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Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.

Views and Opinions.

The Religious World.

ONE feels inclined to pity the professional champion of present day Christianity. He wants to be so much, and in many directions counts for so little. He still exerts influence, but it is an influence that cannot be open and avowed. He stands as a Christian preacher, but he is bound to speak most of the time as a mere social reformer. He dilates on what the world might be if it would but follow Christ, but when he descends to detail he is compelled to appeal for help to exactly the same forces and considerations to which the non-Christian appeals. One day he dilates on the great revival of religion that is already afoot; the next he is lamenting the rapid decline of faith in the Christian religion and the small part played by it in the management of the world's affairs. The *Church Times* explains the action of Japan in Manchuria, and the brutal bombing of unprotected women and children in Shanghai, on the ground that the Japanese are not a Christian people. "To them Christian moral ideals make no appeal." This is, of course, hardly fair to the Japanese. Probably in their heathen blindness they cannot see much difference between dropping high explosives on women, children and old people and starving them to death. Nor is it fair to assume that they have not learned from Christian nations. Japanese procedure in Manchuria is precisely that followed by European Christian nations. First, the forcing of a treaty from another nation, then an alleged infraction of the conditions—always to be managed when desired—then an application of military and naval force in vindication of treaty rights and in the interests of peace and order, and, finally, annexation open or veiled. The only difference lies in the fact that Christian nations were early in the field, the subjects of their operations could then appeal to none but themselves for help, while to-day any country that attempts the same Christian policy can hardly avoid threatening the

vested interests of the followers of the nations that also bow before the name of Jesus Christ.

* * *

As You Please.

Any Christian may find in either the secular or the religious press testimony to the decline or the advance of religion as he wants one or the other. For some years at Cambridge there has been in existence a Christian movement consisting of young men who meet and exchange religious experiences more or less imaginary. We remember writing on this at least three or four years ago. Now in the *News-Chronicle*—a journal almost as pious as the *Daily Herald*—there suddenly appears an article describing this movement as one that has just sprung up with "astounding spontaneity," and adds the information that "some people think it is just part of a religious revival which is passing over the country." This "spontaneity" has been very carefully engineered and well advertised, as those who have watched know quite well. On the other hand the Bishop of Gloucester recently informed the Church Assembly that "the dangers to Christianity are greater now than at any time since the rise of Mohammedanism," and that "one cause of this is anti-religious propaganda." Again one pays his money and takes his choice. You may believe that there is a great wave of religious revival sweeping over England—on the fact of a few weak-minded University students holding religious meetings—or you may make frantic appeals to Christians to be up and doing or otherwise Christianity stands a chance of disappearing altogether. Of course, the fact is that the attempt to perpetuate so primitive a thing as real Christianity in a modern environment is a hopeless task. The Christian Church made its effort when it tried to stamp out the new astronomy in the sixteenth century, the new physics in the seventeenth, the new Biblical criticism in the eighteenth and the new biology of the nineteenth, and failed. It can hardly hope for success now. To-day it can only fawn on the science it failed to suppress, thankful when one of its leading exponents throw it a word of doubtful comfort.

* * *

Food for Infants.

Dean Inge provides us with another glimpse of the present state of the world of religion. He is at present delivering a course of lectures to young people, and—judging from the summarized reports given in the *Times*, "young" should be underlined. The first of his lectures was "Why we believe in God," and he must have left even the young people present as doubtful about the "why" as they were to begin with. The Dean does not believe that Christianity is in any danger—at present. Unconsciously, perhaps he provided the grounds of his con-

viction by saying that the world was still "in the stage of the rattle and the feeding bottle." I admit that if this is true, and so long as it remains true, there is some hope for Christianity. It belongs to the stage of the rattle and the feeding bottle, but that stage is surely passing, and with it Christianity.

I also fully endorse the Dean's statement that the decisive question to-day which separates the religious from the non-religious is whether one believes in a God or not. To those who have advanced only a little above the feeding bottle and rattle stage, and can no longer discuss with a straight face the truth of such glaring absurdities as orthodox Christian doctrines, the question of a God is the decisive thing. If one swallow that nothing else matters, and the rattle and the feeding bottle rules. Unfortunately for the Dean there are millions who feel inclined to take up with a better amusement than the rattle and a stronger diet than is given in the feeding bottle. All the same the Dean must have felt pretty sure of the juvenile character of his audience to tell them that the "sense of want" gave rise to the belief in God. If there is one thing that early man does not want it is his gods. He puts up with them because he feels that he must do so. One might as well say that tax-collectors arose from a sense of want on the part of the public as to say this of gods. They are accepted as ugly facts, and we now know that their existence was due to a misreading of the facts. Gods are born of a blunder, and perpetuated by a mixture of fear and folly.

Still depending upon those in the rattle and feeding bottle stage Dean Inge said that "Atheism was absurd because it reduced the world to a chaos, a malignant trick, a sorry joke." One does not analyse such language as this, it deserves nothing better than a smile. But the Dean might have reflected that others beside the very young might read his remarks, and they would surely ask themselves how such terms could by any possibility apply to Atheism. If there is a God he might have perpetrated this world as a malignant trick, and parsons as a joke. For those who believe in a God perhaps to regard many of the things that exist as a not too intelligent joke might be the best way out of the difficulty. But how on earth does such a description apply to Atheism? And Dean Inge is among the most intelligent of present-day parsons!

* * *

Impertinent Bigotry.

Finally, a glance at the B.B.C. The policy of this corporation with regard to its religious propaganda has long been a disgrace, and now—thanks, we believe, to our initiating some years ago a general protest—it has been taken up by a large number of papers, and has assumed the proportion of a public scandal. There is first, the fact that the B.B.C. has quite unwarrantably converted itself into an organ for the propagation of Christianity. It permits all kinds of Christian preachers to thrust their religious views upon the public, without permitting any adequate presentation of opposite opinions. Second, during the whole of Sunday it compels all who would use the wireless, and who cannot reach foreign stations, either to listen to religious services or to religious discourses with the bare exception of about two hours, which even then steer clear of an ordinary concert. It also declines even to consider the provision of an alternative programme which would permit clients to listen to it if they preferred to do so.

When complaints were first made about the one-sided nature of the Sunday programme the B.B.C. deliberately lied concerning the matter. It was said that only a very few had objected. The Rev. "Dick"

Shepherd wrote that not more than twenty letters had been received. Subsequently he said that the twenty was a mistake for two hundred. Still a deliberate under-estimate. On the other hand it was claimed that an enormous number of letters expressing approval had been received. There was only the word of the B.B.C. for that, and when the offer was made to conduct a house to house canvas—free of all expense to the B.B.C.—in any district the B.B.C. cared to select, respecting an alternative programme on Sunday, the Corporation declined the test.

Now a reader of this journal sends us copies of letters which he has received from the *Listener*, a B.B.C. publication, in which the editor says that:—

Religion is an institution established by the State. The Broadcasting organization is similarly State established, and your sense of consistency will, no doubt, lead you to appreciate the fact that it is impossible for one State established body to publish attacks upon another State established body.

This was in reply to a letter sent for insertion in the *Listener*, but which was declined. To a further letter the reply came:—

Our religious advisory committee are not likely to abdicate at the sound of your solitary trumpet. They might even admit themselves unable to convince a determined sceptic by proof of the historical existence of Jesus Christ . . . All religious people know that God can be found by prayer and study for which a certain degree of humility is necessary.

That mixture of falsehood and impertinence puts the B.B.C. "on the spot." Religion is not established by law, the Church of England is, which is not the same thing. There is nothing contrary to law or custom in one State institution criticizing another. It is constantly being done. The B.B.C. is not State established, it is merely given a charter to operate. This is not the same thing at all. The "solitary trumpet" is a revival of the old lie that only a few object to the Sunday or the religious programmes. That God can be found by prayer and study is no more than a piece of evangelistic ignorance.

The one thing that remains clear is that the B.B.C. through its organization and its journals is determined on bolstering up Christianity, and in support of this will lie and act with all the unfairness which has characterized the Christian Church when dealing with its opponents. Altogether the present state of the religious world forms quite an interesting study in mental obliquity and religious bigotry.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

TOUCHING THE SPOT.

WE borrow the follow paragraphs from one of the most pleasant and best informed writers in the newspapers, "Observator" of the "Observer." These items are from the issue of January 31:—

"To Manchuria is now added the trouble at Shanghai and, between incapacity at home and pressure from abroad, China gets deeper and deeper into the mire. When in 1913 China started on that career of Republicanism which has not yet found the right turning, the new Government issued a message asking the Christian Churches for their prayers for the success of the country in its new phase. Those prayers have not yet been answered."

"The spring session of the Church Assembly, to be opened on February 30, is said to be overcrowded with business.—Northern Paper." "If an agenda has to be crowded, there could not be a better day for the purpose than a 'dies non.'"

Fables Founded on Fact.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF ADDINGEM AND BEAMS.

ONCE upon a time, halfway between Then and Now, there lived a very great Nation called the Brish. And it lived on a not so very great Island called Inkland, situated just halfway between Overthere and Rightthere. And every Man Jack of this great Nation was frightfully patriotic, loyal, courageous, honest, religious. So naturally every Man Jack believed in Almighty Glog—at least, every Man Jack that mattered. It's true there were just one or two insignificant, ignorant people who were Absolute Cranks and said they didn't believe in Almighty Glog. But then, who ever believes what an Absolute Crank says? Besides, they were probably Absolute Crooks too. At any rate they ought to have been if they weren't.

But what (you might ask) is a Glog? Well, I will tell you. A Glog is a Wozzit. In fact, Almighty Glog is Glog of Glogs and Very Wozzit of Very Wozzit. He is the Great Invisible, Indivisible and Indigestible, and there is none other beside Him, though there may be one or two inside Him. Not only is this true, but if you consult the Holy Scribble, you will find a lot more about Glog which is absolutely incontestible.

But how do I know (you might ask) that the Holy Scribble is incontestible? Well, I will tell you. The Holy Scribble must be incontestible because it was written by Glog himself. Just think of that! And He didn't write it with pen and ink, or a typewriter, or anything so utterly mundane as that. Oh, no! Being somewhat enamoured of His case, He wrote it by the simpler expedient of inspiring people to do the work for Him. He breathed his Holy Wozzit into them and they promptly wrote exactly what He wanted them to. So, you see, Holy Scribble *must* be absolutely true.

But how do I know (you might ask) that Glog really inspired these people? Could they not have been inspired by Whizki, for example? No, no, certainly not! Glog *must* have inspired them, because the Holy Scribble actually says that He did. There now! And whatever Holy Scribble actually says, *must* be actually true, because it is actually inspired by — anyway, since Glog is almighty and the Scribble is holy, then obviously the whole thing *must* be incontestible. So, shut up!

Well, as I was saying, in the year 1931 A.G.—which means *Anno Glogorum*—there were two fearfully clever Scientists. But why (you might ask) do I say *Glogorum*, and not *Glogorum* or *Glogi*? Is Almighty Glog feminine plural? Well, I will tell you—it is, and it *isn't*. That is to say He, She, It or They, is or are, *sexless*. Furthermore the Whole Thing is an Unfathomable Mystery. And since Sex and Mysteries are subjects which nice persons do not discuss, except in whispers and other sacred spots, I trust you will henceforth endeavour to curb your curiosity and allow me to get on with the doings.

Now these two frightfully clever men were each brilliant in his own particular way, and neither was brilliant in any other way—though, mark you, I doubt whether either of them would have admitted as much. The first of them was the Master Mathematician, and he was called Sir Arthou Addingem; and the second was the Arch-Astronomer, and he was called Sir Blames Beams. And both of them had written most awfully interesting books which were called, respectively, *Science and the Unthought-of Number* and *The Mystic Multiverse*. The first book proved conclusively, in language that a child could understand, that Almighty Glog *must* be one of three

things. Either He must be the Number First Thought Of; or He must be The Ultimate Number; or He must be just plain Nought, Nix, or Nothing At All. The second book proved equally conclusively, in language so simple that any Newspaper Editor would only have to use a dictionary occasionally, that Almighty Glog *must* be one of three other things. Either He must be the Absolute Beginning; or He must be the Ultimate End; or else, if He was neither of these, He was bound to keep on expanding till He exploded.

But why (you might ask) did either of these clever Scientists bother to prove anything about Glog, seeing that everyone in Inkland already believed in Him? Well, now, I will tell you, because that's just the comic part. You see, as a matter of fact neither Sir Addingem, nor Sir Beames, had the *slightest* intention of proving *anything*! Now isn't that too, too funny! All they intended to do was to explain, in words of not more than two syllables, just a teeny-weeny bit of that vast mass of knowledge which they possessed, but which the Man in the Street (that's the other fellow—not you or me) did not possess. They imagined (quite wrongly, poor chaps) that to increase the knowledge of the Public was to give Almighty Glog a bit of a leg-up. But, ha! ha!—I mean, alas! alas! the beneficial consequences of their actions were in inverse ratio to the benevolence of their intentions.

But why (you might ask) do I say “alas, alas,”? Well, I will tell you. And, what is more, I shall have to say it again—alas! When the Chief Boosters on Earth of Almighty Glog—the Archpushups, Pushups, Press-bliters, Sinisters and other Blurgy—when all these reverend and extremely humble servants of the Holy Wozzit first read the two books aforementioned, they acclaimed them and their authors with loud “Helloyouhas!” of welcome. “Behold,” they declared with one accord, their usually worried faces wreathed in smiles of satisfaction, “behold, here we have the two most eminent Scientists in the whole blooming Cosmos positively asserting that they believe in a Something Behind Everything, and that this Something is not merely a Whatnot of Whither-someness, but is most undoubtedly our old friend Almighty Glog. Furthermore, they prove conclusively that Glog *must* at least be Two Out of Six Things, whereas hitherto we had only given It credit for being Three In One. Moreover, the Great Gap which has never existed between Science and Religion has at last been bridged! Added to which, the Supreme Position of Religion, which has never been endangered, has once more been vindicated! Almighty Glog is again Very Glog Wozzit of Veriest Gloggest Wozzitest! And, last but not least, our salaries are safe for a while longer; world without end. Amen.”

But (you might say) everything seems to be Roses, Roses all the Way—where, then; does the “alas” come in? Well, I will tell you—if only you will try not to interrupt so frequently. Remember, every Rose has its Maggot, and all is not Gold that comes off the Standard. Just listen carefully and all will be perfectly plain.

The Public, for whom these books had been primarily intended, gulped down their contents as a cat gulps a mouse. The Blurgy were *dec-lighted*. They showered blessings upon the heads of the two Scientists; they referred to them repeatedly in their Prayers and their Parish Magazines, until the poor, modest old fellows didn't know whether they were standing on their heads or swimming in a minus-six-dimensional discontinuum. And the net result was that the Books became Best Sellers, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer printed two more Super-tax forms.

So far, so good. But a little further, not so good. For then *things began to happen!* A letter in the newspapers here—an article in a magazine there—a pamphlet somewhere else. And so on—until at last the Terrible Truth began to leak out, and the Fearful Facts could no longer be hid. The Public—that loyal, honest and most religious British Public—had completely misinterpreted the obvious arguments used in the two books, and had arrived at *utterly different conclusions* to those arrived at by the loyal, honest and most religious Blurgy! So much so, indeed, that even those quick-witted leaders of the British Intelligentsia, the Pushups and Archpushups, could not fail to realize the Shocking Situation. And this is what had happened. The Public had accepted the *last* of each of the three alternatives suggested in the two books!

Oh me! Oh my! What *was* to be done? If the Public were to be allowed seriously to believe that Almighty Glog had exploded or was just plain Nothing At All, then sermons and salaries would cease; prayers and pew-rents would disappear; collects and collections would collapse; vestments and vested interests would vanish. And what would the Blurgy do then, poor things?

Well; just about that time, by a most awfully lucky piece of good fortune, the Archpushup of Vericoldlam happened to discover a law, called the Blush-forme Law. It was about half a million years old—but that didn't matter. In fact, the cobwebs on its whiskers made it all the more venerable. And the gist of the Law was that any person who published any statement, argument, declaration or other form of words which might, could, would or should tend to make an Archpushup blush, would be condemned without option to pay a fine of one and eleven-three and to be burnt at the stake.

Naturally the eyes of the Reverend Cleric sparkled when he read this Law. But he was a humane old buffer at heart and seldom teased the cat. So he burst into tears and prayed as follows: "Oh, most merciful Glog; though I would not dream of giving the least pain (unnecessarily) to a mosquito, help us, we beseech Thee, to do our very darndest for the glory of Thy Holy Wozzit. Ah-men!" Then he wrote to the Home Secretary, who wrote to the Prime Minister, who wrote to the King, who put the matter before his Lords, who referred it again to the Commons, who finally went to the People. In the end a National Government was formed to deal with the Emergency; a National Day of Prayer and Atonement was appointed; and in due course a most imposing Ceremony was carried through with tremendous enthusiasm, and was declared by all—but especially the Blurgy—to have been a flaming success.

But what (you might ask) was the "ceremony" to which I have referred? Well, since the event has now passed into the Realms of Oblivion, I will tell you.

After the whole British Nation had done worshipping Almighty Glog at St. Appal's Cathedral, Sir Arthou Addingem and Sir Blames Beams were both taken in a Black St. Maria to the plinth of St. Nelson's Column. There, in the presence of the Royal Family and all the High Officials of the Church and State, as well as a huge crowd which filled St. Trafalgar's Square, they were publicly fined one and eleven-three each, deprived of their titles and solemnly burnt at the stake. Of course, they were given a stake each—and chips.

I beg your pardon? What was the question you asked? Oh; you want to know if my story is *true*? . . . Well, er . . . not *yet*. But just you wait and see!

C. S. FRASER.

Official.

THE British people were, officially, with the arrival of the New Year up to the eyes in prayer and piecrust. No doubt it was a suitable situation for the modern chosen people—the heirs of the Divine promises—the depositories of the truth as it is in Jesus, and, officially, the instructors and directors of the rest of mankind, at least in association with their fellow believers throughout the world and especially in America.

The English people were officially summoned to prayer on a day officially fixed by the Primate of all England, and the Scottish people officially and respectfully followed suit. That is to say, in imitation of the proclamation issued by his Grace of Canterbury, the Scottish Moderators and other clerical leaders in Scotland have also produced a similar call to prayer, which was broadcasted in the orthodox daily and weekly press. The seasonal unanimity among different sects who formerly treated each other with cold aversion were a sign of the times. They were sensible of the rationalistic forces at work in the minds of the present generation; and the wranglings and disputations of other days which tended to separatism are now at least being covered up from the public sight, and an outward, formally official, united front was being presented to the readers of the popular press, who were enjoined to participate in an official day of prayer with the refrain: "Thy will be done." It is now a case of "Get together, boys! If we don't hang together, we will hang separately!"

It is important to note that the more extended use of the popular press by the Churches is an outstanding feature of the times. In the hearts of many clerics there is a vindictive wrath against the increasing number and wider perusal of Freethought publications, which they are forbidden officially to publicly attack. The order has gone forth from the leaders of the various ecclesiastical corporations that the boycott of Freethought must be continued; but all hands are called to the pumps—now represented by the subservient, docile and professedly pious managers of the orthodox newspapers, who are paid to pump into their readers the futilities, fatuities and falsehoods of a moribund faith. The astute clerical organizers make much of Armistice Day, Disarmament Services, Christmas, New Year, Easter and Harvest time. These occasions are all officially taken under the wing of the British Churches; and the full dress displays adorned by the big guns of the army and the government religion are gazed at by the unthinking members of the populace in gaping, fascinated, bareheaded and reverential wonder. Religion is now depending much more than it did upon the spectacular. This points to a gradual reversal of the earlier doctrine, which may now be paraphrased to this effect, namely, that the Deity of the Christians is beginning to appreciate the value of outward show and appearance while the Freethinker attaches value to the state of the mind and its inward thoughts. Freethought makes progress by ideological activity. The constant falling of the water of truth upon the Petrine rock is wearing the latter away. Gently does it! *Non vi sed saepe cadendo.*

When any clerical penman is permitted, or permits himself, to make reference to the activities of militant Freethought he invariably dismisses them as "blank and blatant Atheism." The phrase was coined in the time of Charles Bradlaugh, and though long ago discredited serves the clerical turn as an alliterative mouthful. The average hustling cleric has not the time to stop and consider. He picks his missiles just as a country lout picks his, without per-

viously ascertaining the exact significance of the terms he employs or calculating the possibility of their being returned to him with interest. Fervently does the clerical mind wish that it could *prove* Atheism to be blank! And well does it know how desperately threadbare and ineffective that word "blatant" has become! No, no, Mr. Parson; you are a better judge by experience of what is "blatant" than the Freethinker! Your evangelists by blatant, violent and intemperate oratory and menaces years ago secured the illiterate and unthinking youths who are now the middle-aged and elderly adherents of the Churches. And when these have passed—?

Be assured, anyway, that *real* Freethinkers are made not by blatancy; not by violent invective; not by intemperate speech; not by riotous tub-thumping; but by inducement to quiet independent, personal study and meditation; by dispassionately expressed argument in lecture or conversation; by heart-to-heart fireside talks—about the wonders of the Universe and the history and development of man. *Non vi sed sacpe cadendo*. This is official. The acquisition and assimilation of knowledge (as distinguished from the imposition of belief) mean the rejection of fear and the renunciation of force. The Churches accept the doctrine that all government ultimately rests on force. Freethought declares a newer and higher idea. The slavish respect of the Churches for "Property" secures for them the support of the wealthy and propertied classes. The Churches still exist to bless the squire and his relations and keep us in our proper stations. If the ordinary worker finds that he need not be such an ass as he looks and tries to get the idle rich off his back, the latter naturally look to the ecclesiastical corporations to bear a part in association with the secular Government in securing them in their positions on the workers' backs and (by an arrangement as to allocation of the spoils) to retain wealth, which is power over others, and bully or bribe the masses to remain in subjection. One day the ordinary worker will realize the purpose of the insulting seasonal "soapings" and "butterings" administered to him by his pastors and masters.

It clearly pays the clerics and their wealthy constituents to publish false and misleading definitions of Materialism. It is too commonly accepted as describing a low and gross view and habit of life; instead of conveying the scientific conception of life as divorced from supernaturalism or spiritualism—of monism as opposed to this deluding dualism. It is a poor game to play; because the clerics know that ignorant, uneducated and illiterate persons cannot see the important distinction. The official definition of materialism is the untrue one. If it were to be generally accepted as accurate, then certainly it would apply with far more force to the well to do than to the poorer classes, whose Christmas and New Year festivities are strictly limited by various forms of additional privation, though the great banks are glutted with money and the world's granaries are bursting with the produce of nature! Rich deluding shepherds! Poor deluded sheep!

The official doctrine that Government ultimately rests upon force brings appropriately (if not intellectually) into close association the uniform of the soldier and the uniform of the priest. The British Empire is bossed by the combination of black and khaki, relieved on special occasions by the gaudy colours of the brass hats of both professions. And is not this scriptural? Is not the Holy Bible full of the glorification of War? Did not in our own land Bishops go forth to battle bearing their maces, with which to brain their adversaries? They bore maces so that it could not be said that they shed human blood. The clerics have ever been past-

masters in the gentle art of subterfuge. But we do not find Bishops going into the thick of the battle in modern warfare. No, like the Duke of Plaza Toro, they find it less exciting to lead their regiments from behind, and to shout their war cries to their infatuated proxies.

In the Bible the Almighty is repeatedly represented as a martial character. So he is called "the Lord of Hosts," and "The God of Battles." The Apostle Paul uses several military similes to describe the spiritual warfare of the Christian. The shield, the helmet and the sword are parts of the panoply of the "soldier of Jesus Christ." "Fight the good fight" is the injunction to the Christian rank and file. It was an English parson who wrote that stirring song "Onward Christian soldiers!" And it was the astute William Booth who, quick to appreciate the mass psychology of the mob, launched his organization with the name of "The Salvation Army"; and the crude motto, "Blood and Fire." Well did he know that the mass of the people had been for centuries dazzled and deceived by the glamour of militarism; and that they continued to think of national affairs in *terms of War*. And to-day we have the amazing paradox of militaristic and quasi-militaristic and ecclesiastic displays and services designed to eradicate the conception of War as a means of settling international quarrels! Is it to be wondered at that many ordinary people are disgusted with the insincerity and cant of such proceedings? Has the hypocritical game not been played too often? Assuming that another war happens, in which Britain may be involved, will not justification for our part in it be readily available? Will not the clergy easily find it? At present we are eloquent in expressing our aversion to War; we are praying for the League of Nations; we are praying and petitioning for disarmament; we are shouting for universal peace till we are hoarse; but—ay, there's the rub—there is ever this big "but"—*if we are forced to War?* At the back of our minds there is still an inherited insularism and nationalism tinged with jingoism and the "Hearts of Oak" and "Boys of the Old Brigade" sentiment that wells up at sight of the be-ribboned Recruiting Sergeant and the throb of the drum. There's the rub—and the risk of "rub-a-dub-dub," and of crowds cheering again madly; and of the bespattered and cowed and crucified, but negligible, group of "conchie's." Vacant minds with full throats may yell again "Dammit, we'll shew 'em! British hearts still beat true!" But these vacant minds do not seem to realize that the brains of the chemists in their laboratories work accurately also for their employers the great financiers.

Oh, that we could but divert all this energy and enthusiasm into a united fight against man's common enemies: dirt, disease, fear, ignorance, greed and a narrow nationalism! The *Freethinker* has striven and continues to strive to get people to think in terms of the international and the universal. Humanity as a whole—white, black, brown, red and yellow—has common interests and a common destiny. It has common enemies in all tyrants, oppressors and cruel and avaricious men. Will it be led to follow the light of scientific humanism or the will o' the wisp of a tyrannical supernaturalism? Men and women the world over feel the need of international association in pursuit of truth. Truth is above all universal—not limited or sectional. It is the cause of all good; the object of the pursuit of all lovers of good. The false creeds of puny zealots which have kept men estranged or in conflict must fade out in the impartial light of the Truth that makes men free.

IGNORUS.

An Argument with One's Self.

TO MYSELF: "So you think it rather a coincidence that exactly to the day twelve months ago you broke your leg, and now, to-day, you look through your study window and see a cock chaffinch in the garden with a broken leg? It is rather an egotistical thought. Man alive! who the devil are you to think that there is any significance in such a matter?"

Myself: "All right, you blustering bully—go steady—if you can. I was just musing. A cock chaffinch in the early spring is a beautiful sight. His breast, like the robin's, assumes a warmer hue. The cripple in the garden, happily able to fly, fidgets about among the London Pride for his food. He half lies down among its moist leaves, and takes his food resting. How did he come to break his leg? Vain speculation. Perhaps an aerial wire, fixed in this wonderful age, intercepted his flight. I feel sorry for the little beggar."

To Myself: "What good will that do? Has not the blind God of necessity spoken. It was ordained thousands of years ago that this little fellow with his pleasant 'Chink,' 'chink,' should, in a second, be made different from his mates. Bow your head, or raise it in defiance, it is all the same."

Myself: "I tried to catch him. In 'The Red Lily,' by Anatole France, a cobbler had a tame sparrow that had lost a leg, and the mender of boots cleverly substituted a match for the missing limb. In the same way I wanted to take a hand in managing things in a badly run world. The chaffinch had not the faintest idea of my intentions, but flew away among the branches of a leafless sycamore tree."

To Myself: "That's all very well, but think of the hundreds of human cripples."

Myself: "I can think of them; what then?"

To Myself: "Well, what are you going to do about them?"

Myself: "Nothing. Besides, I cannot at this moment see them from my study window. I can only think of one thing at a time, and that is, a pretty little creature that has harmed nobody, not even shot one of its own kind, in trouble and distress."

To Myself: "There you go—sentimentalizing. Worrying your grey matter over a bit of a bird. What's done can't be undone."

Myself: "Most learned and original thinker how wise you are! I think of what is done and what is undone, and should be happy if I could be as cocksure about everything as you appear to be. Why in the name of Christendom should this most beautiful arrangement of lovely coloured feathers, bright eyes, and happy song—'In a little little time we shall have the wheat here'—why in the name of Christendom, couldn't this accident have happened to a useless cat? Had the eyes of Heaven gone blind at that moment?"

To Myself: "The web of Fate is spun alike for Man, bird, beast and flower."

Myself: "That sounds all right—but what does it mean? It simply means that you cannot answer my question. Here is a sweet songster, dainty in its food, part almost of the very air, self complete, and a perpetual picture of perfect happiness. Your Fate is a malicious old hag. Chaffinch, with never a thought of before or after—telling us the obvious way—we who are racked with thoughts of the past and thoughts of the present and thoughts of the days to come! Some scheming bitch of Fate was jealous of thy happiness, and had picked out as an object of envy one of countless numbers of songsters."

To Myself: "That is in the heroic vein. It was simply an accident and you are only smudging the issue with romanticism. You are only apostrophising what you can see. Think of the countless number of herrings that are being swallowed by whales at the present moment?"

Myself: "Think of my hat! I can think of them, but I cannot see them. Look, he has come back to the bird-board. The Western sun just catches his breast. How could anyone deliberately hurt such a little beauty?"

To Myself: "Incorrigibly romantic!"

Myself: "Bully!"

C-DE-B.

Acid Drops.

Only one of the newspapers, so far as we know, has commented upon the passing of a sentence of six months' imprisonment on the writer of some verse which did not come up to the police standard of morality. He was charged with "uttering and publishing," although the lines concerned were neither printed nor published, but only taken to a printer for estimate with the possibility of publication for private circulation. The printer communicated with the police, who raided the writer's house, took away some books and MS., and proceeded to the charge. A copy of *The Well of Loneliness* was seized and confiscated. There was no pretence that this book was intended for sale. Since when has it been unlawful for a person to choose his own books and read them in his own house? The Recorder of London, Sir Ernest Wild, chose to question the defendant as to his gifts as a poet—as if he was a judge of poetry or that was a matter for his judgment—and, as has been said, sentenced the writer to the heavy term of six months imprisonment. We agree with Vanoc II. who, commenting on this case in an admirable article in the *Referee* (February 14); says:—

The puritans, who are the real smut-hounds of the social piece, transform what for the poet is the rarest ontological experience into pornographic suggestion through essentially obscene repressions. To the pure all things are pure, but to the puritan all things are purulent.

If the morality which sent our poet to prison for six months exercised its blue pencil without restraint on the classics of English literature there would be a wholesale Bowdlerization of the Bible, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Massinger, Ford, Carewe, Etheridge, Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanburgh, Otway, Heywood, Defoe, Prior, Swift, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Byron, Rossetti, and Swinburne.

The most exhilarating news from Dartmoor we received during the recent rioting was that the Blessed Sacrament, housed in the Prison Chapel, is quite safe. We shudder to think of what might have happened if harm had come to the Sacred object. It was touch and go though, for some damage was done to the chapel windows and exteriors. But what an awful catastrophe it would have been if any harm had come to the Precious Thing.

Speaking of the mutiny of prisoners at Dartmoor, the Wesleyan chaplain at the prison says: "Though I have not seen the list yet of the delinquents, I have good reason to hope that no 'Wesleyan' will be found amongst them." Of course; their love of Jesus is sufficient to keep Wesleyan criminals well-behaved in prison, even though it is not quite strong enough to keep them out of prison. What the chaplain is concerned about, however, is assuring the world at large that he really does earn his wage. His testimony is an oblique way of giving himself a pat on the back—which is a habit of parsons.

We note that Father Ronald Knox recently lectured in Cardiff on the "Dangers of Reflection." We agree nothing can be more dangerous. Every Roman Catholic should be specially warned against "reflecting." A little reflection might make an earnest Catholic into one less earnest and the gods forbid any "whole-time" reflection on religion! Where would Roman Catholicism stand if its faithful followers really reflected?

For example, Edouard Le Roy, professor of philosophy at the College of France in Paris, wrote several books, which were severely condemned by the supreme congregation of the Holy Office. On further "reflection" the distinguished professor has admitted he was wrong and has now humbly submitted to Cardinal Verdier, the Archbishop of Paris. Could anything be more eloquent? A pest to such independent thinkers as Voltaire, Diderot, Anatole France and Zola, whose "reflection" took them always on the wrong path.

According to a report in the press of one hundred years ago, a London lady suddenly collapsed one Sunday morning and died. Subsequent investigation disclosed that this was due to the effects of tight-lacing. At the inquest the jury returned a verdict, "Died by the visitation of God." This somewhat ambiguous finding leaves it open to doubt whether the Deity actually called upon the lady in her boudoir and tied the laces himself, or whether he caused his lackey Satan to do the dastard deed for him.

The Clergy Insurance Association is offering to motor- ing clergymen a special "Third Party" policy. In this connexion, it may be noted that the law compels the parson to hold a "Third Party" policy, just as if he were an ordinary man. We wonder what would be said to the motoring parson who claimed exemption, on the ground that he had implicit trust in God to safeguard him against "Third Party" risks? And it would be amusing to read the Press comments on such a claim.

Writing about Church clubs for slum boys, a rev- erent avers that "the boy instinctively reverences Truth and Justice and Love. The club must help him to identify these with Him who is their source." That, of course, is the parson's little game. His object in regard to such clubs—and Sunday schools also—is to mislead children as to the nature of their natural instincts, to take advantage of their ignorance, in order to induce belief in religion. If a child "instinctively reverences Truth and Justice and Love," the phenomenon can be explained without any supernatural origins of sanc- tions. And it is morally wrong to mislead him in the matter.

Ealing Wesleyans have been discussing, "Why does not the Church attract the Adolescent?" God, in the Sunday Schools, was, said a Mr. Pain, "almost exclusively associated with a Bible and a Hymn Book." This should be substituted by teaching "the little ones to think of God as a Father and of Jesus as a Big Brother," then, as they grew up, Christ should be presented as "the hero of Heroes." While regretting that, for most, "adolescence is the period of revolt against early ideas and impressions," Mr. Pain observed that if only they got a grip on them when they were young—not even neglecting the "gang" instinct in boys—at the time for breaking away "there will be something that tugs, and it will not be so easy to leave." Was ever the cowardly advantage which Christians habitu- ally take of those who have not come to what is called "the age of reason" more clearly or shamelessly ad- mitted?

The Spring Session of Church Assembly passed a resolution demanding that there should be no delay in carrying out schemes for the better housing of the very poor. The Bishop of Southwark said that the position of the slums was worse than ten years ago, and in London alone there were 100,000 people, the majority children, living in unhealthy basements. The Bishop of London said there was one thing in which we must not economise, and that was housing. If we were to economise in Bishops and parsons, and if we had less people living in Palaces, and less unproductive expenditure on the business in which they engaged, we might have more to spend on housing, education, and other services which are concerned with life in this world and not in that which is supposed to be coming hereafter.

A Northern paper publishes a complaint from income tax collectors that they are being bombarded with religious tracts. We imagine that it must have been these that the papers mistook for crowds of people queuing up for hours at the time in order to pay their income tax early. Probably these tracts contain a large print reading of "Forgive us our debts."

We are ever at a loss to understand the ways of God—his ways are never our ways; but we simply stand aghast at the death of a sister of the Carmelite College of Begonia. A recent gale caused the church bell to be dis-

lodged, and it fell just when she was attending Mass, killing her and severely injuring three other sisters. We should have thought Jesus (in the wafer) could have prevented such a tragedy, and we ask again, what is the good of celebrating Mass if the principal actor is so utterly helpless when needed? We could have understood it better if the victim had been a Freethought lecturer in the middle of a discourse, but a holy sister at Mass!

The late Mr. Edgar Wallace is reported to have said, in conversation with a clergyman, that if people preferred reading his novels to reading the Bible, it was because the clergy had failed to make the latter inter- esting. With all the time and money which they have at their disposal for popularizing and advertising, it does seem odd that Holy Writ should prove such a "flop" in the literary market. Yet, why blame the clergy? The responsibility surely lies with Almighty God. For, the failure of an almighty author to "put it over" on the public can hardly be attributed to his printers and publishers. They do their darndest, and no mistake!

"I am not sure that the sceptics of the nineteenth century were not right in saying that God as Creator is not needed to explain the universe." Thus, the Rev. Dr. R. J. Campbell. "I have before me young people who are thinking, doubting, arguing with each other on first principles, who do not really want to hear what the Bible says, or what Holy Church says, but want to know what we who speak to them believe ourselves and why we believe it." Thus Dean Inge. "What is most deeply felt to-day is the need of first-hand knowledge of God," says Dr. Campbell. "I can at any rate promise you that I am not going to cry up religion like a cheap- jack. You should not hear a word from me that I do not believe to be true," says Dean Inge. Dr. Campbell's article (in the *Christian World*) and Dean Inge's address at St. Paul's Cathedral—reported in the *Times* and else- where—both indicate a recognition of the fact that, while in the last century the documents and dogmas of Christ- ianity had to be defended, that line of defence failed and now they are driven to defend the last line of trenches that separate them from truth, belief in God.

The Rev. William Cole, whose Blecheley Diary, re- cently published, has attracted much notice, observes in that interesting record under date April 24, 1767. "In the Papers of to-day the Jesuits entirely banished out of Spain and its Dominions. A sad Prospect." It is added, in a note, that "they were expelled on April 2, and it was not until they had been three months on Ship- board that they were allowed to land at Civita Vecchia." One hundred and sixty-five years later history has re- peated itself, and, by a decree of January 22 last, the Society of Jesus was "dissolved on Spanish territory," nor does Spain think with the late Mr. Cole that this is "a Sad Prospect," although the *Church Times* describes it as "an act of injustice," asserts that many who voted for it were "uneasy or doubtful," and predicts that "the Jesuits will come back to Spain." Cole's voluminous MSS. in the British Museum contain many references to the contemporary clamour against Papists. Himself (like the *Church Times*) he seems to have had a partiality for them. On September 3, 1767, he "wrote to the Bishop of Lincoln in answer to his queries of July 28, that there were neither Papist or re- puted Papist in my Parish," and on the same day "to Father Bedingfield with the Return of the Present Pope's Bull of 1765 ratifying and approving the Institu- tion of the Order of Jesuits." One thing can at least be said for Cole, he was a decent man who did what he thought to be his duty which, as his diary shows, can- not be said of many of his clerical brethren at that period.

Miracles will never cease! The Church Assembly seems to be acquiring a sense of humour. On an amend- ment to give certain powers to laymen to elect their own vicars, Prebendary Hinde remarked that from his own experience he had found the laity to be very queer people, but no more queer than bishops, priests and

deacons. It is reported that at this witty sally the assembly laughed. Yet this apparent gleam of dawning intelligence cannot have been more than a very limited and very evanescent flicker. For we are told that the amendment was lost by a large majority. Trust the clergy to hang on like grim death to every scrap of power they possess and to concede nothing to their congregations which might endanger that power.

A hundred years ago (according to the *Observer*) the punishment of 200 and 300 lashes on the bare back was given to each of three privates in the Army, one of whom had sold a comrade's watch, while the other two were guilty or having been absent without leave. To-day (according to the *Spectator*) there are persons who advocate flogging as a punishment for the Dartmoor mutineers. And during the whole of this last century, and for several centuries before, Christianity has been the established religion of this country. We have a vague idea that somewhere in the Christian Holy Book there appear the words: "'Vengeance is mine' saith the Lord." There must be some subtle distinction between vengeance and flogging which is only perceptible to the Christian intellect.

The *Spectator* offered a prize of £2 2s. for the best list of five social customs or institutions which should be discontinued. It is stated on good authority that the competitor who should have won the prize (in his own opinion) did not, in fact, do so. His list was as follows: (1) Royalty, (2) The Church, (3) The Daily Press, (4) The Censor, (5) The B.B.C.

Commenting on a new Government Bill concerned with the welfare of children, a weekly journal says that "the Twentieth Century will go down in our history as the time when children came into their own legal kingdom, thanks in great measure to the champions of their cause during the Nineteenth Century." We may as well add that there was little or no concern about the welfare of children during the previous centuries when religion had its firmest hold on the people. There is also the curious coincidence to be noted that interest in the welfare of children has been most strongly manifested only since church-going and religion have declined in favour. The child of to-day can quite legitimately congratulate himself on being born in a secular rather than a religious age.

Amongst other items mentioned in his will, the Rev. John Broughton Maul, of Earl's Court, left six Calcutta Sweepstake numbers and six tickets in the Stock Exchange Derby Mutual Subscription Fund. We suggest this as a suitable text to be used by the Bishop of London in his next sermon.

A correspondent who has been rummaging in some old volumes of *Punch* sends us some significant extracts from issues of 1870, in connexion with the Education Act of that year. They are as follows: (1) March 26, 1870. Our Education Obstacles. "What can be the difficulty about teaching the children of the mobility the three R's? The difficulty of agreeing what to teach under the name of a fourth R. Each sect wishes to instil into the youthful proletarian mind its own particular crochets under the name of religion. Let us propose a toast—the Ministers of all Denominations." (2) May 21. The Education Question. "Apropos of the 'religious difficulty' the managers and publishers of Bradshaw's Railway Guide are delighted at hearing that there is a fair prospect of a Time Table being introduced into all schools as a solution of the 'religious difficulty.'" (3) May 28. The Secular Difficulty. "There is one consideration which may induce the Secularists not to persist in opposing the admission of the Bible into national schools. If that Book is excluded, the scholars may surmise that the reason is that they ought not to read it, and then they will." (4) November 18. The Real Religious Difficulty. "The difficulty of teaching children, in schools established by the State, any religion at all." Our correspondent asks, "what would happen to one of Mr. Punch's learned clerks who thus trifled with religion to-day." He had better ask Mr. Punch.

Apart from the Education Question of 1870, it would appear that *Punch* half a century ago was less squeamish about religion than now. From the same source we get an item which illustrates this. July 19 and 26, 1870. (1) Controversy and Chemistry. "Why is absolute Dogma, your reverences, like absolute Alcohol? So please you, because it is utterly above proof." (2) Ecclesiastical Intelligence. "Mrs. Malaprop rejoices in a nephew who has lately taken orders, as a Clergyman, observe, not as a Commercial Traveller. She says the Bishop has promised to collocate him to a living when eviscerated by the present incubus." Referring, in the same year, to the Vatican Council which proclaimed Papal Infallibility, *Punch* compares the Pope with the notorious Davenport Brothers, whose performances "are in some degree matched by certain performances at Rome." There is, however, "a material difference between them." The "Spiritualist pretenders did usually contrive to wriggle out of the ropes they were tied with"; but there was no extracating for Bishop Duponloup and the other opponents of Papal Infallibility for "the Pope acts by a machinery and by procedures slowly elaborated and perfected beyond a chance of miscarriage." All these items, we repeat, are from *Punch*, and not, as the reader might assume, native to this feature of this journal.

"Divers," otherwise the examination in Holy Scripture hitherto a compulsory subject at Responsions at Oxford University, will henceforth be "an optional alternative" subject. It was a near thing, carried by a majority of less than twenty in Congregation. The *Church Times* hastens to explain that this decision "does not in any way represent an attack on religion", but it is "sorry that one more link between culture and religion has been snapped. Holy Scripture as an optional subject, even though the option may be commonly taken up, is not the same thing as Holy Scripture as an acknowledged element in the foundation of a liberal education." Which is only another way of saying that it is only by compulsion of one sort or another that Christianity can be confident of maintaining its hold now-a-days. A correspondent to the *Christian World* (Mr. C. J. Cadoux) in a letter on another subject—Remarriage after Divorce—emphasize the same point when he asks "why cannot people see the difference between upholding a Christian standard by example and exhortation (which is what the Christian Church has to do) and imposing it on unconvinced and unwilling subjects by means of the Statute Book?" Why Christians do not see this difference is soon explained—for them precept is so much easier than example.

Fifty Years Ago.

UNDETERRED by Mr. Freshfield's lack of success, Mr. Redmond is now on the trail of the *Freethinker*. The following conversation occurred between him and the Home Secretary, in the House of Commons last Monday evening:—

THE "FREETHINKER."

Mr. Redmond asked the Home Secretary whether the Government had power to seize and summarily suppress newspapers which they considered pernicious to public morals; and, if so, why that power was not exercised in the case of the *Freethinker* and other papers of that nature now published and circulated in England.

Sir W. Harcourt: I stated the other day that I thought it not wise to proceed legally against such publications.

Mr. Redmond: Have the Government the power to seize such a publication? (Hear, hear.)

Sir W. Harcourt: That is a legal question on which it would not be at all discreet that I should give an opinion. (Laughter.)

Mr. Redmond represents New Ross. His constituents number 261, and the total population of the borough, men, women, and children, is only 6,626. We have more readers than that, and we can afford to smile at Mr. Redmond's truly Irish attempt to injure the *Freethinker*.

The "*Freethinker*," February 19, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—W. A. Rogerson, 3s. 6d.
 TED SMITH.—We can agree with you that "a false God" is the other fellow's God. In that sense we agree with both you and the other fellow.
 O. A. MORGUER.—We do not anticipate that your suggestion will be adopted. The last thing that newspapers want in these symposiums are writers who will say what they mean, and who make a direct attack on religious beliefs. The *Freethinker* can be consulted in the New York Public Library, and can be mailed to any part of the world, post free, for an annual subscription of 15s.

C. LAMBERT.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."
 R. WALLER.—You have the whole question by the wrong end. The "masses" never do as they are told, they simply act as it is suggested they should act, and then imagine they are choosing their own course. And as there are as many of the empty-headed at one end of the social scale as at the other, and among the "educated" as among the "uneducated" this generalization is pretty wide in its application.

C.A.—We can only suggest one way in which a person can avoid being hurt by anything we write. Let him avoid reading it until he is of age—mentally, we mean.

J. NORAK.—Sorry, but Mr. Cohen's *War and Civilization* has been out of print for some time.

H. RVANS.—The answer to your enquiry might be given in two words—religious bigotry. Until a reasonable public control is exercised over the B.B.C., it will continue its policy of seeing that nothing attacking Christianity is permitted to be broadcast. And the British public will submit to almost anything in the name of religion.

G. S. SPEED.—Have handed your letter to the Secretary of the N.S.S. If anything can be done the Society will be pleased to do what it can to assist.

T. MOSLEY.—Mr. Cohen's *Outline of Evolutionary Ethics* has been out of print for many years, and would now require re-writing. He may do this so soon as he has leisure to devote to it. A fourth volume of *Essays in Freethinking* will be issued some time this year.

A. MILLAR.—Pleased to note that you are getting well again. Thanks for plant. We are placing it in the garden, and so expect to have a little bit of Scotland on our own.

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.

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/0.
 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."

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 21) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, on the "Physiology of Faith." The lecture will commence at 6.30, doors open at 6.0. Admission will be free, but there will be some reserved seat tickets. This is a special lecture, and we should like Glasgow Freethinkers to do what they can to bring Christian friends along to the meeting.

We have had lately several letters from friends who have sent us newspaper cuttings enquiring whether

these are of use to us, as they do not always see them used. We can assure them we very much value their kindness in sending them. Many things may hinder every cutting being used as a peg on which to hang a criticism. But whether used at the time or not they are always of use. They help us to keep in touch with things that are happening in all parts of the country, and of the world, and even when not commented on inform other things we write. At the very least they help to form a background for any picture we are painting of the present position of the religious world. We can assure all who do send that we greatly value their help in this direction.

The *Leicester Mercury* prints an account of the appointment of three new magistrates for Leicester. Among them, the chief one so far as we are concerned, is our old friend Mr. Sydney A. Gimson. Mr. Gimson has been engaged for many years in Leicester, and there are few who can be trusted to carry out the duties of a magistrate with greater dignity and a keener sense of justice. We congratulate Leicester on the appointment. But the *Mercury* is out in one thing. It gives a portrait of the three new magistrates "after taking the oath." The description—so far as the oath is concerned, contains thirty-three and a third per cent of error. Mr. Gimson did not take the oath. As a good Freethinker he affirmed.

We are glad to see that some of the Freethinking students of Manchester University have protested, in the Union organ *The Serpent*, against the jibes and jeers at Atheism and Agnosticism, without, of course, there being proper opportunities for reply. A recent issue of *The Serpent* contains a further suggestion in the following letter:—

AN ATHEIST LIFE-WEEK.

Sir,—I have had this letter in mind some time. Life Week, the public prank of a public nuisance called the Student Christian Movement, has moved me at last to pen it.

I wish to make an appeal through your columns to all Atheists in our University to come forward and hand themselves into a fighting force to help combat the lies of Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Mahomedanism, and all those other religions which have adherents amongst the student body. Never was it more clearly necessary than to-day that the obstructive machinations of religion must be fought to the bitter end if any progress is to be made, unhampered by the reactionary motives of an institution the history of which is one tissue of lies, deceit, exploitation, repression, and subterfuge. Never was the working man more conscious of the realization that religion is, and always has been, his arch-enemy, than he is to-day. *Take no heed what ye shall eat . . . Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.*

It's not the Kingdom of God we want, Sir, but the assurance of an occasional meal. How to start? Let's hold an Atheist Life Week! Yours, etc.,

WORKER-STUDENT.

If anything on the lines suggested eventualizes we shall be pleased to help in any way we can. It is about time that something as above suggested was done at all our centres of learning. Christians have far too long been given the privilege of doing as they pleased without anyone hitting back.

Apropos of the above we note in *The Post*—the official organ of the Post-Office Workers a letter advocating the formation of a Catholic Men's Postal Service Guild. We have no particular objection to this, but we suggest that a move might also be made to form a Freethinker's Postal Service Guild. We leave out the word "Men's," because we do not discriminate between the sexes in such matters.

As announced on the last page of this issue, the Secular Society, Limited has just issued a reprint of the speech of G. W. Foote in the Court of Queen's Bench, on the occasion of his famous trial for blasphemy. Mr. Cohen will write a special article on this trial in next week's *Freethinker*. For the moment we merely call attention to it as the most striking speech ever delivered in defence at a trial for blasphemy, and to advise every

reader of this paper to secure a copy. It is a document with which all Freethinkers, at least, should be fully acquainted.

Leicester Freethinkers are reminded that Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, to-day (Sunday), at 6.30 p.m., on "The God Men of Science Believe in." A cordial feeling exists between the Leicester Secular Society and the N.S.S., and our speakers are sure of a warm welcome from the Society officials and the audience.

A debate between the Rev. J. W. Povah, B.D., and Mr. A. D. McLaren has been arranged by the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. in the Bristol Street Council Schools for to-day (Sunday). The subject is "The Religion of the Old Testament." The debate will begin at 7.30 p.m.

With blizzards hanging about all meetings are certain to be interfered with, nevertheless quite a good meeting was held at the Fulham Town Hall, for the second lecture of the course. Mr. McLaren's address was closely followed and drew a number of questions. The course will close on Thursday the 25th, with a lecture by Mr. R. H. Rosetti on "Spiritualism v. Common Sense." Commence 8 p.m.

The life of W. Stewart Ross (Saladin) Freethinker, journalist and poet, with a selection from his writings is in course of preparation by Mr. R. B. Hithersay. Will readers in possession of any letters or documents likely to be of general interest please communicate with Mr. Hithersay at 71 Avondale Road, London, S.E.15.

The External World.

TERMS used:—

Object. A material phenomenon which appeals to the senses.

Substance. Lowest denominator of scientific analysis; self-existent principle of existence; "common bedding" for phenomena.

To Exist. To participate in causation.

Sense-Datum. Colour, sound, etc.; the content of sensation.

Sensation. Awareness of sense-datum; the consequent of a reciprocal adjustment of object and nervous system.

Appearance. Content of sensation as a whole; collective effect of items of sense-data.

Perception. Awareness of appearance.

Phenomenon. Formation in substance, having temporary existence.

"If we take away from the assumed substance every quality by which we know substance, then we are not dealing with a thing but with nothing." (Chapman Cohen, *Freethinker*, January 17). If we take away from a cherry the sense-data by which it is known to us—texture, redness, roundness, etc.—then we are not dealing with a thing but with nothing.

No, we are not. And this word "we" is important. Because we are not dealing with a thing it does not follow that the thing does not exist. And if our neighbour, or in fact everyone, is not dealing with it, it still does not follow that it does not exist. This is where Berkeleyism departs from Materialism as I understand it.

According to Berkeley, things exist in virtue of their being perceived, as perceived, and *only* as perceived, the percipient being God (and we ourselves where possible).

But what does exist? Here let us make a differentiation:—

objects: substance.

In the case of objects the esse=percipi may be taken to hold good. In the case of substance it cannot.

Thus the Realist epistemology differs from the Berkeleyan, and I conceive the place for Materialism to be within the wide category of Realism.

"Object" stands in contradistinction to "subject." There cannot be one without the other, and one is as abstract as the other.

Substance manifests phenomena (*i.e.*, takes forms), and when its material phenomena become perceived they merit the name "objects." By means of sensation we experience sense-data, and we call the unified, or holistic, effect of a group of sense-data (related), an appearance; we say, then, we are confronted with an "object."

No subject, no object. But from no subject, no object, it does not follow, no subject, no existent (nothing). From no I, no appearance of table, it does not follow, no I, no wood. Nor does it follow, no human beings, no nebula. (Rather, no nebula, no human beings).

So that while objects are essentially perceived (*i.e.*, rendered significant to mind by sensation through sense-data as appearance), this does not apply to that which is independent of being perceived; which exists in the absence of, and antedates, mind. To remove the sensational effects (giving the qualities) of objects, is not to annihilate their substance. I know by experiment that objective existence persists independent of me, and that in the absence of minds there are, and have been, many existents which are potential objects. What no longer obtains is their appearance. According to Berkeley, appearance is all there is to a thing; there is nothing from which to divorce appearance, and therefore there is no thing "in itself"; nothing apart from the qualities (as gathered from its appearance).

This I deem untenable, and after the word "appearance" write the word "of," thus relating the appearance to some phenomenon, independent of perception, and made of substance. (Cf. *Materialism Re-stated*, p. 54.)

Does this commit us to the view that there is something *distinct* from what is perceived? Not at all. In dealing with objects we are dealing with the substantial stuff of the universe.

Does it lift us beyond consciousness? Not so. All the time we are dealing with what enters into consciousness, and what we infer to exist independent of consciousness.

We experience, things—existents—and the sense-data are what we experience of them. We are not dealing with two distinct and separable kinds of existence. The separation is one of grammatical convenience.

We acquire this notion of *substratum per se* by inference; and also, according to Santayana, by "animal faith." This postulate of the self-existent (substance) also seems the most acceptable way of accounting for pre-human times. It avoids the hypothesis of a Berkeleyan or Jeansian God who ejected the events prior to the evolution of the animal.

G. H. TAYLOR.

[I place too high a value upon Mr. Taylor's writing to permit the above to pass without comment. First, on a question of fact. Berkeley did not deny the existence of the "Thing in itself." He asserted its existence most strongly, and, indeed, his system depends upon it. What he did was to deny the existence of an unknown and unthinkable "matter," and to assert the existence of an equally unknown and unthinkable "mind" as the "thing in itself." If Mr. Taylor will again read the "Principles" and the "Three Dialogues," he will see this expressed as plainly as it is possible for language to do it. Hume caught Berkeley in his own net by pointing out that his substratum "mind," as something distinct from mental phenomena, was as unwarrantable and as useless as "matter" as something distinct from the things we know as material.

I am quite at a loss to know what is meant by substance,

or by anything else, once we dispense with the known qualities of a thing. Dismiss the qualities by which we know an object—apple, table, stone, and there is left nothing but a vacuum. A thing must be the aggregate of qualities by which we know it. That is why we call one thing an apple and another thing a table. I do not know how we can infer anything beyond consciousness, if the thing inferred is to be considered *sui generis*, as absolutely distinct from anything in our consciousness. An inference must be concerned with some thing or things. Nothing will do not do. But if "substance" is not constituted by any or all of these modes, what we have is not a conception, not anything thinkable. It is not a thing we have in mind, but nothing. And we really should not attempt to build up positive conception on nothing.

Finally, if we take, as we ought to take, all such terms as "I" and "not I," object and subject, inside and outside, as standing for phases of experience, we can, as I have explained in my *Materialism Re-stated*, find a reasonable use for them all. But there is no need to posit a mysterious inconceivable, useless, something, whether we call it "Mind," "Matter," or "God." An inconceivability does not become conceivable by a change of terms.—C.C.]

Criticism and the Bible.

III.—THE CREATION.

(Concluded from page 108.)

THE god of the first chapter of Genesis stands on a higher intellectual plane, and is an essentially Babylonian form of thought. Nevertheless, this chapter is by no means one uniform piece but a mixture of earlier and later ingredients, it opens with the sentence: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Yet immediately following this statement, it is narrated that the earth was without form and void, and that God's spirit moved over the waters. Who created this chaos or primeval ocean? If it was Elohim, why did he not then at once create the fruitful earth? It is peculiar that in this creation myth Elohim should in the first place have created the formless mass, the primeval deep, and only after new and improved experiments have been able to bring order out of chaos. The idea of the creation of the universe by an almighty god whose word is sufficient to bring forth a world out of nothing, is in contradiction to the assumption of the development of the world out of an original chaos. The chaos is in this latter case, uncreated. With this conception of an uncreated chaos, the idea of a natural development is compatible. With the conception of a created chaos, however, the idea of an abrupt supernatural origin finds its premise. Furthermore, we see that in the Sumerian legend of creation, from which, by a detour through the Babylonian-Semites, the conception of an original primeval ocean is taken, this primeval deep is regarded not as something created by a god but as something pre-existing. There is therefore no other choice than that of assuming that the words: "In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heaven and the earth," were only added later—to the greater glory of God.

But the attempt to substitute an almighty god who only requires to speak and, hey presto, the desired result appears, for a working god who constructs the world only through toilsome labour, recurs again and again in this opening chapter of Genesis. Refer, for example, to the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth verses of this chapter.

First, Elohim commands: "Let there be a firmament"; and at once arises the firmament. Notwithstanding, he then makes the same firmament. Such a tiring piece of work, together with the performance of the other jobs on the succeeding days, takes it out of him so much that he finds it necessary to rest on the seventh day! But it is difficult to imagine how an almighty god could be so fatigued through the mere uttering of a command each day. There is no escape

from the conclusion that, without any doubt, the words—"And God said, Let there be, etc." were a later insertion. The text: "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters, etc.," is doubtless the older composition. We find also in the Sumerian-Babylonian mythology precisely the same conception, namely, that a great mass of water existed above the firmament which was fastened with immense bolts and thus kept the water from falling down. In the Rig-Veda, we also more than once come across the conception of a vast original sea above the firmament. It is to be found also in many of the myths of the South Sea islanders. For example, according to the New Zealanders, the deluge (parallel instance to the deluge in the Noah episode) arose in consequence of the rage of the god Tawaki who in his anger stamped so heavily upon the floor of heaven that it gave way, and the waters of the upper ocean poured down and flooded the earth.

Yet another proof and, indeed, a very clear proof of the fact that the first chapter of Genesis consists of different disparate traditions, is found in the comparison of verses 3-5, with verses 14-19, of this same chapter. Here, God is depicted as having duplicated the creation of daylight (the sun) and the night-light (the moon); first, on the opening day of creation, and then afterwards on the fourth day.

How has this contradiction arisen? The explanation is fairly simple, although the theological critics of the Bible have not found it. For peoples who are ignorant of the nature of the solar system, the sun is not regarded as the dispenser of daylight. From the simple experience that it is clear and dark when they see no sun or moon in the heavens, they are unaware of any relation of dependence of daylight upon sunlight. Both represent something separate and apart. Only later does the sunlight and daylight become identified. A very characteristic example, in this connexion, is the metamorphosis which the conception of daylight underwent among the old Peruvians. Originally, they looked upon the daylight as completely impersonal, as the opposite of darkness—clearness. When the knowledge was attained that the daylight was a result of the illuminating power of the sun, the daylight was in a certain measure personified, addressed in one of the prayers as Lord of the Daylight and, still later, identified with the sun.

A similar outlook existed also among the Sumerians, for whom originally the daylight was something independent of the sunlight. But their successors, the Semitic-Babylonians, had a very intimate knowledge of the cause of the alternation of day and night; for them, the sun was the daylight-giver and the moon the lamp of night. And the passage in the first chapter of Genesis, verses 14-18, originated in a much later time, when already the astronomy of the Babylonians had made considerable advance; otherwise it would not have been possible to assert that the stars should serve "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years."

The contradiction in the double creation of daylight is therefore simply explained from the fact that in this legend of creation, like that of the other, different notions belonging to different phases of social evolution are interwoven. We may sum up our survey of these creation stories, by saying that the Biblical history of creation is an intermixture of all sorts of Canaanitish, Sumerian-Babylonian and Semitic-Babylonian elements, which were later amalgamated, editorially revised and trimmed up for the glorification of Yahwe.

There are some Christian theologians who, knowing little or nothing of the religious notions of low-standing, pre-civilized peoples, assume that the wor-

ship of Nature is the oldest form of religion—so-called natural religion. They are particularly anxious to prove that the oldest form of the worship of God among the Hebrews, rested upon this natural religion, and therefore to demonstrate that Yahwe was from the very beginning worshipped in Israel, in and through the cult of Nature; and from the very beginning as the one sole god; that consequently the Israelitish religion was monotheistic from the outset.

If we assume for a moment that the first form of religion is natural religion—we shall see later that it is a comparatively late form—then it is necessary for an understanding of this cult of nature, to know the primitive outlooks of the people of this stage. How are we to acquire this knowledge? Certainly not by manufacturing some fancies of our own about Nature, which from our modern cultural standpoint appear as primitive, introjecting them into the mind of primitive man, and then asserting that these are his impressions about Nature; but by studying the outlooks upon Nature of peoples who in modern times live on lower levels of social development, especially their notions about gods, and the influence of the immediate surroundings upon those notions.

But that is not how rationalist theologians or theological rationalists operate. Objectivity is not their strong point. They construe the primitive outlooks upon Nature according to their subjective impressions and the premises which their deductions require. As a result we get, for example, something like this summarized assumption.

For the naive "child of Nature," the sun is something good, something noble and exalted. On the other hand, the water is an evil force. Therefore, the succession of the wet winter by the spring, works upon his imagination as a joyous event. The sun is a hero who fights his way through the dark clouds. The young sun, the hero of the spring—his weapon is the storm—triumphs over the rain and the flood, and liberates light and warmth for the land.

Now let us look at an application of this assumption.

The serpent which is spoken of in the Biblical legend of Paradise, is really a Babylonian dragon. Now there is an old Babylonian legend which recounts how the god Marduk (originally only a tribal and local god of Babylon and, later, a chief god of the whole Babylonian empire) triumphed over the sea-dragon Tiamat, with the help of the storm, made himself the highest among the gods and then created a new world. This dragon signifies the annual overflowing of the Euphrates, against which the sun fights with the help of the stormy, water-dispersing wind; consequently, the conception of the deceitful serpent (dragon) and of world-creation, has sprung from the coming of Spring in the Euphrates Valley.⁴

But grandiose as this imaginative picture may appear, it has acquired its rich colouring at the cost of truth. Even for that part of the Biblical history of creation which is borrowed from the Babylonians, the conjecture that it must have arisen in the inundated territory of the Euphrates, is, as we have already seen, not credible; for the conception that the earth first arose out of a great primeval ocean, from which the land emerged later on, corresponds just as little as the conception of great sea animals⁵ and of the value of the same, to the world-outlook of a river people. *This sort of conception originates only on a sea-coast or on sea-girt islands.*

Furthermore, the view that among the old

Sumerian-Babylonians the water was looked upon as evil and the sun as good, is thoroughly false. This is proved, not only by the oldest texts in which water is praised as the life-giving and life-saving element, but also by the names of the gods themselves. In the oldest Sumerian incantations which have been preserved, Marduk, who was at the beginning only a Babylonian city-god, is designated as Mirri-Dugga and Murru-Dugga, the first-born son of Ia (later Ea), the spirit of the "water-house." This latter is, in most cases, identified in the old formulæ with "Ab-sin," the primeval ocean. Later on, this Murru-Dugga is called, in the texts, Amaru-Dugga, then, the Semitic Maruduk and Marduk, and in the Bible, we find him as Merodach.

What does the designation "Mirri-Dugga" signify? It means the offspring of the "good." Ia (the god of the primeval waters), in the old Sumerian mythology, bears the surname Dugga, the good, just as, on the other hand, Anu, the god of heaven and later sun-god, is mostly called, in the oldest formulæ, Inlilla (from "in"=lord, and "lilla"=high), therefore, "the Lord on High." The latter was regarded as the evil and harmful power.

We see, therefore, that originally the primeval ocean was looked upon as the "good," and the god of heaven or later sun god as the "evil." This again proves that the part of the Babylonian legend of creation which bears reference to the primeval waters, has not arisen in the Euphrates Valley, since we find the adoration of the sea, as "the good," only among coast-dwellers, especially fisher-peoples, *for whom the sea supplies the greater part of their means of life.* There, the sea is "the good," just in the same way as among peoples who suffer constant droughts, it is not the sun that is venerated as "the good," but the overflowing river or the refreshing rain.⁶

There is thus nothing left of the above assumption. The Babylonian legendary history of creation, narrated in the first chapter of Genesis, cannot have arisen on the banks of the Euphrates; and neither is there any justification for the assumption that the old population in this region had originally regarded water as the enemy and the sun as the saviour, and that this creation myth was the intellectual reflex of the triumph of the dawning spring over the cold damp of winter.

Nevertheless, if in Babylonian mythology the water was originally looked upon as the good, later on, with the growing importance of agriculture for Semitic-Babylonian civilization, the sun wins for itself more and more the highest position in the circle of the gods. It comes to be venerated as the giver of light and warmth, the giver of life; while the sea (the floods) becomes a deceitful and malicious monster, a sea dragon. And this transformation, this fall of the old water-gods and the conquest of their power by a new and heavenly world of gods under the leadership of Marduk, is, in a symbolical form, the content of the legend of the defeat of the old sea-dragon Tiamat by the younger god Marduk, and the founding of a new dynasty of gods, of a war in the world of gods, to which not only the myth under discussion but also a whole series of other Babylonian legends bear reference.⁷

W. CRAIK.

⁶ The acid test of superiority in the contest for supremacy between Yahwe and the Baalim, was precisely the ability to bring rain to the famished land. See 1 Kings xviii.

⁷ There is also in the Bible a surviving allusion—a fragment of what was once an entire legend—to "a war in heaven," and to Satan as a fallen god. Satan's first appearance, in the Biblical narrative, was in the form of a serpent or dragon.

⁴ *Creation and Chaos*. Professor Hermann Gunkel, Gottingen (1895).

⁵ "And God created great whales." *Genesis*, i., v. 24.

The Church in Tudor Times.

If any proof that Christians know how to hate were needed it can be supplied by two old cartoons. One of them is *The Papacy* as seen by Luther, and the other Luther as seen by the Papacy. In the first picture the Pope is shown as an animal sitting on a throne while other animals hold geese which bring to them pearls. In the other Luther is shown with a monster on his back, this monster speaking down a tube into Luther's ear, and also playing a musical instrument which takes the place of Luther's nose.

Reproductions of these two pictures are printed at the beginning of Chapter 5, *The Church, in Salzman's England in Tudor Times* (Batsford, 7s. 6d.).

At the beginning of the Tudor century there was a nation worshipping in forms and professing beliefs practically identical with those of their ancestors for many centuries.

At the end was an Established Church containing within itself a number of parties all at variance with one another over matters of belief and ritual.

England never had any love for popes, and the papacy in Tudor times had been held by some of the greatest blackguards that the Renaissance produced, says Mr. Salzman, and the papal court was a byword for corruption and extortion, so that it was fairly easy for Henry VIII. to defy Rome.

The existence of anti-clerical feeling in England at this time was quite natural. The clergy possessed enormous wealth and striking privileges, which could hardly have been justified if the clergy had maintained a high moral and intellectual standard.

Mr. Salzman quotes some striking examples of anti-clerical feeling among the people of England, and asserts that the dissolution of the monasteries, for which Henry VIII. has often been blamed, "was the deliberate act, or at least had the approval of the people through their representatives in Parliament." The popularity of the clergy was not increased by the fact that the change from Romanism to Protestantism, then back to Romanism under Mary, and to Protestantism again under Elizabeth meant the resignation or expulsion of the more earnest clergy and the increase in power of the less scrupulous time servers.

Mr. Salzman quotes the famous terrible jest that in England the constant burning of heretics had sent up the price of wood, and he also says that "the line between religion and superstition cannot be marked, and the image which for one man may be an assistance in meditation on the merits of the saints may for another be a talisman with magic or miraculous attributes."

That the Established Church was no better than the Roman soon became obvious. The man who stayed away from church was regarded as being a secret Roman Catholic and a traitor to his country, and so laws were made that all persons over the age of twelve were to attend church some time or other on Sunday, not for pious reasons, but to enable the authorities to weed out the Romanists from the others.

One parishioner landed himself into trouble by averring that "he would go down to the meadows and hear as good a sermon under a hedge as any made by that parson."

The diversity of opinions within the Reformed Church became so great that in 1662 the Nonconformists broke away to add still further to the chaos which is often dignified by the name "Christian brotherliness and unity."

Other chapters in the book tell of life in the country, the town, the home, and adventure on land and sea and the sixty-three plates, the colour plate, and the forty-six line illustrations taken chiefly from old pictures give a wonderfully realistic picture of life in Tudor times.

NECHELLS.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

MR. CUTNER CRITICIZED.

SIR,—Mr. Cutner has been contributing to your columns a series of articles on some Freethinkers of the past who were notable for their courage and pertinacity in their search for the origins of Christianity, but who were badly equipped for their task. I fear that Mr. Cutner, whom I sincerely like as a man, belongs to the same category.

In his article, last week, on Robert Taylor he speaks favourably of that ex-cleric's wild guess on the source of the name of the mother of Jesus, and afterwards makes a dogmatic statement about the Hebrew language which would excite the laughter of every philologist in the world.

Relying on Taylor, Mr. Cutner says that Miriam (a Hebrew name) is derived from the Latin "Mare" ("Sea"), which he evidently thinks was pronounced like the English "Mary"! This is absurd enough. But Mr. Cutner, remembering that the mother of Jesus is called "Maria" in the New Testament—she is also called "Miriam"—naïvely explains that Maria is the plural of Mare. Madame Blavatsky—a precious authority—is next cited to show that "Venus Aphrodite" is "the personified sea" (but why "seas"?). Hence it follows that Mary and Aphrodite are mythic equivalents.

The Mary of the New Testament may or may not be a myth; but in the earliest evangelical strata there is no hint of her virginal maternity, nor anything to give countenance to the much later Mariolatry of the Church. That feature of Catholicism, which hardly appears before the fourth century and has no official recognition before the fifth, lacks all trace of lore about Aphrodite, but is clearly influenced by the worship of Isis, who was for Egyptians and others the "Mother of God."

Mr. Cutner's dogma that Hebrew was never a spoken language, but made up . . . in the interests of the priests "is even more ridiculous than his philological equation, Mare = Maria = Venus = Mary." Has Mr. Cutner never consulted the article on "Hebrew language" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, where he might learn that Hebrew is one of a group of Semitic tongues, and bears a close resemblance to Phœnician and Assyrian, and was, in all essentials, the speech of the Canaanites before the invasions of the Beni-Israel? Has he forgotten the Moabite Stone (inscribed in a language practically identical with Hebrew) or the Siloam inscription? Were both these priestly concoctions? To be read—by whom?

Priests are not in the habit of making up artificial languages, like Volapuk or Esperanto. They continue to use in their rituals languages which have become archaic. Latin, Coptic, Old Slavonic, Hellenistic Greek, Pali, and Sanscrit are languages employed in various rituals, as well as sacred books, Christian and non-Christian. But none of them were invented by priests; they were all once living tongues.

We Freethinkers should be very careful not to make ourselves foolish in the eyes of scholarly men, whether opponents or not of our cause. It is because of this danger that I have felt impelled to write my criticisms of Mr. Cutner.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

MR. CUTNER'S REJOINDER.

MR. CUTNER replies: Mr. Howell Smith is a typical example of the person I had in mind when writing my articles on Taylor. What he thinks about my "equipment" is a matter of indifference to me, but I did want to emphasize Robert Taylor, not only as a brilliant University student, a fully qualified surgeon and ordained priest, but also as a fine Freethought writer, controversialist and orator in the face of just such criticism as has emanated from Mr. Howell Smith.

What I said about Hebrew not having ever been a spoken language (I mean, of course, Biblical Hebrew) is not Taylor's but my own, and the curious mixture of arrogance and assumption which pervades Mr. Howell Smith's letter is evinced by his asking me whether I "never consulted" the *Encyclopædia Biblica* article on

"The Hebrew Language." Though it might surprise him, let me whisper in his ear that I have, and also perhaps far more books and articles than he has ever dreamed of. It was the *Encyclopedia Biblica* article with its evasions that finally convinced me. To say that Hebrew is "one of a group of Semitic tongues" is no evidence as to when and where it was spoken, nor quoting Nehemiah, nor telling us that "the origin of Hebrew is lost in the obscurity that hangs over the early movements of the Semitic tribes." There is no evidence whatever in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* article that Hebrew was a spoken language and quite a good deal to show it was not. But it is a very good article, of course.

Then Mr. Howell Smith asks me if I have "forgotten" the Moabite stone? No, I have not. It contains thirty-four lines written in Phœnician characters in a *Moabite dialect*. This is a "precious" proof that Hebrew was a spoken language, is it not?

His criticism of the few lines I devoted to Taylor's attempt to connect Mary with other Pagan myths, the myth of Venus for example, is contemptible. If he really wished to criticize, he should have dealt with the two lectures on the subject in the *Devil's Pulpit*—which as well as the rest of Taylor's work, he has obviously never read. I was most careful to precede my remarks by asking "was Taylor right?" and I sent the reader not only to the great work of Mr. J. M. Robertson, but also to the orthodox Miss C. M. Yonge, and, for its reputation on the occult or "mysteries" side, to the *Secret Doctrine*. However, let me go now to Mr. Howell Smith's own authority, the *Encyclopedia Biblica*. In the article on "Mary" will be found practically the same interpretations of the word Taylor gives, but also the following note:—

At this point may be registered the somewhat bold attempt of Rosch (chapter and verse given) to explain such interpretations as "enlightener," "Myrrh of the sea," "star of the sea," "lady" as due to a combination of *Mary with the Goddess Astarte*. (Italics mine.)

Astarte is, of course, another name for Venus, and precisely what Taylor did sixty years previously is characterized by the *Encyclopedia Biblica* as a "somewhat bold attempt." Nothing else. But did all the Rationalist "scholars" and professors of philology roar with laughter at Mr. Rosch? If not, why not?

Mr. Howell Smith's elementary attempts to teach me something about Mariolatry or his pretence of knowing how Latin was pronounced are really not worthy of any further consideration.

Obituary.

MRS. ELLEN CAROLINE REPTON.

OUR readers will learn with regret of the death of Ellen Caroline Repton, wife of our esteemed contributor, W. Repton. Mrs. Repton was taken suddenly ill on the mid-day of February 5 and died in the course of a few hours. A happy married life of twenty-one years was thus brought to an abrupt termination. Mr. and Mrs. Repton formed an ideal couple, and with their only child, a daughter, constituted a happy and admirable family circle. The memory of those many years of happy life remains something which time can but make the more precious. The funeral took place at Putney Vale, on February 10 in the presence of a number of personal friends. Mr. Cohen attended and delivered a brief address.

Rationalist Press Association (Glasgow District)

Grand Hall, Central Halls, 25 Bath Street,
Sunday, February 28, at 3 p.m.

Professor V. GORDON CHILDE, B.A., B.Litt., Dept. of
Prehistoric Archeology (Edinburgh University)
"Some Attempts at the Mystification of Science."

Violinist—Miss May Russell.

Questions and Discussion.

Silver Collection.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): 7.30, Messrs. F. Day and C. Tuson.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—A meeting will be held at White Stone Pond, Hampstead, near the Tube Station every Sunday morning at 11.30 a.m. Speaker to-day Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; at 3.30 and 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Hyatt, Tuson and Wood. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

INDOOR.

FULHAM TOWN HALL, Fulham Road, S.W.6, close to Waltham Green (Underground Station): Thursday evening, February 25, at 8.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Spiritualism v. Common Sense."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. J. H. Wicksteed, M.A.—"The Spring of Humanity."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Rev. Chynoweth Pope—"The Need for Secular Education." Questions invited.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, Hall No. 5, near Clapham North Station, Underground): 7.30, Mr. A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A.—"Roman Catholicism: It's Nature and it's Prospects."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"The Recording Angel, III."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, February 22, at 8.0, Mr. H. Preece will open a discussion on "Socialism and Birth Control."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, February 23, at 7.0, Prof. Harold J. Laski—"Toleration in a Democratic Society."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Debate—"Should Freethinkers be Socialists," Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe v. Mr. H. Cutner.

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Zealley's Cafe, 100 High Road, Wembley): 7.30, Miss Stella Browne—"A Modern View of Parenthood." Admission free. Questions and discussion.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools): Sunday, February 21, at 7.30, Debate, Rev. J. W. Povah, B.D., v. Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The Religion of the Old Testament." Thursday, February 25, at Shakespeare Rooms, 174 Edmund Street (near Livery Street), at 7.30, Mr. C. Smith—"Blind Powers Herd Instinct in Man."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, entrance Lorn Street): 7.0, Prigyes Abel—"Religion on the Continent."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, William Stansfield—"The Further Issues of Rationalism." Question and discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—Mr. Chapman Cohen, President of the N.S.S., will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, on "The Physiology of Faith." Doors open at 6.0, commence 6.30. Admission free.

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH N.S.S. (36 Victoria Park Road): 6.30, Study and discussion. All Freethinkers invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"The God Men of Science Believe In."

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