Richards is a minister, to whom apparently the Bible is the Word of God, from which he derives all his doctrines and their implications. He tells us very little about Christ, but enlarges upon the nature and function of the Church. For example, he calls the Church "a social incarnation of Christ's will." He says:—

You know Jesus did more than indicate the basic principle of the Church. He foretold how that principle would work out. A Church, if it is truly based on devotion to him, if it is responsive to God in his life, what then? It follows automatically that such an assembly will enshrine his spirit and give effect to his will. Paul spoke of the Church as the body of Christ. You know of whom and to whom he applied that term: an actual institution at Corinth, and such an institution it was. At any rate, we in modern churchmanship have advanced beyond the first century. Vice of a most loathsome and disgusting order right in the midst of the Church at Corinth—disputes and dissensions and squabbles and quarrelling! Yet to that Church at Corinth, with all its human failings, while rebuking it, Paul says: "Know ye not that ye are the body of Christ?" What is the body for? It is to express the will. The Church is said to be the social incarnation of Christ's will. There was that personal incarnation stamped upon the page of history nineteen hundred years ago.

Poor old world! How it has been misled and deceived by many superstitions. Taking both short and long glimpses of its history there is no possible escape from the conclusion that the Christian Church has been a gigantic failure. It has by no means been the social incarnation of any ideally good man's will. Paul

declared that so corrupt was the Corinthian Church that in some respects it was worse than the Pagan world outside. That is what we learn from the Pre-Nicene literature. This is by no means a pleasant lesson to learn, but the more we learn about this the greater becomes the mystery of evil.

Though thus writing we gladly admit that we greatly admire Leyton Richards, and that in Carrs Lane Church there are many noble and beautiful characters, but the fact remains that Christianity is a vicious superstition, and the Church a purely human institution whose history during many ages was a disgrace to humanity.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Browning and Bishop Blougram.

Call Christ, then; the illimitable God, or lost!  
God's in his heaven, all's right with world.

—Robert Browning.

ROBERT BROWNING will live as a poet, but his attitude as a philosophical thinker was not impressive. In fact, his intellectual position was simply that of agreement with current theology. His position with regard to the thought of his age was paradoxical, if not inconsistent. His admirers counted him a second Shakespeare; but he sentimentalized, where Shakespeare thought; he stammered, where Shakespeare sang. Browning was less in touch with the intellectual movements of his own time than Arnold, Swinburne, Meredith, or even Tennyson. He was content, in his own way, to fight during a long life in the ranks of reaction.

Browning was obsessed with theology. His early Nonconformist education, his serious cast of mind, the form of his genius, all tended to make religion interesting to him. In very many of his poems he has attempted to depict the heart of the Christian Religion. Truly, he had a robust faith. He was as anthropomorphic as any half-educated tradesman who sat at the feet of Spurgeon, whose passport to remembrance is that he was the last notable preacher who championed the barbarous dogma of eternal damnation. Browning was a poet, and Spurgeon the proudest of preachers, but they had too much in common in religious matters.

A candid critic of Macaulay said that he wished that he could be as cock-sure of one thing as Macaulay was of everything. Browning was cock-sure of so many things in religion. In *Saul* he cries aloud for a "god" with purely human attributes; and in *Evelyn Hope* he is quite certain of immortality. He professed to see no force in the objections of Free-thinkers, and thought he had settled the matter by pointing out that "ice makes no conflagration."

Browning, like Pascal and Newman, chloroformed his intellect with the supernatural. As Joubert says, wittily: "It is so easy to believe in 'God' if one never troubles about definitions." In his poem *Christ-mas Eve* the poet insists that if Christ were not "God" he was nothing, and the same idea recurs in *A Death in the Desert*.

So often called a profound thinker by Christians, Browning's conclusions are dangerously facile and second-hand. The wish is so often the father of the thought; and the grandfather of many dogmas. Browning's optimism was as robust and as impertinent as that of Doctor Pangloss, so brilliantly satirized by Voltaire. To read Browning in sickness, in great sorrow, or physical suffering, in that dire resort to which men are pushed, "with close-lipped Patience for their only friend," would be well-nigh impossible for a thoughtful reader. There are moments when the



statement, "God's in his heaven," seems very doubtful to the loyal believer. And there are frequent times when "All's right with the world" is a gratuitous insult to common sense. Optimism is well for rich men in sheltered homes, but pushed too far it becomes sheer callousness. Browning, at heart, was too much like his own Bishop Blougram with his cowardice in the face of criticism:—

Experimentalize on sacred things!  
I trust not hand, nor eye, nor heart, nor brain,  
To stop betimes; they all get drunk alike.  
The first step I am master not to take.

Christian apologists boast of Browning as a religious poet. They are justified in making the most of a genius when they possess one. We do not quarrel with them for that. His was a religious temperament. About that, at least, any reader of his poetry; and his letters to his wife show it almost on every page. He always writes as an apologist for the belief in "God," free will, and immortality; the "three buttresses of superstition," as Haeckel has termed them. In all Browning's many volumes there is only one poem in which he looked over the fence of Orthodoxy. In his powerful lines *Apparent Failure*, describing a tragedy of the old morgue at Paris, he almost forgot his Christianity. For a few minutes he realized that there were more things in heaven and earth than he had dreamt of in his pietistic philosophy.

In religious speculation Robert Browning never launched out into the deep. He hugged the shore; never directing the prow of his boat towards the illimitable ocean, but ever seeking shelter under the shadow of the land. It was the safe rather than the heroic course that he exalted. For this reason, Browning, as a teacher, can never give the full satisfaction to intellectual minds which they can derive from those who have bravely gone forward wherever their intellect may have led.

MIMNERMUS.

## Were the Jews Savages?

### III.

(Continued from page 118.)

OTHER remnants of fetishism among the Jews may be found in their sacred trees and pillars, frequently referred to in earlier portions of the Bible. Abraham is said to have planted a tree in Beersheba as a religious emblem (Gen. xxi, 33). O. Peschel says (R.M. 250): "On the other side of Jordan trees may still be seen from which are suspended sacrificial gifts, especially tresses of hair." Pliny says (*Hist. Nat.*, xii, 2): "The trees formed the first temples of the gods, and even at the present day the country people, preserving in all their simplicity the ancient rites, consecrate the finest among their trees to some divinity." Jacob is twice mentioned as setting up a pillar. The Rev. T. K. Cheyne allows that, "In spite of the efforts of the 'Jehovist' who desired to convert these ancient fetishes into memorials of patriarchal history (comp. Gen. xxxi, 45-52), the old heathenish use of them seems to have continued, especially in secluded places" (Prophecies of Isaiah, ii, 70). Isaiah (lvii, 6) speaks of libations made to stones in his own time. The worshippers could have cited the precedent of Jacob, who, in pouring oil upon the stone, employed an established mode of honouring living persons and an ancient phallic rite. We should judge that the act was in propitiation of the supposed in-dwelling spirit to whom he ascribed his dream, if we trust the analogous instances related of Blantyre negroes by Rev. Duff Macdonald: "Very frequently a man presents an offering at the top of his own bed beside his head.

He wishes his god to come to him and whisper in his ear as he sleeps" (*Africana*, i, 60). The fetishism of Jacob appears still further in the conditional character of his vow. If fortune favoured him, then the stone should be his Bethel, or home of God (Gen. xxviii, 20-21). According to Jewish tradition, Jacob's pillar was religiously treasured in the holy of holies (Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, article "Bethel"). We shall not be surprised at this early fetishism when we remember that Jeremiah had to denounce their kings, princes, priests and prophets "which say to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth" (Jer. ii, 26, 27). Further he says, they defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and stocks (iii, 9), (see too Ezek. xvi, 17).

In an article on "Sacred Stones" in the *Fortnightly Review* (Jan., 1890) Mr. Grant Allen notices the widespread practice of stone-worship, and does not scruple to apply the argument to the religion of the Jews, since early Semites were notoriously stone-worshippers. This worship, in fact, lay so deep that Mohammed was unable to eradicate it, as every year's pilgrimage to the Kaaba or black stone at Mecca testifies. He notices how the Jewish God was carried in the ark and how David "danced before Jahweh," and compares his place in the temple with the fetish stones in the holy of holies of the temples of Greece. Mr. Allen says, "That Jahweh himself, in the most ancient traditions of the race, was similarly concealed within his chest or ark in the holy of holies, is evident I think to any attentive reader." He points out that the later Jehovistic glosses of Exodus and Deuteronomy, do their best to darken the comprehension of the matter. Mr. Allen concludes:—

Not to push the argument too far, then, we may say this much is fairly certain. The children of Israel in early times carried about with them a tribal God, Jahweh, whose presence in their midst was intimately connected with a certain ark or chest, containing a stone object or objects. This chest was readily portable, and could be carried to the front in the case of warfare. They did not know the origin of the object in the ark with certainty, but they regarded it emphatically as "Jahweh their god, which led them out of the land of Egypt." Even after its true nature had been spiritualized away into a great national deity, the most unlimited and incorporeal the world has ever known (as we get him in the best and purest work of the prophets), the imagery of later times constantly returns to the old idea of stone and menhir. In the embellished account of the exodus from Egypt, Jahweh goes before the Israelites as a pillar or monolith of cloud by day, and fire by night. According to Levitical law his altar must be built of unhewn stone, "for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." It is as a Rock that the prophets often figuratively describe Jahweh, using the half-forgotten language of an earlier day to clothe their own sublimer and more purified conception. It is to the Rock of Israel—the sacred stone of the tribe—that they look for succour. Nay, even when Josiah accepted the forged roll of the law, and promised to abide by it, "the king stood by a pillar (a menhir) and made a covenant before Jahweh." Even to the last we see in vague glimpses the real original nature of the worship of that jealous god, who caused Dagon to break in pieces before him, and would allow no other sacred stones to remain undemolished within his tribal boundaries.

I don't see, therefore, how we can easily avoid the obvious inference that Jahweh, the god of the Hebrews, the god of Abraham, and of Isaac and of Jacob, the god who later became sublimated and etherialized into the God of Christianity, was in his origin nothing more nor less than the ancestral fetish stone of the people of Israel, however sculptured, and perhaps in the very last resort of all, the monumental pillar of some early Semitic sheikh or chieftain.



Mr. Allen points out that :—

Samuel judged Israel every year at Bethel, the place of Jacob's sacred pillar; at Gilgal, the place where Joshua's twelve stones were set up; and at Mispah, where stood the cairn surmounted by the pillars of Laban's covenant. He himself "took a stone and set it up between Mispah and Shen"; and its very name, Ebenezer, "the stone of help," shows that it was originally worshipped before proceeding on an expedition, through the Jehovistic gloss, saying "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us," does its best, of course, to obscure the real meaning. It was to the stone circle of Gilgal that Samuel directed Saul to go down, saying "I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings." It was at the cairn of Mizpah that Saul was chosen king; and after the victory over the Ammonites, Saul went once more to the great Stonehenge at Gilgal to "review the kingdom," and "There they made Saul king before Jahveh in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before Jahveh."

This last passage, as Mr. Allen notices, is instructive, as showing that in the opinion of the writer, Jahveh was then domiciled at Gilgal. In the old hymn, known as the song of Moses, embodied in Deuteronomy xxxii, God is frequently called *Tsur*, "The Rock which begat thee," etc. Professor Robertson Smith allows that the two pillars of the temple Jachin and Boaz, "The Stablisher" and "In him is strength," "were doubtless symbols of Jehovah" (R. S. p. 191).

Having dealt with the subject of "Phallic Worship among the Jews" in *Bible Studies* I shall have only to point out that a stone, or a cairn set up simply as a memorial of a burial place, might on that account, be invested with sacred character and be supposed to be the peculiar residence of the departed spirit and the proper place to make it offerings. No doubt this is sufficient explanation of a large part of stone-worship. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence of conical stones being worshipped as creative and considered as presiding over generations. The stone pillars of Baal and the wooden Asherah cones, the chief objects of adoration among the Phenicians, are usually held to be of phallic character. It is unquestionable that the Jews at one time worshipped Baal (see Hosea ii, 16; Jud. vi, 32), the substitution *bosheth*—in the names of Ishbosheth, Jerubbosheth, and Mephibosheth for Eshbaal, and Jerubbaal—signifying sexual shame. The place where the ark stood was indeed called Baale, or place of Baal (II Sam. vi, 2; I Chron. xiii, 6).

Professor Huxley, in his *Evolution of Theology*, points out numerous coincidences between the religion of Jews and that of the Tongan Islanders. He says :—

Human sacrifices were extremely common in Polynesia, and in Tonga, the "devotion" of a child by strangling was a favourite method of averting the wrath of the gods. The well-known instances of Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter and of David's giving up the seven sons of Saul to be sacrificed by the Gibeonites "before Jahveh" appear to me to leave no doubt that the old Israelites, even when devout worshippers of Jahveh, considered human sacrifices, under certain circumstances, to be not only permissible, but laudable. Samuel's heaving to pieces of the miserable captive, sole survivor of his nation, Agag, "before Jahveh," can hardly be viewed in any other light. The life of Moses is redeemed from Jahveh, who "sought to slay him," by Ziporah's symbolical sacrifice of her child, by the bloody operation of circumcision. Jahveh expressly affirms that the first-born males of men and beasts are devoted to him; in accordance with that claim the first-born males of the beasts are duly sacrificed; and it is only by special permission that the claim to the first-born of men is waived, and it is enacted that

they may be redeemed (Exodus xiii, 12-15). Is it possible to avoid the conclusion that immolation of their first-born sons would have been incumbent on the worshippers of Jahveh, had they not been thus specially excused? Can any other conclusion be drawn from the history of Abraham and Isaac? Does Abraham exhibit any indication of surprise when he receives the astounding order to sacrifice his son? Is there the slightest evidence that there was anything in his intimate and personal acquaintance with the character of the Deity, who had eaten the meat and drunk the milk which Abraham set before him under the oaks of Mamre, to lead him to hesitate—even to wait twelve or fourteen hours—for a repetition of the command? Not a whit. We are told that "Abraham rose in the early morning" and led his only child to the slaughter, as if it were the most ordinary business imaginable. Whether the story has any historical foundation or not, it is valuable as showing that the writer of it conceived Jahveh as a deity whose requirement of such a sacrifice need excite neither astonishment nor suspicion of mistake on the part of his devotee. Hence, when the incessant human sacrifices in Israel during the age of the kings are all put down to the influence of foreign idolatries, we may fairly inquire whether editorial Bowdlerising has not prevailed over historical truth.

In Levitical law, the ordinance remains, "None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xxvii, 30). The Psalmist tells us "They sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils" (Psalm cvi, 37). The worship of devils is alluded to in Lev. xvii, 7, and II Chron. xi, 15). Though the revised version substitutes "he goats" in the last two of these passages, it exhibits the savage character of early Jewish worship by representing the scapegoat, upon whose head the sins were placed, by its proper name—that of Azazel, a totem spirit. Maimonides says the Zabii worshipped demons under the figure of goats.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Concluded.)

## Mystery: Bogus and Real.

THERE is no shelter to which the pulpit, in its capacity of apologist and obscurantist, has more persistently run for refuge than to that afforded by the mysteries of Nature. It is the commonest of all rendezvous when one's object is to maintain superstition and credulity at their "high-water" level. Because Nature is brimful of problems which, on account either of the meagreness of human knowledge, are still unsolved, or of its intrinsic limitations, are essentially insoluble, the apologist bundles his bogus or sham mysteries with those which are real and true, and forthwith assumes that the spurious and the genuine are all of a piece. The aim is obviously to deceive by diverting the attention of the critical faculty, much as the conjurer by adroit manipulations deceives the eye of the spectator.

The mysteries of Nature are real because they are about realities—the data of experience. And the mystery attaching to them is due either (1) to our inability to classify them, that is, to subsume some well-known phenomenon under another with which we are more familiar, or to merge both in a wider class; or (2) to our inability to connect causally (i.e., as cause and effect) well-known phenomena which always occur concurrently or successively. Every mystery in Nature is due to one or other of those two disabilities.

Let me give you two or three instances of real mysteries and how they were made to vanish. For



countless ages the stars were to man a profound mystery. In his pathetic ignorance he thought they were something which possessed a magic influence over the destiny of individual human beings! Wholly oblivious of the superlative fatuity of the belief. When, however, modern science (an affair of yesterday) showed them to be suns, identical in all essential respects to our own luminary, the mystery vanished as night before day.

So, again, was the sun itself as deep, if not deeper, a mystery, even to the threshold of our own time. For æons it was worshipped as a god. Probably he was first and foremost of all the great gods, and the fore-runner of the whole dynasty. But physical science destroyed the mystery by dethroning the god and replacing it by a vast ball of glowing matter—when the sun and a white-hot poker were identified, the mystery vanished.

Likewise, the seven planets or wandering stars were even still more mysterious; and were regarded by all civilizations down to our era as deities who divided the upper regions of air or heavens between them as their respective kingdoms. Their periodic roamings among the stars were considered to be royal processions through their dominions. But when these stately wanderers were identified with our own Earth, these divine rulers were given the *coup de grace* and were replaced by a family of planets, of which our own globe is the youngest but two. Mystery was swallowed up in the recognition of identify.

It will be thus observed that mysteries due to failure to identify, usually vanish as the result of our ever-increasing ability to trace phenomena to their physical causes. And we may safely say that existing mysteries will be solved, if solved at all, by our progressive knowledge of causal relations.

A good deal of mystery still surrounds our ultimate physical substances: matter, electricity, and ether. But already the Eastern sky is aflame with light that bids fair to banish the darkness that mystifies us.

We often hear of the mystery of life, and why? Simply because living and lifeless phenomena have hitherto refused to merge into one class, despite the ever-increasing extent of the ground common to both classes. And until that is achieved the sense of mystery that surrounds every unsolved problem will remain.

Deeper still is the mystery that shrouds the correlations between the physical and the psychic. As these cannot, in my opinion, be derived causally from one another, the mystery is absolute and permanent, unless it can be shown that ultimate substance is both physical and psychic in nature.

Let us now glance at those of the spurious order. A mystery is bogus or counterfeit when it is wholly created by ourselves through postulating some gratuitous assumption or dogma, for the truth of which there exists not a shred of real evidence based upon the data of experience.

For example, the way the primitive magic and myths of Genesis, as well as all other Bible miracles and legends were contradicted and belied by every science as it made its debut on the stage of human knowledge, perplexed, worried, and even agonized the implicit believer. This wholesale antagonism and contradiction between Biblical statements and the demonstrable facts of science were to the devout a painful mystery.

Just think of the honest and staunch Christian, Hugh Miller, struggling to solve a moiety of this mystery by endeavouring to reconcile the magic creations of Genesis with the facts of geology! But the mystery was not genuine; it was a counterfeit wholly created by the dogma that the Bible was a book

wholly inspired by God and contained nothing but eternal verities. Banish this contemptibly false assumption or dogma and the mystery ceases to exist.

The dogma of the Trinity well illustrates the same truth. This tenet is undoubtedly the premier metaphysical puzzle ever conceived by man. It has always been considered by divines as the central mystery of the Christian religion—"one to be believed and not to be comprehended." What tomes, or even libraries, have been written attempting to solve how a distinct three can at the same time be an indivisible one! How, the successive can also be coeval! But the whole mystery is artificial, created by the assumption that the gratuitous dogma is true. Renounce that tenet and the mystery disappears as darkness vanishes when you switch on the electric current.

But perhaps the commonest of all bogus mysteries is that associated with sentient life. Ever since that first appeared upon this planet it has been swathed in a sea of suffering. Its ripples and waves break in pain, and its billows in storms of agony. The grim tragedy which has been continuously enacted for scores of millions of years may be epitomized in the conjugation of the verb, to eat: "*I eat, thou eatest, he eats; we eat, you eat, they eat,*" and the terrible converse: "*I shall be eaten, thou wilt be eaten, he will be eaten; we shall be eaten, you will be eaten, they will be eaten.*" And there is no escape from it. But we are taught than an omnipotent, omniscient, and all-merciful Being is the responsible author of it all. For nearly 2,000 years (for the attempt is made in the New Testament) the apologist has been battering his head against this granite rock in the vain effort to solve the riddle.

I need hardly add that he is now just where he began—at the starting point. But the mystery is wholly fictitious, created by the postulate that there is such a Being. Discard the gratuitous tenet, and sentient life offers no mystery at all.

When to the omnipotence and infinite wisdom of a divine ruler is added the benevolence and care of a father, the mystery is intensified; for now you have to reconcile a daily and gigantic budget of facts as inconsistent with fatherhood as light is with darkness. Here, again, dismiss the baseless assumption and there remains no mystery to solve.

I cannot refrain from alluding to one more. It is about the most palpable of all spurious mysteries, yet only to the reflective mind it appears to be a mystery at all. How could Jesus, who is alleged to be an omniscient God, yet share to the full the primitive ignorance and superstitions of his age? How could omniscience co-exist with barbaric ignorance; or omnipotence with the fatuous practice of primitive magic, is mystery, indeed, but one that is wholly artificially created by the baseless assumption that there ever existed a human being who was all-knowing and all-powerful.

It is now, I trust, evident that to confound fictitious with real mysteries is precisely analogous with mixing counterfeit with genuine coins and then using them as if they all had the same sterling value. Dexterity in juggling is commendable in a conjurer, but is most unworthy in religious controversy. KERIDON.

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And why do they break a bottle of wine before the ship is launched? Why, for the same reason that Polycrates threw his ring into the sea: to pay toll to Nemesis. We say to Nemesis: "I will give you this and you must be satisfied with it. Take my wine, but take no more from me." That is why the Jews, loyal to ancient usage, break a cup when they get married. And the broken bottle is but the trick of a child or a savage, the artifice of Man—poor, simple soul—endeavouring to hoodwink Fate.—"*Pierre Nozère,*" *Anatole France.*



## Acid Drops.

Mr. Ellis Roberts in reviewing a book, *A Little Philosophy of Love*, by Grace Rhys, asks: "After all, why cannot we learn to be simple about the great things of life." The answer is either a lemon, as the man-in-the-street would say, or because certain dressed up solemn-faced humbugs called priests will not allow man to take up this attitude. These precious beauties say that a biscuit is not a biscuit, and a bottle of wine bought from a local grocer is not wine. They strive to preside at the three chief functions in a man's life, and fill up the blanks by talking about the soul, sin, transubstantiation, consubstantiation, and the philosophic pre-supposition of the divine incarnation, and, when a poor man is muddled in this sandbagging of his senses, he cannot learn to be simple about the great things of life. There is hope, however, for a reviewer who asks even a question such as this; for it is the kind of question towards which European civilization is drifting, and Europe will have to answer it in the right way or perish.

In *Glimpses of Authors*, Miss Caroline Ticknor tells a good story about Mark Twain, to whom the lady's grandfather sent a letter ending: "God be with you, for I cannot. Yours, B. H. Ticknor." Mark Twain replied: "Dear Ticknor, He didn't come. It has been a great disappointment to the whole family."

A Bolton infirmary patient tore his bed-clothes to pieces, smashed a window, threw himself from a second-storey window, and nearly killed a passing policeman. Perhaps it was early-closing day with Providence.

A Court dress, as worn by Cabinet Ministers and others, costs £57, including a sword. A bishop's war-paint costs nearly £200. This happens in a country professing to worship a pauper-god.

According to a Sunday newspaper the Labour Party has the support of two bishops in the House of Lords. It should have added that the Tories can rely on the support of about twenty of these ecclesiastics on the Bench of Bishops.

We have often insisted that Christianity embodies a profound pessimism, and in that opinion we might cite in our support no less a person than Schopenhauer. It is quite clear that historic Christianity has always insisted on the worthlessness of this life if it stops short at the grave, and the innate criminality of human nature. Hence the need for a God and a future life, where sinners will be punished and others rewarded. Now the gentleman who is responsible for the weekly column of religious musing in the *Times* arrives at the same conclusion. He says: "Christianity has much in common with pessimism. Life would be a tragedy but for the revelation that it belongs to another order—but for the kingdom of God." The common sense of this is that God made this world, but bungled it so badly that it would be a tragedy if he had not made another in which the faults of this might be corrected. And that makes one ask why he did not do the job properly at once? And if he would not do it properly while he was about it, what reason have we to assume that he would make any other world better than he has made this one? Might we not find that the tragedy would be continued elsewhere, and that, even if we get into the next stage, we may be lured on with the same story carried a step further?

Films on Biblical subjects do not find much favour with the present generation. A recent film, entitled "Sodom and Gomorrah," is described by an evening newspaper as "clerical propaganda in terms of hell fire."

The Greek Church Metropolitan in Moscow has ordered thanksgiving services for England's recognition of the Soviet Republics. The Holy Ghost's politics are changing since the giddy days of the Grand Dukes.

Lord Hugh Cecil, speaking at a meeting of the Church Assembly, said that "however valuable secular education was, it carried no weight from the spiritual point of view." On the other hand, religious education carries the weight of 50,000 priests in this country alone.

"Socialism is based upon two lies," says Viscountess Astor: one, that all men are born economically equal; and the other that Christ's teachings should be regarded literally." Surely Lady Astor has heard the beautiful song: 'We all came into the world with nothing.' With regard to the theological objection, who told the lady that Socialism was based on Christ's teaching? Has she never heard of Karl Marx?

Some day in the future the real Bolsheviks of society will be recognized and identified as a good number of our daily papers. The lies retailed by these purveyors of the printed word in connection with religious persecutions in Russia have had a good run; we now read that the Holy Synod has given orders to celebrate the recognition of Soviet Russia by special thanksgiving services in all the subordinate churches. In this connection, also, Commander Kenworthy might realize that there is such a thing as being too clever.

The *Tribune* reminds us that in 1861 there were 25,000,000 serfs in Russia. This speaks well of progress under the holy Czars; and it should have given Mrs. Snowden something to think about before writing of Lenin with crape round her pen.

Enquiries show that £3,000,000 per year are derived from pew rents for the support of the clergy. Looking back across the ages this seems to be a very successful business concern that started on a capital of thirty shillings. And if any opponent of Christianity regards it in any other light than that of an organized business, he is conceding ground to a company that cannot satisfy Somerset House. It is a chartered company whose activities exploit the vast resources of human credulity, and its dividends are paid to those who regard man as a fallen creature and intend to keep him in that state.

In the *Times Literary Supplement* a book on agriculture entitled *Manuring of Grass Land for Hay* gets three lines of notice; a book on *Jeremiah*, of biblical fame, gets a column. The values appear to be somewhat mixed, but as reasonable beings we prefer a good butter supply in preference to anything that comes out of Jeremiah.

Mrs. Emma Owen, noble for ever and a day, died the other week, and the coroner returned a verdict of "death from natural causes." She starved herself in order to give food to her children. There is no shortage of food in the country; there is only a shortage of money in this Christian community. We would hope that Dean Inge might preach a sermon on this subject and give journalism (an overcrowded market) a rest.

A tramp in Derby, having forcibly fasted for a long period, died through ravenously eating bread. No one is responsible, but as Christianity is the official religion of the country, and God looks after sparrows, it is really a question of whether we get value for our money.



Faith, Hope and Joy are the virtues chosen by Dean Inge in his book entitled *Personal Religion and the Life of Devotion*. Carlyle once wrote: "Be men before attempting to be writers," and we suggest that the Dean might cultivate the virtues mentioned in relation to his fellow men instead of wanting to suppress bad ideas by force. His duty is to supplant bad ideas with better ones, and in this respect he might look to other sources than evening papers. He will find that there are many people quite as anxious about the real welfare of the world; and this without any hope of a future reward. This will be very difficult of comprehension to the Reverend Dean, who has spent much time in that world of bladders called mysticism; but we feel sure that he would see man in a better perspective if he would take off his gaiters.

The following letter appeared in the *Nottingham Guardian*, February 15:—

Sir, permit me to suggest that on Sunday Prayer be made in all places of worship to Almighty God for the cessation of foot-and-mouth disease amongst cattle. I believe this is the only remedy. I am, Sir, etc., J. Barratt, Cropwell Butler.

If Mr. Barratt believes prayer to be the only remedy for foot-and-mouth disease, why did he not suggest it before? He might go a step further and suggest that prayer be made to Almighty God for the cessation of all disease amongst men, women and children. Cases of cancer, tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia, etc., amount to a much greater sum than does an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease amongst cattle. But perhaps he is a cattle owner and is thinking of the monetary value of the cattle affected.

The late John Morley was the author of the excellent phrase "quackish fungoids." This may be applied to the pronouncement of the "Occult Committee of the Magic Circle." This impressive body states that it could give a perfectly simple explanation of Mr. Zancigs' performance, but it would not be fair to them. In an age when an official at the Victoria Underground Station gives 1,000 answers per day to enquiries, and when the number of flashlight advertisements approximates to the emptiness of the public's pocket, there is plenty of work for the Occult Committee to do. It might in its spare time explain how people starve to death in a Christian country, it might produce houses, and distinguish itself from the parent organization that has the heaven of monotony in one hand and the whip of hell in the other.

Mr. George Lansbury, M.P., whose sincerity no man questions, is an unconscious critic of Christianity, and, speaking at Sunderland about workhouses, where the Chaplain delivers his goods at so much per year, he made the following statement. The laughter and cheers are Greek to us but let that pass.

The workhouses of this country, however you administer them, can never be homes. You get up with a bell, have breakfast with a bell, prayers with a bell, supper with a bell, and when you are dead you also get a bell. (Laughter and cheers.)

The following advertisement appeared in the "Agony" column of the *Times*, February 14:—

The World's Need, making the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, King of each heart: thus Sin, that ruins all, is conquered here. "For God so loved the World, that He gave His only begotten Son, that Whosoever (anyone) believeth (trusteth or committeth to) in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life" (St. John iii. 16). He was the Great Sin-bearer, bearing Our sin. Let us accept, confess, and serve Him, the loving Almighty One—Now.

This advertisement occupies eight lines of space, not including the word "now," which commences a ninth line; and at the rate of five shillings per line would cost £2 5s. Is this the first instalment of a reprint of the New Testament in the daily press, with explanatory notes

on the meanings of such words as "whosoever" and "believeth," and are the reader's of the *Times* eagerly looking forward to the next one?

Dr. Hall, who is Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the General Theological Seminary, New York City, has completed a treatise in ten volumes on *Dogmatic Theology*. After this sample of mass production one begins to wonder if Theology is a by-product of the printing press. Anyway, a book's a book, although there's nothing in it, as Byron said; and for those of our readers who are not interested in ten volumes of this description, they might be pleased to know that Woolworth's, who do not deal in Dogmatic Theology, can supply at sixpence each *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Vicar of Wakefield*.

In a book of verse, *By Southern Rills*, Mr. G. L. Wheeler, states concisely one of those truths that are apparent to all those not humbugged by Christian pretensions:—

The beasts of the earth share the bounty of the field.  
In amity beneath the glowing sun,  
Together they roam the daisy-studded weald—  
*The Christian whets his sword and primes his gun!*

It is pointed out by a Japanese writer, Ushisaburo Kobayashi, in his book *War and Armament Taxes of Japan*, that Japanese war imports at present represent nearly 65 per cent. of the total revenue from taxation. The light that gleamed in Palestine and reached the shores of England is reflected to the land of the wild cherry-blossom, in the form of war material; the famous fishermen would have done better by staying at their original occupations.

We are told that 1923 was the worst year on record for accidents in the streets of London. The total reaches the number of 69,813. When the work of Freethought is finished, and mankind has time to breathe, and create a worthy goal on earth, these victims to speed, dividends, and bustle will be included in the count against a Christian civilization that could find nothing better to occupy its time than the prevention of Sunday games and smoking by little boys. We do not include the effective smoke screens created by Dean Inge; he will doubtless figure in comedy when a second Molière or Congreve is born whose expansive smile will dissipate the solemnity of the solemn, and take Christianity as read.

The Naval Correspondent of the *Daily News* appears to be very perturbed that this country is backward in conducting trials of bombing obsolete ships by aeroplane. Let this nautical gentleman be of good cheer; the next war will be the last, without any guarantees necessary from Mr. Lloyd George or clerical henchmen.

The Rev. J. S. Gibbs is one of the best-known sportsmen in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. He is a regular follower of the Badminton Hounds. By his title we feel sure that he is a professional follower of Him crucified, and no doubt the reverend gentleman is a party to the "bleeding" ceremony attending the disgusting spectacle of red-liveried and titled noodles hunting a fox.

Mr. Baldwin has remarked that certain people subscribed a guinea to the party funds and expected a Knighthood for it. This is getting dangerously near to the *Freethinker's* suggestion that the distinctions should be purchasable like dog licenses. And it is not surprising that in a country where it is preached that we are all equal in the sight of God, this superstition about titles is blatant, active, and thriving among a people that prides itself on being practical.



## 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. LAUDER.—Pleased to hear from you. It is cheering to hear from our readers in all parts of the world. We cannot hope to receive endowments on any such scale as the churches. It is enough, perhaps, to find ourselves still alive at the year's end.

J. P. CARTER.—Sorry we have not space for your letter in this issue. As there seems nothing new to add to the subject, we thing the discussion might well cease at this point. We also take the opportunity of impressing upon correspondents the necessity for being brief if we are to find room for the insertion of their letters.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. Lauder, £1.

GORDON SCOTT.—Papers received. Mr. Cohen is writing you.

H.R.—We have heard nothing of any arrangements for us to visit the place. But we should have no objection to making a tour of the Lancashire towns if suitable arrangements could be made. It would only need a few determined friends in each locality to make suitable arrangements.

*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.*

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*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.*

Ignorance is an escalator leading to the Halls of Cruelty and Suffering. On it sit Custom and Religion, Apathy and Obstruction, Terror and Intolerance, Credulity and Exploitation.—D. P. Stickells.

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen is compelled to ask the indulgence of his correspondents this week. He spent two days in bed last week, with as near a taste of what Christians promise Freethinkers in hell that he cares to get, and it was just a question of whether he would be able to get to Glasgow or not on Saturday. However, he managed to get there, and to pay a visit to dear old Mrs. Turnbull, whom he was pleased to find as bright and as cheerful as ever, and to get through the lectures on Sunday. The effort was worth the making, and Glasgow provided as usual good and thoughtful audiences which followed with the keenest appreciation what was said from the platform. But the three days absence from London, with a couple of days lying helpless, has made a sad wreck of the week, and there is a lot to pull up. But the lost ground will soon be recovered, and all's well that ends well.

To-day (March 2) is the anniversary of the opening of the Secular Hall, Leicester, and Mr. Cohen will be present, and speak. There will be other speakers, but as we have no list of their names we cannot announce them. But we shall expect to see Mr. Sydney Gimson among the number.

Some people have very lively imaginations. We see in a London booksellers catalogue a copy of *The Bible Handbook* (dated 1900), priced at 6s., with the note that it is scarce, and that "the last chapter, Bible Immoralities, Indecencies, and Obscenities could not be published to-day." We beg to assure the compiler of the list that any number of copies, cloth bound, can be purchased at this office at 2s. 6d. per copy, and that it will continue on sale so long as the Bible itself is issued.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture to-day (March 2) in the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road, Manchester. In the afternoon, at 3, he will speak on "How Christianity has Failed"; and in the evening on "Why Christianity has Failed." We hope to hear that the hall is well-filled on both occasions. It will be, if the Manchester friends all do their share in advertising the meetings.

The N.S.S. Executive are to be congratulated on the success of the Social gathering held at the Food Reform Restaurant, Farnival Street, on Friday last, when a varied and most enjoyable programme of music and dancing was presented. The chief items were the exquisite singing of Miss Muriel Farquhar and the powerful dramatic recitals of our good friend and willing helper, Mr. George Royle. Miss K. B. Kough also gave a spirited rendering of Tennyson's "Revenge." The humorous element was well represented by Miss Ray Vivien and Messrs. Fred Rome and Victor Hands. In the regrettable absence of the President, brief speeches were made by Messrs. George Royle and Victor Hands and Miss Vance; and the meeting closed with a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, a most efficient and amiable M.C., and to the artistes.

The following passages from the annual report of the Secular Education League will be of interest to our readers:—

Attention must be directed to the incident in regard to Catholic schools which took place in the House of Commons on May 2 last. Mr. T. P. O'Connor proposed, and Mr. Sidney Webb seconded, the following resolution, which, being put without formal discussion late at night, was passed without a division: "That the present system of imposing upon the Catholics of England the burden of building their own schools is contrary to religious and economic equality, and that the system of complete educational equality existing in Scotland should, with the necessary changes, be adopted in England." This motion, passed without opposition, will be quoted in support of the Catholic demand for special treatment in the matter of education, and it constitutes a danger to the future of education in this country. The Scottish Act provides that a sectarian school must be provided where any de-



nominal body demands it, and also that its religion should be taught therein, and all the teachers approved by it and its representatives given a perpetual "right of entry" to supervise the religious instruction. The Act states that the education authority "shall appoint as supervisor, without remuneration, of religious instruction for each such school a person approved as regards religious belief and character.....(by representatives of the Church or denominational body in whose interest the school has been conducted), and it shall be the duty of the supervisor so appointed to report to the education authority as to the efficiency of the religious instruction given in such school. *The supervisor shall have the right of entry to the school at all times set apart for religious instruction or observance.* The education authority shall give facilities for the holding of religious examinations in every such school." If this Scottish Act is accepted as the basis for legislation, and Parliament passes a similar measure for England and Wales, the nation will be committed to a policy of establishing for the teaching of religion small and perhaps inefficient schools on sectarian grounds alone. The Scottish Act violates religious equality, but the conditions existing in that portion of Scotland to which this motion refers are exceptional, owing to the importation of a population mainly of foreign Catholic workmen, and they cannot be regarded as affording any valid reason for imposing upon England, in the name of "religious equality," principles of legislation and methods of educational administration which are dangerous in themselves and subversive of those principles of religious equality which the League exists to promote.

We think this also will cast some light for many on the conditions obtaining in the States with regard to the Bible in the schools:—

The Committee, in their Report of last year, quoted the decision of the Appellate Court of San Francisco prohibiting the use of the Authorized Version of the Bible in the public schools of California on the ground that it was "a book of sectarian or denominational character within the meaning of the political code." Each of the United States of America makes its own educational laws, which are varied and conflicting. It may be useful, therefore, to give particulars of the methods adopted in some of them, for which the Committee are indebted to "The School Child and Juvenile Worker." Six States require that a portion of the Bible be read daily in their schools; in six others the law does not definitely require but permits it to be read; in nineteen other States and in the District of Columbia the law is silent on the subject, and the Bible is regarded as permissible. In five States whose laws make no specific provision the courts have given decisions favourable to Bible reading. The Michigan Supreme Court has held that the reading of the Bible stories that emphasized "moral precepts" was not unconstitutional if the reader made no comment and the pupils were permitted to absent themselves. In ten States the reading of the Bible at stated times is not permissible; in three States there are adverse Supreme Court decisions, and in seven States the educational authorities have excluded Bible reading. In New York there is no prohibition, but the commissioner of education has ruled adversely. The point of contest has been whether Bible reading from a particular version is sectarian. A Nebraska decision supports the view that the Bible itself is not excluded by that State's constitution, but that in the hands of "sectarian propagandists" its use may become illegal.

We take the present opportunity of commending the Secular Education League to the notice of our readers. One of these days the education question will be with us again, and unless there is strong pressure from the outside it is certain that the political parties in Parliament—whether Labour, Liberal, or Conservative—will be ready to buy the support of Church and Chapel, or Church or Chapel by arranging for a continuance of religious teaching in State schools. As we have so often said in this matter, we can only rely upon ourselves, it must fall to us to keep the principle of the Secularization of the State steadily before the public. There are scores of members of Parliament who believe in it, but we outside have got to make it safe for them to fight for it before they will do so.

We have received a brief note from Mrs. Edward Clodd informing us that Mr. Clodd had intended writing us further regarding the comments made by us on his letter

to the *Times*, but he is very unwell and has not yet been able to carry out his intention. We sincerely trust that Mr. Clodd will soon be better; whatever he wishes to say will lose nothing by this enforced delay.

Mr. O. Melton will be the lecturer for the Birmingham Branch to-day (March 2). He is taking for his subject "An Examination of the Law of the Survival of the Fittest," and the subject should prove interesting. The lecture will be in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street. We understand that the Birmingham Branch has arranged a further friendly discussion between the Rev. K. Rawlings and Mr. Clifford Williams.

Mr. A. B. Moss is lecturing this evening (March 2) for the West Ham Branch, at their hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park. His subject will be "Famous Freethinkers I have known"; and his reminiscences should prove interesting to the new generation of Freethinkers.

### The Inglorious Gospel of Gammon.

Let me see wherein  
My tongue hath wrong'd him : if it do him right,  
Then he hath wrong'd himself ; if he be free,  
Why, then, my taxing like a wild goose flies,  
Unclaim'd of any man.

FOR long enough defenders of the Christian Faith have been sorely strained in their appalling task of apologetics. Only the Christian sect of the world's religion needs such a thing; and it is characteristic of Christians that they *do* need it. It has been defined as: "That branch of theology by which Christians are enabled scientifically to justify and defend the peculiarities of their faith, and to answer its opponents." The "peculiarities" are more than evident. In fact, the measure of their Christian faith is the measure of the peculiarities of these peculiar people. That name should *not* be confined to one small section of the Christian sect. But, while the queer notions in the queer faith of these queer folk are so obvious, the science is more than hard to find. The "justification" is harder still to see—they are better at "justification by faith" than by science. The "answers to their opponents" elude our earnest and sincere search most of all; they can answer JeHoVaH in prayer very much more easily than they can answer rational opponents in debate. Godly dialect gives them more satisfaction than human dialectic.

At the present time Christian apologetics are more threadbare than ever; while the threads of their apologies are more attenuated and tangled. The apologetic stretching has gone far beyond the limits of recovery. Christian faith, as well as Christian apologetics, have been elastic, indeed—as elastic as the Christian conscience—but that elasticity is not as infinite as their God of gods. It fails—even as their gods have failed. The fact that their apologies have often been mutually contradictory is amusing, instructive, and (to the rational) satisfactory. "Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh." Some might say that such irreconcilable apologies from rival Christians are an insult to human intelligence; but "two negatives make an affirmative"—and contradictory apologies signify defeat. Charles Bradlaugh utilized this principle well in his *Freethinkers' Handbook* when he made a ring in which the "a posteriori" and the "a priori" apologists for God knocked each other out. Cardinal Newman, in his *Apologia*, metaphorically "chucked up the sponge" when he admitted that reason knows not God. Faith is necessary for that. Faith in the Roman Catholic section of the sect. What an apology—after some 1,500 odd years of the Christian form of religion!



They apologized for the (two different) creation stories—by cursing evolution and evolutionists in vulgar, reckless, and unlimited abuse. Then they further apologized—by accepting evolution, reluctantly and ungracefully. They apologized for the fall of man—by blaming it on the Devil. In turn, they apologized for God's own creation—His Satanic Majesty—by styling him the personification of evil. Presumably they forget to apologize for God—as the dubious personification of doubtful and varying good. They apologized for the existence of evil in God's own world—by postulating the absurd idea of Free-Will; that is, *uncaused* volition. According to that amusing hypothesis, human conduct is a terrific jumble of effects without causes—but not without curses. They apologized for the Christian hell—by converting it into a state of the mind; thus robbing Atheists and other Freethinkers of the prospect of meeting the great and good, who were said to be in that warm abode of intellect. The much more needed apology for the Christian heaven is not yet forthcoming; though, when one thinks of the "music" made on Jews' Harps, such apology ought to be noised abroad. Catholics have apologized for the murder of Ferrer—by admitting (last year) that he was *not guilty*. They have apologized for burning Bruno and persecuting Galileo—by abandoning the flat earth and recognizing other planets. They have apologized for the *Index*—by putting Anatole France's name in it; and for their Bible—by revising it, at long last. Other Christians, by turning Prohibitionist, have apologized for Christ turning water into strong liquor—when the guests had already had enough. They apologized for the Christian conception of woman as an inferior and a vicious snare of the Devil, by accepting woman suffrage—after the women had won it for themselves. They have apologized for Christ's treatment of "His" mother—by instituting "Mother's Day." For Christ's and St. Paul's disapproval of marriage they apologized—by urging marriage and large families. Many of them are now apologizing for *that*—by advocating birth-control: and they apologize for Christ's recommendation of self-mutilation—by favouring the use of positive checks. For once they agree with a Freethinker—Robert Burns—when he wrote:—

"Na, na," quo' I, "I'm no for that,  
Gelding's nae better than 'tis ca't."

They apologize for the coarseness of the marriage service, by excising the worst parts—after they had been told by Freethinkers, many times, so to do. They apologize for Christ's conduct on the Sabbath—by passing "Blue laws" to prevent others doing as Christ is said to have done. They have apologized for "His" insufficient knowledge and poor morality—by saying that he had to suit "Himself" to the times in which he lived. Were he reincarnated in New York to-day, he would have to suit himself to the New York *Times*! They have apologized for the miracles—by seeking natural explanations.

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?  
Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.

And they *might* have apologized for the mistakes of Moses—by pointing out that when Moses was inspired to take down JeHoVaH's dictation he had neither vowel nor vowel-points, no punctuation marks, and no spacing, on his typewriter. One long string of consonants looks as bad as it must sound—if it could be sounded. A sermon by the Christian Kaiser in a Lutheran Church would be melodious in comparison. Possibly this is the explanation of the thunders on Sinai. In any case, various "renderings" of the revelation are possibly by the (more or less) judicious insertion of vowels, spaces, commas, periods, and paragraphs. A special and enlarged number of the *Freethinker* would be necessary merely to catalogue the

almost innumerable, variegated, contradictory, and absurd apologies that Christians have made for their religion.

In religion,  
What damned error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it and approve it with a text.

Life is too short, and too full of worth-while food for thought, for us to waste our time on that. In social life people who are always apologizing are likely to be disliked—and dropped. So it is with the Christian religion. The continuous (though changing) apologetic of the Christian, causes the Christian religion to-day to be rejected and despised by an ever-growing number of men and women.

In actual practice many Christians have quietly given up their gods—for whom so many apologies have been made. The hosts of Wholly Ghosts have been replaced by a real belief in the Gospel of Gammon. Great is the power of Gammon, which sanctifies the kingdom of Mammon. *God is Mammon*; and *Mammon is God*. There is nothing ghostly in *that* belief. It is ghastly rather than ghostly. It *has* been said that you cannot serve both God and Mammon; but it has also been said that with God all things are possible; so Gammon, always rife in the Christian religion, now reigns supreme. Gammon is the essence of Christian apologetics; and Mammon is its substance.

Last of all—but by no means least as a symptom of the passing of the parson—they are apologizing for themselves. They apologize for their own existence. They urge that they are *some* use, anyhow, in some way. They may wear black clothes; but they are not (quite) as black as they are painted. The girl apologizes for her baby—by saying it was a little one. So the apologists for the Black Army assert that they are a little use. One reverend gentleman has suggested the appointment of parsons who would earn their living by honest, useful work. They would be parsons as a sort of spare-time employment. If there were no loaves and fishes, no positions or dignities, probably there would be no rush of recruits to those labour battalions of the Black Army. As a hobby, if it were not lucrative, it would not flourish long.

Others apologize for their superstition and their supernatural powers by devoting most of their time to "social service," politics, lecturing, writing, or to some other remunerative work. They try hard to justify this existence by some Secular activity. Besides, it is all very well to *preach* a Gospel of humility and poverty; but, when one is a miraculously appointed representative on earth of Omnipotence plus Omniscience, the extra earnings come in very useful to keep up appearances. "Why, nothing comes amiss, so money comes withal." Here, again, they are a danger to society. They have been a curse to humankind in the past, with their other worlds (for others), their heavens, and their hells (after you die). Only active Freethought can prevent them doing more mischief, when they introduce their Gammon into the economic sociological, and political affairs of this country, this continent, this world. Let them return to their fabled "there and then." We neither need nor desire them with their Gammon in the "Here and Now." The forces of Freethought, Reason, and Knowledge alone can solve our problems. Freethought has defeated Christian Gammon in the past in hard and long-drawn-out battle. The long, long trail of Christian apologies marks the victorious march of Freethought. Even if that Gammon becomes rasher, Freethought can still devour it. Therefore, let the apologies continue.

Let it work;  
For 'tis the sport to have the enginer  
Hoist with his own petar.

ATHOS ZENO.



## Chats with Children.

### ABOUT "CONVERSION."

THERE are many things which young people take much more seriously than grown-up folk. Often a problem, a difficulty, a puzzle faces us at school or amongst our young friends which we young ones have to think out alone. Parents cannot always help. They know too much, or too little, to understand just how the young feel.

To be laughed at is almost a tragedy to some of us. Perhaps when we are old when we have boys and girls of our own, we too shall laugh at some of the sacred things of our youth. We cannot always believe this while our troubles last.

This fact is all the more curious, because youth laughs much more than any other age. If we cannot "walk on air" in the days of our youth, when there is so much joy and music and beauty in life, how can we hope to be cheerful when everything is grey at its best; dark, indeed, at its worst?

Perhaps it is this contrast of a rare seriousness against a background of mirth which makes youth resent the light-hearted way in which older people dismiss youth's problems as trivial. In these occasional moments when life seems to stand still, waiting for a boy to decide, waiting for a girl to declare herself, what we want is understanding. If we cannot have that, leave us alone.

The wise parent realizes this. A sensible father does not laugh when a child begins to talk about "conversion."

"Conversion" does not happen to every child. Even some famous Christians (like Dean Inge) have never known this crisis in life. On the other hand, many who are now Freethinkers have felt and thought what Christians regard as the "call of God."

At a certain age, in the case of many children there is a sort of "awakening." One feels suddenly that life is not simply a garden of roses. Most of us awake very early to the fact that there are some very ugly blemishes, evil patches, and unfruitful trees. But, unless we are to remain ignorant children all our lives, it is better to have a sudden awakening to knowledge than never to know what life really is.

What is called "conversion" is no fiction which priests have invented. It is a very real and widespread happening. Priests and religious sects have taken advantage of this crisis in a child's life. That is the only part which priests have in the matter.

It is deep-seated in our nature, and there never was a more stupid use of a word than to call this "conversion." Some day I hope you will read the scientific explanation of this "time of awakening."

Such a time is the very worst of all times to ask children to make vows, or to "dedicate" themselves to a creed. It is the best time imaginable to begin to study. The most successful kind of study is the study which is based on a desire to learn and know.

A baby in arms looks at the stars and cries for the moon. The time comes when we are no longer content to admire the sun, to wonder at the sea, to shudder at earthquakes. We begin to want to know what the sun is, why the sea rolls, and how earthquakes happen. It was a revelation to me to know that all these things could be explained and that there were books telling me much more than this.

The reason why grown-up people laugh when their children reach the stage I have been talking about is simply this: "Conversion" consists in taking a child at this serious crisis into a dark room called a church, and there telling the child untrue and usually ugly things about God, Heaven and Hell.

We must change all that.

If our parents do not take us we must go ourselves, not into a dark church but into the open sunlight. We must look on the wonders of the world with a desire to understand them. We must seek the best teachers and the best books—but we must bring with us the love of knowledge, and a patient will to learn.

It is not true that "ignorance is bliss." When you are really awakened to the value of knowledge you will understand that joy and laughter are a help, not a hindrance to wisdom. The enemies of human happiness would like "conversion" to extinguish all that makes for the true delight of mankind.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

## The Erudition of Mr. Aldous Huxley.

MR. HUXLEY, in his novel *Antic Hay*, has written a clever and diverting book. The cleverness is undeniable. This young author, I should imagine, knows everything; especially those things that perhaps he ought not to know. A stream of esoteric condition flows stanchlessly (to use his favourite expression) through his pages. Passages in Latin, German, French and Italian sparkle like stars in his resplendent sky of English prose. If at times one is reminded of Remy de Gourmont, M. Anatole France, and Mr. James Joice, perhaps Mr. Huxley will forgive what is, after all, a rather soft impeachment.

Persons with strong literary stomachs will enjoy digesting this singular book, but finical moralists are warned that they are like to be upset by such diet. The subject lends itself to audacious treatment, for, as Mr. Huxley tells us on the second page of his book, "My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns, shall with their goat feet dance the antic hay." To be perfectly frank, his women can manage the measure equally well. Mrs. Viveash, Zoe, and Rosie, in their various modes can execute the antic hay as gracefully as Mr. Gunbril junior, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Shearwater or Mr. Mercaptan. The last-named gentleman is a writer of exquisite "middles" in the weekly journals, a connoisseur of the works of Crébillon fils, and for whose name his creator appears to have been indebted to some volume on organic chemistry, unless, indeed, we are supposed to see here a rather cryptic joke. For "mercaptan" means, as the chemistry book tells us, "mercurium aptans," which perhaps may be not so unfitting a name for one whose manner of living would tend to expose him to the necessity of periodically absorbing considerable quantities of compounds of quicksilver.

Nearly all Mr. Huxley's characters wear the air of having been lifted from the pages of the *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*. Mrs. Viveash was perhaps unfortunate in having her young lover blown to pieces by a German shell in France; but her attempts at recapturing with others the first rosy raptures of love rather reminds one of those interesting women of whom much may be learned from a perusal of such volumes as E. Stekel's, i.e., *Geschlechtskälte der Frau*.

But Mr. Huxley's *pièce de résistance* is unquestionably Mr. Coleman, a thoroughly disagreeable and, indeed, disgusting person. He is an unpleasant compound of the Marquis de Sade and Felicien Rops, Mr. Coleman, like his creator, is a great Latin scholar. Mr. Huxley makes Mr. Coleman put his Latin to a distinctly peculiar use. He reads the early Christian Fathers for their scatological invective against woman. It is a matter of idle curiosity perhaps, but I find myself wondering if Mr. Huxley happened to light upon the words of the good Saint Odo of Cluny in the course of his doubtless profound reading, or whether he ob-



tained a hint from Mr. Havelock Ellis, who in the Sixth Volume of his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* gives in plain English what Mr. Huxley is thoughtful enough to wrap up in the decent obscurity of a learned tongue.

However, our author lavishes more flowers of his erudition on the worthless Mr. Coleman. This time it is not a question of little-known Latin. It is an unusual matter of art.

"Over Mr. Coleman's mantlepiece," we are told, "there was pinned a large photographic reproduction of Leonardo's *Anatomy of Love*. It may very well be wondered where Mr. Coleman obtained this picture, for it is not usually sold, I believe, with the other reproductions of the master's works. But perhaps it does not matter very much. Mr. Huxley, we must imagine, is writing for a very cultured audience, and the reference has served its purpose. We now know that Mr. Huxley is conversant with at least one of the three German works that happen to reproduce this picture. We will hazard the guess that our author saw it either in Ploss and Bartels *Das Weib*, or in the more recent brochure of Freud's, called *Eine Kindheitserinnerung der Leonardo da Vinci*, published in Vienna. Those of my readers who have seen this drawing of Leonardo's will know what kind of art appealed to Mr. Coleman, to whose mind one is almost tempted to apply the good St. Odo's favourite synonym for women. The curious reader will find the phrase in Mr. Huxley's book: "Do you believe in God," said Mr. Coleman to his mistress, Mrs. Rosie Shearwater, "Not m—much," was the reply.

But Mr. Coleman did believe in God. The Diety introduced significance into his sins. It is a matter worth reflection to note that some of the most vigorous exponents of the erotic, the blasphemous and the horrible ended their lives in the bosom of the Holy Catholic Church. Aubrey Beardsley, J. K. Huysmans, Oscar Wilde and Barbey D'Aurevilly were far from being model Freethinkers. Perhaps one day we shall hear Mr. Huxley himself singing *Nunc dimittis*. At all events, he already knows a lot of Latin.

For a Christian, perhaps the most terrible pictures ever conceived were drawn by Felicien Rops. For the sceptic, however, Rops has little sting. The dreadful and the nauseating merely succeed in being at worst the pathological. Mr. Coleman himself is but an example of the regression to the infantile.

Whether such characters should be put into novels is a doubtful point. For my part I think the *Journal for Abnormal Psychology* is the proper place in which to meet Mr. Coleman and persons like him.

M. Anatole France has said somewhere that we should bring to the interpretation of life, pity and irony. Mr. Huxley has the irony. But where is the pity? Is life nothing but an *Antic Hay*? There are hints that Mr. Huxley has glimpses of better things; of love that is noble and chaste (I am thinking of the delightful and unfortunate Emily), of friendship that can rise to the altruism of Mr. Gumbriel senior. Moreover, Mr. Huxley does not altogether smile benignly upon Mr. Porteous' prodigal son.

I have said enough, I hope, to send all persons who like books such as this to Mr. Huxley's *Antic Hay*. They will not be disappointed by the most distinguished of our younger novelists.

W.H.

"I have read the disputes between Thwackum and Square; the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday the savage; and I am now employed in reading the controversy in *Religious Courtship*." "Very well," cried I, "that's a good girl; I find you are perfectly qualified for making converts; and so go help your mother to make the gooseberry pie."

## Correspondence.

### "THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOST."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The letter of Mr. J. P. Carter (*Freethinker*, February 17) has drawn my attention to another letter, which appeared in the *Freethinker* for February 3, from Mr. W. Power. This I had overlooked, but I hope my oversight has not been too irritating to Mr. Power, who, I am afraid, is entirely wrong in charging me with having confounded "Holy Thursday" with "Maundy Thursday."

Unless my reading has been to no purpose, Maundy Thursday is Holy Thursday in the Roman Catholic Church; and the fact of Ascension Day being Holy Thursday in the Church of England does not alter matters for the Roman Catholic.

If Mr. W. Power will again glance at the fourth of my articles, on "The Myth of Resurrection," he will find that in the ceremony which I describe the host is the symbolic dead god, during the time it represents the buried Jesus (or Saturn); that is prior to and up to the moment when the resurrection of the god is supposed to take place. Why have a dramatic representation of the death, burial, and resurrection of a saviour-god, if he is believed not to have been dead at all? Mr. Power would do well not to get irritated. He would then probably read more carefully.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

### "VICTORIA THE VIRTUOUS."

SIR,—Queen Victoria and her husband were not quite so pious and narrow minded as the clever article on the subject in your current number represents. In the *Life of Sir Wm. Vernon Harcourt*, published recently, it is stated that Queen Victoria had no missionary propensities; on the contrary, she thought them very troublesome people, and as Empress of India she pronounced a warm encomium on the Mohammedan religion.

According to the *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, the Prince Consort was a German rationalist who rejected the miraculous. One does not require the intellect of Immanuel Kant to know that missionaries are a nuisance and miracles impossible, but, on the principle of giving the devil his due, we ought to give royalty its rights. Two of Queen Victoria's daughters, the Empress Frederick and Princess Alice, both personally estimable, were complete freethinkers and very intimate with D. F. Strauss. The Queen's uncle, the Duke of Sussex, was an advanced thinker and the friend of Godfrey Higgins and other intellectuals of the period.

The late Empress Elizabeth of Austria, wife of Francis Joseph, was a freethinker. She translated Schopenhauer into modern Greek. Your contributor, "Mimnermus," should write an instructive article on "Royal Rationalists."

J. STEVENS.

### THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS.

SIR,—I have just met with Mr. J. T. Lloyd's article in your issue of February 3, in which he expresses "great delight to find that Mr. Robertson, in his latest work on the subject, does not use the nebulous argument based on the alleged pre-Christian existence of a Jewish cult of Jesus as Sun-God." This surprises me. Mr. Lloyd refers in flattering terms to my *Historical Jesus* (1916), which was a survey of the defensive positions. But in *The Jesus Problem* (1917) the myth-theory is re-stated, so to say, "up to date"; and there the thesis of the pre-Christian Jesus is compendiously set forth.

By dismissing the manifold argument on this thesis as "nebulous," without an attempt at examination or confutation, Mr. Lloyd, I fear, is playing into the hands of the obscurantists. Apart from that theory, there is no constructive explanation of the emergence of Christism at all.

J. M. ROBERTSON.

There is no purpose to the Universe, and therefore no Riddle. Man and his species, as a part of the Universe, also have no ultimate aim or purpose.—*The Grammar of Life*.



### As Others See Us.

THE editor of the London *Freethinker* resists the solicitations of friends that he change the name of his paper to something less obnoxious to the religious world. One enquires, "Why label such an invigorating tonic 'poison,' and set everyone right off against tasting it?" In an article of considerable length, Editor Cohen gives cogent reasons against taking a different label, among them this: "Had the *Freethinker* called itself by some other name—and followed the same policy—it would by this time have aroused the same antagonism." That prediction is fulfilled in the experience of the *Truth Seeker*, a name bestowed upon this paper by the wife of its founder, who was a rather timid and unaggressive little lady. The name has answered well enough, but has gained it no favour with the orthodox or conservatives. It has occasionally served as an invitation to eccentrics with world-saving theories or demonstrations to submit their output for publication, with the formula: "Noting that your paper is named the *Truth Seeker*, I assume that you welcome truth from whatever source," etc., and then a new and symbolic or esoteric or numerical interpretation of the Bible is offered, or something like that. (As we write, a visitor appears, who, observing that this is the *Truth Seeker*, solicits space to develop the truth about the question of the Virgin Birth, for which he has a spiritual interpretation. He asks only for support while so increasing the circulation of the paper with his contributions that it can afford him a large salary. He departs under the conviction, doubtless, that the paper is misnamed.) The name has moved others, imagining they have detected in its columns some error or misstatement, to write *Truth Seeker* with an interrogation mark, in parenthesis, after Truth or after Seeker (?), which punctuation is supposed by its user to be sarcastic, ironical, and of biting wit. (In our experience it has caused many communications to be dropped into the waste basket without trial.) The innocuous name may have been a help, but there is no certainty of that. On the other hand, its want of definiteness has been alleged as an obstacle to sales. One seeing it for the first time might pass it by as a religious paper. Our Mr. Smith, who undertook to sell the paper on the streets, said he made no impression on passers-by by calling out its name; but when he provided himself with a placard marked "Atheist Weekly" he began to get results. The logical name for a successor to the *Freethinker* would be the *Atheist*. For us there would be a certain "kick" in issuing a magazine named the *Infidel*.—The *Truth Seeker* (New York).

Jacques Loeb, M.D. Strasb.

(From the "Lancet.")

DR. J. LOEB, head of the Division of Physiology in the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, New York, died at Hamilton, Bermuda, on February 12, in his 66th year. He was born in Berlin in 1859. He studied medicine at Berlin, Munich and Strasburg. In 1891 he went to the U.S.A. as professor of biology at Bryn Mawr College. Subsequently he was professor of physiology, first at Chicago and afterwards at California University. In 1910 he was appointed head of the Department of Experimental Biology at the Rockefeller Institute. His published works include *The Comparative Physiology of the Brain* (1900), *The Dynamics of Living Matter* (1906), *The Mechanistic Conception of Life* (1912) and *Artificial Parthenogenesis and Fertilization* (1913). The *Lancet* says respecting the last work: "In this monograph he described step by step the evolution of his ideas on the subject, as the result of his initial experiments on the eggs of sea urchins. His work, along with that of Délagé in France and others, showed indisputably that in a number of invertebrates—echinoderms, worms, molluscs and some insects—it was possible to produce parthogenetic development through treatment by various chemical and physical means, although the exact nature of the stimulus required could not be determined."

### 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.): 8, E. C. Saphin, "Christian Art and Ritual" (Lantern Lecture). The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate, "Is Christianity a Delusion?" Affirmative, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe; Negative, Mr. G. H. Everett.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. Van Biene, "Chloroform—Its Utility and Antidotes."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, R. A. Price, "The Need for an Ethical Economic System."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, "A Century of Political Evolution."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Upton Labour Party Hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park, E.13): 7, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Famous Freethinkers I Have Known."

#### OUTDOOR.

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

#### COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. O. Melton, "An Examination of the Law of the Survival of the Fittest."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 6.30, Mr. John MacArthur, "Christianity and War." (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, Lowerhead Row): 7, Debate between Councillor H. Clay and Mr. Jack Nickolls, "Socialism v. Communism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 43rd Anniversary of the Opening of the Secular Hall, 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, and a Special Programme.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Amalgamated Engineering Union Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): Mr. R. H. Rosetti, 3, "How Christianity has Failed"; 6.30, "Why Christianity has Failed."

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

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