

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. I.V.—No. 22

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 1935

PRICE THREEPENCE

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

Views and Opinions

The Simplicity of Mr. Baldwin

The calculated simplicity of Mr. Baldwin was well exhibited in the following passage from his speech in the House of Commons on the determination of the Government to treble the number of "front line" war-planes:—

It makes me almost physically sick to think that 2000 years after our Lord was crucified statesmen are studying how to take the mangled bodies of children to hospital, and save men and women from poisoned gas.

I call this "calculated simplicity" for two reasons. First, because to be quite honest, the passage, part of a speech which had expressed the determination of the Government to build at least as many bombing planes as any other power could build, the number to be added to as circumstances decided; in view also of the fact that it has been announced by experts that the only form of defence is to be ready to bomb the enemy when he bombs you, the confession should have read:—

It makes me physically sick to think that 2000 years after our Lord was crucified statesmen are studying how to strew the streets with the mangled bodies of children and kill men and women with poisoned gas. I am inviting the House to support the Government in this work.

That would have been a complete and a quite honest statement for the wide use of bombing aeroplanes as reprisals. We have to make the enemy realize that if he bombs our cities, mangles our children and kills men and women with poison gas, we shall do the same. More, we shall try to do it to him at the same time that he is doing it to us, for no one imagines that we should wait to have our own population mangled if we could get our blow in first. The purpose of bombing machines is to bomb; the purpose of poison gas is to poison. Studying methods of taking mangled bodies to hospitals, and reviving people from the effects of gas, follows the planes. I am not saying whether this creation of fleets of bombing planes

is necessary or not; I am only pointing out the facts of the situation, and the manner in which the real facts were cloaked by the calculated simplicity and the artful honesty of the leader of the Government.

* * *

Yesterday, To-day, And—P

Mr. Baldwin's simplicity was further illustrated by his confession that these war preparations, 2000 years after the death of "Our Lord," made him almost physically sick. One would have expected Mr. Baldwin to have been the possessor of a more active imagination and of a more exact knowledge of history. At what time since the establishment of the religion of "Our Lord," has there been anything but similar preparations among Christians? Was it during the Dark Ages or during the Middle Ages, when Christendom was covered with warring, plundering bands of mercenaries; when no man's property was safe, and no woman's honour secure? Was it during the period of organized national piracy when the great Christian nations of the world were sending their ships and soldiers all over the world, seizing land and treasure in the name of this or that monarch? Or was it in our own time? When has there been a period of even ten years during the last century that there has not been a number of little wars on—useful enough to keep soldiers trained for large ones—and statesmen were not spending money and thought on the problem of how to mangle the bodies of other people?

I admit that these statesmen were not concerned actually with the problem of bombing aeroplanes and poison gas. But does that make any real difference? They used the weapons to hand, and cannot be blamed for not using what did not exist. Does it matter so very much whether men and women are blasted with bombs or merely blown to bits with shells from guns; whether they are poisoned with gas, or starved by a blockade, or attacked by disease which has resulted from war? I cannot imagine any man dying from the effects of a bullet with a "Thank God it was gunshot and not a bomb," in his mouth, or that any mother in the last war who saw her children dying from disease brought about by want of proper food, cried out in thankfulness that the death of the child was not caused by a gunshot. One might even ask Mr. Baldwin whether war ever happened when the lives of children were not directly or indirectly sacrificed, and whether the method of execution by bomb is really very different from execution by blockade? The honesty of Mr. Baldwin has passed into a parliamentary tradition; but his simplicity outdoes even his honesty.

* * *

Simplicity has its Limits

And yet even simplicity and honesty need not have prevented some very obvious consideration arising in the mind of Mr. Baldwin. He might have reflected that this continuous series of wars were waged, in the

main, by people who were worshippers of "Our Lord," led by great soldiers who were said to have the love of Jesus deep in their souls. That the armies that waged these wars—all of them necessarily against children and civilians—were blessed by the official servants of the Lord, that battle flags decorate the Churches of "Our Lord," and that in our national Cathedrals and Churches monuments and inscriptions to soldiers who gained glorious victories over the mangled bodies of "enemies" occupy many and prominent places. He might also have thought that while in this Christian country we have a great annual commemoration in honour of the men who died in one war (the chief reason being that there were so many of them) we have no kind of a national ceremony to commemorate the memory of that army of men and women who daily risk, and often give their lives in a thousand-and-one unconsidered ways for the benefit and salvation of others. He might have asked why this heroism, which is developed and displayed in the arena of social life, is ignored in our public displays, while undue emphasis is given to the showy heroism of the battlefield which wastes and degrades what peaceful life has produced. A less simple minded-man might have reflected that even the "ballyhoo" over the King's Jubilee may, quite unconsciously, create a temper that is easily exploited in the interests of national self-glorification, which in turn may be used to make easier perpetuation of the conditions that turn Mr. Baldwin almost physically sick.

Still further. It would not have been very remarkable if Mr. Baldwin had reflected that before the time of "Our Lord," the Roman Empire could keep the peace with an army of about 400,000 men, while we are to have quite that number in one branch of the fighting service alone; that a general who to-day proposed going into war with other Christian nations with 400,000 soldiers only would be looked on as a lunatic; that the wars, the bitterest wars that have been fought, have been between the followers of "Our Lord"; that it is these who have acted as the great war-teachers of the non-Christian world; that it is the example of the Christian West that is turning the most peaceful nation in the world, China, into a war-like people; that it is Christian nations that take up with the greatest eagerness every scientific discovery and every invention that can be used in war; that poisoned gas and explosive bombs are the inventions of Christian countries; and that it is a Christian Minister, the Government's own War Minister, Lord Londonderry, speaking in the House of Lords only the other day, complained that in 1932:—

I had the utmost difficulty at that time, amid the public outcry, in preserving the use of the bombing aeroplane even on the frontiers of the Middle East and India.

Mr. Baldwin must have had the greatest sympathy with this follower of his—acting with his permission, or on his instructions—in his heroic struggles to preserve the right of this Christian nation to bomb the people on the frontiers of India and the Middle East. How fortunate it is for Mr. Baldwin that his physical nausea stops short at the frontiers of Europe. But at any rate no plain and simple mind expects that the people of the Middle East and of India can object to being poisoned by gas or blasted by bombs as sincerely as those who have been brought up in the purer air of the worship of "Our Lord."

And yet, seeing the long time that has elapsed since "Our Lord" was crucified, that the peace of the world has been mainly threatened by his followers, that not one Christian nation feels that it is able to rely with safety upon the honesty and good-will of

another Christian nation, and that even Mr. Baldwin himself is driven to adopt plans which involve littering the streets of an enemy country with mangled corpses before the enemy has a chance of doing the same thing to us, seeing all this, one might imagine that even plain, simple, honest Mr. Baldwin might ask himself whether the world could have been in a much worse state had "Our Lord" never been crucified at all. In any case his visit to earth, his miracles, his crucifixion and his resurrection appears to have been a colossal failure. It has not taught his followers to love one another, and it has certainly not taught them to love outsiders.

* * *

War and Peace

It is apparently too abstruse a method of avoiding mangled bodies and a gas-laden atmosphere to seek even an equality of bombing power by scaling down to a low level of "parity." Mr. Baldwin's proposal is that we must seek equality by having at least as many bombing planes as anybody else, and even a few more, just to be on the safe side. But, as the *Church Times* suggested, if equality can be sought in each increasing proportionately the number of planes, why cannot the same equality—since none of these nations can trust one another—be found in moving towards a lower level instead of mounting to an increasingly higher one? Pending the civilizing and humanizing of the Christian nations of the world that would seem a quite reasonable proposal.

There seems only two objections to this suggestion. One is that if navies, armies, and air forces are reduced to a very low level, it would prevent countries either seizing land abroad or holding natives down. Italy would not be able to establish a protectorate over Abyssinia, France might not be able to maintain control over some of its "possessions," England might not be able to keep certain parts of the Empire under British rule. And if armed forces must exist to retain the possessions we have, and to get new ones as the demands of the home State arise, then there can be no guarantee that the forces used for maintaining order will not be used nearer home. A country's armed forces may be used anywhere and at any time. We showed that clearly enough in the late war.

The other objection to having a small armed force is that it does not offer the opportunities for display and for advertising the superiority of the war-like professions over others. We all deplore—in other countries—the prominence given to military displays. In our own we are well aware that without the processions, the reviews—naval and military, the elaborate and spectacular ceremonies that surround military parades, and implied and often open praise of the military life, its assumed dignity, its value as a school of courage and discipline, the praise showered upon the soldier as the guardian of the State, the advertised invitations—before Mr. Baldwin's statement of the intention of creating larger and larger armaments—to join the army and see the world for nothing, or to celebrate jubilee year by joining the air-force, all these things help to build up the impression that we must have large forces, and this could not be done if the army were kept discreetly in the background. It is ridiculous, everyone in the country agrees, for Mussolini and Hitler to talk of the army being the source of a nation's strength and death on the battlefield as being of all deaths the noblest. This kind of talk is most ridiculous—when its meaning is plain and unmistakable. It is apt to give rise to questions.

So it may be that Mr. Baldwin is not quite so simple as we were at first inclined to believe. We do believe that he is sincere when he says that the Government desires larger forces, but does not wish to attack any-

one. We shall use them only if our rights and interests and liberties are threatened. But, alas! the other countries ape our language and say the same thing. And, also alas! each nation insists on being the only one to say when its rights are attacked, its interests and its liberties threatened. That perhaps is the root cause why good, simple souls feel positively ill 2000 years after "Our Lord" was crucified. But a crucifixion is still going on.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Wisdom of Whitman

"We take up the task eternal, and the burden, and the lesson,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!"—*Whitman*.

"Others abide our question—thou art free."

Matthew Arnold.

RECENTLY, at Sotheby's Sale Rooms, London, a collection of Walt Whitman's manuscripts and early editions of his poems fetched the extraordinary price of £1,665, a price hitherto undreamt of in connexion with American men-of-letters, and reserved only for European authors of the first rank. It was one of the most complete reversals of public opinion in the history of literature. For, three generations ago, Walt Whitman himself was summarily dismissed from a very modest Government position because he had written a very outspoken book of verse, entitled *Leaves of Grass*. What would Walt Whitman have said could he have foreseen that his little book, which brought him so much trouble, would be so treasured by posterity, that even amid the awful distractions of a world-war the centenary of his birth would be celebrated; and that he would be hailed as the most notable among the men and women who had laboured to lay the foundations of a purely national literature for America, and also as the most representative poet of Democracy?

One keen pair of eyes discerned Whitman's real importance in the very earliest days. Emerson's magnificent tribute to the actual value of the then-despised *Leaves of Grass* was not only a most magnanimous gesture from a great writer to a newcomer, but it was an historic utterance. "I find it," said the greatest of all Bostonians, "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I greet you at the beginning of a great career." The tribute was a prophecy. To-day all the auspices seem in favour of Whitman's permanence in literature. It is the old, old story of the fate of pioneers. First the neglect of his own countrymen, tempered by a Niagara of abuse; then the recognition by a select few of the keener minds and brighter intelligences; and, at long last, the very slow emergence into appreciation as a worth-while poet, whose rare genius was recognized as being in harmony with democratic ideals. The trouble was that not only were Whitman's ideas unconventional, but his work was unlike anything else in poetry. It was not the freak of a mediocre writer trying to be eccentric at all costs in order to attract attention to himself, but a new and extended criticism of life. If Whitman had merely rearranged the old poetic materials in the literary lumber-room, such a departure would have been in no sense worthy of remark. He set himself the Herculean task of dealing with life in the nineteenth century in the Great Republic of the West without any regard to convention. His cultured contemporaries were contented to pass their lives carving cherry stones with the old familiar designs; but this rough, self-educated man elected to hew granite into new and undreamed-of shapes.

The making of such a writer is of no little importance. It is like tracing the literary progress of Percy Shelley from the forceful rhetoric of *Queen Mab* to the honeyed perfection of *Prometheus Unbound*, or the advance of young Will Shakespeare from the sugary "Venus and Adonis" to the sonorous grandeur of the great tragedies. In Whitman's own case the literary progress is from ordinary journalism, plain newspaper writing, to those kaleidoscopic word-pictures which determine his place in the world's literature. There cannot be any doubt that it was Whitman's purely journalistic training which sharpened his interest in humanity. He had naturally the keenest sympathy with life, and all human activity interested him; but it is none the less true that, in his capacity of newspaper-reporter, he was brought into actual contact with so many phases of life which would otherwise have escaped him altogether. This world-wide interest is the master-key to those poems of his, in which he seems merely to catalogue human occupations, merely naming the singing of the stevedores at their work, the raftmen sounding their bugles, the Oriental sailors turning to the East. Moreover, by his rare genius, Whitman roused in other men this same tireless sympathy. Our own Edward Carpenter's *Towards Democracy* is a splendid tribute to the influence of the "tan-faced poet of the West," not only as a poet, but also as a social reformer of importance. Whitman's universal charity, which was his natural gift, was sometimes reinforced with emotion, at times startling, as in his significant words addressed to a prostitute: "Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you." Such sentiment is rare in literature. Recall Thomas Hardy's poignant lines addressed "To a Woman About to be Hanged," in which this great humanitarian pities a murderess while he weeps. Whitman never failed to rise to a great occasion. In his poems on slavery and war, he never voiced a popular patriotism, but always the claims of humanity. "You celebrate bygones," Whitman says defiantly, "I project the history of the future." And it will be long before the citizens of the great United States of America will be able to realize the gorgeous dreams of an emancipated humanity portrayed with such vividness in so many of Whitman's unforgettable poems.

The nineteenth century produced few poets of greater significance than this bearded giant who broke all the traditions of Old-World poetry. There was definite room for that Jean François Millet of literature, a Millet who could paint hundreds of other things besides "The Angelus." It is high time that Whitman's example was followed. The poet who could sing of the life of our great cities with imaginative power, intellectual energy, and wide sympathies, will inscribe his name among the great writers, for he would have modern life for his inheritance. Whitman's animating message is a most inspiring legacy from the nineteenth to the twentieth century:—

"Our glorious century gone,
Beheld no head that shone
More clear across the storm, above the foam,
More steadfast in the fight
Of warring night and light,
True to the truth whose star leads heroes home."

MIMNERMUS.

After the colony of Maryland had been founded, the clause for liberty in its constitution extended only to Christians, and was introduced by the proviso that, "whatsoever person shall blaspheme God, or shall reproach or deny the Holy Trinity, or any of the Three Persons thereof, shall be punished with death."

Bancroft.

Does God Like Lipstick?

EVERY now and again, Christendom is stirred to its depths by some profound problem. Christendom, of course, is a most elastic term. We are aware that, for official purposes, we ourselves are part and parcel of Christendom, for when a numbering of its peoples takes place, and an impression of spiritual strength has to be fostered, down in the catalogue we go as one. We have no desire to be a part and parcel of Christendom—far from it—but if we are adjudged so to be in spite of our wishes, then we claim not only the right to be interested in the problems of Christendom, but that our voice is as representative of the voice of Christendom as is, on a division, any other single voice.

Spirituality is, of course, denied us. Because of this, although the nature of the dilemmas into which the devout manœuvre themselves puzzles us not a little, we are very willing to attribute our difficulties to our spiritual shortcomings. The particular trouble just now, according to to the Churches, is that there is breaking out all over the country, an epidemic of feminine unseemliness. Reverend gentlemen, for example, refuse to put through the marriage of a lady with all appurtenant ceremonial rites, because she and her attendant entourage have exceeded the *bare maximum*. The rite of communion again is sometimes denied to the women who rouge their lips so unskilfully as to make the fact manifest. The Pope is repeatedly giving guidance to the faithful on these delicate subjects, evidencing therein the time-honoured attitude of his Church towards women. From the lips of God's Vicar on Earth and the myriad of priests of all denominations who are all, in some sense or other, pieces of God, we learn that the Triune God is substantially displeased. Help would be very useful at the moment in a thousand directions, where apparently guidance is withheld. It is at least cheering to know that God is not always dumb. It is good to know that the Ancient of Days can be roused on occasion from his lethargy, and that as far as the trend of events respecting woman's dress and woman's ornamentation is concerned, his agents are able to tell us with authority and some emphasis that God is not amused.

The Churches can be relied upon not to go too far on this matter. Women constitute by far the bulk of their congregations, and on such a question as their right to settle their own methods of personal adornment, they will brook no interference from man or God. In the case of the interrupted wedding referred to, a few handkerchiefs superimposed on the places left for observation as God had made them, were all that was necessary to meet the divine requirements; after which the handkerchiefs could and would be promptly restored to their humbler function. Recently, a hatless girl was denied entrance to Canterbury Cathedral, as God, apparently, insists on a woman covering her head when visiting a Christian shrine. (The Decree is Hats Off for men and Hats On for women). The matter was speedily adjusted by a stocking being removed from its proper habitat and coiled round a new and temporary spiritual home. Ecclesiastics and ecclesiastically-minded people can show at times a surprising amount of worldly accommodation in condoning offences. Circumventing God is not a device beloved of politicians only. There is charm and even humour in it, to a sweet young thing in her teens. This may be difficult for one of God's Agents to appreciate. But if God is, as Omar alleged (and did anyone ever know better?), a "good fellow," then there is little doubt that he will have a real thrill of pleasure when such

incidents occur. Just as is experienced by the better type of man of wealth when he finds on an odd occasion some spirited person in his path refusing to be awed or intimidated by his financial potentialities.

The denial of the "Sacrament" to those who use cosmetics not wisely but too well, or to those who neglect sufficiently to conceal the body as designed by God, does appear, to the uninitiated outsider with only weak insufficient human reason to guide him, a piece of effrontery which only the possession of spirituality in an excessive degree could excuse. In the sense that God made the country and Man the town, it appears equally true that God made the Human Body and Man covered it up. If, to carry it further, it is not only permissible but compulsory to cover up God's handiwork, then it must follow that if not compulsory it is at least permissible when God has made the feminine lips pallid and uninviting, to cover them up also—with a little cosmetic. Why should it be said reproachfully in the one case (with *Hamlet*) God has given you one face and you make yourself another, and in the next breath: God made you without clothing, but your first duty is to take cover?

The theological answer to apparent inconsistency is that Man is not saved by Logic. The fact must be accepted although one feels that logic even in a God would do him little harm, and might even endear him to a small portion of the population. The major point remains: If God has views on Dress and Cosmetics, who knows what these views are? The Roman Church claims as do others, that it knows the will of God on these matters. But even it admits its fallibility. Even when on the admittedly rare occasions when an infallible decree has been launched, in accordance with all the strict formalities laid down, the ruling perforce must be given in words. This, however, helps little, as it is the significance of words that matters, and their significance can always, if necessary, be made to appear debatable. The Protestants, on their part, go to the Holy Book for guidance, short-circuiting the inspired priestly interpreter, which means in practice that they always find parts of the volume to accord with their preconceptions. And to base any church practice on something said by, say, St. Paul, requires considerable hardihood. Consider, for instance, the laudation heaped by the Christian Church on the Divine Institution of Holy Matrimony. And then consider that Paul said, *It is better to marry than to burn*. This, probably the finest example of "damning with faint praise" extant, is Paul's contribution to Conjugal Romanticism.

As far as we can represent the voice of Christendom we are at one with Mr. H. G. Wells, when he says of "their wonderful sacrament," that it is "an unintelligible mix-up of bad metaphysics and grossly materialistic superstition." Into the contents of such a poisoned chalice a little foreign matter, even if in the shape of lip-stick, would hardly make a noticeable difference in any direction. "Was there anything more corrupting," continues Mr. Wells, "than this God-eating, to take into a human mind and be given cardinal importance there?" If Mr. Wells is right, and he, too, counts as a substantial voice in Christendom, God-eating is not likely to be altered in its essence by a touch of scarlet. It is a case of *Farewell Nobility*, with or without lip-stick.

But Official Christianity professes much and protests much as to the profound satisfaction attainable by partaking of the Christian sacrament. More than that, there are substantial concrete blessings accruing therefrom, such as the staking out of a claim in the New Jerusalem and advance Preference bookings for something in the nature of tip-up chairs at their

interminable concerts. To deny the sacrament to the communicant in these circumstances implies a knowledge of the Divine Mind to a nicety, a stupendous piece of arrogance which only an unamiable megalomaniac could make with equanimity.

Half a century ago, the Christian Church debated with earnestness and vigour the question of everlasting torment. Jesus came to bring Immortality to Light. "Glorious," they said. But what if Broad is the way that leadeth to damnation? What if many be called and few chosen? And what if those who believe not are to be damned? If so, said some of them, this isn't much of a Gospel to write home about. Looking back upon these happenings although it is deplorable that such a vile belief had attained such a strength as to call for serious demolition, yet however grisly and uncongenial a theme it was, it could hardly be considered a minor one.

Nowadays, "with apes and players rustling the old garments," once again the cleric turns to questions that really matter.

T.H.E.

The Gods of Ancient Assyria

DESPIRE their chronic militancy the early Assyrians attained a high standard of civilization. Their powerful empire endured for several centuries, and in its prime extended from the Persian Desert to the Aegean Sea and bordered the African Sahara. Assyria's far-flung dominions included Persia, Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phœnicia, Palestine, Syria, Egypt and other lands. All Western Asia was swayed by the Assyrian sceptre which swept aside the sovereignty of hoary Egypt, to whose premier position it succeeded. At a time when culture was scarcely born in Europe, the Assyrians had developed the arts and sciences, and they appear to have been the first people to have established a real world Power.

Researches among the ruins of this long departed State have thrown a flood of light on the secular and religious customs of the Assyrians, whose sacerdotal ceremonies and beliefs exercised a potent influence over those of later Israel, and subsequently on those of the Christian communion.

There were gods and goddesses in profusion in the Ancient East. But although some 4,000 deities have been enumerated in Assyria, a score only find frequent mention in the inscriptions. As Zeus was the head of the Greek pantheon, much as Jupiter was in Rome, so, in Assyria, this supremacy was assigned to Assur, whose counterpart in Babylonia was Il or Ra. But while the Babylonian Il became a divinity, dim and shadowy, Assur stood forth in Assyria as a god of majesty and power. The country preserves this mighty deity's name, and he was the lord god of the people both in war and peace. He seated the King upon his throne, enforced his commands and lengthened his years. The god made the womb fruitful, protected his worshippers from foreign foes, and led them to victory. Their campaigns were conducted in Assur's name, and the conversion of the benighted heathen was the avowed object of their conquests. As Assur's servants, the Assyrians raided, plundered and destroyed, and their ravages accomplished, their enslaved enemies were compelled to bow down and worship Assyria's sovereign divinity.

In the art of the period, Assur is depicted as a god in human guise, wearing a horned cap, and frequently bearing a bow, which emerges from the centre of a winged circle, and is sometimes being discharged, or he may be holding forth his hand as if in aid, or shown in the act of striking a blow. The winged

circle, as Rawlinson, the Assyriologist, notes, is nearly always associated with Assyrian Kings. "The 'great king' wears it embroidered on his robes, carries it engraved upon his seal or cylinder, represents it above his head in the rock tablets whereon he carves his image, kneels or stands in adoration before it, fights under its shadow, under its protection returns victorious, places it conspicuously on his obelisks and other monuments; and, in all these representations, it is remarkable how, by slight modifications he makes the emblem conform to the circumstances of his own employment at the time." This winged circle may be variously interpreted, but it seems to symbolize the god's omnipotence and eternity.

The Assyrians also adored a trinity of deities, Anu, Bel and Hea, and by these divinities men cursed and swore. It has been conjectured that Anu symbolized the primeval chaos; Hea, life and mind, and Bel the creative agency which moulded matter and made it subservient to physical law. Another interpretation makes Anu, Bel and Hea the deities respectively of the earth, the skies, and waters. But if these were their original offices, later accretions have gathered round them. For although Hea's marine associations survived, Anu and Bel were evolved into gods, who ministered to the world's general affairs.

Anu was one of the rulers of the lower regions and a lord of demons and spirits, but he played a subordinate part in State religion, although a celebrated king avows himself as Anu's particular votary. Bel was a far greater person in this trinity, and was revered both in Babylonia and Assyria. In the Assyrian story of creation from which the legend in Genesis is derived, Bel created the heavens and the earth and formed man from dust, which the god blended with his own blood. Bel also fashioned the lower animals and then made the heavenly lights, sun, moon, and stars. And in the conflict of the gods Bel dispatched the mighty dragon Tiamet, by darting a thunderbolt between her distended jaws. Then, he in concert with Hea plans the defence against the seven devilish spirits who rebel and storm the citadel of the great gods themselves. This legend also reappeared in Christian tradition, while Bel, as his name implies, was pre-eminently the lord of all lands and of the world. Babylon and Nineveh were consigned to his special care, and the latter is mentioned in some inscriptions as Bel's sacred city.

The third person in this trinity is Hea, who is almost the equal of Bel. Hea is certainly a leading deity; he is the chief inventor, and he determines human destiny. As a water divinity he presides over ocean and stream. In the Epic of Creation, he shares with Bel the role of guardian, and directs the courses of the planetary globes. Hea also figures prominently in the Assyrian Flood Legend, and he warns Hasisadra, the Noah of the tale, that a devastating deluge is impending and commissions him to construct a great vessel so as to escape drowning. Bel is bent on the destruction of the whole human race, but Hea implores him to permit Hasisadra and his family to evade a watery death. Hea is a god of wisdom, "the lord of deep thoughts," and his counsel is ever in request when the other deities decline to a state of doubt and uncertainty.

Another triad of widely-worshipped gods were the deities of the sun, moon and atmosphere. The lunar god was regarded as of higher rank than the solar divinity, and this reversal of the usual order of precedence is traced to the circumstance that the cool and refreshing night is a welcome relief from the glare of day in sun-smitten lands, such as Assyria. Again, the lunar orb was perhaps the greater favourite because the priestly astronomers and astrologers

welcomed the star-studded nocturnal skies when pursuing their studies of far distant worlds.

Both in Babylonia and Assyria, Sin the moon god had many temples, and the third month of the year was sacred to him. He was depicted sometimes in human shape surmounted by the crescent moon, or he was represented by the crescent alone. This deity's importance is also attested by the fact that his name constantly appears in such appellations as Sin-gasit, Sin-shar-uzar, Sennacherib, and many others.

Shamas the sun-god had innumerable devotees, and was pre-eminently a military deity. He marches with the armies and secures their success. His aid in warfare is essential, while in times of peace Shamas strengthens the power and authority of the priestly kings. This god's emblem appears in nearly all the sacred cylinders, and his name constantly occurs in the inscriptions and, although he is less conspicuous in Assyrian mythology, Shamas is held responsible in the deluge tablets for the Flood that nearly destroyed mankind.

The third member of this secondary trio of gods is signified in the inscriptions by a monogram. His title has been variously interpreted as Bin, Yem, Rimmon, Vul and others. This god then, whom we will dub Vul, was the lord of the atmosphere, and a prominent deity. He resembles the Indian Indra, and like the Christian Satan, he was "the prince of the power of the air," the rider of storm and tempest, and the wielder of the thunderbolt. When the harvest failed, the forests were uprooted and famine and pestilence devastated the land, all these afflictions were his handiwork. Yet, in spite of these sinister characteristics, Vul had some redeeming features. As the lord of the atmosphere he provides the beneficent rain, and thus becomes the fount of fecundity, and the begetter of abundance.

Six of these eight divinities had their female companions. Il and Assur are bachelor gods, and some of the goddesses are pale and colourless, but Bel's wife Beltis is a robust personality. She is a great lady and the mother of the gods, while Hea's spouse rules Hades, and as queen of the realms of the dead soothes the last hours of the dying.

There is also a stellar company of five gods: Nin, Marduk, Nergal, Ishtar, and Nebo. Nin was a god of hunting and was generally popular, while Marduk was frequently coupled with Assur as a military god. Nergal is also a war deity, and presides over the pleasures of the chase. His emblem was the celebrated winged lion which guarded the gates of royal palaces.

The Assyrian Ishtar—the Nana of Babylon—was substantially the same goddess as Astarte in Syria and Phœnicia. Like Aphrodite and Venus, she symbolized love and beauty, presided over marriage, and stimulated the sexual passions of the animals. Ishtar was a seductive damsel, and strove without success to awaken the ardour of Izdubar. At other times she appeared in company with Assur, and the two led the Assyrian armies to victory.

Nebo, the fifth of these stellar deities, is the guardian of science and culture, and is primarily the mental power that gathers knowledge from afar. He also trains and instructs. Still, although the most grandiloquent titles are conferred upon him in the inscriptions he remains a minor divinity in Assyria's pantheon.

Religious services took place in shrines and temples where the deities were portrayed, save in two instances, in human form with images of metal or stone. Nin and Nergal were the exceptions, and were represented by huge animals adorned with human heads, while bearing enormous outspread wings. These

sculptures, like those of Epstein, display grim power and present an appearance of solemn tranquillity which generates emotions of reverence and awe.

In marked distinction to the ancient Egyptians, the Assyrians devoted little more than perfunctory attention to the dead. In later times, at least, their ideas concerning the after-life were vague and shadowy. Yet their Hades continued "an abode of darkness and famine," and there were rewards and punishments in the realms of the dead. A special prison of shame was appointed for faithless wives and husbands, as well as for those adolescents who had "dishonoured their bodies."

Among their mortuary customs were mourning rites and dirges for the departed who, during Assyria's historical period, were invariably laid to rest in a grave. Also, there was a regular supply of food and drink offerings for the sustenance of the spirits, and ornaments and utensils of every description were buried near the body in the earth.

T. F. PALMER.

A Modern Threnody

If you set out to see a kingfisher you will be disappointed; if, however, in your ramble down a quiet country lane leading to a stream, and if you are thinking of anything but the halcyon bird, you may have a vision of glittering and jewelled beauty which will be gone in a flash. What chance took you to Montaigne? What hap led you to Chaucer? What twist in a day's destiny threw you in the paths leading to Blake?

In an inn where there is communion of the saints of knowledge, the writer was sitting and noting the geometrical lines on the counter made by wet glasses—and thinking of the maddening cage in which most of us are locked. Suddenly there was a stop to such thought—a voice was reciting:—

"Nor praise the gods for beauty's anodyne,
For serried daffodils that dance amain
To golden-throated trumpets of the wind;
The banners that the poppies lift amid
The bending green battalions of the corn
That ever bravely march and bravely stay;
Praise not the gods for these, but praise poor Man!"

A new song, and yet in its harmonies having some of the delicious music of Shakespeare, of the rightful pride of an upright being, of the Promethean defiance breathing the arrival of awareness in a man; perhaps, after all, here was someone who could show us how to get out of the cage. The glass being raised to the lips was arrested—the drinker was listening. A big man in a blue jersey who was sitting astride a wooden form looked at the speaker. The barmaid's eyes shone with interest, the cellarman stopped at the top of the cellar stairs. Here was a saying, obliquely ratified, "So that meat would go cold in his hand whilst listening to a wise man." "Go on, go on—read further," said the writer to himself.

"Our eyes have learned the cunning to distil
Perforce this drug—sweet thing which beauty is
From sweetless things, unaided by the gods.
They breathed no gentlest loveliness therein
For us to find and ease us of our woe."

Here then, was my unsought kingfisher. Who writes like this? Who smites on the mind with blows that re-echo with clear understanding of what the poet means? I have read acres of print in all sorts of papers and reviews, but this has never been noticed. Blunden, Brooke, Hodgson, Houseman, Bridges, who in the name of paid and blatant publicity is the writer? And a voice less strident asks, how can such work be overlooked in a semi-hysterical world that will face up to anything but the real facts of existence?

Almost taking the book out of the hand of the speaker, who had successfully non-plussed me by asking who I thought was the writer, I looked through the pages. Here was a poet who had drained the cup of bitterness to the dregs. Van Gogh wrote somewhere of human beings living in cages:—

"Do you know what takes away the cage? Every profound relationship, brotherhood, friendship, love. They open the cage like a magic key. If you lose the key, existence becomes a living death. He who creates sympathetically creates life."

The poet, through a profound friendship, had discovered the truth of Van Gogh's affirmation, but in his own words at his loss he asks:—

"Did some God, yawning through eternal day,
A moment of his tedium beguile
Shaping in drowsy ease a meed of clay,
To all the golden quick'ning of her smile?
Then did he yawn again and to the dumb,
Crush back that wonder with an idle thumb?"

And the singer answers it all, first by defiance, and then by acceptance of every moment in eternity, but all gods are neither prayed to nor cursed, for he finally routs all vain and deceptive trust in them to find reliance in himself.

There are echoes of Euripides in this slender book, and I do not know if copies are available. When a student has made a library of his own of some two to three thousand books, in time, many of them appear to become covers, although he has been careful to make each book earn its shelf room. A stiffer examination is made of each new comer; most new books are clever variations of old ones. But "Poems: in Memory of a Dead Wife, 1919"—no heavier than a girl's bangle—must be taken in among the fraternity of books. It has a sweetness even out of despair; it raises a friendship which denies, of this human scuffle, that all is vanity, and Mr. Will Dyson will accept our praise and thanks for having ennobled and enriched literature in the tradition of Milton and Shelley.

C-DE-B.

Acid Drops

The Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland says, "We honour the King as a man as well as a King, because of his simple trust in God, because of his love for the word of God, and because of the simplicity and purity that has marked his home life." All things considered, this is rather faint praise, because it is not for any or all of these things that George the Fifth is King of England, and if he were destitute of them all their absence would not invalidate his right to the crown. If the King has a sense of humour he must often say to himself, "Save me from my friends."

In the statement of the Government that it intends to equip every one of the population with gas masks, we note that no mention is made of seeing that horses, asses, dogs, cats, and others that what one may in the circumstances call the higher or more reasonable animals, are provided for. Yet it is clear that when gas-bombs are falling like hail on our cities there will not be a single animal left alive. We are quite sure that no owner of a dog or a cat would object to paying an extra shilling or so to preserve its life, and the delicate stomach of Mr. Baldwin would be spared the sight of myriads of dead animals in houses and in the street. It is not as though these animals will be in India or the Middle East, which are outside the zone that turns Mr. Baldwin's stomach; they are here with us, part of our households, and about whom a great many would feel more concerned than they would about even a Cabinet Minister. We suggest that something should be done about it.

There is also the case of babies. Gas-masks certainly ought to be provided for them—even before old men and old women are protected. Perhaps a cradle built like a gas-mask might be prepared. And the baby should be kept in one whenever it is not being bathed or fed. Our first warning will be the dropping of bombs, and we must be prepared. We suggest also that one way of opening the eyes of the country to the danger fronting it would be for the King and Queen to open an exhibition of gas-masks for babies, and get the Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose to appear wearing them. The public must be awakened to the danger.

The manner in which the temper which made a reasonable peace possible in 1918 is well illustrated by a passage in Mr. Hamilton Fyfe's *My Seven Selves*. Mr. Fyfe was war correspondent to the *Daily Mail*, and on one occasion he sent in his report some stories by kindly Germans. He received at once a cable:—

Nothing wanted about good kind Germans. There are no good Germans but dead Germans.

It was this kind of poison, used by the press, that made a good peace impossible, and sowed the seeds of the disruption of Europe that followed. It takes all one's sense of justice and of consequences to say a word in favour of the freedom of the press where our Yellow Journalism is concerned.

The first chair, devoted to the study of Spiritualism, is to be established in Sweden at Lund University. One of the members of the University Circle Free Forum in Stockholm is in London, and has told a reporter that a group of workers in Germany are attempting to photograph the soul. We hope success will attend their efforts. It will be most exhilarating if a Jewish soul definitely shows finer texture than an Aryan soul, or greater possibilities for first-class development; or if even both sorts of souls seem equal in texture and quality. But we shudder to think what will happen if the photograph of a true-blooded German soul is superior to a Jewish one. Perhaps it will even be found that Jews have no souls!

On the other hand, Spiritualists in England are very angry with George Robey. This famous comedian may poke whatever fun he likes at anybody except Spiritualists; but their feelings must under no circumstances be hurt. Mr. Robey, though he did refer to people who believe in "spirits" categorically declares that in his B.B.C. broadcast, at which exception is taken, he never referred to Spiritualists, and surely that is reasonable. Lots of people believe in "Spirits" who are not Spiritualists. We do—sometimes—ourselves. It all depends on what spirits are meant, as Mr. Robey would say.

As a matter of fact and principle, we have no objection, nor should other people have, at any beliefs, religious or otherwise being made the subject of burlesque. Ridicule and burlesque are tests of the reality of belief. In the days when religion was taken seriously, and believed in earnestly, Christians did not mind their being made the subject of humour and satire. It is only when religion is out of touch with the intellectual environment that it asks to be protected from the deadly and testing assaults of humour and sarcasm. Believers can no longer accept their official creed and permit their sense of the ridiculous to play upon it. Hence the outcry against ridicule.

Abyssinia has been very much in the news of late, and will continue to be so, we expect, until it is annexed, or, in diplomatic language, becomes a protectorate of Italy. But it is rather a thorny subject for Christians. For Abyssinia is the oldest Christian State in the world. Christianity has had a freer hand there than anywhere else in the world, and for a longer period. Its prominent feature, in the mind of that portion of the public which builds up its knowledge of history from short stories and scraps of news in the papers, is that it is a stronghold of slavery. That is true, although attempts are being made to abolish it. Still, Lady Simon, after her investigations a few years ago, pointed out that Slavery was hard to destroy, it was based on the Bible, the priests took every attack on it as an attack on the authority of the Bible, and, in short, part of the position that existed in America a couple of generations ago, exists in Abyssinia to-day.

Apart from this, but unexpected happenings, it looks as though the days of Abyssinian independence were about done. Africa has been shared out among the European nations, and Italy, naturally, wants its slice. Abyssinia is the last remaining independent native State, and Italy is looking for what it was promised. In

1891, Great Britain made a treaty with Italy which would have given it Abyssinia. In 1915, when the Allies were bidding for Italy's support in the war, and Italy was willing to come in, provided it could pick out the winning side, and the winning side offered adequate "inducements," a clause in the treaty that was drawn up read that "Should France and Great Britain extend their colonial possessions in Africa at the expense of Germany, they will admit in principle Italy's right to demand certain compensation by way of an extension of her possessions in Eritrea, Somaliland." Italy has waited for payment, and now demands it as one of the measures to divert attention from home troubles. And it will be very strange and exceedingly unfortunate if one of those providentially planted frontier incidents does not lead to armed action by Italy, when the autumn arrives, and military operations can be more easily undertaken. "National honour" must likewise be defended and vindicated; and the philosophic historian will conclude that it is evidently the intention of "Providence" this should be so, since a great deal of the world's surface has come under the control of enlightened Christian powers in exactly this way.

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Assembly asks very plaintively "Must the Church be always in the rear?" Well it always has been, and it looks as though it can only be at the front by ceasing to be a Church. How can an institution be anywhere but in the rear when its leaders and followers have ideas selected for them, beliefs framed for them, and are threatened with pains and penalties if they essay anything new in either direction? The most "advanced" religious thinker is never doing any more than trying to frame primitive ideas in modern terms: the most "advanced" Church can never be doing anything more than seeing how much of the new it will be forced to accept in order to keep the old in being. There is as eternal a conflict between old and new in the Church—Christian or other—as there is between savagery and civilization, or between ignorance and knowledge.

One of the conditions which the Dictator of Europe, Adolf Hitler, has laid down in his peace terms is the prevention of influencing public opinion through the cinema and the theatre. This means, of course, that nothing must be said of Germany's treatment of the Jews, the intellectuals, and anti-Nazis generally. The back-stair agreements that are being framed will prevent the public knowing how far this condition is accepted, but it is well to remember that the Government and the press are remarkably silent concerning Mussolini's treatment of anti-fascists, and the same result might happen with regard to Germany if it suits the policy of the Government, and pressure is brought to bear on the press. One ought not to forget Mr. Macdonald's warning that he hoped the Government would not find it necessary to do anything to curb the freedom of the press. That kind of thing, said often enough, familiarizes the public mind with it as a possibility, and so paves the way to it becoming a fact.

More wisdom from a Catholic editor:—

Strange as it may seem to you, if a man has married more than once, and if he and his spouses all reach Heaven, they will live in a state of perfect felicity and union for they will love each other in God and for God's sake.

Solomon will be having, on these lines, an exceptionally good time in Heaven—though it cannot unfortunately be ascertained whether he has got a little tired of his 300 wives during the odd 2,500 years he has resided with God. We wonder also what married men blessed with only one wife would say at the prospect of spending the whole of eternity with a single spouse? Perhaps some already think that Hell would be more desirable!

Councillor W. F. E. Smith, the Mayor of Newport, who refused to take part in any Jubilee religious celebrations other than Catholic, vigorously defended his action. "I say definitely," he cried, "that I am not going to a

Church of England service, which is conducted with another denomination which does not conform to the Church of England and other religious bodies which believes that Christ was an imposter." This last allusion was to the Jewish Rabbi, who did take part in the Christian religious service, and whose presence obviously bothered pious Mr. Smith more perhaps than anything else. However, it is worth recording that the Newport Town Council carried a motion of "strong disapproval" by 19 votes to 10, a motion which might influence Mr. Smith to attend the next Jubilee religious service no matter what drivel was uttered or who uttered it.

Elsewhere, in Belfast, Jubilee Week exhibited more than mere "disapproval." The Irish "Orangeman" and the Irish Catholic about equal each other in religious hatred, and a mob of 300 smashed windows in the Catholic quarter (a striking proof of how all in Christ love one another), and—of course—looted a public house. Orange gunmen, like their Sin Fein confrères, soon were on the scene with serious shooting and even Catholic mill-girls were attacked by Orange women. Altogether, this exhibition of Christian unity and love was most impressive.

A Welsh lady, Miss Catherine Huws, writes to the *Western Mail* describing the shock of her life. It seems she attended an inter-college debate on "That political power ultimately belongs to the Workers." The lady was quite ready to hear this discussed, but what caused her blood to run cold was the language of one of the speaker's which was "terrible to hear." "He denied the existence of God, Christ and the soul. . . . There was devilish conviction in his voice when he endeavoured to prove that Jesus Christ was a materialistic Communist." Worse still, "The audience rejoiced in the man's leadership and supported his Godless arguments." But why this terrible shock? If Miss Huws had gained the slightest knowledge of current thought she would have known that these ideas are far from common, and if she had received a reasonable training she would not have been so shocked as to make her almost hysterical.

The General Assembly of Unitarians and Free Christian Churches, which met recently at Liverpool, had a great deal to say on the un-Christian character of war. We do not know on what ground. Up to date there has not been a single war during the last seven centuries in which the majority of Christians were not in agreement with it. It has sometimes said that Christianity while never abolishing war at least "sanctified it." It did more than that. Christianity moralized war, as it moralized intolerance and many other evils, that without religious sanction would have had far less power in the world than they have to-day. If Christians were really opposed to war, peace would be one of the surest things belonging to the near future.

Apparently even Evangelical Revivalists occasionally get more or less disgusted by the "improving stories" so common at such services. A writer in the *Methodist Recorder* admits that the yarns about converted murderers and other brands plucked from Hell by conversion are:—

Very effective in tracts, in booklets, appealing for funds. Great platform illustrations. The convert who is much talked about and set up as an example is nearly always an ex-drunkard or an ex-gambler. Sometimes, for a change, he is an ex-infidel; a man who spent his time, perhaps on a Communist platform, attacking the faith.

But he feels that this sort of thing is being overdone. He thinks that Christians "including, of course, myself," might do well to look after number one. He re-tells a story to the effect that:—

At a Buchman meeting a young man, feeling he was being outdone in confession, cried, "I blew my nose on the bath towel!"

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Distributing the *Freethinker*, W. James, 5s.; W. M. Cairns, 2s.; Don Fisher, 3s.

T. P. APSLEY.—Glad to hear from so old a reader of the *Freethinker*, and to get your high opinion of it. Your receiving a copy through the post is a result of our attempts to introduce the paper to new readers. Some of the copies sent out in this way are bound to get into the hands of present subscribers. Yours was one of this number. Please pass it on.

J. R. LICKFOLD.—We note your appreciation of "The World of Books" in last week's issue, and your wish for it to be repeated frequently. We will try to do so.

S. TURNER.—You should find the outline you require in an easy and popular form in *Arabic Thought and its Place in History*, by Dr. De Lacy O'Leary. It is published by Kegan Paul (1922), at 10s. 6d.

S. M. DEGOLIER.—The article would hardly be pertinent to English readers who have not read what it refers to. The trouble with so many who, as they say, "investigate" Spiritualism is that it seldom dawns upon them that to investigate a subject, a previous study of matters bearing upon it is necessary. The result usually is that the value of the average "investigation" into Spiritualism is about as impressive as the ruminations of a savage on the causes of tidal motion. No tenet of Spiritualism has ever been "proven" in the sense that any scientific doctrine is proven. It is proven only to such as believe, while others with the same facts come to quite opposite conclusions.

S. GREEN.—Sorry, but Mr. Cohen really has not the time to give an outline of the fundamentals of religion and Freethought in private letters, much as he might feel inclined to do so. We are sending you a copy of Mr. Cohen's *Four Lectures On Freethought and Life*, which so far as we are concerned is the best outline of the position we have in a small compass.

W. REPTON.—Thanks for cuttings; they are interesting and useful.

J. STEVENSON.—Thanks for cuttings from a reader of thirty-five years standing. As we have often said, when we find readers we keep them. We do not think there is another paper in the kingdom that has the same personal hold on its readers than the *Freethinker* has. And it is not gained by flattering them or pandering to their prejudices. That is what makes us feel proud of their support.

J. C. BALANTINE.—Thanks for your appreciation of the article "How to Create Peace." The *Freethinker* has always stood for world peace, and has done, and is doing, its share of the work by exerting a stimulating influence greater than it is possible for it to do by allying itself to this or that particular movement. The value of a movement or a teacher who appeals to the intelligence of men and women without allying itself or himself to any specific sect or party is always of first-class importance. Your finding our articles "stimulating" is a case in point.

W. J. MEALOR.—Mr. G. H. Taylor will be gratified to learn of your great appreciation of his recent article on "Darwinism and its Critics." The article deserves all you say about it.

T. F. WILLIAMSON.—Thanks. Your appreciation of Ingersoll shall appear.

W. D. FISHER.—Mr. Rosetti has written you on the matter.

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

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

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen's new work *Letters to the Lord* is now on sale. It is issued in stiff paper covers at 1s., and in cloth at 2s. In each case postage will be twopence extra. It can, of course, be ordered through any newsagent or bookseller. It should be one of the "best sellers," and it is certainly calculated to make religious folk sit up and take notice. Fifty years ago it might have meant a prosecution for blasphemy, but times have changed and the Freethinkers have not worked in vain.

Manchester saints will be having a busy time for some days. Commencing to-day, June 2, Mr. G. Whitehead will hold open-air meetings each evening during the week. On Saturday evening the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. will open with a reception of delegates at the Victoria Hotel, Deansgate, at 7 p.m., at which the President, Mr. Chapman Cohen will be present. On Sunday, June 9, business meetings will be held morning and afternoon at the same hotel. Only delegates and members of the N.S.S. are entitled to be present. In the evening a Public Demonstration will take place in the Picture House, Market Street. Full particulars are announced in another part of this issue.

Those who intend to be present at the outing on Monday should lose no time in acquainting the local secretary, Mr. W. Collins, 4 The Bungalows, New Mills Road, Hayfield, Near Stockport. It is proposed to visit Castleton, in Derbyshire. Train at 9.30 from Manchester Central. Dinner at the Cheshire Cheese Hotel at 12.30. Tea at 5.30. The cost for rail fare and the two meals will be 8s.

We daresay that those people who were responsible for the break-up of Sir Oswald Mosley's meeting at Newcastle-on-Tyne feel they have done something of which they ought to be proud. For our part we consider it is a very bad piece of work, and for two reasons. The first, and the most important, is that the right to free speech cannot be dependent on the kind of opinion that is being advocated, and therefore the break-up of a public meeting by sheer rowdiness is a blow struck at freedom of public meeting as a whole. It is A's turn to-day, it is B's turn to-morrow. People who delight in preventing an opinion to which they are opposed getting a hearing are doing what they can to destroy the only effective barrier to downright terrorism in public life.

In the second place, they are not enemies of Sir Oswald Mosley, they are among his best friends. Let alone, his windy utterances, pantomimic performances, and stupid argumentation would have killed him long ago. Of all the ridiculous figures in public life he is surely to-day the most ridiculous. He has neither the social excuse nor the theatrical strength of Mussolini. He is a pitiful compound of vanity and incapacity, anxious only to assume the character of a national leader, and satisfied if he is hailed as such by a number of middle-class out of works. What notoriety he has achieved—and even that has dwindled sadly of late, is entirely due to the advertisements the meeting-breakers have given him. If they really wish to kill Sir Oswald, these people should guard his meetings from the slightest interruption. As it is,

for one person who goes to hear Sir Oswald, fifty go in the expectation of witnessing a circus. People who cannot listen to an opinion to which they disagree should stay away from meetings altogether. And all should remember that intolerance is intolerance quite irrespective of whoever and whatever is the object of its manifestation.

America has lost one of its most striking personalities in the person of Jane Addams. She was a worker in all sorts of humanitarian causes, and her fine character and unswerving devotion to any cause that she believed to be right was one of her marked characteristics. Distinguished people from all parts of the world sought her out, and she richly deserved their esteem. It is so many years since we first read one of her books that we had forgotten that she still lived. She was a devoted worker among the poor, a pioneer of the Woman's Movement and as a worker for peace gained an international reputation.

We recall one of her sayings just after the war broke out. She gave it as her opinion that if the war could have been withheld for another twenty years there would have been an end of war altogether. Her faith was in the new generation that was growing up, and which had been subjected to an entirely new view of social development. If this new generation could have reached maturity and gained power, they might well have reversed the teachings of the mentally and physically aged politicians and diplomatists who guided Europe to the great disaster. But that was not to be. The Old Men of the Tribe led the youth of the world to war, and in the disaster that followed, the world brutalized and disenchanting, fell back upon a tribalism disguised as a nationalism that even now can appreciate nothing higher and better than the ethics of the jungle. The Old Men are in the saddle, doping the young ones with the catchwords that belong to a vanishing world, and pursuing their almost criminal career with only too great a success. This must have been the greatest affliction that troubled the last years of one of America's most notable characters.

We have to acknowledge several letters informing us that the senders have received specimen copies of the *Freethinker*, although they have been regular subscribers for some time. We are pleased to have the last statement, but may explain that they have received them as part of an attempt to make the paper better known. We have no means of knowing whether all to whom the paper is sent in the way described, and we suggest that when copies are received in this way they be passed on to a likely stranger. All will be glad to learn that we have gained many new subscribers by this method of distribution, and that these have expressed thanks for being brought into contact with the *Freethinker*.

We make the above statement for another reason. We know that there are large numbers of people in the country who would be regular readers if the *Freethinker* was brought to their notice. We very seriously ask their help in the work we have in hand.

Lovers of London as well as lovers of Dickens will find in Mr. William Kent's *London for Dickens Lovers* (Methuen, 3s. 6d. net), a valuable and excellent guide. The author knows his subject well, and his book is, in addition, a mine of curious and interesting information gathered from many sources and much reading. Dickens, of course, knew his London, and could describe its many streets, scenes and sights with a master hand. Many writers have traced his descriptions to their sources in a fascinating number of books and *London for Dickens Lovers* is a worthy addition to the series. We should have liked to see it well illustrated, however, and it is a pity that the publishers did not find a better frontispiece to represent Dickens' London.

The summer activities of the Manchester Branch will commence at Platt Fields, on Sunday, June 2, particulars will be found in the Lecture Notices. Mr. G. Whitehead

will be lecturing during the week, and local members are urged to attend as often as possible to assist with literature sales, and to support generally.

The outing to the Croydon Aerodrome, arranged by the West London Branch, was a great success. Twenty members and friends turned up and thoroughly enjoyed the day. Details of the next outing to take place on June 30, will be announced later.

Members and friends who visit Hyde Park can now obtain copies of the *Freethinker* from the Kiosk.

Masterpieces of Freethought

"ECCE DEUS"

By WILLIAM BENJAMIN SMITH

III.

It is, of course, quite impossible to give Smith's analysis of some of the supposed "human" traits attributed to Jesus. He seems to have no difficulty in proving—to me, at all events—that these "human" attributes can be far better fitted to a God. His knowledge of Greek and Hebrew enables him to compare the words translated "compassion," "rebuke," and so on—words which are used to show that Jesus, in addition to being a God, was also a man—and to show how uncritically they are used.

Outside the fourth Gospel, Smith points out, it is only once where Jesus is said to have "loved." It is the famous story of the Rich Man who was told to sell all he had and give to the poor (Mark x. 21). Smith proceeds:—

Hitherto in Galilee (of the Gentiles) the Jesus seems to have met only multitudes of invalids, particularly demoniacs; "Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all." No such persons meet him in Judea, only blind Bartimæus forms an exception confirming the rule. Now Galilee was certainly as healthful as Judea. Why, then, such countless throngs of sick folk in Galilee and none in Judea? Only one answer is possible: *The maladies of Galilee were purely spiritual; they were paganism, false worship, polytheism.* The gods and idols, those were the diseases he cured and the demons he cast out. His career in Galilee is only a brilliant poetic picture of the progress of the Jesus-cult. "Go tell John what ye hear and see; blind men look up and lame men walk, lepers are cleansed, and deaf men hear, and the dead are raised, and the poor are evangelized." All these works stand in line. It is the same great deed expressed under six forms—the conquests of the Jesus-cult among the poor, the Gentiles and the gentiled Jews. Now in Judea the true God was worshipped, true religion prevailed. Hence such cures as those wrought in Galilee of the Gentiles were impossible. But spiritual blindness prevailed, alas! even among the highly-honoured people of God; hence the cure of blind Bartimæus, who symbolizes the spiritually-blinded Jew. If such be the proper interpretation of those facts, then there is no other choice: we must regard this *One*, who meets Jesus at the gate of Judea, as the symbol of Jewry.

This extract gives the reader a very good idea of the way in which Smith interprets many seemingly historic incidents attributed to a real Jesus; and his searching analysis of many passages in support of his views is extremely rich in suggesting new ways of looking at time-worn stories, which, at least since the New Testament was translated into English, have been regarded by pious Christians as unmistakable history. The way in which he takes up such a parable as that of Lazarus and Dives (which even Christians recognize as pure symbolism) and compares it with other stories in proof that the whole

thought of the Gospel writers (or interpolators) ran along these lines, and not on history at all, should be studied by all students to whom the problem of Jesus is fundamental to Christianity. In no other way, claims Smith, can the real significance of the parable of the Prodigal Son be understood; and even the stories associated with Mary and Martha are all pure symbolism:—

In the two sisters Mary and Martha (Lady), the former sitting at the feet of Jesus (gladly adopting the Jesus-cult) the latter cumbered with much serving (Jewish rites and ceremonies), and demanding similar service from her sister, it seems impossible not to recognize the Gentile and Jewish world. Consider it was the habit, many centuries old, to speak of a people as a woman (daughter of Zion, daughter of my people), and then say how the early Christian mind, brooding continually over the knotty problem of the Jew and the Gentile in the kingdom, could have narrated such an incident *without thinking of the patent allegory.*

Smith devotes some pages of very careful analysis to these stories of Mary and Martha and Lazarus of "Bethany" and Mary the "sinner." "Acute biographers of Jesus," he says, "have remarked the conspicuity of women, even of erring women, in the Gospel narrative, and have shrewdly surmised that the Christ must have been an uncommonly handsome and winsome Rabbi—in fact, 'a dear, charming man,' such as the Jewish race not seldom perfects in beauty—and must have had a peculiar attraction for the eternal feminine"; and symbolism is the only true interpretation of the famous story of the "woman taken in adultery"—famous alike because it is almost always used to show the beautiful character of the human Jesus, and because it has long been recognized as an "interpolation"—forming no part of the "original" gospel of John, but too, too beautiful to be rejected altogether. Smith goes very deeply into the question of symbolism with many vivid examples, but space forbids further discussion here. He even studies the "didactic" element very carefully, and considers it a "serious error to ascribe a purely literary quality to the personality of Jesus, or, indeed, to any other." And, finally, he comes to that great "stand-by" of the biographical school, the Epistles of Paul, especially the first four. "When driven from every other stronghold," says Smith, "the higher critic will certainly take refuge in this redoubtable quadrangle." Mr. Joseph McCabe, for example, in a Little Blue Book entitled *Did Jesus Ever Live*, concedes almost everything, but will not give up Paul. He admits that "Prof. W. B. Smith makes, perhaps, the most learned attempt to show that Jesus was a pre-Christian deity turned by his followers into an historical being," but seems not to have read Smith's crushing reply to those who, like himself, rely on Paul as the impregnable rock of the historical Jesus. Mr. McCabe gives the exact passages in Paul, which he claims to contain "one unshakeable story about Jesus," and insists that "Paul bears definite witness to Jesus." Some of these passages are minutely examined by Smith, who in turn claims that even "Paul is not impregnable." For example, one of the passages used by Mr. McCabe is Romans vi. 6. Smith remarks:—

We do, indeed, hear of the death and resurrection; but in the only allusion in Romans (e.g.) to the crucifixion, it is declared (vi. 6): "knowing this, that the old man was crucified" (with the Christ?); and again, "we were then conspurched with him (vi. 4; so, too, in Gal. ii. 20: "I have been conspurched with Christ." Of course, it is easy to see that these expressions are mere figures; but if there was a symbolic burial (in baptism, as all admit), why not also a symbolic crucifixion?

The Epistles are, as various writers have pointed out, "saturated with Gnosticism"; and nobody will pretend that the Gnostics used much else but metaphors and symbols. And, after all, what are parables but symbols? "Without a parable spake he not unto them." (Mark.) "How deeply," remarks Smith, "the mind of the Scripturist was tinged with this habit of symbolism may be inferred from the story of Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael, which seems to us as plainly, simply, and unequivocally historical as anything in literature. Yet says the apostle: 'which things are allegorical.' (Gal. iv. 24). If the principal author of the New Testament interpreted such an unvarnished biographical detail as an elaborate allegory, are we wrong in still further widening the circle of symbolic interpretation in the Gospels, where, in any case, it must admittedly be drawn with a radius so exceptionally large?" And he concludes with reference to his dealing with Paul: "Here, then, the guns of this boasted battery are not only captured; they are turned destructively upon the critics that trained them. The simple primitive and long-cherished conception of the Eucharist not only does not prove the historicity of the Last Supper, but it does prove decisively the non-historicity and purely symbolic content of the incident in question. . . . Was the Epistolist writing history? By no means. For be it noted that Death was, 'according to the Scriptures'; that the Resurrection was also 'according to the Scriptures.'" And Smith considered he had finally "routed" Paul—in spite of the "few desperate fighters," maintaining a "tedious guerilla contest."

Smith considers also very carefully what he calls "the Gospel Portrait," and claims that "no faithful or vivid portraiture is present in the Gospels," and that "no human genius has yet been able to say convincingly what the character of Jesus really was. The various conceptions are just as different as the various minds that conceive them." This chapter is an exceptionally acute one, and I should require many pages to deal with it alone. In fact, I hope to do so at some future date.

But I must briefly allude to the searching criticism Smith bestows on those "bulwarks of Liberalism," the famous "nine pillars" from the Gospels which Prof. P. W. Schmiedel of Zurich considers irrefutably prove that the Gospel writers were recording a real historical figure in Jesus. John M. Robertson had also to face these texts, and his analysis should be compared with Smith's. And it must be conceded that Schmiedel has to be fairly faced if the biographical school are to be beaten. Nowhere in his book is Smith so confident. He seems to enter into the fray with positive delight. He ridicules the idea that because the evangelists recorded something which does not seem in accord with what a God should have done or said, it is bound to be "history." He insists that the Gospel writers were not writing for fun or fame; that "their sentences are surcharged with meaning." The Evangelists were not just "simple folk, naively jotting down what they heard, or indulging in pleasing reminiscences of good old days." And therefore, as they were "admittedly Jesus-worshippers, they believed and earnestly propagated the doctrine that Jesus was divine; in their minds, then, the passages were *not* demonstrations of his mere humanity; they were *not* pillar proofs that 'the divine is to be sought in him, only in the form in which it is capable of being found in man.' Prof. Schmiedel's notion that these tell-tale passages have been preserved out of reverence for the very words and very deeds of the Jesus is caught out of the air; it is contradicted by everything that we know of the composition of the Gospels." Again, I am sorry space forbids me to quote

how Smith deals in detail with each passage. The reader must go to *Ecce Deus* itself for his remarkable and searching criticism. In my opinion, Schmiedel's "pillars" are crumbled to dust. "There are no texts," declares Smith, "in the Gospels that indicate that Jesus was a man. Of course, he is represented as speaking, going from place to place, even as sleeping, and as hungering, as working wonders, as being surrendered, arrested, tried, condemned, executed, buried, raised again. But all this is merely imagery."

Smith devotes many pages also to a very close and careful examination of Josephus and Tacitus, in so far as these writers are quoted in support of a real Jesus. Josephus is easily dismissed. But Tacitus is very minutely examined. It ought to prove very interesting for a pious Christian to answer Smith on Tacitus. Bluster, more than any solid argument, disposed of J. W. Ross's *Tacitus and Bracciolini*, in which is maintained that the whole of Tacitus's *Annals* was forged in the fifteenth century. Smith also proceeds on a textual criticism of the Latin text, and his conclusion is: "By three entirely independent lines of enquiry we are led to precisely the same result. The chapter (concerning Jesus) wears the appearance of being interpolated." And he concludes:—

It is a grave mistake to suppose that early Christian writers had no temptation to cite profane witnesses to the historicity of Jesus because "that was a settled fact" with their "Christian readers." It was not a settled fact with all Christian readers. The existence of the Docetists and other Gnostics, as well as the fierce polemics of Tertullian, Irenæus and others show clearly that this co-called "fact" was questioned, and even rejected, in many Christian quarters.

I can only call attention to Smith's examination of the words, "Judas Iscariot." It is a splendid contribution to the question which should not be overlooked. And I trust I have indicated matter of sufficient interest to send discerning readers to *Ecce Deus*, one of the most remarkable works on an intricate problem that has ever appeared.

H. CUTNER.

Recent Books

Men and Their Motives (J. C. Flügel, 1934). Prof. Flügel (London Univ.) is our leading psychoanalyst exponent, and this book, like his *Psychoanalysis and Clothes*, should have a wide reading. He again brings apparently unrelated phenomena into connexion. Are you a worker in the International Language Movement? Then have your anal—and oral—erotic motivations laid bare. Are you interested in Henry VIII.'s matrimonial habits? Then see them traced, for instance, to his desire for opposition and rivalry. Would you like to abolish jealousy? Learn, then, how to manage infantile relationships, and see how the tendency to jealousy is aggravated in adolescence by the notion of property in love.

A Common Faith (John Dewey, 1934). In these Yale lectures, Prof. Dewey continues a line of thought foreshadowed in his earlier works, notably *Experience and Nature*. This most eminent American philosopher since Wm. James, rejects supernaturalism and revealed religion, but asks, What can we save from the wreck? Like Julian Huxley, he wants a natural religion, a common faith free from class, race or sect boundaries. We must disentangle from all supernaturalism the religious attitude that is potential in man. Instead of an "aggressive Atheism," we must find some worthy object of faith which

will keep alive "natural piety." He chooses "inclusive moral ends which imagination presents to us," and has no objection if you call it God. Similarly, Materialism, though valid, depreciates the importance of mind, which raises the character of nature as a whole. Though he criticizes the churches, he is willing to assign them a function if they become "social-minded."

The Death of Materialism (Carington). There is something amusingly familiar about this title, and the cream of the joke is that in Mr. Carington's opinion all the attempts to refute Materialism, before his book, failed, by going "on the wrong lines." His task is to show what are the right lines, so that Materialism is now killed for the first time! For the lack of style and dignity in language, and the absence of scientific understanding, the author offers, in their place, some facetious jokes. His "reasons" for rejecting Materialism include (a) the unity of consciousness; our minds being local centres in the Universal mind; (b) the fact that there are no Things-in-Themselves; (c) the breakdown of classic physics. Not a very original collection! Mr. Carington places some reliance on the philosophy of Eddington, and also of Vaihinger's book *As If*. (Vaihinger was Lange's disciple in the belief that Materialism, though true, is not satisfying). So far from Materialism being dead, we are told in *Fact and Faith* (J. B. S. Haldane, 1934), that "the progress of physics in the last ten years has removed a great many of the objections to Materialism," which "has become vastly more plausible" in that time. In fact, "Materialism," says Prof. Haldane, "has been pretty completely successful in astronomy, physics and chemistry. In biology I do not think any facts inconsistent with it have been discovered." The remaining big gaps in our knowledge do not permit Haldane to adopt any final 'ism. This book contains his contributions to the *Rationalist Annual* since 1925, and make a fine addition to Watts' Thinkers' Library—the more valuable because Haldane is by no means a prolific writer. There is not a dull page in the nine essays, and the author's zest for speculation is combined with a rare power of satire when he assumes that by a simple turn of fate Zoroaster had become our national saviour instead of Christ. Haldane then proceeds, in the true bungling religious way, to reconcile modern science with Mithraism, and even makes a better job of it than paid professional Christian apologists do for their own creed. Haldane asks for more interest in the history of religions, for "the god-making tendency is always with us, and only by a study of its past are we likely to curb its development."

On the subject of Materialism's supposed decline, it is interesting to note that in *Idealism, A Critical Survey* (Prof. Ewing, 1934), it is Idealism that has passed its heyday, and the author's task is to assess its importance "now that its day of dominance is over." Idealism is "the theory that the existence of physical objects apart from experience is logically inconceivable," and Theism is "the belief in the cosmic supremacy of spiritual values."

Modern Knowledge and Old Beliefs (Vivian Phelps, 1934).

This is a sort of arranged scrap-book to bring Mr. Vivian's magnificent *Churches and Modern Thought* up to date. Freethinkers in England will salute this militant old comrade, whose interest in the cause is not confined to the arm-chair and writing desk. As in the larger book, recent advances in many fields are discussed to the one end of discrediting Christian apologetics.

A Martian Examines Christianity (Levett). Taking an old theme, the author has produced 118 pages of propaganda, pure and simple, in language suitable

for the most uninitiated "nothingarian" who awaits conversion to secularism. This is a book for Christians too; it convinces but does not hurt, though the author has no sympathy even for Modernism. But it is the first time I knew that a Rabbi was a defender of Christianity.

Russian Sociology (Julius Hecker, 1934). One of the inside authorities on the Soviet development, Dr. Hecker, here gives accounts of twenty-seven viewpoints, of which strict Marxism is only one.

Religion and the Science of Life (McDougal, 1934), is the title of the first essay in the book. Prof. McDougal thinks Behaviorists have neglected the theoretical in their pursuit of the practical in psychology, and he wants some common agreement among psychologists. Of special interest to social reformers is his appeal for eugenics, and his protest against the stupid delay in permitting haphazard multiplication, which compares unfavourably with the care exercised on greyhounds, etc.

Science and Monism (Wightman, 1934). This deals with the tendency, historical and contemporary, philosophical and scientific, to bring all aspects of existence, living, mental or material, into a monistic scheme—an ultimate oneness.

Human Sterilization To-day (Cora B. Hodson, 1934) is in effect a co-operative product of eugenicists in many countries, with plenty of foreign illustration and a conveniently small bibliography. Eugenic sterilization is related to political theory, and although the foreword strangely promises to refrain from argument, there is plenty of sound argument in the text to show us that parenthood is a natural right which will have to be surrendered in the interests of the community.

Darwinism and its Critics (Prof. Sir Arthur Keith, 1935). This is an answer to Sir Ambrose Fleming and the creationists. Sir Arthur has no difficulty in disposing of arguments, old or new, against evolution, e.g., "If the special creation of man took place, as Sir Ambrose maintains, in the year 5411 B.C., it is difficult to see how the Cromagnons could have appeared in Europe some few thousand years before their ancestor Adam was created."

Sir Arthur, however, is at variance with some of his colleagues in biological matters, e.g., in the use of the word Darwinism. Leading investigators to-day take the view that on account of post-Darwinian advances like the analysis of heredity, selection, adaptation, etc. (which Darwin is said to have treated as irreducible principles), the term Darwinism cannot advisedly be used as synonymous with evolution, as Keith would have it. As Hogben says, Darwinism explains, not the origin of species, but the origin of gaps. The significant names, so far as origins go, are Mendel and Morgan. For the production of new things, one looks, not to natural selection, but to the laboratories in Texas and Leningrad, with the remarkable work of Paynter, Bridges, Muller, etc., on vinegar flies, mice, and other beings, whose rate of multiplication admits of experiment. Rightly or wrongly, the term Darwinism has acquired certain restricted implications. It is, however, merely a matter of terminology, as is Keith's divergence from the standpoint of Haldane, who regards selection as creative, which Keith does not.

Sir Arthur ridicules the suggestion "that at every stage a creative power is bending over and guiding the development of every growing egg." But surely no creationist need be committed to that attitude, and Sir Arthur quotes none. On the contrary, the believer in creation says God "bent over" the first

man only, and, having planted the seed of humanity, now sees it fructify.

On the whole, then, when one compares Prof. Keith's reply to Fleming with that by Mr. Chapman Cohen, it becomes evident that the practising scientist is not necessarily a better expositor than the layman.

Nature and Life (A. N. Whitehead, 1934). This philosopher-mathematician-poet pleads for the fusion of life and nature, since we have no warrant for separating mentality and matter. Realism and Idealism are therefore only half-truths. Science, permissible as a method, is dangerous as a philosophy, for it finds mere rules of succession, and is blind to purpose. A new philosophy-religion is needed, freed from obsolete ecclesiasticism.

G. H. TAYLOR.

A Ballad of Blown Gaff

or
Exactly Who it is

PRINCE, when the world hawls at us, it is up
With you and yours, and we shall go sky high,
Where is the compensation for the pup
The shoddy statesmen sold to you and I?
Diplomacy, with gentlemen top-hole,
Fine art, good form, to give the vulgar fits,
It just amounts to a massacre's toll,—
All can be blown to very tiny bits.

Lapland has nailed its colours to the mast,
The Esquimaux in khaki soon will strut,
The Aborigine is drilling fast,
La guerre will soon have every human mutt.
And nearer home, where culture sheds her bloom,
And armaments with hogwash daily flits,
We need not sigh if prices get a boom;
All can be blown to very tiny bits.

I'll doff my hat to scarecrow in the field,
Salute a cow that munches scented hay,
But not again my wandering senses yield
To those whose talk is just the same to-day,
As that which caused one million men to die—
O fossil statesmen, used by Bankers' wits,
Your land of shadows has gone all awry,—
All can be blown to very tiny bits.

Poland has fears, the Pope moans from his seat,
The swinish Press that never hatched a thought
To spread good cheer now works at fever heat,
And all *Men's efforts are reduced to nought.
Dumb, in the stews of silence lurk the foe
That fling all nations into gloomy pits,
They too will feel Mar's wrath,—it must be so,—
All can be blown to very tiny bits.

Prince, I had hoped to sing of lovely things,
Of joy and peace for Man before he quits;
The Bankers' cry throughout the whole world rings,
All can be blown to very tiny bits.

CHRISTOPHER GAY.

*As distinct from destructive bipeds, and those who juggle with all nation's finance.

We are not born or begotten in a very spiritual fashion.—*Desmond MacCarthy.*

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

THE GOSPEL JESUS

SIR,—All your readers must be grateful to Mr. Cutner for his fine and clear exposition of the arguments in *Ecce Deus*, a book out of reach of many of us. But in spite of their strength, questions of the following kind will, so to speak, pop up when the historicity of the Jesus of the Bible is discussed.

If the historical Jesus is crowded out of the canvas, where else are we to seek for the starting point which—in the early years of our era—rapidly transformed "a pre-Christian Cult" into a popular religion which spread like wildfire, and soon was powerful enough to dethrone the Gods of Greece and Rome, and consign them to the limbo of myth and legend? If the Christ of the Gospels is ruled out altogether, even as apart from the mythical and mystical element in which he is there presented,* there is, perhaps, ground (as many have thought) for putting Paul in the front place as the founder of Christianity as we know it, St. Paul had apparently some particular Jesus in mind whom he preached as Christ crucified and risen.

MAUD SIMON.

* The compilers of the Gospel claim to be writing history, even of concealing "an esoteric sense."

AN OLD SAW

SIR,—In "Acid Drops" recently you made mention of the old woman who said "lets hope it's not true." She was of Edinburgh and the story is as follows.

The Minister speaks of the Redeemer on the cross—the sweat and the bloody drops: "What has that Saviour done for thee, Martha, what suffered, what purchased? Art thou not abased with gratitude till thy very eyes fear to look up to Heaven where he now dwells, still pleading the cause of such mighty sinners as thou? Yea, the very sinners that caused that agony and these bloody drops." "Eh! Sir, but that was sae cruel a business, and sae long syne, that a body wad fain houp it wasna true."

I have often found that primitive folk, left to themselves have no belief in a future state; that only when assailed by the religious, whom they deem educated is their thinking side-tracked and a pretender follows in the wake of believers.

To quote George Moore, "we are like May-flies on the surface of a stream, no more than they, for all our poets and priests."

J. MACKINNON.

Obituary

VALERIE BRADLAUGH TRASK

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Valerie Bradlaugh Trask, aged six months, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Trask, of 13 Macaulay Road, Clapham, London, S.W.4, which took place on May 18, in the Victoria Hospital, Vincent Square. Our sympathy goes out to the parents, both sincere Freethinkers, who had ideas and ideals for the development of their daughter into a useful citizen to Society and the Freethought movement. The remains were cremated at West Norwood Crematorium on May 23. Simplicity was the keynote, and a Secular Service was conducted in the presence of the parents, relatives and friends by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

Every pathway of modern science is closed with the sign: NO THOROUGHFARE—MOSES.

Thomas Henry Huxley.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Dr. Moritz Benn—"Is Capitalism Doomed in the United States?"

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. H. S. Wishart—"Freethought and Science or Jubilee Religion."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, June 2, Mr. Goldman. 8.0, Highbury Corner, Mr. Tuson. 8.0, Monday, June 3, South Hill Park, Mr. Ebury. 8.0, Wednesday, June 5, Mornington Crescent, Mr. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.45, Sunday, June 2, Mr. L. Ebury. 8.0, Tuesday, June 4, Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, Mr. C. Tuson. 8.0, Friday, June 7, Manor Street, Clapham High Street—A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Gee, Wood, Bryant and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Wood and Bryant. 7.30, Wednesdays, Messrs. Evans and Tuson. 7.30, Thursdays, Messrs. Saphin and Wood.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (The "Umbrella," Bridgeton Cross): 8.0, Debate—*Affir.*: Mr. T. Queen (Protestant Defence League. *Neg.*: Mr. Jock McInnes (Glasgow Secular Society)—"Is the Bible Inspired?"

OUTDOOR.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge): 7.30, Friday, May 31, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

COLNE, 7.30, Thursday, June 6, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Holland Street): 8.0, Friday, May 31 Muriel Whitefield. 7.30, Sunday, June 2, West Regent Street, R. T. White and Muriel Whitefield. 3.0, Sunday, June 2, Grant Street, St. Georges Cross, John Moore and Edward Logue—"Creation or Evolution." Literature on sale at all meetings.

HARLE SYKE, 7.30, Wednesday, June 5, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, June 2, Messrs. W. Parry and H. Little. 8.0, Tuesday, June 4, Belfast Road, Old Swan, Messrs. J. V. Shortt and D. Robinson. 8.0, Thursday, June 6, High Park Street and Park Road, Messrs. W. Morris and J. V. Shortt.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields): 3.0, Sunday, June 2, Mr. G. Whitehead. 7.30, Stevensons Square Mr. G. Whitehead. 7.30, Newton Town Hall. Open Space, Monday and each evening throughout the week, Mr. G. Whitehead will speak.

NELSON (Chaple Street): 8.0 Tuesday, June 4, Mr. J. Clayton.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): 7.0, Mr. A. Flanders.

PRESTON (Town Hall Square): 3.15 and 7, Sunday, June 2, Mr. J. Clayton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR: 8.0, Saturday, June 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

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