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Views and Opinions.

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Cackle About Christ.

During the war everyone knows that newspaper comments were standardised. Such articles as were permitted to appear had to be of a certain kind, and so far was this carried out that skeleton sermons were provided for parsons and skeleton articles for journalists. Both were allowed to fill in the gaps with harmless generalities, but the same things were said by each. In reading articles on religion which are permitted to appear in the newspapers it is quite evident that the same process of standardisation is at work. If an article is published on religion, no matter what it may say in certain directions, we may be quite sure that certain things will not be omitted. The writer will not omit to express his “reverence” for the religious beliefs of the rest of the world, he will declare that he would like to believe in the religion of Christianity if he were not so desperately honest, he will confess his faith in a kind-of-a-sort-of-a-something which does duty for what other people call God, above all he will not forget to profess his great admiration for the ideal Christ, and for the splendid morality of the Gospels. The more he disbelieves in the special doctrines of Christianity the thicker he will lay on the gush about Jesus. If he does not do this, his articles would never appear. In fact, I question whether there is a newspaper in Britain sufficiently independent and courageous enough to publish a straightforward attack on fundamental religious beliefs. There are, of course, plenty who would, and could, write such an article, but they would never be allowed to figure in our liberty-loving press. So I ask whether there is a paper in this country that would publish a straightforward attack on religious beliefs written by an avowed and representative unbeliever? I do not know of one. Does anybody else?

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One-Sided Controversy.

Now that, really, is one of my fundamental criticisms of the series of articles which were published by the *Daily Express*. They were standardised. No thorough-going Freethinker was allowed a look in. The writers were all in agreement that there might be a God—some were quite certain of it—but they did not know what he was like, what he did, or what

the deuce he existed for. And they, of course, all were very greatly impressed by the moral teachings of Jesus, and by the figure of Christ. Mr. Arnold Bennett would not care to assert that Christ was not the greatest man that ever lived, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle found the “Christ figure” more beautiful and understandable than ever. Quite naturally the clergy who commented on the articles seized on this as a splendid testimony to them and their religion. That was to be expected. For, after all, the only genuine thing that emerges from all this is that Jesus Christ is the figurehead of an established religion, and so long as that figurehead is paraded as the greatest character that ever lived, or the greatest moral teacher the world has seen, the clergy feel fairly happy. On the one side they have a hold on those who value Jesus Christ as the divine sacrifice for their sins, and on the other side, if people will not accept that stupid superstition, but will accept him as the greatest figure that ever lived, they can count on their not doing very much to disturb him. If they do not catch them on the religious issue they do on the moral one. What is lost on the swings is made up on the roundabouts. The publicist saves his face by professing admiration for the human Jesus, the parson uses the testimony to the human Jesus to keep alive the belief in the superhuman Christ. Deep calls unto deep—or shall we say that clap-trap calls aloud to balderdash?

* * *

Old Wine in New Vessels.

Now the character of the *man* Jesus of the New Testament is not at all an uncommon one. The wandering mendicant preacher, telling all men to be good, and carrying as a stock-in-trade a number of well-known moral commonplaces, is quite a well known figure in the East. And the incarnate God, calling all men to believe in him, and punishing them if they will not, is a common figure in the mythology of religion. What Christianity did was to combine the teaching saviour, and the saviour-god in the one person. But there is admittedly—among those who know—nothing new in (a) the fact of a teaching saviour, (b) a saviour god, (c) a combination of two religious figures. In the history of mythology this is constantly taking place, and is taking place to-day. Why then this constant harping on the figure of Jesus Christ—of whose very existence there is no positive proof, and whose character is quite clearly a hotch-potch from a number of different sources? If these people who gush about Jesus are genuinely and intelligently in love with certain moral teachings attributed to the New Testament Jesus there is no need for them to make their value dependent upon the belief in a mythological personage. That is only to help confuse the already sufficiently confused intelligence of the general public and to play the game of the Churches in making the value of a moral precept depend upon the acceptance of the reality of a piece of religious mythology. It would be far better to help clarify the moral sense of the public by insisting that ethical precepts rest for their value

upon social and individual grounds and are quite independent of any personality or profession of religion.

* * *

Some Sins of Omission.

Most of the *Express* writers, and most of those Labour leaders—and even many of the clergy who to-day praise Jesus, do so on the ground of his alleged value as a social and moral reformer. The religious side of him is quietly dropped. The clergy are content if you will accept him on any ground whatever, and the rest appear to be satisfied if they save their face with the respectable public. But if there are two things quite clear in connection with the New Testament Jesus it is that he had not the slightest conception of the nature of morality, as such, and no special interest in it, and that his interest in social reform was absolutely nil. He did not recognize, with Confucius the social nature of morality, nor with Buddha its causative character. And I confidently say that anyone would have a better conception of the nature of morals after reading Aristotle's *Ethics*, or Plato's *Republic*, than they would after a life's study of the teachings of Jesus. There is with him no conception of the use of morality save to gain a supernaturally given reward or to avoid a supernaturally inflicted punishment. And the logical deduction from this was the frightful teaching of St. Paul that if there be no resurrection from the dead then good conduct is waste of time. That idea, based upon the attitude of Jesus, is still common with Christian preachers, and with those who are infected with Christian teaching. It is supernaturalism or nothing. In sociology there is the same fault to be found. Slavery was passed by unnoticed. Non-resistance was encouraged. To take no thought for the morrow was the general counsel, leaving it to God who looks after the birds of the air to look after man who is so much more valuable. I have had it pointed out to me that Jesus showed his sympathy with the poor when he declared that the labourer was worthy of his hire. My informants ignored the fact that when Jesus is reported as saying this it was to justify his mendicant followers taking meat and drink from any house at which they rested.

* * *

Intelligence versus Piety.

On the intellectual side there is no evidence that Jesus was the equal of Mohammed, while there is positive proof that he was in marked inferiority to Buddha. Toleration, which has been so marked a feature of Buddhism, wherever established, was foreign to the spirit of both Jesus and his followers. Surrounded by all kinds of superstitions he accepted all, and protested against none. Scientific or religious they were easily swallowed. In the pagan world, which appears to have been as completely outside his purview as Hegelianism is outside the mentality of a Salvation Army street preacher, there was in existence a marked development against the crude Demonism and Supernaturalism of the lower religious world. Jesus swallowed it all, and gave by his Demonism a sanction to that frightful reign of terrorism, brutality, and superstition which for centuries disgraced the European world. By his example he sanctioned the unclean virtue of celibacy, and so played his part in the racial brutalization which resulted from its adoption as one of the leading religious virtues. Even religiously he moved on a lower level than could be found in parts of the pagan world. For there can be no question that the many forms of savage superstition which revived with the establishment of Christianity were in process of disappearance with the better educated pagan religious teachers.

Creating an Ideal.

What, then, do people mean when they talk of Jesus as a supreme example for mankind, and praise his ideal character? I do not question that one can, if one cares to, make an ideal character of him. But then so could they of anyone else. If one rejects all told of a man of which they disapprove, leave out of sight altogether his intellectual and moral limitations, ignore the influence he has exerted for harm, and count only the testimony of those who say he has influenced them for their good, take what he says and read a meaning into it in terms of what commands a fair measure of public support, ignoring altogether the plain meaning of the context, do all this and you can make a perfectly admirable teacher of the New Testament Jesus. But so you could of anyone else that one cares to select. And, after all, it is not this moralizing, socializing Jesus that existed for the early generations of Christians. It was the supernatural being who was to give them safety in the next world in whom they believed. The other Jesus did not exist for them, and if he had existed they would not have been in the least interested in him. They, at least, were not to be misled by a handful of moral commonplaces with which they were perfectly familiar. The ethical Jesus was a creation of a recent date, when supernaturalism was losing its hold on the people, and the churches began to feel that they must somehow or the other bring their Jesus up to date.

* * *

Jesus as an Advertisement.

I have not by any means exhausted all that might be said against the New Testament figurehead, only outlined part of the case against him. But when one talks about Jesus as being a great example, one is surely justified in asking which Jesus? Do they mean Jesus the Demonist, the celibate, Jesus the believer in morals as being no more than a debtor and creditor account with some supernatural bogey, Jesus who believed in insanity as being caused by devils, in the power of "My name" to cure disease, the acceptor and propagator of the crudest of superstitions? I do not dispute the existence of an ideal Jesus—I am only doubtful of the existence of a real one. The ideal Jesus has always been whatever one cared to make him. When witch-finders were busy burning old women in Europe and America, they found the warranty for belief in demonic intercourse in the New Testament. When the Church upheld celibacy as the greatest of ideals, the most perfect form of life, it found its example in Jesus. When in the political world the English people were struggling against the tyranny of the Stuarts it was the non-resisting Jesus the Church held up as an example to the revolutionists. When the struggle against slavery set in, it was to the New Testament that the upholders of slavery turned for encouragement. Since then we have had Jesus as the advocate of any and every kind of political nostrum that one cares to advocate. He is a rank Conservative, a rabid anarchist, and a fiery Socialist, a moderate Liberal, anything and everything that one cares to make him. And what on earth is the use of a character that can be turned about in this way? What sort of a guide is it that sends each one who comes to him in a different direction? The one thing that clearly emerges from all this is that Jesus is the figurehead of an established religion. That religion must keep him to the front, at least in name. The people are still in leading strings to the Church, and all kinds of publicists imagine they can promote their cause by using his name. The man who sells blacking or whisky to the King finds it a good stroke to advertise that he supplies the Royal Family. There are always

enough weak-minded people about who will take that as a recommendation, and it will help to sell his goods. The man with a social nostrum for disposal tries the same kind of dodge. If he could advertise himself as purveyor to the Royal Household he would do so. As he cannot do this he falls back on Jesus. But social advocacy is not quite the same thing as selling blacking or whisky. It does not matter very much what kind of blacking one uses or what kind of whisky one drinks, and the mentality of those who use them matters still less. But the spirit and the temper in which one takes up with a social doctrine does matter very much. For social progress depends ultimately upon the intellectual temper that one brings to bear upon the work before one. Social and moral truths are not, after all, dependent upon our acceptance as a guide of an ignorant Galilean peasant who may or may not have lived some two thousand years ago. It depends upon truths that have been hammered out in the experience of the race, and it is only as we bring that truth home to the masses of the people that we save them from becoming the cats-paws of vote-catching politicians or time-serving theologians.

* * *

I had intended concluding this series of notes in this issue, but I find there are yet one or two things that needs to be said, and I dare not take up greater space this week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Biographical Problem.

William Robertson Nicoll: Life and Letters. By T. H. Darlow. Hodder & Stoughton. Price 10s. 6d. net.

NICOLL was a many-sided man, whose interests were numerous and often seemingly contradictory. First we will consider him as a journalist, literary critic, and publicist, in which three capacities he achieved phenomenal success. In 1884 he was appointed editor of the *Expositor*, a theological monthly magazine. In June, 1886, he came up to London and finally settled down, first at Norwood and afterwards at Bay Tree Lodge, Hampstead, and in November, the same year, the *British Weekly* made its appearance, with Nicoll as its inspirer and editor. This was called a venture of faith—faith almost exclusively in the ability of the editor to convert it into a paying concern, a faith which ultimately proved itself to have been abundantly justified. Nicoll was fully aware of the enormous difficulties that attended the undertaking, as is shown by the fact that for months prior to the appearance of the first issue he had been appealing to eminent Scotsmen, such as Marcus Dods and Henry Drummond, for their active co-operation. Writing to the former he said:—

The mortality among magazines this year is frightful. The following are dead, or die in the year: *Interpreter*, *British Quarterly*, *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, *Clergyman's Magazine*, *Congregationalist*. In all these cases but one the death is due simply to editorial carelessness and incapacity.

With Nicoll capacity carried with it the utmost carefulness. Mr. Darlow says:—

The editor's characteristic interests showed themselves in a series of "New Literary Anecdotes," which included unpublished letters by Lord Macaulay and George Eliot, and reproduced an unpublished pencil-sketch of Anne Bronte by her sister Charlotte.

The biographer says further:—

The novel feature of the paper which arrested public attention was to announce the results of

a new religious census of London. This enumerating of worshippers in all the churches and chapels of the metropolis had been carried out simultaneously with elaborate care on the morning and evening of Sunday, October 24. The returns were carefully arranged and printed by weekly instalments, followed by a summary which enforced the broad lessons of the census as a whole. It appeared that out of a population of over 4,000,000 about 1,000,000 persons had attended at one service or both on that particular Sunday (p. 72).

From the first the *British Weekly* was a semi-religious and semi-literary journal, whilst politically it supported the Liberal Party. Religiously it represented and directed its appeals to the Free Churches. Its literary department was from the first exceedingly conspicuous, on account of which not a few Free-thinkers we knew became regular readers of the paper. "The Correspondence of Claudius Clear," and "Rambling Remarks by a Man of Kent," pseudonymous contributions, whose author was Nicoll himself, gained for the paper many thousands of readers, among them being the late famous Admiral, Lord Fisher, between whom and the editor there sprang up a most intimate friendship, and a correspondence ensued, Fisher signing his letters, "Yours till Hell Freezes," or "Yours till the Angels smile on us," or "Yours till a cinder." Nicoll was wonderfully successful in discovering young men of exceptional promise and inducing them to contribute to the *British Weekly*, some of whom were Sir J. M. Barrie, Ian Maclaren, and Stevenson. He also enthusiastically recommended the works of such eminent novelists as Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Vincent Brown, John Buchan, and Leonard Merrick, most of whom wrote to him to express their profound sense of indebtedness to him for his invaluable encouragement and help. Two of his dearest friends were George Adam Smith, now Principal of Aberdeen University, and the late James Denney, Principal of the Glasgow U.F. Theological College. Once these two distinguished men were discussing him together. The former, reviewing the *Life and Letters* in the *British Weekly* of September 17 says:—

Poet and publisher, mystic and manager, trustful yet shrewd, affectionate yet unsparing, theologian, politician, and one of the foremost of our literary critics, he stands alone among his contemporaries. I once said of him to James Denney, "What an extraordinary being!" and Denney replied, "That sums him up."

Besides the *British Weekly* several other journals owed their existence to Nicoll, such as the *Bookman: a Magazine for Bookreaders, Bookbuyers, and Booksellers*, and the *Woman at Home*. He was also a contributor to the *Times*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Sketch*. He was literary adviser to Hodder & Stoughton, and was responsible for the publication of scores of books on the Bible and theology.

Here we pause in order to ascertain what manner of man this pre-eminently successful editor, literary critic, and publicist really was. We cannot but admire his inexhaustible energy, tireless labour, and incessant watchfulness over his interests, neither can we honestly evade the question, what was his character? In the first place, he was what is commonly understood by the phrase a man of the world. For example, he worshipped success and looked down with contempt upon non-success. His elder daughter said: "I think we were brought up to consider unsuccessful people as not much worth knowing." His biographer admits that:—

As he advanced in life some of his friends felt that Nicoll became more conservative in tastes and ideas—as so often happens with age. It was a

more serious flaw that, as he succeeded, he grew too fond of successful men. In his heart he believed that substantially all failure is due either to stupidity or to indolence.

In the second place, Nicoll was a timeserver. In the *British Weekly* he posed as champion of the Free Churches, but it is frankly admitted in the biography that he did not adequately understand the Nonconformists of England and Wales. Writing to the late Dr. Clifford in 1919, he said, "I am a Presbyterian and I detest the Episcopal form," and Mr. Darlow assures us that "by temperament and training, as well as by deep-rooted conviction, Nicoll was a Free Churchman." And yet on the question of education, for example, which was a burning question in 1905, he was in violent opposition to the policy advocated by the Free Churches, and *privately* he gave strong expression to his antagonism in a letter to Professor Peaks, saying:—

It has been most distressing to me to see the folly and bigotry of men who imagine that we can force upon those who hold Catholic views the teaching that suits Protestants. It recalls the worst faults of the Nonconformists in their day of power, and, of course, is thoroughly impracticable. The Free Church Council has played a wretched part in the business, but I have not liked to say much, fearing to make dissension among ourselves.

Canon A. C. Deane, vicar of Hampstead from 1913 until 1916, was one of Nicoll's closest friends, with whom he enjoyed the freest intercourse. Reviewing the *Life and Letters* in the *Church Times* of October 9 the Canon writes of Nicoll as follows:—

His private opinions on ecclesiastical matters were not always those which he thought it politic to express in print.....We had many a long talk on the education question. Both of us were invited to certain meetings at Lambeth. I knew that great results were possible if Nicoll would only urge in the *British Weekly* the adoption of a course with which, in private, he agreed. But he would not. His sense of loyalty forbade him; "it would be going back on the position to which we are committed," was his plea.

In the third place, Nicoll was intensely religious. He was the son of a Free Church minister in Aberdeenshire. His father's church was small and its members poor. His stipend never reached £200, and was often down to near £100; and yet this poor minister, being by nature a bookworm, managed to buy books to the number of 17,000, and knew them so well that he could put his hand on any volume needed in the dark. Though he never spoke to his son about religion, the whole atmosphere was so charged with it that no boy of Nicoll's temperament could by any possibility have resisted its influence. It was a painfully gloomy atmosphere, and Nicoll himself wrote of "the austerity, the somewhat chilly rigour, which characterized manse life in the Free Church." In a letter to a friend in January, 1902, he made the following confession: "I feel that I was defrauded of my youth—there was so little sunshine in it—far too little." Yet in spite of all that, he swallowed his father's religion and his narrow-minded and bigoted theology, and retained both to the end. In its review of *Life and Letters* the *Nation* says:—

While a native of the Five Towns may become completely at home in the Grand Babylon Hotel, and may outgrow, if he does not forget, the Sunday school in the dingy provincial street, it is not possible for a North Briton to do so.

The *Nation* is wholly mistaken. We know North Britons who have succeeded in completely renouncing Christianity. The reason why Nicoll never did so was that he never faced all the facts. His knowledge of literature was astonishingly wide and deep,

immensely wider and deeper than that of nearly all his contemporaries, but he had practically neither knowledge nor appreciation of Nature. Whenever he went out for a walk with a friend he never talked about the beauty of flowers and grass and trees, but only about books; and even among his innumerable books there were none of a purely scientific character. His ignorance of science was abysmal. Mr. Darlow admits that "with a mind of such range it was remarkable that he knew hardly anything about science, and never seriously tried to learn." For such men supernatural beliefs, or "Fable of the Above," as Meredith calls them, are easily believable. But those Christians who are fully familiar with scientific teaching, if they are honest, feel that they must reject either Christianity or science. Nicoll never allowed himself the chance of making such a choice, and like most orthodox theologians he was actively intolerant of theological views that differed from his own.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Comedian as Critic.

I had rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman.—*Shakespeare*.

The crime of enquiry is one which religion never has forgiven.—*Shelley*.

MR. G. K. CHESTERTON is the maid-of-all-work of the Church Catholic. Nothing comes amiss to his provocative pen. Like the ideal journalist, he seems capable of writing on any subject at a moment's notice. He has turned historian in order to praise the Middle Ages; and posed as a literary critic the better to pen jibes at all sceptical writers from Shelley to Swinburne. Innocent of science, he has used reams of paper in attacking men who have devoted their lives to special branches of scientific knowledge. Mr. Chesterton has done all these things with such glib assurance that many of his readers think that he is a very up-to-date journalist. Yet it is as plain as a pikestaff that he does not represent contemporary ideals and thought. What he does represent is a reaction against the views current in the later years of the nineteenth century. He has attacked Woman's Suffrage, he dislikes Jews. He is never happier than when telling the working man when and where he is wrong. The truth is, probably, that he is a Democrat who finds himself in the fold of the Catholic Church, and, being in Rome, does as the Romans do. He is not a hard-shell Conservative, for his humour is continually coming to his rescue, but he has always delighted the Reactionaries more than the Intellectuals. His humour, too, is of the Peter Pan brand, that of the schoolboy who has never grown up, and the printed page remains to show his freakish, Puck-like prejudices and perversity. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Democrat and Catholic, humourist and pietist, he is one of the oddest of human combinations.

In his latest book, *The Everlasting Man*, Mr. Chesterton has turned scientist for a few hours, and boldly attacked the evolutionists. So untrammelled are his views, that one editor of a daily newspaper dubbed the volume, "A defence of religion." If so, pious editors, like drowning men, catch at straws. For Mr. Chesterton uses all his resources of wit and irony, and, when they fail, falls back on the schoolboy weapon of making grimaces. For instance, he tells the Freethinkers: "As for the general view that the Church was discredited by the war, they might as well say that the ark was discredited by the flood." That is the Chestertonian trick. "General vices" indeed! The Freethought criticism of the Church of Christ is a direct accusation, and is not met by mak-

ing a grimace through a horse-collar, or by pretending that Captain Noah's voyage is genuine naval history. It is curious that Catholic writers possess this airy-fairy manner of dealing with critics and opponents. In a monthly periodical, recently, a Catholic writer, defending the infamous cruelties of the Holy Inquisition, points out that centuries ago men had stronger constitutions than they have to-day. Doubtless, man needs to be made of tempered steel to withstand the pleasantries of the rack, thumb-screw, and stake.

Mr. Chesterton jests on so many things beside science, although his book is primarily an attack on the Darwinian hypothesis. Here is an example:

I do not propose to work what I believe would be a completely successful practical joke, that of telling the whole story of the Gospel and the whole history of the Church in a setting of pagodas and pigtailed; and noting with malignant humour how much it was admired as a heathen story in the very quarters where it is condemned as a Christian story.

Observe the debating dodges in the above paragraph, "the Gospel" and "the Church." There are four "Gospels," and scores of "Churches," but it does not suit Mr. Chesterton to admit it. As for the Christian story with a background of pagodas, there is no need for anyone to re-write "the old, old story" again. If Mr. Chesterton will go to the British Museum library and consult the *Sacred Books of the East*, he will find what he wants in the Buddhist writings, which are so much older than the Gospels he tries to defend, and pretends to admire so much. If he pursues his studies diligently, Mr. Chesterton may find that he has plucked the heart from the Christian mysteries. Unfortunately, the priests of the Catholic Church do not like laymen to study too much, and the *Index Expurgatorius* may well serve to keep Mr. Chesterton in the twilight of Faith.

"Man," says Mr. Chesterton pontifically, "is not merely an evolution, but rather a revolution." And his face broadens to a grin as he jests concerning evolutionary processes:—

The Greek witch may have turned sailors to swine with a stroke of the wand. But to see a naval gentleman of our acquaintance looking a little more like a pig every day, till he ended with four trotters and a curly tail, would not be any more soothing.

Presumably, Mr. Chesterton imagines that the processes of evolution date back only as far as the legendary story of the Garden of Eden, and no farther. Science, however, will have nothing to do with "Adam" and "Eve," and the talking snake. They have been driven from Eden for ever, not by an angel with a flaming sword, but by the growth of knowledge. It is only Mr. Chesterton, and those worthy citizens whose educational careers finished at fourteen years of age, who appear to be unaware of the trend of scientific opinion in the civilized world. Once, when someone said, "You cannot put the clock back," meaning that you cannot put events back, Chesterton answered triumphantly, "The reply is, you can put the clock back." This was terminological thimble-rigging, and this volume is full of similar examples. If any proof is needed of the triumph of science over superstition, it is to be found in the fact that so many present-day priests, Anglican and Roman, calmly pretend that the teachings of science are wholly in accord with the earlier books of the Bible. Only two religious bodies have been honest in this matter. Poles asunder in many respects, the Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army, have remained faithful to the ignorance and superstitions of the Ages of Faith. Neither will part with "Eve" and the apple, and both bodies

profess to believe that Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and their scientific colleagues, are now suffering the tortures of the damned. These innocents no more believe in evolution than they understand the alphabet of science. So illiterate are these folk that it is doubtful if the more educated of them will forsake *The News of the World* to read Mr. Chesterton's jocose defence of the "old, old story" of "Adam" and "Eve" and the talking snake.

Mr. Chesterton tries very hard to prove the scientists wrong, but with all his artifices he cannot prove the religionists right. He points scorn at the hard-working geologist, who—

had dug very deep and found the place where a man had drawn a picture of a reindeer. But he would dig a great deal deeper before he found a place where a reindeer had drawn a picture of a man.

The cream of the joke is omitted by Mr. Chesterton, for, if the Bible is sober history and not mere legend, that cave-man was pursuing his art studies before the creation of the world, which, as old Euclid puts it, is absurd.

Mr. Chesterton is good at clowning, but he must not take himself too seriously. If scientists are to be refuted it must be done by men who know their job, and not by facile journalists whose scientific training is limited to a shilling handbook of geology or physiology. And the time-honoured schoolboy expedient of annoying an opponent by placing a thumb on the nose and extending the fingers is not customary in scientific discussion. Mr. Chesterton is not really so childlike and bland as he appears to be. In attacking science he is, in the last analysis, defending Priestcraft. In spite of his camouflage of controversy, he cannot reinstate the Bible account of creation. The old Biblical legends are fundamental to the Christian Superstition. On them rest the assumption of a fallen and sinful race. Entwined with them is the myth of the Devil, and so many other strange and monstrous things which are so necessary to the well-being of the priestly caste, who batten on ignorance, and enchain and cramp the human intellect for their own ends.

When the Sultan of Zanzibar sent a second-hand tramp steamer to sink the British fleet, a hearty laugh rang through the civilized world. Mr. Chesterton's acting the part of Saint George attacking the dragon of Science is equally exhilarating. There is a whole world of difference between the thirty years' patient investigation of a Charles Darwin, and the humourist writer, who vamps on the vocabulary of science in order to bolster the delusions of the Christian religion. Christians are surrounded by the waters of Science and Freethought, and stand a bad chance of drowning. And the matter will not be prolonged unduly because a comic journalist essays the part of Mrs. Partington, the courageous farmer's wife, who sought to sweep back the Atlantic Ocean with a mop.

MIMNERMUS.

How to Grow a Religion.

Sow a perplexity and reap many wild guesses; sow wild guesses and reap some fancies; sow some fancies and reap delusions and confusion; sow confusion and reap a few superstitions; sow a few superstitions and reap much folly, fetishes, magic, and a Holy Host. Plant a Holy Host and crop some dogmas; plant some dogmas and crop a few creeds; plant a few creeds and crop many temples, ritual, priestcraft, and a hierarchy. Sow a hierarchy and reap enslavement, exploitation, and persecution; sow persecution, and reap much bloodshed; sow some bloodshed and reap—the Christian creed of Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All Men.

Freemasonry and Freedom.

II.

(Continued from page 663.)

THE Church of Rome has not altered its dogmas and that its blocks and scaffolds are no longer used to destroy those who do not accept its "creed" is owing to the triumph of the principles of Masonry itself, which have been incorporated in the constitution of modern States, to that of the spirit of tolerance which, at first, exercised in the lodges, has penetrated the whole body of society, except in the Church of Rome, which remains *as ever* completely intolerant and fanatical. Its recognized theologians teach even now that *only she* possesses the whole truth and that she has the right to punish even to death all heretics. In a book called *De Stabilité et Progresus Dogmatis*, a work approved by the Pope, Father Lépiciér (Professor of Theology in the College of St. Urban, Rome, Councillor of the Congregation, member of the Papal Council for Bible Study and of the Committee for regularising the law of the Canon Right), proclaims the following thesis in conformity with the dogmas of the Church:—

If heretics, freely becoming heretics, publicly profess their heresy and excite others through their example and their evil wisdom to accept the same errors, no one can doubt that they deserve excommunication from the Church and to be taken away by death from the midst of the living.

The Church can of itself judge concerning infidelity, and can itself pass sentence of death, but cannot carry it out—that is left to the civil arm.

Speaking strictly, we cannot deny the right of the Church to punish with death even repentant heretics. Heretics and apostates can be led back by force to the faith. Those who possess and practise the true faith must be compelled, even in the body, to fulfil the promises which they at any time may have undertaken.

Children, although they are baptised without their own will, are compelled since they have the use of their own reason to live according to the Catholic faith and because there is no other way to eternal life; strictly speaking, they can be compelled in the manner already described to live according to the Catholic faith.

That abominable fanatical doctrine, which is an outrage to every untroubled conscience, has covered the earth with blood and ruin for centuries, and is still taught by the Church.

It is not only aimed at pure heresy, but at every opinion, even political, which is against the propositions of the "Syllabus"—it condemns the fundamental principle of the modern State, religious freedom, freedom of the press, freedom of teaching, the separation of Church and State, the independence of the civil power, toleration in religion and philosophy.

The Church denies toleration in religion and philosophy. H. Hutten, now Bishop of Liege, in his *Christian Apologetic*, says: "The Church does not permit toleration in religion or philosophy."

That civil toleration is very weak and provisional: where the Church is supreme and directs the government, it does not tolerate heresy, it destroys heretics or expels them from the State as it did for centuries, even in the middle of the nineteenth century in the Papal States, in the Republic of Ecuador, and, indeed, wherever it succeeded in gaining political power, such was its action. Theologians teach that the submission of the Church to the idea of civil toleration ceases if, instead of accepting religious freedom as a fact, as an accidental social necessity, "the constitution tries to establish it as a principle and formulate it into a natural indestructible right."

There exists a real gulf between the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the fundamental ideas of modern society. The danger of the dogmas of the Roman Church lies in this, that in all countries where it has succeeded in retaining a hold on a sufficiently great number of the faithful, it has created a political party which it controls, and through which it aims at re-establishing its ancient rule—that rule which has oppressed the consciences and weighed so heavily on humanity for more than a thousand years and in all countries has caused so much pain and suffering. This it is that explains the keenness of the anti-clerical struggle in all the Latin countries. The German and Anglo-Saxon countries broke off relations with Rome in the sixteenth century, and the Catholics in these lands, being in a minority, were powerless to enforce the dogmas of the Roman Church.

This does not happen where the majority are Catholics. The fight to win and preserve freedom of conscience, and all that that means, must go on without halt or rest, for the very existence of civilization itself depends on it. That fight is a duty which Freemasonry cannot avoid without betraying its historic rôle. And it has fulfilled that duty, and will forever fulfil it in these countries where the Roman Church threatens modern liberties. This is principally the case in Latin countries.

In France, Masonry continues, logically and energetically the realization of its ideal—the freeing of the human conscience. In 1869 the Congress of Eastern Lodges examined the proposal: To remove from the rules of the Grand Orient that formula which established as a foundation belief in the order—the belief in the existence of God and in the immortality of the soul. Enemies of Freemasonry have asserted, and in quite good faith, certain masons have believed them—that we wished to substitute for the dogmas of Deism the dogmas of Atheism. The text, as altered, was approved on September 14, 1877, at the great meeting in Paris; it became the first article of the Constitution of the Grand Orient in France, in this form:—

Freemasonry, an institution in its essence philanthropic, philosophic, and progressive, is occupied with the search for truth, the study of morality, and the practice of solidarity.

It labours for material and moral betterment and to bring about the intellectual and social perfection of humanity.

Its principles are, reciprocal toleration, respect for the rights of others and for its own, complete freedom of conscience.

Considering that the sphere of metaphysics is specially the province of the individual it dismisses all dogmatic certainty.

The motives for this change in the earlier text have often been explained and cannot be refuted.

Blatin, of the Grand Orient of France, explained them to the International Masonic Conference at Antwerp, on July 22, 1894, and in the International Masonic Congress at Paris, August 31, 1900, he said:

We are often blamed in that we pay no respect to the traditions of toleration in our order, when we remove from its place in our temples the ancient motto of our fathers, "To the glory of the Great Architect of the Universe."

Our reply precisely given is—on the contrary, we assert that more than ever do we support our proud tradition in the removal of that formula. The same spirit which guided our fathers when they recognized the Great Architect, is guiding us when we take away that formula. In these latter centuries there has been in existence a philosophy apparently deistic under many names. Gathered under its flag the Great Architect becomes in this way a word of great toleration.

At a time when naturalist, positivist, and atheistic principles are beginning to play a more serious part in the department of philosophy, the old formula of the Great Architect no longer suffices: indeed, it becomes a formula of disunion, a standard of intolerance whose disappearance seems to us entirely in keeping with the traditions of our Order.

Now you see, my brothers, and loudly we proclaim it again, so that those who do not wish to hear us, may hear if they will—the removal of the phrase, “To the glory of the Great Architect,” never was an act of negation. It was, contrarily, an act of grave affirmation, declaring our love of tolerance and our respect for the freedom of conscience of all.

Are we not entitled to ask—Do not these persons in Masonry, who in this act discover a disruptive motive, do they not in fact pay scant respect to the most prized traditions of our Order, and do they not introduce a sad hindrance to the triumph of those ideas on whose behalf it is their duty to fight alongside of us?

Whatever may be the words, inscribed on our banners or on the facades of our temples, words of necessity changing according to the epochs and social media in which we live, yet it is our honour, let us not forget it, to place before the profane the great moral idea of solidarity, which, away from all religious formulas, and based on altruism, ordains to each of us his duties to others, to nature, and to himself.

You are members of the human race, thus it speaks to us all, the prosperity of humanity is *your* prosperity, its suffering is *your* suffering. Whatever is good or bad for humanity is equally good or bad for you yourself, a happy humanity is your heaven, a suffering humanity is your hell.

That is a morality superior to the religious moralities taught to those around us, moralities which justify the most hateful injustices. Ours is a morality to be spread and taught everywhere, for it is destined to become the one great directing morality of all society.

That declaration ought to clear away the misunderstandings which divide Masons.

(Translated from the French), of A. Sluys by R. Stevenson.

(To be Concluded.)

Acid Drops.

The Glasgow magistrates have decided to prohibit political meetings on Sundays. This means, of course, those buildings which are under the control of the magistrates, for they have no peculiar jurisdiction over others. Still, we hope that this incident will help to show those who consider that political action is the short cut to the millennium that nothing is of much consequence in the absence of the right to freethought and free speech. We should not have so much of this as we possess but for the work of freethinkers in the past, and the claim to that right is still very largely left to freethinkers for assertion. Socialists are too keenly engaged in trying to capture votes of Christians to pay much attention to it.

The *Daily News* recently published an interesting series of articles illustrating the special form of Bolshevik tyranny carried on in Italy under Mussolini. The *Church Times*, however, thinks the articles are overdone, the principal reason being that Mussolini has not shed the blood of priests and bishops as the rulers of Russia have done. That does, of course, make a tremendous difference. The murder of ordinary people who venture to criticize a dictatorship that is in alliance with the Holy Roman Church, may be excusable, but the killing of the Lord's appointed is a thing that no good Christian can overlook. But we wonder what the *Church*

Times would say if the Russian Government struck up some sort of a concordat with the Vatican? And stranger things than that have happened in the world of politics.

A writer in the *Leeds Mercury* discovers that “those writers who speak discouragingly of Christianity really owe most of their ideas to the Churches.” One lives and learns, but we should really like to know what Church gave modern thought its basic ideas. There is the Copernican system in astronomy, the Galilean and Newtonian physics, the idea of evolution in biology, and of uniformity in the whole world of science. Take away these fundamental conceptions and modern thought disappears. Will the *Mercury* writer please tell us which Church gave the world these conceptions, or even welcomed their appearance? And when we leave these fundamental ideas and come to the directly religious ones we are just as puzzled. Demonism lies at the root of Christianity. It was taught by Jesus Christ, and endorsed by Christians of all ages. What Church led the way in getting rid of this fantastic idea? or in relinquishing the idea of a literal hell and heaven? We should much like an answer to these questions, and there are more ready afterwards. The fact is, as we have so often said, that when one is writing in the press on religion almost any kind of nonsense is good enough.

The Rev. Dr. Lyttleton, late headmaster of Eton, has solemnly informed the world that before many months are gone this country will be experiencing chastisement at the hands of God. So now we know all about it. Whatever troubles we experience we know will be sent by God. He has arranged for it, and we must blame him when it arrives; that is, if the religious ones among us have the pluck to stand up to their deity and tell him what they think about it.

A paragraph in one of the daily papers reports a Christian Science lecturer as claiming that all evil will be eradicated by right thought, and death will be conquered by man's collective claim to life. We are not sure that death is an evil, and in the case of many we believe it would be a general good. But otherwise it seems only a logical conclusion from Christian Science principles. The trouble is that a great many people reach the stage when they obstinately believe they are dead, and the undertaker steps in and does his work before they can be brought to a better state of mind.

The Rev. Dr. Selbie says, concerning the complaint of the Archbishop of Canterbury as to the mental poverty of the present-day pulpit, that there is nothing new in the complaint, and several other parsons have followed the same line, and evidently imagine that does away with the matter. On the contrary, it only helps one to realize the position more clearly. It is quite true that for many generations the clergy have been far behind the mental level of the more educated classes, and they are likely to remain so. And the sole reason for this is that with our present knowledge of the nature of religion it is becoming impossible for men of really first-rate intellect and education to take up with the clerical profession. Every craft exercises some sort of selective influence, and in the main a profession gets the men it deserves.

The Republic of Turkey has just suppressed a number of Moslem religious orders. Evidence was forthcoming, says the *Times*, that these monasteries were the centres “of all kinds of absurd and fanatical practices, and used the influence which they obtained by playing upon religious credulity of their ignorant and half savage followers.” It concludes that “there is no doubt that the decree must be regarded as a statesmanlike move.” We rather fancy that a very different view was taken when the Russian Government suppressed the Christian monasteries in Russia, which were the centres of all kinds of

absurd and fanatical practices, and traded upon the religious credulity of their ignorant and half-savage followers. But there is a great difference between suppressing a Christian monastery and a Mohammedan one. The difference is not quite clear to one who is neither a Christian nor a Mohammedan, but it is quite clear to a Christian.

Green lights and coloured hangings were part of the scenery in the reception room of Madame Estelle, who was fined the other day for telling fortunes. People are foolish who go to these seers, but the magistrate explained that they must be protected. The same paper that published the account of the delinquences of Madame Estelle had a picture of the fifty-foot velvet hangings in St. Paul's, where people go to hear what fortunes await them in the next world. Against that form of fortune telling, the law offers no protection whatever. On the other hand, it protects the fortune teller. Madame Estelle made a great mistake. She should have set up as a prophetess of a new religion, and instead of charging a fee should have depended upon free-will offerings. There is a right and a wrong way of doing these things. The law does not say a man must not take money for saying masses for the safety of one's soul in the next world, but it cannot stand by while a simple fortune teller informs a woman what is going to happen to her in this one.

Engineer-Rear-Admiral Fmdin was one the speakers at a demonstration arranged by the World Evangelical Alliance, and he delighted the audience by telling them that in 1912 the King let it be known that he had promised his mother to read a chapter of the Bible every day, and had done so—up to 1912. We do not know whether the story is true or not, and we recall the famous story of Queen Victoria presenting a Bible to some African chief with the observation that it was the source of England's greatness. The story was officially denied, but it did not stop its use in tracts, which never lets a useful story drop merely because it is not true. So we do not know whether the story is true or not. Anyway it does not matter. Nor do we know why King George was selected—except to please those people who, if the King wears his hair in a particular style, immediately rush to get theirs done in the same way. But there are scores of old women and old men up and down the country who say they do the same thing, and their doing says just as much for the Bible as it does in the case of King George. For a man's testimony depends for its value upon his standing as an authority, on either literature, or theology, or anthropology, or religion, and we are not aware that King George ranks as an authority on any one of these topics. And one would much like to know, if he reads the Bible regularly, what chapters does he read? and does he select them because he prefers some to others, or does he merely pick up one haphazard and go through it, even though it be one of the chapters of genealogies? Anyway, reading them might be as good a thing to induce sleep as anything else.

There was some talk in the Church Congress about the colour question, and several of the speakers warned their fellow Christians that they would have to rid themselves of the habit of looking upon the coloured races as of necessity inferior, and the white as being of necessity the superiors. It is worth noting, although none of the speakers pointed this out, that the acute phases of the colour question is quite a product of the Christian ages. There was no colour question in the ancient world, and inferiority and superiority was far more a question of genuine culture than it has been since. But here, as elsewhere, Christianity served as a cover and an excuse for the worse phases of human nature. The black was clearly condemned as the descendants of Ham, and as the yellow and brown races were not Christian, the fact that the whites were gave them a comfortable sense of moral and religious superior-

ity which excused the Europeans plundering them whenever opportunity offered. This quite suited the piratical practices of the European world, and it has its echo to-day in the foolish talk about the destiny of the world being committed to the Anglo-Saxon race, etc. What the Christian sadly needs to learn is the lesson that there are differences, and that differences are not of necessity to be expressed in terms of morals. If that lesson were properly learned the job of bringing peace to the world would be much easier than it is.

We have had Jesus put before us as almost every conceivable thing from time to time, but an American writer has just "beaten the band." Mr. Bruce Barton has discovered in Jesus the champion advertiser of all time. He says the Bible begins with an advertising slogan—"Let there be light." He says that some day a business man will write a life of Jesus and will tell the story of the founder of modern business. We are also given the following as something that might have appeared in the "Capernaum News": "Prominent tax-collector joins Nazareth forces. Matthew abandons business to join new cult. Gives large luncheon." "Service after purchase," the slogan of the motor-car agent, Mr. Barton says the world owes to Jesus, and every business man ought to study the parables of Jesus and adapt them to his business. According to the *Daily News* the book is solemnly and religiously written, and is being solemnly and religiously read. We are not surprised. As Jesus has been everything else, we do not see any reason why the same kind of logic that makes him such a multiple personality should not make him the founder of modern advertising.

Certainly if Jesus was not the "boss" advertiser his followers have known how to practice the art. If one sees the way in which the clergy force themselves to the front in most affairs, how they manage to secure the administration of other people's charity, write thousands of testimonials to the purity of their own religion, and then afterwards quote them quite solemnly as testimonials of unimpeachable value, it is quite evident that they quite well understand the art of advertising. And if they did not learn it from Jesus, they have learned it well and thoroughly, and not the least amusing part of the whole business is that they get people to give them the money wherewith to advertise the goods they have for sale.

We noticed a review in the *Daily Herald* of a new work on witchcraft. The work—we have not read it—appears to be a retelling of the familiar story of brutality and superstition connected with the belief in witches and witchcraft as "the most terrible, the most enthralling, the most dreadful, the most despairful in the whole of human history." We quite agree with this, but to make the story complete, and to point its full moral it should be said that this terrible belief was taught in the Bible, it was endorsed by Jesus, and the example of Jesus as a believer in Demonism was urged against those who with their lives in their hands tried to teach people better. But it would not have looked well in the pages of the *Herald* to have had their ideal character pilloried as the champion of the "most terrible, the most ridiculous, and the most despairful chapter in human history." Jesus the demonist would never do.

How often of late have we said that when a journalist is writing on religion any kind of nonsense will do, so long as it is nonsense? The *Daily Mail*, in a leading article, says, "The decay of religion would be disastrous to our civilization, for science, with all its immense services to the race....deals with facts, not with that world of deeper reality which lies behind and transcends these facts—a world which can only be apprehended by the spiritual faculty in man." Science deals with facts, and religion with that which is not fact. It is just as we said—any kind of nonsense, so long as it is nonsense,

"Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

THE purpose of this Trust is to acquire sufficient funds which, by investment, will produce an income of £400 annually, the capital remaining intact. It is an endowment secured by legal Trust Deed, administered by five Trustees, of whom the editor of the *Freethinker* is one. It means giving the *Freethinker* permanent financial security, and is thus a business-like and sound scheme, which should commend itself to all supporters of the Cause. A full explanation of the Trust was given in the issue of the *Freethinker* for October 4, and any further information will be given to anyone interested. At least £8,000 will be required, but, considering the number of Freethinkers at home and abroad who value the *Freethinker* and its work, there should be no great difficulty in securing that sum. It should be enough to remind givers that every gift to this Trust equals an annual donation.

Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook, one of the Trustees, and the originator of the idea, adds to his original subscription of £100 a further donation of £5, and writes:—

I am sure I am voicing the feelings of all the Trustees when I say how much we appreciate the kind expressions of approval from our friends and their liberal response to the appeal. Giving is catching, and I cannot resist going without something and sending a further £5. I earnestly hope all the "small" people, instead of being appalled by the apparent magnitude of some of the gifts, will come along with their "littles" and try to make them often. All will be enrolled on the scroll as pioneers and workers in the greatest financial effort ever made on behalf of Freethought. If you want a slogan, "Let it be £10,000."

Since I left Sunday-school just fifty years ago I have not given a penny to any Church or chapel or other religious institution. Had I continued a Christian and an attached member of some church or Little Bethel, or joined the S.A., my total contributions during the long period that has elapsed would have run into big figures. I am ashamed to confess it, but I have "saved" through being a Freethinker! There are thousands like me. Now, at our age, especially when family and other expenses ought to be less and we are within almost measurable distance of "that hell which is to be our portion," it is time for us to "shell out" and help to put out the fire! Our descendants will thank us, for whatever "ism" is put forward for the true and lasting benefit of humanity will be of little or no avail until superstitions, which the *Freethinker* and our Editor so worthily fights to totally destroy, have faded "from the imaginations of men."

"Grateful" encloses cheque with the comment:—

It would be asking too much of you to wade through all I could write in expressing my feelings towards the *Freethinker* with regard to the recreative reading it has given me, and, above all, in freeing me from the bonds of a disgusting superstition. So I will just say I am enclosing cheque for five guineas in aid of the Endowment Fund. My only regret is that it is not more, but it may be more yet.

Mr. H. Green says:—

I am sorry it is not more, and "for the love of Mike," please do not get me wedged in between a couple of one hundred pounds in next week's list, or you'll make me feel smaller still. I am hoping for a whole page of subscriptions something like my own, then it would not appear so bad.

We are acknowledging sums in the order they are received, and there is no need whatever for Mr. Green to appear small. Our biggest subscribers would think less of us if we valued men in terms of money, and it is the will to help that is going to count in this, the biggest effort yet made by our party. And, as we said last week, those who have given large sums, have done so because the magnitude of the object called it, not because they wished to daunt others doing what they could, whether it

were much or little. It may interest Mr. Green to know that some of the subscribers of larger sums have promised further help if the whole of the party responds as it ought to do.

Mr. R. Brown has adopted another plan of capitalizing his usual subscription to the Fund:—

I see on my return from holidays that you have opened the above Fund with gratifying success, and no one wishes to see the good old *Freethinker* endowed more than I do. Unfortunately, to many of us, it is not always possible to capitalise our subscriptions at once; it is so in my case. As an alternative I will increase my contributions sufficiently to capitalise in five payments, and enclose a cheque for £10 as a first payment.

The following is a complete list of subscriptions to date:—

Previously acknowledged, £3,116 15s. Mrs. H. Parsons, 5s.; J. Thomas, 5s.; G. Smith, £10; A. M. Wright, 5s.; W. J. W. Easterbrook (2nd subs.), £5; E. Pariente, £5; "Jersey," £5; H. Marshall, £5; E. Baulkes, £1; "Anonymous," £2; R. Brown, £10; H. Green, 10s; T. Saunders, 5s.; "Grateful," £5 5s.; D. O. Bonvonn, 10s.; R. Balsman, £10; W. Owen, £1; C. E. Still, 10s.; Ting, £1 1s.; J. E. Barry, £1; M. Sowden, 5s.; J. Burdon, 12s. 6d. Total, £3,181 8s. 6d.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the "Freethinker Endowment Trust," and crossed Midland Bank, Limited (Clerkenwell Branch). All letters should be addressed to the Editor, *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To Correspondents.

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

G. BEDBOROUGH.—Article received safely. Have been waiting for a chance to publish it.

(MRS.) H. PARSONS.—Thanks for good wishes. Hope you are well.

V. MARTELL.—The lines you quote are from a poem by Sassoon, published during the war. We fancy they have been reissued, with others, in book form.

E. R.—The date of the Authorised Version of the Bible was 1611. There were 54 translators, and they took seven years over the job.

H. ELMES.—We have never said that few of the clergy believe what they preach, and your argument that great numbers of the clergy are very earnest men is waste of time. What we have said is that many of them would gladly leave the pulpit if they could see the possibility of a living in other directions, and that we know of our own personal knowledge. For the rest we can only repeat what we have often remarked—namely, that we should have a higher opinion of the mental capacity of the clergy if they did not believe what they preached. But you cannot have them both able and honest.

W. DAVIES.—Thanks, the back numbers will be useful for distribution.

H. MARSHALL.—Thanks for contribution to Endowment Trust. Sorry to learn you have been unwell. Best wishes for speedy recovery.

J. THOMAS.—It is the will that counts, and with each one willing all should be well.

R. BROWN.—Letter held over, from want of space, till next week.

D. O. BONVONNI.—Glad to hear from you after so lengthy a silence. Will deal with letter next week.

J. DAVIDSON.—We have never heard of George Jacob Holyoake sending a donation to a Christian institution to celebrate his recovery from an illness. We suspect the Rev. Mills was indulging in the usual parsonic propensity for falsehood where Freethinkers are concerned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 25) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, on "Evolution and Christianity." The lecture will commence at 7, doors open at 6.30. Admission is free, but there will be reserved seats at 1s. each. There is to be an attempt to restart the work in Liverpool, and Mr. Cohen will be glad to see anyone after the meeting who feels inclined to lend a hand in some regular work in the city. There are many hundreds of Freethinkers in Liverpool, and something should be done to organize them.

We have received, and read with both pleasure and profit, a volume of *Selections*, published at the Bangalore Press, Bangalore, by Ram Copal. The first part of the selections is from Bhatrī-Hari, a Hindoo poet of the sixth century, and the selections disclose a man of profound thought and fine feeling. Each of the selections is accompanied with the original in Sanscrit. The second part is from Burns, and is prefaced by an excellent introduction by Mr. Ram Copal, extending to 37 pages. The essay does credit to the writer, and will be read with pleasure by all lovers of Burns. The third part consists of selections from a number of European poets, from Shakespeare onward. From correspondence we have long known Mr. Copal as a man of wide reading, genuine culture, and solid thinking, and this volume serves to enhance him in our estimation. The work is admirably conceived to introduce some of the best thoughts of the East and West to each other, and in spite of the hackneyed refrain that "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," this volume of selections goes a long way to prove that in the deeper and more enduring things of life East and West do meet on the ground of a broad and common humanity. If a man is known by the company he keeps, the maxim must hold of one's mental companions as well as of his physical ones, and Mr. Copal's companions do credit to both his heart and his head. The volume is published at Rs.2, which, we suppose, is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 3s. 6d. in English money, and as it extends to about 300 pages, on good paper, and is well printed, it must be counted as a remarkably cheap volume. The volume is Freethinking throughout.

Our readers may remember that some time ago there was a special religious gathering to consider the use that might be made of the newspapers in the way of advertising religion. It was decided that this avenue of publicity had been neglected, and that it should receive attention in the future, and that all possible influence should be brought to bear on newspaper editors. We may be wrong in our assumption, but it is certainly curious that since then there has been unusual activity in the press with regard to religion. In addition to the increase of articles appearing in the Sunday papers particularly, we have had the *Daily Express* articles, and now we have a series of articles running through the *Weekly Despatch* on

the subject of a future life. As we say, we may be wrong, but we have a suspicion that this sudden activity in relation to religion may be no more than a cleverly worked advertising stunt. Preachers take these discussions as texts for their sermons, and call attention to the papers in which the articles appear. There is thus an advertisement on both sides.

That it is due to the desire of the newspaper editors to get a genuine expression of belief with regard to religion we do not believe for a moment. In the ten articles published in the *Express*, there was not a single article which gave a straightforward attack on religion. No one who disowned all religion was allowed to enter. In the twenty articles that are to be published in the *Weekly Despatch* there is not the name of one single out-and-out Freethinker among the lot. That is certainly not the way in which a man would go to work who wished to use his paper as a real mirror of public opinion. But by restricting the articles published to such as either definitely believe in a future life, who will meander along, hoping that the belief may be sound, vapouring about the beauty of the conception, etc., even though they are not quite clear, there is induced a comfortable feeling among believers, and the danger of discovering the truth is so far averted. That is one reason why we believe that the whole is just a "stunt," arranged for the benefit of the unthinking. And we are inclined to ask here, as elsewhere in this issue, whether there is a newspaper in the country honest enough and bold enough to publish an article from a representative Freethinker which will tell the truth about the whole matter? Does any of our readers know of one?

The memorial to the Artillery serving in the war was unveiled on Sunday last. We do not know what or who was responsible for this being done on Sunday. It is certainly unusual, and some of the papers were evidently puzzled about it. It looked like an official violation of the Sabbath, so one paper with that humbug which appears to be inseparable from British Christianity, referred to the gathering as "the congregation." That got rid of the necessity for the editor either condemning or supporting the choice of the day.

Of course, there was religion connected with it. There always is on such occasions. The Chaplain-General of the Forces was present and gave it his blessing. First of all the parson blesses the guns that go out to war, then he blesses the men that do the fighting. Then he prays for victory while the men are fighting. Then he has another turn when the war is over. Next he blesses the memorial to the men who have been killed, and for whose safety he prayed when they went out. Taken altogether, the parson is the only one that gains from the whole performance, from start to finish. Win or lose he is there to take the credit for whatever is going. Oh, Lord, what fools we mortals be!

Why I Ceased to Believe.

THE great majority of people who give up the Christian religion do so because they find its dogmas in conflict with science or their own perception of physical facts. That conflict never troubled me at all in the beginning. It does not seem to me even now to matter much whether we are descended from Adam and Eve or a kind of ape, still less whether or not the whale swallowed Jonah. Conversely, I should no more believe a man was god because he worked miracles than I should bow before and adore Marconi.

I lost my faith in Christianity because it conflicted with my own standards of right and wrong. Because, in short, it wasn't good enough for my conscience. I was brought up nominally as a Roman Catholic. About sixteen, I found religion, as revivalists say, and became, as a youth, rather remarkable for my devotion and diligent observance of the Church's commands. I really was anxious to become a saint.

If I had stayed in England, not impossibly I might have remained a Catholic to this day. But living in Catholic countries, I was infinitely distressed by

the cruelties inflicted on dumb animals by persons professing and practising my own religion. I discussed the matter with a priest. I have never forgotten his reply: "Wanton cruelty to an animal is seldom more than a venial sin. Animals have no rights and we have no duties towards them. God has placed them unreservedly in the hands of man."

Alarmed, I searched the Scriptures and could find nothing with which to challenge the reverend father's dictum. Christ says no single word about our duty towards the lower animals. It is impossible to twist any passage in the New Testament into an injunction to be even ordinarily considerate towards them. The priest was right. The brutal Neapolitan cab-drivers, the Norman farmers who drive nails into the brains of ducks and geese—these could not be convicted of sin according to the Christian law. I looked further. I found that Christianity tolerated human slavery. St. Paul sent a runaway slave back to his master. Protestants and Catholics alike throughout the Middle Ages made no protest against judicial torture or the cruellest forms of execution. The Catholic Church refuses to allow an illegitimate son to officiate at its altars.

But did the Supreme Being himself care at all for the happiness of the things he had created? Sitting by the side of Lake Champlain, in America, I noticed myriads of brightly-coloured flies which had been attracted by the sheen of the water, perishing miserably. Their creator had implanted in them no warning instinct. I turned an eye on Nature. Everywhere I found her red in tooth and claw. There were animals who could exist only by preying on each other. Infants died in agony after costing agonies to their mothers.....And if God was all mighty, for all these things he must be responsible. Truly did the Christians represent him as a terrible being who could be appeased only by bloody offerings.

I ceased to worship him.

The Bible I presently discovered was only one of many ancient books of doubtful authenticity which claimed to be the word of God. Men born in Europe believed in it because they were taught to do so as children; just as men born in Mohammedan countries continue to believe in the Koran. I have never been able to discover on what grounds these books are supposed to be of divine or even supernatural inspiration. Once discussing the nature of faith with me, a theologian defined it as enabling us to apprehend the existence of things which the reason could not prove. But why then believe the Bible sooner than the Koran?—for discrimination is a faculty of the reason and with reason we have parted company.

I have never regretted the loss of my faith nor perceived that other people were the better for it. History proves abundantly that religion has justified deeds which every natural human conscience, left to itself, would condemn. It is by its morality, not by its extravagant dogmas, that Christianity utterly fails.

EX-CATHOLIC.

Dogma is bluff based upon ignorance. There is benevolent and malevolent dogma. Benevolent dogma is an attempt to "save the world," by instigating it to accept certain propositions. Malevolent dogma is an attempt to gain control over others by persuading them to accept certain propositions.—Ezra Pound, in the "New Age."

In the second place, we have found that the progress of religious thought has largely consisted in the gradual elimination of anthropomorphic elements from the idea of Deity, and that this elimination must go on until all human or quasi-human attributes are entirely expunged. Prof. W. H. Hudson, *Introduction to the "Philosophy of Herbert Spencer."*

The Origin of Life.

Did life spring into being on earth under the stimulus of radioactivity?

Did the radiations from radium minerals, which have either stimulant or deadening powers on vital processes, according to the extent to which they are used, once act in just proportion and under just such circumstances that the chemical atoms combined into living protoplasm?

This hypothesis is advanced by Paul Becquerel, writing on "The Problem of the Origin of Life," in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires, Artistiques Scientifiques*. Asks Mr. Becquerel: What do we know of life's origin? Have we some vague idea of the way in which it appeared on the surface of the globe?

At what epoch did this prodigious event occur? Which came first, plants or animals? Since the earliest ages, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Hebrews, the Greeks, the Latins, to satisfy their curiosity, devised an incalculable number of sacred legends and natural hypothesis.

Has modern science got any further than they?

Now the great debates on the generation of infusoria during the eighteenth century, and on the alteration of fermentable liquids during the latter half of the nineteenth, in which Pasteur took such an illustrious part, appeared for the moment to solve this question. They proved conclusively that there is no spontaneous generation on earth at the present time.

Whenever life appears in a sterile medium, some cellular germ must have been brought to it from outside.

Hence dead matter cannot acquire life apart from already living matter. This, for the moment, is a law without exception.

In these circumstances, if we wish to explain the origin of life on the earth's surface without recourse either to spontaneous generation or to supernatural creation, there is only one likely solution. It is that the earth, like an ordinary bouillon of cultures, has been "saved" with germs from another inhabited planet. Have meteors, cosmic dust, the propulsive force of stellar radiation, or universal attraction, brought such germs hither? My conclusion is very clear.

Terrestrial life did not come from another world. As my experiments on the microbicidal action of ultra-violet rays at low temperatures have shown, no germ can traverse the inter-stellar void without being killed by the sun's ultra-violet radiations.

But there are forces yet more dangerous in the high atmosphere!

They are the cathodic rays, which, striking upon the fine crystallized dust of frozen nitrogen, produce the magnificent boreal auroras!

Not only are these rays fatal to germs, but after absorption they produce the X-rays, whose redoubtable powers we know only too well. These X-rays would reach the interstellar germs adhering to the nitrogen crystals, and even those lurking in the interior of cosmic dust particles, where they might have penetrated if these were porous; and there the germs would be inevitably annihilated.

As for transportation by meteorites, Pasteur himself demonstrated that these are sterile. In the present state of science we must then be content to concentrate our researches upon the earth. To regard the origin of life as having taken place elsewhere is to elude the problem.

Besides, cosmic forces were formerly quite sufficient to form on our planet organic substances and bring about, under conditions of which we are still ignorant, the synthesis of living protoplasm.

The beautiful experiments of Daniel Berthelot and of Hoxlasi on the synthesis of sugars and starchy

substances are most hopeful. They make possible a theory of "radio-biogenesis!"

According to this conception, which I have been the first to develop, it is possible that, at an extremely remote era, possibly ten million centuries ago—for the evolution of terrestrial life has taken much longer than is generally supposed—the sun gave out much more ultra-violet radiation than now. Besides, sedimentary strata being rare, the crystalline rocks forming the greater part of the ocean bottom must have been much more radio-active than at present. Under the action of these physical forces on the waters charged with mineral substances and carbonic acid, in conditions yet unknown, there is nothing improbable in supposing that there may have been formed colloidal organic substances, complex systems of albuminoids, and from these protoplasmic—living germs.

Carried to other regions covered with protective sediments, these germs then developed apart from the influence of these dangerous radiations. It was thus that probably began in the Archean seas, the reign of the microscopic protozoöphytes—those strange cellular mixtures that were neither animals nor plants, whence issued, by way of differentiation, the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

Let us hope that science with the astonishing means now at its disposal, may in the near future corroborate this hypothesis experimentally.—*Translated by J. Sumner.*

Correspondence.

"LOGIC AND SCIENCE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I confess myself somewhat disappointed with "Keridon's" promised statement of his "sceptical logic." I hoped perhaps he was going to deal with it in his usual trenchant way from the attitude of Sing commented on by Havelock Wilson, that any completed body of knowledge is not a science, but a discipline, and that science properly is merely "becoming." Quite candidly all this that is now dished up is very stale fare. I really think "Keridon" must have overlooked or forgotten J. S. Mill's chapter in his *Logic* "Functions and Value of the Syllogism," where every criticism, many of them I am loth to say, much more incisive than "Keridon's" are, I think, dismissed. I had thought a great deal about the subject for some years before I secured a secondhand copy of Mill's *Logic*, and I was then gratified to find confirmation of what I had observed for myself by analysing my mind and observing it as closely as I was capable. "Keridon's" contentions are, if I accurately state them, that the syllogism is antiquated, cumbersome, and of very little, if any, value in discovering new truths. It is true since Locke and Bacon the syllogistic method has suffered eclipse. But I have always felt that the deductive principle is more natural to the mind, is more an integral part of reason than the inductive. Though inductive and deductive are correlative, and, as I have remarked, it seems they ought to have appeared together, and not at some centuries' interval. Why I think the deductive is more integral is because Aristotle's was a very acute mind, and when making his analysis he would otherwise have familiarized himself with the inductive method.

I believe the problem that puzzled Kant was how we were able to, considering mind as distinct from the outer objective world, to predict future events. The solution I also think was along the lines of the Stoic philosophy, viz., that human reason was in its constitution a minute replica of the universal reason of logos. That the purer reason would function on sense knowledge similar to universal processes. Mr. Spencer supports this theory when he comments on the similarity of trains of reasoning and cosmical processes. The logical unity is triune, so according to the latest conclusions of physics is the universe in the last analysis. The objective

symbol we signify as reason by its triune, three terms, and propositions. The ultimate universal something is signified by the subject, and the predicate by unfolding or making implicit what is latent or hidden in the subject explicit, corresponding to the evolutionary process continued indefinitely by the cumulative propositions establishing identity under many forms in the conclusion. Now it follows if these are the facts that "Keridon" in his attempt to discredit syllogistic reasoning is attempting an absurdity in as much as he is trying first to deny the constitution of our reason and, as a consequence, the cosmical processes. It must be admitted that the syllogistic method cannot be used objectively, and the course of truth is outside the mind, which apparently is of supreme advantage to the inductive method. But invaluable as the latter method is, I can never rid my mind of a suspicion that it is somewhat artificial and empirical in its action. It observes experiments and concludes its results in a generalization. It is an accepted dictum that nothing is so useless as a general maxim, I incline to also include "generalization." For valuable as these synthesized facts may become they need first to be unified in the mind and to germinate there. And to do this analysis is essential, which I contend is the special function of the deductive faculty working with its syllogistic methods. But to contend, as "Keridon" does, that the syllogism is not necessary is, if I may borrow his useful figure, and vary it, to attempt to make sausages without a machine. As Mill points out the syllogism is not now based on the "dictum" which was merely playing with words, but on the productive axiom of identity. That the major premise is merely generalized experience verified frequently, which avoids the charge of the "circle" and "begging the question." That is, the major premise is not to be considered strictly categoric, but a record of past experiences; if challenged it refers you to "experience." The examples admirably chosen by "Keridon," whatever his intention, are conclusive proofs of the value of ratiocination in reducing generalizations (majors) to practical use. And to this extent they add to and enlarge our knowledge. So that the syllogism must be an instrument in common with Induction, and as effective. "Footprints in the snow observed in the morning," "Smoke from a chimney," "Rising barometers," etc., are all generalized past experiences from which by deduction we infer present conclusions. Everybody who walks in snow leaves footprints. There are footprints here in the snow. Somebody has passed this way. Very frequently we reason from particular to particular without the use of the major, but its use is often essential to enforce and to make clear the stages of reasoning. I have known Mr. Foote and Mr. Cohen occasionally cast an argument in strict orthodox syllogistic form. To deny that anything new can be got out of a syllogism is to deny that analysis ever produces anything new, it is as essential as synthesis. Nor does the fact that we seldom use the "major" in talking affect the points at issue.

M. BARNARD.

SIR,—With reference to the recent "row" in your columns, "Keridon" appears to be under the impression that Logic consists in the syllogism, which, of course, is silly, though the syllogism is useful in certain cases and springs up easily in the minds of unfaught crowds. Logic is the art of conveying thought exactly and clearly by means of just and fitting language, whose forms and meanings and structure have been arranged socially by grammar and dictionaries. The latest effort appears to me to prove that he is as yet incapable of the logic described here.

The sentence containing "solipsistic idealist" and "phantasmagorical universe" is prodigious, even if one knows not what it means, and would "bring the house down" at a Labour meeting. "Bizarre scepticism" is not bad, except that there is nothing bizarre about scepticism, it being quite common and respectable. "Sceptic," "Agnostic," and "Freethinker," meaning, the first and practically the same thing, and the third hardly as daring but less clear, "free thought" being impossible, may all mingle in the busy throng unharmed and may even attend "service." It is the Atheist who

is no sceptic, or doubter, but is sure, knowing the genesis and development of gods and creeds, against whom the Christian world fights. The others may, like Blatchford and Bottomley, return to the fold any day, or aid in the building of a new theology in which the old forms will be disguised by scientific names. For instance, the high goddess Nature has two persons—matter and energy. These two persons (*vide* Athanasian creed) are really one person and involve in some inexplicable manner, another person, Inertia born of the father, Gravity, from all eternity, or from one of the eternities, for it appears that there are many (*vide* "Keridon" and a learned fool at the recent British Association meetings). Energy and inertia are both characteristics of unhappy matter, *i.e.* it is static and kinetic at the same time; it cannot move and it "does do," to quote a piece of "Keridon's" English. And still they come! "The atomic and molecular forces." Dear me, Energy has assistants. Would that "Keridon" might escape from the toils of the ancient wordy "science" of early Victorian days and realize that the only possible appeal to the senses is by means of matter and that to mouth all those foolish abstractions is like attempting to solve things by ignoring the machine and discussing its "motion." There is no such thing as motion; there is no such thing as mind. There is merely matter in a state of continuous change, change so swift, subtle, and minute on the one hand, and so slow and ponderous on another, that would-be philosophers are constrained to hide their discomfiture under a cloud of words, and are thus led to the invention of new gods just as nebulous as the one they imagined that they had overthrown. The crazy cult of psychology, the discussion of abstractions, is smiled upon by Christians as a wide and easy way back to their fold.

However, as this will only weary you (and, incidentally, me), I will close by hoping that "Keridon" may succeed in "explaining his explanation" some day without exhausting the dictionary. A. RUSSELL.

JESUS AS A FREETHINKER.

SIR.—Mr. H. Cutner is wrong in saying I am "very angry" and "very anxious to shout from the housetops." I am not in the least angry and I am trying hard to avoid "publicity" at present, because I am under contract to produce a large book in a short time. Hence I must leave further controversy to others. It seems to me more profitable to devote my energies to swaying our opponents than to quarrelling among ourselves. Keen discussion is good, but when Mr. Cutner says that neither he nor other Freethinkers care "a brass button" for my opinion, I think he cannot object to my withdrawal.

I would like, however, to make one or two suggestions. First, why not define the term "freethinker"? I define it as a person who can think freely in accordance with available knowledge. Whether Jesus or any other more or less legendary characterization comes within that scope can then be considered. Second, thinking freely does not necessarily mean thinking correctly: there will always be differences of opinion. Third, only the broad general view of advancement in freedom of thought is useful, and thus only can we realize the advance made in the last three hundred or one hundred or fifty years—particularly in the last ten years. Fourth, controversialists should not impute to others what they did not say. I did not say Ingersoll and Bradlaugh were simple "Bible-bangers," nor that they were wholly "out of date." That they are partly out of date is obvious. They themselves, had they lived, would have been the first to revise their essays and bring them up to date. What I object to is the translation of these and other valiant fighters for religious freedom of thought and expression into a "Secular Saints' Calendar" and the crystallization of their words into "Holy Writ."

ETTIE A. ROUT.

SIR.—Why should not Miss Rout call Jesus a Freethinker? Several of your correspondents seem to think the discussion is closed when doubt is raised as to his historical existence. I agree that it is much more important to produce evidence that Jesus ever lived than

to consider the various phases of his alleged character. I am one of those who regard his existence as unproven.

Hamlet, Mrs. Warren, and Peer Gynt had no objective existence, but this fact does not prevent our discussing their characters. Why should Jesus be an exception?

I prefer Ingersoll to Jesus, but I think Miss Rout entitled to call Jesus a Freethinker. Does any Freethinker doubt the "tinsel and lies" which she says have been woven by priests around Jesus, myth or otherwise?

Mr. Cutner seems to me to be quite right in wondering what sort of Jesus is left after we have stripped him of these disguises. I am no more inclined to follow Miss Rout than I am to follow Tolstoy in picking and choosing between varying incidents in the alleged "Life" of Christ. The case would be very different if we had any evidence to show that he said the excellent things reported of him and that he did not say the evil things his biographers have attributed to him.

The ordinary definitions of the word "Freethinker" help us very little, but we all have a vague idea that a Freethinker is one who has discarded the religion of his fathers on rational grounds. In this sense of the word we have a very wide net—properly wide, I think—including people who have not travelled far on the rationalist road. For instance (I give the first illustrations which occur to me) I should feel justified in applying the name of Freethinker (contemporaneously, of course) to Henry Ward Beecher, and (at the time of his *New Theology* only) to R. J. Campbell. In other words, the term "Freethinker" has a very comprehensive range and seems particularly applicable to those who dissent from religious authority.

It is not sufficient to show that Jesus claimed (like Dr. Marie Stopes) to have a direct revelation from God. Those familiar with Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* will at least admit that these personal revelations and communications would be infinitely preferable to following an authority based on other people's revelations centuries ago. I am quite willing at any time to receive "Tables of Stone" or direct face-to-face news from any existing deity. The Freethinker's objection is to following what other people are said to have been told by deities of whom we have no knowledge.

The fact that Jesus was crucified for blasphemy ought to be sufficient to warrant our calling him a Freethinker. I am inclined to think we might with some pertinence ask the question, "Was Jesus a Christian?"

"Banner of our contradictions," Renan called him, and I think Jesus himself was a mass of self-contradiction, which makes me almost think he must have existed.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

North London Branch N.S.S.

The debate between Mr. H. Cutner and Mr. G. Coldwell, of the Catholic Truth Society, attracted a very good audience to the St. Pancras Reform Club. The debate was followed with close attention, and at the conclusion many questions were put to the speakers. It seemed fairly evident that Mr. Coldwell failed to prove his contention that the Catholic Doctrine of Confession is rational. Both Mr. Cutner and Mr. Coldwell are prepared to debate again during our spring session.

To-night (October 25) Mr. Kerr, the Editor of the *New Generation*, who is well known to and appreciated by our circle, will debate with Mr. Saville, whom we have not heard before in debate, but from all reports we believe Mr. Kerr will find an opponent not unworthy of his steel. We wish to draw special attention to Mr. Hornbrook's lecture on November 1. Mr. Hornbrook has most kindly consented to give us one of his most valuable talks on Health, and we can assure our North London friends that they are having a unique opportunity of hearing some expert advice, which is given "for the good of the Cause."—K.

Man is born not to solve the problem of the universe, but to find out where the problem begins, and then to constrain himself within the limits of the comprehensible. —Goethe.

The Way of the World.

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DIVERSION.

It was customary for the London journeymen to take a holiday on hanging-days at Tyburn, and these came eight times a year. "It was common through the whole metropolis," says Angelo, "for master coach-makers, frame-makers, tailors, shoe-makers, and others who had engaged to complete orders within a given time, to bear in mind to observe to their customers 'that will be a hanging-day, and my men will not be at work.'"—*M. D. George, "London Life in the XVIII. Century."*

THE TRAGIC RUSSIAN.

I feel that the Russian is the most tragic type in the world. He is born with his terrible malady, a melancholy, which, though at times unsensed, always poisons and weakens his soul. From the very moment of his birth he seems to feel the heavy burden of the decrees of Fate.....A real Russian, when asked how life goes with him, will never answer "Good" or "Bad," but only "Nichevo," which translates literally as "Nothing," but really conveys the meaning of "Oh, just middling" or "Nothing out of the ordinary worth mentioning." It signifies that life is neither good nor bad and conveys the idea that all goes well with him. If he acknowledged that it was well, his overpowering superstition would make him fear some form of retributory punishment on the morrow; whereas, if he stated that it was bad, he would be acknowledging his suffering, and thus be fastening this state upon himself. If it is "Nichevo," he experiences no feeling of suffering nor fear. For this he is thankful to God, to whom he always turns in his short and simple prayers, not as a son to his Father or as a servant to his Master, but as a slave to an omnipotent tyrant.—*F. Ossendowski, "From President to Prison."*

LORD KELVIN AS A FUNDAMENTALIST.

Kelvin's concentration, from almost his earliest years, on physical science led him so far in advance of his contemporaries in actual discovery and in prophetic theory that it was a gain to the world. But in other matters it left him in the position of an Ulster Presbyterian of a century ago. He took the Bible on its face value, and was only a little discontented because it was not printed with dates at the head of each page and illustrated with maps. He dismissed Darwin as "unscientific." He was sure that geologists must be wrong because his view of solar radiation did not give the earth a sufficient age for their interpretations of its strata and fossils. It seemed to him an adequate explanation of the origin of life to suggest that meteors bearing its seed came to it out of space. His authority in his own domain was so justly great that even the leaders of other branches of science took these excursions seriously, and he has been ranked with Napoleon ("Who made these stars?") as a competent defender of theological dogma. But he was a good, and a lovable man, whose personal qualities are here charmingly described.—*The Times Literary Supplement.*

THE MATERIALIST AND "VITAL" PROCESSES.

The term "materialist" ought not to be used as one of reproach; the materialist is almost always a sincere searcher after truth, who, starting from his colleague, the physicist's knowledge of the properties and behaviour of non-living matter, attempts to apply these to the behaviour of living matter. He finds that many of the laws that hold good in the world of the non-living seem to be equally applicable to that of life. In particular, he finds that vital heat, for example, is not in its essence different from heat of non-vital origin, that the great generalization of the conservation of energy holds good for the mammalian body, that "vital" processes are accelerated by a rise, and retarded by a fall, in temperature exactly like "purely" chemical reactions in a test-tube. He is able to say in the language of his

chemical colleagues that living matter (protoplasm) behaves in many respects like an irreversible colloidal emulsoid hydrosol.—"*Physiology and 'Vital Force,' 'Nature.'*"

Obituary.

We regret to announce the death, on the 6th of this month, of Mr. F. Goulding, known to Freethinkers of some years ago as "the Atheist Blacksmith." Mr. Goulding, who was aged 81, was a fervent upholder of many advanced movements, and described himself as an Atheist-Anarchist. He was laid to rest at Manor Park Cemetery in the presence of his many admirers and his sorrowing sons and daughters, to whom we tender our sincere sympathy.—*E. M. V.*

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 postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30. Debate, "Should the Religious Terrorization of Children be made a Criminal Offence?" Affirmative, Mr. R. B. Kerr; Negative, Mr. G. Savile.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7. Mr. J. C. Whitebrook, "Curious Results of Time Notions."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11. C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "Medieval Art and Religion."

STANLEY HALL (Hallam Street, Great Portland Street, W.1.): Mr. E. C. Saphin, a Lecture and Social.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3. Mr. H. Constable, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30. Mr. Fred Mann, "The Taxes on Knowledge." Questions and Discussion invited. Silver Collection. The Branch will have a Social Evening in the D and F Café, High Street, Glasgow, at 7 p.m. on Saturday, October 31. Tickets, 2s. 6d., can be had at the meeting on Sunday.

HULL BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 5 Room, Labour Club, Kingston Square, Jarratt Street): 7.30. "Christianity and Progress."

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Pountain Street): 7. Mr. Frank H. O'Donnell, "Danton—French Revolutionary Leads."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30. Amy Capenerhurst, "An Evening with Schubert." Musical Illustrations.)

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall): 7. Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Evolution and Christianity."

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