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

Views and Opinions.

God's Great Gamble.

CHRISTMAS, in England at least, is often a season of slush. "Christmas," said someone to Douglas Jerrold, "is not what it used to be." "No," replied Jerrold, "it never was." The snowy Christmas time seems to be a creation of Christmas cards and pantomimes, with a dash of story-telling. So far as facts go, Christmas time seems to have always been what it is to-day—sometimes a snowy time, but usually a time of rain or drizzle or fog, or just ordinary weather. It never was what it used to be, and the fact that it should have been thought otherwise is an interesting example of the way in which myths are created and perpetuated. It makes one wonder less at the perpetuation of the myths that go to make up Christian history. Mythical views of life and fact are the easiest of all things to manufacture, and the very hardest of all things to destroy.

But there is one kind of slush on which one can count with absolute certainty at Christmas time, and in this instance things are the same year after year. As the French statesman is credited with saying—although that, too, may be a myth—the more things change the more they remain the same. And the original, perpetual, seasonal slush is that given out every Christmas by preachers and writers who have to do their Christmas stuff. One knew in 1931 what they would say in 1932, and one knows in 1932 what they will say in 1933. There is always the talk of the magic of the cradle in Bethlehem, the greatness of the message of Peace on Earth, good-will to all men, the tremendous importance of that event to the history of man, etc., etc. This kind of talk never ceased for a moment, even when the Christian armies of Europe were devastating the world, when soldiers on one side were forbidden to fraternize with soldiers on the other side during Christmas for fear the blood lust would be weakened and they would forget the daily hymn of international hate,

and when the ministers of Jesus were acting as the most efficient recruiting sergeants. And as people have come to believe in the snowy Christmas as something which our forefathers seldom or never lacked, so the myth of the world's benefit from the "cradle of Bethlehem" has been established as one of the least questionable of teachings. There is nothing so easy as to establish a myth, nothing so hard as to kill it.

* * *

Christmas Slush.

Take this from the *Christian World* on "The Approach to Christmas":—

When we come to the manger . . . it is nothing less than that, then and there, as men count days and hours, our human redemption began to be accomplished; that in the Child the timeless love of God, ever speaking to men by prophet and seer, and by goodness in all its forms, took on itself forms of time and space. God could do no more for men than that . . . Bethlehem was God's great gamble in which He staked everything to make men understand what the amazing, tireless love of God is like. It is the reality of a love whose length and breadth and height no man knows.

There you are! Christmas may be foggy or sunny, warm or cold. But so long as Christianity exists there will never be any mistake about its being slushy. The 40,000 parsons of Great Britain, the hopelessly pious, the newspaper scribblers who turn out their stereotyped articles, will see that the slush is there. It need not be variegated slush, for the Christian public that revels in Christmas slush will not expect any variation. They are like children listening to an oft-told fairy tale, they want the time-honoured slush, verbally unaltered.

Look at the *Christian World* sample! Could anything be more nonsensical! Part of it is sheer verbiage, the rest is undiluted falsity. What does it mean by the birth of "the Child," implying that God took on the forms of time and space? If Jesus ever existed, and of that there is very considerable doubt, in what respect did his birth differ from the birth of any other child? Unless we drop into the sheer nonsense of saying that once in the world's history a child was born without the co-operation of a male parent, there was no more in the mere birth of Jesus Christ than there was in the birth of Jack Robinson. For fifty-one weeks in the year the *Christian World* would question the literal truth of the Virgin Birth. But on the fifty-second week, it drops into the language of the crudest and the most ignorant of superstitions. I wonder whether the writer could put into plain language exactly what he does mean? I doubt it. It is unadulterated Christmas slush, that will be repeated in thousands of pulpits before the Christmas season is over.

A Taking Phrase.

But I rather like the idea of "God's Gamble." He was evidently getting reckless. For a long time he had been backing the wrong horse. He had made a world and pronounced it all good, only to find it getting all bad. He had drowned all but a handful of his creations because he found it impossible to do anything with them, only again to find that the new lot was just as bad as the old lot, that they would go after other Gods and break every one of his commandments. And he had the mortification of seeing whatever civilization existed going with the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans. No wonder he got exasperated and tried a last desperate gamble. He was like a man on a racecourse who has consistently backed losers all day and then stakes his only remaining "bob" on the last race. The production of Jesus was his "great gamble in which he staked everything," and like the almost "broke" backer, his last gamble went the way of his preceding ventures. He had again backed a loser.

Let us give God credit for the best of intentions. He wanted to back a winner as certainly as the man who has staked his last shilling on the 4.30. But with what success? His last great gamble worked out as badly as had his other speculations. He took on the forms of time and space in order to show to man a love that was without height or breadth, or length, or colour, or smell or weight, or anything else, and with the result that men hated each other as they had never done before, because of this great gamble. In His name men used the rack, the torture chamber, and the stake; they lied and forged and slandered in order to demonstrate their sense of God's graciousness in taking on forms of space and time. And to-day if one were to take a census of the actual believers in the occurrence and the value of this great gamble it is extremely probable that they would not amount to a fifth of the world's inhabitants. To stake so much, and to win so little! And then to be met, even from one of his avowed champions—the *Christian World*—with the pitiful expression, "God could do no more!" It is like the inscription over the pianist in an old-time mining camp—"Gentlemen, don't shoot the pianist, he is doing his best."

* * *

A Desperate Stake.

The more I look at that expression "God's great gamble" the more attractive it becomes. If the *Christian World* writer had been thinking of what he was writing, I doubt if he would ever have written it. If he had felt that he was writing for men who were in the habit of analysing what they read he would not have written it. "God's great gamble!" It is so reminiscent, so characteristic of the gambler who has been living on backing "dead certs," and who ends in the gutter. The gamble was to teach men what love meant. But look at the effect—the "dead cert" "also ran," and that was all. When God took on "the forms of space and time" the peace of the world was maintained with an army of 400,000 men. In four recent years the nations who are most vociferous in their recognition of the value of God's efforts managed to kill and wound nearly twenty millions. Battleships blessed by chaplains dot the seas, armies, also blessed by chaplains march over the land. The *Church Times* in its latest issue finds as a reason for England developing its own oil production that it would make our battleships independent of the goodwill of the Shah of Persia, and the outcry against war to-day is nine-tenths made up of fear of aerial bombardments and the financial cost of modern warfare. It is not the love of God that is driving Christendom into even an elementary degree of honesty. What is aimed at by most of the peace talk that is now promi-

nent is due to the pressure of facts. Some degree of honesty between nations is advocated because it is becoming quite plain that rascality simply does not pay, and in the long run honesty is really the better policy. If God had never gambled, the world could hardly have got into a worse state. If He had never shown man his love, the pressure of facts would have placed a curb to the forces that make for a disintegration of human society. Christian societies are being driven to honesty and peace as they were driven to drop witch-hunting and heretic-burning. And God's gamble had nothing to do with the growth of a better spirit. Even to-day there is nothing quite so powerful as a belief in God for dividing people who might otherwise work amicably together.

Said Martin Luther on one occasion, "Herein we see the cunning of Satan, whom I doubt not will get the better of poor half-witted God." The *Christian World* slush reminds me very much of that remark. "God could do no more." He had tried his best. He had made the world with the best of intentions, only to find he had made a mess of it. He tried to wipe out what he had done by drowning his creatures, and again found things going from bad to worse. Then he "staked everything" by taking on himself a human form, and found himself being crucified. This was "God's great gamble," and again he lost. His followers grow fewer and fewer every generation. Men are ceasing to call on him for help, or can hardly make a worse mess of things than they have made with the help of God. The great gambler has staked his all—and lost. The rest of the game must be played out by man.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Boosting the Bible.

"Liberty's chief foe is theology."—Bradlaugh.

"More life, and fuller, that we want."—Tennyson.

"The Bible is the great cord with which the people are bound."—Bradlaugh.

THE Albert Hall, London, has been the scene of many activities, ranging from boxing and evangelical shows to recitals by musicians and singers. One of the most remarkable, however, occurred recently, when the tenth "Great Bible Demonstration" was staged by a number of Nonconformists, whose conduct showed that they were the backwoodsmen of the Free Churches. Indeed, these people hailed from Methodist chapels, brick conventicles, and tin tabernacles of Greater London and the adjacent districts. They came to sedate Kensington accompanied by their pastors and masters, and sang hymns and listened stolidly for an hour or two to the star-turns who did their best to bolster the Christian Bible in these days of scepticism and unrest.

Lord Hailsham, the Secretary of State for War, was one of these star turns. Another was Sir Ambrose Fleming, the inventor, whom the journalists afterwards referred to as "the great scientist." And last, but not least, the Rev. Dinsdale T. Young, the blood-and-brimstone preacher, who has figured on so many evangelical platforms, and who is thoroughly representative of the Old Guard of Orthodoxy, who die, but never surrender to Modernism in any form or shape.

As became a lawyer and a Cabinet Minister, Lord Hailsham was almost as elusive as the "Scarlet Pimpernel," but he managed to convey to the meeting that he considered the Authorized Version of this particular Bible to be fully inspired and wholly trustworthy. This, coming from a Minister of State, must have comforted an audience hailing principally from Suburbia, and sufficiently uncultured to sing the roof off in hysterical hymns strangely reminiscent of a

Negro camp-meeting.

But the Don Quixote of the evening was Inventor Ambrose Fleming. He charged the windmills of Unbelief, and if he unhorsed himself in the process, the innocent congregation never noticed the pleasant phenomenon, "Science positively demands creation" shouted Sir Ambrose, shaking an admonishing finger at the absent opposition. "The universe is not a godless, reasonable, mythical firework," he went on, warming to his subject. "Atoms are manufactured articles," presumably like cheap cigarettes named after a wild flower, "and must have had a manufacturer." It was a wonder that the audience did not applaud more vigorously. The wheel had come full circle! Here was Archdeacon Paley's rusty old watch-argument rescued from the dustbin, polished up, and again presented to the light of day after it had been discarded in those homes of lost causes, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The audience was again comforted, and looked at the inventor on the platform as the boys looked at Goldsmith's school-master when:—

"The more they gazed the more the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew."

The next morning a London newspaper actually referred to this speaker as a "great scientist" who "smiles at modern theories," and the meeting as "a great demonstration" in favour of the Christian Bible. Yet some folks regard newspapers as history in the making, and editors as really educated men. The Albert Hall demonstration was wound up by the Rev. Dinsdale Young who out-Heroded Herod, and out-paced the inventor-evangelist who preceded him. Brother Young sprayed the audience like a machine-gun turned on the serried ranks of innocent believers, each bullet reaching its billet in the pews. At his age a man can be garrulous, and he took full advantage of the position. Cocking his eye at the Minister of War, Brother Young declared that "Statesmanship was on the side of this particular fetish-book and then looking at the inventor on the platform, he declared that "physical science" was on the same side. Indeed, it was the world's own encyclopedia, and would solve all problems, heal all social wounds, and, presumably, stop earthquakes.

"Prodigious," as Dominie Simpson puts it. That touch concerning the universal appeal of this fetish-book was a fine professional stroke, which should have appealed to all workers in the Lord's Vineyard from Balham to Bermondsey, from Wandsworth to Welwyn. Presumably, every dispute is fundamentally a matter of the intellect, but what are we to make of such disputants who use their brains, such as they are to decry intellect and to defend superstition at its shabbiest?

This is only part of the trouble. To curry favour with the many-headed orthodox readers, newspaper editors described this particular meeting as a giant demonstration; called an inventor a great scientist, and the other speakers men of universal importance. The men who wrote this fulsome nonsense all know that it is gross exaggeration. But the readers, most of whom leave school at fourteen years of age, get a wrong impression of the present-day value of Orthodoxy in its most extreme form.

After all, it is quite an easy matter to fill a large building in London, when you can draw on a population of over seven millions of people. Recall some of the recent Sunday-film polls. By clever wire-pulling the preliminary town's meetings at the elections were overwhelmingly Sabbatarian, the figures for Walthamstow being 670 votes to 389. Yet the actual election itself resulted in a two to one victory for a free Sunday. "There's richness," as Wackford Squeers says.

There is real danger in this organizaion of the

Orthodox army by which troops can be transported to any given place at a few hours notice. It was similar tactics which forced Prohibition on the American citizen, with its attendant evils of bootlegging, racketeering, and wholesale murder. Here in this country forty thousand priests and their faithful satellites are continuously interfering with any movement towards Freedom, and a reactionary and unscrupulous newspaper press assists them in their sorry work. Englishmen, forsooth, are to be deprived of harmless amusement on Sunday because it would interfere with the attendances at churches, chapels, and tin-tabernacles. Such forcible interference with the innocent amusements of the people is a form of oppression to which a free people ought never to submit.

By presenting a false view-point of the present-day value of the Christian fetish-book the newspaper press is simply helping the forces of reaction. The backwoodsmen of Orthodoxy are not representative of anything but the backwoods and the undergrowths of civilization. They are mere survivals from a bygone period, and the sooner it is realized widely the better for everybody. When the Christian Bible has taken its proper place among the many other so-called Sacred Books of the East the clergy will have to look for honest employment. That's the rub! A proper understanding of this particular fetish-book is the beginning of the end of the Christian Religion. The boasting of the Bible makes urgent the need of making more Freethinkers. Progress must not be hindered and hampered by the clever manipulation of a stage army of the backwoodsmen of bigotry.

MIMNERMUS.

Religion in America.

MR. THEODORE DRIESER'S latest book *Tragic America*, discloses a terrible state of affairs in that country. It is a book of four hundred pages, and a chapter is devoted to religion in America. It commences: "I decry the power of the Church and its use of that power, in America in particular!" The Government, and the wealthy individuals who rule affairs are attracted to the Church because of its hold on the mind of the people and they count on its power and influence as useful to them:—

And not without reason, since especially among the ignorant and poor, its revealed wisdom counsels resignation and orders faith in a totally inscrutable hereafter. In short, it makes for ignorance and submission in the working class. And what more could a corporation-minded government or financial group, looking toward complete control of everything for a few, desire? (p. 236.)

The wealth of the Churches, continues Mr. Drieser elevates them to an enormous prestige: "Thus, the gifts from the living as well as income on permanent funds and legacies controlled by these twenty-five denominations in America totalled in 1928 \$532,368,714.80." About one hundred million pounds! The value of property held by some of the Churches is given, in dollars, as:—

Baptist	...	...	...	...	469,835,000
Congregational	...	...	...	...	164,212,000
Jewish	...	...	...	...	100,890,000
Methodist	...	...	...	...	654,736,000
Presbyterian	...	...	...	...	443,572,000
Protestant Episcopal	...	...	...	...	314,596,000

But the Roman Catholic Church beats them all, for it holds property in America to the value of \$837,271,000! Between 1916 and 1926 the value of church buildings rose by two thousand million dollars. Trinity Church, alone, at the head of Wall Street, owns fifteen million dollars of real estate from which

it derives an income of \$1,460,000, all from property practically given to it, and all exempt from taxation. "An estimate in the *Literary Digest* concludes that \$7,000,000,000, at least, constitutes the total securities and property of the churches in America." (p. 241.) How's that for a religion preaching the virtues of poverty and renunciation?

The Roman Catholics in America are increasing by leaps and bounds: "fifty-five per cent of America's entire population are claimed as Church members. Over one-half! And of these the Roman Catholic Church claims thirty per cent." "From 1906 to 1926, while the percentage of pupils in our American public schools increased only fifty per cent, the total number of pupils in Roman Catholic parochial schools rose one hundred per cent—schools that belie science, deny the powers and plans of any earthly government not profoundly submissive to the mythical heavenly government which they proclaim and administer, and which boldly, and in the main successfully, seek to block all forms of education not wholly harmonious with their antiquated, false and mentally submissive data as to how life is organized and what its proper rewards as well as functions should be." (p. 243.) And yet, says Dreiser, America claims to lead the world in education: "I believe that America is actually becoming weaker mentally, not stronger."

Take again the Foreign Missions sent out from America. They possess vast assets and thousands of missionaries: "An army of Catholic missionaries, numbering 163,615 strong, prey on foreign peoples."

In fact, the Catholics claim 6,000,000 members in Asia and 3,500,000 in Africa. Management of these Roman Catholic mission branches is under the Catholic Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. The personnel for this project is trained in 5 universities, 309 seminaries, 1,117 superior schools, and 836 professional schools. Also, the Catholic Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith uses 164 printing shops. Is it any wonder then that the world is being overrun with this Catholic inanity? Or that America, so interested in trade from whatever source, should aid in the great work? (p. 251.)

As for the Protestant Missions, they work hand in hand with the Government, "and are frequently as much the emissaries of American trade as religion, and even more so." For they not only introduce the natives to the spiritual benefits conferred by religion, but to those more material ones, such as "bathtubs, sewing machines, electric lights, refrigerators, or in other words anything and everything that our modern corporations make."

The enormous sums obtained from the country are not only wasted, they do positive harm. Says Mr. Dreiser:—

The millions spent on foolish campaigns designed to shape or change public opinions in regard to this or that: divorce, birth control, the falseness of the Darwinian theory, or almost anything in connexion with science and history! The blather about saints and cures and bringing all to Jesus, the while taxes are evaded and the scummy politicians whom they endorse, or even nominate and elect to office, proceed to rob the public in favour of the corporations and churches whom they serve! No wonder ignorance, no wonder illusion, when those with power in the religious field knowingly delude and mislead the masses! The things told them! That it is important to vote for this or that crook; uphold religion; it is good for the people to go to war, to put religion in the schools, to give into the hands of these mental bandits the care and education of all children, so that they may be properly enslaved by religion! (A slave, in my opinion, is the man who does not think for himself. A man with knowledge is not powerless.) But always with suave and

polished words. For it is not men who are talking, as they assert, but God through them! And so through the mouths of tricksters and social prestidigitators, and no more and no less, comes all this booeey in regard to the hereafter! No wonder then that Russia swept religion away! And it should so be done here! (p. 239.)

These religious denominations—there are two-hundred and twelve of them—although they may differ upon minor points of ritual and doctrine, are fundamentally at one in teaching the virtue of resignation in trouble and adversity to the will of God; and of the wickedness of rebellion to the powers that be. "And since Heaven is for all, and the chief business of all is to achieve the hereafter or 'sweet bye and bye,' why urge for anything difficult, let alone revolutionary, here? And that is why wealth and government always look upon religion as, if not their handmaiden, at least their 'side kick' in their earthly adventuring." Consider, continues Dreiser, the attitude of the churches to "the capital and labour wars in which the minor individual has during decades past, and more so now than ever, been denounced, underpaid, starved and beaten, the while the Church, in all its phases and under whatsoever sectarian banners it marches, has stood by and done nothing, studied neither the economics, the sociology nor the government of the all too real world in which these labourers are compelled to live, how and why they are so compelled to live. Not the Church!" (p. 252.)

Mr. Dreiser has a world-wide reputation as a writer. It is a pity that many of our public men who are known to hold similar opinions, and express them privately, are not equally outspoken.

W. MANN.

"Whom Do Men Say That I Am?"

No one, not even the biggest sceptic, can deny the influence that the name of Jesus has had on many nations during nearly 2,000 years. It may have been for good or it may have been for ill, but the record is indelibly stamped on history; and it cannot be shirked by those of us who so strongly oppose Christianity.

Leaving aside, however, all questions of theology for the moment, the fact remains that Christ's name has been a veritable gold mine for his followers. The Churches have gathered from the sheep a continuous stream of wealth of all kinds. Apart from living on the faithful on the principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire, immense and often beautiful and lavishly decorated buildings in his name have been erected all over the world, and they are served by staffs—some of them very highly paid. In addition, there are thousands of convents and monasteries, the inmates of which do very little productive work and are almost all dependent on charity. But this is not all.

Hundreds of thousands of books have been written about Jesus, and as many pictures have been painted of him. Most of them have been money-makers, for even the poet or artist has to live. A book in praise of Jesus is almost sure to sell. In fact one might say the public is never tired of hearing the praise of Jesus—especially coming from a sceptic or unbeliever. The writer who has made Jesus his theme, and who quotes the nice things said of the Christian deity by people like Mill, Strauss, Lecky and other famous sceptics, is at once taken to heart by

the orthodox. And the true Christian finds it exceptionally difficult to believe that the genuine Freethinker is only one degree less than himself in his adoration of Christ; this degree being merely that the Freethinker does not recognize the deity of Jesus. How often do we find the Christian apologist in defending his creed, say, "of course even the most convinced Atheist will agree with me that Jesus is the greatest being that ever trod this earth," and so on.

In *Whom Do Men Say That I Am?* (Faber & Faber, Ltd.) Mr. H. Osborne has collected "the views of the most notable Christian and non-Christian modern authors about Jesus of Nazareth." These views have been naturally, very carefully chosen. Only one or two writers have been allowed to say rather nasty things about Jesus, and they were simply too important to be omitted. Eight writers give the Protestant view; four the Roman Catholic; three the Jewish; three the Mohammedan; thirteen views come from scientists and philosophers; and finally there are fifteen views from writers of "literature."

They make interesting and instructive reading especially as it is apparent that quite a number of the writers simply repeat, parrot-like, what they learnt as children or what they had heard or read later on.

The theologians, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish or Mohammedan, are loud in their praise of Jesus, either as the Son of God or as a great Jew or as an equally great heaven-sent Prophet. Their opinions are mostly worthless—though the three Jewish writers try to be impartial. One feels sorry for them. They have been told so often by the Christians around them that Jesus is incomparably the greatest Being who ever trod the Universe that at last, they and a good many other Jews, are beginning to agree—but with the proviso that he was after all only a Man (with a capital M) and a Jew. No decent Jew nowadays can afford to throw overboard such a conception allied to the name of Jew. As Disraeli said, half Christendom worships a Jew and the other half a Jewess, and Jews nowadays are extremely pleased about it.

Not having read his complete work, I cannot say how Dr. Klausner, for example, treats the non-historicity theory of Jesus. But from the extract given in Mr. Osborne's anthology, he seems to believe what he wants to believe and reject what he does not want to believe—a most convenient method of dealing with his subject as far as he is concerned. Take, as an instance, what he has to say on the town of Nazareth. Dr. Cheyne in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* has written an elaborate article to show that at the supposed time of Jesus it never existed. "The present Nazareth," says Dr. Klausner, "does not stand on the precise site of the ancient Nazareth, which was destroyed at an early date and in the twelfth or thirteenth century, was rebuilt on a site below the old town."

The inconsequential ease with which Dr. Klausner asserts the existence of Nazareth at the time of Jesus and its destruction, without putting forward a scrap of evidence in support, is only equalled by his delightful description of the "later" Nazareth which he visited in 1912, and which he describes in detail as if it was in the same surroundings that Jesus was born "two or four years before the Christian era." Of critical analysis there is not a trace nor the least desire to deal with such arguments as those of Dr. Cheyne. He must have known them as it is impossible to believe anyone in these days would write a serious life of Jesus without taking into consideration the arguments of the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, most of which are those of professed believers and members of the Church.

The existence of Jesus is not only admitted by

Klausner, but he believes all sorts of things which can only be matter for dispute.

The chief thing I note from the extract given is that the worthy Doctor takes as gospel most of the stories in the canonical gospels, and any allusion he can twist into agreement with them, found in the Talmud. "Justin Martyr," says Klausner, "records how Joseph and Jesus made goads and ploughs which were still extant in his day"—and when this kind of evidence is produced in serious support of a thesis, the best thing one can do is to leave the writer seriously alone.

From Dr. Gore one can expect anything, so it is not surprising to find him insisting on the miracles of Jesus. He quotes Seelcy as "quite right when he says, 'On the whole miracles play so important a part in Christ's scheme that any theory which would represent them as due entirely to the imagination of his followers or to a later date, destroys the credibility of the documents not partially but wholly and leaves Christ a personage as mythical as Hercules.'"

The significance of this statement is almost always shirked by apologists.

Take away the miracles of Jesus and what have we left as far as his personality is concerned? Simply a man repeating a number of moral maxims which were current in his day, which give him the status of an ordinary teacher dependent on charity for his keep, all of which certainly annihilates any pretention to Divine honours. As Dupuis pointed out long ago, no Christian would have any truck whatever with such a Jesus. He is simply non-existent as far as the modern believer is concerned. Miracles make Jesus a God; the absence of miracles makes him a nobody quite unworthy of holy devotion. The only logical position is that of Newman. "I believe in Jesus and the miracles and everything else the Church teaches because the Church tells me to." This is unassailable from his point of view. Gore knew this, so do Temple and Storr and the other genuine believers. They all made quite big books about it. They filled, and other Christian writers continue to fill, thousands of pages to prove the miracles were miracles even if we don't understand them. Jesus was God because of the miracles; the miracles were genuine because Jesus was God and what could be more beautiful and necessary to a materialistic and unbelieving world than an amplification of these two simple statements? Mr. Osborne will, I think, agree with me that innumerable books have been written on this entrancing subject alone, and nothing so important could have been written on any subject. Not that "understanding" is necessary to accept them. As Dr. Temple says of the "Incarnation," "In another sense it is, and must remain, beyond our understanding;" and the way in which this writer and thousands of others will fill hundreds and thousands of pages imploring us to accept the drivel of the Gospels without "understanding" is a phenomenon as astounding as it seems to be almost universal among religious writers. Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc have the gift equally with Klausner, Temple and Gore.

The Mohammedan Khwaja Kamal-Ud-Din's opinions are most interesting. Jesus for Mohammedans is merely a man, but of course he is "a true messenger of God, and one of the Muslim Prophets." The Khwaja obviously believes all he wants to believe in the canonical gospels and rejects what he doesn't. It is beautiful to see the way in which some of the non-Christian writers are unanimous. For some Jews God alone is greater than Jesus. For the Mohammedans it is Mohammed. Renan cries, "All the ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born who is greater than Jesus." Mill, who

seems to have studied most things, but certainly not Biblical criticism to any extent says, "Whatever else may be torn away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique figure . . . It is no use to say that Christ as exhibited in the Gospels is not historical . . . who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?" Even the most orthodox Christian could hardly show more genuine disingenuousness than Renan and Mill.

Mr. Osborne has to mention writers who are antagonistic to Jesus—so long as they are not brutally so. The work of Evan Powell Meredith—the *Prophet of Nazareth*—certainly would not be admitted. For it is the most outspoken I know and the relevant extracts from it would damn any anthology. Haeckel is, however, allowed to testify against Jesus and his ethics, so is Bertrand Russell, but H. G. Wells seems to me to be rather bewildered. He *could* love Jesus and he does not; he *would* love Jesus if only—well, if only something came into the question with which he could agree. It is amazing that so gifted a man and writer as Mr. Wells should be so fuddled when it comes to Jesus and "God the invisible King." He frankly admits that he is "puzzled and confused." He would not be if only he had the courage to see that the Jesus presented to the people is a compound of ancient saviours, myths, and fairy tales born of ignorance, sun, nature and phallic worship, and welded together by one or two writers who are artists in the original and in translation. What do the opinions of most of the writers chosen by Mr. Osborne matter? An opinion is merely an opinion. One can read for oneself. Put aside a few moral trutlis of love and mercy and justice in the Gospels which must have been the property of many nations who had risen above the cave-man era, and what have we left? The miracles? Most of them are hopelessly and stupidly irrelevant, and they are far sillier than anybody could invent nowadays. And what then? Nothing worth having except here and there some flashes of literary artistry. The whole of New Testament theology, that is, whatever can be coherent culled from Jesus, Paul, James or John, is so much silly nonsense which can be neither justified in science or fact, or even speculation. Nobody except the leaders of our Churches and some ascetics, wants it. The world can do without the lot and would be better without it. Strauss, whatever he may have said in his first *Life of Jesus* written before he was thirty, came to see it clearly in his *The Old Faith and the New*. Let me close with one extract from this book:—

It may be humiliating to human pride but nevertheless the fact remains. Jesus might still have taught and embodied in his life all that is true and good as well as what is one-sided and harsh—the latter, after all, always producing the strongest impression on the masses; nevertheless, his teachings would have been blown away and scattered like solitary leaves by the wind, had these leaves not been held together and thus preserved as if with a stout tangible binding, by an illusory belief in the resurrection.

H. CUTNER.

The latter part of a wise man's life is taken up in curing the follies, prejudices and false opinions he has contracted in the former.—*Swift*.

The Archbishop: (To a soldier.) You are not so accustomed to miracles as I am. It is part of my profession.—*G. B. Shaw (Saint Joan)*.

Acid Drops.

The Newspaper Society, in its evidence before the Royal Commission on Lotteries made timely protest against the Judicial Proceedings (Regulation of Reports) Act, 1926. This is the Act, relating to press reports of Divorce cases, which it is now sought to extend to proceedings in Ecclesiastical Courts and cases. Mr. Harrison, representing the Newspaper Society, said:—

"From whatever point of view it is regarded, that Act is the worst possible precedent," he said.

"It tarred the whole of the press with a brush appropriate for a very small minority. It was passed in an atmosphere of prejudice which deterred Members of Parliament from opposition.

"It is so badly worded that not a single report since the Act was passed has conformed to its provisions, because strict conformity is impossible.

"We assert, therefore, that this Act is a shining example of the foolishness of legislation designed to interfere with the freedom of the Press, and we trust that its quotation as a precedent will have no weight with you whatsoever." (*Star, December 15.*)

Comment is unnecessary except to say that this Act is not the only means of interfering with the liberty of the press, particularly its liberty, not so much to publish, as to suppress!

Last Sunday (December 18) was observed throughout Great Britain, in the United States, and in some continental countries as "World Peace Sunday." This is an odd arrangement for, as Christmas Day falls on Sunday this year, and is always associated with the slogan of "peace on earth," we should have thought the latter day more suitable for the purpose. That it was not chosen is doubtless due to the circumstance that the majority of Christians, at least in this country, do not go to Church on Christmas Day. At least one clergyman is reported to have advised his flock not to let the day make any difference to their usual festivities announcing, apparently with no pleasure, that of course he will drop in at the church and say "Evening Prayer" on that day as usual. Christmas is, in fact, a secular holiday, and there could be no better proof of the fact that the Churches do not believe in their power to influence world peace than that a "World Peace Sunday" should be arranged on the Sunday before Christmas. We have seen few reports of the sermons preached, but none of them that are available include any suggestion for such practical steps to stamp out the war-mind as we have suggested in our recent Armistice Day proposals.

A correspondent suggests that Christmas Day falling upon a Sunday must present an anxious problem to those who "remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Some of them, of the extreme Sabbatarian variety, will be compelled to assemble for worship on the Lord's Day, and thus to make an appearance of keeping a pagan and popish festival which, when it falls on any other day, they ignore. The less rigid Sabbatarians will, it is assumed, behave on this Sunday as they do on all other Sundays shunning all secular work, games and pastimes, and going to chapel as usual. Their children, having had their Christmas dinner—evangelical piety is no enemy to good work with knives and forks, though down on corkscrews—will be sent off to Sunday school to wrestle with the Bible—and indigestion. Then to evening service, hymns on the piano, family prayers, and, just about the time when things are getting lively in most houses, off to bed! If such a routine is of rare occurrence in these days it just goes to show that the Lord's Day observers are only careful about what other people do on that day, and allow themselves a freedom they habitually deny to others.

The Parish Council of Crowborough asked the Ministry of Health to confirm a by-law which would have made Sunday recreation a criminal offence, not only for men and women but for children. The Minister (Sir Hilton Young) pointed out to the Council that it was "almost unknown for any Council to propose such a by-law, and that many such made in the last century had been re-

pealed." He added that such a by-law would fall "primarily upon the poorer classes." The Council has referred the by-law back to its Committee and, probably, no more will be heard of it. If the same reluctance to implement out-of-date laws and penalties is shared by his colleagues in the Cabinet, it is hard to understand their resuscitation of parts of the Lord's Day Observance Acts in their recent measure. The Crowborough Parish Council is as much or as little justified in trying to prevent Sunday games as is the Government in putting obstacles in the way of public entertainment in general upon Sunday.

It seems to have escaped notice that the very practice which meets with the whole-hearted support of Christians in this country with regard to the observance of Sunday, is denounced by these same Christians as intolerable tyranny when it occurs in Russia. Thus, in England Christians may by a majority vote decide whether the rest of the community may play games, or go to an entertainment on Sunday. In Russia it depends upon a district vote whether Churches remain open or not. In each case there is in operation a species of local option. But here, where it is wielded in order to maintain religious privileges, it has the highest of moral sanctions. In Russia, where it prevents religion being forced on a people whether they want it or not, it is an act of so monstrous a character that the British Government is urged to break off all relations with so iniquitous a country.

We see it announced that Pope Pious XI. has instituted a world-wide campaign against religious manifestations in which hysteria, morbid introspection, and undue mysticism plays a part. We do not know just what is meant by *undue* mysticism, probably it means any "mysticism" that reveals anti-Catholic visions. But for the rest, well if the Roman Church excludes everything in which hysteria and morbid introspection has played the dominant part, there will be very little left of historic Christianity, and the Saints' Calendar will be reduced to very small proportions.

A life of Nansen has just been translated from the Norwegian, written by the great explorer's intimate friend, Jan Sorensen. It naturally does full justice to Nansen's magnificent qualities, his courage and humanity and his devotion to truth and justice. The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer, however, was forced to note that Nansen "forsook Christianity," but hastens to assure us that in spite of this, "he was Christian in all his life and works." This is the usual pretty piece of Christian impudence. Nansen was *not* a Christian and no pious hopes or reflexions can make him one. "He did more," concludes the reviewer, "for his fellow-men in ten years than most politicians accomplish in a life time." Of course; but then Nansen was *not* a Christian. What a lot of courage is required to say that Nansen was a Freethinker!

The Catholic Action Society has changed its name to the "Bellarmine Society," and seems to be now determined to go into action with the gloves off. One of its objects is to defend the faith in the Press. "Whenever an attack on the Church appears," we are informed, "in a newspaper or magazine, the society will, where advisable deal with the matter." We are quite certain that any attack on the Faith in this journal will be found to come into the category of "most unadvisable" to reply to. The Bellarmine Society will always show a bold front before Catholics—but nowhere else.

Two Catholic Labour M.P.'s voted with seven Catholic Conservative M.P.'s against extending the grounds of divorce to cases of incurable insanity. One of the two Labour men said, "I am convinced from the point of view of marriage that for this House to agree to this motion would be a most serious step." We feel it almost impossible to do justice to this remarkable piece of irrefutable logic and fine humanism. But what

a world of love and life, Catholics would allow us to live in!

There is a proverbial significance in being "sent to Coventry," which perhaps accounts for Canon Quick (of St. Paul's Cathedral) going there—to the Coventry Diocesan Conference—to make one of the most stupid and extraordinary speeches which the recent records of such assemblies and clerical oratory provide. Speaking on Science and Religion the Canon boldly asserted that "science could not provide the ultimate interpretation of anything"; that they (*i.e.*, Christians) "need not be over eager for hasty reconciliation with science"; that the discoveries of science "are difficult to fit in with the religious interpretation of the whole." It was added that "in an age of tumult and confusion it was attractive to make religion an asylum and a refuge." It may hardly be credited that in the same address Canon Quick declared that "science will always be discovering new sequences of causes and effects," and that the only way open to Christians in view of this process is to believe "that all things work together for good to them that love of God." "All things," presumably, including the—asylum.

Dr. R. J. Campbell, replying to a reader of the *Church of England Newspaper*, who consulted him about his (the reader's) habit of worrying, commends to the poor man's attention the following maxim. "A man's business in life is to do the will of God; God takes upon Himself the care of that man; and therefore that man must never be afraid of anything." This seems to mean that if a man is worried because he has symptoms that suggest he may be sickening for a grave illness he may be sure that "God will take care of him," and fear not. Lest any simple reader of our pious contemporary should think he really means what he says, Dr. Campbell hastens to say, "except when the cause is purely pathological" depression is due to introspection. Even when it is pathological and marked by that fear which "is fundamental in all forms of neurosis" this fear can only be expelled by the "time honoured apostolic method: perfect love casteth out fear." In other words, unless Dr. Campbell is innocent of the English language, love of God is the only cure for neurotic fear. Perhaps Dr. Barnes, who was protesting the other day against clerical quackery and faith-healing pretensions, will have a word with his brother the Chancellor of the Diocese of Chichester.

Nearly all the newspapers have been giving space to Christian propaganda letters, articles and sermons. The *Daily Sketch*, with unconscious irony observes—in printing some lines from an unknown Methodist minister at Minehead—that "no greater proof of the intense interest aroused by the articles on 'Have we lost God,' could be provided than—by this address!" But, if God has been found at Minehead, it is in a disguise which orthodox Christians will hardly recognize. For the Minister quoted (Rev. T. H. Caddy) thinks that "Mr. Shaw has done well to lay out the God of that story"—(*i.e.*, the story of the God-idea told by science) and proceeds to describe some other ideas of God which he (Mr. Caddy) rejects. "There is the indulgent father who can be cajoled by sacrifice and promises made by those whose only sin is the sin of being found out. There is the 'master of ceremonies' at baptisms, marriages and funerals, and 'such a God is no better than a West African fetish.'" Even the "theological God" and "the god of battle," are persons the Christian "must have done with." If we ask the stale question so often asked of us, what are they going to put in the place of all these discarded deities, neither the Minehead minister nor the *Daily Sketch* "symposium" provides an answer.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer begs the Bishop of Croydon to make cinema films fit to be seen not only on Sundays but on week-days as well. But why the assumption that a bishop, or a parson of any kind, is the right person to improve the films? We know, of course, that bishops and other parsons think and say they are the right

people for such a job, but we've only their word for it. They also assert that they are under special guidance from God, but this again is merely assumption and assertion. Parsons, whether bishops or lesser clerics, are no wiser, more moral, nor more cultured than other citizens of similar educational opportunity. They are notoriously more narrow-minded and prejudiced. They are therefore the last persons to be implored to "reform" the cinema. But perhaps one ought not to take Mr. Swaffer too seriously. He knows the public for which he writes.

The *Universe* does not like Mr. Shaw's latest work. The "shocking language used by this author about our Divine Lord," has horrified the Catholic paper which will not advertise the work under any account. It however devotes nearly forty lines describing the book and giving an extract from it, which seems to us to be almost an advertisement if not quite one. The *Universe* might have reproduced one of the Black Girl's pictures in further protest. What a warning against infidelity and infidel authors the combined pictures and text would be for holy Catholics!

The B.B.C. has arranged for twenty-five lectures to be given on alternate Sundays next year on God, Christ, Man and His World, and Christianity. The *Church Times* is not entirely satisfied with a synopsis of these lectures—"the outlines are sometimes too scrappy to suggest their value . . . there are inevitable omissions"—but feels the lectures "should very decidedly contribute to a recovery of faith which the nation sorely needs." What delicious optimism! The idea of a broadcast lecture converting anybody is "decidedly" funny. But then any straw is worth clutching at in these awful times of unbelief. In any case it is difficult to define this word "faith." The holy and unlovely rows which take place regularly at St. Hilary over "vestments" and "mass" and other Catholic mummeries must make orthodox and unorthodox alike squirm. What good will the B.B.C. lectures do for this kind of thing?

Through eating a pie made by a baker who was what the doctors call a "carrier" of disease, a man recently fell ill and died. A newspaper refers to the carrier of disease as "One of Life's Mysteries." It might be better described as one of God's little jokes at the expense of his "children."

We rather like that heading in a religious journal—"Profitable Poultry Keeping—Preparing for Christmas," and the opening sentence, "The fancier's fattening pen is of the greatest importance as Christmas draws near." Of even greater importance, we presume, than the Birthday of Our Saviour, who had the misfortune never to own a fattening pen.

In a twelve-month British people pay £41,600,000 to cinemas, of which over £5,000,000 is Entertainment Tax. The Chancellor of the Exchequer ought to be glad that there has been no religious revival similar to the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, which revived the Puritan dislike of pleasure and of happiness created by "worldly" amusements.

The Hospital Savings Association declares that in the last twelve months there have been over 100,000 new contributors to hospitals. It would seem from this that the citizens of this country are still capable of responding to charitable appeals, despite their being, as the parsons allege, merely selfish, pleasure-loving "pagans." And the explanation is that a loss of belief in religion in no wise affects the primary instincts and feelings of socialized human nature. Christians have not—although we are asked to believe they have—a monopoly of benevolent feeling.

From a pious editor there comes the advice, "Say nothing that is wrong of the dead and of the living." So far as we can see the chief religious drawback to this piece of philosophy is that in practice it might deprive many Christians of the holy joy of slandering dead and living Freethinkers.

Christmas is the time when British Christians become very grateful that a Christ was born in order to be slaughtered later for their benefit. One of their methods of expressing this gratitude is by means of a wholesale slaughter of oxen, geese, and turkeys, which are turned into "burnt offerings"—so to speak—and buried in the Christian interior. From the point of view of the slaughtered, the celebration of the birth of a Saviour for all mankind—and not for the animal kingdom—is something like a calamity. On Christmas morn the Christian sings "Oh come, let us adore Him," and then goes home to complete the adoration by over-filling his stomach. Anticipating the result of this kind of rejoicing, the Church thoughtfully provides prayers and hymns under the caption "In Times of Trouble."

As a "sign of our times," the following has been seen by the *Christian Herald* :—

The movement for Sunday cinemas, which is further despoiling the British Sunday, is growing apace, and when a referendum of the ratepayers is taken, in most cases the cinema proprietors get a victory over the opposition of the Churches.

Although not in God's confidence, we should like to suggest that maybe God is not interested in the parsons' attempts to make the non-believer conform to their professional fancies as to how Sunday should be spent. Also, God may even be deliberately making the task of the parsons more difficult, so that winning the people for Christ is a greater feat and the resultant victory more praiseworthy. We earnestly beseech our Christian friends to reflect deeply on these suggestions and their possibility.

According to the Rev. T. S. Gregory (Methodist), Christendom is in Exile. The following is an excerpt from a report of an address on this theme :—

Contrasting the sure and simple faith in the God of our grandparents with the Humanism of our day, he remarked that the Church had retreated from position after position since the days of the Reformation. To-day we are facing a serious crisis in the religious life of Europe. When we were young there were 150,000,000 of people in the West who, at any rate, believed in God. To-day who could say that that was true?

For Freethinkers, this should serve as "glad tidings" to start the New Year with. But there is still plenty of fighting to be done. The supernaturalistic ideas which Christendom in retreat has left scattered throughout the world have to be uprooted from the human mind and driven into exile also.

Fifty Years Ago.

It was the high priest of Nishi-hong-wan-ji who was selected by the reforming Japanese Government of 1868, to proceed to London and to report on the influence of the Christian religion on public morals in England. It was the intention of the Japanese Government that if the report were favourable, Christianity should be introduced throughout the country. But after the high priest—a most enlightened and spiritually-minded man, of very liberal views—had spent eighteen months in London, he reported to his Government that Christianity was far more powerless than either Shinto or Buddhism in preventing crime, and particularly drunkenness, and it was therefore resolved to make no change in the public religion of Japan.

The "Freethinker," December 24 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CORRECTION.—In Mr. Cutner's quotation from Mr. Belloc in our last issue (p. 811 line 62) the final word should, of course, have been "chemistry," not "Christianity."

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—C. S. Fraser, 6s.

H. A. DAVIS (Chicago).—Many thanks for new Subscriber.

W. E. FULLER.—Thanks for letter, with your reply, which is an excellent one. Of course, the chief if not the only reason why the clergy busy themselves with the distribution of these charities is that they secure an advertisement. And with none of the Church charities do the clergy play fairly. They make a house to house or a public collection, taking from all careless of whether they have religion or not. Then the whole of it is lumped together as the offerings of Christians. Very seldom can the clergy act honestly when religion is on the carpet.

W. H. MURPHY.—Much obliged for cuttings.

J. V. SHORT.—We do not think that the regulations in the Liverpool schools permitting children to be absent for the purpose of religious instruction would be applied to Freethinkers absenting their children for the purpose of being taught something other than religion. It ought to, but one cannot expect fair-play from Christians in power. However, it would be well to make the application, and we should be very pleased to hear the result.

A. W. PINKERTON (Toronto).—The *Globe* on Freethinking is amusingly interesting because of the gross ignorance it displays of the subject. We agree that when the present Premier of Canada compared General Booth to Charles Darwin he touched the limit of offensive impudence. He must be a very poor mental type to be guilty of such a comparison.

T. PENNER.—No one regrets more than we do that many who would like to be present at the Annual Dinner cannot afford to be there. But we do not see what purpose would be served by adopting any other plan than the one hitherto pursued. We always think of those who are absent as well as of those who are present.

W. A. ATKINSON.—Your lecture notice, post marked December 13 (our press day), did not reach us until the morning of the 14th.

H. J. LEES.—The claim that because a man makes profit from his trade on Sunday, therefore part of all that profit must be confiscated is a piece of downright religious impudence, and sanctions legal robbery in the name of religion. If an industry is permissible there is no more reason against profit being made on Sunday than on any other day in the week. The time appears to us ripe for Cinema proprietors to make an energetic stand against robbery in the name of religion, and in the interests of religious establishments.

J.A.D.—The Churches are in a desperate position, and the attempt to identify us with Communism is part of the plan to frighten people off Freethought. But it is a very old game to identify Freethinking with whatever happens to be found objectionable for the moment.

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.

There has been a very brisk demand for the gramophone record of Mr. Cohen's "Meaning and Value of Freethought," and the advance orders have now been discharged. Those who have ordered before this paragraph appears will have benefitted to the extent of threepence. Gramophone records have to be specially packed for transmission through the post, and the sixpence charged covered only the bare postage. The cost of packing amounts to an extra threepence. So that the price of the record will be 2s., or including postage and packing 2s. 9d.

With reference to the Record, Mr. S. A. R. Ready, the energetic Secretary of the Liverpool Branch, who is mainly responsible for the existence of the record, writes:—

From the very beginning I felt sure that such a record would be successful; it had so much in its favour, in so far as your many friends would welcome a thing that brought a feeling of more intimate contact than does a book or an article in print. But the finished article has far outstripped my wildest imaginings. It is difficult to convince oneself that you are not present in the room in person.

As for the subject matter, you are to be congratulated on the truly enormous amount you have packed into such a short space. A talk on Freethought of but a few minutes duration that includes such a wide survey of the position must be nearly unique. As one proceeds from a definition of Freethought to the references to early human society, the rise of the priesthood, the high position reached by ancient Greece and Rome, the onslaught of the Christian religion with its tortures to suppress opposing opinions and the consequent degradation of society in Europe, one is astounded by the range in history and sociology that has been accomplished in lightning strokes. And yet there is still more to come. The record goes on with an analysis of conditions as they are to-day, with pertinent allusions to the press, politics, and the general lack of a critical approach to life, finally winding up with what is at once a condemnation of the intolerant attitude and an appeal for a saner and more dignified life for human society.

Christmas, 1930, gave us *Opinions*, Christmas, 1931, gave us *Selected Heresies*, Christmas, 1932 gives us the record. Can I say more than that it is a very worthy successor to the two books mentioned?

The West Ham Branch N.S.S. will hold a Social in the Metropolitan Academy, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, London, E., on Saturday, January 7. The large hall has been taken for this occasion, and all Freethinkers and their friends are invited to enjoy the programme of songs, dances, games, etc. Admission is free, and proceedings will begin at 7.0 p.m. prompt.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti had a peculiar experience at St. Albans in a debate on "Can and Should the Development of Civilization be Independent of Religion?" By the rules of the local Debating Society the two opponents need not deal with each others remarks. Mr. Rosetti's objection that the paper prepared at home by his opponent was not a reply to his arguments was declared not in order according to rules. Adapting himself to the novel conditions Mr. Rosetti was able to get in some useful work for Freethought. The Rev. C. A. Hudson, M.A., was a very courteous and generous opponent. Members of the audience took part in a general discussion.

Charged at Bow Street under the Seditious Meetings Act, 1817, and declining to give the undertaking required by the magistrate (Sir Chartres Biron) Mr. Tom Mann and the Secretary of an organization of the unemployed are in prison. The ostensible object of this old Act is to prevent assemblies within one mile of Westminster Hall when Parliament is in session. Like the wider and more dangerous law of Seditious libel this Act can obviously be used to interfere with the liberty of agitation and

petition, and to suppress demonstrations by minorities. No offence was alleged against Tom Mann or his fellow defendant. They were charged as "a preventive measure." Whether such a charge would have followed had the prospective petition and assembly related to, say, a demand for reduced duties on beer and spirits (or any other subject of controversy but the one involved) is doubtful. These proceedings show the need for vigilance on behalf of liberty, and prove that, as we have often said, there is no such thing as an obsolete Statute.

Judge Spencer M. de Golier writes expressing his sincere sorrow at the demise of the New York *Truthseeker*, a feeling which we share with all sincerity. No one knows better than we do what it means to keep a Freethought journal in being year after year, and the constant anxiety it involves. The *Truthseeker* was the oldest Freethought paper in the world, and it has done good service in its time. Perhaps it may one day be revived. He sends a year's subscription to this journal (a renewal) as a "tribute of love and respect to the *Truthseeker*." He also expresses his high admiration of the *Freethinker*, which we receive with all due appreciation.

The *Daily Telegraph* is publishing a series of articles by the Master of the Temple, the Rev. S. C. Carpenter, on "Religion and Science." This is obviously part of the present press campaign that is being carried on in the interests of the Churches. And in accordance with plan, the *Daily Telegraph* does not intend to have a series of articles on the other side. By hook or by crook, and more by crook than by hook, the general public must, so far as is possible, be kept ignorant of the real strength of the case against Christianity. The press administers "dope" by what it excludes as much as by what it includes. When the series is concluded Mr. Cohen will review the series. If there were any sense of decency about the modern press he would be permitted to do that in the *Telegraph* itself, but that is impossible. The great lying creed has to be buttressed by the lie inferential, when it cannot be upheld by the lie circumstantial.

The *Telegraph* is also publishing letters on Mr. Carpenter's articles, but by a strange happening no letters directly attacking the articles on Christianity have reached the editorial eye. A cowardly creed helped by a lying press!

IN PRAISE OF OPTIMISM.

Let us pass them over for the present, and turning to what regards myself, I say that if in my writings I mention any hard and stern truths, either to disburthen my mind or to console myself with a laugh, and not for any other reason; I at the same time do not cease in the same writings to deplore and oppose and dissuade from the study of that miserable and cold truth, the cognition of which is the source of indifference and slothfulness, or else of baseness of mind, iniquity and dishonesty of action, and perversity of habits; while, on the contrary, I praise and exalt those opinions, *though untrue*, which generate acts and thoughts noble, energetic, magnanimous, virtuous, and useful to the common and the private weal those fancies beautiful and joyous, *though vain*, that give worth to life; the natural illusions of the mind; and, in brief, the ancient errors, very different from barbarous errors; the latter only, and not the former, should be destroyed by the operation of modern civilization and philosophy, but these in my opinion, overpassing the bounds (as is natural and inevitable in human affairs) have scarcely risen out of one barbarism when they have precipitated into another, not less than the first, although produced by reason and knowledge, and not by ignorance, and therefore less efficacious and manifest in the body than in the spirit, less vigorous in actions, and, so to say, more secret and intrinsic. I am inclined to believe that the antique errors, so necessary to the well-being of civilized nations, are no less, and every day must become more impossible to re-create. . . . From "*Leopardi*."

Rules for Editors.

(From Leigh Hunt's "*Examiner*, March 6, 1808.)

ONE cannot help smiling to think of the numberless folios which have been written on the art of politics. Mankind really seem to have imagined that it was extremely difficult in the precept as well as practice; and from CONFUCIUS to PLATO, from PLATO to JUSTINIAN, from JUSTINIAN to MACHIAVEL, from MACHIAVEL to MONTESQUIEU, a thousand extravagant praises have been bestowed upon political scribblers. I cannot discover, for the life of me, what peculiar talent could have been found in such writers. Some of them may be allowed to possess a shade of imagination, but what are called your sound politicians must evidently be very inferior men, for they confess they have nothing to do with either enthusiasm or fancy; and what is genius without these qualities? Nay, they absolutely acknowledge that they estimate little but experience and mere matter of fact. I only wish that the newspaper politicians were confined to matter of fact for a few months, and we should soon see what would be the fate of political composition.

It has been said by philosophers, that the end of instruction is to elevate man to wisdom; but I think that he is a much nobler teacher who brings wisdom to man. It would be much happier for the mind if it could be wise without exertion, and I really cannot see much art in this boasted ascension to knowledge. It is very well to go up the stairs of St. Paul's to examine the cross, but it would certainly be much better if one could whistle the cross down. For this reason, I have endeavoured to simplify the rules of newspaper politics, and instead of making my readers toil up a ladder, like GULLIVER, to read gigantic folios, have reduced this sublime science to the most inexcursive and unambitious comprehension.

I. OF POLITICAL ATTACHMENTS.

You must absolutely be a party-man, or you are neither a true editor nor a true patriot. Patriotism consists in a love of one's country, and a love of one's country is certainly not a love for it considered in its earthly qualities, not a love of muddy Brentford or calcareous Margate, but an attachment to the best men in the country. Now the best citizen is he who would do most good to his fellow-citizens, and as every man must judge for himself, the best statesmen is he who offers you the best place. It becomes you, therefore, to support him on every occasion, and particularly when he is wrong; for who would expose the errors of his friend?

2. OF EDITORSHIP CONSIDERED ABSTRACTEDLY FROM PROPRIETORSHIP.

If you are proprietor as well as editor of your paper, you have the truly English freedom of saying what you please for your patron: but if you are editor only, it becomes you to say every thing which the proprietors may dictate. This restriction may appear hard, but in difficult times you must be hardened to meet difficulties; you are the servant of the proprietors, and inclination may be sacrificed to duty. What is called spirit will not pay your bills. The man who digs for money must of necessity stoop very low to find it.

3. OF POLITICAL CONTROVERSY.

It is manifest, that every man who differs with your favourite leader must be miserably defective either in his head or his heart, but most likely in both. This is so self-evident, that it requires no argument. As to those insipid hypocrites, who pretend to be of no party, avoid them as so many newspaper outlaws, who are cut off from the social bustle of dispute. A

writer of no party must be of no feeling, or at any rate a gross libeller of the public, for he must either have no capability of attachment or he must plainly tell the public that there is not one of all their favourites who is worthy of entire co-operation. Give, therefore, no quarter to any writer of any party or of no party: if you wish to produce a revolution in political opinion, you must be strenuous and ardent. The principle of the lever has nothing to do with moving the human mind. You must oppose ponderousness to weight and rage to violence. The heaviness of some papers and the fury of others will afford you excellent examples. But above all, never lay yourself open to what is called conviction: you might as well open your waistcoat to receive a knock-down blow. A man will shut his eyes to an ugly sight, and I should be glad to know why he may not shut them to an uncomfortable argument. Give all the blows you can and receive none: newspaper controversy is a true battle; the soldiers have no business to argue about reason, they must only do all the mischief possible. In fact, a playful moderation in politics is just as absurd as a remonstrative whisper to a mob. I have heard of a lad who nibbed one of his long nails and wrote with it, and as he most probably wrote very badly, I dare say that from this circumstance a bad penman is said to write a fist, that is, you must always argue by personal attack. Would you attempt to conquer a prize-fighter by chucking him playfully under the chin? Then how would you conquer the *Belchers* and *Game Chickens* of newspaper controversy but by opposing to them the *Gulleys* and the *Gregsons*? Your sentences must be so many metaphorical bruises; if you cannot reach your adversary's head, aim directly at his heart, and in the intervals of the battle amuse yourself by calling him names. If a man could save his country by being vulgar, who would be a gentleman? The greatest reformers, such as LUTHER and CALVIN, have shewn a very proper contempt for mere refinement. If LUTHER, in the gaiety of his ardour, calls CALVIN a fool and an ass, CALVIN, in the consistency of his argument, calls LUTHER a hog, beast, wretch, madman, and devil. I would recommend to you three exquisite sentences of the Genevese Doctor as a specimen of warrantable energy: he says to LUTHER, after a few convincing arguments, "Do you mind me, you dolt? Do you hear what I say, you madman? Do you listen to that, you great beast?"* I will be judged by any body, whether, with the exception of a little want of Christian spirit, these figures of speech are not the exact models of a spirited disputation.

4. OF INVENTION IN NEWS.

The art of newspaper politics certainly cannot rank among the polite arts, but nevertheless it requires almost as much fancy as poetry or painting. This is peculiarly apparent in the periodical accounts of battles. A skilful editor shall describe heroes, dispose of armies, and dispense victories and defeats with all the fire and invention of HOMER. If your favourite statesman is in office, it is your business to announce nothing but victories; if he is out, conquest must vanish with him. While you are in opposition, you must lament the total want of foresight in Ministers, their useless expeditions and senseless expenditures, and you must praise the French Emperor: while you are ministerial, you must insist and swear, not forgetting to stake the credit of your paper, that the country is in the best of all expulsive situations, that the expeditions will settle the balance of the world, that the opposition is an infamous fac-

* This is quoted from memory, but it is not the smallest exaggeration.

tion, and that NAPOLEON is a Corsican tyrant and usurper. If the enemy gains a decided victory, you will swear that the two armies parted, but certainly with an advantage on our side: if the two armies really part, you have nothing to do but to gain a victory. At the beginning of a campaign, however, you must always gain victories. It is an indispensable rule. If you hear, for instance, that the French and Russians are about to meet, be certain that the French are defeated with great slaughter, and announce the intelligence in capitals worthy of the occasion, as thus, DEFEAT AND SURRENDER OF THE WHOLE OF THE GRAND FRENCH ARMY. I need not tell you to use a smaller type when you are in opposition, that is, provided you are simple enough to say any thing to the credit of Ministers. At such a season, pomp is unsuitable both to a manly grief and to a proper enjoyment of victory. If you should be so bashful as to feel awkward, when the victories you have announced for the Ministry prove to be defeats, you have an excellent answer to all complaints in the reply of that admirable statesman STRATOCLES, who arrived at Athens from a naval defeat, put a chaplet on his head, and made all the citizens feast and sacrifice in honour of the glorious victory; and when the shattered fleet arrived two days after, and the people called upon him to answer for his imposture, cried out, "Why, you will not quarrel with me for having given you two days of jollity?" PLUTARCH calls this impudence; but it is evident, that he knew as little of true policy, as our newspaper politicians know of him.

5THLY AND LASTLY, OF EDITORIAL SENSIBILITY, OR OF BEING HAPPY TO HEAR AND SORRY TO STATE.

Great geniuses are always men of great feeling. If you keep all your frowns and your terrors for your enemies and rivals, you must preserve all your smiles and tears for the interesting occurrences of the fashionable world. Home news is the most pathetic thing in the world, and an Editor never appears to such advantage as when, like HOMER'S *Andromache*, he smiles and weeps at one instant. Thus, if in one paragraph you exclaim with vivacity, "We are happy to hear that the Duke of QUEENSBURY has recovered from his fit of the gout"—in the next you will probably observe that pathos, "We are sorry to state that serious apprehensions are entertained of the life of the illustrious Officer, who, after having dined very heartily on Thursday last, slipped down upon the ice as he was passing through King's place." Again, if you very naturally rub your hands in another paragraph, and cry out "We are sincerely happy to hear that the Marchioness of S— was *not* thrown from her horse in the act of spurring the animal," you will have every reason to shake your heads in the next, and exclaim "We are sincerely sorry to state that the Right Hon. Lord B. was thrown out of his curriole and terribly bruised. His legs were found to be quite black."

Thus then with talents for disputation, talents for fiction, and talents for weeping and smiling, no Editor need be afraid of being quite poor, provided he does not become an honest man.

LEIGH HUNT.

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man.

Shelley.

God himself cannot exist without wise men, said Luther.
But God can still less subsist without unwise men.

Nietzsche.

"Powder and Shot."

WHEN the Christian Mr. Lansbury, leader of the Labour Opposition in the House of Commons, addressed his appeal for the relief of unemployment, not to the organized strength of the 3½ million trade unionists of Great Britain, but through the Conservative *Times* to the leaders of Religion, he cast a searching beam of light upon the activities of the Churches in their relation to the present-day masses of the hungry poor. What was the nature of his appeal? He asked:—

Who is there among the leaders of Christendom who will, in the name of the Master, organize and lead such a campaign of *prayer and action* as will compel Parliament to act?

As might have been expected, representatives of those much vaunted charity dispensing organizations, the Churches, immediately fell upon Mr. Lansbury with overwhelming evidence to show that from their reservoirs of wealth a constant trickle of visible sustenance had for years past flowed to the benefit of the ever increasing army of the unemployed. There was, however, one honest opinion given by a high-placed cleric. The Bishop of Durham wrote to the *Times* and said:—

Let us clear our minds of cant. Unemployment is not a problem which the Churches can solve. Such charitable assistance as they can give cannot touch the fringe of the public need. Their own members are largely unemployed, and their resources are rapidly shrinking. If, by a *tour de force* of abnegation, the clergy, Anglican, Nonconformist, and Roman, were to surrender their entire incomes to the assistance of the unemployed, it would not provide the "dole" for more than a few weeks, and it would swell appreciably the number of the workless.

The Bishop is, of course, quite right and it may well prove less embarrassing for him in the future that he has made his confession of the Churches' impotence to solve the problem just now. Nevertheless we can understand that priests, whose parishes embrace the worst of ecclesiastical slum property, and who daily see the sparsely clothed and underfed children of the unemployed pass their door on the way to school, are revolted that such conditions are allowed by the public conscience to persist. But we submit that it is because they are ordinary men capable of displaying ordinary human sympathies that their indignation is roused at the sight of so much poverty about them. We can sympathize with men who cannot conceive that a just and merciful God is pleased to confront his servants with the emaciated frames of unemployed men and women supposedly "created in his own image." If disease stricken children are in the sight of their God "good," humane priests must feel as keenly as we do that he mocks their intelligence in demanding their continued faith in his bounty and mercifulness.

But in our humble opinion the clerics to whom we have referred make a great mistake in clothing what is easily recognisable as a natural resentment with all the flummery of their religious beliefs. They open soup kitchens, collect cast-off clothing, provide rest rooms and the like and call it "God's work." It is nothing of the sort. The name of God need never be invoked in support of it, nor do the tenets of Christian belief lead the unemployed to expect it. Whatever their conditions, however deep their degradation, Christian teaching demands from the poor that they should accept it all in a spirit of thankfulness, in anticipation of a compensating reward in heaven. A Birkenhead clergyman, W. J. Allan Price is unmistakably clear on this point. He writes:—

Our Lord was not concerned with either politics

or economics. Born into a nation that was ground down by foreign tyranny, He never made the gaining of its independence a part of His programme, even though the refusal to do so brought Him to the Cross. His people suffered under a tyranny of taxation that would amaze people who are not familiar with the facts. He saw poverty all around Him; the loss of the smallest coin caused the most acute distress. Clothes had to be worn with patches upon patches. . . . All this forms the background from which the parables emerge. In addition men's hopes were fired with the longing for the Messianic kingdom. . . . a land flowing at last with milk and honey. Such was their poverty and such was their aspiration. Yet when Jesus was challenged by John the Baptist to declare His Gospel He met the situation with the ever to be remembered words, "To the poor the gospel is preached." And that Gospel is the Gospel of Redemption without any concern about material things. (*Times*, October 14, 1932.)

We do not want to impugn the few conscience-stricken priests who are desperately anxious to relieve the distress of the unemployed with whom they are in daily contact. But what else could they be in the circumstances if they would escape the open hostility of their impoverished parishioners? As priests teaching the doctrine of Christ they need not go outside their province of instructing the poor to look to their spiritual, in preference to their material welfare. They must know, as well as we know, that if that is all they intended to do, the unemployed would have scant respect for them or for their dogmas.

It would indeed be remarkable if the canons of Christianity, which tolerated for two centuries all the enormities with which the highly lucrative slave traffic was accompanied, could suddenly damn the present day system. The philosophy which guided many of the prelates of last century to obstruct the passage of every measure to remove the barbarities of the existing system can hardly be used in opposition to the savagery of that same system in the Twentieth Century. We cannot be blamed if we are chary of accepting the modern miracle that the clerical leopard has, in less than a hundred years, changed its particularly black spots. Moreover, there is ample evidence to show that our suspicions are perfectly justified. When the Government set up the National Council of Social Service with which to co-ordinate the voluntary bodies engaged in relieving unemployed people, it chose to ignore the work done by the Churches and left those bodies altogether out of account. As a result the General Director of the Industrial Christian Fellowship wrote a pathetic letter to the *Manchester Guardian* about the shabby treatment it had received. He said:—

My particular object in writing is to express the hope that the Churches and kindred bodies, which have been bearing the burden and heat of the day in caring for the unemployed in their localities or through their central organizations, will not allow all this work to pass out of their hands and lose its identity under the National Council of Social Service. If they do, they will again leave themselves open to that mischievous innuendo. . . . that they care nothing and do nothing for the unemployed.

These words reveal the motive of this Christian society's charitable works. It is concerned more with contesting the challenge to Christianity which the presence of unemployment entails than with the real interests of the unemployed.

The Catholic *Tablet* (desiring no doubt to burn into the minds of the poor the Pope's injunction "to suffer with greater resignation the privations imposed upon them by these hard times"), has commented with studied insult upon the Bishop of Durham's description of the Unemployed as the British Lazzaroni in the following way:—

In one sense the term Lazzaroni is inexact. The Neapolitan lazzaroni were dirty and thriftless enough, but they did not sponge on the industrious and the frugal in the fashion of the British dole-drawers . . . That they were undesirables is true; but a hundred Neapolitan children of the sun did not take as much out of the community in a month as ten British lazzaroni take in a week.

It is our firm opinion that the Churches as a body can do nothing of practical value for the unemployed, and when they affirm to the contrary with pious rhetoric their motives are as plain to the unemployed as they are to freethinking infidels. As one of these unfortunate people who are unemployed has said in reply to the General Director of the Industrial Christian Fellowship:—

When are the churches . . . going to do something practical for the unemployed? . . . Games, concerts, billiards, and draughts are of no use to us. We want more food and clothing . . . As intelligent members of our class we recognize that unemployment is fundamentally a political and economic question . . . How can the Church and social centres help us in these circumstances? Higher standards of benefit, the abolition of the anomalies and means tests legislation—these are the vital requirements in the homes of all unemployed workers, and the Church . . . can make no contribution in this connexion. (*Manchester Guardian*, December 6, 1932).

G.F.G.

Some Christian Types.

II.—THE MUSCULAR CHRISTIAN.

IN his younger days John Twister, M.D., had been a celebrated athlete. He had represented England on the International Rugby field; had been a first-class oar; and a first-class sprinter. Then he settled down in London and acquired a fair practice. He was popular with his patients, and possessed the gift of instilling confidence. He was an unconscious psychologist, and he studied each patient carefully. He was a member of many clubs and societies: he was on the committees of most of them, and talked at their meetings at considerable length. He discovered that these clubs were good training schools for public-speaking—and that public-speaking was professionally profitable.

After the War he found his practice diminished by the inroads of younger men. Then he made another important discovery: that he himself had special natural qualifications as a muscular Christian. The after-war period saw an enormous increase in sports appertaining to physical fitness. Wimbledon, Hensley and Twickenham attained an importance and held an interest that before the War were almost unknown. Whole pages in the newspapers were devoted to sport in every shape and form. The Churches seized on this popular movement to develop a Purity Campaign. The War had brought about a lowering of moral standards and a general loosening of social restraints. Churches and Church Societies proceeded to get busier and busier; and Dr. John Twister saw his chance, and threw himself into the Purity Campaign with enthusiasm—not to say avidity.

He had very few patients, and more time on his hands than he knew what to do with. He was therefore well placed for devoting himself to moral crusades. He became a favourite speaker at Meetings for Men Only. Usually a parson occupied the chair and many other parsons formed part of his audience. John Twister, M.D., did not speak so much as bellow. When he referred to impurity he foamed at the mouth. He said again and again: "I am not a religious man, but I think that any man who is guilty of irregular

sexual relationship is a damned scoundrel." The swear word did not shock the religious listeners because it was used in a good moral cause by a sound moralist whose feelings for the time being had outrun his verbal discretion.

"The doctor may be a bit blunt in his expressions," they said piously, "but really at heart he is a man of very high ethical principles and deep religious convictions, and it is his moral indignation that makes him so emphatic."

Dr. Twister received many confidential communications from harassed parents and well-meaning parsons in connexion with young men inclined to be "wild." He was asked if he would give them a thorough examination and the parents added: "What we shall value even more, doctor, will be a really good heart-to-heart manly talk. If possible, keep our son under observation, so that your influence over him will be founded on knowledge of his actual behaviour."

Dr. Twister did keep such patients under observation, and thus he enjoyed a vast amount of social prowling. In mind he was really thoroughly salacious, and relished nothing so much as intimate talks on taboo subjects. Then, too, he found this paid handsomely. Respectable parents welcomed his aid and paid up quite cheerfully. He became their confident in all sorts of intimate family matters. This flattered his vanity and gratified his sense of power. He loved to be introduced by the Reverend Chairman thus: "To-day we have with us Dr. John Twister, who is not only a well-known medical man, but is also a well-known champion athlete." Then the doctor would rise up impressively, pausing a moment in tense silence. He spoke first of various forms of athletics. "The performances of my day," he said modestly, "may not rank so high as those accomplished to-day, but on the other hand we knew absolutely nothing about scientific training as it is understood at the present time. In my day men simply practised between lectures at College, ran or jumped, and then got back into their clothes—usually without even a rub down. Massage as an aid to athletics was unknown. Most of our men drank far too much alcohol, regarding it as a necessary part of the training. That, however, was one thing I never did (loud applause). Even then I recognized that alcohol was a foe to physical fitness (renewed applause); and although I had to stand much hostile criticism on this point I had enough strength of character to stick to my principles and refuse to touch a single drop (loud and prolonged applause)." Lowering his voice, the doctor would proceed in solemn tones: "But there was something far worse than alcohol which came into athletics; there was sex." The gusto with which the last word was uttered thrilled the audience. Breathlessly they followed John Twister's vivid descriptions of licentious acts which he himself had never committed, but of which he evidently had intimate knowledge. Odd cases were cited of young men whom he had been able to help when he found alas! they had reaped the fruits of impure living. Not only, then, did he cure them physically of their dreadful diseases, but he helped them to attain greater moral strength, which was very much more important (reverent applause and pious sighs). Then he spoke of sexual weakness resulting from impure habits, and mentioned casually the benefits experienced by patients he had treated.

At this stage several members of the audience resolved to consult Dr. John Twister as soon as possible. The doctor saw it in their eye, and his heart was glad: also he felt his pockets swelling. What could be more gratifying than to feel that his moral reputation and his bank balance were being made to grow simultaneously?

By continually talking platitudes on public platforms and avoiding the bedrock facts of life he built up the character of being a daring thinker among those who were unable to think clearly at all. It is true that the thoughtful members of his own profession said he was a blatant old humbug and a medical ignoramus; but what did that matter? He continued to flourish like a green bay tree; he outstripped the better educated and more honest members of the profession, not because of his greater knowledge but because of his greater hypocrisy—or should one say because of his greater intuitive understanding of the inherent gullibility of the so-called respectable sections of the community?

CRITICUS.

Hymns Osculatory—and Some Others.

Hymnology, and its peculiarities, so far as Protestant sources are concerned, have already been noted (*Free-thinker*, 1931, pp. 427, 636.) Here we refer to the Catholic variety, which, so far as hymns in the vernacular are not less stupid but, in many cases, more erotic in tendency than those of "heretical" origin. The mere sentimentality of ludicrous productions like "I should like to die said Willy if my Papa could die too," gives place to a sugary terminology which originates in the preoccupation of Catholics with the Virgin Mother, and innumerable virgin saints. As distinct from the liturgical hymns, like *Ave Maris Stella*, these crude and extravagant laudations of chastity are worse than anything written by Dr. Isaac Watts. One of the most popular begins: "O Mother I could weep for mirth, joy fills my heart so fast," and has a chorus as follows:—

"I think of thee and what thou art
Thy majesty, thy state
And I keep singing in my heart
Immaculate! Immaculate!"

Sacramental hymns have an even harsher note of theological literalism. Thus:—

"Oh see within a creature's hand
The vast Creator deigns to be,
Reposing infant-like as though
On Joseph's arm or Mary's knee."

Hymn books used in convents, and in schools conducted by monks or nuns, contain exaggerated invocations to the particular saints who are their "patrons," as well as the types common to Catholic hymnals.

From *Hymns for Franciscan Tertiaries* come the examples which are quoted below. (1) "With a wreath of roses and lilies for Our Lady's Shrine":—

"Loved flowers! come press my lips, press them again
And take my kiss
Unto the throne of heaven's most gracious Queen,
Cause of man's bliss:
And as you incense clouds upon her rest,
Unto her loving heart breathe my request,
To thee our hymn, O Virgin full of grace
O give us in thy tender heart a place."

(2) Another with a "lily" theme:—

"Thou holiest of creatures, by sin never stained,
Dear lily of earth by no blight-fall attained
The Spirit Divine by thy beauty was won
And made thee the Mother of God's own Son.
Oh marvellous greatness! Oh dignity rare!
For a creature her very Creator to bear
Ineffable goodness! that God for his home
In the saving of man did not loathe thy chaste womb."

(3) Finally, to pass from accouchement to osculation as a theme for hymn writing, there is this, entitled "The Kiss of the Crucifix":—

"Each sorrow is a kiss of Jesus crucified,
This kiss, do thou dear Lord oft in this life impress,
And when my soul is carried on its fleeting tide
May I 'mid heavenly joys, behold Thy loveliness.
What saint, now seated on a throne of purest bliss
On earth was spared thy trying tests of love?"

If thou the great reward will be of such a kiss
Kiss me, O Lord, until I am with Thee above."

To come to prose—not that it is to be suggested that we have been in the realm of poetry—the religion which glories in this sort of pseudo eroticism (and in the *Lives of the Saints* may be found plenty of material for judging the results of this "devotion") is the mortal enemy of sex education in schools, and of everything that would tend to make sex relations and their problems rational and clean.

A.H.

A Christmas Carol.

(Tune "Christians Awake.")

CHRISTIANS awake! Confess this is the morn
On which each solar deity was born;
Rise to perceive the progress knowledge makes
In overthrowing reverential fakes,
And to admit, whatever may be said,
Faith only lives where intellect is dead.

Of virgin birth, as much is known by us
As by Josephus or by Tacitus,
Who surely knew, although they dare not say,
Most pagan deities were born that way—
Born in the constellations of the stars,
With stars and planets for their pa's and ma's.

Priests preach and then, assisted by the choir,
While hymns are sung to "touch" you they conspire,
With praises loud the "gifts of God" are sung,
Then in the vestry doubtful coins are "rung";
God's crowns are promised—after reaching heav'n
But priests secure the silver now being giv'n

Oh! may you keep and ponder in your mind
God's wondrous love in damning all mankind;
Sending unchristened babies down to hell
Because poor Adam ate His fruit and "fell";
All wise God knowing that all men would fall
Had wiser been to make no men at all.

Then may we hope, anticipate, expect
That some day reason will reach the "elect,"
That with the aid of science and research
We may defeat the minions of the Church
And so retrace each false step man has trod
Since mind was muddled by belief in God.

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