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Views and Opinions

Causation and Miracles

IN my last article I gave reasons for believing that Hume's criticism of miracles was not quite so conclusive as it has been thought to be, and also that part, at least, of this failure was due to his conception of the nature of causation. Hume's argument, at all events, left the believer, if not unscathed, at least unconvinced, because it did not, and could not, in fact, prove the impossibility of miracles. I think later advances have enabled us to do this. I believe that, just as an understanding of the significance of researches into the origin of the belief in gods has enabled us to say the question of the *reality* of God is now ruled out, leaving us with nothing to study but the origin and the development of the belief in God, so we may by reducing the belief in miracles to the factors of which the belief is a necessary product, find ourselves left with only a sociological and psychological problem to answer.

We may best commence with an examination of the nature of causation. When Hume defined causation as an invariable sequence, and laid it down that it was impossible to establish any actual connexion between them, he was writing at a time when analytical science was in its infancy, synthetic science was hardly in a more advanced stage, and a philosophy of scientific method was just struggling into being. Today we view things from a standpoint impossible to Hume, and the fallacy of Hume's conclusion with regard to causation is not difficult to discover—although, it may be said in passing, there are a great many contemporary scientists who have not yet completely emancipated themselves from the earlier stage.

* * *

The Impossibility of Miracles

What is it that actually constitutes an act of causation? There is what we call a cause, and there is what we call an effect; what is the relation between the two? Hume says all that exists is a mere sequence, and this is widely accepted to-day. But

when we examine a little more critically we discover that the thing upon which Hume built actually does not exist in a scientific conception of causation. There is no sequence, that is, there is no time element, and it is the introduction of this quite unnecessary factor that lies at the root of the confusion.

Let us take the most familiar of all examples. Ask the *cause* of water, and the reply will probably be oxygen and hydrogen in combination. The evidence offered is that when the two are chemically combined water is produced. But considered as separate things oxygen and hydrogen are emphatically not the cause of water, or of anything else. By no sort of examination, by no sort of consideration of the properties of O. & H., can there be deduced the properties of water. In relation to water, it is simply not true that oxygen and hydrogen are, as separate things, in a causal relation to water. Adopting somewhat loose language, one may say that O. & H. can only constitute a cause of water when the two are combined. But when the two are combined—under the necessary conditions—then O. & H. are not the cause of water, the combination is water. There is no succession, no time element involved. As I have said elsewhere, there are only factors and their products. But the products are not things that follow the combination of the factors, they *are* the factors in combination. The whole difference between a "cause" and an "effect," is, as was pointed out many years ago by Lewes, the difference between analysis and synthesis. When we talk of the cause of a phenomenon we are considering the whole of the separate factors which together constitute the effect. When we speak of an effect we are considering all these factors in combination. The proper definition of a cause is the simultaneous assemblage of all the conditions necessary to the appearance of an effect. If this simple consideration had been borne in mind we should never have had the confusion which exists among scientists about explaining life in terms of physics, or the looking for qualities in the factors that are, and can be only, present in their assemblage. But, as I have so often pointed out, the scientifically-minded scientist is a great rarity—almost as rare as an open-minded priest.

* * *

Life and the Supernatural

Now the bearing of this on the question of belief in the miraculous is, whether it enables us to say definitely, not merely that there is no adequate evidence for a belief in miracles, a position which will always leave for the believer the chance of replying that in his opinion the evidence is quite adequate, but whether, taking the view of causation stated above, it warrants us in saying that miracles do not occur because they are impossible. In other words can we say that the conditions which result in *believing* in miracles are known and can be stated, and that these remove altogether the possibility of miracles as his-

torical occurrences; and that they remain as psychological facts only? I believe we can indicate the conditions upon which the belief in the miraculous arises, and that we can also indicate the conditions which make the historical occurrence of miracles an absolute impossibility.

Hume had noted that "It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilized people has ever given admission to any of them, that people will be found to have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors, who transmitted them with the inviolable authority, which always attend received opinions," but his preoccupation with his own theory of causation, and also with the special argument of Tillotson's against the "real presence," prevented his going beyond the point of doubting whether enough evidence could be produced to justify belief in the miraculous. Otherwise he would have seen that a very simple conclusion is possible that would rule out miracles altogether.

The vital generalization here is that the *belief* in the miraculous is wholly a cultural phenomenon. It appears at a certain stage of cultural development and as surely disappears at another stage of culture. At one level of development comets may spread disease, sickness may be cured with incantations, water may be turned into wine, virgins may bear children, the dead may be brought back to life. Everything is then possible because nothing is certain. At another level, one can hardly say with exactitude that these beliefs are rejected, for they do not obtain sufficient acceptance to speak of their rejection, they are simply not entertained. Two or three generations ago the belief in diabolic agency was very common. To-day it has become the characteristic of a rapidly diminishing minority. No evidence that I know of has ever been brought forward to prove to those who do not believe in it that diabolic agency does not exist; it has with huge numbers simply faded out.

We have in the fact of reducing the belief in miracles to a cultural phenomena what is necessary to establish the existence of a causative process. On the one hand we have a marked ignorance of the factors that result in a human birth, or the nature of the difference between wine and water, etc., and on the other the existence of a social environment in which many things are considered possible, because nothing of their real nature is common knowledge. In other words, the explanation of the belief in miracles depends upon two things, (1) lack of knowledge as the nature of the forces around us, (2) a social state in which the primitive misunderstandings that find expression in the miraculous is organized and perpetuated in institutions. There is here what we find in every separate act of causation—a combination of two factors resulting in a third thing—the product—a belief in the miraculous.

* * *

Credibility and Possibility

In denying the possibility of a miracle we are thus on the strongest of scientific grounds. Knowing the constitution of water and of wine, I do not say that I do not believe there is evidence enough to prove that Jesus turned water into wine; I say I *know* he did not. I do not say that there is no evidence that a woman ever produced a child without male cooperation, I say that knowing the conditions of human procreation, I *know* that it never happened. And the same may be said of the "miracles" that are exhibited in the annals of every religion from the most primitive times.

When we thus have at hand the true causation of the belief in miracles, is there any use or wisdom in saying that, after all, it is a question of evidence whether miracles have happened or not? Do we need to say that it is just a matter of evidence whether at some time somewhere twice two equals five, or that when we know the necessary conditions to the production of a given phenomenon, that that phenomenon might happen in the absence of those conditions? If we are not to convert the whole world into a lunatic asylum we may surely say with confidence that when we know the conditions of a certain happening, that event cannot happen in the absence of those conditions. When we have a proposition, the terms of which cannot be brought together in consciousness, then there is surely nothing absurd in calling that proposition an impossible one? If "impossible" is to carry any definite meaning at all, we are warranted in applying the term to such things as those named.

When Hume said that the man who believed in Christianity believed in a constant miracle in his own person, he expressed a truth that he might well have developed further. It was indeed another example of Voltaire's difficulty in accepting the tale of the saint who walked a hundred paces with his head under his arm. Ninety-nine of the steps are quite credible—it is the first one that raises the whole problem. The rest is easy. Believe in a God, swallow the first miracle and other miracles follow in due sequence. Hume's great mistake lay in treating miracles as mainly a question of credibility. It is nothing of the kind. Discuss miracles on the basis of credibility and their possibility is admitted, and it is notorious that what is enough evidence to satisfy one person is not enough to satisfy another. The scientific case against miracles is not that they are incredible, but that they are impossible, and for the reason that the known conditions for the appearance of the phenomena called miraculous are not present.

The question, in short, of the belief in miracles has ceased to be an historical one, and has become one of psychology. It is not a question of whether miracles occur, but solely that of discovering the conditions, social and psychological which makes such a belief possible. One does not argue whether Old Mother Hubbard really lived in a shoe, or whether fairies actually dance on a summer's night in the shadow of forest trees. If we discover adults who believe in these things, we still do not discuss their possibility. We are only interested in the curious problem as to what are the conditions that result in such a belief. I see no reason whatever why this argument does not apply with equal force to the once universal belief in miracles.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The propaganda of the old Atheists of the eighteenth century, brisk, lively, talented, acute, and openly attacking the sway of the sky-pilots is a thousand times better adapted to wake men from the sleep of religion than the dreary and dry rehashes of Marxism, hardly ever illuminated by well-chosen instances with which our literature is swamped, and which, he it frankly said, do not give even a true portrait of Marxism. . . . There is absolutely no reason why the old Atheism and Materialism should not benefit by the improvements made by Marx and Engels. The all-important matter is—though this is too commonly forgotten by our own so-called Marxians, but in reality Marx-mutilating Communists—to awaken the still completely uneducated masses, so that they adopt a conscious attitude in regard to religion and interest themselves in its criticism.

Lenin (*Works* Vol. XXVII.)

Watson's Wonderland

"Not much beholden to the munificent past,
In mind or spirit, but frankly of this hour."

Watson.

"The kind, wise words that fall from years that fall—
Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all."

Swinburne.

COLLECTED works make or mar men's reputations, for so often they are warehouses rather than treasuries. Beside the masterpiece comes the half-success; beside the permanent, the temporary, and sometimes the frankly fugitive. But few things in literature are more gratifying in these dark days of exaggerated and bubble-and-squeak reputations than to note the steady path along which the fame of William Watson has advanced. He owes his good fortune solely to the sterling merit of his work, for no one has done less to advertise it. Those who can look back to the best reviews of the past years will be surprised to perceive how noiselessly William Watson crept into the hearts of all lovers of real literature.

No one can read his poems from *The Prince's Quest*, published over half a century ago, to *The Man Who Saw*, issued during the World-War, without being struck with the amount of work of classical quality, of which there can be little question. In nothing, perhaps, in his genius so bright as in his humanity and his devotion to Liberty. His courage, too, is shown on every page of his writing. In *The Purple East* and *A Year of Shame*, he impeached the Sultan, Abdul the Damned. Was ever monarch, or government, attacked in such grand and sonorous lines, with such sinewy rhetoric, sounding declamation, pictorial richness? Sonnets, written at white-heat of passion, echoing in the hearts and present in the memory of the men who read them. The poet's freethought is "four-square to all the winds that blow." It is playful in *The Eloping Angels*, a satire in the light-hearted Byronic way, and it is deadly serious in *The Unknown God* :—

"A God whose ghost in arch and aisle
Yet haunts his temple and his tomb;
But follows in a little while
Odin and Zeus to equal doom:
A God of kindred seed and line;
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine."

In a fine sonnet, addressed to Aubrey de Vere, the poet, he expressly voices iconoclasm :—

"Not mine your mystic creed, not mine in prayer
And worship, at the ensanguined Cross to kneel."

On matters of high moment, indeed, William Watson always sings with rare dignity and restraint. It is not too much to say that *Wordsworth's Grave*, *The Tomb of Burns*, *In Laleham Churchyard* and *Shelley's Centenary* will be linked indissolubly with the memory of those truly great writers they so worthily celebrate, so penetrating is the insight into the genius of each individual poet. Maybe, the finest effort in this direction was his *Lachrymæ Musarum*, which made so notable a stir when Alfred Tennyson died. It ranks as one of the noblest poems written for years, for, like his great contemporary, Swinburne, he always handles that great theme of death right worthily.

Watson's poetry is a golden treasury of jewelled aphorisms. Take, for example, a few felicities of expression, culled at random from his works :—

"Rare is noble impulse, rare
The impassioned aim."

"Not in a vague dream of man forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows loving the to-day."

"The mystery we make darker with a name."

"Now touching goal, now backward hurled,
Toils the indomitable world."

"And set his heart upon the goal,
Not on the prize."

"Song is not truth, not wisdom, but the rose
Upon truth's lips, the light in wisdom's eyes."

Innumerable poets have sung of Nature, and it is highly significant that Watson preserves his originality. When we remember what Catullus, what Lucretius, what Wordsworth, what Tennyson, what Meredith, what countless poets have sung in praise of Nature, we might well despair of hearing a new note. But Watson has a charm and power all his own. Here is a couplet from *The First Skylark of Spring* :—

"O high above this home of tears,
Eternal joy sing on."

How unforgettable in its way is the following :—

"And over me
The everlasting taciturnity;
The august, inhospitable, inhuman night,
Glittering magnificently unperturbed."

He can make a picture of a commonplace scene :—

"Where on the tattered fringes of the land,
The uncounted flowers of a penurious sand
Are pale against the pale lips of the sea."

In his latest volume, *The Man Who Saw*, Watson chose Lloyd George as the theme of his principal poem, and cramped, for once, his poetic genius within the narrow limits of the conventional. It is a real tribute to say that Watson is neither dull nor rhetorical. Compared to the official Laureate's later crudities, Rudyard Kipling's hysterics, and the tiny outbursts of minor poetasters, Watson's poorest lines are at least readable. Few real poets could write about contemporary politicians and remain poets. Even Swinburne, Tennyson and Victor Hugo, living in an era of far greater men, did not do this thing with impunity, and their political poems represent but the excrement of their genius. Young University men and the staff of *Punch* can do these little things so much more admirably. To-day the budding Miltons have no Cromwell as a subject for adulation or detraction in Britain.

The trouble is that it is well-nigh impossible for a modern man to write exactly what he thinks, as a man, about men in authority, and yet print what he writes. This makes political poetry possible, but improbable, and gives point to the gibe that there is less freedom in Britain under the Guelphs than in old-world Rome under the eagle of the Cæsars.

Watson's poems on the World-War are white-hot with scornful fury, intensified by the genius with which the poet makes every word add its share to the final effect. Yet he can get away from these warlike moods, and return to Nature, as in the beautiful lyric, *The Yellow Pansy* :—

"In our garden, on its frozen stalk,
A yellow pansy bloomed.
'Twas Nature, saying by trope and metaphor :
'Behold when empire against empire strives,
Though all else perish, ground 'neath iron war,
The golden thought survives."

We must not close on a polemical note. We remember gratefully that Watson has, in his long life, given us of his best, and that is the highest form of literature. He is the one living singer of the English race who has held his ear close to the movements of the modern world, and brought away with him some sounding echoes of its music. At its best and freest that golden voice of his has conveyed to us the deepest message known to the sons of men. For, in the last analysis, noble thinking means noble writing. All else is as ephemeral as "the dust upon the desert's dusty face." Recall his own brave words :—

"The unquenchable muse,
Though meanly lodged to-day
In dreariest outlands of the world's regard,
Forsees the hour when man shall once more feel
His need of her and call the exile home."

Why Atheist?

WELL, I will tell you. Because:—

(1) Atheist is the only word in the English language whose meaning most accurately corresponds to my religious convictions. And in spite of the efforts of religious persons to misrepresent this meaning, it remains the least equivocal term which a man can use who, if he be called upon to name his views, wishes to convey to others the following convictions.

(2) I am satisfied that there is no verifiable evidence in support of the real existence of any sort of God. If God were the absolute reality which he is claimed to be, then by those very proofs which we employ to determine the existence of all proven realities, God's existence should be the easiest of all to prove. But the precise contrary is the case; the existence of God has always remained unproven. Many persons of high theological eminence definitely assert that all attempts at proof must inevitably fail. Others declare that we have no right to make such attempts. This anomaly is the more remarkable, not to say hypocritical, when we realize that it is these very people who are paid to proclaim that nothing is more real than God!

(3) I am satisfied that there is plenty of verifiable evidence against the real existence of any God. Thousands of Gods have, at one time or another, been regarded as realities, which to-day are admitted to be pure myths. The origins of God, Jehovah, Allah, Siva, or any other modern God, are wrapt in exactly the same sort of myth as the origins of Osiris, Ra, Ormuzd, Thor, Wotan and the rest of the dead and gone pantheon. Belief in any single God is as illogical as belief in a number of Gods. It is simply "belief," unsupported by and contrary to verifiable evidence, that keeps any God "alive."

(4) I am satisfied that there is no verifiable evidence for the existence of souls, spirits or any of those misty things which we are supposed to develop into after we have died. The evidence for their existence is on a par with that of the evidence for God's existence. The history of every religion shows that the idea of a soul originated in man's ignorance and imagination. When a man died, his breathing stopped. Hence it was thought that his breath (spiritus) had gone out of him and was still roaming round on its own. When a man slept, he dreamt that he was talking to persons already dead, or that he had gone to some other place than where he found himself on waking. Hence a two-fold reason for imagining that some part of him was detachable from and could exist apart from his body. When a man walked about in the sun, his shadow always followed him. Yet under certain conditions this shadow had a disconcerting way of disappearing. Hence another excuse for imagining the existence of "another self."

In his desire to name observed phenomena, man invented the original terms from which the terms we are discussing have derived. In his ignorance of the natural explanations he attributed properties and qualities to them which they did not possess. As knowledge increased, souls, spirits, etc., became more and more hazy, while the breath, the shadow and the dream became more correctly understood as natural phenomena. Souls, spirits and spooks of all sorts are the mere relics of antique misconceptions.

(5) I do not believe in the possibility of a "future life." If the term "death" means anything intelligible, then it means the cessation of all those activities which are summed up in the word "life" or "alive." If it does not mean this, then what does it mean? One does not refer to a stone or a pencil as being dead or as having died, because these things

never were alive or living, in the only intelligible sense of these terms. Therefore, since death means the cessation of life, it follows that anything which is dead cannot at the same time be alive. In other words, "future life" in its usually accepted meaning is a contradiction in terms and therefore absurd.

On the other hand, if a living thing continues to live after it was *supposed* to be dead, then it will proceed to manifest again those activities which justified our saying that it was alive; and we will have to admit that we were mistaken in thinking it was dead, or had died. But corpses, dead animals, trees, plants and germs do not manifest the activities which made us say they were alive. Therefore to suppose that they go on "living" in some mysterious "future life" is merely to deny the facts which make the words "life" and "death" have any intelligible meaning. With exactly the same illogicality one might suppose that a watch continues in some mysterious manner to indicate the time after its workings have been destroyed. Doubtless "souls" have "spiritual watches"!

If souls really exist, then the future life is a possibility. If the future life is a possibility, then some such thing as a soul must exist. But from whichever point of view the question is examined, there is no verifiable evidence for the reality of either, whereas there is conclusive evidence that they are merely concepts arising out of ignorance or illogicality.

(6) I am satisfied that there is no verifiable evidence for the existence of the so-called supernatural. In the sense in which "natural" is here used, it is an adjective for Nature or the whole cosmos. In this sense *everything* must be natural. Every phenomenon must therefore be explicable in natural terms. In so far as no explanation is forthcoming, we are ignorant; so we have no right to assert that the phenomenon itself is not natural, or that it cannot subsequently be explained in natural terms. As it is now used, the word "supernatural" is nothing better than an euphemistic cloak for our ignorance. It is as empty of meaning as the terms "infranatural" or "extranatural."

(7) I am convinced of the evil influence of religious teaching. Religious ideas are implanted in our minds at an age when we are incapable of testing their truth against proven facts or personal experience. Owing to the manner in which we acquire them, we cannot help growing up with a strong bias in favour of these ideas, and with a correspondingly strong disinclination to examine them critically. This is shown in later life by the temper which is almost invariably aroused when our religious beliefs are called in question. And this temper is the result of the clash between our ingrained prejudice and our inability to produce for our own minds any satisfactory reasons in support of this prejudice. Being based upon unproven, and for the most part unprovable, statements, religion teaches us at the earliest possible age to rate unverified "belief" at a higher value than verifiable truth. Credulity and bigotry are the natural offspring of this teaching.

Religion is based wholly upon tradition. Tradition may be good, bad or indifferent. In other spheres traditional views or habits have to submit to revision in the light of changing needs or conditions. But religion puts the sanction of tradition on a plane above actual necessity. Consequently it stands for the maintenance of, and continued respect for, ideas which are old, apart from whether they are good or bad. Any criticism of its traditional foundations is always regarded as a menace. Any suggested alteration of its traditional customs or ideas is always opposed as heterodoxy, and therefore as sinful. Religion, therefore, must always remain as a powerful force for re-

action, and a constant bar to human progress, both physical and moral.

Evidence of the truth of this is patent in the pages of history. The history of medicine is riddled with instances in which religious ideas have acted as a stumbling block and a deterrent to beneficent enquiry. The history of education shows the opposition which secular authority has suffered at the hands of the religious hierarchies. The history of law shows the well-nigh insuperable difficulties which have been placed in the way of new and humaner measures by these same hierarchies. Yet we find that with supreme hypocrisy and indifference to the facts, the Churches nowadays claim to be mainly responsible for such things as the abolition of slavery, the emancipation of women, the improvement of morality and what not. It would be incredible were it not true. In a few more years the Churches will doubtless claim to have abolished the slums, done away with unemployment and poverty, and possibly even to have initiated the League of Nations and abolished war! What next!

I have no space to repeat the appalling consequences of religious bigotry in the past, and its ever-recurring incidence in the present. But one cannot fail to bear in mind the still-existent Blasphemy Laws and the attempts in 1930 and later to introduce even harsher measures. As though the Almighty were so touchy and helpless against the criticisms of his puny creatures that the latter had to protect him by laws! And I am vividly reminded of this by the present "Incitement to Disaffection" Bill—a measure which seeks to enforce the same suppression of opinion by the sly ruse of pretending to protect the Armed Forces from disloyal propaganda. I prophesy that if the Bill becomes law, the Established Church or its representatives will, sooner or later, take advantage of it for the suppression of heterodoxy in their own interests. Needless to say they will not prosecute heterodox views on the ground of heterodoxy, but on the grounds of disloyalty or disaffection or some other more convenient term.

For these and many more reasons I am and I call myself an Atheist.

C. S. FRASER.

Samuel Butler

(Concluded from page 726)

ONE of Samuel Butler's pictures may be seen in the Tate Gallery, but it owes its position more to the posthumous literary fame of Butler than to its merits as a work of art. It is entitled "Mr. Heatherley's Holiday." It was painted while Butler was at Heatherley's studio. It represents a corner of the studio, with the shelves containing pots, vases and models used by the students. In the foreground is a skeleton, which Mr. Heatherley—a bearded melancholy-faced man—is engaged in repairing.

Mr. Heatherley never took a holiday, and was said always to spend it in repairing the damages inflicted by the more sportive of the students, who would at times dance it round, and otherwise lark about with it. It is originally named "Tinkering with a Skeleton," and contained a figure of a child looking on, and other alterations were made. Butler gave the picture to his friend Mr. Jason Smith. It owes its position in the Tate Gallery entirely to Mr. Festing Jones, Butler's life-long friend and biographer, who, when Mr. Jason Smith died in 1910 (eight years after Butler's death), spoke to Sir Charles Holroyd, the Director of the National Gallery, about it, and it was accepted as a gift from Mr. Smith's executors.

Butler was even less successful with music than with painting, although he studied this more for pleasure and recreation than for profit. It was by literature that Butler was at length to attain fame, and then only towards the end of his life. He never attained to popularity, and probably never will. Even to-day, more than thirty years after his death, there is no cheap edition of his works. Nevertheless, he was one of the most original and seminal thinkers of the nineteenth century, and one of the most trenchant exponents of cant and hypocrisy who ever used a pen.

Although unsuccessful as an artist himself, yet he studied the subject to some purpose; spending much of his time among the Continental Galleries and Museums, especially those in Italy, and his knowledge of Art was profound.

In most cases of unrecognized genius, it is not the fault of the neglected one, but his misfortune not to attract attention. But in Butler's case the fault lay mainly with himself: Butler made no attempt to ingratiate himself with the public. He was the *enfant terrible* of literature. He never sugar-coated his pills, or made any attempt at compromise. On the contrary, he went out of his way to tread heavily on everybody's corns, until, as he himself admits, he became a veritable Ishmael, and indeed, takes an impish glee in being so. There is no doubt that this attitude was due to the experiences of his unhappy childhood, which inspired him with a perfect hatred of society in general. After escaping from the Egyptian bondage of his father's Rectory, Butler was determined to make full use of his liberty and say exactly what he thought. So, after his return from New Zealand, he cut Society, with its taboos, rules and regulations; took bachelor chambers in Clifford's Inn, Fetter Lane, and henceforward led an independent life, which he could afford to do on the interest of his eight thousand pounds.

In *Erewhon* (Nowhere, spelt backwards) a Utopian romance, he criticized both Darwinism and Christianity. Its sequel *Erewhon Revisited* is a satire on the origins of popular religions. A classic by training, he upset the classical scholars by writing a book to prove that the *Odyssey* of Homer was written by a woman. A warm supporter of Darwin upon the publication of the *Origin of Species*, he became his bitterest assailant by adopting the theory of Lamarck. To Huxley and his colleagues, who were fighting a strenuous battle against the Victorian belief in the six days' Creation and the Garden of Eden, Butler appeared a traitor, especially as he did not believe in these fables himself; and, anyhow, he was only a literary man with a classical education and a penchant for Art. What did he want to butt in for, on a scientific question for which he had had no training, an amateur, an outsider? That is how Butler appeared to the Darwinians.

But his crowning transgression was in the religious sphere, by his publication of an elaborate mystification entitled *The Fair Haven*; a satire on religious commentators; a satire so realistic in its mock orthodoxy, and piety, that many even among the clergy and the religious press were deceived into commending the work to their friends and readers. Butler's name does not appear in connexion with the book at all, but it is declared to be the work of John Pickard Owen, once an unbeliever, but now, through a study of the Gospels, a convert to the truth, and anxious to convey it to others; "it was in reality," says Clara Stillman, in her able monograph on Butler, "an ironical analysis of all the arguments advanced by the theologians to justify belief in the supernatural, and a pretended refutation of all unbelievers. With such two-edged satire Butler was in his element, and he let himself go with infinite relish." And further:—

The main position of Owen's book was that to combat unbelief effectively one must enter sympathetically and thoroughly into all the doubts and difficulties of unbelievers, grant their importance and seriousness, their actual basis in reason and scientific fact, and deal with them honestly, not fear to face them or wave them airily aside, the usual method of defenders of the faith. One's triumph would then be a real and lasting one worthy of the truth of Christianity. John Pickard Owen, having been an unbeliever, and being now a believer, was supremely well fitted to perform this task. It goes without saying that Butler made the most of all the doubts and difficulties, and that his answers to them were far from being as satisfactory as they might seem to the uninitiated. (C. G. Stillman: *Samuel Butler*, pp. 97-99-100.)

Pickard Owen took as the vital fact upon which everything else depended, the Resurrection. Establish that, he declares, and everything else follows. He then proceeds to examine the arguments for and against the Resurrection: "Needless to say, his perfectly orthodox conclusion is reached in complete defiance of his own analysis. . . . Its evangelical tone, its mock solemnity, its elaborate display of reasonableness, its false disarming candour, make it such a masterpiece of Buffonian irony, as that was conceived by Butler, that it is little wonder that it was taken seriously by a large number of people, including a prominent clergyman who sent it to a friend whom he wished to convert, and several reviewers of religious publications." (*Ibid*, p. 100.) The clergyman in question was no less distinguished a dignitary than Canon Ainger. Two religious papers, the *Rock* and the *Record*, also accepted it as a serious defence of Christianity.

Butler declares that he fully expected that everyone would recognize the work as a satire, and in a letter to Miss Savage he hopes the work will be attacked, and give him a chance of excusing himself; if so, "I shall endeavour that the excuse may be worse than the fault it is intended to excuse," and "I dare say I shall get into a row—at least, I hope so." In the Preface to the second edition of the work, published under his own name, he made unmerciful fun of those he had hoaxed, says Miss Stillman, and, "of course, these people never forgave him for having made fools of them. The distrust and contempt with which his later works were received had their origin here. He had hoped for a row, but there was no row. There was only silence. And this was what greeted his books again and again. Having been taken in once, reviewers would not risk it a second time. They could not tell when he was in jest and when in earnest." (*Ibid*, pp. 102-103.) Butler was puzzled and deeply disappointed.

Butler left a series of note books behind, from which we propose to give some selections.

W. MANN.

MIRACLES

The Egyptian and Syrian monks were considered the favourites of heaven, and were accustomed to cure diseases with a touch, a word, or a distant message, and to expel the most obstinate demons from the souls or bodies which they possessed. They familiarly accosted, or imperiously commanded, the lions and serpents of the deserts; infused vegetation into a sapless trunk, suspended iron on the surface of the water; passed the Nile on the back of a crocodile, and refreshed themselves in a fiery furnace. These extravagant tales, which display the fiction, without the genius, of poetry, have seriously affected the reason, the faith, and the morals of Christians.—*Gibbon*.

Acid Drops

Parliament in its wisdom has decreed that a Royal Duke could not possibly maintain his existence without an official grant of £10,000 annually. And as a Royal Duke cannot be expected to keep his wife out of so niggardly an allowance, an extra £15,000 is provided for her keep. Parliament is likewise impartial in its care for the married state. So, while upon every ordinary person lies the liability for his wife's maintenance, it also admits that when an ordinary man is married the State shall do something for *his* wife. If he is earning, say, £300 annually, the State graciously allows him fifty pounds free of income tax. The wife of a Royal Duke is valued at £15,000 a year, the wife of a commoner is valued at fifty times two and threepence. Now we may estimate the value of our wives. It is a question of £15,000 versus £5 12s. 6d. But the impartiality of British law is seen in the fact that the extra cost of a wife is admitted in both instances.

The Dean of St. Paul's says that in Cathedrals Christianity should be preached to those who are without any label. Does he mean that it is to be preached to Jews and Mohammedans, Atheists, etc? We suspect not. We fancy that what is meant is that a Christianity must be preached, that is nothing in particular, so that those who are a little particular will not stay away. Otherwise it is clear that Christianity itself is a label, and the Dean realizes that to be precise where Christianity is concerned is to expose its absurdities. Imagine anyone advising on any subject other than Christianity that what is said must not mean anything definite, or even understandable. It looks as if the Dean is trying to imitate the imbecile vacuities of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald.

History as it is written in the *Daily Express*, subject India:—

The British first came to India in the seventeenth century, as traders *avoiding political power as long as they could*. Eventually the anarchy and misrule of the native princes, combined with the intrigues of Portuguese, Dutch and French competitors, *compelled the British to interfere with the politics of their neighbours*.

The italics are ours, and we reprint in order to remove the wicked impression that exists in foreign countries that British possessions have ever been more than burdens which have been taken up in obedience to the will of the Lord, and mainly in order to restrain the wicked competition that has been directed against this country.

Lord Hugh Cecil thinks that parsons might well be subject to a "retiring age," and he points out the number of aged incumbents there are. We do not altogether agree with the proposal. It might be put in another way. Suppose the age of entrance was made to be seventy, and there were no retiring age at all? That would supply some employment for old men, and women, for there should be no sex distinction, and it might keep the very old men out of politics where they are apt to do more harm than good.

"Irreparable harm," says the Rev. A. E. Whitham, "has been done to the body, to the teeth, to the eyes, the hair, by the ignorant amateur. But anyone can assume the role of spiritual director." If the accent is merely on the word "amateur," there is not much in the warning. The professional "spiritual director" is worse than any amateur. Perhaps it is because even an amateur can see our teeth, our eyes, parts of our body, and, in some cases hair on our lucky heads, but who has ever seen our "spirit," even under "a double-million magnifying microscope of hextry power?"

Mr. George Bernard Shaw opened, the other day, a hall to the memory of William Morris. An excellent account of him and his work is given in the *Church Times*, and we are pleased to note it does not hide the

fact that he was an Atheist. Morris was a fine poet, a convinced Socialist, but above all, a magnificent craftsman. He said:—

If there is a God he never meant us to know much about himself. I have never thought much about these things since I was at Oxford, thinking of becoming a parson. I know of no greater happiness than this world can give. . . . One thing is certain, if there be an after-life, we shan't be less fit for its fellowship by having made ourselves good fellows in this.

William Morris was a true Secularist.

A phrase in a Prayer by the Editor of the *British Weekly* is open to objection from his temperance readers. He asks God: "Do Thou, O Lord, fortify our spirits?" It reminds us of the Curate who led the children's singing of the Hymn: "Little drops of water." "Yes, yes," he said impatiently, "but put more spirit into it."

Archdeacon Storr reminds us of what Christians so often pretend to forget, namely that when Christ talked of friendship he limited it to "Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you." This is what the *Freethinker* has so often had to say to sentimentalists who imagine that the "Fatherhood" of God involves the "Brotherhood" of all men. God's "fatherhood" is no more real than is the paternity of a celibate priest who calls himself "Father" So and So, instead of "Priest" So and So. The true union of man with his fellows is not a blood relationship, nor a union of those who believe in the same superstitions.

Two paragraphs in the *Sunday Express*, the other day, should prove very satisfying to Christians. The first is a slight review of Sir Charles Marston's latest work, *The Bible is True*, in which we are told the erudite and extremely pious author has discovered who was the "daughter of Pharaoh," who took Moses from the bulrushes. Sir Charles also "proves that Moses was born about 1520 B.C.," and—though we have not yet read the book—we have no doubt he also proves that God chatted to Moses exactly like Sir Charles chats with his friend; and that Moses had no difficulty whatever in piling up the waters of the Red Sea on either side so that the Children of Israel could cross it on dry land.

Unfortunately, news from Paris rather upsets the religious applecart. It seems that the remains of a city in Syria, dating from 5,000 B.C., have just been excavated and quite a good deal of cuneiform literature has been unearthed. "It includes," says the report, "many of the stories which were later reproduced in the Old Testament, and indicates the sources from which the writers of the early Books of the Old Testament drew their information." We are quite sure that even if these discoveries were confirmed in every particular, Sir Charles Marston would still believe in the Divine Inspiration of the Bible; and with him are all the Fundamentalists in the world. Still, for most sensible people, the dilemma is a real one. For how can God inspire writings which were obviously copied from cuneiform literature written thousands of years before the Hebrew language was even thought of?

Professor Pollard, broadcasting the other day on the Reformation, mentioned "a sixteenth century Vicar of Bray, who loyally obeyed Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary and Elizabeth, and who throughout all the trials and temptations of that troublesome time remained unshaken in his fidelity to the national religion." He was obviously a true Christian.

Dr. Downey, the Archbishop of Liverpool, in asking for funds to complete the Roman Catholic Cathedral there, pointed out that while £8,000,000 was the cost of a battleship, only £3,000,000 was required for the Cathedral. "Is a battleship," he pathetically asks, "of more value than a Cathedral?" Well, it all depends. Neither is required in a well-ordered state; but it might

be argued that, under certain circumstances, the battleship can at least protect trade and food routes from a possible enemy. But of what value is a Cathedral when used as a praying-centre? Of what value are prayers at any time and under any circumstances? What is the use of the superstition and credulity enshrined in Cathedrals? Of what value are they to any community? Or the priests, bishops and cardinals? And Dr. Downey did *not* answer these questions.

A recent visitor to Sweden laments the very slow progress the Roman Catholic Church has made in that country. It only boasts of 4,000 Catholics and 17 churches. He considers that "Sweden is a gracious country, and its people no less so." Perhaps this is partly because they have resolutely rejected Popery. At all events, the visitor puts forward a suggestion which he hopes will be taken up by Catholics here. It is constantly to repeat, "Jesus—Convert Scandinavia," and he thinks that "in a short space of time Sweden's 4,000 Catholics will be doubled and redoubled." But why not try England first? Let Catholics all over the world say, "Jesus—convert England." Will troops of rabid Protestants clamour to be converted? Or Freethinkers?

The father of the priest-in-charge at the Church of St. Hubert in Birmingham, died at a whist drive held in connexion with the Church. What a glorious opportunity it would have been for Mr. James Douglas to have given the *Daily Express* readers one of his wonderful inspirational articles on the subject of the sinfulness of playing whist, had the death been that of the father of a prominent Freethinker, and the whist drive held for the benefit of, say Conway Hall. Why does Mr. Douglas keep silent on these unique occasions?

A recent anthology, consisting of extracts from contemporary newspapers between 1805 and 1887 has just been published. A pious reviewer, however, takes exception to the book because not only are "the references to religion few," but there is actually no reference to any of the leaders of the Oxford Movement! After all this is not so surprising as it may appear. The vast majority of the people were too desperately poor, and had to work too hard for their daily bread (it was often little else) to worry about the ridiculous differences of opinion as to what the Fathers said or did not say about Church Doctrine or Ritual; or whether Newman was right or wrong in Dissent or anything else. And the ordinary newspapers reflected the ordinary layman's opinions. At all events, we can see from this anthology that the Oxford Movement was not the epoch-making revival church writers make it out to be. It affected few people outside a certain clique, and certainly made very little impression either on the people or on the newspapers. And that is good to learn.

Once again the Bishop of London has proclaimed his touching belief in angels. Those which helped the British Christians at Mons in 1914 against the German Christians provided him with unique material; and now, twenty years later, he related to a breathless congregation at St. John's Church, Victoria, the case of a child who said she had seen two angels. Said the Bishop:—

I see no reason why certain people who are pure in heart should not sometimes see angels. This pure-hearted child had seen something which was hidden from the eyes of the ordinary world. I believe angels appear to certain people, although the appearances may be called hallucinations by some authorities.

In other words, Angels, when they are seen, are the products of illusion or downright lying.

Religion and its subordinate superstitions die hard. A new movement, The Women's League of Health and Beauty has an organ *Mother and Daughter*, distinguishable on the bookstalls by its silver cover with a nude lady romping into nowhere. We are quite willing to believe that the wholesome physical exercises the

League is organizing will be beneficial to those who undertake them. But what sort of Hygiene is expected to accompany the "Prayer Meetings on Fridays at five o'clock." According to the November issue of *Mother and Daughter*, the Prayer meetings are arranged "at the request of those members who feel that prayer is the best basis on which to build." Surely those who "feel" that way could pray, without advertising the fact thus imperpetually.

Dr. James Black (D.D.) in an article called "The Pagans Laugh," gets some (Christian) fun out of the fact that the "Pagans" gave nick-names to Christ and his followers. There is no obvious "fun" in calling Jesus a "Nazarine" and a "Galilean," it is rather for believers in the historicity of the Jesus stories to tell us why Jesus was never called a "Bethlehemite." Dr. Black calls it a "joke" or "pun" that led the pagan world to call His followers "Christians," which our writer says meant both Christlike and "good." If the Pagans had any sense of fitness as well as humour, the word they used probably meant "goody," or even "good-for-nothing."

Dr. W. E. Orchard has been "spilling the beans" indeed. In his new book *The Way of Simplicity*, he says, "Faith is possible to the weakest intellect," "it is not an act of the intellect which is forced on it by facts." "Faith is due to the will to believe." This looks like a plea of guilty to all that the Freethinkers have said about Faith. Such faith as this is indistinguishable from Credulity and should so be named.

Professor Rufus Jones has a peculiarly unprofessional way of using the English language. He calls Christ "the most unique figure in the history of the human race." Professor Jones, unhappily, is not unique in this queer misunderstanding of a simple word. If a thing is unique it stands alone, and there cannot be degrees of uniqueness. Prof. Jones adorns a country where Prohibition never meant prohibition, and where nobody takes any notice of the warning "No Admission" unless it adds the word "Positively."

The Rev. Leyton Richards, in the presence of the Bishop of Birmingham, made a suggestion which we are by no means inclined to regard as outside the possibilities of the future, although remote enough at present. He looks forward to the time when a united Church will possess "a Foreign Office, no less than the State," with "a kind of Cabinet drawn from the various churches, whose function it would be to scrutinize international affairs from a Christian standpoint." Thus would come into being an "ambassadorial service" with "an embassy in Berlin, Paris, yes, and in Moscow." Its object apparently would be to put pressure upon all statesmen who dared to oppose Christian ideas. The success of such a scheme would, in our opinion be the most disastrous and retrograde policy possible. It looks as if Mr. Richards has been converted to the Holy Roman Imperialism, but wants the Protestant Churches to share the glory of its persecuting ideals.

The People reports a "Miracle in No-Man's Land. It tells the "Story" of "An Officer of the French Army who all his life had been a declared Atheist who reveals how God came to him amid the roar of the guns." God, according to this exceedingly silly tale, appeared in the form of a German "Oberleutnant," a very likely guise, that most Frenchmen would expect to find Him in. Both officers were gathering violets—naturally enough one expects such things in the delirium of a wounded soldier—the German indeed "held aloft a great cluster of purple and white violets" amid the carnage of the battle-field. So, of course, the Atheist Officer is converted on the spot, and when his faithful comrades find him, he points to his "pocketsful of violets," which ought surely to have converted the entire army. The author gives us some clue to his meaning perhaps, in his words "Madness has been let loose in the world." His story is an excellent illustration.

There is no Bishop of Jerusalem; apparently the nearest that can be got to this is the appointment of Bishop in Jerusalem—the Rev. G. F. Graham Brown. This gentleman reports, in a recent address in Nottingham, that the Christian outlook in the Holy City is in a bad way. There are two influences to fight, Turkish and Jewish, and neither of them are making for Christianity, or even religion. Turkey he says, provides education that is "first-class of its kind, but it had a secular atheistic basis and was just blank materialism." The young generation of Jews were spreading ideas of determinism. So Christians are faced with the tremendous problem of "How to present Christianity to the liberal Moslem, and to the orthodox and to the cultured Jew in Jerusalem." Apparently the Bishop in Jerusalem looks like becoming, in fact, the Bishop out of Jerusalem, for he says that "practically the Christian Church is not merely retreating, but has practically retreated from certain strategic points." Things look black.

The *Church Times* is distinctly uneasy that such success as Russia has accomplished in its industrializing and educating a deplorably ignorant population should have been done without religion—worse still, with the accompaniment of a strong fight against religion. We are not surprised. An even partial success in Russia without religion would help to kill the very sedulously propagated superstition that a nation without religion must decline. We are quite certain that Russia could not have been worse off than it was in Czarist times with religion, and equally we could not easily have been in a worse mess had religion never been heard of in this country.

Apropos of the diplomatic alliances which are being contracted among various groups of nations, and which will inevitably lead to war as they did in 1914, a Non-conformist journal remarks that "We are still in an age of international feudalism." If such is the case after nineteen centuries of Christian instruction and influence, then that wonderfully elevating and civilizing effect of the Christian religion, which we have heard so much about, must be severely over-rated. The state of affairs could be no worse if the peoples of the world had altogether dispensed with supernatural guidance and revealed wisdom.

Fifty Years Ago

A NOVEL by Mr. E. W. Howe (*The History of a Country Town*), describing life among the sparsely-settled tracts of the Far West, shows how the lives of men and women may be made utterly miserable by a narrow, fanatical creed. The people of the country town which is taken as an example are mostly Calvinists, and do what Christians in this country have long ceased to do—they carry their religion into every-day life, with the result that life to them is merely the gloomy portal to the charnel-house. These people are hardworking, thrifty, and in comparative comfort, so far as that means plenty to eat and drink and the wherewithal to clothe themselves. But their creed forbids them all amusement, all recreation, everything that would break the monotony of their lives. Sunday finds them gloomily wending their way to church, "where the business of serving the Lord" is despatched as soon as possible to allow the people to return home and nurse their misery. Debarred from any mental culture save the soul cramping study of the Bible, cut off from contact with anything but their narrow, hopeless, deadening creed, what wonder that "the pale unhappy women spoke in low and trembling tones of heavy crosses to bear, and sat down crying as though their hearts would break?" Cannot Mr. Spurgeon be persuaded to spend the winter in the Far West instead of on the shores of the Mediterranean, and there witness the grinding tyranny which is the logical outcome of his gloomy Calvinistic creed.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

F. WHITE.—Thanks for appreciation.

A. IRVING.—It is hardly worth reopening the controversy. To do so would be a repetition of statements already made, with neither side getting "forrader."

G. S. SPEED.—We are obliged for copies of letters. Continued pressure only will affect the B.B.C. If to that could be added the resolve of public men to have nothing to do with a censorship, and to refuse to speak under its auspices, a change might be soon effected. But, most people seem quite happy so long as it is not *their* opinions that are suffering. Liberty is coming to mean liberty to prevent other people speaking.

J. SHARPLES.—If the clergyman in question will permit one of your members to supervise the distribution of the *Freethinker* to his congregation, then we have no objection to publishing his remarks on the *Freethinker* in these columns.

FOR distributing the *Freethinker*.—D. Fisher, 3s.

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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.

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

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Sugar Plums

To-day (December 2) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Birmingham Town Hall. Owing to the hall being engaged every Sunday evening by the Corporation, the meeting will take place in the afternoon at 3.0 The doors will open at 2.30. The Town Hall requires a large number of people even comfortably to fill, and we hope that local Freethinkers have done their best to make the lecture well known.

Stratford Town Hall was filled on Sunday last to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "The Fight for Freedom of Thought." There were a great many questions put at the close of the lecture, so many that the whole of the available time was taken up by them, leaving no room for discussion. But the interest shown in the proceedings was marked, and there appeared to be a gratifying number of young and apparently intelligent listeners present.

There has been some trouble in Northampton over the statue of Charles Bradlaugh. The cause was its suggested removal on account of its alleged obstruction. But the question was, where? One site that was suggested, Regent Square, roused the ire of the Rev. A. Fielding Daniel, who, claiming that he has the support of the vicar of the neighbouring parish, said "whatever may have been the good characteristics of Bradlaugh, I do not want to see the statue erected there." He added, "We do not want it in the midst of our people whoever else may want it. We are doing our best to bring our people to a God-fearing state of mind."

This was an example of two things. First, the bigotry of Mr. Daniel and others; second, the fear that these same people have of the great Atheist nearly thirty years after his death. For the latter aspect we are in agreement with Mr. Daniel as to the probable influence of even a statue of Bradlaugh. Even dead he is more than Christians can stand. Alive he filled them with a holy, or unholy, terror of his powers. Poor Mr. Daniel; poor Vicar of the neighbouring parish!—whoever he is. And what a religion, to dread even the influence of the statue of a dead man! Still, we sympathize with these distressed Christians. After trying to keep their people ignorant of who Bradlaugh was and what he did, to have erected at their very doors a statue of the great Atheist, is too much.

Personally we shall not shed tears whatever becomes of the statue. Bradlaugh's name and fame are not dependent on his having a statue erected or on having one maintained. His name lives in the minds and hearts of too many for it to die out, and his work plays its inevitable part in the life of the people, not only of this country, but of the world. A sluggish imagination may need visible objects to prompt it to activity, but to the finer type no such artificial stimulant is required. What Bradlaugh did remains; it is embodied in the life and thought of those who still battle for freedom; it is established in the larger and freer life of the people.

In the end it was resolved to keep the statue in Abingdon Square, merely removing it to another part. So the statue will remain to remind the people of Northampton that they were once represented in Parliament by an avowed Atheist, Republican and Malthusian, and, perhaps to suggest to some that his life and his ideas may repay investigation.

There is in the press, and will be issued either just before, or immediately after Christmas, a new book by Mr. Cohen. The title will be *Primitive Survivals and Modern Thought*. It will deal with survivals in thought, in religion, philosophy, and sociology, and should prove of assistance to many.

We are glad to learn that Mr. Whitehead had a very good meeting at Bradford on Sunday last. There were a number of questions after the lecture, most of which had no relation to the subject. There are nearly always a number of people who feel that they must put a question, and never appear to realize that a question should either ask for further information on the subject to which they have been listening, or, for an explanation of something which has been said; and the better policy is often to refuse to answer. That saves the lecturer's time, and also gives a much-needed lesson to the questioner.

We feel justified in promising a good sale for Mr. Bedborough's work *Arms and the Clergy 1914-1918*. No such record of the utterances of the clergy exists in a tabulated form, and the memory of the public is so transitory that probably many have forgotten the enthusiastic manner in which the clergy worked to encourage the war-spirit and the ardent manner in which they circulated any lie that could keep the war-spirit in being. *Arms and the Clergy* is a book that no one can afford to miss who wishes to have a reminder, or to remind others, of what the clergy were in the war-years.

Glasgow saints will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. Jack Clayton of Burnley to-day (December 2) when he speaks in the McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, on "The Birth of the Soul." As a speaker for the N.S.S., Mr. Clayton has had much experience and adventure in Lancashire towns and villages, and his all-round ability on the Freethought platform should be a decided attraction next Sunday. The lecture begins at 7 p.m. Admission is free, with a Silver Collection.

James Thomson (B.V.)

III.

(Concluded from page 742)

THOMSON'S work is so definitely individual that it cannot be compared, as a whole, with that of any other writer; many writers he resembles in excellence; but in his own combination of qualities he is unique. His descent, training, and life-experience were, in many ways, exceptional; and this shows clearly in B.V.'s work. His prose ranges from the sheer poet-beauty of *In Our Forest of the Past* to the fiery satire—a satire that would make even the savage and stupid Jahweh wince—of *Christmas Eve in the Upper Circles*.

In the first-named essay B.V. writes:—

... and we came to a broad valley through which a calm stream rippled toward the moon, now risen on our left hand large and golden in a dim emerald sky, dim with transfusion of splendour; and her light fell and overflowed a level under ledge of softest yellow cloud, and filled all the valley with a luminous mist, warm as mild sunshine, and quivered golden on the far river-reaches; and elsewhere above us the immense sweep of pale azure sky throbbled with golden stars; and a wonderful mystical peace as of trance and enchantment possessed all the place. And in the meadows of deep grass, where the perfume of violets mingled with the magical moonlight, by the river, whose slow sway and lapse might lull their repose, we found tranquil sleepers, all with a light on their faces, all with a smile on their lips.

Christmas Eve in the Upper Circles begins:—

Poor dear God sat alone in his private chamber, moody, melancholy, miserable, sulky, sullen, weary, dejected, supernally hipped. It was the evening of Sunday, the 24th of December, 1865. Waters continually dripping wear away the hardest stone; year falling after year will at length overcome the strongest god: an oak-tree outlasts many generations of men; a mountain or a river outlasts many celestial dynasties. A cold like a thick fog in his head, rheum in his eyes, and rheumatism in his limbs and shoulders, his back bent, his chin peaked, his poll bald, his teeth decayed, his body all shivering, his brain all muddle, his heart all black care; no wonder the old gentleman looked poorly as he covered there, dolefully sipping his *Lachryma Christi*. "I wish the other party would lend me some of his fire," he muttered, "for it is horribly frigid up here."

Compare these passages of beautiful, stern, fluent, opulent prose; and you will recognize a master of the pen; akin both to Shelley and to Lucian. Deliberately I have made a violent contrast to reveal anew the versatility of genius. In range B.V. was approached by only one contemporary—Swinburne; he had not a single peer, this author of the *City*, in the catholic use of words to the end of beauty. These praise-words of mine may seem exaggerated; but it is impossible for one who loves pen-craft to lack enthusiasm for this perfection of prose. A slight shifting of life's kaleidoscope, and B.V. would have been both an Aristophanes and a Rabelais.

In *A Plea for Xanthippe* and *Indolence: A Moral Essay* the poet may be read as a purely humanist-humourist essayist; and as such he is in the English tradition with Leigh Hunt and Lamb.

I shall not quote from B.V.'s poems; the *City* has recently appeared in *The Thinker's Library* for a shilling; and the volume contains a satisfactory selection of other of his metrical work.

* * *

As a translator Thomson is always faithful; never does he try to improve upon his author; he is neither

adaptor nor "traducer"—to use his own jest; he is the ideal translator—a true renderer. B.V., as I have already written, had the gift of understanding that makes the perfect translator; and so, with B.V. as interpreter and—on occasion—introducer, Goethe, Heine, Béranger and Leopardi speak easily in our tongue.

I have seen many attempts at English versions of Heine, a tremendously difficult, though not impossible, poet to "bring over." Two English poets succeed, I think, as nearly perfectly as may be; these poets are both German-lovers; they are Charles Godfrey Leland ("Hans Breitmann") and B.V. B.V.'s poet-craft can best be measured by comparing his versions with those of others. He wins nearly, or quite, every time.

A great deal of B.V.'s work is still uncollected; one day, no doubt, the hunter through extinct periodicals will seek-out every scrap of his writing, and advertise triumphantly *The Complete B.V.* That time is not yet. The poet "stands for" something unique and definite in human life; at his characteristic greatest he is *The Complete Saturnian*. As such he will live.

Politically, Thomson was a Republican, agreeing in this with his friends and colleagues, Bradlaugh and Foote. In religion he was a Secularist and an Atheist. It is to be added that he was assuredly not orthodox, either as Secularist or Atheist. To *The Liberal* B.V. contributed a series of four articles, on "A Strange Book." This (strange book) is *Songs of the Spirit*, by J. J. Garth Wilkinson, a Swedenborgian and a Blakian, enormously admired by Thomson, who, like all humans of genius, tended at times to be injudicious in his admirations. In this minute and exhaustive examination the poet writes so sympathetically of extraneous inspiration that it is fair to claim him—without prejudice—as a mystic. No one not fundamentally a mystic could write as Thomson does of Blake and of Garth Wilkinson.

* * *

Besides the books that I have mentioned as being issued in B.V.'s lifetime, several, as I have indicated, have been published since his death. Here is a brief list: *A Voice from the Nile*, with Memoir by Bertram Dobell; *Satires and Profanities*, with Preface by G. W. Foote; *Shelley, a Poem* (Privately Printed); *Poems, Essays and Fragments*, with Preface by J. M. Robertson; *Selections from "Cope's Tobacco Plant,"* with Introduction by Walter Lewin; *The Story of a Famous Old Jewish Firm*, etc., with an Introduction by B.E.; *Biographical and Critical Studies; Walt Whitman; Translations from Leopardi*; the last three with Introductions by Bertram Dobell. Dobell is also the Editor of the *Poetical Works* in two volumes. The dates range from 1884 to about 1911. (These notes are written far from my library.)

Very nearly the whole of the contents of these books consists of reprints from B.V.'s contributions to periodicals. Once again; it is not easy to overpraise the labours of Bertram Dobell in furthering his friend's fame. I rejoice to add my own modest tribute to a love that was far stronger than death.

* * *

All the books that are listed above contain immortal prose, or immortal verse, and frequently both.

I ask my readers to remember this as they read the last quotation that I shall give. The author is "Saladin" (W. Stewart Ross); and the essay, *A Last Interview with a Man of Genius*, appeared in *The Agnostic Journal* for April 6, 1889, being reprinted the following year in *Roses and Rue*:—

I shall never forget the last time I met Thomson. I met him at the office of this journal, accompanied by one of his last remaining friends (G. Gordon Flaws, "Gegeef"). This was in May 1882, after his return from Leicester. The hand of death was on the poet's shoulder, not solemn and stately death—only the mournful abjectness of dissolution, met by a calm and suffering rather than a fierce and defiant despair. . . . The glance of a moment sufficed to show Gegeef and myself that our companion was in the sodden state which succeeds a prolonged debauch. . . . Gegeef advanced a small loan, and in spite of his remonstrances the bar at the Holborn Restaurant was the only mart in the world where Thomson would consent to have the little sum disbursed. . . . He stands before me now as he did nearly seven years ago among the well-dressed people at that glittering bar—he, the abject, the shabby, the waif. . . . His figure, which had always been diminutive, had lost all dignity of carriage, all gracefulness of gait. When the miserable hat was raised from the ruined but still noble head, it revealed the thinning away of the ragged and unkempt hair, deeply threaded with grey. His raiment had the worn, soiled, and deeply-creased aspect that suggested that, for some time back, it had been worn day and night, and had been brought in contact with brick walls and straw pallets, and even the mud of the street. The day, for May, was a raw and cold one, with a drizzle which ever and anon merged into a downpour of rain; and the feet of the author of the *City of Dreadful Night* were protected from the slushy streets only by a pair of thin old carpet-slippers, so worn and defective that, in one part, they displayed his bare skin.

B.V. died tragically at University College Hospital, on the evening of June 3, 1882, "from utter exhaustion consequent on internal bleeding," says Salt, in his indispensable *Life*. The broken body was buried at Highgate Cemetery, in a grave where already lay the body of his friend, Austin Holyoake, who had passed-out in 1874. With B.V.'s body "were buried a small purse and locket containing a tress of yellow hair—his one memento of his lost love."

Since Salt's *Life* was published (originally in 1889; since several times re-issued; and still in print) a new fact concerning B.V. may be given. At the time of his passing, the poet was engaged to Miss Barrs, of Leicester, to whom he addressed several exquisite poems in the last few months of his life. A dangerous freak of B.V.'s, committed during an attack of dipsomania, when he was a guest of the Barrs', caused his hurried departure from Leicester; and there is little doubt that remorse for this social delinquency was a main cause of the poet's deliberate and "willed" passing. Affectionate and sensitive, he could no longer face himself. This has never yet been said; but there is no reason now to conceal what I believe to be the truth. To Genius all is forgiveable; and B.V.'s gift to the world is enough, and more than enough.

My source for this addition to the public knowledge of B.V. is my old and gifted friend and colleague, Vanoc II., of the *Sunday Referee*, himself a Leicester man, and probably the greatest living authority on B.V.'s life and works. To him herewith I express my thanks.

Later I hope to amplify and extend these meagre and desultory notes upon the life and death of a neglected genius—James Thomson (B.V.).

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

Man is naturally a savage, and emerges from barbarism by slow degrees. Let us take the streaks of light, and be thankful for them, as they arise and tinge the horizon one by one, and not complain because the noon is long after the dawn of refinement.—*William Hazlitt*.

Arising from Rip van Winkle

A LAZY, good-for-nothing fellow, this. Good-natured, perhaps, but slothful, inactive, comatose. Contented, yes, but unambitious, immovable, and usually horizontal. Undoubtedly a slug.

His case was romantic once. But not now. Diagnosed by contemporary mind-physiology he becomes a very prosy affair indeed. You see, he was short of the chemical which his thyroid gland should have supplied.

Left to himself, he would have been content to whistle life away, lounging with the select gathering at the village inn, or sitting on a wet rock, waiting for fish that never came. But, alas for Rip, what a life she led him.

A termagant, a shrew, a veritable brawling terror was Dame van Winkle, beside whom Xantippe, the wife of Socrates, was merely a mild remonstrator. The phenomenal temper of this woman was the wonder of the neighbourhood, and the bane of poor Rip's existence.

Such was Dame van Winkle. But we've got her number now. It was the perversive activity of her adrenal glands.

As soon as Rip's faithful and inseparable companion entered her cottage, his tail would sink between his legs, his ears would lie back, and he would cringe, rather than walk, into the room. Conditioned reflexes here, apparently, according to Pavlov's "reflexology."

Let us have a look round the precincts of the Inn. The landlord is Nicholas Vedder. His strong suit is taciturnity. Blown up with well-controlled self-importance, he sits placidly smoking his habitual pipe. If he is displeased, the puffs come short, sharp and rather frequent. On the other hand, if he is letting the smoke curl lazily about his nostrils he is registering pleasure. The pages of Confucius will supply his motto; "To be taciturn is the natural way."

He presents no mystery now. We could soon move him to anger or fear by giving him a dose of synthetic adrenaline.

Yes, we've got them all "taped." Even the dapper, busy, clever, active Van Brummel there, who is undaunted by the longest word in the dictionary, and who got himself made a captain under Washington. His tissues are merely fired to action by an abnormal supply of throvine, which is 65 per cent iodine.

Awakening from his decadal slumber, Rip felt hungry, which signifies his awareness of contractive movements in the stomach muscles, brought about by chemical changes in the blood, as a result of nutrition falling behind. Returning home, he noticed, among other stray vestiges of former times, that the ruby face, on the inn-door, of George III. (whose early strength was doubtless due to an excess of iodine in the thyroid, the exhaustion of which caused his later degeneration to lunacy) had been re-garbed in the clothes of George Washington, who . . . but it would be sacrilege to criticize the one incredibly perfect man who ever lived.

* * *

Now the point is, is the deficiency of thyroid the cause of Rip's lazy nature, or is Rip's lazy nature responsible for the deficiency of thyroid? Therein lies the argument between the Materialist and his opponent.

Fortunately there is a way of finding out. If we feed Rip with thyroid, does his character change? Does emasculation alter manliness? Can we influence sex-life with Vitamine E? Will myxedema yield to gland treatment? Would a "loosening" of the

parathyroid remedy sluggishness? Might another generation find the preacher replaced by a chemical staff, who will treat defects of brain-functioning by injections, i.e., alter character?

Yes, says the Materialist, because character and (or) behaviour are the expression of conditions which include physio-chemical conditions in the body.

Yes, says the anti-materialist, because the Musician is always ready to use a better instrument if you can give him one. Feed the sluggard with thyroid and his Mind will utilize it. Similarly, by detracting from his thyroid you can convert an intelligent person into a gibbering idiot. In this case (runs the argument) you have impaired the instrument, and the music will suffer. The Mind will give an inferior exhibition. For it is Mind that does the work. All that your science can do is to interfere with the instrument. And if you put in an excess of thyroid you produce nervousness and waste. You have here added to the instrument and the balance is again upset.

So that it looks as though the Musician, Mind, is, after all, quite impotent, and totally at the mercy of the instrument. He does not *choose* the instrument in the first place; he cannot guard it against theft, and if more instrument is supplied he is forced to use it. What brass band musician would accept a baby's rattle for use?

It rather looks as though the experimental scientist is the musician, if any. But what he does with foresight is done blindly by hormones, glands and Vitamine E. These are the musicians, for they are responsible for the music.

At this point the Animist bobs up, and tells us that these little factors are themselves conscious purposive monads, a thesis which is rejected on account of the restricted definition of conscious agents and of purpose.

Psychology "started out in the last century as an investigation by introspection of the spiritual mind of man, and it has now decided to refrain from any mention of mind, spirituality and introspection." (McCabe). What is commonly accepted overlaps with cerebral physiology. There is no unique endowment in man, nothing, that is, that cannot have come by evolution from an ape mind. Even the Psychological Research Society, which was founded to provide scientific proof of the independence of mind, shows agreement, more or less, only on telepathy. And is telepathy consistent with Materialism?—a moot point for a Student Circle.¹

The so-called "urges" at the base of mental life are due to chemical activity. Character can be affected by hormones (secretions of the endocrinal, or ductless, glands), or by deficiency of acidity in the body fluids, etc. Precocious depravity of children may indicate a premature development of the anterior lobe of the pituitary and an early decay of the thymus gland. "The expectant mother who feels her breasts develop, and her emotions grow tender, is inspired by hormones from her ovaries. The 'manliness' of the male is an expression of his glands, and 'womanliness' is based upon chemical inhibitions of the development of male characteristics." (McCabe, *Riddle*, etc.) Experiments on rats and birds show that the glands of one sex can be transferred to the other; the male rat be made to have milk, or the meek hen turned into a fighting cock by the removal of her ovaries.

¹ McCabe thinks telepathy is Materialistic if anything, and in his *Enquiry into Spiritualism*, George Whitehead postulates telepathy as a rational explanation of certain phenomena. The search would have to be for a physical basis or medium.

Turn to the study of races, Ethnology. "We are justified," writes Prof. A. Keith, "in regarding the pituitary gland as one of the principal pinions in the machinery which regulates the human body, and is directly concerned in determining stature, cast of features, texture or skin and character or hair, all of them marks of race. When we compare the chief racial types of humanity—Negro, Mongol, Caucasian and European—we can recognize in the last-named a greater predominance of the pituitary gland than in the others. The sharp and pronounced nazalization of the face, and the tendency to bulk of body and height of stature in most Europeans are best explained in terms of pituitary function."

Then to History. The genius of Julius Cæsar has recently been ascribed to his glands, the brilliance and subsequent decay of Napoleon's mind to the state of one section of his pituitary, and so forth. Henry VIII., James I., and Joan of Arc have also been tackled: the tendency of the latter to masculinity is common knowledge. Future literature may attempt theories, e.g., of Swedenborg or Annie Besant, but the "explanations" can never, of course, be verifiable in the scientific sense.

From historical personalities to nerve-physiology. The nervous impulse or propagation at last yields to research. "The nerve-fibres have very thin membranes, and as the molecules of nerve matter break up positive ions are believed to pass to the outside of the membranes and remain there, balanced by the negative particles inside the membrane. The stimulation of the sense-organ, by light or sound, disturbs the balance, and a wave of depolarization passes rapidly along the nerve." (McCabe). Between consecutive nerve-cells are synapses ("one-way junctions") and they play a great part in behaviour, so that "by the use of certain physical reagents it is possible to increase the conductivity of the synapses." (Hogben, *Mechanization of Consciousness*). Strychnine is such a re-agent.

* * *

It is safe to assert that Rip's laziness is due to his physiological make-up.

Why censure him, then, says the Fatalist, and also his friend the believer in Free-will? Simply because, says the Materialist, our censure is the expression of *our* make-up. The evils of certain anti-social qualities become apparent, and our perception of the fact causes us to pass blame or give praise. Surely there is nothing here inconsistent with Materialism!

The whole of science builds on Materialism. It is evidently that or nothing. If the anti-materialist wants to press his musician analogy he must prove its relevance. For the musician is *external* to his instrument, and works it by *physical contact* by fingers, mouth or feet. If there is anything analogous to this, it must be shown. If there is something extraneous to the materialistic conditions which interfere with them physically, and makes them do things they are inherently incapable of doing, it is for the anti-materialist to supply the evidence demonstrating that inherent incapability by the production of the extra-natural agency.

G. H. TAYLOR.

OPINION

He is a strong man who can hold down his opinion. A man cannot utter two or three sentences without disclosing to intelligent ears precisely where he stands in life and thought, namely, whether in the kingdom of the senses and the understanding, or in that of ideas and imagination, in the realm of intuitions and duty.

Emerson.

Blowing the Gaff

WE were stuck for a title to this article. As we were dealing with political and clerical gentlemen of notoriety, and practical inefficiency, we thought of "National Junk Department" as eminently suitable; again, "The Way of a Serpent" was not inappropriate; for if there is anything tortuous, and slimy on earth, it is suggested by the conduct of those who pose as the political and spiritual Saviours of our day.

Let us endeavour to take the reader along the street called "Straight," aided as we are by the confessions of one who is only too well acquainted with the by-paths and crooked lanes of national, and international diplomacy, and, also, the queer animals that lurk therein. Now, as he furnishes us with an exposure of certain gentlemen, we gratefully follow his lead, and choose the title—"Blowing the Gaff."

The Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George has been delivering himself at the City Temple, London. To his credit be it said, he is one of the few politicians worth listening to; and, as he speaks in a language understood of the people, he can boast of an accomplishment that very few of our prominent Statesmen possess. My fellow countryman is bi-lingual, and knows the possibilities of speech. Having met so many men who express themselves in such a way that several interpretations can be given to every important statement they make; and having been told that Englishmen are very poor at picking up foreign languages, we are forced to conclude that English must be one of them.

We have heard of "almost contemporary evidence," which referred to something that occurred 150 years after the event! A "close approximation" may mean anything from half an inch to a point far South of the Equator. A study of some of our political notorieties will supply a man with specimens of language that stagger the human intelligence. One prominent parliamentary hand said on one occasion that "Socialism had no more to do with a man's religion than the colour of his grandmother's hair." Of course, no one suggests that this stuff would deceive any man of intelligence; but it evidently served a purpose—bringing in grist to the mill, and fish into the net! We are sorry to record that many Freethinkers are tricked with this palpable lying; believing that the easiest way to social and political reform was along the paths of the refined, and obliging perverter. This type of man would never allow his avowed principles to stand in the way of the policies that suited his purpose; and would find a language to justify himself for cutting the patient's throat; saying that he did so on the ground that he had been granted a doctor's mandate by the poor victim, the electorate.

How the Church nobbled the Socialist movement is a tale that needs no repeating. When the party was in power, one could not help the impression that it was a sinister organization for the benefit of each brand of religion in turn; or any vested interest that served the purpose of keeping it in power. That several exceptions voiced strong opinions in accordance with their formerly avowed principles, we cheerfully admit; but the majority displayed no more courage than a consumptive rat in the presence of an Indian mongoose.

Now that the Goliath of the party is bought-over by the enemy, we are not surprised to find that the Sedition Bill is favoured by him, on the ground that it was designed to preserve the little liberty we already possess! We are not surprised to find that the class he once described as "the caterpillars of the Commonwealth" is the very company he can't do without; and that the art of crawling along with them

has been copied to social and political perfection. We are not surprised to find him presiding at a great international washout, dignified by the name of "World Conference"—a Conference with its back already broken by the Ottawa tragedy. It was not, however, altogether in vain; the wines were good, and, no doubt, well sampled; and it is rather significant that the political robots met to do nothing, in a museum, amid a collection of fossils! We are not surprised to see this flying wonder paying only occasional visits to Mother Earth; and then only on the pretence of travelling for his health, or else displaying his talents for showmanship before an enraptured audience. We are not surprised to find this superlative quibbler willing to oblige everybody—"with reservations." With reservations—the back-door to every form of inquiry. No aircraft warfare—except for outlying districts! With reservations—which may mean anything, including the thin end of the wedge, which means everything. And when we are told that this special concession to the benighted blacks is based on our broad humanity, and out of loving consideration for their welfare, we are inclined to bestow upon this master of stump oratory the only position he is worth—a place with the other moral, and political remnants on the "National Refuse Heap," known as the House of Lords. We are not surprised to find that while Mr. Henderson was working his life and health away in the cause of disarmament, his greatest enemies, according to Dr. Hugh Dalton, were the warmongers of the Socialist Cabinet!

It is, probably, true of many a man that he does not begin with the axiom, "my ambition at any price"—though even this obtains in some instances—yet there is, undoubtedly, a subconscious self that is ever striving for its goal; and it is for the psychologist to study the symptoms that proclaim the evolution of a mind that allows nothing so common as honour to stand in its way. It may truly be said of our hero that his subsequent career was the logical development of the way he began.

And of such is the Kingdom of Heaven!

But in Mr. Lloyd George we feel that we possess something human, intellectually, and morally solid; and when he virtually asserts that such nonentities are simply echoes, political marionettes worked from behind the scenes, he says no more than we already knew; but—he said it! We shall leave this part of his address for the present; and deal with what he says about Mussolini.

"He (Mussolini) talks about training the children of Italy from seven upwards to the use of arms (cries of shame). He is going to attune the minds of children to the prospects of slaughter—not of peace, not of goodwill, not of brotherhood, but of killing."

Even so; and there are many of his admirers at home who will echo the sentiments of the Italian Castor Oil Saviour, with cries of *Muchee Bono*; and *Pro Bono Publico*. But whilst the Signor is more blunt and blatant than his English admirers, he is, if less refined, scarce as sinister as our warmongers. In a work newly published, entitled *Beirdd Ein Canrif*, Vol. II., pp. 67-68, I find a poem by a young Welsh Calvinistic minister, the Rev. A. E. Jones, B.A., whose bardic name is "Cynan." This little poem is entitled—BLAD (an address never heard from the steps of the War Memorial of any of our colleges on Armistice Day). It speaks of one who comes from the realm of the pale shadows with a message for our young men; and particularly those of the "O.T.C." Speaking for himself, and his brethren beneath the sod, he says: "we would not have empty praises, nor honour; but "what is this with which you insult us? A stone, upon which is inscribed the

lie: 'It is sweet to die for our country.' " The poem concludes with these words:—

Ffrind, yma rigwisg yr "O.T.C."
Am fod y celwydd mewn parhad
Ryw ddydd fe gofi ngairiau i
"Melys yw Marw Dros Ein Gwlad."

The last four lines are to tell his friend in the uniform of the "O.T.C." that, inasmuch as the lie is still going the round, some day he will be reminded of the words of the poet—"It is sweet to die for our country." This satire is the work of a young man, who served during the "Big War" at Salonika, in the "Dead Meat Department," as a stretcher-bearer. Soon after the war ended, this young man won the crown at the Royal Eisteddfod, held at Caernarfon, for his poem entitled: *Mab Ybwthyn*. In this long composition he laid bare the horrors of war, the evils which were inevitably engendered by it, and the hypocrisy of those who sought to glorify the Inferno that meant a glorious time and a financial Paradise for too many. No doubt Mr. Lloyd George will remember the bold, blind, blackguard set that was made upon the poet by the faithful followers of the Prince of Peace! Perhaps he hopes that with the aid of a little preaching the leopard will change his spots, and the Ethiopian shed his skin.

"It is no use blaming Governments," he says, "They do not want war."

At first sight, one would feel inclined to say that if Governments do not want war, they have a funny way of disguising the fact. We have heard of the Government that went to the country over the Opium business; and how we forced the drug on the Chinese for the benefit of the capitalists—and against their wishes. We have heard of and remember the iniquitous Boer War, and the dirty diplomacy that forced Kruger to send the ultimatum. We remember the Jameson Raid—Jameson, the friend of the filibusterer, Cecil Rhodes—Jameson, the man who was honoured, and should have been hanged.

WM. J. LAMB.

(To be concluded.)

Good God!

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

The truth of this oft-quoted text will plainly be seen by the following testimonies, which have been brought to my notice on my travels round the mining areas of Durham.

A lady recounted, and vouched for the accuracy of the following.

Her father, after a long life of sin, was at last converted. Anxious to make up for his past, he decided to do something for the Lord. After trying in turn to sing, and speak without success, he was feeling rather discouraged. At this juncture, an old friend gave him a violin, and again he was at a loss. But remembering that God answers prayer, he asked for Almighty assistance. After getting up from his knees, he took up the violin, and surprised not only himself, but everyone else, by playing the well known hymn, "Rescue the perishing." Whoever but God would have hit upon the idea of making the danger itself the call for help? (This man just scraped home).

Then again, from another source, comes the following:

A man whose wife refused to listen to his arguments and pleadings for her salvation had this remarkable experience.

Her husband brought home, one day, some bacon, and asked her to cook it for him. This she was doing, over a fire, into which had been thrown the paper in which the bacon had been wrapped, when a small piece of the paper flew up into the pan. As she removed the paper she noticed only four or five words, not charred, and

was surprised to see, What think ye of Christ. Down she went, and there was joy in heaven.

Without God's help, could any woman save her bacon by cooking her husband's bacon?

Finally, to emphasize my point, consider the wisdom of the Lord in the following. A man, lying drunk in a public house, had a copy of the *War Cry* placed in his pocket by a zealous Salvation Army officer. After going home (God knows how), he awakened up early next morning, still half drunk, and his eyes passed over the pages of the *War Cry*. Soon he was interested, and, finally, we learn he was at the mercy seat, and is now a good loyal soldier.

Again we see God's wisdom, in knowing that unless he caught him drunk, he would never have read or accepted the *War Cry*.

What more can you want than these proofs? That's the end, reader.

Thank God.

JNO. T. BRIGHTON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Miss F. W. Stella Browne—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins, Gee and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park Gates and literature to order.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, W. Kent—Charles Lamb Centenary."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Gerald Heard—"The Three Psychologies."

STUDY CIRCLE (63 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, December 3, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Some Signs of the Times: A Freethinker's Interpretation."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Conway Hall, 49 Theobalds Road, W.C.): 7.0, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Grove House, Leyton, E.10): 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury—"Religion the Canker of Humanity."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A.—"Impressions of Egypt."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Theatre, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, W. I. J. Owen (Liverpool)—"The Survival of Reason."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Birmingham Town Hall): 3.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"The Fight for Freedom of Thought."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street): 7.0, Mr. W. Cliffe—"Poets and Poetry." A discussion class is held every Thursday, at 7.30 p.m.

BRADFORD SECULAR SOCIETY (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.0, Mr. A. Roff—"Some Unsolved Problems."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, H. P. Turner (Burnley)—"Christina Jesus, Mithra and Jesus Christ."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—"The Birth of the Soul." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Frau Saran (German Refugee), A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, A. Jackson (Bootle)—"Bible Big Shots."

MIDDLESBOROUGH (Club Hall): 7.0, Tuesday, December 4, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

(Continued on page 767)

*A Bombshell for the Churches***ARMS AND THE CLERGY**

BY

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

The War Years are now 16 years behind us and a new generation has arisen that is not familiar with the attitude of the clergy of all denominations during the strenuous period 1914-1918. To-day their talk is of peace and the barbarisms of war. Then there were no more strenuous advocates of war, and no greater cultivators of the war-spirit than the clergy. It is well that their record should not be forgotten, and Mr. Bedborough has in *Arms and the Clergy* produced with marked success a handy and effective piece of work. He has selected from representative clergymen of all denominations a mass of statements that might fail to secure credence, were it not that the source and date of each quotation is given. This is a work that everyone interested in the question of peace and war should possess.

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(Continued from page 766)

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Gods and Souls."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. Speare—"Maritime Discovery."

STOCKTON (I.L.P. Hall, Yarm Lane): 7.0, Thursday, December 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Hall, Laygate): 7.15, Friday, November 30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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