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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>King Death.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	449
<i>The Battle of the Boyne.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	450
<i>The Essence of Whitman.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	451
<i>Palestine Exploration and the Bible.—W. Mann</i> - - - - -	452
<i>"Hands Off the Germs."—Javali</i> - - - - -	453
<i>Thomas Clarkson: The Friend of the Slave.—Joseph Bryce</i> - - - - -	458
<i>"The Fourth Age."—Vincent J. Hands</i> - - - - -	459
<i>Some Notes on a Blue Book.—Andrew Millar</i> - - - - -	460
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

King Death.

Under cover of a critical skit on the Folkestone practice of grading graves into first, second, and third class, the *New Leader* in its last issue treats its readers to what would, not so many years ago, have been reckoned frightful blasphemy, and it is made the worse by accompanying pictures of Satan receiving all sorts of people in hell. But the *New Leader* is not quite correct in thinking that the Folkestone practice—which, we believe, is fairly common all over the country—is something new with Christianity, inasmuch as it reverses the old idea that all are equal in death. In the history of Christianity this never meant more than the phrase "all are equal in the sight of God"; and that never prevented all sorts of distinctions being maintained on earth. The slave and the slave-owner might be equal in the sight of God; but that never prevented the slave-owner having the right to "wallop his own nigger," nor the Church advising the latter that it was his duty to submit. By all men being equal in death all that the Church has ever meant in practice is that all men had to die, and that was so obvious as to hardly need stating. But they were never all equal in the kind of funeral they received, nor the kind of grave in which they rested. And they were certainly not all equal in the next world. Even in heaven there were distinctions in position, while that between heaven and hell was pretty obvious. "Equality in death," "all men are brothers," "the labourer is worthy of his hire," etc., are just a few of the many loud-sounding phrases with which the Church has always fooled that class of people who prefer sound to sense.

People and Places.

Personally we see nothing more objectionable in men not being equal in death than we do in their not being equal in life. If inequality is justifiable in this world it is quite as justifiable in the next. The notion that if there is a next world the rules and regulations applying to this one must be reversed, is a sheer superstition. It is an expression of the essential quality of the belief in survival which models the next world on our peculiar ideas of what this world ought to be. The individualistic Christian pic-

tures it as a place where Socialism is anathema. The Socialist Christian as one where class distinctions are unknown. One suits the Duke of Northumberland, the other Canon Donaldson or Mrs. Snowden. But, if there is a future life, we incline to think that distinctions will be as obvious there as here. The heavenly halo is likely to be worn with greater ease and distinction by, say, a duke, straight from the House of Lords, than by Jack Jones. Melba would be in greater demand for the heavenly choir than Christabel Pankhurst. As a courtier performing before the heavenly throne one of our aristocracy would most likely cut a more graceful figure than would Mr. Wheatley. In an assembly in the next world there are scores of people who would unquestionably stand out with as much distinction as they do here. If there is an after life, and if they who survive are the same people there as they are here, we do not see how we are going to get rid of distinctions and classes. And if we are not the same people there as here, then it is not *us* at all, and the speculations as to what will happen to us there do not arise. *We* shall not be there. There will be only so many spiritual impostors masquerading in our places.

* * *

Ourselves and Others.

One would, of course, like to think that in another life, if there be one, there would be fewer artificial obstacles to natural ability and excellence asserting themselves than there are in this one. But we are not so certain about the abolition of natural classes, or even the benefit of living for ever. That has always appeared to be one of the dreariest and most miserable of outlooks. The probable reason why so many people think it desirable is that few ever take the trouble to think things out. The prospect of eternally singing the praises of an egotistical deity, telling him that he is great and holy, age after age, is a picture that could charm no one. And we do not think we should care to spend eternity with people whose only claim to a crown is that they have achieved the miserable and colourless ideal of a good Christian character. Those who say that they desire to live for ever can hardly have a reasonable sense of the consideration that is due to other people. Not the slightest attention is paid to *their* desires or to their comfort. We not only do not want to live for ever ourselves—we cannot conceive five or six thousand years of any kind of existence that would not become terribly monotonous, and we most strongly object to living for ever in the company of many folk we know in this world. There are some people we could not tolerate for a week. They get on one's nerves, and unless angels are permitted to swear regularly, frequently, and lustily, the irritation of flying round with certain people would be wearying and objectionable. What on earth would heaven be like if Mr. Cook had to twang harps in the company of Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Joynson-Hicks rub halos with Trotsky, or Lord Hugh Cecil flap wings side by

side with the editor of the *Freethinker*? Any of these departed spirits would probably welcome the institution of excursions to hell, and we should be surprised if all the return halves of the tickets were duly presented at the station from which they were issued. The only condition on which we would voluntarily try the experiment of living for ever would be that certain other people were either denied the like, or moved to a place where we should not meet.

* * *

Does Death Level?

And our friends of the *New Leader* overlook the fact that class distinctions—so far as their positive aspect is concerned—are not abolished by death. Of course, we all die, but that is not all. One can hardly expect, to take an example, that when Mr. Ramsay Macdonald dies he will be buried with the same attendant ceremonies as an ordinary Socialist. As a result of his pose as a good Christian he will have a longer sermon preached over his remains than will be preached over that of an ordinary member of his party, and a more distinguished preacher will be selected to deliver it. His funeral will cost more, there will probably be a more expensive monument erected over his remains, and there will be a larger quantity of speech-making and obituary writing than is the case with ordinary folk. Death does not destroy these distinctions, it serves far more as the occasion for marking them. And if one believes in God and a soul there should be no surprise if the deity gives a different welcome and a more prominent place to one than he does to another. We suspect that there might be a little surprise if there were not, and even Mr. George Lansbury will probably expect when the heavenly usher announces his arrival to have the magic letters M.P. added to his name. When one comes to think of it, the only equality of death is of a negative character. Each one of us when dead is equally inoperative for good or ill. We are all equally unresponsive to anything that may be said or done, equally powerless for good or ill. It is a negative, not a positive equality. In other respects death is not a leveller. It keeps in being the distinctions we have gained during life, which is, as a matter of fact, the only form of even temporary futurity on which we can confidently reckon.

* * *

Give Us Rest.

The fundamental absurdity of the future life is not connected with the belief in the survival of class distinctions, but with there being any personal survival at all. The continuance of class distinctions in death can only appear absurd in the light of a preconceived theory about God and his government of the next world, and ultimately this is a mere reflection of certain social aspirations. Those who believe that class distinctions ought not to exist in this world will not believe in them in the next. Like the most primitive believer they will construct the future life in accordance with what they think things ought to be. Spiritualists, who are adepts at getting the kind of revelation they think they ought to get, are expert at this, and build up a future life which satisfies each group according to its peculiar desires, and, of course, with no consideration whatever of probabilities or possibilities. The mother who longs for her baby child, is to meet it again some thirty years hence, when it will be grown out of all reasonable recognition. The parents are to be united with their families in a world where sexual life has no existence, and where family life can have no being. The "soul" is to exist minus a body, a function is to be without an organ, a

character fashioned for action in this environment is to function in one that is entirely different, men and women who know each other only because they have a shape, a form, different from other forms, are to be recognized without form at all. In a world where everything is thus turned upside down, who can tell what may happen? Where common sense has no power there is room for endless absurdities. It is a world where the fool may well be the equal of the philosopher and where even the banalities of the seance room may pass muster for the profoundest wisdom. All we can do is to hope that it is not true. Of that consoling thought neither the Archbishop of Canterbury nor Sir Arthur Conan Doyle can rob us. They make the future look horribly wearisome, but they cannot make it true.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Battle of the Boyne.

PERSECUTION has invariably been an essential factor in the history of religion. The advent of Protestantism embittered Catholicism, and between the two there has never been perfect peace. In Great Britain and Ireland rivers of blood have flown as the inevitable consequence of the never-ending conflict. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, sometimes the one and sometimes the other happened to be in power, with the inescapable result that the one in defeat was doomed grievously to suffer. James II. was an ardent Catholic, while William III. was an equally zealous Protestant. James was in many respects a strong and able man, possessing fine administrative qualities, and proved a complete success as Lord High Admiral and Warden of the Cinque Ports. But as king he was a tragic failure, and after three years the throne was declared vacant on the ground that "King James II., having endeavoured to subvert the constitution of the kingdom by breaking the original contract between king and people, and by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked persons having violated the fundamental laws and having withdrawn himself out of the kingdom, had abdicated the government, and that the throne had thereby become vacant." He crossed over to France, but did not remain there long, for the idea struck him that he could conquer Ireland, and to Ireland he went in great haste, with the motive of asserting through Ireland his right to the British throne. At first it seemed as if he were going to succeed. He held a parliament in Dublin, which passed Acts of attainder against nearly four thousand Protestants, who were ordered by the governor of the city to take their departure within twenty-four hours. Only housekeepers and traders were allowed to remain, and even they were subjected to more or less disagreeable restrictions. He had a small army at his disposal, with which to defend and promote the Catholic faith. William III., his successor on the British throne, watched his Irish policy with great interest, and in the autumn of the year 1689, sent the Duke of Schomberg with a small force to oppose him. The two armies had some engagements, but nothing of importance occurred until William appeared on the scene. He landed at Carrigfergus and immediately joined his army, and on catching sight of James's forces, strongly intrenched behind the River Boyne, he addressed them, saying, "I am glad to see you, gentlemen, and if you escape me now the fault will be mine." The battle of the Boyne took place on July 1, 1690, and Macaulay describes it thus:—

It was not until the assailants had reached the middle of the channel that they became aware of the

whole difficulty and danger of the service in which they were engaged. They had as yet seen little more than half the hostile army. Now whole regiments of foot and horse seemed to start out of the earth. A wild shout of defiance rose from the whole shore; during one moment the event seemed doubtful; but the Protestants pressed resolutely forward; and in another moment the whole Irish line gave way. Tyrconnel looked on in helpless despair. He did not want for personal courage, but his military skill was so small that he hardly ever reviewed his regiment in the Phoenix Park without committing some blunder; and to rally the ranks which were breaking all round him was no task for a general who had survived the energy of his body and of his mind, and yet had still the rudiments of his profession to learn. Several of his best officers fell while vainly endeavouring to prevail on their soldiers to look the Dutch Blues in the face. Richard Hamilton ordered a body of foot to fall on the French refugees, who were still deep in the water. He led the way, and accompanied by several courageous gentlemen, advanced, sword in hand, into the river. But neither his commands nor his example could infuse courage into that mob of cowstealers. He was left almost alone, and retired from the bank in despair. Further down the river Antrim's division ran like sheep at the approach of the English column. Whole regiments flung away arms, colours, and cloaks, and scampered off to the hills without striking a blow or firing a shot (*History of England*, vol. 2, p. 693).

Macaulay calls that battle an "ignominious rout," but to the Irish Protestants it was the most glorious victory ever won, and to this day they celebrate it with the utmost enthusiasm. With hearts aglow they drink to "the pious and immortal memory of King William III." The Battle of the Boyne is for them a material symbol of the eternal triumph of the Protestant cause over the forces of ignorance and superstition as embodied in the Church of Rome.

It must not be forgotten that, like most battles, that of the Boyne was fought in the interest of religion. In Ireland Catholics have always been overwhelmingly in the majority, with the inevitable result that Protestants have been subjected to a certain amount of persecution. On the other hand, we must not be blind to the fact that even in Ireland, since its union with Great Britain, Catholics have been in the list of the persecuted. Some of us remember the strong and bitter opposition shown to the granting of an endowment to the College of Maynooth, a distinctively Catholic institution designed for the education of Catholic priests. Dr. Lewis Edwards, the greatest of Welsh divines, contributed an article to the *Essayist*, entitled "Maynooth," in which he poured withering contempt upon that grant, and upon the Papacy as such. The article appeared in the year 1845, but the great man, before he died, had the grace to confess publicly that it was a wholly unworthy product of his brain. It is a firmly established fact in England for many generations Catholics were regarded and treated as woe-fully inferior people to whom many political rights were denied. We know perfectly well that persecution is a feature of religion as such, and not of any particular sect of it. Queen Elizabeth was a Protestant; but, as Lecky puts it, "she persecuted to the full extent of the power of her clergy, and that power was very great." Lecky says further:—

The Protestant persecutions were never so sanguinary as those of the Catholics, but the principle was affirmed quite as strongly, was acted on quite as constantly, and was defended quite as pertinaciously by the clergy. In Germany, at the time of the protestation of Spire, when the name of Protestant was assumed, the Lutheran princes absolutely prohibited the celebration of mass within their

dominions. In England a similar measure was passed as early as Edward VI. On the accession of Elizabeth, and before the Catholics had given any signs of discontent, a law was made prohibiting any religious service other than the Prayer Book; the penalty for the third offence being imprisonment for life, while another law imposed a fine on anyone who abstained from the Anglican service. The Presbyterians through a long succession of reigns were imprisoned, branded, mutilated, scourged, and exposed in the pillory. Many Catholics under false pretences were tortured and hung. Anabaptists and Arians were burnt alive (*Rationalism in Europe*, vol. 2, p. 39-40).

Thus we see that the principle illustrated in the Battle of the Boyne penetrates the very essence of Christianity in all periods of its history. There never was a time when it could have been said of Christians, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Nothing could have been more faithfully Christian in spirit than the Spanish Inquisition. Such being unquestionably the case what logical inference must we draw from it? What is it that accounts for the outstanding differences and hostilities between the various religious systems? The only possible conclusion is that religion is an exclusively human creation, and serves to gratify desires which owe their existence to ignorance and fear. Primitive man dreaded solitude because it brought him face to face with insoluble mystery, and out of the sense of mystery all the existing cults emerged. Christianity is the latest outgrowth or exerescence from the primal stupidity of human nature, and Christianity is not fundamentally different in origin and development from other religions, into formal competition with some of which it had to enter for a few centuries. Mystery is the stuff out of which all religion is made, and almost all religions are equally true or equally false. You may call them, if you like, "beastly devices of the heathen," but to trace their evolution is to throw a flood of light on human life. If one is true, so are all; but true or false, they bear closely on our journey from nowhere to here, and they do not begin to be of use till they are dead. J. T. LLOYD.

The Essence of Whitman.

Spirits are not finely touched,
But to fine issues. —Shakespeare.
I warned both hands before the fire of life,
It sinks and I am ready to depart. —Landor.

THE continuous production of editions of Walt Whitman's poetical works, and the issue of critical commentaries on the poet and his methods is a sure sign of the interest of the reading public in "the tan-faced poet of the West." What is even more significant is that contemporary writers of repute take up the subject of Whitman and his poetry with the same zest as they display with regard to the old-established favourites of literature. For example, in the delightful new series of *English Men of Letters*, issued by the house of Macmillan, Whitman is accorded an early and an entirely honourable place.

Mr. John Bailey, one of the foremost of English critics, has been happily entrusted with this monograph on Whitman, and very interesting reading the volume makes. For Mr. Bailey is a critic saturated with the best of European culture and the American poet is a very rough diamond. And, although the English critic is both attracted and repelled by the Western poet, so great is Whitman's fascination that the critic makes us feel that this iconoclast deserves a place among the splendid names that adorn the English men of letters.

Poets, even great poets, do not always realize the value of what they have written. Wordsworth thought as highly of the trumpery *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* as he did of those magnificent poems which have fixed his name far above all rivals save only Shakespeare and Milton. Tennyson valued the trashy and tawdry *Idylls of the King* as much as he did those superb lyrics which made him the greatest poet of his generation. So with Whitman. The original *Leaves of Grass* was a notable volume, but he was continuously adding to it poems which were indistinguishable from prose, and the petty prose of an auctioneer's catalogue. Often the result was as comic as a street-boy's version of *The Merchant of Venice*, but Whitman thought, or liked people to think, he was writing masterpieces all the time.

Mr. Bailey brings into prominence the rare Wordsworthian manner in Whitman's poetry. This part of his verse deals with the poet's recollections of his childhood and youth, the period when he "loafed and invited his soul" on the lovely sands at Long Island within sight of the ocean. This communion with Nature was to bring to the poet serenity of mind, as it did in an even greater degree to Wordsworth himself. And Wordsworth, who was a much finer and greater artist than Whitman, got this feeling upon the printed page in a much more inspiring and direct fashion than the American poet. Who can ever forget the utterance of John Stuart Mill, who had been educated on too strict a curriculum that when he read Wordsworth's poetry it was as if a bolt had been shot back in his brain, and he saw for the first time the freshness and beauty of the earth.

The reputation of Whitman, as of so many poets, is endangered by the excess of what is published. As in the cases of Byron and Wordsworth, the exquisite little volumes of selections made by Matthew Arnold are surely sufficient for the ordinary reader. So a selection might be made of the best of Whitman, and a most attractive volume would be the result. The reader could then judge Whitman at his best and worthiest, instead of being repelled by the jargon and bombast of some of the "Calls" and "So Longs" and later poems, or self-styled poems, whose proper place is the waste-paper basket and not the printed page at all.

Mr. Bailey indicates that Whitman's association with American journalism of the middle of the last century had a deterrent effect upon his style. Maybe, the *Brooklyn Eagle* was neither better nor worse than those other newspapers edited by Messrs. Jefferson Brick and Zephaniah Scudder, and satirized by Charles Dickens in the pages of *Martin Chuzzlewit*. But that is neither here nor there. Edgar Allen Poe, a flawless artist, was also a journalist, but he never allowed the fact to destroy his art. The fact is that Whitman had no "style" to destroy. Large masses of his verse are nothing but the notes for poems, the unfinished studies for a painting to be completed later. His prose, to be quite frank, is the very worst among the poets of the English-speaking race. The original preface to *Leaves of Grass* is a terrible performance, worse than the average publisher's puff preliminary, written by a poor scribe anxious to earn the price of his dinner. *Democratic Vistas*, and his notes on the Civil War, contain much that is feeble and wearisome. Indeed, Whitman's challenge to posterity lies in a choice collection of lyrics, in which, to adopt Emerson's phrase, "uncomparable things are said incomparably well."

Whitman was an iconoclast, and he sought to be the poet of democracy. But he stammered as often

as he sang, and the first careless rapture of an inspired utterance was seldom his. He could never let himself go like Swinburne in a Niagara of enthusiasm, and call the world to witness:—

I am the trumpet at thy lips, the clarion at thy tongue,
or the more stupendous audacity of Shakespeare's:—

Not mine own fears,
But the prophetic soul of the wide world,
Dreaming on things to come.

Whitman meant well, but with the issue of the original edition of *Leaves of Grass* he had almost delivered his message. A few splendid lyrics followed, but the rest were only fit for the poet's corner of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, alongside blatant eulogies of politicians who rewarded services with no niggardly and ungenerous hand. It is highly significant in Whitman's case that, although he would have liked to break entirely fresh ground in poetry, to enlarge the frontiers of poetical utterance, he never entirely succeeded in doing so. He pointed the way, leaving others to follow. His most artistic utterances were not concerned with the crowded democracy of the States, nor with the physical glories of humanity. His most perfect poem is that recording the song of a little brown bird, and the burden of the lyric is death, the oldest sorrow of the human race.

MIMNERMUS.

Palestine Exploration and the Bible.

III.

(Concluded from page 437.)

As we have shown in previous articles, the Egyptian records, far from confirming the truth of the bondage and exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, went far to prove that the story as told in the Bible was wholly unhistorical. The Palestinian excavations confirm this conclusion.

In spite of the fact that the Bible writer never once mentions the name of the king ruling over Egypt at the time of the alleged bondage in Egypt—the word Pharaoh is not a proper name, it is a title meaning "The Great House," a title corresponding to the modern titles of Czar and Sublime Porte—and therefore the reconciler of the Bible and the monuments is at liberty to choose the reign of any Egyptian king, as the reign during which the Israelites were "oppressed," yet, even with all this latitude, the Bible story cannot be fitted into Egyptian history.

Professor Macalister observes: "It must be freely admitted that the result of excavation has been to confuse rather than to illuminate the history of Palestine from the Tell el-Armana period down to, let us say, the time of Samuel." And, further, "These remarks are especially applicable to what is one of the darkest problems of the early Biblical history—the date of Exodus and the relations of the immigrant tribes of Israel to Egypt on the one hand, and to Canaan on the other" (p. 156). The "reconcilers" have generally agreed to pick upon Ramesses II. as the Pharaoh of the oppression, and his son, and successor, Merneptah, as the Pharaoh of the exodus. These identifications have now been definitely and completely disproved. Says Professor Macalister:—

It must be admitted that the effect of excavation has been to add most bewildering complications to this simple story; and it is now quite clear that

¹ Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, p. 155.

the course of the Hebrew colonization of Palestine must have been a much more gradual and elaborate process. The first discovery which indicated this conclusion was that of the mummy of Merneptah himself, concealed in the tomb of Amon-Hotep II. Whatever explanation we may choose to adopt of the crossing of the Red Sea, it is mere casuistry to pretend that it does not imply that Pharaoh was drowned there along with his host; this may not be actually narrated in so many words, but it is quite clearly presupposed.

Next came the great "victory" stele of Merneptah, giving another severe blow to the traditional explanation of the Exodus narrative. This monument bears a pæan celebrating the exploits of the king, and it ends with remarkable words to the effect that Ashkelon, Gezer, and Janoam are destroyed, and *Israel is wasted and hath no seed*. So that Israel was already the name of a settled agricultural community in Palestine when Merneptah caused this monument to be erected. (Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, pp. 157-158.)

It is evident, unless we have another case of resurrection from the dead, that Merneptah could not be lying at the bottom of the Red Sea, and at the same time carrying on a victorious campaign in Canaan. It has been said that Pharaoh could not have been drowned along with his army. But the Bible declares that the Lord "overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea" (Psalms cxxxvi. 15). Kalisch, the great Hebrew scholar, points out that "the translation of the Authorised Version 'overthrew' is certainly too indistinct"; the Hebrew text says distinctly, "He (God) *drove Pharaoh and his host into the Red Sea*."² Moreover, as he further remarks: "In fact, the retaliation of divine justice would have been very imperfect had it not included him who was the source and the author of the miseries of the Israelites, against whom the ten plagues were chiefly directed, and who were themselves less unwilling to obey the commands of God (Ex. x. 7)" (vol. 2, p. 197). Even if Pharaoh had survived, he would have had no army for a campaign in Canaan, for, as Kalisch remarks: "It is evidently the intention of the sacred historian to describe the total annihilation of the whole military force of the Egyptians" (vol. 2, p. 192). Again, if Pharaoh raised another army, and pursued the Israelites into Canaan, how is it there is no account of it in the Bible?

The attempt to transfer the exodus to the time of the Hyksos kings of Egypt before the time of Ramessu II. and Merneptah, or to some ruler after their time is equally difficult. As Professor Macalister concludes:—

To sum up, we have three possible correlations of the Exodus story with historical events, which excavation in Egypt has revealed to us; but all three are involved in difficulties through which without further light it will be impossible to see our way. If we take the Hyksos expulsion as representing the Exodus, we shall find it impossible to explain the condition of things which exist in the Tel el-Amarna period, with any conservation of the Biblical story whatsoever. If we choose the Amarna period as being the time of the Exodus, the details will be found quite irreconcilable, although the broad outlines are not dissimilar. If we return to the old theory of Ramessu II. and Merneptah, we must explain the "Israel" stele of Merneptah in some more satisfactory way than has yet been discovered, and we must also explain how the Israelites hoped to get away from the sway of an oppressor who maintained a great for-

ress in the middle of the land to which they were fleeing.³

Every discovery adds to the difficulties of the would-be reconcilers of the Bible with ancient history. Professor Macalister points out that "the Beisan stelæ add further difficulties" (p. 158). And the tablets recently discovered at Boghazköi "add yet one more embarrassing complication" (p. 159). It is as well to point out here that reports appearing in the newspapers regarding discoveries made in the ancient East should be received with extreme caution, as they invariably claim the new discoveries as confirmation of the Bible history. Even Merneptah's victory stela was so claimed. Professor Peet says: "It is almost incredible that in some minds the discovery of this new document merely served to clinch the belief in the dating of the exodus to the reign of Merneptah [Merneptah]. Cooler heads, however, were much more concerned to note that, so far from confirming the Merneptah date it made it practically impossible."⁴

It is said that many of the places named in the Bible still bear the same name to-day. But, says Professor Macalister: "The tourist, if he takes the trouble to think at all, finds himself repelled from faith by the nauseating list of contradictory and often impossible identifications of Holy Sites that have been pumped into him.....there are tales of travellers who have departed from "Gordon's Tomb" under an impression that they have been inspecting the burial-place of General Gordon."⁵

Dr. Beke, the traveller, throws some light upon the way in which these identifications of Bible sites came about. He relates that when he was at Harran he found a well, and he and his wife gave it as their opinion that this was the well "at which the daughter of Bethuel was met by Abraham's steward (Gen. xxiv. 10-20)." They made most minute enquiries for any history, or tradition, attaching to the well, without success. However, the suggestion caught on; the inhabitants of Harran, says Dr. Beke, "appear, however, to have gladly availed themselves of my suggestion, the 'tradition' was immediately set on foot, and we learn from Captain Burton's statement that it has spread to the city of Damascus—and this all within nine years!"⁶ It is known, now and for ever, as "Abraham's Well." A standing witness to the truth of Holy Writ. The best, the only witnesses to the truth of the Bible stories, are those that have been manufactured.

W. MANN.

"Hands Off the Germs."

THE fact that I disagree with some of the views of Mr. Vincent Hands as set forth in various issues of the *Freethinker* shall not deter me from heartily welcoming the reappearance of his merry quips and quiddities in your issue of June 27. In this welcome your other readers are certainly with me, and we all trust that those protean and ubiquitous disturbers of protoplasmic peace, the bacilli, which Mr. Hands informs us have been making a rough house of his inside, will experience a speedy confounding of their knavish tricks.

In the last column of his letter Mr. Hands exhibits in marked degree the true philosophic spirit. It is, indeed, difficult to preserve mental equanimity and display an attitude of benevolent toleration towards those quasi-philosophers who so persistently

³ Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, p. 161.

⁴ T. E. Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament*, pp. 109-110.

⁵ Macalister, *A Century of Excavation*, p. 33.

⁶ C. T. Beke, *The Idol in Horeb*, p. 28.

² M. M. Kalisch, *A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 193.

croak from the house-tops their inability to find what they are pleased to designate the "cause," "purpose," and "destiny" of the universe. As though there could be a cause, a purpose, or a destiny to the sum-total of things and phenomena—the "all-that-is." Of course, the thunder's crash has a "cause," the lightning's flash a "destiny," and the tapeworm's enormous fecundity a "purpose"; but the *whole* is a never-beginning, never-ending purposeless flux. The very glories of the heavens are magnificently eloquent not only of an ever-present integrative evolution, but also of an equally ever-present, compensatory, disintegrative evolution. The delicate, tenuous embryonic nebulae are forebears of the virile, incandescent blue and white suns. The latter degenerate first into the cooler yellow and red suns, later into the cold, dark, dense, dead masses that wander about through the silent depths of inter-stellar space, until at long last, possibly through collision with other heavenly bodies, possibly through intra-atomic disruption, their component elements are resolved into the primal stuff of the cosmos, whence, ultimately, the spiral nebulae are begotten; and once more the ever-recurring cycle starts afresh. The telescope reveals cosmic babes and cosmic corpses, or, as the astronomer Flammarion happily puts it: "In the heavens are cradles and tombs." The cosmic process has no beginning and no end, and involves no creation and no annihilation of the fundamental substance. The sum-total of the universe is a constant. Of "purpose" in the universe there is not a whit save what puny man in his petty conceit puts into it. And what is man himself but an ephemeral speck in the ceaseless flux, a tiny eddy in the boundless ocean of matter-energy? Nevertheless he is a not altogether unimportant link connecting a past with a future eternity. But then, alas, so is our friend the enemy, the germ! And though the affectionate parent regards his child as of more value than the sparrow, yet purblind but unbiased Nature makes no distinction in her offspring. The child may crush the fly, but the bacillus kills the child. The fact that man is a present resultant of certain of the cosmic matter-energy processes extending backwards fan-wise in time through an infinite past series of permutations and combinations of the fundamentals of the universe must, perforce, compel him to join issue with the Canadian poet¹ and cry:—

We can't do what we would but what we must.
Consoling thought when you've been on the bust!

Over matter-energy processes anti-dating his existence man obviously has no control. On the other hand, there is the further indubitable fact that man himself is, within the limits of the deterministic sphere, an initiator of cosmic matter-energy processes that will extend into the future throughout all time. This should give him furiously to think—and induce him to act circumspectly. Every cause is necessarily an effect of an antecedent cause, and similarly every effect is the cause of a subsequent effect. To talk of a *first* cause or a *final* effect is to be contradictory in terms. The very suppositions are nonsensical and constitute sheer unthinkableabilities. To quote once more from our poet:—

There's no haphazard in this world of ours.
Cause and effect are grim relentless powers.
They rule the world.

With reference to the Cosmos, the true philosophical spirit and outlook is, I submit, that of the man who, while resignedly accepting the world as he finds it, yet at the same time spares no efforts within the fairly wide field of action permitted by his deter-

¹ Robert Service.

ministic tether, to make the little corner of it—into which, without a by-your-leave, he has been pitchforked, and out of which, with an equally characteristic disinterestedness, he must one day be thrown—a little more comfortable for his fellow sentient beings, a little more happy for humanity, than it was before his advent on the cosmic stage.

What makes a human life really worthy of having been lived is, to paraphrase the alleged words of St. Peter, to have been compassionate and practically helpful towards the underdog, to have been courteous to all men. Life is, indeed, a mug's game if it be spent in futile wringings of hands and perpetual bleatings of "*cui bono?*" concerning existence. The mentality of the let's-go-into-the-garden-and-eat-worms type of pessimist is not only anti-social but unscientific and unphilosophical. Give me rather the type of criminal who, when asked a few days before his execution, by the prison chaplain if he could do anything for him, replied: "Yes, I want some lessons in playing the harp." To the healthy-minded life is a keen and intensely interesting game. It is, moreover, a game to be played fairly and with a never-abating energy uninfluenced by the knowledge that sooner or later one's own bails will be sent flying. Such outlook on the universe it is that makes those dauntless spirits—captains of their own souls—who are capable of appreciating life as *the* great cosmic joke. It is only men of such calibre who can cry, when the fitful fever is all but over:—

I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

In contradistinction to the unthinking crowd whose whole existence is little more than vegetative, it is men with this philosophic outlook who have wrested most of the truly valuable out of life, it is, in short, they and only they, who have really *lived*. Concerning such men I cannot imagine the Jewish-Christian Yahveh-Jehovah making aught but disparaging remarks. But I fancy that an omnipotent, omniscient and all-benevolent being, if he existed, would say of them: "They have used their talents wisely and well."

JAVALI.

Acid Drops.

We are in grave doubts whether *Freethinker* readers will ever see these lines. Tuesday, July 20, the day on which we go to press, has been selected by a number of "Psychics" (that is a term which in the vocabulary of Spiritualism covers all sorts of folly and foolishness) as the day on which all sorts of trouble is to start. There is to be earthquakes, inter-cosmical trouble, a rising of the black races, wars in which Russia will attempt to "clear God and his Son out of the world," etc. Hundreds of spirit messages have been received, and, of course, the Commander-in-Chief of the spirit armies is in it. Sir Arthur has had reports from his army of spirit scouts, and he is content that something dreadful is about to happen. We confess to being in a state of funk, and we have put off paying the office rent this quarter till we see what happens. One may as well be on the safe side.

But we think Sir Arthur has made a grave blunder. If he refers to the practice of his forerunners he will find they always left a prophecy undated or gave it a date that was a very long way ahead. Sir Arthur goes the whole hog, here as elsewhere, and evidently wishes to demonstrate that where the spirit world is concerned he is yet to see something too stupid for him to swallow. We congratulate him on his courage, even if we cannot upon his common sense. There is just one grain of craftiness in what he says. He informed a reporter—who must have had trouble in keeping his face straight, that "even if some great event

does not occur, it will still be one of the most remarkable psychic incidents of which we have record." We are inclined to disagree with this. If Sir Arthur will look up an account of the cases in a good first-class asylum for, say, the last fifty years, he will find "psychic incidents" of an equally remarkable character. Sir Arthur's "psychic" correspondents are not nearly so original as he appears to think. And we are wondering whether Sir Arthur would care to unload his war stock at, say, fifty per cent. below the market quotation? With so many dreadful things due it will not be worth much to him.

Dr. Campbell Morgan, who is now visiting England, told a Convention meeting: "There are people who say 'Cheer up! Keep smiling!' It is the devil's doctrine—unless Christ gives you a reason for it." Judging by the lugubrious faces of most chapel-mongers, we should say "Christ seldom does give a reason. And when he does, the result is an oily, unnatural imitation of cheerfulness that is as unlike wholesome gaiety as anything could be.

The Rev. D. B. Knox, compiler of "*More Quotable Anecdotes*," tells a story about Dr. Adam Clarke. The Doctor, who was an early riser, was once asked by a young preacher how he managed to do the early rising business; did the Doctor pray about it? he piously enquired. "No," replied the good man, "I get up." The Methodist writer who retells the story comments:

There are many, many people in the Churches who would be benefited by a relation of that story from the pulpit, to point their attention to the fact that there are hosts of things they would be better occupied in doing than in making them only a subject of prayer.

We heartily agree with that statement. Many of the problems that confront our civilization to-day would not be troubling us had our pious forerunners but occupied their time in solving them, and removing the root causes, instead of asking "Our Father" to put things right. And many another difficulty might be surmounted if Christians would think and work rather than "watch and pray." We sometimes wonder if one reason why Christianity gained a hold on the masses is that, because it teaches them to pray for a thing to be put right rather than to do something to that end, it appeals to common human weakness of "letting things slide."

The World's Evangelical Alliance has published an illustrated verbatim report of the speeches at the Albert Hall meeting. It contains the full speeches of "Jix," Bishop Knox, and other Protestant heroes, with portraits. Those of our readers who miss their *Ally Sloper* would do well to borrow, we won't say buy, this diverting sixpennyworth. From it the reader can learn all about that brotherly love which is to unite all the peoples of the earth in one Christian community.

Bishop Welldon, in a letter to the *Times*, protests against the language now frequently used by certain of the Labour members in the Commons. "Vulgar profanity," says he, "does no good to any cause; it is offensively painful to all high-minded people." What is offensively painful is that the Bishop's gorge rises only when the "language" comes from people whose opinions are opposed to his own. We notice, too, he is as whist as a mouse when the "high-minded" pious use disgustingly vulgar and offensive language about Atheists.

A wallet of Treasury Notes from his congregation was accepted by the Rev. Dr. McKeag, of Belfast, on his being transferred to another church. Evidently the reverend gentleman thought it would be just as well to make sure here of a little material recompense of his labours in case the heavenly reward should fall short of expectations.

"You are not to bring your politics into religion," Bishop Gore told the Anglo-Catholic Conference, "but you are to bring your religion into politics." Heaven forbid! There are already quite enough of the historic Christian practices in politics; such as, childish invective, manœuvring for advantage, exaggeration, disregard of truth in furthering one's cause, attribution of bad motives to opponents, a trading on public ignorance and credulity, intolerance of the other's point of view, and so on.

Many ministers nowadays are in the habit of doffing their clerical attire and wearing a dress that does not proclaim their calling. This tendency the Rev. F. W. Newland, chairman of the Congregational Union, has condemned. He says the ordained man has a solemn vocation and should be willing to proclaim it; nothing is gained by hiding the minister's special position. He should wear a costume that befits his calling; and what is required is a sartorial genius to devise such a costume. Well, if the parson wants a dress befitting to his vocation, why can't he be satisfied with one similar to that used by his Central African brother of the same profession? The ideas that the Christian medicine-man and his savage prototype teach are pretty much alike, and the dress ought to be so too.

The proceedings of the Wesleyan Conference show great minds struggling with advertisement. The Rev. James Lewis, in a fine business speech, stated that they spent £10,000 on a building and they would not spend £1,000 on a man. The ordinary man immediately asks, what has the concern to sell? The vocabulary is that of commerce, but the raw material for their activities is the mind, caught young, and successively bewildered with words. The reverend gentleman scents opposition from Roman Catholics; Dr. J. H. Ritson warned the Conference that their greatest struggle was coming between Roman Catholics and Protestants—concerning the housing question? No. Concerning the cost of living? No. Concerning a good education to ensure good citizens? No. Their greatest struggle with the two opposition houses was—and a grown-up man is ashamed to write it—concerning the interpretation of the Sacraments and their view of the ministry. The savage is still in our midst and the dead horse mentioned by Mr. Rosetti is painful evidence that labour leaders ought to consult eye specialists.

It appears to be the rule with a certain section of Europeans always to write disparaging of the Turk. He was England's ally once, but, as Dame Margery Eyre says, "Let that pass." The Belgrade correspondent of the *Spectator*, anxious to be on the side of the angels, makes the following statements in his letter that cannot be taken seriously providing that words mean anything: "But if the Turks have left little material imprint on Belgrade, they have bequeathed a terrible moral heritage of Oriental laziness, corruption, and inefficiency." Now that is a nice big black eye for Johnny, and no doubt in the style set by Mr. G. K. Chesterton. Further on in the letter, however, the writer, having forgotten or not read what he had written, gives the following:—

Generally speaking, the impression one obtains in joining in the various phases of Belgrade life is one of a quiet and agreeable "Gemütlichkeit." No one is in a hurry. Nowhere does one feel cramped. People are making money, and to judge by the large variety of goods displayed at extremely high prices they are also spending it. The city is faced with no serious social problems. There is little or no unemployment, while strikes are forbidden by law.

Only a true-blue journalist can do this sort of thing in this particular style. All schoolboys know that the Saracens taught the Crusaders to wash themselves. This particular journalist is suffering with a religious complex and ought to get rid of it by joining the Salvation Army instead of implying that the Turk—once an ally—has no right to be on the earth. Let brotherly love continue.

Business in Methodist circles must be in a bad way. The following resolution, which was carried at the Wesleyan Conference, is a sign of the times: "That the Conference declares in favour of the union of the Wesleyan, Primitive, and United Methodist Churches on the basis of the amended scheme of union and sends it as provisional legislation to the May Synods of 1927." And this amalgamated body is a small fraction of the number of religions that profess to have the one and only hope of salvation.

Mesmerism and stupefaction by words may be traced in the explanation by a correspondent in the *Daily News*. The subject is, "Reservation in the Greek Church," and the following extract is brought to light in the twentieth century to show the thin partition that trembles between enlightened human beings and the savage: "The adoration offered by the Greek Orthodox Church to the consecrated elements as being the Blood and Body of Christ, is the adoration offered to the Presence in the rite of Holy Communion, and not apart from that rite." Shades of Diogenes, shades of Lucian, and lamp-shades for those who cannot look the business of life in the face.

The advisability of parents always giving a reason to their children for a command was emphasized by Dr. Herbert Gray, at the Baby Week Conferences. The "because I say so" reason was an insult to the child's intelligence. This advice of the Doctor's is right enough, but we can see trouble brewing for the Churches when the child trained on such lines grows older and is expected to take in all the parson or Sunday-school teacher tells him. There is so much Christian dogma for which an intelligent and convincing reason cannot be given to an alert and enquiring child. There are so many absurdities, stupidities, inconsistencies, and irrationalities, which the poor unfortunate teacher will have to explain must be accepted "because God—or Christ—or the Bible—says so." And as Dr. Gray says, that kind of reason insults the child's intelligence. By the look of things, the child trained on the Doctor's plan will be even more indifferent to religion than is the present generation. Hence, we strongly advise the Churches to discourage the Doctor's dangerous notions, or else clients will become still scarcer in the near future. And as every servant of the Churches knows, where there is no belief the parsons perish.

As to the kind of heavenly kingdom the spiritualistic revelation sets forth, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gives us a hint in his two-volume work, the *History of Spiritualism* :—

As we survey all the speculations of mankind, perhaps the Elysian fields of the ancients and the happy hunting grounds of the Red Indian are nearer the actual facts than any fantastic presentation of heaven and hell which the ecstatic vision of the theologians have conjured up.

We think old Omar put it more neatly than that with his "Heaven's but the vision of fulfilled desire." Anyway, Sir Arthur's pet religion appears to be not a bit more progressive in its vision of a heaven than is the Christian religion. Both that and his merely reiterate what the ancients imagined. And, judging by the growing indifference to religion, we should say stale visions are becoming a drug on the market.

The ways of the followers of the gentle Jesus are peculiar, particularly when they happen to missionaries and removed from the restraining influence of secular developments. In Korea an American missionary has just been charged with an assault on a native boy. The good man found the boy stealing, a form of evil that is happily absent in the Christian land from which the missionary hails. So he promptly branded the word "thief" in Korean on the lad's cheek, which may serve to remind him that while missionaries may help others to steal from the heathen, it is not proper for the heathen to steal from the missionary. The Korean papers are demanding that the missionary be expelled.

That strikes us as a very mild kind of punishment. If ever a term of imprisonment was justifiable, it is here.

The vicar of Milborne St. Andrew, Blandford, Dorset, wrote to the Duke of Northumberland saying that he thought mining royalties should be abolished. The Duke retorted that the Church from which the vicar receives his salary is one of the largest owners of mining royalties. That appears to be a clean hit on the part of the Duke. But it should be remembered that some of the leading men in the Church have offered to support the surrender of the Church's mining royalties—provided they are profitably bought out. Nor should it be forgotten that before now the Church has surrendered property. It got rid of its slaves—at market prices—when the Government abolished slavery and bought out the slave owners.

Mr. Alexander Irvine has written a life of Christ, and Canon Donaldson informs the readers of the *Daily Herald* that he has "never read a better description of the youth of Jesus Christ—his home, his trade, and his surroundings in those years." One wonders where on earth Mr. Irvine gets his information? The New Testament does not supply it. But it satisfies Canon Donaldson and the sloppy Christian readers of the *Herald* because it pictures Jesus as fulfilling the law that "man should eat bread in the sweat of his face." The nonsense that some people will write about Jesus is astounding, when the only picture we have is that of a wandering wayside preacher. The notion of him as a working man earning his bread in the sweat of his face is absurd. Why not picture him as a coal miner? That there were no coal mines should not interfere with the sketch. It only makes the story the more wonderful.

The *Christian World*, in noting the fact of a tablet being erected to Michael Faraday in the Southwark Library, calls attention to what it calls Faraday's curious relation to religion. Faraday, it will be remembered, belonged to a curiously narrow religious sect, and varied his great scientific labours with religious addresses which the *Christian World* describes as consisting of loosely strung texts from the Bible which he believed to be inerrant and verbally inscribed. It adds that Faraday in this provides an interesting psychological study. We quite agree with that, but it is not fundamentally more curious than is the case of many eminent men to-day who, along with enlightenment in other directions, profess a form of religious belief quite at variance with their general culture. There is the same problem with all, but in the case of Faraday the issue was faced with greater intellectual courage and straightforwardness than it is with others that one might name. Faraday had the courage to say that he did not use his reason with religion, or he would not believe it. And that shows a greater sincerity of character than is the case with those who try to harmonise by the aid of elaborately framed excuses a knowledge of modern science with the beliefs of primitive savages.

The Rev. Dr. Norwood says of what he calls the "mystery of pain" that he cannot accept the "cheap and easy" interpretation of it that it is sent for our good. But if Dr. Norwood will look at the matter without confusing his mind with religious beliefs he will discover that the "mystery" is quite unnecessary. The mystery begins only when he sets himself to harmonise the existence of pain with the government of God. There is no mystery for the non-believer in God, any more than there is with other natural facts. There are only problems to solve; but Mr. Norwood commences with an unwarrantable belief, and lacking either the courage or the ability to see how unwarranted it is, proceeds to further confusion by a half-hearted apology, and a pretence of readiness to face facts at all costs. All the mystery is of his own creation. But in his behalf it may be said that if he did not have a mystery of some sort his profession would be gone.

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

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

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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.

CINE CERE.—Thanks. We shall be making use of the book, but it is about the last word in unapproachable silliness. Any stupidity passes so long as the name "Christianity" is tacked on to it. Then even otherwise sensible people seem compelled to treat it with the respect due to sound common sense.

B. WILSON.—Letter has been forwarded. Hope you are well.

R. T. BRANKERD.—Jesus denounced hypocrites, but so has most other people. Everybody in public life denounces the hypocrites that support the other side but remain quiet about those on their own. So one finds the man who swindles in thousands preaching the beauties of honesty to the fellow who can only operate in sixpences. If men would look at facts instead of being led away with catchwords there would be more real improvement in the world than there is.

L. M. EASTERBROOK.—We have dealt with the subject of your letter in the "Acid Drop" column. Two or three of the London dailies chronicled the incident, but one could hardly expect them to give it the prominence they would have given to news which either glorified Christianity or vilified Freethought.

A. B. M.—Trust you will enjoy yourself. We note your hope that we shall soon be on holiday, but we have to snatch a few days when and how we can, and even then we have to take our work with us.

W. WILSON.—The Industrial Christian Fellowship is one of the many attempts the Church is making to get the people to swallow a set of absurd doctrines under cover of professed interest in social questions. It undoubtedly succeeds with many, but one hopes for the growth of a larger measure of common-sense.

W. C. ELLIOT.—See "Acid Drops."

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

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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.

Readers of the *Freethinker* and members of the N.S.S. will regret to learn that Miss E. M. Vance has just undergone a rather serious operation for gall stones. For some time she had been complaining of internal pains, and an examination disclosed its nature. She was, by the orders of her doctor, sent at once to Charing Cross Hospital, and an operation was performed on July 16. We are glad to say that the operation was completely successful, although it has naturally left her weak, and it may be some weeks before she is her normal self again, but she has good recuperative powers, and we expect her recovery will be fairly rapid. It is too early after the operation to say when she will return home, but it will not be delayed longer than is absolutely necessary. As this complaint has evidently been bothering her for some time, we are hoping that the operation will have the effect of improving her general health.

The Federation of Lancashire and District Branches of the N.S.S. held its quarterly meeting on Sunday last, and there was an encouraging attendance of delegates. Meetings are being held at which Messrs. S. Cohen, Monks, Newton, Partington, and Sissons have taken part. Some discussions with local preachers have also been held. The Secretary, Mr. Newton, of 94 Victoria Road, Dukinfield, Cheshire, makes a very earnest appeal for the co-operation of all N.S.S. Branches and members, and we sincerely hope the appeal will meet with a good response. The Branches here cover what is probably the most thickly populated area in Britain, and there must be many thousands of Freethinkers who should be lending a hand, and very many thousands of men and women who are just on the border line between Christianity and Freethought.

The *Yorkshire Evening Post* having written an article in which it spoke of "the debt civilization owes to the Catholic Church," Mr. A. Radlett, one of our readers, wrote asking what was the debt civilization owed to the Christian Church? The letter was not inserted, the editor explaining that it would lead to religious controversy, which he always endeavoured to avoid. So that you may enter on religious controversy, so far as making statements glorifying the Church is concerned, but you must not intrude controversy in the shape of even enquiring whether the statement made on behalf of the Christian Church is true! Some pretty notions of what is meant by fair play!

The *Observer* records as a journalistic feat of note that for thirteen years Mr. Robert Lynd has contributed a weekly article to the *New Statesman*. We do not wish to belittle Mr. Lynd's achievement, but we may point out that for the past twenty-nine years there has only been one issue of the *Freethinker* that has not contained an article by Mr. Cohen, and that is placing on one side other matter from his pen.

In explaining how the "cut-off" is applied to broadcast speeches when the time limit is reached, Captain Eckersley, of the B.B.C., related an amusing mistake once made by an official. A parson after delivering an earnest address closed with the words: "My friends, one and all of us, if we observe these precepts, we shall go to heaven. I don't think I have spoken too long, have I?" At least, that is how he meant to end. But the "cut-off" official jumped in too soon, so that the reverend gentleman was made to say: "We shall go to heaven. I don't think—" Truth will out.

Thomas Clarkson: The Friend of the Slave.

II.

(Concluded from page 444.)

CLARKSON'S next act, after the formation of the Committee, was to visit Bristol, one of the principal slave ports, to collect evidence. The journey to Bristol was taken on horseback, and coming suddenly in sight of the imposing city, Clarkson felt like some presumptuous youth about to attack a giant's stronghold. The Church bells, he tells us, were loudly ringing as he approached; but we may be quite sure they were not ringing to welcome to Bristol a man who had vowed to abolish their slave trade, or die in the attempt. Mr. C. Cohen, in his book, tells us that in the early years of the eighteenth century the number of vessels that left Bristol Channel annually for the slave coast averaged sixty, which must have been no inconsiderable part of its commerce.

From this time onward, until his health gave way, in 1794, we find him continually on the move in prosecution of his object. He made most extensive enquiries in the ports of London, of Liverpool, and Lancaster. (The slave dungeons are still to be seen on the quay of the latter place, or were a few years ago when the writer was there.) We find him in all the principal towns forming committees, and hunting up persons whom he thought he might influence; editors of papers; members of the Quaker fraternity; and all kinds of seafaring men. Lodging in small inns, he would pursue his investigations during the day, returning to the inn late at night, and sitting up until the early hours of the morning writing his reports. "For seven years," he tells us, "I had a correspondence to maintain with four hundred persons with my own hand. In this time I had travelled more than thirty-five thousand miles in search of evidence, and a great part of these journeys in the night." On one occasion, being told of some sailor who might supply him with useful information, but whose name and whereabouts his informant did not know, except that he had spoken of belonging to a war vessel in ordinary, Clarkson set off determined to find him if possible. In Deptford, Woolwich, and Chatham, he boarded one hundred and sixty vessels without success. Proceeding to Portsmouth he boarded another hundred, and from there he went to Plymouth. On the third day of his search, when he came to his fifty-seventh vessel, he found the man he wanted—a sailor who had been round the world with Captain Cook. When Wilberforce in one of his speeches remarked upon the indebtedness of the House and the country to "the indefatigable labours of Mr. Clarkson," there was no one knew better than he the extent of the obligation.

Very early in his investigations Clarkson discovered that the conditions of the seamen engaged in the slave trade were little better than that of the slaves themselves, and that the mortality among them was abnormally high. He collected the names of more than 20,000 seamen in the different ports, and actually knew what had become of each. His labours on behalf of the seamen were no less indefatigable. In an interview with Mr. Pitt, the great statesman would not credit that the condition and the mortality of the sailors in the slave-trade were such as Clarkson alleged. But when Clarkson produced his books with the 20,000 names, with the dates they had signed on, the name of the ship and the port they had sailed from, the number that had died upon the voyage, and the large number who from other causes had

never returned to tell the tale, Pitt could only stand aghast at the enormity of the revelations, and at the intrepidity of the man who could collect such a vast mass of evidence and information. One is not surprised to read that after some years of such strenuous labour, with shattered nerves and impaired health, he "was borne out of the field, where he had placed the great honour and glory of his life."

Just as Thomas Paine remained a Deist all his days, so Clarkson remained a Christian; but, strange to say, his advocacy was never based on religious grounds; the only arguments he used were those of injustice and impolicy. And in connection with the latter, he had gathered a vast collection of native African materials and products, and was able to show that a legitimate and profitable trade might be done with that continent, quite independently of the slave trade. Wilberforce stressed that argument very forcibly in his speech before Parliament, many of its members having been shown the interesting collection that Clarkson had gathered. The religious argument round which the battle raged in after years had not then developed that bitterness and rancour which so disgraced the Christian Church.

Clarkson lived on to see the final passing of the Emancipation Bill, some thirty years later, Wilberforce having passed away only a fortnight before. At the first meeting of the convention of delegates after it was an accomplished fact, Clarkson, who was then in his eighty-first year, was led into the meeting on the arm of Joseph Sturge, a younger stalwart in the fight. But he was in such a frail condition, that his entry could only be greeted by an impressive sympathetic silence.

I have remarked on the scant reference in contemporary records to the early stages of the movement and Clarkson's own labours. John Richard Green does not even mention the name of Clarkson, and goes so far astray in his reading of the movement as to couple it with the name of the Wesleys! Indeed, his Christian friends seem all bent on minimising his labours. In giving the number of vessels that Clarkson boarded in the various ports in search of a single sailor as 160, 100, 57 equal 317, I am quoting Clarkson's own figures. But in the publication of the Religious Tract Society, the editor, evidently thinking that his pious readers would not have a sufficient stretch of imagination to comprehend the magnitude of the labours such visitation would entail, obligingly reduces the number to—40. Such is history as she is wrote—by the Christian pen. This is all the more unpardonable, because the author on the same page, and referring to the self-same incident, actually quotes from Clarkson's book. But the boycotting of the pioneers of this movement began very early. At a meeting of the London Missionary Society, held shortly after the final Emancipation Bill was passed, a speaker said they were not going to give the credit to any one man, that it was the awakened Christian conscience that had been the *instrument* of abolition. But the man who had initiated such a humane movement, who had stirred his own country from end to end, and gathered up all the scattered threads of interest and bound them into a working co-operation, who had gone to France at the beginning of the Revolution, and moved about among the members of the National Assembly, and been in constant consultation with Mirabeau to secure concerted French action, who had even gone to Russia to interview the Czar, and who was largely responsible for having created the much-vaunted "Christian conscience"—surely such a man was worthy of a more magnanimous treatment and recognition.

In the ages to come, when religious ideas have

ceased to warp men's judgment and sympathies, and the labours of the glorious dead come to be regarded from a purely humanitarian standpoint, the names of many of the silent, unobtrusive, and neglected workers in the cause of humanity will doubtless then receive their due mead of praise and honour. And not the least of these will be the name of Thomas Clarkson.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

"The Fourth Age."

Life is a comedy to him who thinks;
A tragedy to him who feels. —Walpole.

Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep,
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth.
—Shelley.

MR. WILLIAM REPTON has produced in *The Fourth Age*¹ a series of essays that constitute a real "human document"; if one may use so hackneyed a phrase in connection with an outlook that is by no means hackneyed. Why he should entitle them *The Fourth Age* is hardly manifest; the aspect of life with which he deals would be more fitly termed the *mad* age. And Mr. Repton is one of those rare individuals—and I know he will understand me if I say, *fortunately* rare—who perceives the madness in life and is affected by it intensely; who feels within himself those earthly oppressions which, so far as the masses of mankind are concerned, were else unfelt indeed. For it is a strange anomaly that the victims of oppression are often least mindful of it; they bow their heads to the yoke; they meekly accept the valuations of their pastors and masters; they have not arrived at that stage of intellectual maturity when, as Mr. Repton says, "that modesty has been shelled out of them."

There are some of us who would fain forget the holocaust of war. Others there are—and I count myself as one—who have no difficulty in forgetting. But with Mr. Repton the iron has bitten deeply into his soul. It is impossible to escape the impression that he is an embittered man (not *soured*, but *embittered*). Fortunately his bitterness is turned against "religious Tyrants and exalted Idiots"—blind leaders of the blind, who crucified humanity in order to make the world safe for— Ah! safe for what? It is well that we be induced to pause awhile and reflect on the madness of war; its horror; its futility; the appalling waste. Only thus can we become useful servants of love, order, and progress. It is well to exercise "towards all creatures a bounteous, friendly feeling"; it is better to have a critical appreciation of human needs—loving kindness may wreak incalculable harm if it be not under the control of a right method. It is no use inveighing against war whilst we perpetuate the conditions that produce it. That is, for me, the supreme lesson of the *Fourth Age*.

But the main interest of the book lies in the psychology of the author. It reflects admirably the feelings of an intelligent and cultured man brought face to face with the stark reality of war. It says much for human adaptability that such a one can emerge—sane. I do not envy Mr. Repton his experience. True, I endured the horrors of war myself, but I was only eighteen, and although I possessed the average intelligence I lacked the realism of our author's outlook on life. I was doped. I had a religion of sorts. I worshipped Mr. Bottomley. I thought that if I saw it in *John Bull* it was so. [It was a bitter blow to find that the war was *not* over by Christmas. But "another powerful article" soon

consoled me.] I give Mr. Repton my assurance that the worst horrors of the war (and I served in the infantry) did not quench my ardour for the allied cause. I was thoroughly doped, I grant. On reading Mr. Repton's essays I am glad of it. My illusions probably kept me sane. To-day the war is hardly a memory for me—it is a dream. Not an *evil* dream—the incidents that occasionally thrust themselves into consciousness are more often concerned with the humorous aspects, rather than the tragic. I experience difficulty in remembering—*Mr. Repton cannot forget.*

It would possibly give a false impression to quote from any of the essays, for here irony, sadness, pathos, satire, and all human emotions find expression. There is even a touch of humour in the prayer of the artilleryman: "Oh, Lord, make me pure like Cadbury's cocoa." But humour is foreign to Mr. Repton's purpose. His concern is with:—

The foul beast of war that bludgeons life.

He would have every soul seared with the same horror of war as his own. Above all he would have the idealism of youth (that idealism which, in my own case, led me to make sacrifices cheerfully in what I regarded as a good cause) directed along channels of social utility. On the ruins of war he would lay the foundations of the New Age. But he is too shrewd a realist to expect it to happen this week!

I can imagine Mr. Repton and myself appearing before the same military tribunal in some future war to end war. Mr. Repton would be denunciatory, witheringly eloquent (if they gave him the chance); I should be terse, cryptic: "Gentlemen, you may go to hell!" And, yet, I sometimes wonder if it were not better to have fallen—as I saw so many fall—with a bullet through the brain, than struggle on under the disabilities of disease to the same destination. On a balance of probability the dead are better off. Strange, how we cling to this mortal life!

There are some who will doubtless complain that a shilling is a lot for thirty-eight pages. It depends on the quality. There will be no complaints from those who share Mr. Repton's horror of war; his social vision; and his desire to create a braver type of Man than the frustrated individual of to-day:—

Whose heart's a haunted woodland whispering;
Whose thoughts return on tempest-baffled wing;
Who hears the cry of God in everything,
And storms the gate of nothingness for proof.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

The first week's mission in Swansea has been the most successful of the tour. The favourable weather sent multitudes to the sands, and, as a result, enormous crowds gathered at the whole seven meetings. On every occasion I was listened to with close attention and sympathy. With the exception of a slight disturbance from a couple of local characters suffering from a mental trouble, who ranted in the crowd and shouted words of abuse, everything passed off in ideal fashion. The small group of local enthusiasts should have their number augmented if one tenth of the people in agreement with Secularism at these meetings would join the Branch. Unlike most other pitches the Swansea Sands are practically clear of rival orators. This gives one the opportunity of delivering systematic lectures of a character which would be impossible in the midst of other distraction.

G. WHITEHEAD.

¹ *The Fourth Age*, by Wm. Repton. Pioneer Press. 1s.

Some Notes on a Blue Book.

More comprehensive than any modern collection of aphorisms, chaotic as the Koran, wrathful as Isaiah, as full of occult things as the Bible, more entertaining than any romance, keener-edged than most pamphlets, mystical as the Cabbala, subtle as the scholastic theology, sincere as Rousseau's confession, stamped with the impress of incomparable originality, every sentence shining like luminous letters in the darkness....."

—Nils Kjaer (on the Blue Book").

I LIKE to "discover" a book for myself, especially if it contains views opposed to mine; and especially if it is well-written, with all the pleasing elements of clarity, originality, novelty, etc., for man wearies of one thing, however great and good, and rejoices and is refreshed at times by finding his antipodes. Such a book was given me lately, without comment, by a fellow Freethinker, the work of a genius who through philosophy had "found Christ." Previously Strindberg had been but a name to me; having read his *Zones of the Spirit*, or *Blue Book*, or *Thoughts*, I felt I knew him intimately if not comprehensively—one stands a little in awe of those men of vast learning and abstract speculation such as Kant, Hegel, Karl Marx, and Swedenborg, in whom the infinite seems to confront us in this finite world. Our author was ultimately the disciple of Swedenborg, but eclectic in many philosophies and many religions, amusingly dogmatic and abusive at last of all that opposed his robust, new-found, peculiar Christianity. Strindberg had been reared a devout Christian, but later, and inevitably, comparing the Above with the Below, the Father in heaven appeared to him to regard unmoved the struggles and misery of man on earth. With the clear and simple, too often brow-beaten logic of youth he became a rebellious Atheist and Socialist, criticizing at last "God himself"—i.e. the geographical God of his early faith, not, perhaps, God himself, but the subjective God of his fathers; Prospero's God or the Setebos of Caliban, or the divinity that that surer philosopher, Anatole France, saw in marionettes and wooden idols, symbols of ideas not of things, and so on into the mist of metaphysics where only the great can soar and see! What, then, of the ninety-nine per cent. of the great mass of simple, material-minded, normal folk who, with the same senses, unsophisticated, read the book of nature and of life? Are these the "apelings," the children of the "Lord of Dung," the "black men," the blind, the bad, etc.? Are so few called, so few chosen, the signs so inscrutable? Are the steps to heaven so steep and difficult that the simple child, alike with the wise and sad and wayfaring man, must miss them? True, men like "Darwin and his son Haeckel" have soared, also, but in the wrong direction, apelings all! Thus slowly, painfully, hopelessly must the ways of God, and the way to Him, be revealed. Strindberg is sincere, and certain at last, God is an axiom, a categorical imperative, and needs no finding out. He had reached at last the (for an Atheist) astounding conclusion: "When I think over my lot, I recognize that invisible Hand which disciplines and chastens me without my knowing its purpose. Must I be humbled in order to be lifted up, lowered in order to be raised? The thought continually recurs to me, 'Providence is planning something with thee, and this is the beginning of thy education.'" This is, of course, the kernel teaching of Christianity, egotism disguised as humility, grateful and comforting to the sinner, to the man who seeks for method purpose goal in himself and the universe, who staggers under

The heavy and weary weight of all this unintelligible world.

But, alas! after all his philosophies and religions there remains the man himself and his mortal human fate. The cruel machinery of life and death and suffering, for man and beast, in the world we know, must know no pause while sentient things endure. Nirvana may arrive at last for all, but the happiest heaven imaginable cannot atone in justice for all that has been and will be suffered here on earth. Besides the surer, if sadder, philosophers know that happiness and misery, death and life, are twins, that the one cannot be translated "beyond" without the other. But this happiness we sigh for, this purpose method goal that misleads our philosopher, is not there but here. Has it not been said, the kingdom of heaven is within you; the maker and finder of it not God but man. Ultimate origins aside for the moment, moral and intellectual mind, developing late in the stream of evolution, has given aim and purpose to what before it could only be blind chance or idle cause and effect. Man has created it. If he needs a God he will create Him too, perhaps a better, because more modern God, than Strindberg's.

How simple is wisdom, how easily are the wise confounded? as witness what we dare to call our philosopher's mistake, and silly and absurd at that. Morality for him has no meaning apart from some source of ultimate morality, the fount and reservoir of all good; but in human society, whether created or evolved, morals were the inevitable necessity, crystallizing at last in what is called the moral law, varying in different countries and cultures, still far from perfect or complete in application or in effect. Herein is seen "the growing good of the world," growing now by leaps and bounds, now pressed back, now moving, imperceptible, but certain as the glacier's motion, temporal not eternal, human not divine.....The Strindbergs that sit in heaven shall laugh—if they do sit there—at the essays of the apelings, but was not their spiritual beatitude attained through the same base material reflections the crudest of us use; and were they superior to the least of us would not a tear of pity mingle with their scorn for the poor, blind crowds wandering blindly led by lies? By mere accident, not by merit, but by faith, promoted to the Pantheon, would they not supplicate, as more merciful redeemers, the elder gods to hasten and simplify the way to bliss? But, no, they will rejoice that God's ways are not our ways; in the selfish, individual salvation of all the "saved" they will sit aloft in serene beatitude, and hope and fear and compassion for what were their fellow-mortals will trouble them no more! They will say there as they said here, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice," and generally be as foolish in heaven as they were on earth. For, why, if all will be right when God's work is complete, why were the saints so premature in urging, advising, justifying God? A few million years less or more of mortal calamity and suffering added to the myriad gone before would not matter much—means to an end with a vengeance.....but why go on? Such simple but certain ratiocination has made all our Freethinkers, and, scarce begun the process, the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Christian case is already in full view.

Still we are not done with our converted Atheist, nor have we been quite just to him. With him as with most finders of God, no doubt it was the best in him, the highest duty, the insistent moral urge, that brought about his final revolt from common sense and what our author calls "rustic intelligence." Thus conscience, in itself a sublime and priceless mentor, may lead even the philosopher astray. If, as we believe, Strindberg was mistaken, he had yet conquered himself, the greatest of victories, often

the most difficult of denials for Christian and Pagan alike.

Without being impressed or repelled by its intimations of immortality, we read the *Blue Book* with interest and delight. The series of "thoughts" are amazingly shrewd and suggestive. One finds one's own picture, and the full length portrait—of the writer—of his very soul, and ours!

A wonderful book—and we do not wonder at its author seeking so eagerly, in its fierce unrest, a sanctuary and a satisfaction for the soul, even if imaginary. We, too, could "believe" if we tried, but we seek knowledge; faith is a comfort only, not a foundation; not always a virtue; in religion often a vice; for us the Sphinx remains, the riddle unsolved by all the sages of all time—or there is no riddle, and things are—just what they seem! So many guides to heaven in so many books in so long time; the final volume is not yet, and, we fear, never will be. But, after all, even to the pious, it is the here and now that matters most to men, not even its great things, but its little petty cares!

As we close, the glorious sun from a lovely cloud-flecked sky is shining down upon the vegetal and floral wealth and waste of June. The worst, we feel, is but to share the fate of the rose.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

AGNOSTICISM AND ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As a good many people seem rather fond of referring to Ingersoll as an Agnostic, in order to show that this great and militant Freethinker was *not* an Atheist, it may be as well to refer them to Vol. v., pp. 245-248 of the *Dresden* edition of his complete works:—

Question.—Do you believe in the existence of a Supreme Being?

Answer.—I do not believe in any supreme personality or in any Supreme Being who made the universe and governs Nature. I do not say there is no such Being—all I say is that I do not believe such a Being exists.

Question.—Don't you think that the belief of the Agnostic is more satisfactory to the believer than that of the Atheist?

Answer.—There is no difference. The Agnostic is an Atheist. The Atheist is an Agnostic. The Agnostic says: "I do not know, but I do not believe there is any God." The Atheist says the same. The Orthodox Christian says he knows there is a God; but we know that he does not know. He simply believes. He cannot know. The Atheist cannot know that God does not exist.

I could give a dozen extracts from Ingersoll which show conclusively that he could see no difference between Atheism and his own Agnosticism.

But those who deny this assertion can start with the above extract and show where Ingersoll differs from the fearless, aggressive, uncompromising Atheism of Charles Bradlaugh. I trust that "Ephphatha" (Mr. J. Stewart Cook) will respond.

H. CUTNER.

AN AGNOSTIC OUTLOOK.

SIR,—There is a well-known but little used method of argument commonly called "sticking to the point." It involves the clear perception of the exact question in debate and the pertinent discussion of that question throughout the controversy. I ask now to submit to "Ephphatha" and Mr. Harpur the phrase "suspended judgment," and beg them to keep it like a sign before the mind's eye, and bear with me while I talk about it. "Ephphatha," in his original article, said that the Agnostics, when confronted with any theological proposition, should argue. "If you can offer me reasonable grounds for your belief, I will accept it. Until you

do, I beg leave to suspend my judgment until sufficient data have been amassed to warrant a.....conclusion."

I have no wish to be insincere in argument, and I freely admit that this statement does not tell us whether, in the case of theological propositions, the requisite data are available or not. But on studying the context I was forced to conclude that "Ephphatha" contended for the negative. Firstly I drew this inference from the following: "There are some things we cannot ever know or hope to know, and among these things are the matters with which the Christian theologians are wont to bore ordinary people to tears." And again: "The theologians are occupying themselves with completely vain speculations concerning subjects about which they know as little as I do; that is nothing." Secondly I drew this inference from the fact that, if "Ephphatha" did not imply this contention, it would be difficult to conjecture what he was trying to say about Agnosticism. It must be patent that in the absence of such a contention, Agnosticism would simply mean that you want some facts to work on before you can draw a conclusion—a position very little removed from that of saying that you want something to think about before you can think. And that is hardly worth giving a name to. I took it, then, that Agnosticism involved two elements, first, the suspension of judgment in the absence of sufficient data, and second, the absence of sufficient data. That is the point at which I threw the lump of lead into the water.

"Ephphatha" thinks I am complaining because he declines to say it could not possibly float. But in that he has entirely missed the point. I only asked him to form a judgment as to whether it will float or not. He volunteers the statement that there is not the slightest evidence in favour of miracles, and asks, "Why go further?" For the simple reason that you have gone nowhere at all with that statement until you have told us its value in determining belief. Is it going to leave us believing that lead will float, or that it will sink? If either, then we are enabled to judge; if neither, then we are truly in a state of suspended judgment.

"Why go further?" In point of fact "Ephphatha" does go further. He forms judgments of theology all along the line, and freely admits as much in his correspondence. My fundamental objection is to his inconsistency. It would be interesting to learn from him wherein lies the essential difference between one theological proposition and another, in virtue of which we are now able and now unable to judge of its truth. If we are mystified concerning God, I fail to see that we are any better off regarding anything that may be said of His works. "Ephphatha" will not give a definite pronouncement on the immortality of the "soul," but he says the immortality of the body is "obviously impossible." It is my turn, now, to ask why. If we must suspend judgment of God's powers over the "soul," how are we better placed in judging His powers over the body? I wish "Ephphatha" would make a little more clear the logic of the Agnostic position, and maybe Mr. Harpur would join in with a brief exposition of the Animistic. Mr. Harpur says an Atheist is a person who must believe something, but an Agnostic has carried his infidelity further. If an Atheist must believe something, and an Agnostic must believe nothing, what must an Animist believe? It is rather puzzling, but from a casual glance I should say the answer is probably a lemon.

MEDICUS.

SIR,—I am grateful to Mr. Stewart Cook. I have no objection to pen-names as such, but "Ephphatha" sounds like a previous conviction! For the rest, I'm afraid Mr. Cook's reply is merely a reiteration of his former fallacies. These fallacies are not due so much to his "Agnostic simplicity" as to his failure to keep distinct things separate. For instance, inadequate evidence can always be reconsidered in the light of further evidence; but you can multiply irrelevancy to infinity without attaining adequacy—like "the flowers that bloom in the spring," it has nothing to do with the case.

In his article Mr. Cook gave (I repeat) two distinct and contradictory reasons why he professed Agnosticism.

First he averred that the question of the existence of the "Christian or any other God" was beyond the powers of human decision—"we cannot ever know, or hope to know"; "there is, and can be, no real proof or disproof" were phrases he used. But later, in the same paragraph, he says: "Confronted with any theological proposition [including, presumably, the primary Christian doctrines] the Agnostic position is: "'You say this and that. If you can offer me reasonable grounds for your belief, I will accept it. Until you do, I beg leave to suspend my judgment until sufficient data have been amassed to warrant a serious and considered conclusion.'" Yes, but he has previously told us that the *fons et origo* of Agnosticism is that there cannot in the nature of things ever be sufficient data. He has already pronounced the *a priori* judgment that "we cannot ever know"; because, presumably, these problems belong to a region where the ordinary canons of evidence have no applicability. By the way, he quotes himself as saying "there was no real proof," whereas what he said was, "there is, and *can be*, no real proof"—a very different thing.

Whatever Ingersoll professed in theory, in practice he was so little of an Agnostic as to declare in his lecture, "The Truth": "We are satisfied that all the gods and phantoms, and that the supernatural does not exist." To profess Agnosticism as to the nature of Ultimate Reality is an intelligible procedure, although the scientific value of such an Agnosticism is nil. But to suggest that the primary Christian doctrines belong to the same order is truly to distort all rational values. Mr. Cook would have us believe that the postulate of Theism is a question of ultimate existence. It is not. It is a question of elementary common-sense. Mr. Cook demonstrated this with his "incarnate imbecility," God, and thus affords a striking illustration of the truth of Mr. Chapman Cohen's dictum: "The trouble of the Agnostic is that so soon as he begins to justify his position, either he states the Atheistic case or he fails altogether to make his case good." VINCENT J. HANDS.

Heart of Winter, A Sonnet

DEEP-RUTTED roads, 'neath steel-grey skies; the snow on
bare bleak boughs, that hold no lonely leaf;
Ice-seal'd ponds, where skaters find relief
From shrilling winds that gaunt woods joy to know;
The ample blaze of homestead hearths aglow;
Books, gossip, laughter and an hour too brief
For late, long supper; Time esteemed a thief
Of no account—since youth would lure Life so!

Now through the dark great Sirius 'gins to shine;
While o'er the world Orion waits to swing
His burnished wheel. Indoors, sweet friends may sing,
And tell old tales, while hearts once more divine
That Winter comes with glorious crystalline
To crown the year, and pledge yet one more Spring!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Dr. Johnson blamed Shakespeare because "he is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose." It is just for that reason that his moral effect is so tremendous. He grinds no axe, he never tries to "get at" us, so that we cannot suspect him of preaching. And yet the personality that breathes in everything he wrote is so profoundly sane that it acts like a tonic upon all who become intimate with him. His tragedies, dealing with the ultimate issues of life, lead his very youngest reader to ponder over the problems of human character. His comedies, with their "thunders of laughter clearing head and heart," put all who enjoy them on good terms with mankind. And even children of twelve may begin to catch a glimpse of that wide-eyed tolerance, that sublime tenderness, which is ever present with Shakespeare, and springs from his sense of the human race as a crew adventuring on this little planet into the great unknown, and only saved from shipwreck by mutual assistance and forbearance.—J. Dover Wilson, *Litt.D.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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LONDON.

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SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3, Mr. H. Constable, a Lecture; 6, Mr. E. Saphin, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside the Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. H. B. Samuels, a Lecture.

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