

# ARE THE CLERGY HONEST?

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*Add Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,  
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## Views and Opinions.

### Are the Clergy Honest?

The Bishop of Southwell has been lecturing the Nottingham Education Society on the evils of telling lies. And, in a quite Pickwickian sense, that reminds me of Douglas Jerrold's reply to a question just after he had been listening to a lecture on "Drink." "What was the speaker like?" was the question. "Oh," replied Jerrold, "he was full of his subject." And, again, keeping to the Pickwickian sense, I can imagine no better authority on "Lies" than a Christian parson. Neither in the historical nor in the contemporary sense can he be considered as an amateur. The Church to which he belongs provides some of the finest examples of systematic lying that the world has ever seen. From the manufacturing of spurious gospels, down through the tampering with classical works, the creation of thousands of miracles, stories of dying unbelievers, slanders of members of rival religions, spurious missionary statistics, right down to the manufactured experiences of the district visitor, pulpit preacher, or professional evangelist, no one has such a rich and varied assortment of lies to draw upon as the Christian preacher has. There are lies direct and indirect, lies by innuendo and implication, lies by suppression, and by direct statement. The light of the political liar burns but dimly by the side of the religious expert. Long ago historians said that Christian truth was first cousin to Punic faith, and the rival charges of Christian sectaries are enough to show what little regard for plain and exact statement any of them has.

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### An Admirable Bishop?

But the Bishop of Southwell is an exceptional parson. He was mainly concerned with the treatment of children, but his generalizations had a wider range. Here, for example, are a few of his statements:—

To keep back half the truth and so to convey an entirely false impression seemed worse because

more subtle than an open, bare-faced lie. It was particularly important at present to make young people realize that a lie was not less a lie if it was uttered by a gesture instead of by speech or by silence. The guilt of falsehood was not diminished because speech was not used as the method of propagation.

He would freely admit it had sometimes been the case that the Christian Church, imagining that certain discoveries if made would shake her religious position, had discouraged critical inquiry and research. The names of Galileo, Darwin, Newton, and others would occur to mind.

He believed those evil days were past, and that he spoke for the majority of Christian people when he said that it was their resolve that there should not be again any barrier from the side of religion to hamper those who, whether they represented science or history or archaeology or literature, were pursuing truth. Rather would they welcome such efforts, being assured that the truth could never be at issue with itself and desiring every manifestation of truth.

If one went only by the spoken word, one would be filled with confidence in the integrity and trustworthiness of the Christian clergy. Children could not be placed in better hands, adults could not be under wiser, or more reliable leaders. What could be better than advising teachers that rather than mislead a child by an answer to an awkward question it would be better to make no reply at all? Only the value of it appears to be discounted by uncertainty as to what the speaker understands by it all. For instance, there is the question of religious teaching in State schools, or the wider one of teaching religion to children either at home or in school. Is the Bishop quite unaware that when the Bible is introduced to children as the word of God, without qualification of any sort, that there is being taught them—in even the opinion of very many Christians—a deliberate lie? Mark, it is not what the teacher understands by the expression, it is wholly a question of what the children will understand by it; for "to convey an entirely false impression seemed worse because more subtle than an open bare-faced lie." And if the Bishop really means what he says, will he, in order to show that he is genuine, at once advocate the exclusion of religious teaching from the schools, and the leaving of religion alone, so far as the child is concerned, until it is old enough to understand it. That is the only way to protect the child against false impressions that are worse than bare-faced lies. Otherwise the Bishop of Southwell runs some risk of being classed along with those utterers of half-lies whom he so strongly condemns.

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### Opinion and the Church.

There is quite an air of disarming candour about the remark that the Church has "sometimes" discouraged critical enquiry and research, if she thought it would injure her position. One likes that word

"sometimes." You see it only occurred occasionally, probably a long time ago, a mere episode in Church history. Nothing of the kind occurs to-day! We all know with what avidity the Christian Church hails new discoveries, or new theories about the origin of the idea of God and a soul. The Bishop, presumably when he preaches, keeps his own congregation fully informed of all anthropologists have to say on the origin of these beliefs, and is candid enough to tell them that while he and they believe to the contrary, the leading scholars of the world are in agreement that these and other religious beliefs have no better and no other origin than the fear-fostered beliefs of the primitive savage. It must be so. For whether one suppresses an antagonistic teaching by burning the teacher, or by taking every care that those under our control are not acquainted with what that particular teacher has to say makes no substantial difference. Whether we suppress the teacher, or the teaching, it is the same in the end. Of course, the Bishop may not have intended to create a false impression when he referred to Christian discouragement of critical enquiry, as a mere occasional, and now discarded thing; because that would bring him under the charge of indulging in what he calls the worst form of falsehood. But he should really be more careful; for others may not be quite so charitably inclined towards him, and may credit him with the intention of throwing dust in the eyes of the teachers he was addressing; whereas we take it as the case of a thoroughly good man expressing himself rather clumsily.

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#### Bigots for Christ's Sake.

This good man believes the evil days in which the Church was hostile to criticism are past; and that he is speaking for the majority of Christian people when he expresses their resolve that there shall be no more barriers from the side of religion to obstruct those who are pursuing truth. Good man! But in his goodness of heart and uprightness of mind he exaggerates somewhat the advance we have made. After all, fifty-one gives us a majority out of a hundred, and the minority is still large enough to cause trouble. But I am afraid the Bishop in his goodness overestimates. The great Catholic Church is apparently left out of consideration. And that represents about half the Christian world. And of the rest of Christians it is not quite clear that they are quite so liberal as the Bishop would have us believe. There are Daytons in America, and there are Daytons here in England. Thousands of teachers, such as those he was addressing, are actually afraid of letting their opinion on religion be known, because they know that if they did so they would lose all chance of promotion at the hands of their Christian governors. And being brought up in a Christian atmosphere, they naturally prefer promotion to principle. There are numerous politicians, and business men, and scientists, and journalists, and men of letters who are in precisely the same position. They dare not avow that their research has led them to conclusions diametrically opposed to Christianity; because the Christians *they* come in contact with are not so high-minded and so great lovers of truth as is the Bishop of Southwell. And I would remind the Bishop of the fact that this paper suffers from a boycott all over the country simply because it preaches conclusions that are opposed to the Christian Church. Newsagents are threatened by their Christian customers with loss of business if they show it. Newspapers dare not mention it. It is a boycott that is scientifically organized and miraculously effective. The miracle is eclipsed by the fact

of our continued existence. The Bishop must have overlooked these things, and I have no doubt when they are called to his notice he will qualify his statements, lest he incurs the charge of speaking so as to produce a false impression which, as he says, is worse than a bare-faced lie. I am greatly indebted to him for that generalization.

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#### What will the Bishop Do?

A man who thus goes out of his way to lecture teachers on the importance of their teaching nothing but the truth, and to be on their guard against giving misleading impressions by telling half truths, or suggesting a lie by any possible means, evinces such a high degree of intellectual rectitude, that I feel certain I have his support in asking that in future children shall be no longer taught as unquestionable truths, things which everyone knows are questioned by some of the foremost scholars of the day. To tell children that certain biblical narratives are definite statements of historic fact, when in thousands of pulpits they are being explained as mere allegories, is to do more than suggest a lie, it is telling a deliberate lie, and telling it in the most cowardly of ways. I feel sure also that he will be at one with me in denouncing those Christian bigots, who strive by every means in their power to make it painful for men to speak what they believe to be the truth about Christianity; because that is doing more than suggesting a lie, it is forcing men and women to live a lie. He will also support the statement that when men attempt to prove that Christianity is true by making it mean something different from what all Christians have hitherto understood it to mean, that is creating a false impression; because if what people have taken for Christianity is not true, then so far as Christianity, as an historic phenomenon, is concerned, it is not and cannot be true. So we shall have his warm support in saying that it is not enough to denounce the Christian Church for persecuting Bruno and Galileo, and denouncing Darwinism; the wrong here is to-day so plain that no one dreams of justifying what was done. But we, the Bishop of Southwell and myself, must also denounce all those Christians who to-day place the slightest obstacle, whether it be business or social boycott, or punishment of any kind for speaking out exactly what one thinks about Christianity. He will, I am sure, believe that, if we believe Christianity to be a lie, we must say so, and that every Christian will, with the good Bishop of Southwell, welcome our saying so; not because it must change their opinions, but because they will recognize that we are speaking the truth as we see it, and that we are doing every Christian a service by so speaking. I must believe all this and more of the Bishop of Southwell, because there is nothing between believing it and believing that the Bishop was, as he says, indulging in the worst form of falsehood and suggesting under cover of truth what is really a lie. The only difficulty I have in the matter is in deciding by what means so high-minded a man as the Bishop of Southwell, a man of such unimpeachable mental morality, can continue in the service of a Church which, above all others in history, has distinguished itself by persistent and consistent lying; which refuses to denounce a troop of lying evangelists, because their lies serve the Church; that continues to issue lying tracts about Freethinkers; which maintains the Blasphemy Laws; boycotts men and women wholesale because of a difference of opinion; which suppresses so far as it is possible all literature which is in direct conflict with it; and will even preach a lying sermon over a dead heretic's grave, if it can gain a little

cheap popularity by so doing. I have the utmost respect for so high-minded a personage as the Bishop of Southwell. But I fear me that when he finds out the nature of the Church to which he belongs, and the kind of people that makes up the bulk of his associates, he will be compelled to leave it and them. His rules are so excellent. And with a thoroughly upright man there must always be the endeavour to square theory with practice.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### "Is There a Lord's Day?"

SUCH is the title of the Rev. Dr. Horton's latest Monthly Lecture, published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of January 13. Dr. Horton is one of the most widely known and highly respected Free Church ministers in this country, and the whole of his clerical life has been spent as Pastor of Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church, Hampstead, London. For many years it has been his custom to deliver monthly lectures, in which he discusses all sorts of religious subjects. The one now before us is a sensational protest against what he regards as a wicked desecration of the Sabbath. He exclaims that "the Sabbath was made for man, and that man, for whom it is made, is destroying it." The majority of the churches are gradually emptying, and we are assured that "empty seats kill good preaching." The Archbishop of Canterbury publicly complained, not long ago, that churches are not filled because the quality of preaching has seriously deteriorated. The true explanation of declining church attendance, however, is to be found in the fact that people generally are giving up belief in the supernatural. It is sorrowfully admitted, on religious platforms, that the Sunday Schools are losing ground, and Dr. Horton says that "the sports on Sunday afternoon take the children and the motor-bicycles take the teachers, and the Sunday Schools cannot be maintained." Now Sunday sports sprang up as the direct result of the weakening of the old faith in the sanctity of the Sabbath. The preacher is fully justified in saying that "for one hundred years or so the Sunday Schools have been the chief influence in keeping this country religious"; but every candid observer must surely be aware that in this country, as well as in other lands, religion has been fruitful of incalculable evils.

Dr. Horton represents God as speaking to men in the following odd fashion:—

Your life is toilsome; your life is often burdensome to you; you get submerged in the things of the earth; you get so overborne by the things of the senses that the spirit within you is almost crushed, and, therefore, lest you should be submerged, lest you should be crushed, lest the spirit should go out of you, and we should lose touch with one another, I give you the seventh day to keep it holy.

Then he assures us that the Bible from beginning to end exhorts us to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." He quotes from the New Testament, but discreetly omits to mention Paul, who, as a matter of fact, did not believe in holy days. In Romans xiv. 5, we read: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind." He found fault with the Galatians, saying: "Ye observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain." Having utterly ignored the apostle Paul's teaching, Dr. Horton indulges in this vulgar and groundless boast:—

It is the record of human life from the earliest that when a nation has obeyed this commandment that nation has had a strange and wonderful blessing on it. The nation that has kept this commandment has flourished with a tenacity which astonishes the world, and not only the nation but men and women who have kept this commandment have been able to work and accomplish things in the world in a way they never could have done if there had been no holy day, for the holy day has refreshed and recuperated them, and set the direction of their life right when it had got a little wrong. The holy day has given to work and to pleasure a deeper meaning, a more permanent meaning in human life.

Was it the British nation the preacher had in his mind when he uttered those words? If so, was it in ignorance or in defiance of the history of this nation that he spoke? If he is familiar with the nature and methods of its amazing conquests in different parts of the earth, can he describe them in terms of admiration and gratitude? Has he ever read such a book as *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, by the late Olive Schreiner? Besides, is it a Christian act for a minister of God to ascribe superiority over all others to his own people?

As we have seen, Paul was a non-Sabbatarian, but we find also that many of the fathers of the early Church were in agreement with him. Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Cyril of Jerusalem, and many more, rejoiced in the belief that Christ had released them from the law of Moses. They observed no holy day, and advised their followers to imitate them. Even at the time of the Protestant Reformation there was no Sabbatarianism. Martin Luther wrote: "The Sabbath in no way pertained to the Gentiles. It was not commanded to them nor observed by them." Even Paley, rendered famous by his *Evidences*, says: "The observance of the Sabbath was not one of the articles enjoined by the Apostles." Eminent bishops of the Protestant Church of England taught most emphatically that Christians were under no obligation to observe any holy day. The Sabbath advocated by Dr. Horton is of a comparatively recent origin. It was not kept holy by the Christian Church at any time prior to the rise of the Puritans. It was only under Charles I. that "The Lord's Day Observance Act" was passed, which prohibits, for example, Sunday opening of places of public entertainment. Soon Sunday became a day on which people could do scarcely anything at all without committing a crime. Husband and wife dared not kiss each other or their children on the Lord's Day. Charles I. went to Scotland and happened to laugh at something on Sunday, a sin for which he was publicly rebuked. The tyrannical character of Sunday in Scotland was terrible in the extreme. It is almost impossible to believe that some fishermen were brutally punished because they had had the courage to save a shipwrecked crew on Sunday. That is very much the kind of Lord's Day insisted upon by Dr. Horton. If he had the power he would compel people to abstain from all work, play, and pleasure, and to engage in the discharge of spiritual duties on Sunday, and he employs the most scathing terms in denunciation of those who do not do so. He says:—

We profane it at our peril. The nation that profanes it is downward in its course. The men who lose it are wandering in the dark. We must not wonder, if it is true that this observance of the Lord's Day is a cardinal doctrine and truth of human life, that when we desecrate it spiritual deterioration sets in. The desecration of it, as we often have to observe to-day, leads to an extraordinary commonness and vulgarity of character. The Sabbathless population—how common they become!

That is one of the blatant lies uttered from the pulpit. Are the French inferior to the British because they are more Sabbathless? It is a falsehood of the deepest dye to declare that "the life of man without God is hopeless and useless." The study of Nature led Darwin to Atheism; but can Dr. Horton say of him that his life was hopeless and useless? He was a genuine benefactor of mankind. There are in this country, at the moment, many thousands of Sabbathless and Godless people, most of whom faithfully serve their day and generation. The saviours of society hitherto have not been believers in God and Sabbath keepers. These have had their innings and they have miserably failed. The saviours of society will be those whose mission will be to shatter the fetters of ignorance and superstition, and help their fellow-beings to live natural lives as children of the earth and servants of one another.

Dr. Horton is growing old, but he still wishes he could face this country and tell the inhabitants what he feels and knows, but it is too late in the day. If he could go out and plead it would be all in vain. The Christian Sunday is doomed and the Christian God is passing, and no human pleading, however eloquent and passionate, will ever succeed in restoring either. Nature is at last coming into its own, and nothing can turn back the clock of progress.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Revolt Against Priestcraft.

The task of the twentieth century is to discipline the chaotic activity of the nineteenth century. And it can only do this by becoming aware of the death-sentence to be passed on Western civilization if it neglects to organize a new social and spiritual discipline.

—Frederick Harrison.

CLOSE observers of foreign affairs must have noticed that Priestcraft has had a remarkable set-back recently in different parts of the world, as far apart as Russia and Mexico. The oldest two of the Christian Churches have been the principal objects of attack. In Russia the Soviet Government has made a clean sweep of the Greek Church, which was for so long associated with the tyranny of the Romanoff dynasty; whilst in Mexico President Calles has declared war to the knife on the Roman Catholic Church, which has been a trouble to her statesmen for generations. The resemblance between the two plans of campaign is, to say the least, striking.

The Mexican President has just laid before the Chamber a new Bill regulating the activities of priests, and making them subordinate to the Government. Under the provisions of the Bill the State refuses to recognize archbishops, bishops, and other dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Permission to dedicate new churches must be obtained from the Government. Collections are only allowed inside places of worship. Priests may not inherit by will from other priests, or from private citizens to whom they are related within the fourth degree. The proposed Bill is very far-reaching in its effect, for other religious communities are subject to its provisions. For instance, the Church of England, and other foreign sects, may be allowed to retain foreign-born priests for six years longer, but after that period they must be replaced by born Mexicans.

The proposed measure, it will be seen, is a very drastic one, but, doubtless, the statesmen of Mexico know the enemy they have to deal with quite as much as the Russians realized the reactionary power of the Greek Church priests. Until the Revolution, Russia

was the wonder and despair of the rest of Europe. Whilst the thousands of churches blazed with jewels, Russian peasants were the worst educated and most degraded on the whole Continent. Religious fanaticism appeared there in its worst form, and the periodic massacres of the Jewish citizens sent shudders all over the civilized world, and made the Tsarist regime a hiss and a byword. The largest share of the responsibility lay with the Greek Church hierarchy, which enjoyed full power and abused it to the uttermost.

Christian priests have always itched for universal domination, and, curiously, at the very time when they are losing ground heavily in so many directions, the missionary question has been raised in its most acute form, and in a most unexpected quarter. The industrial unrest in China has culminated in a furious outburst of anti-foreign feeling, and missionaries, who are representative of alien religions, have been expelled. Some critics went so far as to suggest that these same missionaries were actuated by other motives than purely theological ones. Be that as it may, the Chinese will have no foreign evangelists, and have thrown them out and their bibles after them.

The Chinese people are not so unsophisticated as the natives of Africa, who take the bibles offered by the missionaries, and presently find that their homes are taken from them. China is no ordinary mission field, and the "heathen Chinese" is not a barbarian. He possesses a civilization which was hoary with age while as yet our forefathers were painted savages, and he has a choice of native religions. It is the Christians who, in his eyes, are the barbarians, and, truth to tell, what with the quarrels and animosities of the numerous Christian sects who seek to make converts, and the enormous divergence that so obviously exists between Christian precept and practice, the spectacle offered by European civilization cannot be a very edifying one.

Since the break-up of the Manchu dynasty, and the disappearance of a strong national government, the anti-foreign feeling has not been held in check, and the missionaries have been the first to suffer. This is scarcely to be wondered at, for the average Chinaman thinks of his native village; may think of his province; but hardly visualizes China as a whole. In so far as he is narrow, he is intolerant, and he is very inclined to trample on the things he cannot understand. What the Chinaman does know is that Europeans possess better artillery than his countrymen, and that they have forced, at the point of the bayonet, tolerance for missionaries, whom all classes of Chinese view with undisguised contempt. Perhaps English folks might understand this attitude better if the positions were reversed. That is to say, if the Chinese were able by naval and military force to extort terms for their almond-eyed and pig-tailed missionaries to preach Confucianism, Tsarism, and Buddhism among ourselves.

In some places the missionary is a civilizing agency; that is to say, he introduces Western social habits. That character he does not and cannot possess in China. He has nothing but Christian theology to offer the people in various contradictory versions. Not only do they conflict with each other, but they all run counter to the most cherished and ingrained ideas of Chinese society. To the Chinaman the highest and most exalted of all virtues is filial piety, and in his eyes some of the most familiar texts of the Christian Bible must appear both shocking and immoral. English people ought really to look at these things from a Chinese point of view. It is not pleasant to think what fate might befall Chinese missionaries with their unfamiliar rites and

doctrines if they were imposed by bayonets and machine-guns upon the sturdy population of our Black Country, or upon the militant Catholics of Ireland. There are tens of thousands of people in Great Britain and Ireland, who, destitute of the morality of Confucius, stand in as much need of reclamation as the Eastern race which we, hypocritically, pretend to pity.

This widespread revolt against the machinations of Priestcraft is highly significant. Over fifty years ago Leon Gambetta denounced Clericalism as being the supreme enemy of Democratic ideals, and his words are as true now as on the day on which they were uttered. The French priests were always in the opposite camp to that of the Republicans, just as in Russia the priests of the Greek Church supported whole-heartedly the Tsarist regime, and were blind to barbarities which provoked the horror and amazement of the civilized world.

Priests like their bread buttered on both sides, and they know full well that this happy state of affairs is far more likely to be realized in a country run on Feudal lines than in a state based on Democratic ideals. Even in this country the whole weight of the Established Church is always thrown against the people. A careful scrutiny of the votes of the Bishops in the House of Lords for over a century will prove this beyond all cavil and dispute. A further scrutiny of the Anglican Prayer-book will reveal the curious circumstance that prayers are offered for individual members of the Royal Family, and that King Charles the First is regarded in ecclesiastical circles as being a martyr. It is enough to curl a Democrat's hair, and turn it white afterwards. For it shows that a certain section of the English people is as conservative as the Chinese in matters of opinion, and the matter is not rendered more impressive because intellectual sloth is regarded as a national virtue, and flunkeyism as a characteristic to be admired.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Pagan Roots of the Christian Creed.

### II.

(Continued from page 38.)

It may be asked, and very pertinently, whence came the idea of a dying God? How did such a notion arise? However strange, grotesque, or fantastic it may seem to us to-day, it was quite rational to primitive or even semi-civilized man, from his standpoint of viewing Nature. Natural causation, as embodied and expressed in physical energy, played little or no part in his notions and theories of existence and life. The energy which moved his universe was stored in an unseen world in the form of gods, spirits, and demons; all conceived as human beings save that they were impalpable to the touch and usually invisible to human sight. The only material properties which were invariably absent in the make-up of these fantastic creations were those of weight and solidity. In all other respects they were wholly material. This lack of substance or weight however, gave the gods mobility and elusiveness, and thus fitted them in a special manner to act as causal agents in the domain of magic, since all reasoning on causation by primitive man was anthropomorphic. Just as he, *i.e.*, his soul or spirit, was "cause" of his own actions, so were the doings and movements of Nature, both animate and inanimate, caused by good and evil spirits.

Now, the marvel and enigma of life, with mysteri-

ously recurrent phases of birth, growth, decay, death, and reproduction, impressed our primitive forefathers with that wonder and awe which all nature bestirs in the awakening mind of a child. He was more keenly alive than we are to the fact that all living existence is absolutely dependent upon the annual renewal of life in spring. Civilization, with all its artificial means of fertilizing the Earth and of increasing its produce, has robbed us of primitive wonder, fear, awe, and reverence, just as familiarity deprives us of all childhood's sense of the marvellous. This dependence was often brought home to him in painfully acute forms by droughts, floods, and other untoward events, all of which he invariably ascribed to the action of some hostile agent in the so-called spirit world.

Nothing, however, was more obviously patent to him than that life and death alternate in a mysteriously regular manner. During summer all Nature is instinct with life; but during winter all life appears to have vanished from the earth. Desolation and death reign everywhere; the earth's robe of living green withers and decays in field and in forest. The flower fades and the fruit falls, apparently dead; while the Earth becomes one vast cemetery, in which the offsprings of summer lie dead and buried.

Under the impulse of the awakening mind semi-civilized man was not content merely to observe facts; he was impelled to frame theories to account for them. In all things, as we have just said, he reasoned after the human model or anthropomorphically; he projected into Nature his own feelings, desires, and passions. Every shower of rain was a gift ordered by the gods; it was they who hurled the thunderbolt or raised the storm. In like manner, the succession of seasons and the alternation of night and day were the expressions of their will.

It was, therefore, inevitable that he should regard the annual productiveness of Nature as due to a divinity, and of course, to be consistent to his human model, it would have to be a female divinity. In this way the earth—the source of all productiveness—became to him the greater Mother Goddess. And as he knew of no reproduction apart from a duality of sex—male and female—he was driven to conclude that there were two divinities concerned—a God as well as a goddess; especially as this duality seemed to supply him with a clue to solve the mystery attached to the perpetual recurrence of winter and summer, *i.e.*, to the life and death duality inherent in Nature. He reasoned thus: The Great Mother or Earth Goddess was obviously enduring or permanent, but something tragic must have happened to her male consort. He must have been mutilated or killed, and that would account for her unproductiveness; but, since the duty of a Myth was to explain things, it invariably adapted itself to the facts that had to be explained and provided accordingly. In this manner the slain and mutilated god-man was brought to life again, was raised to heaven and made God, who now could renew his visitation to the Earth Goddess, his consort. She therefore conceived and became again productive and fruitful. As this reunion occurred annually at a fixed astronomical date or event (*i.e.*, the vernal equinox), their festivals were celebrated regularly at the return of Spring or Easter-tide. The Great Mother Goddess and her divine consort were usually worshipped together, and formed between them a dual cult. There were several of such pairs of dual worships quite famous at the time. In Syria, Adonis and Aphrodite were worshipped as such; and so were Baal and Astarte at Sidon; and Osiris and Isis in Egypt; just as Attis and the Great Mother were worshipped together in Asia Minor. These different designating terms, however, were

only local variants of the names of the same divinities. Aphrodite, Astarte, Isis, Istar, and Cybele were only different names for the Great Goddess, Mother Earth. And the names Adonis, Baal, Osiris, Tammuz, and Attis were likewise local designations for her male consort. It was quite befitting that their worship should be observed in conjunction, for the lamentations and wailings with which their festivals always began represented the sorrow and grief of the goddess for her divine spouse; while the wild rejoicings with which they ended indicated her joy at re-finding him; and her grief and joy were shared by her worshippers.

Thus our primitive ancestors explained to their own satisfaction the earth's recurrent periods of life and death—of summer and winter—by the myth of a slain and re-arisen god-man who acted as male consort to Mother Earth; and, as they had a very real belief in sympathetic magic, the worship naturally assumed a phallic character. By this means they imagined they could charm back the earth's deified consort, and again make her fruitful and productive, thereby providing man and beast with the means of life for another year.

Theoretically there was, as I said, another class of Nature worship, usually grouped under the name of "solar cults"; but these tended to parallel the ritual of the strictly vegetation order.

As we have said before, all Nature worship, when not of a particular kind or place, was solar by implication. Nothing was more obvious than the fact that there was another generative principle in Nature besides the fecundity of the Earth; and it was equally obvious that that other factor was in some way connected with the sun and with the sky, for rain and sunshine were absolutely essential to the growth of vegetation. In the strictly vegetation cults, however, the astral fact was lost or obscured in the symbolism of animal life and its duality of sex.

Moreover, it was quite natural for our primitive ancestors to regard rain and sunshine as the gifts of the gods; for they had not one glimmer of knowledge of the true nature of the sun or of the atmosphere. The region in which the clouds sailed was to them simply the *lowest heaven*; and that in which the sun rode his daily course, was simply the highest. To regard this other factor as a male principle or consort was wholly gratuitous, and was due to the extraordinary fecundity of primitive imagination and luxuriance of its fantastic growths. Even in the strictly solar cults, however, the periodic withdrawal of the sun and its recurrent impotence in winter was looked upon as something tragic, though not theoretically susceptible to the human mutilations and sufferings of the male deity in the vegetation cults. Of this type of religion the most celebrated was that of Mithras. Mithras, though from the first a secondary and a "Redeemer" god, was not necessarily a suffering and a dying one. Through coming into contact with the gods Osiris, Attis, Adonis, and Dionysus, and since mutual adoptions, adaptations, and borrowings were then universally practised, the worship of Mithras ultimately assumed the character of a suffering, a dying and re-arising God; and the rites and ceremonies, which had meaning only for such deities, were latterly observed in his worship with equal regularity and solemnity. Thus all saviour cults tended progressively to resemble and duplicate one another and to assume a common ritual, whether or not its own deity was a solar or a vegetation God. Now, Mithraism was the cult which Christianity duplicated in the main as regards rites, mysteries and ascetic practices. In proof of this fact I shall quote a paragraph from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—a

witness by no means prejudiced in our favour—in which the writer summarizes the analogies between Christianity and Mithraism.

The fraternal and democratic spirit of the first communities, and their humble origin; the identification of the object of adoration with the light of the sun; the legends of the shepherds with their gifts and their adoration; the flood, and the ark; the representation in art of the fiery chariot; the drawing of water from the rock; the use of bell and candle, holy water and communion; the sanctification of Sunday and of the 25th of December; the insistence upon moral conduct, the emphasis placed upon abstinence and self-control; the doctrine of heaven and hell, of primitive revelation, of the mediation of the Logos emanating from the divine, the atoning sacrifice, the constant warfare between good and evil and the final triumph of the former; the immortality of the soul, the last judgment, the resurrection of the flesh and the fiery destruction of the universe—are some of the resemblances which enabled Mithraism to prolong its resistance to Christianity. At their root lay a common Eastern origin rather than any borrowing.

KERIDON.

## Acid Drops.

One can trust a clergyman to remember his trade interests, even at the graveside. Readers will recall the recent disaster at a Cinema in Canada, when over seventy children met their death. At the funeral service a sermon was preached by Archbishop Gauthier, who used the occasion for asking that laws should be made preventing the *opening of Cinemas on Sunday*. He was quite willing to let children take their chance on week days, apparently. The Archbishop said, according to the *Times*, of January 12:—

How can our administrators forget that they themselves have a moral responsibility? Let us remember that this horrible disaster took place on a Sunday. Let us remember that the tendency of to-day is not towards the sanctification of Sunday. Public opinion should impose respect for the Lord's Day. Why do our legislators leave these places open on Sunday? Let us pray that our legislators may find a law that cannot be attacked to remedy this situation. I am the first to demand such a law, and I cry aloud for it. I ask for it in the name of public morals and of these little coffins.

We do not imagine for a moment that the Archbishop sees the full implications of his speech. These men are so used to placing religious considerations before all others that they take no heed of decency or common-sense; otherwise it might occur to him that people will be more apt to be asking what God was doing in not preventing such a disaster, than to be drawing from it any supposed moral of an alleged better Sunday observance.

An Aberdeen journal, reviewing some Religious Tract Society books, declares:—

The days are gone, happily or unhappily, when youngsters spent Sunday afternoon learning the Shorter Catechism or one of the longer Psalms, and had, as devotional reading, books that inculcated awe-inspiring and often horrifying ideals.

We like that "happily or unhappily." How revealing it is! If the reviewer had merely said "happily," he would have offended his pious readers. By sticking in two terms he avoids offending all kinds of readers. Each can take his choice according to his particular prejudice. Our journalists are clever.

Gipsy Smith, we learn, has had a great time among the Maoris, and "will have many remarkable stories to tell when he returns." There's no possible doubt whatever about that! At the job of providing remarkable stories he hasn't an equal among evangelists.

Mr. Isaac Foot, a former M.P., recently addressed the Friends' Guild of Teachers. He mentioned the change in public opinion regarding drunkenness; once regarded as a slight offence, it was now looked on as disreputable and heinous. That change he attributed to the direct teaching in the schools given about the effect of alcohol. We beg leave to differ. In our opinion the lectures given on alcohol in schools are simply a waste of time. The change of public opinion is the result of better education, which, in turn, has opened up more rational amusement to the masses. The results achieved by pious teetotalers' propaganda has been practically negligible. Drunkenness has decreased because people's leisure is occupied with books, the theatre, travel, and games.

Canon C. S. Woodward, Vicar of St. John's, Westminster, thinks that Christianity will not grip and challenge young people until Christians, as in early days, are distinctive, refusing to accept the common standards of the world. At present, he says, owing to so much compromise, it is "extremely difficult to point to any marked difference between a professing Christian and any other respectable member of society." Oh, but things are not so bad as all that. One can still pick out a Christian—one simply selects the man or woman who is the biggest adept at malicious gossip and backbiting. He or she is sure to be a shining light of some church or chapel. The Christian is still distinctive.

Bournemouth recently banned the opening of cinemas on Sunday, on the grounds that Sunday opening would not be to the best interests of the town. Bournemouth has over 20 Nonconformist chapels of different denominations. We infer from this that in some odd manner "the best interests of the town" are deeply concerned with the trade interests of the parsons. As the citizens live by the trade resulting from catering for visitors, and are not concerned with the parsons' commercial affairs, they who are not kill-joys and Sabbatarian fanatics should make their views known to the pious Council. There's one thing we notice, the Councillors seemingly are not, on principle, opposed to Sunday amusement; they have Sunday evening concerts at their Winter Gardens. From these they have no conscientious scruples to taking money, nor do they object to employing Sunday labour. At bottom, the Councillors' opposition to Sunday cinemas is no doubt two-fold. They want no competition with their own concerts, and they desire not to offend the parsons. It would never do, however, to frankly avow a commercial motive nor to reveal spineless obedience to the parsons' bullying. Hence the Councillors trot out the pretty tarradiddle about serving the best interests of the town.

The difference between Christianity and the other great religions, says the Rev. F. L. Wiseman, is that they are an account of the search of men for God, but the Gospels tells of God's search for man. Mr. Wiseman is talking mere pious rubbish. The great religions, and including Christianity, are accounts of primitive man's attempt to explain the facts of nature in the light of his primitive knowledge. In that we find the reason why all the great religions are now declining. Modern man will no longer accept the primitive man's explanation. In these circumstances, decay of faith is inevitable; and all God's churches in the world will not arrest it.

"There is no sort of wrong, there is no sort of disrespect to Jesus, our Master, in playing a quiet game on Sunday, provided that it does not entail the labour of others," says Dr. H. Cistley White, Headmaster of Westminster School. He thinks Sunday ought to be made joyful, and would strictly limit Sunday-school to half an hour. Statements like these rather distress our merry contemporary, the *Sunday School Chronicle*. It calls the headmaster's doctrine a pernicious one for religion and the child. It adds: "We have a different ideal of a joyful Sunday. For as religion is not a medicine to be taken in minute doses....." What our contemporary appears not to realize is, that the rest of

ordinary mankind objects to being made to conform to the Sabbatarian idea of joyfulness on Sunday, and it objects to having the Christian medicine forced upon it, whether in minute doses or by the barrel. But the brains of the Puritan are so doped with his patent tonic that he is mentally unable to perceive so simple a fact as that.

A Methodist writer, the Rev. C. W. Andrews, hastens to impart to preachers, Sunday-school teachers, and parents a wonderful discovery he has only just lighted on. This is, that the best way of getting people to avoid doing what is wrong or to leave alone doubtful pleasures, is not by everlastingly denouncing the "evils," but by educating people into appreciating what is better. There is, he says, a fatal fascination attached to the thing denounced or forbidden. The negative "don't" fixes attention on the thing to be shunned and makes it desirable. All this is true enough, but our parsons have been a very long time realizing its truth. The reason for this is that the Sacred Book inspiring them to denunciation is a conglomeration of denunciation with its "Thou shalt not's" and its threats of the wrath of God. And this explains why the priests have, during the Christian era, spent most of their energy in denouncing this or that evil, real or imagined. Seemingly, just a few of our modern parsons are beginning to realize that the Church's traditional method of reforming people is about as stupid a thing as could ever have been invented. We hope they appreciate the fact that the Church learnt the method from its God-inspired fetish book. If they do, maybe they will begin to realise that some other tricks acquired from the same source are just as stupid and useless.

Truth will out. And the Rev. H. Mudie Draper, a Wesleyan minister of Clapham, lets it out. His objection to Sunday games is mainly a commercial one. He virtually admits that is so. Take the boys who play football on Clapham Common on Sunday, he says: How many Church members are we likely to get from their number? The answer, he adds, is obvious. It is; and so is his reason for objecting to Sunday games. The reverend gentleman also thinks that people have nowadays plenty of leisure to play games during the week, without Sunday being used for the purpose. The working-class, he points out, have more leisure because of the Eight-hours' Day, the Shop Hours' Act, the Day-light Saving Act, and the weekly half-holiday. True; but he omits to mention that the workers secured none of this leisure through the efforts of the Churches. That being so, it is sheer impudence on the part of Mr. Draper and his kill-joy friends to attempt to dictate to the people how they shall employ that leisure.

Glasgow Education Authority has decided to press for a national censorship of films in the interests of children. While it is so keen on censorship it might, in the interests of the children, clear out of the schools of Glasgow that obscene collection of tall stories, the Holy Bible.

The Bishop of Bloemfontein addressed to the *Morning Post* a letter, wherein he states "that religion includes the gigantic attempt to alter the whole spirit of the world, and make humanity really human to itself." Unfortunately, all the books on Christian history are not burnt, or this statement might be believed.

The famous Tennessee case, in which the school teacher, Mr. Scopes, was fined one hundred dollars for teaching evolution in the State schools, was advanced a step further on January 15. On an appeal, the supreme court of the State decided that while the law itself was quite constitutional, the local judge had no power to inflict a fine of more than ten dollars. Any greater fine must be fixed by a jury. The sentence was, therefore, squashed. The case is now to be carried to the Supreme Courts of the United States in order to rest the constitutional character of the law. Of course, if the Constitutional Law is interpreted fairly, there is no doubt that the law of Tennessee is invalid. There is no God

in the United States Constitution, and the Government of the State is forbidden to interfere in matters of religion. But where Christianity is concerned notions of justice take some queer turns. For Christ's sake anything is admissible, from feeding a baby to burning an old woman.

A gentleman down Ardrossan way, the Rev. M. Adamson, has discovered what he conceives to be a reply to Lord Inchcape's indictment of Foreign Missions. He says we must not leave China to Confucius and Buddha; because what would have happened had Rome been left to Virgil and Cicero, and Greece to Socrates and Plato? Well, all we can do is to ask anyone with intelligence to contrast Athens under the influence of Socrates and Plato, and Rome under that of Virgil and Cicero, with the same places after a thousand years of Christian teaching and leadership. Of course, if we had never had the Christian Church, we should never have had the Inquisition, or the religious wars of the later centuries, or the ascetic epidemic, or the worship of relics, with various other comforts that Christianity brought to a weary world. But we fancy we should have rubbed along somehow. And if Socrates and Plato were to return even to-day, they might well ask what of barbarism it was that had taken possession of their beloved cities.

Lord Inchcape has remained silent under the attacks that have been made on him, probably because no real reply has been made to his charges. What he said was that the Missionaries stirred up trouble by their ignorant interference with native customs, and their insolence towards native beliefs and institutions. What has been done is to publish a lot of opinions from parsons and ignorant stay-at-home evangelists, telling of the number of natives who have attended mission schools and received attention from missionary doctors. And all that has nothing to do with the case. The people who subscribe to the missions are not at all interested in educating the Chinese or doctoring the Chinese, save so far as they may be used as baits to get them to swallow the absurdities of their own religious faith. If anyone doubts this let him try asking for money from these subscribers on the understanding that none of it will be devoted to teaching Christian doctrines, or in getting converts. On that plan he would not raise fifty pounds per year. From beginning to end the Foreign Missionary movement is one of the biggest impostures that this country has evolved.

Sir Oliver Lodge began to "become" a theologian about thirty years ago. To-day he would be welcomed as minister of a fairly orthodox church. Speaking on "The Human Quest for Truth" in a London Baptist Church, on a recent Sunday, he said that "science is in the melting pot," and later, that "science is tending to a strengthening of theology in all its vital aspects." He condemned Rationalism, calling it "something we are up against." Those were bald assertions unsupported by a single scrap of evidence; and those who are but tyros in scientific studies are fully aware how utterly untrue they are.

As he proceeded in his address, Sir Oliver indulged in wilder assertions still. "Theology," he said, "is too big for human reason," the truth being that reason rebels stoutly against it. That is why religion is an emotional affair, making no appeal whatever to the intellect, "faith being our guiding light," in Sir Oliver's own words. Then he declared that "faith is not credulity." What on earth is it, then, in religion, if not credulity—a disposition to believe on no substantiated evidence of any kind. The objects of religious faith are all exclusively imaginary, such as God, Christ, the unseen world, and the souls, not one of which has ever offered the slightest proof of his or its reality.

Lord Riddell, at a Conference concerned with Education in Industry and Commerce, trounced the praisers of "the good old days." "The present generation," he declared, "is a very bright generation, better-looking, healthier, stronger, and keener than its predecessors."

It is a pity he didn't add that this generation is not in the least religious; for that fact helps to explain the improvement. It also reveals the reason why pulpitanterers are so fond of slinging mud at our young men and women.

Christian faith in God's protective power isn't what it was. The Rev. Mr. Rattenbury cables from China:—"We are trying our best to move missionaries to place of safety as a measure of precaution." And the English headquarters replies: "We remember you continually in prayer." Mr. Rattenbury, however, taking the prayers for granted, is not so sure they will work the safeguarding business. "Trust in God," says he, "is a good principle, but 'safety first' is a better."

In our play hours the real self emerges from the cramp of the work time. But, says Mr. Arthur Mee, let us give ourselves the kind of liberty we like, and not take recreations because they are the fashion. For our part, we are not concerned with "the fashion," but with the "liberty we like." At present the Sabbatarian rear up their prohibitions against our liberty of choice of recreation on Sunday—the one free day of the week. Perhaps Mr. Mee will publicly tell the kill-joys they are in the wrong. But we suspect he won't find time for that.

"I have two little nieces who sang at Christmas: *While shepherds washed their frocks by night*," says Dr. E. Lyttelton. The little girls' version, we fancy, is as likely to be true as the original.

East Hill Congregational Church, Wandsworth, S.W., is not to be left behind in the advertising movement now proceeding with big and little churches. A leaflet, "What really matters," is being distributed, and it contains the following extract from a book recently published: "Over Nineteen Centuries ago our civilization turned the corner of the road and met Jesus of Nazareth. It never has been the same world since. Something happened at that meeting from which humanity never will be able to escape, and *never ought to wish to escape*." This extract transports us into the world of romance at once. It is sloppy and careless writing, and if the world does not want it after nineteen centuries of religious wars and disputes the vendors ought to examine their goods. All churches are *inviting* people to come in; the fun will commence when they take that nice old clergyman's advice, "Compel them to enter in." And the person accepting the invitation, to oblige them all, will have to enter in a hundred pieces, or stay at home and read that dear old gentleman, St. Augustin, who stated that the existence of mice was a problem which faith could grasp.

Under the heading of "200 Clergymen Protest," we read an appeal to the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England. How remote from any intelligible touch with life are the two hundred protesters may be gathered from the following:—"Such inconsistency in divine worship is unthinkable and would tend to wound deeply the sacred body of Christ." This phrasology is not much of a compliment to the toilers who have worked to make language capable of expressing things that can be clearly understood; but perhaps we make a mistake in thinking that ecclesiasticism would risk being understood.

Sir Hall Caine's *The Life of Jesus*, we learn, is likely to be published this year. There should be a large sale for it. All the other romances by this author have achieved great popularity.

A pious reviewer of Miss Ethel Dell's latest book says that this popular author always gives us a good story and a high standard of ideals. We are not acquainted with this author's works, but we always have understood that the standard of ideals were decidedly primitive, not to say cave-mannish. If that be so, we can understand that a pious reviewer might deem them high.



## The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £867 10s. 8d. A. J. Marriot, 5s.; F. C. Wykes, £1; A. Cayford, 10s.; V. H. S. (5th sub.), 5s.; C. Bridgen, 1s.; E. Topp, 2s. 6d.; P. McClachlan, £1; D. Macconnell (2nd sub.), £1 5s.; A. Colman, 5s.; F. Collins, 10s.; Ren Rut, 5s.; T. Sutcliffe, 2s. 6d.; Old Bill (Toronto), 6s.; S. Waring, 1s.; S. Blagg, 10s.; E. H. Hassell (2nd sub.), 10s.; Wayfarer, 2s. 6d. Total £874 11s. 2d.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust, and addressed to me at 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Every contribution will be acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### To Correspondents.

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

E. TOPP.—Mr. Cohen would be quite ready to visit Edinburgh if some of the friends on the spot would attend to the necessary local arrangements. Why not try to get them together for that purpose? Thanks for contribution to Trust Fund. We are never likely to measure people in terms of cash.

A. C. (St. Albans).—We are glad to hear from a recent subscriber to the *Freethinker*, and to find that it is thought so highly of. We are aware that it is not always easy to get new readers for a paper such as this one. We have no cross-word competitions, or horse-racing, or scandal, and we do not promise hair-raising revelations that never come off. The paper makes an appeal to the better side of human nature only, and while it is not the easiest of tasks to get new readers, there are large numbers who would become readers if they were only made aware of its existence. That is where our friends can all help.

W. R. BLAKE.—There seems no provision for release of a soldier from compulsory attendance at Church. During the war a promise was made by the authorities that when the war was over the question should be gone into. But nothing has been done, and the Army authorities decline to treat a soldier as a full-grown individual capable of forming his own opinions about religion. And we can hardly expect a Christian to pay much attention to a mere matter of principle.

H. MARLOW.—We have explained times out of number that the National Secular Society has nothing whatever to do with any political movement, whether it be Conservatism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, or any other 'ism. The Society appeals for support from all who believe in Freethought, careless of what political or other opinions may be held. And it means what it says.

J. WEARING.—Thanks for reference. Will prove useful.

BISHOP W. M. BROWN.—Papers have been sent. If we come across a stray copy of Mr. Cohen's booklet on *Foreign Missions* will send it on.

G. GARRICKSON.—Trust you will have a pleasant trip to South America. We feel inclined to envy you the few days quiet that you must have while at sea.

Mr. H. IRVING writes to express his appreciation of Mr. Bryce's "Reminiscences," and to say that he and his wife are the "charming couple" to which Mr. Bryce refers, and that he wishes to again meet the writer of the article. We can endorse Mr. Bryce's description, so far as one-half of the couple is concerned, and will argue it out with the other half when we meet.

HAROLD SCUDDER.—Will appear next week. Crowded out of this issue.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

To-day (January 23), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road, Manchester. In the afternoon, at 3, he will speak on "The Making of Man," and in the evening, at 6.30, on "If Christ Came to Manchester." Freethinkers should try to induce some of their Christian friends to attend the evening meeting, particularly.

We have not had many Annual Dinners that went off with greater smoothness and with greater satisfaction to all present than that at the Midland Grand Hotel, on January 12. The dinner itself was excellent, and both the speeches and the entertainment touched a very high level. "Clown Argo" deserves special mention for his amazing imitations of animals, machinery and birds. Misses Ivy M. Wright and Edith Price delighted the guests with their singing, and as did Mr. Charles Hayes and Mr. Robert Beresford. Altogether a very successful evening, and Mr. G. Royle, with Miss Vance and Miss Kough, fully deserve complimenting on the results of their efforts.

The number present was slightly smaller than on the previous year, which was fully accounted for by those friends who were either themselves down with the prevailing complaint of influenza, or had experienced the death of members of their families from the same cause. Such regular attendants as Mr. A. J. Fincken, Mr. C. Quinton, Mr. J. Neate, Mr. Wood were absent from one or other of these causes, and Mr. J. T. Lloyd was not yet sufficiently recovered from his recent illness to trust himself out at night. On the other hand, there were quite a number of newcomers present, and these we fully expect to have with us on future occasions.

We are asked to announce that a number of Freethinkers have banded themselves together at Chester le Street, Durham, with the intention of joining the N.S.S. later, for the purpose of spreading Freethought ideas. They have a room which is used as a reading room and library, and which is open every day. Lectures are also given every Sunday. The address of the Secretary, Mr. J. T. Brighton, is Prospect Cottage, Chester le Street, Durham. We know there are very many Freethinkers in that district, and wish the new venture every success.

The newspapers of last week contained news of a blasphemy prosecution in Toronto. Mr. Ernest Sterry, editor of the *Christian Inquirer*, is charged with issuing a "blasphemous, indecent, and profane libel against the Christian religion." We have no details, and the "indecent" very likely carries no further meaning than unpleasant. One of the counts in the indictment is that Mr. Sterry, who is a native of Lowestoft, said: "The Bible contains hundreds of passages relative to the divine being which any moral, honest man would be

ashamed to have penned." If that is a fair sample of the blasphemy committed, we can only say that Canada must be a long way behind this country to make it the basis of a criminal charge. The case is said to be likely to cause a sensation in Canada. If Freethinkers are laive to their duty, it will.

When we say that it would be impossible to sustain a charge of blasphemy on such a basis as the passage cited, one ought to qualify that by saying "at present." At present there is a considerable amount of latitude, due to the prevailing interpretation of the common law of blasphemy. But it was pointed out during the hearing of the Bowman case in the House of Lords, that while public opinion had moved in the direction of greater liberality, there was nothing to prevent the earlier interpretation being reinforced should circumstances lead the government of the day to think it advisable. That is an eventuality to which all Freethinkers should be alive. The Blasphemy Laws are in existence, and while they exist they are a threat to intellectual liberty in every country where the British laws have any influence. The only security is to repeal the laws. And the only way to do that is to go on making Freethinkers. Every recruit to the Freethought cause is a further guarantee of intellectual freedom. Every sincere Christian is a potential threat to mental liberty.

We note a couple of well-written letters in recent issues of the *Yorkshire Post*, by Mr. C. C. Prior and Mr. R. G. Ellison, on "God and Natural Law," and the attempt to harmonize the existence of pain and suffering with theistic beliefs. We are glad to see both these letters, they may do something to counteract the use at present being made of the Newspaper Press.

In reply to a question asked by one of our readers, we wish to state that we are always willing to send parcels of recent issues of the *Freethinker* for distribution to those who are willing to undertake the work. When writing, friends should say about how many they can handle.

We are glad to learn that Mr. E. C. Ratcliffe's visit to Birmingham last Sunday was a marked success. Good collection and good sales of literature, and the Brassworkers' Hall crowded. Everybody was pleased with the lecture, and hopes to have the speaker with them again at an early date.

We have received the first Annual Report of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, and it displays a great deal of activity which, we hope, has produced good results. The Society has been raising the legal issue of the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the Christian Churches, and although there does not appear to be any decisive victory recorded, the publicity given the matter will have been of great benefit to Freethought. And, from our own fighting, we know how frequently that attack has to be renewed before the thick heads of the orthodox are affected. And the mere existence of a Society for the Advancement of Atheism is a standing challenge to the religious world.

#### THE UNCREATIVE ASCETIC.

The ascetic mind is seldom a fertile mind because it places its values in the unattained glory of another world, free from bodily contacts and temptations. Therefore, instead of delighting in the things of this life it shows a tendency to bemoan them; and, bemoaning them, it dulls the edge and quickness of perception; it sees the worth of this life only as a preparation for a future life. There follows, naturally, a lack of interest in material things and this begets an other-worldliness that bars the possibility of creative thought.

T. Sharper Knowlson ("Originality").

## Coward's Castle.

THE correspondence on "Religion" in the *Morning Post* continues to afford an astonishing display of ignorance, stupidity and baffle-headed thinking. So far as any realization or understanding of the progress of scientific knowledge is concerned, the writers might still be dwelling in the Middle Ages of Faith and Darkness. They do not appreciate in the least the significance of this knowledge as it affects their superstitions. Yet the majority of these people belong to what are called "the educated classes."

We do not expect anything else but intellectual dishonesty from the professional exponents of the Christian superstition. Their livelihood depends upon it. As Samuel Butler put it bitingly in his *Hudibras*:—

What makes all doctrines plain and clear?  
About two hundred pounds a year—  
And that which was proved true before  
Prove false again? Two hundred more.

But one might reasonably expect to find something better from some, at least, of the cultured laity in the light of certain "questionnaires" issued by journals in this country and in America. Thus, 105 papers in New York received 10,424 replies from the Metropolitan District, of which 7,500 indicated belief in a god, and 2,924 unbelief; the London *Daily News* had 9,991 replies in favour, and 3,686 against; whilst the *Nation and Athenæum* recorded 743 believers and 1,024 unbelievers. When we consider the difference between the readers of the first two, and of the last, it becomes at once apparent that the standard of education and culture makes all the difference.

But the *Morning Post* describes its discussion as a "Pulpit," which explains why no frankly rationalist, Atheistic or sceptic criticism has appeared. In this the *Morning Post* Pulpit is characteristic of the traditional Christian "cowards' castle."

Of late I have been considering why it is that the teachings of Christianity which appear not only to be glaringly false, but absolutely imbecile, to the informed thinker, can possibly be accepted by so large a number of people who seem to be educated and quite sane in other directions. The conclusion I have come to is that they are mentally incapable of grasping the great truths which modern science has established in face of the puerilities of current religion. Only recently I met a man who frankly told me that he had tried to read Hæckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, and that he failed to understand it! Yet this man is a graduate of Oxford University, and a schoolmaster to boot! In this case, what does "education" amount to anyway? How can we expect the vast masses of the people who are uneducated, or, at best, half-educated, to realize the manner in which religious superstition has been intellectually smashed, pulverized, and exposed for what it really is—a gross fraud and imposture upon their credulity?

Such questionnaires as those to which I have referred cannot be taken as indicating the attitude of the public mind. It is to be expected that "believers" will rush forward to express their assent, whereas the vast mass of readers will pass the matter over indifferently. Among those who are thus indifferent, and are sufficiently well informed to be intelligently opposed, only a few will think it worth while to expend a stamp in registering their opinion. There is no doubt as to which are the more intelligent, the Christian "sheep" or the Rationalist "goats." But the first are organized, the others are not.

The editors of our great newspapers are as well

aware as we are that the Christian superstition is "discredited beyond redemption," as one of them said to me. They know that it would stand no chance whatever in an open controversy to which Freethinkers were admitted on equal terms with their opponents. But they also know that the Christian "shepherds" to-day are as vindictive as ever their predecessors were in past centuries; and that their ovine flocks are still sufficiently numerous to make things awkward if they permitted such a discussion. The Christian is hopelessly outclassed if the Freethinker is given a free hand. Thus, we can imagine the sub-editors of the *Morning Post* going through the "tripe" sent in by eminent divines and others, with their tongues in their cheeks, carefully consigning to the waste-paper basket everything of a sceptical complexion.

What humbug it all is! It is about time in this, the twentieth century, that the churches were told openly and bluntly that their ridiculous dogmas and doctrines are *untrue*, that the whole Christian superstition is a *lie* from start to finish.

All religions are based upon guesses and wild speculations, unproven assertions and unverifiable assumptions. All gods are the result of human imagination or invention, all "divine revelations" are fictions of priestcraft. The god of the Old Testament is an ugly fiend, whose nature reflects that of the savage, cruel, revengeful, bloodthirsty, treacherous age in which he originated. That Christianity, which adopted him, should have been, throughout its history, even worse, is not surprising. The surprise is that it should still persist in view of this history which is open to anyone to read. It is an outrage upon the intelligence of our modern civilization; for a more feeble foundation for such an erection of monstrous nonsense can be found in no other religion. It needs no scholarship to decide that the story of Jesus Christ is a fiction, and that no such person ever existed.

The first chapters of Genesis give a totally false account of the origin of the world, of man, and of human nature. To say that it is an "allegory" is merely to evade the issue. It is nothing of the sort. It is a fable handed down from a pre-scientific age. It has proved a stumbling-block to the progress of knowledge for 2,000 years. Yet it is being taught to-day as a literal truth to children, by men who themselves know that it is not true. If the world was not "created," and man did not "fall" exactly in the manner stated, then the whole of Christ's "mission" falls to the ground. This, the heads of the Great Lying Church, and of the equally mendacious lesser sects, know perfectly well, and this is why the Freethinker is barred out from "cowards' castle."

It is time that the whole character of this mythical figure, Jesus Christ, was challenged. Too much is granted to him, even by Rationalists. There is nothing about him that is unique or even remarkable. The "virgin birth" story was a commonplace with heroes in the ancient world. There is not a word in his much vaunted ethics that is original. The doctrines attributed to him under this head were put in better form, and much more completely, by such previous teachers as Confucius and particularly by the Buddha Gotama. Even assuming Jesus to be a historical personage, which he is not, his character, as described, was most imperfect. He was an ignorant man, and his mentality was of an inferior order.

According to the New Testament, Jesus was so ignorant that he believed various diseases and forms of insanity to be caused by "devils," and that he had the power to cast them out. He was so stupid that,

when he found a fig tree not bearing fruit out of season, he cursed it. He was full of revilings and cursings against those who would not accept him at his own valuation. He lost his temper and assaulted men who were merely pursuing their recognised, lawful and necessary avocation. He treated his own mother with marked disrespect. And finally, he was a false prophet. He believed that the end of the world and his second coming would occur in the lifetime of the generation then living (Matt. xxiv., 34; Luke xxi., 32), and the Apostles believed the same thing (1 Thess. iv., 15-17). This should be sufficient to discredit anyone, and the marvel is how these verses were allowed to stand in the various redactions and recopyings of the story since it first began to gain currency.

There is nothing whatever in the whole legend of Jesus to justify the claims made in respect of it. It carries throughout the evidences of pure fiction from the genealogy of Joseph (who was his father, and yet not his father!) to the resurrection myth. It has given rise to the most colossal imposture ever foisted upon a credulous world—the Roman Catholic Church, and to a succession of the greatest charlatans that ever lived—the Popes. Among these, at least one, the syphilitic Leo X., spoke the truth in his cups (*in vino veritas*, if not *ex cathedra*), when he said: "We owe all this to the fable of Jesus Christ." But this fable has a good deal of money wrapped up in it, and the livelihood of a large number of people; and this is the real reason why it is so tenacious of life.

Scipione Ammirato, the Florentine canon, also expressed the truth when he wrote (*Opus. Disc. 7*):—

He who speaks of religion speaks of wealth, and the reason is very simple. Religion being a separate account which one keeps with the *Seigneur Dieu*, and we mortals being obliged to apply to him in many events, be it to return thanks to him for benefits received and evils avoided, or to pray him to spare us from this or to accord us that, it is necessary in either case, whether it be as solicitors or as recipients, that we part with our goods, not to the God of the Universe who needs them not, but to his Church and his priests."

This is really the issue of the whole controversy. It will not be until the people refuse to part with their goods to those holy humbugs, the priests and parsons, that Christianity will finally be relegated to the limbo of discredited myth and superstition.

E. J. LAMEL.

### "Upon Westminster Bridge."

SUGGESTED BY WORDSWORTH'S SONNET.

HE gazed upon the city in the glow  
Of early morn—from his celestial tower;  
And gave to earthy things a lasting dower—  
The golden nectar of a soul's o'erflow:  
What was it, Poet, that impressed thee so?  
Thou must have risen at an early hour;  
And felt the breath of some auspicious power,  
Amid the host of things that come and go.  
There is no sense of aught that standeth still;  
Eternal movement marks the dullest day;  
But how mechanically on its way  
The tide of Life moves ever on—until  
We would deny the Truth of all we see,  
In a broad vision of Humanity!

W. J. LAMB.

Make your educational laws strict, and your criminal ones may be gentle; but, leave youth its liberty, and you will have to dig dungeons for age.—*Ruskin*.

## The Fear of Death.

A GOOD deal of interest has been excited in medical circles by the publication of an article in the London *Lancet* advocating that it should be made easier and less painful for people to die. The proposition is, of course, not a new one, but it acquires a fresh significance when one considers the powerful agencies which modern science has placed in the hands of the physician.

There have been many expressions of opinion from medical men, some of whom see nothing wrong in smoothing the way when there is great agony and recovery is impossible. But they point out that the greatest care and discretion should be exercised and the methods employed should not be left to the discretion of one man. There should be a consultation, as in the case of an operation.

It may surprise some people, however, to learn that the majority of those who have contributed to the discussion declare that as a general rule the last brief stage of human experience is accompanied by neither pain nor fear.

"I have seen many hundreds of people go to their long rest," says Sir William Arbuthnot Lane, the eminent physician, "and in many of the instances they have just wanted to sleep—for death is but sleeping and forgetting—I don't think there is any great fear of death. At least that is my opinion from the many cases I have seen."

Such testimony is corroborated by many others who, by virtue of great experience, have the best right to express an opinion. The superintendent of a great London Hospital, for example, declares that he has seen hundreds of people die, "but seldom have I seen anything like a dread of death. Most people just before death are either unconscious or in a comatose condition."

What becomes, then, of the fear of death of which we have heard so much and which looms so darkly in the literature of all ages? If men were not afraid to die then there would be no virtue in the sacrifice of the hero, no great merit in the enthusiast who died that the truth might live.

It is common knowledge, of course, that such a fear exists; but it exists in the healthy and vigorous rather than in the moribund, and is the salutary protest of the healthy organism against extinction. It is a biological necessity that men should desire to retain their lives and should fight against death by every means in their power, but when the inevitable moment arrives nature removes this desire and administers a merciful anæsthetic.

Sir William Osler, that great and scholarly physician, some years ago placed his opinion on record in the following words: "I have careful notes of about five hundred deathbeds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. Ninety suffered bodily pain or distress of one sort or another; eleven showed mental apprehension; two positive terror; one experienced spiritual exaltation; one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no sign one way or the other: like their birth, their death was a sleep and a forgetting."

Even Dr. Samuel Johnson, who during his life suffered great agonies at the thought of death and could not endure the discussion of it, when his time came passed through the great portal without a trace of fear and breathed his last so peacefully that his attendants hardly perceived when his dissolution took place.

"It falls to the lot of most doctors," says Dr. R. W. Mackenna, in his beautiful little book, *The Adventure of Death*, "to see much of death, and I have watched by the bedside of the dying of many classes and all ages. ....My experience has been that, however much men and women may, when in the full vigour of health, fear death, when their hour approaches the fear is almost invariably lulled into quietness, and they face the end with calmness and a serene mind."

But we have not only the evidence of those who have seen a great number die; we have also the testimony of many who have been threatened with inevitable death, and escaped. Such a one, a nurse who was miraculously saved by a surgical operation from what seemed certain death, on being asked whether in the shadow of

imminent death she felt any fear, replied: "No, I have a natural human shrinking from death when in perfect health, but when on the edge of the precipice I had absolutely no fear."

There is pain and sorrow enough in the world," says Mr. A. C. Benson, the famous essayist, "for us to spare investing death with grim terrors of our own. There is no terror to the dying about death at all."

This is not a mere expression of opinion, but the result of an experience when, during an alpine holiday, Mr. Benson hung for twenty minutes suspended from the edge of a crevasse with nothing between him and death but the strands of a frail rope and the devotion of his friend and guide.

During these dreadful moments he had no sense of fear, only a dim wonder as to how he should die. He says he had no edifying thoughts, and he did not review his past life or his many failings. He speculated a little as to what death would be like, and towards the end had a sort of anxious longing to get the thing over as soon as possible.

Similarly, Dr. Livingstone has related how, seized and mauled by a lion, he felt neither pain nor fear, and from his experience ventured to suggest that nature cast a similar anæsthesia over the animals that fall a prey to the carnivora.

Dr. Mackenna mentions the case of a young man who fell from the roof of a lofty building and escaped, miraculously, with a few bruises. The sufferer assured the doctor that, in his long fall to earth, which seemed to cover an eternity, he did not feel the slightest fear. Similar testimony has been given by persons who have been nearly drowned. Often, indeed, their attention has been attracted by some incident, such as attempts at their rescue, which they have observed with complete calm and detachment, even with a sense of humour.

Another point that attracts attention in these reminiscences of resuscitated persons is, that at the moment of their greatest danger not only did they experience no fear but they felt no pain. Sir Francis Younghusband describes a motor accident that nearly proved fatal, yet when the crash came he felt neither pain nor anxiety: "If death had resulted," he says, "it would have been absolutely painless, for no pain had yet come."

The fear of death in many persons is just the fear that it may be a painful process, yet experience is universal in declaring that the act of death is painless. There may be suffering during the last illness when the body is making its final struggle with the great enemy, but eventually when the fight is seen to be hopeless a merciful euthanasia supervenes.

And even much of the suffering that accompanies the last stage of certain diseases is more apparent than real. Convulsions that appear to the onlooker to be formidable are merely reflex actions of which the patient is unconscious. "One of the worst cases of eclamptic convulsions I ever saw," says Dr. Mackenna, "occurred in a woman aged twenty-eight. I was present at the moment of onset and saw agony graven in sharp characters upon the sufferer's face. But when the convulsion was over the patient slowly recovered consciousness and, as she opened her eyes, said: "I have had a nice little sleep."

A similar instance has been given by Professor J. Cook Wilson, who described the terrible respiratory struggles of his father when dying from heart failure supervening on influenza. The medical attendants assured him that his father, despite his harrowing symptoms, felt nothing, a statement which the son found it difficult to believe until the father woke up and volunteered the statement that he had passed a comfortable night.

As a matter of fact, many perfectly healthy persons occasionally exhibit signs of great distress when they are in a profound sleep and lying on their backs. They are, apparently, being slowly suffocated and respiration can only be conducted with great difficulty. Yet when such a person is turned on his side the breathing immediately becomes easy, and when he awakes he is certain to declare that he experienced no discomfort.

GEORGE E. WINTER.

Johannesburg Sunday Times.

## The Annual Dinner.

THE Thirtieth Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society, held on January 12, proved a most enjoyable and memorable function, both socially and individually, in spite of the unavoidable absence of many old members and friends. The rooms at the Midland Grand Hotel were tastefully decorated, and the ladies of the party never looked better or happier and added just the right touch of colour and gaiety to the enjoyable gathering. There were many of the old stalwarts, and quite a large number of younger people—a fact remarked by the President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, who, in his address, welcomed them as the coming soldiers in the future fight for intellectual freedom. Mr. Cohen, with that ease which long acquaintance of public speaking gives—as well as native ability—gave a rapid resumé of the year's work, and noted some points for Freethinkers to remember in the future. The high level of his speech was splendidly maintained by the other speakers. Mr. George Bedborough, as an after-dinner speaker, is without a rival—he has an inexhaustible store of good stories upon which he drew freely, causing roars of laughter; notwithstanding which he never lost sight of the special work of the National Secular Society, the toast of which was enthusiastically acclaimed by the company. Mr. Rossetti spoke in his usual impressive manner, Mr. Hornibrook gave personal experiences in Australia and New Zealand, noting, among other things, how the Christian Sunday had changed during his absence of 20 years from this country, and he paid a fine tribute to the work of the late W. W. Collins, both as lecturer and writer. That astonishing youth, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, seems even more enthusiastic after his 50 years' record of solid Freethought work behind him than ever, and he gave a trumpet call to his fellow youngsters to carry on the good work. Mr. R. B. Kerr made a splendid first speech, and connected as he is with the Birth Control movement, it was a pleasure to hear his fine tribute to the work of the Secularists, without which, he claimed, the great reform and ideal movements of the day could never have been promulgated. In addition, his description of the superstition of the French Canadians, among whom he lived for many years, was listened to with the greatest attention. Mr. Whitehead welcomed the visitors with humour and point, and Mr. A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., responded on their behalf. The entertainment proved a most delightful interlude, Miss Eva Cobbett fulfilling the post of accompanist with distinction, and Miss Ivy M. Wright and Miss Edith Price adding fine singing and comedy to the programme. Mr. R. Beresford sang superbly, his splendid bass voice proving most effective, while Mr. Charles Hayes kept his audience in a convulsion of merriment with his admirably selected stories and songs. As for Clown Argo, his imitations of animals and birds and motor-cars and babies were almost too good to be true. I thought of that famous story in *Gil Blas*, about the sucking pig most of the time. The interval provided opportunity for renewing old friendships and discussions, and the proceedings terminated most happily.

May I add that the presence of no one was more cordially noticed than that of Miss Edith M. Vance, who looked so well after her recent illness. All her friends hoped that she would grace the N.S.S. dinner for many years yet to come.

H. CUTNER.

At the door of life, by the gate of breath,  
There are worst things waiting for men than death.  
—Swinburne.

Science is a first-rate piece of furniture for a man's upper-chamber, if he has common-sense on the ground floor.—*Oliver Wendall Holmes.*

The only medicine for suffering, crime, and all other woes of mankind, is wisdom.

*Professor Thomas Huxley.*

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have for some time sought an opportunity to write to you concerning whales, poets and persons, but I have been hindered. Still, I have watched with interest the trend of the various controversies which have recently gathered round my name in your columns. You will forgive me if I try to answer many correspondents in one letter? Life is short, and brevity is requisite

1. *The Whale.* Attack should have been made upon Sir Francis Fox, who put the story into his book. I quoted it, not because I was necessarily convinced of its truth, but because it seemed, on the face of it, as credible as the criticisms of the critic. I notice, with regret, that Sir Francis Fox has just died.

Your correspondents shelter behind a learned Canon of Holy Church, who, they say, has disproved the story. He hasn't. He has merely weakened it. He has been in touch with the owners of the famous ship, and the widow of the swallowed man. Neither had ever heard of the incident. I accept their ignorance as entirely genuine. It proves nothing and disproves nothing. Nor does it follow that Bartley's silence afterwards is proof against the story. However, as far as I am concerned, the attacks which are being made upon me are not to the point. They should have been made upon the author of the book in question. From it I merely quoted, not because I desired to bolster up the Jonah story, but because I wanted to emphasize the absurd modern fashion of accepting criticism as the last word, which it never is. That is *that*, and positively I won't deal with the whale any more. I leave it to your correspondents to dissect it, if they wish to do so.

2. *The Poet.* His effort about Christ's Fool is brighter than those mournful poems (save the mark) about Tombs and such like. It has given me much pleasure, although its quality (as poetry) is very poor, and its wit rather cheap than nasty. I am interested to notice that I am not the only fool walking this earth, but that there are Hands outstretched.

3. *Persons.* Mr. Cutner and others continue to drag my name into odd articles. I am glad that it provides them with copy. I am inclined to think that the lust to kill, which your correspondents evince, is a sign that they are in a poor way. I am but a poor, obscure, unlearned clerk, who blanches in the face of their wisdom. Surely there is better fish in the sea to haul out on to the dry, arid desert of Freethinking than—

DESMOND MORSE-BOYCOTT.

### JOSEPH BRYCE'S REMINISCENCES.

SIR,—The genial banter of my friend Joseph Bryce came in at the hospital window, where I am still incarcerated, with all the fragrance of a summer breeze. Here am I, my thirtieth year just passed, head a trifle bloody if unbowed, already addicted to an armchair and dressing gown, and ready to exclaim with Fagin: "An old man, my lord, a very old man," and along comes J. B., very much my senior, to remind me that once, and not very long ago, I was young, with unbounded confidence in my own destiny (now a little moth-eaten), and an appalling taste in socks and chorus-girls.

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the rose,  
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close.

How old the world grows, and yet, despite its disappointments, how tremendously worth while.

In place of the usual ghost story, I was regaling my wife this Christmas with a dissertation on infidel deathbeds; not a pleasant theme truly, seeing that I have a sort of vested interest in one myself at the moment, but not entirely devoid of humour. I was explaining how imperative it was that I should "die handsome." If, through softening of the brain or temporary delirium, I should evince the slightest desire for Jesus in my closing hours, my Freethinking friends would regard it as a personal insult, and would nurse a grievance against me all the rest of their days. If, on the other hand, I can manage to pass out dramatically exclaiming: "Let us banish gods from skies and capitalists from earth"

my eternal peace is assured, and they may even subscribe to the cost of the funeral—although I am not very hopeful of the latter. It is an invidious position, but the end is by no means imminent fortunately; and if occasionally I fancy I hear the baying of the watchdogs of unorthodoxy, the voice of Joseph Bryce is not among them. If I die a Plymouth Brother he will not reproach my dishonoured bones. He at least will understand. For he is a snuff-taker. And snuff-takers are human.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

SIR,—Your leading article of the 9th inst. is a full exposure of the hypocrisy of the free (?) and pious British Press. To those of us who believed that the educational enlightenment of the past fifty years would supplant the pulpit with the Newspaper Press, it is disappointing that newspaper proprietors, in the present age of reason, are willing to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, and a grave reflection on their intellectual honesty.

"Doth Job fear God for nought?" No. Commercialism is at the bottom of their pious policy. They are justified in accepting religious advertisements and notices for publication from all and sundry persons, but when they reserve a column for the free expression of opinion of correspondents and others, and carefully notify that they accept no responsibility for such opinion, and at the same time reject what they consider would be unpalatable to their supporters and advertisers, they are guilty of that intolerance that has characterised the ages in the evolution of mankind. These pious proprietors are the materialists of our time whilst they babble over what they call spiritual things, and it is for money that they publish their papers just as, for the same thing, the parson says his prayers. They are guilty of the sin of Holy Mother Church, which is that of following the herded sheep instead of leading them into the paths of truth and righteousness, and when the people discover that their shepherds are worthless hirelings these pious proprietors will right about face for the same reason that prompts their present activities.

It is equally regrettable that politicians pursue the same policy for the purpose of getting votes from the prejudiced and unthinking electors. It is more so to hear a great labour leader babble about the quiet "Sawbath," and another that brings Wesleyan salvation for weary souls.

The Freethinkers of fifty years ago realized that religion was the dope of the common people, and sought to remove it, but politicians of the present day are either less enlightened or more cunning than those of a former generation, and by their cunning eesk to gain present personal advantage for themselves rather than the progress of the race.

SINE CERE.

#### FREETHOUGHT AND FREEMASONRY.

SIR,—I have read with interest in your issue of December 26 last a letter from "Alpha," in which he advocates a closer relationship between the Secularists of England and France, and I agree with him in this respect.

What I do not agree with is that Secularists in France should consider it to be consonant with their dignity to be working under the banner of Freemasonry, an emblem to which they have no claim, and which they do not need.

When the majority of Freemasons in France decided that they could no longer subscribe to the one great and universally accepted landmark of the Order, that is to say, a belief in God, the Great Architect of the Universe, the True and Living God Most High, they ought as honourable persons to have seceded from Freemasonry, and they ought (as Mr. Toole did on a famous occasion) to have gone round the corner and made a little Hell of their own.

Instead of that they violated their solemn obligations to resist any innovation in the body of Freemasonry; they "nobbled" the Institution and converted it into something which, whatever it is, is certainly not Freemasonry.

I suppose the existence of an organization, a large

membership and ample funds, constituted the main temptations for such flagrant robbery and bad faith. "How oft the sight, etc." Shakespeare.

Nothing but these temptations could have prevented their adopting their new creed and founding a new Institution of their own, which they could have named, e.g., the "Grand Occident of Freethinkers"; and their action would then have been justifiable from all points of view and free from the deeply-dyed stain which will ever disgrace those who carried out the operation.

What annoys me is that Freethinkers should consider it necessary to masquerade as Freemasons.

To do so is such a deception and such a cheat that I wonder, in the name of Honesty, why it continues.

When there was dissension between the Church and the French Freemasons the Freemasons seceded from the Church, although they continued to hold their faith in the great symbol of Freemasonry, the letter G.

Why then when the freethinking members of Masonry lost this faith and changed their metaphysical views did they not have the courage to secede from Masonry? Why did they remain in a Masonic Institution and meanly adopt a compromise creed which reads that, "considering metaphysical conceptions as belonging exclusively to the individual appreciations of its members it abstains from any dogmatical affirmation?"

This proves they are not Masons; and my advice to them is to cease pretending that they are.

It also proves that they are but half-hearted Freethinkers. I adopt part of Alpha's phrase, thus: "No sincere Secularist can honestly be a Freemason."

Then why should he call himself one and sail under false colours?

Why want to wear the dress of a grub, when you can be a gorgeous butterfly?

OMEGA.

#### JESUS AND MARX.

SIR,—I have to thank Mr. E. J. Kerr for his interesting letter in the issue of January 16. The only fault I have to find is in attributing to me "numerous assertions as to working-class policy," which I am not aware of having made. Indeed, I did not know there was such a thing as a definite working-class policy; and when Mr. Kerr speaks of the collapse of the strike as being due to the divergent views and aims of labour's various leaders, he seems to be of the same opinion.

It appears that when I coupled the names of Jesus and Marx, to which exception has been taken, I spoke truer than I knew. Mr. Kerr cites two of the newest of the new theologians, who have discovered that Jesus was the economic twin-brother of Marx. He says that Marxians will be not a little amused at this theological discovery. I should certainly say they will, if they have any sense of humour. Christ has been claimed as the patron of almost every absurd cult that Western civilization has given birth to. In recent years, he has been in turn a Christian Scientist, a Socialist, a Spiritualist; and now it is discovered he was a Marxian. It only remains for some of these learned theological scholars, so beloved of Mr. Kerr, to discover that he was an Atheist. As he rightly says, it is all very amusing; but I do not think that the argument, from his point of view, is a very dignified one.

I might say, that the social and economic origin of Christianity is ably treated in Kalthoff's *Rise of Christianity*; but this author, very sensibly, kills off the twin-brother of Marx—the historical Christ—at the very beginning of his treatise, and thus rids the subject of any theological confusion. Mr. Kerr professes to see in the life and crucifixion of Christ the culmination of the economic miseries of the Jewish people. All I have to say is, that if anyone can find in the sayings and teachings attributed to Jesus Christ in the Gospels, a confirmation of any economic theory, Marxian or otherwise, their penetration is keener than mine.

Why I should constantly be called over the coals for the mere mention of the name of Marx is something I cannot understand. I have never expressed an opinion on his economic theories; and the assumption that my views are antagonistic is quite unwarranted.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Quandary.

Despite the protests of various religious bodies, Glasgow Corporation decided by a large majority to open children's swings in the public parks on Sundays.

HIGH on the throne the judge sat with a frown  
Upon his face, for now a batch appeared  
From Glasgow, who had served him with renown,  
And up to heaven circumspectly steered.  
He was intensely tired for of late  
The tone of heaven had not been so high  
And things were out of joint and out of date,  
And it was weary weariness to sigh.

What are these men's good deeds? he asked of him  
Who kept the keys, and hit those on the head  
Who in a mood familiar or a freakish whim,  
Called him "old cock"; " 'twas catty," so he said.  
" These men," he said, have with high zeal and zest,  
Compunction, vigour, and despite the slings  
Of fickle fortune—these have, to be blessed,  
Opposed the use on Sunday of the swings.

And is that all? he murmured, for he knew  
That, Sundays also, the whole cosmic scheme  
Must swing, or bust, and that there were a few  
Raw-kneed and parritch-nurtured—without cream—  
Wee belles and beaux from Glasgow, who are young  
But once; and then are old before their time;  
In deep dejection, he thus sat, o'erstrung  
With deeds of zealots who thought joy a crime.

There were tin medals, harps of gold, and flutes  
For naughty boys who must grow up in fear,  
Crowns and the mystic rainbow, and new suits,  
For old, and brooms for jasper streets to clean—  
Celestial dust from feet celestial grown,  
And there were trumpets, and a mass of things;  
But none would do, for those, who, over-blown  
Opposed the use on Sunday of the swings.

" Go search the place for Lucian, bring him here,"  
(For Atheists go to heaven, they are prime,  
For hygiene, and there is no sort of fear  
That mental windows will be shut, or time  
Be lost in haggling over things like bread  
That's something else, or squares that look like rings)  
Meantime, the Glasgow batch, recalled with dread  
Their opposition to the Sunday swings.

And Lucian now appeared; he had been seen,  
Making an oboe for a Bishop who,  
Was tired of the usual stock, and keen  
On something fresh, that didn't twang, but blew.  
This oboe, so the maker said, would play,  
Two notes at once—a treasure fit for kings,  
On earth two voices—(who would take away  
A right of spinsters' heroes?)—the dear things!

The case was stated, and with judgment clear,  
Our Lucian helped to bring it to an end.  
Smiling, he whispered, in the judge's ear,  
And it was then decreed that they would send  
The Glasgow batch to Saturn that swings round,  
At (see small primer for the times each day),  
Until by light of these it would be found,  
That roads to Heaven are not lost by play.

MORAL :

We stand on our heads if we seek pleasure  
By denying it to others, who, at worst, will only  
wear out the seat of their trousers.

CHRISTOPHER GAY.

All great myths are conditions of slow manifestation  
to human imperfect intelligence.—*Ruskin.*

Faith, haggard as Fear that hath borne her, and dark  
as the sire that begot her, Despair.—*Swinburne.*

Reading and writing are in no sense education, unless  
they contribute to this end of making us feel kindly  
towards all creatures.—*Ruskin.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith  
School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, K. Dimsdale Stocker,  
"God, Nature, and Professor Julian Huxley."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101  
Tottenham Court Road): 7.45, Mr. E. C. Saphin, a Lecture.  
Thursday evening, January 27, at the same hall, 7.45, a  
Debate on, "Has Swedenborg Failed"? between the Rev.  
W. H. Claxton and Mr. H. Cutner.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common):  
7, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe will open a discussion at 30 Brixton  
Road, on "Problems in Morality." January 30, we shall be  
giving a Social, at 7 p.m.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120  
Rusholme Road, All Saints): 3, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The  
Making of Man." 6.30: "If Christ Came to Manchester."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2  
Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30,  
Mr. W. H. MacEwan, "Words, Used and Misused."  
Questions and discussion cordially invited. Silver Collection.

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