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

**Views and Opinions.**

**The Gentle Christian.**

THE avowed aim of the Common Law of Blasphemy is to protect the feeling of Christians. It is feared that some Freethinker might say something that would wound their feelings. There is no such special law to protect the feelings of Freethinkers from the language of Christians; for, says the law in substance, that is not to be expected, nor is it needed. Freethinkers, it implies, are grown-up men and women, and they are not stupid enough to create a breach of the peace if someone speaks jestingly of their opinions. With the Christian it is otherwise, and the Law has to deal with things as they exist. The Law has no desire to interfere with opinion, but in the case of the Christian—and there are so many of them—the situation is difficult. So the Law is compelled to regard every Christian as undeveloped, not yet grown up, possessing the strength of a man with the irresponsible irritability of a child, and therefore we cannot expect him to face those who differ from him in the same frank and open spirit that one may reasonably expect a Freethinker to do. Therefore we must have a law that will protect, not the Christian against the Freethinker or even the Freethinker against himself, but in reality the Christian against himself. We are afraid, say the judges, that if we permit the Freethinker to say what he really believes about religion the Christian may lose his head, see red, get into a blind passion, and commit an outrage on public order and decency; in other words, make a public nuisance of himself. So the law has to step in and put a fence round the Christian in the shape of a blasphemy law, much as we have to put a fence round sheep to prevent their straying over people's front gardens. The Blasphemy laws are needed only so long as Christians remain in an undeveloped state, and the law asks Freethinkers to submit to this much as they might be asked to refrain from saying to a weak-minded individual, things that one could say with absolute safety to a normal per-

son. When Christians become capable of self-control there will be no need for blasphemy laws. But by that time there may be no Christians to ask for the existence of such laws.

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**An Interesting Specimen.**

The other day there was a Church Bazaar held in Earlestown, and one of the speakers was a Dr. H. E. Watkins, the local Medical Officer of Health. The *Ashton Guardian* of April 22 reports him as saying:—

No one could get along without religion. There were many Agnostics, but they were usually scientific men who would not believe until they were given definite proof. I look upon the Atheists as liars. Any Atheist knows in his heart that he lies. When he is in a tight corner he calls "God help me," and he means it.

I do not know anything of this Dr. Watkins, and on the face of it he is just one of those mental nonentities who are not, so far as they are individually concerned, worth bothering about. But he does represent a type, the type for whom the Blasphemy Laws really exist, and whose susceptibilities have to be guarded by law against the wicked Atheist. It is however quite certain that Dr. Watkins—whose patients may God protect!—runs no risk of being classed with those who will not believe anything unless they have proof. No one, even upon the evidence of this newspaper report, would be likely to accuse him of looking for reasons for accepting his religious beliefs. He just takes them, and having taken them gratifies his religious spleen by impertinence to men and women who have devoted more serious thought to religion in a single hour than Dr. Watkins is capable of in a lifetime. So much for the Doctor—and, again God help his patients if he brings no more intelligence to bear on their ailments than he does on religion and Atheism.

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**Pure Religion.**

My interest in Dr. Watkins is one that an intelligent medical man will readily understand. A doctor may quite properly speak of a beautiful case of fever, or a lovely fracture, not because he is lacking in sympathy with his patient or because he is not ready to work like a nigger—although that is not a very good example of hard work, but simply because the case before him offers a perfect specimen of the disease he is fighting. So I find in this Medical Officer of Health a very fine specimen of the Christian at his best—I mean by "best" one that is least adulterated with non-religious ideas of truthfulness and fairness. Unadulterated by intelligence or courtesy we have in Dr. Watkins all the arrogance, the impertinence, and the immovable stupidity that forms the principal ingredient of the true Christian undefiled. One is the more inclined to welcome such a specimen because nowadays the average man who calls himself a Christian is so affected

by the non-Christian forces in his environment that it is only the specialist who can detect the Christian elements that remain.

Falstaff said that he was not alone witty in himself, but he was also the cause of wit in others. So it might be said of those in the Christian world whose reputation gives countenance to the absurdities of this Dr. Watkins, that not alone are they the purveyors of foolish and fallacious arguments, but they are the cause of folly and fallacy in others. For when we take the crudities of Dr. Watkins we find them to be but the vulgarization of statements that are put forward by men holding high rank in the theological and philosophic world. Not so plainly as does Dr. Watkins do these men say, "Men cannot get on without religion," that would be obviously absurd in face of the fact that millions to-day manage to get on very well without it, and who challenge the religious philosopher to produce a single piece of evidence to prove that life suffers from the absence of religion. But they do make the same indefensible statement hidden in such generalizations that "man has an unquenchable yearning after something that is greater than himself," or describe the rejection of God after God as evidence of man's thirst for communion with God. It is the falsification of both history and psychology by men in positions of leadership that allow callow minds as that of Dr. Watkins to ventilate crude absurdities "as one having authority." It is really a case of the fool seeking licence for his folly under the shadow of a reputation for scholarship enjoyed by others. That is why I say that Dr. Watkins is interesting as a type. He represents a type of mind that is perpetuated mainly because of the patronage and encouragement it receives from men who would be ashamed to put their real teachings in as plain a manner. Their essential crudities are veiled in the jargon of the professional philosopher; it is when the man in the street, the Methodist preacher, the Salvation Army Captain, or a Dr. Watkins gets hold of it and expresses himself in plain everyday language that we are able to see religion as it really is. Dr. Watkins is not more wrong than the class of men I have named, he simply lacks the education that enables him to pass off obscurity for profundity.

\* \* \*

#### The Poor Atheist.

Dr. Watkins looks upon Atheists as liars. I should be the very last to deny that some Atheists are liars, because I should be the first to challenge the assumption that Christianity has a monopoly of either vices or virtues. After all, lying is a very common human characteristic, and I challenge the Christian's right to a monopoly of lying just as I challenge his right to claim a monopoly of truthfulness. But in the interests of exactitude I am bound to say that for downright systematic and persistent lying from Paul to Watkins, the Christian Church may safely challenge comparison with any institution or with any man that has ever existed. We all know that the Church has condemned many a man for telling the truth, but I cannot recall a single case in which it has condemned the lie that "abounded to the greater glory of God."

I am, therefore, at a loss to know exactly what Dr. Watkins means by saying that all Atheists are liars. Does he mean that the Atheist is telling a lie when he says that he does not believe in a God? If so then the Atheist is a very unusual kind of a liar. When men lie they usually lie for some valid reason, for financial profit, for social applause, or from fear of injury. But what profit does a man gain in this country from calling himself an Atheist? If he aspires to public honours a profession of Atheism will

certainly not make success more certain. If he wishes to exploit his fellows a profession of Atheism will not serve to lull their suspicions. So far as my memory serves, nearly all the notorious rogues who have ended their careers in a prison, and many who have not so ended them, have made lavish professions of religion. The surest and safest way to prey on the public is to pray with them.

Does Dr. Watkins mean that when the Atheist says he does not believe in a God he is telling himself a lie? That is almost too absurd for even Dr. Watkins to believe. If I believe in a God I surely cannot persuade myself that I do not. Even the Bible might have taught Dr. Watkins something here. For it is said (and it is the kind of saying that should appeal to the cerebral disturbance which he is likely to take for thinking), "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God," that is, whatever profession of belief he made, the facts were known to himself. On that point he might tell a lie to his fellows, but he could not tell a lie to himself. I do not know whether Dr. Watkins has read Samuel Taylor Coleridge, or even whether he has ever heard of his existence, but in any case I may remind him of Coleridge's saying—and he was not an Atheist himself—that there is not one man in a thousand who has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist. And it really does take a man with a little more strength than the average person to avow himself an Atheist in this Christian-soaked community of ours. Of course it ought not to require courage to be honest, but, thanks to Christianity, it does. And for that unfortunate fact we have to thank men of the type of Dr. Watkins. On the average, human conduct will follow the line of least resistance, and when a confession of heresy is met with abuse—or worse—timidity puts on a protective cloak of conformity.

On the whole I am rather pleased to have made the acquaintance of Dr. Watkins. I have the same kind of delight in meeting him that Ross felt when he proved the nature of malaria, or that Koch felt when he made the acquaintance of the germ of consumption. Both felt pleased at discovering something that was poisoning the health of thousands of human beings. In isolating the evil they were paving the way for its destruction. So with Dr. Watkins. He helps us to realize to what extent, and in what way a religion such as Christianity can poison a man's character and wreck his native sense of right and justice. In no other connexion save that of religion could a man talk as did Dr. Watkins without making himself an object of ridicule. As a defender of Christianity he is quite safe. No brother Christian will blame him; no parson will utter a word of warning. He is a living illustration of "true Christianity" and of the falsity of the statement that abuse is no argument. Abuse is really, in practice, the only kind of argument that a large number of people understand. Dr. Watkins may not have worked out the philosophy of this, but one must compliment him on the efficient manner in which he exemplifies it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Puritans drove imagination from its last asylum. They prohibited theatrical representations, and stigmatized the whole race of dramatists as enemies of morality and religion. Much that is objectionable may be found in the writers they reprobated; but whether they took the best measures for stopping the evil appears to us very doubtful, and must, we think, have appeared doubtful to themselves, when, after the lapse of a few years, they saw the unclean spirit whom they had cast out return to his old haunts, with seven others fouler than himself.

Lord Maculay.

## Unnatural History.

"Much of what we call sublime is only the residue of infancy."—*Landor.*

"What damned error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it and approve it with a text."  
*Shakespeare.*

"Learning is good, but common sense is better."  
*G. W. Foote.*

THOMAS CARLYLE once described man as a "two-forked radish." The term was more critical than accurate, and it would not have won the entire approval of Darwin, Haeckel, or Huxley. Nevertheless, Carlyle erred in most distinguished company, for if the Trinity, who it is alleged, inspired or wrote the Christian Bible, could not recollect accurately such an elementary fact that the whale is a mammal and not a fish, although they are supposed to have made many millions of them, there is every excuse for the irascible sage of Chelsea.

Curiously, the writers, or compilers of this particular Bible were so often inaccurate and ill-informed. They were as careless of facts as politicians and Christian Evidence lecturers. They not only wrote a lot of beautiful nonsense, but often contradicted themselves. When entirely bankrupt of ideas, they simply copied a passage written elsewhere in the same book and filled the vacancy as easily as a penny-a-liner working against time. Their book is full of fairy-stories, but one of the most remarkable things is their lack of knowledge of natural history. Their mathematics would disgrace schoolboys, their history was almost entirely imaginary, but their many excursions into zoology were nearly too funny for words and should have added to the gaiety of the world.

Wordsworth has told us that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." And this reminds us that there is an astonishing discrepancy between the zoological conclusions of earnest students of nature and the downright ignorance and exaggeration of the Oriental writers of this Christian Bible. In natural history proper, not the veriest tyro, the most myopic bungler, would confound the hare with the ruminants. Yet dear religious folk would have us believe that the creator of Linnæus blundered concerning the hare chewing the cud, and fondly imagine that the three-headed Christian God wrote delirious jargon about clean beasts and dirty beasts. As a fact, it was actually reserved for scientists such as Darwin, Wallace, and others, to clear out the Augean stable of Biblical ignorance, and to create the science anew.

"Wild beasts used once to roam through England but now very wild beasts are only found in theological gardens," wrote a schoolboy. And "very wild beasts" are to be found in the Old and New Testaments. In those pages may be found a talking snake, a lodging-house whale, and a pigeon-co-respondent. Where else are the fiery serpents, the dragons, the cockatrice, and the worm that never dies? Where, other than in this so-called sacred zoological collection, are the bedevilled pigs, the four-legged fowls, the unicorn, the cherubim, the ventriloquial donkey of Balaam, and the menagerie of the Apocalypse? Even the alleged human beings in this Bible act most strangely. "Adam" and "Eve" start life at full age instead of infancy. The lives of the Old Testament patriarchs ran into centuries, and Methusaleh is declared to have lived near a thousand years. Melchisadech, more fortunate still, had neither beginning nor ending of days. Other happy persons had two funerals apiece. Even the founder of Christianity is said to have finally left this earth like an aeroplane, and may be careering in the ether to-day.

This Biblical menagerie also boasts of horses of fire which carried Elijah the prophet to "heaven."

There is also Aaron's rod which turns into a serpent and swallows other snakes. And what is to be said of the kind-hearted raven which brought refreshments to the prophet? The crowning glory, however, of these imaginative ignoramuses is their yarn of "Noah's Ark," in which samples of the whole of human and animal life were shut up and preserved in a good-sized pantechmicon, which rode the waves of a universal deluge for forty days. Critics have pointed out that if two South American sloths had started to find salvation in the Ark they must have died of old age long before they had reached the final stages of their journey. And another critic has urged that, as there were eight Orientals in the ark there must, of necessity, have been more than two fleas. Indeed, it is a case of "laughter, holding both his sides."

Among such a collection of freaks it is remarkable that cats are nowhere mentioned. Maybe the third person of the undivided Trinity, the sacred dove, had a rooted objection to that animal. Or, perhaps, the writers remembered that cats were sacred in old Egypt. The leviathan, mentioned in "Job," is a wonderful creature, with its "comely proportions," its firework "neesings," and organs of vision "like the eyelids of the morning." This Bible menagerie is unique, there is nothing like it on earth. In sober truth, there is precious little history and no science worth troubling about in this so-called sacred volume. The atmosphere throughout is that of the "Arabian Nights," the favourite source of supply for pantomime producers.

These nonsensical ideas all emanate from the Christian Bible, and it is idle to pretend that they can be made current coin in the intellectual world of the twentieth century. The clergy, of whom there are 40,000 in this country alone, are practically banking on the ignorance of the pre-scientific world. By insisting on the general accuracy of this Christian Bible they are using modes of thought and language that belong to the time when faith was paramount, but knowledge was very limited. They are using the language of centuries ago, when the human race was said to have originated in the "Garden of Eden," the earth was the centre of the universe, and only recently created.

The entire clergy represent a mere backwater of human thought. They talk, and talk, and talk as if nothing had happened for two thousand years, as if twenty centuries of ordered knowledge was of no more value than the snows of yesteryear. The pulpit is guilty of intellectual dishonesty. And the work which Freethinkers have set themselves is that of freeing their fellows from the absurdities of pre-scientific times which are perpetuated by this fetish book. The clergy profess to scorn science, but they have a great deal to learn from scientists, and not the least is reverence for truth. Commercialism may be a good thing for shopkeepers, but the alliance between chicanery and commercialism will most certainly lead, in the long run, to the damnation of the priests of all denominations. The thinking element in this country sees this as a time of intellectual revaluation. Sooner or later the more serious-minded of our countrymen must attack clericalism, the chief bulwark of medievalism. These priests do not really believe their own fairy tales, but there is money in the sorry business, and they have control of our national education. Hence our countrymen are but half-educated, for the priests realize that if the scientific way of looking at things prevails, they will find, like Othello, their occupation gone. Priests are the real savages of our civilization; but they perpetuate barbarism for money. They are a national nuisance.

## The Dead Hand.

MANY earnest Christians, who have been trained from childhood to regard their religion as the source of all morality and civilization, cannot understand why, unbelievers in their faith should attack what they regard as the source of everything good. They think that the unbeliever must have some hidden motive, that he wants to discard morality altogether. Or does it out of mere vainglory. Or, by the more ignorant, that he is acting under the inspiration of the devil. To tell these people that Christianity, in its essence, as taught in the New Testament, and by the primitive Church, is the enemy of civilization and progress, only provokes incredulous amazement. Yet it is the truth.

Christianity is an historical religion, and it must be judged by its history. As its founder is reported to have said, the tree must be judged by its fruit. If we believed it to be harmless we should no more think of attacking it than we should think of attacking Anderson's Fairy Tales, or the tales of the Arabian Nights. It is because the fruit has been so deadly, and is still powerful for evil, that we attack the tree of Christian faith.

In this connexion we would draw attention to a recently published book, entitled *After the Deluge*, by Leonard Woolf (Hogarth Press, 15s.). The sub-title is: "A Study of Communal Psychology." By the Deluge is meant the Great War, and this book is an attempt, by a study of communal psychology, to find out the way in which beliefs and ideas have or have not affected actions in contrast to the historians who are usually more interested in events, theories and "movements," than in communal psychology. It is really an analysis of the underlying ideas governing the actions of the people as a whole, ideas that have been handed down from generation to generation, the tremendous influence of the "dead hand."

Mr. Woolf lays it down that:—

At every particular moment it is the dead rather than the living who are making history, for politically, individuals think dead men's thoughts and pursue dead men's ideals. Very often these are not only the thoughts and aims of dead men, but are themselves dead and rotten; they may be the mere ghosts of beliefs, ideals from which time has sapped all substance and meaning. Indeed it seems sometimes as if it is only the dead mind which can stir deeply political passions, and that a political ideal must have lost much of its meaning and relevance for the living before they will pursue it passionately. . . . But the old is nearly always stronger than the new, and the dead than the living. Thus you have the tyranny of the dead mind. (Leonard Woolf, *After the Deluge*, Vol I., pp. 33-34.)

Therefore the task of the scientific historian who would "place" the great war in the record of the human race would have to begin with an investigation of the matrix of civilization and communal psychology which made the event possible.

Among these ideas, the most powerful, and the most widely disseminated, were those generated by Christianity; and Mr. Woolf points out that two of the fundamental ideas taught by Christianity, namely, the renunciation of earthly well-being and happiness, and the idea of Sin, have had an enormous influence in history and upon the course of civilization, although it is ignored by our history books. "The idea," says Mr. Woolf, "that earthly happiness is of any great importance is inconsistent with the central doctrine of the Christian religion as preached by the various Christian Churches. . . . it is roughly correct to say that a belief in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and a certain attitude towards sin are fundamental Christian

doctrines." (p. 216.) But, as he further points out, "the democratic doctrine with regard to happiness is in practice inconsistent with the doctrines of Christian churches." Thousands of people have tried to reconcile both sets of beliefs and "beneath the surface of European history, during the last 150 years the struggle between the communal psychology of democracy and the communal psychology of Christianity has been working itself out," with the result of "a gradual pushing back of religious beliefs into a secluded corner of the ordinary man's mind, disconnected with politics or the affairs of this world, and reserved for rare contemplation of his private conduct, metaphysical speculation, and meditation on death." And further:—

Democracy is essentially irreligious and anti-Christian because of its fundamental tenet with regard to the importance of, and equal right to, human happiness. It was no chance that the passionate humanitarian Voltaire was also a passionate opponent of the Christianity of the Church of Rome, for a man who believes, as Voltaire did, that the primary object of a civilized and rational being should be to make the world we live in as comfortable and civilized as possible for everyone, be he heathen or Christian, saint or sinner, is revolted by the doctrine and practice of a Church which not only preaches that earthly happiness is unimportant, but is prepared to make many people suffer Hell in this life in order to give them the chance of escaping it in the next. (p. 218.)

As soon as the people began to believe that happiness was of supreme importance, and that government should aim at the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the conflict with religious psychology commenced. For, continues Mr. Woolf:—

Christianity envisages a framework for human society in which earthly miseries have a recognized permanent and honourable place. They are trials sent by Heaven to test and train us; as such, it is impious to repine against them. Famines and the like are tribulations with which, as Miss Hannah More said, it has pleased God in the past to afflict the land and will please Him again in the future. Under the circumstances there is a natural tendency for the mind to accept famines, poverty, and similar political evils as inevitable blessings in disguise and to conclude that efforts to make them impossible are futile and presumptuous.

This belief explains how it was that even the most enlightened and humane men were so strangely tolerant of the miseries inflicted on human beings by their political and religious institutions, before the eighteenth century, "they never spoke with the note of passionate revulsion which we hear so often in men's voices since Swift, Voltaire, and Rousseau. The reason for this is that the background and depths of the minds of men as sceptical as Erasmus and Montaigne were formed by the psychology of Christianity." (p. 220.)

Likewise the Christian doctrine about sin has had an enormous influence upon social and religious life. It lay in the background of men's thoughts and coloured their whole outlook on the world; says Mr. Woolf: "It kept their eyes and minds always turned in a certain direction so that they could scarcely see anything sane or humane which fell outside this foggy circle of sin and punishment and hell." (p. 223.)

It was taught that to oppose and defy God and the Church is the most heinous of religious sins: "to oppose and defy the Government is by analogy the most heinous of political sins. . . . This attitude explains the fact which puzzles so many people when they read the history of Europe before 1800, the amazing savagery of penal codes accepted as right and proper by otherwise humane men. These

humane men regarded the law-breaker, not simply as one who had transgressed a governmental regulation forbidding people to snare a rabbit or steal a sheep, but also in the religious sense a sinner." It was considered a duty to make sinners unhappy for their own good, and as they tortured and burnt the heretic, they also considered it their "duty to treat in a similar way those who committed such crimes as *lèse-Majesté*, murder, or petty theft." (p. 225.) That is what Christianity has done for Civilization. This is only volume I., we shall look forward to the second.

W. MANN.

## Criticism and the Bible.

### GOD-FATHERS AND GOD-CHILDREN.

THESE expressions have survived until modern times; but they have been emptied of all their old contents. Their original significance has for long been forgotten although the words are still associated with family relations. Such relations, however, are those of the modern small family, with the break-up of which the old god-father and god-child ceremonial is fast dying out. Long before the modern family, however, there were other forms which ethnological investigation has established as existing all over the world in earlier times. Before even the patriarchal families, of which we read in the Old Testament, there existed the much larger kinship-units of tribes and totem groups or gentes. With many of the legends about floods there are also associated legends about the origin of those larger tribal and totem bands, within which the notions of god-fathers and god-children acquired their original significance.

As we have already seen, according to the flood legends of many peoples the whole earth perished beneath the rising waters; only the marine animals and the high-soaring birds survived the period of the deluge. A new creation of mankind was therefore necessary. This new process of creation was effected either through the tribal god forming the new men out of earth or wood and breathing life into them, or by transforming marine animals, which had survived, into men; or the god "took upon himself the form of" a marine animal or bird, and, entering into sexual relations with an animal of the same species, beget new men. We always find that the animal out of which the tribal god awakens the human seed or in the form of which he performed the act of procreation, is also the chief totem animal of the particular tribe, after which the tribe not infrequently calls itself, and which serves for this tribe as a sacred symbol. Other peoples, again, relate that only a single man or a single woman were able to save themselves from the flood; their propagation takes place through the tribal god (or, according to circumstances, the tribal goddess), who is also often thought of in the form of an animal entering into sexual intercourse with the survivors.

The legend of the inhabitants of the Pelew Archipelago (Caroline Islands), offers a good example of one of those conceptions. According to the legend, there lived among the Pelewans immense giants called Calits. They quarrelled, however, with the men of Pelew. Only an old woman, Milatk, remained faithful to the Calits. In order to punish the men, the Calits, on the occasion of the next full moon, caused the sea to rise; Milatk was the only one to survive, since she built a raft for herself at the command of the Calits; still, it

<sup>1</sup> According to another variation she had foolishly tied her raft to a tree, with the result that the raft could not rise beyond a certain height.

happened in the end that her long hair got entangled in a tree on a mountain, and she was drowned.<sup>1</sup> After the flood had abated, the Calits found the dead body of the woman. In order to repopulate the groups of islands, they caused a female Calit to enter and take possession of the woman's dead body which, in this way, received a soul and came back to life. The Calits then had sexual relations with the re-animated Milatk and produced five children, the first born of the Pelewan tribes.

According to the flood myth of the Cree Indians, the whole of mankind was destroyed by a deluge, with the exception of the virgin Kwaptaw who seized hold of the foot of an immense bird which flew over her head and was in this way transported to a high cliff. There she was visited by an eagle, which was the highest totem-god of the tribe. He made her pregnant and she bore him twins, the ancestors of the new race.

The legend of the Canaris of Ecuador is still more characteristic. It relates that two men saved themselves from being drowned in the flood, by climbing a mountain called Huacca-ynan, which significantly meant the high place of the totem-gods. When the flood abated, their store of provisions was exhausted. They built for themselves a hut, and went out in search of food. When one day they had returned, they found in the hut eatables and the intoxicating drink of the Canaris—chicha. This was repeated ten times. Becoming curious, they resolved that one of them should conceal himself and see who it was that brought those refreshments. The older brother took the first watch. He saw two large "Aguas" flying towards him, in the dress of the Canaris, and upon their heads the hair ornaments worn by this tribe. When the older brother saw that the "Aguas" had the face of pretty women, he rushed out of his hiding place toward them; but they flew away. The younger brother was more fortunate. On the third day, when the "Aguas" returned, he succeeded in capturing one of them. Both brothers now entered into sexual intercourse with the "Agua," who was in reality a female deity, and as a result six sons and daughters were born. These were the ancestors of the Canaris. Since that time the "Agua" was venerated among the Canaris as the highest totem-god. At the religious festivals its gay coloured feathers served as a kind of sacred insignia.

Among many other peoples of the South Seas and of America, we find similar legends. However differently they describe the origin of the first tribal ancestors, whether the god created them out of dead matter by breathing his breath or soul into them, or whether they were sexually produced by the god, the legends always acknowledge *that the living and their posterity owe their life, their souls, to the god*. In return for his allowing them to live, they have to satisfy him with offerings, chiefly blood-offerings, since, as it is believed, *the soul or life-force resides in the blood*. The relation of the tribal god to his progeny is, so to speak, regarded as a contract or covenant. He grants them prosperity, power and protection, and *they obey his commandments and honour him with blood-offerings*.

These legends are enlargements of that order of thought which is characteristic of animism so-called, that is to say, of the original belief in ghosts or spirits (spiritism). This animism or spiritism represents a much older stage in the history of religion than the cult of Nature or Natural religion, which philosophical speculation regards as the original stage. But this latter standpoint starts out, not from those relatively primitive peoples who have existed on the earth's surface until modern times, but from the older civilized peoples of Western Asia and Hindu-

stan, or from the Greeks of Homer. Among the Australian aborigines, American aborigines, or South Sea peoples, there is no trace of Natural religion. Their religion consists in the belief in ghosts who are conceived to be the spirits of the dead. These invisible spirits, in most cases, roam about at large, and, according to their disposition seek to help or to harm men. At definite times, however, they frequently take up their residence in certain animals, plants or stones, which, on that account, become animate objects, spirit dwellings. When later the totem societies or gentes evolve into important social organizations in the life of the people, religious worship concentrates in increasing measure upon the spirits of the mythical founders of the tribes and gentes. Animism evolves into ancestorism. Those spirits are now mostly thought of in the form of the totem animals, after which the group names itself. At least, so it is thought, the ancestral spirits when they desire to become incarnate, choose with preference the totem animal of their descendants' gens. The totem animal becomes the symbol and the seat of the tribal and gentile god. There now arises the idea that such a totem-animal must not be hunted, killed and consumed, or at least that its blood must not be shed since the spirit or soul resides in the blood. And this injunction does not always remain limited to one's own totem-animal. It often applies to the totem animals of those other gentes which are closely related by ties of blood. But the consumption of warm blood is especially considered as a sin against the ancestral spirits; *for to drink the blood is to consume the soul, i.e., the life.*

The old Peruvian world of the gods, indicates clearly how, on a higher stage of evolution, this cult of ancestors or ancestor worship takes definite shape. This applies more particularly, in our illustration, to the Chetschua tribes who lived on the highland of the Cordilleras. Each of those tribes had its tribal and creator-god. These gods were venerated under such names as "creator of all," "the world enlivener," "ruler of the earth," or "world teacher." In most of the individual tribes, however, this supreme god had a special surname and his particular insignia of power. He was conceived of as a special tribal creator. Thus the Incas hailed him as "creator of the Incas," and the Chancas as "creator of the Chancas." Below this god—so his creatures considered—stood the Huacas, the ancestral gods of the phratries and of the gentes or totem groups of which the phratries were made up.

The following legend, shows how the Incas of Peru thought of their origin:—

"There in Tiahunaco (by Lake Titicaca), God, the creator, allowed (after the abatement of the great flood) the people and the tribes who dwell in that place, to arise, in that he formed out of clay a human being for every tribe, and painted upon their bodies the costume which they in future should wear. He also furnished those who should in future wear long hair, with long hairs, but those who should cut their hair, with short hairs. He then gave to each their particular tribal speech, their hymns, subsistence and seed for sowing. After the creator had finished the painting, he gave to them all a soul and commanded them, the men and the women alike, to go under the earth. He then caused them to come up again at that place which he had determined for them. As the natives relate, some of them emerged out of holes, others out of hills, others out of pools or out of the branches of trees. Therefore, because their ancestors had emerged there and multiplied there, because their generations (totem groups) had begun, they made of their ancestors, Huacas, and venerated those places in remembrance thereof, that there their gen-

erations had arisen. Each wears the dress with which its Huaca was furnished. Later on, as the stern natives report, the first who came out of those places were transformed into stones, hawks, condors or some other sort of beast or bird. Hence it is that the Huacas, whom they worship, have many different kinds of forms."<sup>2</sup>

This account is corroborated by a number of other authors. At the time of the conquest by the Spaniards the worship of the Huacas was in general practice almost throughout the whole of Peru, and their chief places of worship were on the Paccarictampus, (the legendary birth places of the totem groups) mostly in the mountainous regions, on mountains and hills. To these places, the animal and human offerings were brought. Beside the altar stone there usually stood a representation of the Huaca in wood or stone, or, in some cases, only a simple stone or tree in which, according to the conception of the natives, their Huaca had entered in order to receive the sacrifice which was offered to him. To the ordinary Huacas, usually only animals like the llama were sacrificed; but to the Huacas of the chief totem groups (the mother-gentes) and to the tribal deities, children were also sacrificed. After the sacrifice of the animal—white llamas were usually preferred and proffered—the warm blood was at once collected. A part of it was splashed upon the altar stone or the Huaca image; another part was poured over the sacred bread—Sancu—which lay ready in a large receptacle, and now, after the blood had been poured over it, was called Yahharsancu, i.e., blood-baked. The latter was now consumed by those present, as a testimony of their blood-union with their god.

At certain high festivals, as, for example, at the great festival of creation which was held annually in April, on the Huacapata (the terrace of the totem-gods) in Cuzco, children were also sacrificed. The priest of the sacrifice strangled the children, tore the palpitating heart out of the breast, offered it to the creator-god and the four chief Huacas, and then smeared those images from ear to ear with the warm blood.

Peru lay far away from Palestine. But very near to one another were their religious outlooks and practices.

W. CRAIK.

<sup>2</sup> Related by the Spaniard, Christobal de Molina.

### Fugitive.

You stole away one day when Spring  
Was stirring in the leafless boughs;  
Love's outward token from your lips  
Renewed the past's eternal vows.

Your hand waved lightly and you smiled—  
I traced the old familiar ways  
That took me from our anchorage  
Of calm and countless happy days.

You stole away, but left behind  
Sweet thoughts and sweet remembered hours—  
You scattered fadeless flowers for those  
Who seek no more in memory's bowers.

I hear you say "Grieve not for me,  
Lest that your grief should be for you"—  
A glance around the living world,  
Shows that there still is much to do.

So Fate, who keeps our hours and days,  
Who may be wise—have good intent,  
Can give no more or less to me  
Than freedom on the way you went.

C-DE-B.

## Acid Drops.

A new evening paper, launched at Bristol, was "dedicated" by the Bishop of Malmesbury. The Bishop is evidently a man with a gift for making himself generally useful for he mentioned that, although he had never before been to a newspaper office in a professional capacity, he had once "dedicated" a solicitor's place of business. His lordship may have had in mind on the present occasion that, in the opinion of St. Paul, a bishop "must have a good report of them which are without." As the new journal has provided employment for 200 men thrown out of work by recent newspaper amalgamations in the neighbourhood it is evident that human enterprise and organization, rather than "God's blessing"—which the managing director requested of the Bishop—have to be relied upon by men who are in need and difficulty. Men supply the money, the machines, and the labour, and, not to be left out of the picture, the Church supplies—a blessing!

The Rev. S. F. L. Bernays, Rector of Finchley, addressing local rate-payers said with regard to Sunday cinemas that "he had never heard of a Bill to stop people playing golf on Sunday." The Sunday Bill was "class legislation." We are always so ready to lecture the working classes. He happened to know an M.P. who voted against the Sunday Cinema Bill although he was himself a member of a Sunday Dramatic Association. If that was not humbug he did not know what was. If all the people went to church on Sunday the churches would not hold them; but it was better to play games and to enjoy some healthy recreation than "to be 'mooching' up and down with nothing to do." We agree with the Rector when, replying to criticisms of his speech, he said, "you can't make a person do a thing, but you can help him to do it. You cannot stop a man being a fool, but you can stop him harming others." Commonsense in the pulpit for once.

A London reader of the *Daily Sketch* suggests that there is too much fuss about Sunday cinemas. "Surely," he says, "the time has arrived when we can please ourselves without being told by Parliament whether we shall attend church or cinema, and when all good citizens and right-thinking people should know what is best for themselves." Unfortunately that time hasn't yet arrived. There is in our midst a noisy gang of religious bigots who don't want Sunday amusements themselves and declare that no one else shall have them. These same bigots have the effrontery to dictate to other people how Sunday shall not be spent. And apparently there are very few members of the present Parliament who consider such bigotry and effrontery offensive and intolerable, or they would have repealed the old Sunday Acts. But perhaps this only proves that whatever may be said of the nation generally, our legislators are "Christian at heart."

The Rev. Father Parsons of Finchley has been having a row with the local Council. He asked, and obtained, permission to put up a small enamelled sign on the lamp-standard at the corner of the street leading to his church. The Council insisted that the sign should read "To the Roman Catholic Church." Father Parsons says that the term "Roman Catholic" is "controversial," and was coined directly to oppose the beliefs of Catholics." Why, he asks, should he "put up a sign printed in terms objectionable to those it is meant to guide?" A more relevant question is why should a local Council care twopence about the distinction. We suspect there is some Anglican cleric in the neighbourhood who would be just as annoyed as Father Parsons if someone were to put up a sign describing his church by its proper legal title, *i.e.*, "The Protestant Reformed Church." Surely anyone with a tongue in his head can find his way to any church he has a fancy for. That Catholics themselves should need an illuminated sign to direct them to their own church suggests that their enthusiasm for their religion is less than the priest's anxiety to secure their attendance.

What would anyone think of a plumber who, being called in to attend to some pipes he had installed some time before, and which had never worked satisfactorily, remarked that the pipes were at the outset the best he could get, that if there were any defects in them it was not his fault, and that, as the trouble had been there from the beginning, nothing that he could do would mend it? What then are we to think of an Archbishop of the Catholic Church (Dr. Downey of Liverpool) who said "the established order of the universe must take its course. It was utterly unreasonable to expect special intervention of Providence to avert natural consequences in the physical or moral order." "God," said Dr. Downey, "selected this world out of an infinite number of possible worlds," but that "does not make God responsible for evil." This seems to be only a theological version of the doctrine that we should bear the ills we have rather than "fly to others that we know not of."

E. Arnot Robertson, the authoress, in an article entitled "How much do you tell your children?" asks parents what they intend doing in regard to religion and the child. Her own view is that:—

Most of my friends are more or less doubtful of all dogmatic creeds. But it is up to you to be honest about it and put the case for and against orthodox religion as fairly as possible as soon as the children are old enough to think things out for themselves.

The first statement is not likely to be regarded by parsons as a piece of glad tidings. As for the recommendation that follows, it is calculated to make defunct Victorians turn in their graves, as well as set the teeth on edge of most priests and ministers. For the time-honoured practice is that of capturing the child before he can think for himself, and endeavouring to create a bias in favour of religion by teaching religious dogmas as if they were unquestioned or unquestionable truths. To suggest that the case for and against religion should be put fairly before the child—that is indeed a shockingly modern suggestion which the Lord's representatives will regard as immoral or even indecent. It doesn't give religion a fair chance.

Dublin is shortly to have 1,000,000 people praying and singing as "one mighty voice" in praise of, and thanks to, God. If this stupendous noise does not reach the Almighty's ear, surely nothing will. So as to make it quite certain that the adoration of the faithful does not mis-fire, hundreds of loud speakers are to be installed and also dozens of amplifiers, choirs and harmoniums—in fact, if God fails this time to recognize his own pet Church while the "service" lasts, it may dawn on even the most credulous that he never will.

The Holy Father is sending Cardinal Lauri, "the Protector of the Eucharistic League for the Peace of Christ in the reign of Christ" as the Papal Legate, and goodness knows what honours he will have showered upon him by his "children" in Dublin. The arrangements, scheduled for June 22 next, seem to be as well organized as those of the more universal sweepstakes, but we are pretty certain most of the pilgrims would prefer a winning ticket to hearing the Papal Legate pronounce the Apostolic Blessing. Whether this immense Conference, backed with all the picturesque and more or less impressive ritual of the Roman Church, will cause an upheaval remains to be seen. We doubt whether the conversions will be more numerous than at any other time.

Apropos of a discussion, "Did Jesus die for me?" a Dr. W. A. Elwood, of Grimsby, writes to a Methodist paper as follows: "To me, it is incomprehensible that men who are ordained preachers can write and argue about such a fundamental doctrine of religion. No wonder our chapels are half-empty! I may be old-fashioned, but I was under the impression that the doctrine that 'Christ died to save the world,' was part of the old, old story I have been listening to for the last forty years. If Christ did not die for us, perhaps someone will tell me why he died at all." Well, considering the irrefutable fact the only persons we know to have derived

benefit from the old, old story are the parsons—benefit such as food, housing and clothing—we suggest that our puzzled friend should now have no difficulty in seeing for whom Christ died. But, of course, parsons being modest folk, can hardly be expected to boast of divine favours received. Besides, if they did the favours would cease!

Another reader of the same Methodist paper holds fast to the doctrine of "the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ." This sort of Christians must have a very inflated notion as to the value of their miserable souls to think that they are worth saving by the murder of a god by the barbarous method of crucifixion. There is this to be said for Atheists. They refuse to derive any benefit from the murder of a god. And that is why Christians call Atheists materialistic and wicked!

Someone suggests in a newspaper that if the Church would practice tolerance, as advised by a certain bishop, what a vital force the Church would represent to-day. Can the leopard change its spots? Why, indeed, should a Church which believes that it is the sole repository of Divine Truth be tolerant towards anything which differs from, or anybody who has a different opinion from, that Truth. For the Church to be tolerant would be equivalent to admitting that there is a possibility that other opinions may be true. Because that is a possibility which must never be admitted, the Church will continue to be intolerant. What a legacy Christ left the world!

It is stated (in *Reynolds Illustrated News*) that the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association is proposing to start a whole host of "common informers" promoting actions for all kinds of breaches of the old Sunday Observance Act of 1782. They propose to "wreck the Sunday restrictions by causing them to be enforced." As one of the items in such "informations" is generally that the person charged "did pursue his ordinary calling for profit on the Lord's Day," there is, however, a reason why every minister and clergyman in the country should not be made a party to one of those actions. Doubtless the Cinema Trade does not realize that *religion* is the cause of all the trouble, and if they want to deal out retaliation in kind for the Sunday Performances trouble, the clerical supporters of the Lord's Day Observance Society have a better right to their attentions than unfortunate barbers and newsagents.

The ways of God are past finding out and his indifference to matters that would appear to be his special concern is most disturbing. Thus the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, which has been three times shaken by earthquakes since it was built by the Crusaders, is again in danger from the feared collapse of its dome. Not only are five stainless steel girders being made at Sheffield to prevent this calamity, but they are being made, according to the *Times*, "to the order of the Crown Agents to the Colonies." The British mandate in Palestine evidently includes not only a benevolent interest in making that country "a national home for the Jews," but also the expenditure of public money for the maintenance of the shrine of international and often contentious Christian piety. The Crown Agents for the Colonies are not, presumably, paying for the girders out of their own pockets.

In the opinion of the President of the Free Church Council, "The lack of enthusiasm about anything worth while is one of the characteristics of modern youth." Of course, when one assumes that the chief thing worth while is connected with religion and the antics concerned with church attendance, the above conclusion is easily arrived at from such an assumption. This pious president is, after all, merely telling us what we know already, namely, that modern youth is not attracted by religion and the churches. To state the matter thus, however, does not in these modern times imply anything derogatory to youth. Our godly friend therefore chooses to state

the fact more subtly. The truth is that most of the causes and things which are really worth while have many youthful admirers. We do not say that such causes and things arouse the enthusiasm of the majority of the younger generation. They never have done that at any period. We do say that the same proportion of the younger generation—the intelligent section—is attracted by such matters to-day as has been attracted during preceding periods. But we don't expect a parson to notice that, while he is obsessed by a professional grievance.

A Devonshire reader of a daily paper avers that he has contributed for five years 1s. 6d. a week, as well as occasional extra sums, to a church, and has got more than he paid for; and he believes that he always gets more than he pays for from the church. The West African native probably thinks something similar in regard to his offerings to the witch-doctor. It is a common phenomenon over all the world that the child-like intelligence believes what it is told. If that were not the fact the vendors of superstition would everywhere be starving. We are inclined to fancy that it is not only the Christian religion which openly praises or encourages the child-like mind—that breeding ground of credulity. This may help to explain why the revenue of the Christian priesthood collectively totals up into many millions. The cream of the joke is that the cash is all acquired by preaching a creed glorifying poverty! We think even Jesus, the man of sorrow, could appreciate so plain a joke as that.

Marcus Adams the specialist in child photography, declares that the modern child is an improvement on the children of former generations. It is younger in outlook and older in intelligence. This change is attributed to pleasurable and more sensible methods of teaching which stimulate enquiry and develop the young intelligence. Mr. Adams remarks that formerly girls were brought to the altar in blissful ignorance of what marriage held in store; the consequent shock of awakening could not fail to produce some adverse effect on their children.

What a different world, says Mr. Adams, the child now enters—"no longer a world of *don'ts* and idiotic restrictions, but a world continually opening out into new vistas of interest, a world built for exploration. A world to be enjoyed, not feared." The result is shown in more intelligent and happier faces. "The child of old," says Mr. Adams, "had to find out everything for itself and had to fight innumerable restrictions in doing so. What would you expect but a timid, half-shrinking look in consequence?" Mr. Adams expresses the hope that "the gospel of repression, meanness, and fear has gone for ever." He suggests that the outcome is more intelligent and happier children.

## Fifty Years Ago.

LET the Government be armed with ample powers against secret societies, but let the constitutional rights of the Irish people be respected. Above all, let not the guilt of a few villains be charged against a whole people. We do not in these columns, frequently meddle with politics; but in a crisis like this our duty is clear. Freethinkers should oppose themselves to the momentary madness. They must show regard for the permanent interests of humanity. They must resist any attempt to gag, oppress, and imprison a nation. We believe that if Mr. Gladstone stands firm the crisis will soon be over, and his Government will be stronger than ever. It will then have plenty of opportunity, not only to revise and supplement its past legislation for Ireland, but also to do something for the people of Great Britain. Radical reforms are urgently-needed here as well as in Ireland, and we hope our grand old Premier will live to carry them.

*The "Freethinker," May 14, 1882.*



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- E.M. (Wimbledon Common).—Thanks. Hope to use MS. as suggested.
- A. HONEY (Chiswick).—Cutting received. It shall have attention.
- G.W. (Oxford).—*Our Old Nobility*, by Howard Evans, is, we believe, long out of print.
- C.H.L. (Birmingham).—Notes to hand. Next week.
- J.C.W. (Montreal).—To sell Bibles from door to door in this country would require a Pedler's licence. Apparently the law is similar in Montreal, and the convicted persons sinned against a local by-law which does not apply to Bibles only.
- H. HARRISON.—We agree with you that man can be as cruel as any animal. We would go further and say that he can exceed all other animals in brutality. But from the religious point of view both animal and man were created by the same deity, and he must take equal responsibility for both.
- WEMBLEY BRANCH N.S.S.—Your lecture notice was not received until the day after we went to press. Must reach us by first post on Tuesday.
- A. E. ASPINAL.—The tale was a foolish lie that has been exposed more than once. But in the thirst for notoriety the person in question evidently does not hesitate to slander his own mother—that is if he is reported correctly.
- The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.*
- The Secular Society, Limited Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*
- The National Secular Society's Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*
- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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, 3/9.*
- 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.*

## Sugar Plums.

Sunday next (May 15) is the date of the Annual Conference which will this year be held in Manchester. The Conference will sit in the Victoria Hotel, Deansgate, at 10.30 sharp on Sunday morning, and again at 2.30 in the afternoon. There will be lunch at 1.0 in the Victoria Hotel at a charge of 3s. per head. In the evening there will be a public demonstration in the Hulme Town Hall, which is accessible from all parts of the City. Trams stop at the door of the Hall. We hope to find every Branch of the Society represented and a good muster of members from all parts of the country. Details of the meeting will be found on the back page of this issue.

On Monday there will be an excursion to Blackpool. Mr. Cohen will be staying over Monday in order to meet a number of members whom he is only able to see during the Conference meetings. A special saloon train for the excursion will leave Victoria at 9.10, returning at 8.15. For those who must be back before this train

arrives, earlier trains are available. A lunch and tea will be provided and the inclusive cost will be 10s. It is important, however, that those who wish to join the excursion should make their intention known as early as possible so that suitable arrangements may be made. Write either to the General Secretary, at the Society's Offices, or to Mr. W. A. Atkinson, 40 Mountford Street, Salford, Lancs.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti had two good meetings at the Spring festival of the Failsworth Secular Sunday School. The Orchestra and Choir also materially assisted to make the festival enjoyable and a success. The announcement at both meetings of the demonstration following the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. on Whit-Sunday in the Hulme Town Hall was a gesture indication of the friendly feeling existing between the two organizations.

The Stockport Branch of the N.S.S. forwarded a resolution advocating a change of policy in the Sunday programmes to the B.B.C. A reply was received from Capt. Eckersley, Director of Programmes, on behalf of Sir John Reith, in which he repeats the old statement that the B.B.C. has "overwhelming evidence" that only a small proportion of listeners object to the present Sunday programmes; that they think "the difference between the Sunday programmes here and at certain Continental stations fairly reflect the difference in the attitude of the nations concerned towards the observation of Sunday," and that "they are taking the right action by excluding the lighter forms of entertainment." It is added that only "the following items are excluded on Sundays—Dance Music, Vaudeville, Revues, Musical Comedies, and, with certain exceptions, Plays." We like the *only*.

Will Manchester readers please note that Mr. George Whitehead will be lecturing in Manchester during the week prior to the Conference. On Sunday, May 8, he will be in Stevenson Square at 3 o'clock and 6.0, whilst from Monday to Friday the 9th to 13th inclusive, he will be at Alexandra Park Gates (corner of Alexandra Road and Claremont Road) at 7.30 each night. A good muster of local "saints" would be helpful to assist in literature sales, collections, etc.

The Bishop of Chichester has decided in favour of Sunday Cinemas. But he gives a very bad reason for a good decision. He says:—

It does not seem to me to be right for us to use our influence to prevent others differently placed from going to a good cinema on a Sunday night and from getting relief from the terrible intimacy of overcrowded houses, of household drudgery, of drab surroundings, which a visit to the cinema may provide.

But the question of the legitimacy of Sunday entertainments has nothing to do with overcrowded homes and miserable surroundings. If every one who visited Cinemas had a most comfortable of homes and the most delightful surroundings, that would not justify Sabbatarianism. Nor can such conditions be tolerated any the more by opening of Cinemas on Sunday. The plea adds a little more humbug to a situation that is already redolent with hypocrisy.

It is simply untrue that those who go to Cinemas on Sunday go because they are driven there through living in overcrowded homes, etc. Precisely the same type of people go to concerts and cinemas on Sunday that go on other days of the week. More go on Sunday because that is the day on which they have most leisure. Anyone need only take a casual glance at the people who visit Cinemas on Sunday, and who would visit theatres if they were open, to see that hardly any look as though they were driven there because of uncomfortable homes. A great many of the friends of Sunday entertainments use this argument because they think it will disarm opposition; and those who feel they can no longer profitably oppose them, much as they would like to, repeat the plea as an excuse for not opposing them. Liberty to attend a concert, or a theatre, or a Cinema on Sunday is demanded, not to escape from a miserable home, but as a right that

should be enjoyed by all. It is about time that this lying slander on those who wish to spend their Sunday in a reasonable manner was killed. Reformers should be made of sterner stuff than to try to place Christian bigots in this way.

The *News-Chronicle* thinks that Dr. Bell "deserves the praise due to a bishop who dares to say what he thinks." The surprise is illuminating, and indicates the high type of character developed by Christianity. But one very significant thing is not noted by the *News-Chronicle*. This is that even bishops who think and who say what they think, never say it until long after all other people who think are almost tired of thinking it. But a bishop who says what he thinks! No wonder the *News-Chronicle* is surprised. But we wonder if the Bishop of Chichester says *all* he thinks.

A learned writer on folk lore and anthropology, Canon J. A. MacCulloch, has written *Medieval Faith and Fable* (Harrap, 15s.), which has a Foreword by Sir James Fraser. The book treats of fairy beliefs, demons, lycanthropy, the cult of the Virgin, and numerous other features and movements of the history of religion. We shall notice the book at greater length, for we can agree with the famous author of the *Golden Bough* that it is written with "sound and wide learning and literary grace."

Lady Maud Simon, an occasional contributor to these columns, has an effective letter in a discussion in the *Saturday Review*, on "Is Christianity Harmful?" Religion, she says, "has again and again retarded progress by its constitutional inability to adjust itself to new knowledge." For the guidance of humanity it is better to listen "to the wisest and best of mankind" than to "accept the legendary traditions and superstitions handed down from primitive times."

## Thomas Paine

(Concluded from page 285.)

MONROE knew and appreciated Paine's distinguished services in the War of Independence. Finding him in so weak and enfeebled a condition, he took him into his own house, where he remained many months, at times so ill, that twice reports of his death were circulated and received with joy in England. One of these reports even gave Paine's "Last dying words," in which he was represented as saying, "I am determined to speak the truth in these my last moments, although I have written and spoke nothing but lies all my life." Paine had the satisfaction of reading this report by Monroe's fireside.

Almost at the same time came an invitation from the Convention to rejoin that assembly, and an offer of a pension from the Committee of Public Instruction. He accepted the honour offered by the Convention, but declined the pension. Monroe was not altogether unrecompensed for his kindly action in restoring his distressed fellow-countryman to life and to some measure of health. There was no man better qualified than Paine to advise him in the very difficult course he had to steer, as the representative of America, in that time of transition and upheaval. All Paine's knowledge of the men in power and of events was freely placed at the Minister's disposal, and Monroe derived great benefit from his assistance.

Paine's second period of service in the Convention was not of long duration as that body ceased to exist in the autumn of the following year, when the Directory took its place, but he had the satisfaction of assisting in the passing of a Constitution which was based to a large extent upon the draft upon which he had been engaged shortly after his election in 1792. Of the Committee of Nine appointed to prepare a

Constitution, six had been guillotined and one banished. Paine and one other only were left.

Paine suffered great bitterness of heart from the continued silence of Washington, who had never made a single enquiry about him, either during his imprisonment or after his release. At last he wrote a very strong letter of reproach but still no answer came, and the sense of grievance became intensified and permanent.

It was not until seven years later that Paine was able to achieve his long-cherished desire to return to his beloved adopted country. The activity of the British Navy during the war with France made an attempt on the part of a man badly wanted by the English Government a very risky venture. The *Age of Reason* had been published in England, where it had met with an immense sale. The publisher, Williams had been prosecuted and convicted of blasphemy. A sum of a thousand pounds belonging to Paine had been confiscated.

His model iron bridge had been appropriated and a bridge constructed from it was erected at Sunderland to span the River Wear.

Before Paine finally sailed from France, the great Napoleon had visited him, fresh from his victorious campaign in Italy. Napoleon stated at that interview that he always slept with a copy of *The Rights of Man* under his pillow, and that a statue of gold ought to be erected to the author of the work. It is regrettable to have to add that a further subject of the conversation was the prospect of a successful naval descent upon England, which the English outlaw was quite ready to assist in.

Any hopes that Paine may have entertained of an unmixed welcome upon his return to America were speedily dissipated after his landing at Baltimore in October, 1802, after an absence of fifteen years. He went to Washington to visit his old friend, Thomas Jefferson, who was then President. Writing to Rickman in London Paine said, "You can have no idea of the agitation which my arrival occasioned. Every paper is filled with applause or abuse."

About twenty years had elapsed since the end of the War of Independence, and the States were divided into two great political parties, the Federalists and the Republicans. Jefferson, recently elected President, belonged to the latter, and consequently was the object of criticism and attacked by the Federalists. The fact that he had given Paine facilities for coming home in a national ship, thus recognizing a man who was the author of an attack upon the Christian religion, gave a pretext for abuse which they did not fail to take advantage of.

At a Federal Dinner a toast was proposed, "May they never know Pleasure that love Paine."

Jefferson received Paine kindly, but it became apparent that it would be an embarrassment to him to be associated too closely with the fierce religious controversy which began to develop, so Paine's stay at Washington was not of long duration. He went to his old home at Borden Town, New Jersey, found that his property there had been well looked after during his long absence, and had improved in value to an extent which led him to hope that it might produce an income of about £400 per year. Unfortunately for him the Bordentown people were strongly Federalist and were also deeply scandalized by *The Age of Reason*. The author's hopes of a peaceful retirement there were doomed to disappointment. There was, in fact, marked hostility and Paine moved to New York, afterwards buying a farm at New Rochelle.

In Paris, Paine had lodged for several years, after leaving Monroe's house, with a family named Bonneville, with whom he had been very comfortable and happy. When the time came for his return to the

States, he invited Bonneville, who was a journalist, not in very good odour with the authorities, to come with his family to America, promising to befriend them. Bonneville, in anticipation of trouble, packed off his wife and three children to the States, not long after Paine had gone. He himself was unable to leave then, being under close observation by the Government. Madame Bonneville and the children duly arrived and Paine felt under an obligation to look after them. The lady obtained some employment as a teacher of French in private families, but in the main the expense of maintaining the family fell upon Paine's shoulders, and it was not until after his death that Bonneville was able to rejoin his family in New York.

In the meantime his wife had been compelled to bring an action for libel against the proprietor of a small newspaper, for publishing the statement that her relations with Paine had been of an immoral character. The verdict was in her favour. The judge, however, only imposed a fine of 150 dollars, as he considered that the book which contained the libel, tended to serve the cause of religion. It may be noted that the defendant, Cheetham, had nine or ten actions pending against him for libel at that very time, so it would appear that his religious zeal did not include observance of the ninth Commandment.

The last three or four years of Paine's life were rather lonely. His pecuniary circumstances became somewhat straitened, and he was disappointed and saddened that so many of his old friends should have fallen away from him, because of religious differences. His early dreams of America as a country of perfect freedom, with a brand-new Constitution, under which there would be complete liberty of opinion and conscience, had not been realized. His health gradually failed and he became careless of his dress and appearance, although formerly so particular in both respects. It was a severe blow to him when his vote at an election in New Rochelle was refused by the supervisor on the ground that he was not an American citizen. The justification for this statement was that Gouverneur Morris had not claimed him when imprisoned in France. Public offices in the States, even in those early days, were largely determined by political influences and the officer who disfranchised Paine at that election, was a prominent Federalist. The end came on June 8, 1809, Paine's age being then seventy-two.

Two or three months before, he had been removed to the house where Madame Bonneville and her three sons lived, and she was with him at the last. The funeral was not marked by any pomp or ceremony. The man who had written the words which had cheered men on to victory at the most critical stage of the struggle for Independence departed from life's stage without any sign of recognition from the State.

The mourners consisted of two negroes, who had walked twenty-five miles to pay their last respects, Madame Bonneville and her sons, and a Quaker named Willett Hicks. Madame Bonneville stood at one end of the grave and placed her son Benjamin, afterwards a General in the U.S. Army—at the other end. She made this simple utterance, "Oh, Mr. Paine, my son stands here as testimony of the gratitude of America, and I for France." He had desired to be buried in the Quakers' burying-ground, a request which was refused, and the interment had to be carried out on his own farm at New Rochelle. A headstone was erected on the spot bearing these words:—

Thomas Paine, Author of *Common Sense*, died the eighth of June, 1809, aged 72 years.

The storm of abuse which had been poured out upon the author of *The Age of Reason* did not cease upon his death but continued with increased force and

added venom. Paine had been a drunkard, had filthy habits, lived an immoral life. A witness was even found who falsely testified that Paine had confessed on his death-bed the wickedness of his writings. The accusation of immorality was disposed of in a court of law, as already related. As regards excessive drinking, there is no evidence that Paine was a victim of that vice, except for a short period in Paris, after the downfall of his hopes for a peaceful development of an era of Liberty, Equality and Humanity. It was an age of heavy drinking, and persons of the highest rank and position suffered no loss of reputation for being actually drunk. In the English House of Commons it was not an unknown thing for both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to be what we should politely call "in their cups" during a debate.

Paine drank brandy, and after the age of fifty his nose, which was not a small one, became tinted with red. This was, of course, a proof "strong as holy writ" of insobriety. In respect of the allegation of filthy habits and slovenly dressing, there is the written testimony of prominent people at various phases of Paine's life, that he was meticulously careful of his dress and appearance. In the last few years of his life, a saddened and disappointed man, he became careless of his dress, but certainly not uncleanly.

So great, however, was the power of prejudice that many years were to elapse before a biographer could be found to write an adequate and sympathetic life of the man who had devoted his life to what he believed to be the cause of civil and religious liberty. The virulence of the attack by professors of Christianity seemed to justify what Paine had once somewhat bitterly remarked of them "that they had religion enough to hate but not to love."

Now that the dust and heat of all this conflict has long passed away, it is perhaps possible to form a more or less impartial judgment of Tom Paine and his work which still survives when most of his antagonists who played much more important parts on the world's stage have been entirely forgotten.

He was a master of a vigorous, clear-cut English, every sentence of which expressed clarity of thought and unmistakable meaning, going straight to the point without the slightest waste of verbiage.

He had no humility of mind. The striking success of his *Common Sense* no doubt confirmed him in the idea that he was destined to achieve great things for mankind by the power of his pen.

Carlyle, in his *French Revolution*, makes a shrewd reference to this phase of Paine's character. He writes:—

Her Paine; rebellious staymaker; unkempt; who feels that he, a single needleman, did by his *Common Sense* pamphlet, free America—that he can and will free all this world, perhaps even the other.

Paine does not seem to have realized the difference between theory and practice. Both in America and France he lived to see that rules and principles of government which, on paper, should have produced a golden age, depended, for their successful issue, upon perfect human instruments. Unfortunately such instruments could not be found, and therefore the results fell deplorably short of the ideal. Almost all the things claimed by Paine in his *Rights of Man* have come to pass in England, by peaceful evolution. Can it be claimed that the Constitution of the United States which Paine thought the height of human perfection, has produced better government? *The Age of Reason* Paine thought unanswerable, but it aimed at the destruction of a religious system without offering anything tangible in its place. One is reminded, in connexion with this of Hamlet's rebuke to

Horatio :—

"There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio  
Than are dreamt in your philosophy."

Before leaving him, let us pay our tribute to the large-hearted man who anticipated public opinion by very many years, in favour of the emancipation of slaves, who loved liberty, who never had a sordid or selfish aim in all his life, and who is surely entitled to take his place among those Englishmen who have left their mark upon the times in which they lived and moved and had their being.

F. M. READ.

### A New Life of Mrs. Besant.

"Then gently scan your brother man,  
Still gentler sister woman,  
Though they may gang a kennin wrang  
To step aside is human."—Robert Burns.

THERE is a glut of biographies. They appear in batches weekly. The late Lytton Strachey invented a new method of biographical writing and brought to its development erudition and style. Few of his imitators have like qualifications. It would appear that in the post-war school of biography historical knowledge and critical judgment are optional subjects. Of this incessant output very little has the touch of mastery. Intimacy, yes; but the intimacy of journalism, not of literature; second-hand description, not first-hand knowledge. In *The Passionate Pilgrim*, by Gertrude Marvin Williams (John Hamilton, 18s.), we have a new Life of Mrs. Besant. The author may be congratulated rather upon enthusiasm than upon accomplishment. We cannot agree with the publisher's description of her book as an "extraordinary" one. It is true to its type. That type is suggested by the adjectives in the "jacket." "Richness" of incident, "liveliness," "vividness," "entertainment," these are, indeed, the marks of popular journalism, and they are all found here. Good "copy" at the expense of good taste; a disproportionate emphasis on "newsy" as distinct from important detail; a frank effort to tickle the public appetite for such things as "cattiness" in women (p. 81), and for any available gossip about notabilities—these are hardly the ingredients of serious biography. History may be, as Carlyle said, "the essence of innumerable biographies," but not of such biographies.

Whatever may be the final judgment on Mrs. Besant's contribution to those secular causes which she has successively espoused before and since her allegiance to theosophy, there can be no question as to her pre-eminence as an orator. Mr. Richard Whiteing, in his *Autobiography (My Harvest)* has an admirable description of her style. "Her address is impeccable in its measured and restrained eloquence, its clarity, its graces of rhetoric; and it takes its stately march from beginning to end without a pause for a thought or a word." There is danger as well as delight in such oratory, for the dazzle of brilliant language may and often does obscure fallacy of thought and statement.

It is natural that, in reviewing this book in these columns, we should deal mainly with Mrs. Besant's association with the Secular movement and with Charles Bradlaugh. Material here is abundant. We have not only the files of the *National Reformer* and other journals and publications of that period, we have Mrs. Besant's own autobiographical writing, and we have a number of works about various special phases of or incidents in her career written by persons who had the advantage, if they had the bias, of first-hand knowledge. We have also the record of the life and work of Charles Bradlaugh, and it is significant that, in certain respects, there could be no two such diverse records as the latter and the present book. It was inevitable that Bradlaugh's daughter and Mr. J. M. Robertson, each in their own sphere the most competent authority—but not on that account infallible—should rather understate Mrs. Besant's part in one of the finest partnerships in service that modern annals record. Mrs. Williams goes to the other extreme, and draws an incredible picture of Brad-

laugh as a "simple old" fellow when he was forty-six. He, hardly less than the rank and file at the Hall of Science, were—as, according to Mrs. Williams, Bernard Shaw, Dr. Aveling, W. T. Stead, and other men were afterwards to be—her slaves. At the Hall of Science Mrs. Besant's personality and gentility may well have made a remarkable impression, but to say that the humble folk there, being led by an Iconoclast, "were craving for an idol to adore," and gave her "the incense of their adulation," and that the "lesser stars" in that quarter—they included "B.V."—were "blotted out in the glow of Mrs. Besant's radiance," is mere journalistic exaggeration. It is no secret that Bradlaugh would have married Mrs. Besant had it been possible. As it was not, and Bradlaugh, being like a good many other Freethinkers of that period and since, a stickler for convention and more chivalrous than his enemies knew how to be, he pursued a course throughout which ought to have made the record of it with all the verbal paraphernalia of a "sex appeal" novelist.

Mrs. Besant was twenty-seven and Bradlaugh forty-one when they first met. For thirteen years the personal association survived, albeit not easily towards the end of that period. Mrs. Williams says that Mrs. Besant's heart was never in Secularism. It is recorded, at all events, that the latter finally confessed to Bradlaugh that she had not been satisfied with her own teaching for ten years. Perhaps if she had never chanced on that copy of the *National Reformer* in Truelove's shop, and so met Bradlaugh, she would never have been a Secularist. It is as useful to wonder whether, if Mr. W. T. Stead had never given her Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* to review, she would ever have met that lady and become a theosophist. It seems likely, however, that the second chance was, if not more satisfactory from the point of view of public service, at least more congenial to natural bent. For Mrs. Besant tells us herself that even in infancy she was "mystical and imaginative, religious to her finger-tips, and with a certain faculty for seeing visions and dreaming dreams." She had thoughts of a convent when she was a girl, and now she is the great "Arhat" of the Liberal Catholic Church, whose best known episcopal ornament is "Bishop" Leadbeater! One thing emerges from these considerations. If, as seems to have been the case, it was not Secularism but Bradlaugh that attracted Mrs. Besant, be it noted that she "fell" more completely and permanently for Madame Blavatsky. That is why Mrs. Williams errs in giving the varied experiences in unusual personal relationships of a most impressionable as well as impressive woman some kind of glorified sex motive. The whole evolution is explained by heredity, successive environments, and by the kind of mind here concerned.

Annie Besant, now eighty-four, might have been spared the limelight here flooded upon many things which, if they needs must have been recorded once, might be left in the kind obscurity of dusty files. Those who rummage in the latter should have more knowledge than is required to pick out good "copy." And second-hand information, thus obtained, should be accurately transcribed. In this book (in addition to those noted in the Errata are other errors, and we shall only mention a few from early pages. "A village (sic) appropriately named Darwen" (p. 67) can hardly be a misprint. The National Secular Society is so named on page 47, but most other references have "Secularist" as its title. Edward Truelove is twice mis-spelt (pp. 47, 65). Worst of all is "Besanth" for Besant (p. 53). These, however, are minor matters. The major errors are not typographical or textual, but errors of judgment and treatment and phrase, due, we are certain, to a failure to subordinate "liveliness" and colourful writing to a balanced presentation of events and controversies that bristle with pitfalls for the unwary student. Mr. Gladstone, reviewing Mrs. Besant's *Autobiography* in the *Nineteenth Century*, remarked that it showed with what "intellectual ease, and what unquestioning assumption of being right vast spaces of mental travelling may be performed. The stages are indeed glaringly in contrast with one another; yet their violent contrarities do not seem at any period to suggest to the writer so much as a doubt as to whether the mind which so continually changes its attitude and

colour can after all be trustworthy." This was, and is, illuminating criticism, and we apply a few words more of it to Mrs. Williams to whom they are not less appropriate than to her subject. She passes from one phase or period to another "as lightly as the swallow skims the surface of the lawn."

ALAN HANDSACRE.

## The Book Shop.

MESSRS. J. M. DENT AND SONS, LTD., are to be congratulated on their venture in producing an "Open-Air Library." Readers will not regret a purchase of *Nature in Downland*, one of the series, by W. H. Hudson, price 3s. 6d. nett. The book has tonic properties, and it follows in rightful succession the works of Richard Jefferies. Most individuals prefer a green field to a brick wall, or a tree instead a booking office at a railway station, and this volume produced with the usual good taste of Messrs. Dent, will make the reader want to get out into the country if he is a town-dweller. If he be a countryman, it will give added delight to the prospect of nature in all her moods and seasons. Hudson was an ardent individualist. Solitude was always as near to him as his shirt. He did not fear too much of his own company. He roamed the West Downs of Sussex, and there is an intensity in the setting down of his knowledge of his subject that gives it an enduring quality. Slowly but surely nature writers are beginning to be recognized; the majority of them served their apprenticeship in the school of poverty—some never passing out. But the earth has not yet been discovered by many—nor the peace that it can give to those who know the correct approach. Nor can it be known to those who think that the last word in civilization is a picture of a train with wheels revolving—produced by electric lights and stuck on the side of an inoffensive building. There is a steadiness and sanity in the prose of Hudson, and to me, a great provocation to quote. There are many places in the volume where he describes, perhaps unconsciously, states of mind that may be defined as enchantment. These are luxuries of life without any debauching effect. They are the luxuries that cannot be bought or sold, but as yet, with the exception of a few repellent mystics with their nonsense, there has been no effort to record them for the greater benefit of John Smith. As a sample of Hudson, independent, questioning, accepting nothing on trust here is a typical passage: "If any man can say that Keats has expressed all or as much as he has felt in nature or more than he has felt, I would say of such a man that he does not inhabit the same world with me, but lives in some other world." As a "long-pull" (this is esoteric language), there is also a lovely story "An Old Thorn." For those not in the secret, I will call it extra over and above measure.

My first introduction to Mencius (B.C. 372) the Chinese philosopher was through *The Wisdom of the Chinese*, (Brentano, 1920). A second acquaintance was made in *Towards the Open*, by Henry Chester Tracy, and now Messrs. Longman's have published *Mencius*, translated by Leonard A. Lyall, price 12s. 6d. Mencius followed Confucius, and his philosophy in comparison with that of his master appears to be harder and more practical. The book before us, excellently printed, gives a comprehensive collection of his sayings, and the introduction can be read and re-read with profit. Mencius was no metaphysician, and did not attempt to explain the origin of evil. The book abounds in steady dry light; his wisdom begins from the hearth, and those readers who go unbidden to the feasts of the good will find much in Mencius that appears in another form in Virgil and Marcus Aurelius. Of war, Mencius states that it is "teaching the earth to eat men's flesh." Again, and this is an appeal to men who know, he states, "The man that bends can never straighten others." I found traces of Kropotkin's "Mutual Aid" in Mencius, and in an age when great men are press-made twice daily, it will be refreshing and helpful to turn to a definition of a few centuries B.C. "Dwelling in all below Heaven's wide

house; standing on all below heaven's true base; walking in all before heaven's great way; when he gets his will, following it with the people; when he does not get his will, walking his way alone; not to be made wanton by wealth and honours; not to be moved by lowness and want; not to be bent by terror and force; this may be called a great man." Self-discipline is sounded in this volume, and the sayings take on the quality of eternity. No reader can touch Mencius without feeling better for the contact; there is generous help held out, the language, thanks to the translator, justifies the claims of the words of Mencius being translated into simple, straight forward English. In the *Sunday Referee*, April 3, Vanoc II. uses the phrase "in this death-obsessed world." The facts of the world now clamour with so great a noise that even writers in public newspapers are forced to deal with them; this is a change of method, for at one time the last subject that a newspaper would touch was one with any human and social significance. Recorded and unrecorded suicides are at present very high in numbers. Mencius wrote, "Lead the people on the way to ease, and they will not even grumble at hard work. Kill them on the way to life, and even as they die, they will not grumble against the slayer." This might be taken to heart and acted upon by our statesmen, if any. But as it lacks "pep," and the "getting" spirit, and as it is too simple, the chances of its absorption by the rulers of our destiny is very remote. A big cigar, boiled shirt and Rolls-Royce is more possible—they are the glittering prizes of a Christian civilization, whilst practical philosophy is almost a foreign language. *Mencius* is a noble work—presumably of love; it will last a life-time, and it will be taken up and read many times by those who realize what a lot of unnecessary things to be done in life, are—unnecessary, but this is Chinese, of a nation, in the present time that has committed the crime of allowing itself to be attacked. Our Squint-eyed Christian press have seen to that.

If we compare thinking to the corn that is ground between mill-stones, the comparison may be useful in many ways. In the first place, what kind of grain is it that the jolly miller (yourself) is putting in? Secondly, do you unchain the sails of the mill or do they go round uncontrolled? The particular grain that I have been grinding for many years has been gathered from books in the varied fields of philosophy, partly through inclination, and partly because the process has given me a degree of contentment in my own dispensation. Some time ago, a public writer made deprecatory remarks about Marcus Aurelius. It is fashionable in this age, so bunged up, as it were, with clever people, for a wise man to be regarded as a simple fool, for reputations are to be made by uttering some outlandish judgment on the departed great. Shaw does this trick very well. But with it all there is not produced a finer book-friend than the *Meditations*. Reading them again, when change has swept over a changing life, one runs to welcome the noble truths, confirmed by life's experience; one can affirm immortality for Marcus Aurelius although he did not desire it.

I heard the horses being harnessed to the travelling vans in "Caravan" for the last time but one. The critics have damned it, and the play is withdrawn; and in spite of critics' opinions, I maintain that the theatre-going public is the loser. Imagine, if you can, the professional critic who has to "do" shows as they are called. I recall a remark in a friend's letter on the subject of critics—"I met one poor devil who did eight shows the week before last." The play had faults, but these could have been eliminated. It was a broad and human play of circus life; it breathed the rare sense of reality. There was the theme of tradition, the name of which to many critics must be a word of a foreign language, and it contained no inhibitions, no complexes, no bedroom scene, no telephones, no wireless sets, no motor cars, and no advertisements for corsets, dresses, or nail polish. It took hold of life with both hands, and from the stage there came the idea of space, freedom, and fresh air—this is my excuse for including a note on it in this series. Miss Cicely Hamilton translated the play from the German; she would be well advised to have it

produced in a country where the critics do not do eight shows a week. The play contains a succession of what is known as straight lefts at a mountain of modern stupidities; as tradition is rapidly becoming as substantial as an air-balloon, I conclude with a note on it from a German, Von Hugo von Hofmannsthal: "The despair of an epoch would be expressed by the fact that it came to think it not worth while to occupy itself with the past." How the theme is treated in the play may yet be the pleasure of country readers who are play-goers, and do not think that London critics (eight shows a week, poor devils) are infallible.

C-DE-B.

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## Correspondence.

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

THOMAS PAINE.

SIR,—Your contributor F. M. Read's article has several errors. Will you allow me to correct them (1) The ex-King Louis XVI. was condemned to death by a majority of fifty-three, not twenty-five. Twenty-six of the fifty-three voted for death with reservations of one kind or another, leaving a clear majority of only one. (2) The Convention did not pass a law for the arrest of foreigners, but to exclude foreigners from the Convention. This law was proposed by Bourdin de L'Oise, not Robespierre. (3) The vast majority of arrests during the reign of Terror were ordered, not by the Committee of Public Safety, but by the Committee of General Security. The former body was concerned mainly with defence against invasion and foreign affairs, whilst the latter was charged with the internal administration of France. (4) Paine did not complete the MS. of the *Age of Reason* before his arrest. He completed only the First Part. The Second Part was written in 1795, after his release.

J. M. AHERNE.

Dublin.

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## Obituary.

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JOHN BATEY.

At Highfield, Rowlands Gill, on April 30, the remains of John Batey, aged thirty-eight, were laid to rest. Fifteen months of painful suffering, following an accident at Stargate Colliery, and in which he sustained terrible injuries—a broken spine, broken ribs, and internal injuries—had been borne with remarkable fortitude. A member of the Newcastle Branch of the N.S.S., and of the R.P.A., he was keenly interested in Freethought, and died, as he had lived, steadfast in those convictions. Relatives succeeded in getting his sorrowing widow to consent to a religious funeral, and after hymn-singing by his former chapel friends, the cortege, followed by about 200 persons, proceeded to a church a mile away, where a Church of England service was conducted, followed by the usual Christian "last rites" at the graveside. Many flowers were placed on the grave, and the mourners dispersed, many being indignant at this pious mummery over the remains of a stalwart Freethinker. Also they may have had some thoughts as to what the Lord will do for the widow and her two children, to whom all who know them extend their deep sympathy.

Where religion is concerned the fool is given a first-rate opportunity to play the part of a philosopher, and the philosopher seldom fails to play the part of a fool.

Chapman Cohen.

Desertion of a calumniated friend is an immoral action.

Dr. Johnson.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Wood; Platform No. 2, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood, Tuson and Bryant; Platform No. 2, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Sunday, May 8, at 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury; 7.30, Mr. C. Tuson. May 9, South Hill Park, Hampstead, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. May 12, Leighton Road, Kentish Town, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town): 7.30, Mr. L. Ebury. May 11, Canal Head, Peckham (opposite Rye Lane): 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. May 13, Camberwell Gate, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson.

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of London Road, High Road): 7.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—"The Meaning of Freethought."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. (Beresford Square): 7.45, Mr. Sydney Burke—"The Harm that Good Men Do."

INDOOR.

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from Brecknock Arms): 7.20, A Lecture.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Mechanism and the Arts."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Lord Snell, C.B.E.—"What Emerson Taught Fifty Years Ago."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level, opposite Open Market): 7.0, Messrs. J. Byrne and G. de Lacy.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, May 8, Stephenson Square, 3.30 and 6.30. Monday to Friday, May 9 to 13, Alexandra Park Gates, 7.30 (corner of Alexandra Road and Clarendon Road).

MERSEYSIDE FREETHINKERS.—Sunday, May 8, Ramble. Meet at Bowring Park Car Stop, 2.45 p.m. Refreshments will probably be obtainable along route, but ramblers are advised to bring food with them. Everybody welcome.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market): Sunday, May 8, at 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): Saturday, May 7, at 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND (Lanblton Street): Wednesday, May 11, at 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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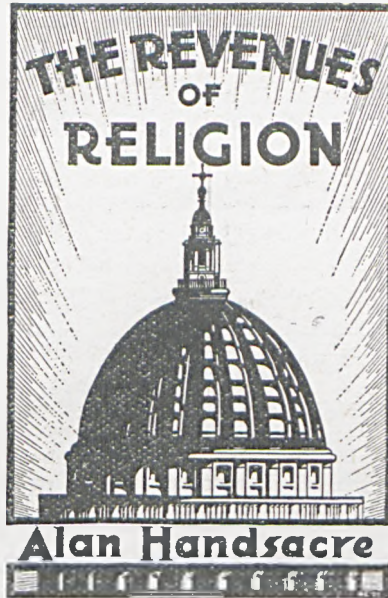
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A  
**Public Demonstration**

IN THE  
**HULME TOWN HALL,**  
STRETFORD ROAD, MANCHESTER.

**WHIT-SUNDAY, MAY 15th 1932.**

Chairman: Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN President N.S.S.  
SPEAKERS:

- |                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael. | J. Clayton.   |
| A. D. McLaren.           | F. E. Monks.  |
| R. H. Rosetti.           | G. Whitehead. |
- and Others.

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