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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Thanking God—The Editor</i> - - - - -	465
<i>The Boy who said "Damn"—Mimnermus</i> - - -	466
<i>Some Elements of Paganism in Christianity—H. Cutner</i>	467
<i>Sabbatarian Misery and Gloom—T. F. Palmer</i> - - -	469
<i>The Antiquity of Life and of Man—J. Reeves</i> - - -	470
<i>Theology Under Fire—J. M. Stuart-Young</i> - - -	474
<i>Freethought or Democracy—G. H. Taylor</i> - - -	475
<i>Burlap—Alan Tyndal</i> - - - - -	477

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

Views and Opinions

Thanking God

ONE of those banalistic "Wayside Sermons," which hang outside Churches, apparently for the purpose of illustrating the moronic character of the average worshipper, has it that it is terrible to feel thankful and yet have no one to thank. I have never met anyone in that almost impossible state, but then some of the vagaries of the religious mind may have escaped me. In any case I can easily picture a more terrible condition, and one of which history furnishes many examples. This is the state of a God who is passionately, even desperately waiting to be thanked, and no one comes forward to thank him. The constant feeling of dissatisfaction, the eager anticipation which is never gratified, the hope carried on from hour to hour, never to be realized, must in the end engender a state of mind not far from that of desperation. But when one lives on thankfulness, and when one knows that a continued lack of thanks means a gradual decay ending in annihilation, then the state of mind must be that of a prisoner walled up in a living grave.

It is, therefore, significant that in the history of religions great emphasis has been placed by the Gods, great and small, on the duty or at least the advisability of men and women returning thanks to them. The Gods must have prayer, and what else is prayer but a petition with an implied vote of thanks to follow? And the Gods have asked for prayer; they have threatened with punishment and privations those who refused it. Where the feudal chief demanded a tribute of food or service, the Gods have asked only for thanks. And where this has not been forthcoming they have dwindled to disappearance. A God without thanks is a deity without sustenance, a king without a country, a ruler without followers. He is a mere shadow of a shade. With every God it is a case of "Give me thanks, or I perish."

An Omnibus Vote

Recently from an Irish newspaper I received the following:—

Thanksgiving to Our Lady of Good Counsel Mary Immaculate, Queen of the Rosary, Our Lady of Lourdes, Saints Philomena and Jude, Theresa, Ignatius; the Sacred Heart, and Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, for favours received.

It must be said that the Roman Catholic Church has taken the task of feeding God and the Saints with thanks much more seriously than has Protestantism. The ordinary man and woman cannot live on abstractions, and if the Gods, major and minor, are only thanked in a general sort of way, while this may keep them alive, they tend to become emaciated. The Catholic Church guarded against this by having two or three major Gods and a whole host of minor ones, each one with his or her special kind of work clearly defined. There was a saint, or minor God, who would look after special diseases, or cattle, or horses, or people at sea, or those in distress, and so forth, and there were major Gods who looked after things on a larger and more general scale—earthquakes, pestilences, the weather and so on. Remembered by petitions and fed with thanks and praise, this practice ensured the heavenly army getting its full rations—so to speak—and as an army marches on its stomach so the heavenly host went its way rejoicing. That is why with such as the Roman Catholics the Gods are big, burly, definite, capable sort of beings, while with the more sophisticated believers they are weak, anæmic things obviously fading for want of nourishment. Everyone has heard of the old saying, "Man is what he eats." One may say Gods are what they get; and if they get nothing they soon become its equivalent.

* * *

Be Careful in Prayer

In this newspaper advertisement the only fault that can be found is that it is of a rather promiscuous character. It only mentions the saints by name, and does not tell us just what each saint did, so that people might know to whom to pray when they wanted particular things. This is necessary, for it would be awkward asking St. Jude to cure corns, when his particular job might be securing a rise in wages. On the other hand there may be in it more artfulness than simplicity. There may be other saints who have been asked to do something, but who have not responded, and the recalcitrant ones are thus reminded that there are other pebbles on the beach, and that unless the Saints are more attentive to what is, after all, their real business, some of them may die of starvation. It is also just possible that this kind of public notice may set up some kind of competition among the gods, each one fearing to lose "kudos" where the others gain it. "Codlin's your friend, not Short," applies elsewhere

than in the pages of Dickens. Let it be publicly known that one Saint answers readily the prayers of his followers, and other saints may grow more attentive to the possibility of increasing the amount of praise and flattery upon which alone they may persist. Again Catholics are in front of Protestants in their business aptitude. In Roman Catholic countries abroad when people wish the Saints to do something they indicate their desire on a piece of paper, place it in a box in the church—with a fee, and then await results. But the Protestants merely ask for something in a general sort of way and publish no precise records of the effective action of the one to whom they pray. If prayers are worth saying they should be precise; and if the results are forthcoming they should be published and the thanks publicly given. We should then know whether the gods were worth keeping alive, and what amount of nutriment they were being given.

* * *

Need for Discrimination

In common with our industrial system this prayer and thanks business requires rationalization. There are, of course, two sides to even this question, as with all others, and it may be ultimately a question of measuring profit against loss. For example, it is advisable to watch carefully the circumstances in which the invitation to thanksgiving is made. Thus, the prayer-book has this invitation to thanksgiving after a storm:—

O come hither, and behold the works of God; how wonderful he is in his doing towards the children of men.

But this is not advisable just after an occurrence such as the earthquake at Quetta, or the recent terrible storms in America and Japan. God might easily take this invitation to contemplate his handiwork as displayed in ruined homes and dead bodies as an untimely exhibition of sarcasm. And the Gods have never shown any appreciation of humour or sarcasm; they are "dull dogs" and take themselves very seriously. But provided this care is shown, there are occasions where prayers should be precise. Thus, everyone knows that when after a dry period the Lord is asked to send rain, the rain often comes in devastating quantities, and in places where it is not really wanted. But whose fault is this? If I pray for rain without saying where it is wanted, why it is wanted, and at what time it is wanted, how is anyone to act? The Lord cannot be certain whether the rain is wanted in Camberwell or Canada, whether it is required to make the corn of farmer Jones grow, or to replenish the water supply in general. That kind of prayer certainly should be precise.

Again, there is a chaplain attached to the House of Commons who prays that the Lord will endow members with wisdom and understanding. Asked in that general way what is the Lord to do? If he gives each member, say, a twenty per cent increase, he leaves things substantially as they are. The foolish ones will be a little less foolish, and the more sensible ones will be a little wiser. The Lord might reply, "What is the use of giving them more wisdom; they can't properly use what they've got."

But suppose the chaplain were to pray:—

O Lord, we pray thee to restrict the fondness for self-advertising of the Minister for . . . , and that thou wilt endow the Minister for . . . with power to give us a straightforward answer to a simple question, and as thou knowest what little understanding the member for . . . has we beg that thou wilt endow him with the capacity for understanding the question before the House; we also beg that thou wilt so

move the hearts of Cabinet Ministers that they will thing more of the nation and less of their own aggrandisement.

If that were done the Prime Minister might, in answer to one of those spontaneous questions which he has arranged shall be put, reply:—

In response to the prayers offered on April the first, we are pleased to report that there has been a marked improvement in some of the cases named, while others are, we may presume, either under consideration, or are incapable of improvement. But in view of the results it is intended that the Lord be publicly thanked for his services and his good intention, and that a number of additional chaplains be appointed to the service of this House.

The whole situation needs overhauling. The only things the Gods require as necessary to their existence is to be believed in, to be prayed to and to be thanked for being there. It is neglect of these things that have caused thousands of Gods to pass out of existence, and has so seriously affected even those who remain. It is no use believing in God if the belief is not made public, it is no use having a God if he is not asked to do something, and it is no use—to God—his doing something if his action is not made public in the shape of thanks. If every man believed in a God and yet said nothing about it to his neighbours, the Gods could not continue living. They are there waiting to do something, waiting to be thanked. It is, we repeat, distressing to think of a God sitting almost alone in a place once thronged with his kind, sitting there waiting to be thanked and slowly dying for regular doses of "The Food of the Gods."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Boy who said "Damn"

"Not in vague dreams of man, forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day."—*Walton*.

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain."—*Ingersoll*.

AMID thousands of unloved and unremembered graves at Kensal Green Cemetery is one with the arresting inscription: "Write me as one who loved his fellow men." The quotation is from the poem, "About Ben Adhem," and the tomb is that of Leigh Hunt, the pioneer, and the friend of Keats, Shelley, Byron, and so many famous men, and himself a writer of renown.

Of his ancestry Leigh Hunt presents a charming picture in his *Autobiography*, stating, with urbane humour, that on his mother's side they were "all sailors and rough subjects with a mitigation of Quakerism," as on his father's side, "they were all creoles and claret drinkers, very polite and clerical." Hunt's father was a clergyman, with an incorrigible propensity for conviviality, and the earliest recollections of his distinguished son were associated with the interior of the King's Bench Prison, in which his father's reliance on Providence had led him through the primrose paths.

Leigh Hunt was educated, like Lamb and Coleridge, at Christ's Hospital School, of which he has left a pleasant impression. "I am grateful to the Hospital," he wrote, "for a well-trained and cheerful boyhood. It pressed no superstition on me." For some time after his schooldays Hunt, characteristically, haunted the bookshops and wrote verses. His temperament was averse from all forms of commercialism, and Dickens has satirized, somewhat unkindly, his failings as Horace Skimpole, in *Bleak House*, but ignored the innate nobility of the man's character.

At twenty-three years of age Leigh Hunt entered the political arena, joining his brother in starting *The Examiner*. The paper was lively and literary, and had for its motto the caustic lines of Swift. "Party is the madness of the many and the gain of the few." During its fourteen years of existence, *The Examiner* ran the whole gamut of good and ill-fortune. It attracted wide attention, and became so much of a power that Leigh Hunt and his brother were sent to prison. *The Morning Post*, as fulsome and as reactionary as now, had published a lickspittle article describing the Prince Regent (afterwards George the Fourth) as an "Adonis in loveliness." This nonsense was more than Hunt could stand, and *The Examiner* retorted that this particular Adonis was a fat man of fifty, a liar, a libertine, an undesirable, the companion of demireps and gamblers, a man who had lived half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of the country or the respect of posterity. The reply of the Government was as vigorous as Hunt's attack, and the two brothers were prosecuted and fined £500 each with two years' imprisonment.

Hunt's heavy sentence brought him into unusual prominence, for political feeling ran very high in those far-off days. He had enjoyed the felicity of Charles Lamb's friendship from boyhood, and he had known Shelley for some years. He now added to his friends Byron, Hazlitt, and Keats. Indeed, he was singularly happy and fortunate in his friendships. Later in life the charmed circle included the names of Carlyle, Dickens, Macaulay, Lytton, and Lord Houghton. For this reason, Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* is most excellent company, for he always writes naturally and unaffectedly, and his descriptions of his famous friends is very entertaining. Hunt relished the society of his distinguished associates, and he enjoyed life in his own way. His account of his Italian travels is an example of the best kind of such writing. His humour is quite personal, and never pumped up for the occasion. A typical example is his youthful recollection of how he used, after a childish indulgence in bad language, to think with a shudder, "Ah! they little think I'm the boy who said 'damn.'"

An omnivorous reader, Hunt secured the rare commendation of the scholarly Macaulay for the universality of his literary taste. The compliment was richly deserved. Of all authors, indeed, and of most readers, Leigh Hunt had the keenest eye for merit, and the warmest appreciation of it whenever found. An active politician, he was never blind to the abilities of an opponent. Blameless himself in morals, he could admire the saucy wit of Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Wycherley; and a Freethinker, he could see talent in the dusty volumes of some of the old divines. It is to his credit that his wide knowledge, instead of puffing him up, only moved him to impart it. Next to the great pleasure he himself took in books was that he derived from pointing out to others the pleasure in them. It is this generous insight that makes his *Wit and Humour* and *Imagination and Fancy*, two of the finest and most readable handbooks on English literature.

Hunt was thoroughly honest in his criticisms. He did not care a straw whether an author was new or old, an Englishman or a foreigner, for his sympathies crossed all frontiers. Nor did he shrink from any literary comparison between writers if he thought it appropriate. Thackeray had this same outspoken sincerity. Recall his reference to the full-blooded hero of the "Leather-Stocking" novels, in which he says: "I think he is better than any of Scott's lot." Recall also his apologetic lines in the preface to *Pendennis*, in which he laments his inability to present the real life of a young man about town.

It was largely owing to political prejudice that Hunt was dubbed the leader of the "Cockney School" of poetry. As a fact Hunt had a pretty talent of his own. His verse had a very strong influence on his contemporaries, and often it inspired music better than itself. After all his poems and his *Autobiography* form the only part of Leigh Hunt's voluminous literary work which will survive. But this dilettante writer helped to make history with the publication of *The Examiner*, which, for near a generation, attacked Tyranny without fear or favour, and, at the sword's point, maintained the liberty of the press. In this particular instance Leigh Hunt showed unexpected depth and resource, and proved himself a man of action. He is Ariel turned Prospero, and showing in the startling transformation how extraordinary a figure is Ariel. It is appropriate that on Hunt's tombstone should appear lines from that fine poem which so largely helps to make his name ever green and fragrant. This brave soldier of the Army of Human Liberation loved Humanity without misgiving, and Humanity, loving him in return, crowns his grave with honour. Now that the long struggle for the freedom of the press is crowned with victory, we may look back and see that those indomitable years of Hunt's editorship helped materially towards one of the finest achievements of our race.

MIMNERMUS.

Some Elements of Paganism in Christianity

IV.

Just as it was found impossible to suppress the idea of a Mother-Goddess in Christianity, so it was found impossible in that religion to do without the idea of a Saviour. Even the Jews who utterly repudiated all goddesses, and particularly anybody who was called the "Mother of God," and who objected to women officiating in their religion altogether, accepted the idea of a Messiah. The break-up of their kingdom, the constant invasions they had to endure, together with the horrors of slavery and exile, made them dream of the time when God, in his mercy, would send them David, or a "son" of David, as their saviour, to lead them to victory against their enemies and bring about that wonderful Golden Age they so yearned for. But whether they liked it or not, the whole idea of Saviour or a Messiah was indubitably Pagan, a survival of primitive belief in magic and sacrifice—alas, too often also of the sacrifice of children and virgins to appease the angry gods.

Paganism is steeped with saviour gods. Jove, Helios, Artemis, Dionysos, Herakles, Cybelè, Æsculapius, Osiris, Attis and Adonis are all "Saviours." Some of them were, like Attis, born of a Virgin. Others, like Osiris and Dionysos die and are "resurrected." Krishna was the Hindu Saviour, Quetzalcoatl, the Mexican, and, like Jesus, both descended into the grave. Most of the Saviours rose again after three days, and the resurrection nearly always took place somewhere near the Vernal equinox (March 22). Prometheus was certainly a "crucified" saviour, an immortal god and a friend of the human race. He was one of the Titans, and with his brother Epimetheus "created" man. Prometheus, with the aid of Minerva, went up to heaven, lighted his torch at the chariot of the sun and brought down fire to man, thus making man superior to all other animals. He it was who interposed when Jove (Zeus) was incensed against mankind, and he "taught them civilization and the arts." This transgressed against

the will of the god. Prometheus was chained to a rock and a vulture constantly preyed on his liver. He never gave in and thus became, as Bulfinch says, "the symbol of magnanimous endurance, and strength of will resisting oppression." Bulfinch, however, does not point out how similar was the fate of Jesus, "who was wounded also for man's transgressions and bruised for his iniquities." Prometheus is said to have been actually nailed to the rock with arms extended, just as if he were crucified; and his best friend was Oceanus, the Fisherman. Oceanus was also called Petroeus, but I cannot say how much of this story was utilized by the Gospel writers. It seems to have been the fate of so many of these saviours to have died for mankind and risen again.

Take Attis (or Atys), for example. He was worshipped in Phrygia as Adonis was in Syria. He was called the "only begotten son" and "saviour." He was represented as tied to a tree (Jesus was "hanged on a tree") and there was a lamb at its foot; and according to Lactantius, as cited by Dupuis, "was a mortal according to the flesh; wise in miraculous works; but, being arrested by an armed force by command of the Chaldean judges, he suffered a death made bitter with nails and stakes." The "stake" here is nothing else but the "cross" upon which criminals were put to death. Frazer, in the *Golden Bough* gives an account of the ceremonies which took place to commemorate his death and resurrection—the "legends and rites of Adonis and Attis were much alike," and the festivals generally took place between March 22 and 27.

Bacchus was also called the "Saviour," and, according to Dupuis, the "Redeemer." He was put to death by the Titans. After three days' sleep in Hades, Jove restored him to life and Pallas (Wisdom) brought him his heart. Dupuis said his resurrection was acclaimed with great joy on March 25; and adds that he ascended into heaven. Dionysos was another name for Bacchus, and, of course, he also rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. "Whether," says Frazer, "this was a spring festival does not appear, but the Lydians certainly celebrated the advent of Dionysos in spring."

Serapis was another god called the "Saviour." He was an Egyptian deity, connected with the bull Apis and identified both with Osiris and Hermes. Doane gives an illustration representing him, from Murray's *Manual of Mythology*, and he seems to look very much like Jesus—that is, fair-headed, and with a light complexion. Of course had Jesus really lived, he would have been a Jew, and therefore dark-skinned like the modern Arab.

Under the name of Hermes, the god was prayed to as the "good saviour," and Plutarch in his account of Isis and Osiris actually calls Hermes the *Logos*.

Mithra was certainly another "Saviour," and his worship nearly ousted that of Jesus.

His monuments have been found all over the ancient Roman Empire, and many in England. John M. Robertson gives an account of some of these in his *Pagan Christs*, and also of his worship in general.

The word "anointed" gives the meaning of the word "Christ" or "Messiah"—"Jesus" meaning "Saviour." Cyrus, the King of Persia, was certainly one of the "Christs." So was Mithra; and the word is in the Old Testament (e.g., Psalms cv. 15). And in Matthew xxiv. 24, it says, "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets," thus showing the word was a common one, in common use, designating all sorts of religious leaders, fanatics, wonder-workers, etc. "Christ" is not a religious name belonging to Jesus. As Rev. Dr. Giles says, it has no "spiritual

signification." Nor is it a surname as some people—perhaps unconsciously—suppose. There was no Mr. and Mrs. Christ. What the Hindus call an "Avatar" is really a "Christ," that is, an Angel-Messiah or God-Man, like Krishna or Buddha, who were both supposed to be incarnations of Vishnu.

There are, of course, quite a number of other "Saviours" or "Christs" in Pagan antiquity; but it must not be thought for a moment that all their stories or the fables associated with them were identical or even identical with that of Jesus. Hundreds, or even thousands of years, separated some of these saviours. Their histories were embellished in different countries and by different nations. In the ordinary course of evolution, the story of Hercules, for instance, was bound to be different from that of Zoroaster. Moreover, none of these stories was ever meant to be taken literally, though they were eventually believed to be literal by credulous crowds of worshippers. They enshrined "mysteries." There was almost always connected with them a "secret doctrine" known only to the initiated and the priests. The "common herd" were told to believe without question. Was not a priest, brought up in the atmosphere of a temple or synagogue, or church, more likely to know the truth than a mere layman who had to work for a living?

Christianity is one of the latest of all religions. It follows the others in "fundamentals," because these fundamentals are the *raison d'être* of religion. Based on ignorance, credulity, superstition and fear, Christianity has carried on the main traditions of the religions of Pagan antiquity. Its believers imagine it to be the "truth" once for all given to man from God, and refuse to see that the same claim was made by the priests of Serapis and Attis.

Now, whatever may be the accretions and the dissimilarities of the various religions, one fact stands out clearly. Most of them are based, as Dupuis insisted, on the worship of the Sun. Its course through the signs of the Zodiac, its birth and death during the year as represented by the seasons, its fructifying qualities and life-giving rays, have been allegorized and fictionized by innumerable writers. We still use the basic idea in our own fiction. The struggle between darkness and light with the good Sun eventually triumphing, or the struggle between the cold and miserable winter with summer emerging as the glorious victor—what is it with us but the miserable murderer being finally overcome by the jubilant detective? The "saviour" of mankind was the Sun emerging through all the terrors of grappling with darkness, as the victorious "saviour." It was the Sun who was the "anointed" one, it was the Sun who was the "saviour." It was at the Vernal Equinox when he rose, beautiful in his glory, after having overcome the icy-grip of winter, bringing with him the golden promise of spring and summer with its fruit and grain, its joy of living, its beautiful flowers and new-born animals all pulsating with the new life so ardently looked for during the long cold nights of the preceding season.

It must not be thought for a moment, however, that the worship of the sun, and the fictions and fancies engendered by that worship are alone responsible for religion. Phallic worship played an enormous part as did the idea of vegetation gods and animism generally. Religion is not the growth of one idea but of dozens. It was not altogether based on even credulity and fear; it must have brought something with it necessary for its continued growth. Many people must have found in it something responding to their needs, otherwise its place among us cannot altogether be accounted for. It certainly requires more than ordinary detachment to

survey it, to analyse it and to reject it. All over the world it surrounds almost every babe as soon as born. Its symbols and priests are among the first things the growing intelligence of the child sees and is made to understand. And these child-impressions seem in many cases never to be wholly obliterated.

Yet religion is Pagan. It is saturated with the elements of Paganism, and it is only by an understanding of its origins that one can successfully fight its baneful influence.

H. CUTNER.

Sabbatarian Misery and Gloom

THE Puritan Sunday lingered through many dreary generations as a day of dejection and gloom. All reformers who endeavoured to relieve its oppressiveness were stigmatized as children of Belial. Old Testament texts were triumphantly cited as testimonies of the Sabbath's sacred character, and an eternal hell of torment was confidently predicted in the next world for those who desecrated the Lord's Day in this.

Curiously enough, the utterances attributed to Christ, which all Christians are supposed to reverence lend no support to the Jewish observances ordained in the Hebrew Scriptures. Martin Luther long ago declared that Jesus openly and deliberately ignored the orthodox Sabbath. Indeed, the words ascribed to him: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," reflect the views current in his time among the more tolerant and progressive Jews, whose outlook had been broadened and enlightened by Greek humanism and culture. Philo, the contemporary of Josephus, included secular studies among permissible Sabbath occupations. For, pleads Philo, "the seventh day is also an example from which you may learn the propriety of studying philosophy. As on that day it is said God beheld the works that he had made, so you also may yourself contemplate the works of Nature."

Yet, nearly to the end of the nineteenth century the British Museum, our art galleries and other national treasures were, on Sunday, almost all systematically closed to the public. Even now, our theatres are not allowed to open. Sunday games in the parks and open spaces have only recently been permitted by the London County Council with a Municipal Reform majority, and when a vote was last year taken on the subject, despite its present so-called Socialist ascendancy, the right to play on Sunday was reaffirmed by a majority of one vote only. Presumably, much as Members of Parliament are afraid to act according to their convictions in matters concerning marriage and divorce, so Labour County Councillors (so far as they are themselves enlightened) are unwilling to incur the risk of losing religious support at the polls.

The arguments advanced for strict Sunday observance are contradictory and absurd. In the light of evolutionary science, the observance of a Sabbath as a grateful remembrance of God's resting day after his laborious toil in creating the universe is childish. Another legend traces the institution to the commemoration of Israel's Exodus from Egypt. As Prof. Tyndall in his brilliant address on "The Sabbath," cogently stated: "The Bible countenances both interpretations. In Exodus we find the origin of the Sabbath described with unmistakable clearness thus: 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is. Wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.' In Deuteronomy this reason is suppressed and another is assigned. Israel being a servant in Egypt, God, it is

stated, brought them out of it with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. 'Therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the Sabbath day.' After repeating the Ten Commandments and assigning the foregoing origin to the Sabbath the writer in Deuteronomy proceeds thus: 'These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire . . .' and he added no more. But in Exodus God not only added more, but something entirely different."

All the leading Reformers favoured freedom from Sabbatical intolerance. Luther, Melancthon, Calvin and Cranmer championed liberation, and even John Knox openly entertained his friends on Sunday. Indeed, with the populace it became a day of festival and recreation. No doubt, the manners and customs of the time appear somewhat coarse and cruel, and Sunday was the chosen day for sports and pastimes that were crude, and sometimes indecent. Such excesses were constantly cited by the more austere sections of the community in their agitation for a stricter observance of the Lord's Day, while death and damnation were declared to be God's certain punishment to profaners of the Sabbath. Dr. Bound, a Puritan divine, advanced opinions subsequently embodied in the terrible Westminster Confession and, in his writings, he alleged innumerable instances of God's vengeance against Sabbath-breakers. One of these judgments was directed against a nobleman "who for hunting on the holy day was punished by having a child with a head like a dog's."

Bound having set the ball rolling, instances of divine displeasure multiplied exceedingly. Half the evils in life were traced to the violation of the sacred day. Deaths overtaking Sunday bathers were magnified and remembered, while those occurring on other days were forgotten. Some solemnly asserted that the Civil War was a punishment for Sunday desecration, while the Great Fire of London, and other calamities were attributed to the same cause. A Nonconformist minister, John Wells, prepared a ponderous volume replete with examples of God's judgments. One blaspheming wretch is carried off to hell by the Devil in person, while his companions in sin are duly chastised, for one suffered a sudden death and was converted into worms, while the other was executed. Even a hospitable vintner who offered passers-by a cup of wine on Sunday was transported through the air by a whirlwind and was never seen again. In the seventeenth century Sunday football was deemed a deadly sin, so we are assured that a player on that day who broke his leg, suffered in consequence from gangrene, and in appalling agony and despair passed away. Very properly, the narrator of those dreadful occurrences bids his readers to beware and tremble.

During the reigns of Elizabeth and the first Stuarts the Puritan movement grew in strength, and this, despite the opposition of the secular authorities. When at last the Puritans became paramount, they, who had hitherto posed as the apostles of freedom, now displayed a positive passion for persecution. The broader-minded clergy were driven from their benefices; they were fined, and their writings were burnt by the common hangman, and they were compelled to recite in the Churches many doctrines that ran counter to their conscience. The wise words of the later Bishop Heber—words that may be commended to several contemporary ecclesiastics—would have found no acceptance in strict Puritan circles. "Much," remarks Heber, "as each religious party had suffered in its turn from persecution, and loudly and bitterly as each had, in its own particular instance, complained of the severities exercised against its members, no party had yet been found to perceive the great wicked-

ness of persecution in the abstract, or the moral unfitness of temporal punishment as an engine of religious controversy."

On the other hand, that Puritan protagonist, Dr. Bound, was firmly persuaded that he was fully possessed of the truth, and he felt no compunction in thrusting his opinions on other people. He arrogantly declares that: "It behoveth all kings, princes, and rulers, that profess the true religion to enact such laws and see them diligently executed, whereby the honour of God in hallowing these days might be maintained. And, indeed, this is the chiefest end of all government, that men might not profess what religion they list . . . but that the parts of God's true worship be set up everywhere, and all men compelled to stoop unto it." Surely, no Romanist theologian was ever more dictatorial and dogmatic than this ultra-Protestant divine!

Yet sad and depressing as the Puritan Sunday became in England, the clergy in Scotland made it even worse. The late Robert Cox extracted from the official reports of Edinburgh's Town Council many piquant illustrations of the methods in operation in the sixteenth century to coerce the community into strict Sabbatical observance. Morning and afternoon attendance at kirk were made compulsory and, however protracted the dreary sermons, they were perforce followed from beginning to end. All signs of amusement were sternly discountenanced. But although the flocks obeyed their shepherds in going to kirk, they selected their own preachers. So, to stop this scandal, it was ordained in 1584, "that all freemen and freemens' wives in times coming be found in their own parish kirk every Sunday, as also at the time of the communions, under the pain of payment of an unlaw for every person being found absent."

Moreover, at the time of Church service the taverns and other wicked places were searched for delinquents who were promptly marched off to the sermon.

These drastic rules were soon extended so as to cover the whole day. That rules so rigorous were repeatedly disregarded needs no proof, but still the authorities imposed more and more penalties and restrictions. No food or drink could be bought or sold on Sunday, and the despotism exercised is well shown in a decree of January, 1650, which runs: "Whereas many both old and young persons walk, or sit, and play on the Castle Hill, and upon the streets and other places on the Sabbath day after sermons, so that it is manifest that family worship is neglected by such, the Council appoint that there shall be several pairs of stocks provided in several public places in the city, that whosoever is needlessly walking or sitting idly in the streets shall either pay eighteenpence sterling penalty or be put into the stocks."

When children were caught playing on Sunday their parents were fined sixpence for each offending child, while the penalty inflicted on parents whose offspring were found on the Castle Hill was a fine of one and sixpence or imprisonment in the stocks. At stated hours only was water available from the public wells, and the quantity permitted on Sunday was limited to one pint per person. The Sabbatarian tyranny of Scotland, however, was completely eclipsed by that of America. An attempt was actually made in Puritan Massachusetts to render Sabbath-breaking a crime punishable with death, while by the laws in operation in the colony of New Plymouth, Sunday desecration "was either followed by death or grievously punished at the judgment of the Court."

As modern ideas made progress pioneer humanists strove to brighten Sunday. But they were usually vilified as infidels animated by immoral motives. Even

in the nineteenth century, Bishop Bloomfield condemned Sunday steamboats as sinful, and deplored Sunday tea-gardens as the haunts of disreputable characters.

Notions such as these are now almost obsolete, but the Lord's Day Observance Society still exists, and continues to enjoy influential patronage and support.

T. F. PALMER.

The Antiquity of Life and of Man

THESE two topics command the special interest of Secularists, because alone they go far to undermine the foundations of current theology.

As regards the Life Period, which doubtless approximately corresponds to the Geological Era, there has been a good deal of hesitation in accepting the conclusion arrived at by the most definite and reliable method of combined experiment and computation, viz., that from the phenomenon of radio activity. This process, involving the disintegration of some metals, such as Uranium, with the emission of the gas Helium and the formation and accumulation of Lead, has evidently been going on from about the time when the rocks were deposited by geological action. By about 1920 ages for most of the geological periods were available, the highest figure, for the oldest rocks, being about 1,600,000,000 years.

After I had used this date in my little work, *The World Story of 3,000,000,000 Years*, I was somewhat chagrined to find that exponents were commonly halving the figure. The reason for this course was a surmise that the rate of disintegration might not have been the same in remote times as it is now. But as it had already been ascertained that the rate was not changed by any application of forces (heat, pressure, etc.) in the laboratory, the idea did not seem to possess any weight. Calculations had also been made from the contained radium, and these commonly gave about half the age derived from the lead. But it was recognized that the gas escaped, and it therefore could not be expected to yield the true age. Notwithstanding, in books and articles the length of the era was often given as 800,000,000 years.

It has therefore been gratifying to find that later investigation has tended to confirm and even to increase the age. In a recent report of the National Research Council on "The Measurement of Geologic Time," lately summarized in *Nature*, the figure given for the oldest rocks examined, the Pre-Laurentian, is 1,725,000,000. This calculation was made from the amount of accumulated lead. And the report (carefully) states that this method gives more clearly the true age. Therefore in future we may reasonably expect that the length of the era will be stated, in round numbers, as 1,700,000,000 years.

Similarly, attempts have been made to reduce the Age of Mankind (in this case estimated, not directly and definitely calculated). I used the date 500,000 B.C., with a query, in 1922, which was then as far as one could justifiably go. But in following years one frequently found the figure reduced to 100,000. This we may now finally reject. And we may reasonably double the 500,000, in accordance with the recent conclusion of Professor Sir Arthur Keith: "On our modest scale of reckoning, that gives man a respectable antiquity of one million years."

It is difficult to find any reason for the resistance to the higher dates other than the exceptionally powerful influence of ancient tradition on some people, especially when the newer views contradict long held notions of Judeo-Christianity. Even some who have received a scientific training, and have entirely relinquished the 4004 B.C. of Bishop Usher, still apparently dislike to go further away from the old position than they are compelled.

J. REEVES.

Henceforth th' policy iv this gover'ment will be, as before, not to bully a sthrong power or wrong a weak, but will remain true to th' principle iv wrongin' th' sthrong an' bullying th' weak.—*Mr. Dooley.*

Acid Drops

Mr. Cyril Dams of Windsor Castle has discovered that the "only sufficient reason for hating war is that it is utterly contrary to the will of God." Not, mark you, because the average man doesn't want to be killed or maimed for life, or because he does not want his wife to be widowed and his children fatherless, but simply and only because it is against the "will of God." The "will of God" seems to have been pretty powerless to prevent war during the past 10,000 years; and it makes one wonder what good is it anyhow? Mr. Dams also considers that "peace is God's will," and because it is "God's will," that is "our only justification for working and praying for it." Obviously then, God is always for peace and never for war; and it would be interesting to have it explained why God should have ordered the ancient Israelites to slaughter their enemies so often; or why God's representatives on earth, the Popes, should have ordered the extermination of so many heretics, through war; or even why so many thoroughly Christian nations should have been so eager in the past to settle their petty differences by wars lasting sometimes for over a century? Dragging in "God" seems very much like dragging in the flowers that bloom in the spring—he really has nothing to do with either war or peace. In other words, he is *non est*.

The question, "Is England Christian still?" discussed by Christians the other day in the Albert Hall, left it very much in the air. Lord Halifax, for example, felt that "it was vital to re-capture for England and the world the sense of other-worldliness and of relation to God that many are in danger of losing to-day." He might have said that the "other-worldliness" has been lost to most sensible people. They feel the only world they know anything about for certain is this one, and if they don't make the most of it while they can, they might lose something far more precious than the "relation to God," about which Lord Halifax knows no more than the most ignorant savage. It takes most of us all our time to deal with this world and its problems; and if God really exists, his best place is in Heaven with his own angels and with people like Lord Halifax when that gentleman makes his appearance there.

Lord Justice Slesser insisted on "no surrender of principles," at the same meeting. He pleaded for belief in "the divinity of Our Lord, the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the miracles as they are stated in the New Testament, the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, and the sanctity of the Church." And he is ready "to tolerate those who do not altogether share our views provided always that on the fundamental question of the integrity of the Church and the Sacrament there is no weakening." In other words, Lord Justice Slesser is a Fundamentalist of Fundamentalists—nothing is in Christianity which is too silly for him to disbelieve. He also wants "unity" inside the Church—which shows how little he really knows or understands Church history. We ought to add that, after exhorting everybody to come into the Fold, some gentleman in the audience yelled out "Perjury," and "Blasphemy" before he was gently ejected by the stewards. He possibly did not see the force of "Unity" with Christians like Lord Justice Slesser.

Lady Alistair Graham would be content, she told the same meeting, "to get one soul to look in Our Lord's eyes"—whatever that means—though, she added, it would be necessary for the "Holy Ghost to look through our eyes"—if that has any meaning also. As for the Bishop of St. Albans, he doubted whether England "had ever been Christian." At all events, he was "quite certain that the present generation has need to be converted to the Faith." This is quite natural, but we would like to bet a volume of Ingersoll to a hundred prayer books that this wholesale conversion will never take place. We are too far removed from the ignorance, stupidity, and

fear of the early Christians ever again—except in the case of most Roman and a few Anglo-Catholics—to believe in the nonsense of Lord Justice Slesser and his fellow-Fundamentaists.

The Atheism of Soviet Russia continues to inflame the minds of those who regard the destruction of Atheism as a lesser evil than a peace which tolerates alike the Christianity of one country, the Mohammedanism of another, and the Atheism of another. But that will never suit the bigoted pietists. This is what the *Catholic Times* says, in an article amusingly headed, "War Is A Crime":—

We must choose between two evils, and Russia's possible loss of the Ukraine is a much less evil than war-fires all over Europe, while many would say that the undoing of Godless Sovietism is no evil at all.

The Methodist Conference at Bristol this year is covering a wide field. It is said that the "Temperance and Social Welfare" section of the Agenda occupies 36 pages. The "social" section of this curious combination aims mainly at "a resolve to set Christ at the head of the social life of the nation." Does this mean that Christ is putting up for Parliament, or is the intention to offer Him the Dictatorship? In times past, when men really believed things, God and His Son were absolute Monarchs on earth. They used to be omnipotent conquerors who needed no Methodist Pleasant Afternoon young people to solicit votes for them.

The Rev. B. Iddings Bell thinks that "if Christianity is ever again to recover a general respect this notion that a thing called 'Modern Thought' has rendered the Faith impossible to be believed by honest, thinking men, must be vigorously dealt with." As they put it on the films, "You've said it, baby." But Mr. Bell seems to have very inadequate notions on dealing with the tremendous problem, all the same. He seems to imagine that if he says that "in God are three Modes of Being, Father, Son and Spirit," and then describes them in the usual theological terms he has knocked "Modern Thought" out of the ring. The problem is a little more complex than that; and if Mr. Bell really thought he could meet and beat "Modern Thought," he would at least come out and try, instead of darkening the issue by a plethora of words signifying nothing.

The Battle of Boyne is nearly always celebrated in Ireland by Christians who, to put it mildly, loathe other Christians. Anybody who talks about "Unity" should live in Belfast at the time and meet Orangemen and Catholic. This year "Christian" love has been exemplified in pitched battles between the sects, numbers of people killed and wounded, the military called out, and in some cases almost unbelievable cruelty taking place. Something of the same kind of "Unity" happened in Edinburgh recently; and the incidents give one a fair picture of the kind of thing which was usual in medieval times wherever religion was intense.

It is not unfair to claim that such scenes are impossible where genuine Freethought is taught. Tolerance is one of our fundamentals; and by tolerance we mean tolerance in its widest connotations. Liberty of speech and thought is the very essence of freedom. And freedom is the backbone of real progress. Every man has a right to his own views, and to express them if he so wishes so long as he inflicts no harm on his fellow-beings. Forceful repression, whether of people or ideas, is in the long run bound to fail. We repeat, such scenes as have happened in Belfast and Edinburgh would be impossible in a country where Freethought was accepted.

The Medical Bureau at Lourdes has "recognized" two cures of English pilgrims last year, but owing to "lack of adequate documents the Bureau could not register them." The "cures" really took place, of

course, and they were quite miraculous. But unfortunately the "indecision" of the diagnosis in the first place makes it impossible for them to be "registered." This really means no one is quite certain that the two people really had the disease attributed to them. But why worry over a little thing like that? On the other hand, one of the pilgrims who had cancer "died on the homeward journey." If all this does not prove that "Our Lady" does perform miraculous cures at Lourdes, we don't know what will. Surely a little faith is better than none at all?

Thirty-five Oxford undergraduates, clad in "College blazers, cricket shirts, and shorts" (according to the Fashion expert of the *Methodist Recorder*), and presumably wearing monocles and talking with an Oxford drawl, astonished the natives of Dewsbury the other day. As the *Methodist Recorder* reports, "it is not surprising that a local citizen asked: 'What was oop wi't strange creatures?'" Those who had the patience to listen to these queer invaders learnt how cleverly these youthful pilgrims had "tackled Communists and Atheists." The report adds that "the campaigners themselves have been enriched in knowledge of human nature." We imagine a wealth of inference is behind this laconic sentence.

The President of the Methodist Church sees some sort of merit in recording the fact that in the "depressed areas where scarcely a member is in employment, they have never allowed their church finances to suffer." One can see the same phenomenon in the most destitute parts of Italy where the Churches flourish and abound in wealth and beauty while the inhabitants live in the direst squalor.

Mr. James Agate, in the *Sunday Times*, makes an original comment on the New Testament Parable, which gave John Ruskin a title for his book *Unto This Last*. Mr. Agate says:—

The parable of the labourers in the vineyard must have bothered every reader. Obviously if one has made a bargain, one has got to stick to it, and must not go back upon that bargain because someone else makes a better one later on. But surely even a parable should be equally true at all times; faith is a grain of mustard seed equally on Tuesday as on Monday. But the parable leaves us to wonder how the householder fared next day when he went into the market to engage his labourers a second time.

Mr. Agate's penetrating sarcasm makes him conclude that this parable like many others is "truer on the spiritual than on the material plane."

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark gives a gentle reminder in the usual direction to his enthusiastic followers. They have been religiously celebrating the canonization of Fisher and More, and forgetting that all these things cost money. So he is appealing for funds as "money is still needed to defray the cost of canonization." The idea that the Church would do a little thing like this at its own cost and for the sake of More and Fisher no matter what that cost would be, is knocked on the head by the Bishop. Money is needed by the Church, and canonizations, or masses, or any of the other divine ceremonies, have to be paid for. And the pious will see that it is, too.

It is extraordinary how many sane people believe in the St. Swithin's Day superstition—that it will rain for forty days if it rains on July 15. Swithin became Bishop of Winchester in the ninth century and, of course, the nonsense about his day being wet or fine was unknown for centuries after his death. It is referred to in one of Ben Jonson's plays, and though Swithin was a Roman Catholic, it is mostly Protestants who believe in the fable. Now, why does the extreme Protestant, who almost always throws overboard everything connected with "Popery,"

still believe in such a stupid superstition as St. Swithin's Day?

A Newcastle writer believes that there is only one thing which will successfully fight birth-control, and that is religion. Well, religion has fought a good many things, and wherever and whenever it was a question of *reform*, it has lost. In what way can religion arrest the spread of contraceptive knowledge? Anybody can obtain a "handbook" now for nothing; and practical advice can be got from dozens of clinics all over the country. Young married people can get the necessary information from friends; and Roman Catholics can actually obtain books written by members of the Faith with full particulars of the "safe" period. But apart from all this, who have the big families now? Doctors, lawyers, clergymen—who? The very poor have, of course, but is this because they are so very very religious also? The religious fight against birth-control will go the way it has gone against Freethought. It will lose.

A writer in the *British Weekly* gives us some new "dope" on the relationships of the earliest apostles. Thomas, called Didymus, was probably Judas or Thaddeus; James was brother of Jesus:—

We may conjecture that Mary and Joseph had a large family, and the sisters are mentioned in Mark vi. 3, and two or perhaps three of the elder ones became disciples of Jesus, while the younger ones, remaining at home, were more sceptical. There is reason for supposing that some members of our Lord's family—brothers or half-brothers—were included among the twelve. One serious hindrance in the way of accepting this is, of course, John vii. 5, where we are explicitly told that "even His brothers did not believe in Him."

They *knew* Him, we must suppose!

Professor Findlay has been asked if the Church of Scotland is "justified in refusing the use of the Free Churches for worship." Instead of answering the question, Dr. Findlay gets out of it by saying he refuses "to condemn the action of a communion of which I am not a member." This decision seems to sentence the writer to perpetual silence on the subject of crimes and persecutions committed by anybody but himself—not perhaps a bad idea.

We are still awaiting a protest by the German pastors and congregations against the tyranny which condemns so many thousands to Concentration Camps. The much-boasted claim that these pastors have themselves suffered persecution does not seem to amount to much in numbers or severity. We note that Baron von der Ropp, Hitler's friend, was entertained, the other day, in London at a luncheon arranged by the World's Evangelical Alliance. The Baron, who heads Hitler's supporters called the "Christian Storm Troops," was honoured by the presence of some of the most prominent of our clergy. So far from opposing Hitlerism, the report says it was made clear "that it was in no way opposed or counter to the State." No visitor or guest hinted at any sort of persecution.

For "the first time in 400 years Pontifical High Mass was sung in the open air," the other Sunday in Canterbury. There were 15,000 pilgrims and, as one Catholic writer puts it, "it saw the deliberate taking back of Canterbury by its own Catholic Church, and it was nothing less than the beginning of the taking back of Catholic England." It may be, of course, quite that; it may be that the Protestants in England will surrender their fort, and that the Church of England will once again revert back to Rome. But before this country swallows the pagan myths and pious rubbish of Popery there are the Freethinkers to deal with. And in the battle of reason against superstition, there can be only one result. The Church has lost before—it will do so again.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- H. WISHART.—Next week.
- C. E. GOUGH.—We agree with you. Intolerance and opposition to improvement usually shelters behind old and dead laws with a result that we are fighting the influence of the dead rather than the living thought of the present.
- J. BROADLEY.—Pleased to hear of the good influence of Mr. Jack Clayton's meetings. We hope he will be receiving the cordial help of Freethinkers in his travels round the Lancashire towns. We cannot all lecture, but we can all help.
- H. NIBLOE.—Thanks for letter, which explains itself. Good wishes heartily reciprocated.
- T. GRAYSON.—Many thanks for forwarding the letter. It is interesting as evidence that the *Freethinker* is read in many unexpected quarters. With regard to the other matter, the clergy have always been in the habit of pursuing the kind of propaganda you note.
- H. TOMLINS.—Mr. Cohen has written you. The delay was occasioned by his being away on a few days holiday. He is the better for even this break, and is now trying to clear away the accumulated correspondence.
- J.C.—The speech of Father Bernard Vaughan in which he said "Our business is to keep on killing Germans," was reported in the *Daily Chronicle* for January 26, 1916.
- S. GREEN.—Glad you found the book useful. We will supply the *Freethinker* to the Public Library you name if you send us the postal address. We already send it to a number of public institutions.
- 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 connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.
- All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

Sugar Plums

The Annual Report of the Executive of the National Secular Society has now been issued, and makes a very readable sixteen-pages pamphlet. Every member of the Society will receive a copy in the course of the next week or two. But the report is a useful piece of propaganda, and those who would like to assist in its distribution among non-members can have twelve copies for one shilling, or twenty-five for two shillings, post free. We invite the help of Freethinkers in circulating the report among non-members of the Society.

Our Esperantist readers will be interested to learn, as will other Freethinkers, that a recent article by our contributor, Mr. C. S. Fraser, on "Emotion in Language" has been reproduced in the *Sennacieca Revuo*, which has a world-wide circulation. Due acknowledgment of the source of the article is made.

There were some attempts, chiefly by rowdy Roman Catholics, to disturb Mr. Whitehead's recent meetings in the open-air in Stockport. Fortunately the attempt did not succeed, but the incident proves the need for local sympathizers to turn up at these meetings, and also to become more closely associated with the local Branch. These should write to Mr. G. Burgess, Westland Avenue, Stockport. Mr. Burgess is a very energetic official, and he and his fellow-members deserve all the support that can be given them.

Those who took the hint given a few weeks ago on the desirability of introducing this journal to likely subscribers will be glad to know that it has borne fruit in several acknowledged cases. How many there are unacknowledged we are unable to tell; but acting on our advice is a good form of propaganda.

Our old friend, Mr. A. B. Moss, writes us that he recently paid a visit to that veteran Freethinker, Mr. W. Heaford, and found him full of interest in the progress of the movement, although illness confines him to his room. As far back as the early 'eighties Mr. Heaford was an active speaker and writer in the Freethought cause, and lectured regularly in both London and the Provinces. He was also well-known to Freethinkers in many of the European centres, and it must be very irksome to have been "laid up" during recent years. But he has borne the buffetings of fate as cheerfully in the last years as he did the attacks of the pious in an earlier period.

We have often pointed out the immense annual subsidy given by the State to the Churches and other religious establishments in this country; and it is part of the programme of the National Secular Society to place religious buildings upon the same level of taxation as others. An indication of the amount of this annual subsidy may be gathered from a recent incident at Southampton. A strip of land belonging to St. Peter's Church was required for road-widening. An extension of this road-widening required some land belonging to a Dr. Knowlton. The latter offered the land free to the Corporation on the sole condition that a dwarf brick wall with ornamental railing was put up. The Churchwardens demanded £400 and legal expenses. A correspondent who sends the newspaper-cutting with the above particulars says that this works out at a value of about £10,000 per acre. Taking the land occupied by Churches, and other buildings registered as religious—particularly in the big cities, one can form some slight notion of the vast sum presented every year to religious bodies. And yet Christians tell us that the State does not give them any financial support!

HOW THEY SAW IT

It is said by some anthropologists that all nations have some record or folk-lore re the flood. But this is not so, and on questioning some of the Natives as to why they did not know of this ancient scriptural tale this is what they said:

Many years ago Missionaries came north to talk to our people, and they collected some of the tribes to tell them of your religion, of which we knew nothing. Now for several days our people listened to how your God created the world and so on. All listened and all went well until the Missionary began to tell us a fairy story about this flood you talk of. You know that up there it rains or snows on more than three hundred days each year. So when the Missionary said it rained for forty days and forty nights, and then a man built a great ship because there was no more land or mountains to be seen, this was more than we could stand.

So our big chief stood up and said to the Missionary, "Now boss, you stop talking, we see it rains here for sixty days and sixty nights, and it makes no difference to land and mountains, or rivers, or nothing. You are one big damned liar, and you are finished here." Whereat all the tribes dispersed, and would never listen to a Missionary again.—From "*Round the Smoking Room Fire*," by Major Radclyff.

Theology Under Fire

(Concluded from page 454)

He looked at the other men's attentive faces. "Think, each of you, for one minute—think sanely, reasonably. Do you, as human beings, hunger for an individual eternal life—William Barley, Harold Loder, Richard Bain, Hubert Dacre, Martha Oaks—for ever and ever and ever, world without end, Amen? Picture the billions upon billions of mortals who have passed this way once, and can never, never pass again! One of the wisest and sweetest sayings ever uttered by any woman came from the pen of Elizabeth Barrett Browning."

Extending a long and shapely hand, he recited in fervent and really moving tones:—

"Let us stay
Rather on earth, beloved, where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it!"

Even Martha was stirred, as her eyes—dim with appreciative emotion—plainly testified.

"The death-hour rounding it! Yes, that is indeed a noble thought, Hellbox," she conceded gently. "To have been honest, fearless, true—to have lived every moment of one's life. . . . But, none the less, I am not satisfied with your logic. We are promised a resurrection of the body. I cannot help but believe in the fulfilment of that pledge."

Then, with intense sincerity, her soft, plump hands pressed against her heart, she solemnly intoned:—

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.' Does not that glorious promise move you? Does it mean nothing to you?"

The faces of all four men had softened. Dick Bain was visibly touched by the glowing rhetoric of the familiar passage from *Revelation*. "I admit," he cried, "the beauty of those soul-stirring words, and the aspiration they embody is not alien to the Agnostic's desire for the Divine. But it cannot be used to justify a belief in the survival of the being after death."

Then turning to Dacre, "Crack my nuts for me, Hellbox," he entreated. "Miss Oaks is the real alcoteaser."

"What's an alcoteaser?" asked Martha wonderingly.

"The locked-up tantalus confronting the weary wayfarer who drops in for a drink—the key being lost or mislaid!"

"This question of the resurrection of the body," volunteered Dacre musingly, "or even of the survival of consciousness after death, lies outside any possible discussion. It is essentially unscientific. It ought not to be discussed."

"And why not, pray?" demanded Miss Oaks belligerently. "These poor Africans, with their fetish and their ju-ju, I see simply as so many children. There's a strongly altruistic impulse behind the missionary's work in Nigeria—especially the kind of work we do at Gidi-Gidi."

Both Dacre and Bain looked for the moment conscience-stricken.

"Nobody doubts that part of your argument, Miss Oaks," said the younger man cordially. "You certainly put their feet on solid ground physically, and you teach them a measure of hygiene. But . . . on the spiritual plane, what do you do? Dacre and I are

convinced that you unsteady the African—if indeed you do not work him positive harm—by taking away his tribal beliefs. Your substitutes leave him poorer for the exchange. A little more technical, and a little less religious training, we think, would be better. Why not teach him how to develop the best that lies within his own nature—without any dogma whatever?"

Martha's face grew sullen once more, as she shook her head in emphatic denial of any proposal to exclude dogma from manual and ethical training.

"I know you read Wells, Martha," broke in Dacre laughingly, "For a dozen or more years ago, you said many complimentary things about his *Ann Veronica*. Well, do you remember the passage where he roundly declares that, if only decent jobs were guaranteed to ex-priests and ex-clergymen, there would be a swift closing-down of the churches? Nobody would be left to conduct the services! . . . But we were discussing survival after death, I think. Shall we go into that problem a little more deeply—on strictly medical and scientific lines?"

The missionary seemed undecided whether to accept or refuse. Then, as the men appeared willing, she nodded a reluctant consent.

For a moment Dacre pondered, as if preparing his arguments. Finally he turned to Dick:—

"You go first, laddie. I'll elaborate after you have finished."

"It's this way," cried the boy eagerly. "I'll be only too glad to try and show Miss Oaks what Rationalists believe. Of course, I may be a bit obscure. I speak, remember, as a student of the world—the world as I see it. I can only talk by the light of the training I had in boyhood. My parents' guidance has left me entirely free of religious bias of any sort."

"Well, to start with: How could you, Miss Oaks, or how could I, exist elsewhere, unless it were the absolutely identical you and me: lungs, heart, blood, viscera and brain? That, surely, is quite elementary science—babyish common-sense! To claim that consciousness can evidence itself except through the body is outside science. That body, remember, is made up of millions upon millions of minute cells!"

"So far, so good," conceded Martha Oaks drily.

"You're quite right, Dick," approved Dacre, nodding his agreement. "Brain, heart, blood, nerves, viscera—they all go to make the personality. You cannot, any of you, have my memories, because you have not my bowels. I cannot have yours because my lips have not met the mouths that yours have kissed."

"We are all imprisoned, dear lady," he sighed, turning more directly to Martha Oaks, "within the circle of our individual worlds. Memory, for example, is an amazing thing. How many times, here beneath the tropical sunshine, have not you and I walked the streets of London in a city fog, shall we say—but knowing every inch of the way and recognizing each shop as we have passed it? And in London—how often have not aliens such as you and I trod the sandy roads of the tropics in a blinding drizzle of rain—and yet felt the sun smite on our foreheads? All the senses build up memory; and not one of the five but depends upon our physical conditions, whether we be in health or sickness? Go on Dick, I have said my say."

"We now come to the question of a setting for the body," Dick proceeded quietly. "Environment! Are we not all aware that, beyond a certain altitude, it is not possible, without artificial aid, for the lungs of human beings to function? Moreover, the weight of the human body, involving muscular development, has a direct relationship to the mass of the planet. If you have read H. G. Wells's fantasy, Miss Oaks, which describes the visit of certain Earthmen to the

Moon, you will find that our Author was clever enough to emphasize this point."

"That's a story I've not read," commented the missionary. "But please go on!"

"One of Wells's tremendous puppets thought to take a stride of a few feet. Instead, he sprang a tremendous distance. Why? Because his power of muscle had exceeded the resistance of the Moon's thin atmosphere. Now the human body, as we know it and have known it for millions of years, fits exactly the environment in which it is placed. It is almost impossible to think of it in any other environment. The postulate of any survival of consciousness—individual consciousness—in man, at once calls for a similar postulate for everything else—for animals, for birds and insects, and even for animalculæ. Don't you see that, dear friend? You cannot draw fanciful lines of demarcation between living things. To the scientist, all life is sacred. It all belongs to the one broad stream of sentience. If there are gaps in our understanding, such gaps are due only to our lack of knowledge."

It was apparent from the missionary's mocking smile that she remained quite unconvinced.

"Well, if you haven't got that straight, Miss Oaks, there's no use in my going on!" Dick laughed. Then, looking at his watch: "It's time we men did some work. If Dacre has similar ideas to mine, let him finish off my little thesis."

Springing to his feet, he persuaded the others to movement.

"Come, sir," urged Loder to Dacre, with a backward flick of his hair, "You really must give our lady friend the *coup de grâce*. . . . Wait a moment for me, Bain, and I'll accompany you to your hut. I want to borrow one or two books."

As Dick lingered in the open doorway, Dacre said quickly: "What a lot of children we are! And our mental infancy, so far as the Western hemisphere is concerned, can only be ascribed to Hebraism."

"How so?" asked Martha, also rising and preparing to return to the hospital.

"Hebraism is the proven parent of Christianity, which, in Europe and America, rules the roost. Without Moses, there could never have been a Christ. What is the result? Well, imagine a modern being, in a world of wireless and telegraphy, aerial transport and television, to say nothing of the League of Nations, reputed to be sane and in his right mind (Oh! there are millions of such, believe me!)—a modern being who is content to mix up the theology of the Pharaohs, the cosmology of the Persians, the ritual of the Incas of Peru and the social economy of the reign of Alfred the Great with—shall we say?—a poignant flavouring of the ethics of the race-course, the philosophy of the prize-ring, the sensationalism of the press, and the morality of the football field—and then to call that nice little mixture the One-and-Only-Religion-worthiness of world-wide-acceptance! Isn't it simply too ridiculous for words?"

"It is, Hellbox! It is!" cried the three men, grinning at Miss Oaks's discomfiture.

But in the compound, a moment later, they all knelt down. Strange it might have been—fantastic in fact it was, but Martha Oaks had made but one slight gesture, and obediently they knelt about her. It was their customary evening ritual.

Her voice came in quiet but very earnest tones: "O thou Great God, who bringest the mighty of the earth into the ways of humility, and puttest kings into the habits of their slaves, in Thy infinite mercy look down on us to-night and grant our prayer. We beseech Thee to have pity on our plight, and to bring us Thy sure relief. We have languished here in pain

and tribulation for many weary nights and days, and our hearts are sick and sore for Thy solace. As we kneel now before Thee in our weakness, do Thou send us Thy power and Thy strength. Deliver us from our enemies. Give us Thy patience to endure, but give us also Thy energy to continue unto victory. Purge the minds of our enemies from all thoughts of vengeance, and free us also from every suggestion of undue punishment. Make us to be one people in Thy sight, no matter what the colour of our skins. Give us peace in our time, O Lord. These things we beseech Thee in the name of Our Lord and Saviour, Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ."

Her hearers uttered a reverent "Amen."

Rising to their feet, they looked at each other a trifle self-consciously. But they knew their unique position—five white people surrounded by hordes of threatening Blacks. Because of that dark menace, they shook hands—cordially and simply as though they were indeed the little children that Dacre had described.

Martha's sturdy little figure went jauntily through the deepening gloom, her faint moon-shadow dancing along at her side as though ambitious to race ahead of her well-shod feet.

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria, W.C.A.

Freethought or Democracy?

THE acceptance of the revised principles at the Conference means, among other things, that it is no longer conceived to be the bounden duty of Freethinkers to work for "the self-government of the people." I applaud the implication that to champion Democracy is not our business, and would even go further in the contention that contemporary democracy is inimical to the welfare of Freethought. Freethinkers reject the authority of numbers in such questions as Atheism, belief in after-life, value of religion, etc. Yet in the matter of State Government can we be certain that the decisions of the majority should be any more worthy of practice?

That Democracy has been of value in the past, that no better system is now being tried, is irrelevant if a better system, and one more conducive to Freethought, can be conceived. The growth of Democracy is a reaction to oppression, and as such has been marked, not by any innate longing to rule on the part of the masses, but by a series of resentful kicks against bad conditions. Consequently its alliance with Freethought has been largely accidental. The chief concern of Freethought, as any history¹ will show, has been the conflict between intolerant religion and scientific knowledge (aided by human reason). But Democracy is defensive in nature: rather than initiate, create, actively promote, better conditions, it unimaginedly seeks to mitigate the effects of bad ones. Trade Unions, and Friendly Societies, like the old Tudor Gilds, are precautions against excessive suffering under existing conditions, while the C.W.S., another quite laudable institution, is but a belated copy of individualist enterprise.

The theory and practice of Democracy, as Pollard, for one, has shown, only crystallizes under the pressure of economic hardship, and even then is only understood by a kind of minority-vanguard, often following a leader. The Peasants' Revolt (1381) cannot be separated from the life-work of John Ball, or the leadership of Wat Tyler, while the minority-vanguard is instanced by the Rochdale Pioneers or the Chartists. Again, much of what is popularly attri-

¹ e.g., Robertson's, Bury's.

buted to democracy has not been accomplished by the people at all, but by other suffering classes, like the barons under Langton or De Montfort, or the middle-class shipmerchant, John Hampden, who initiated the protest against the levying of Ship Money in peacetime.

Measures like the Petition of Right, Bill of Rights, Act of Settlement, etc., show in their clauses, not so much a concern for self-government, as for safeguarding against the abuse of royal power, or the infringement of already existing liberties, while the long story of the nineteenth century reform (part of it rendered advisable by the French Revolution, and part to transfer the balance of power in Parliament from the landed to the new manufacturing class) has left us with a mob of voters, among which one looks in vain for any general measure of discernment, reason, self-reliance or other qualification for government. They have no practical training for it, neither the inclination nor leisure for study and educative travel, and, as the Party System shows, no clear-cut lines of policy, and above all, as the persecution of minorities shows, no conception of Freethought as a principle, but only as an expedient. Sedition and Blasphemy Laws, often reinforced by arbitrary police powers, subsidiary dictatorships like the B.B.C., and the pandering for votes, obtain in democratic systems. If Russia be claimed as democratic, then the apparently unfair procedure taken at the Zirov trial against Communist deviationists indicates how minorities are denied freedom of criticism. So far from guaranteeing Freethought, Democracy does not even guarantee its own continuity. The Saar Plebiscite—a perfectly democratic procedure, with all the attendant evils thereof—shows a majority sacrificing not only its own right to free criticism, but also that of the unfortunate minority.

From Right to Left, however, Democracy stands unquestioned, respectable, safe. Yet the large percentage of electors who do not vote would be enormously increased if there were no electioneering to kindle passion and prejudice. Power is foisted on unwilling masses who have neither the desire nor the ability to rule, while those who have must see their votes negated by morons. The man who is expected to undergo intensive training to press buttons, turn knobs and operate levers, is accepted as a national adviser on no qualifications whatever. He is placed on equal footing with the trained and travelled professor of economics, whose books he has no desire to read, as a glimpse into any library will show.

Freethinkers may view the situation with satisfaction when two voters, whose interests are identical, cancel out each other's vote. At face value this may look like good Freethought, but it is good politics? Is it even Freethought? In assuming with Freethought the right to express what we think, we are apt to assume that the ability to do so follows as a matter of course. But Freethought includes thought, and thought should be founded on the assimilation of facts and the trained ability to weigh them, i.e., it should operate on certain material. But the "Freethought" that makes people choose blue, red, yellow or black frequently operates on no material at all save the tradition and convention, or on material prepared by sinister interests, and uncritically imbibed. It may even, towards 8 o'clock on election night, operate on a pint of beer. And we may safely assume that the ability to make a scientific study of politico-economic conditions among the mobocracy (longitudinal), is not so great as the ability therein to consume a pint of beer.

Thus, with no restrictions on his "Freethought," the moron counts one with the economist. What, then, is the restriction that Freethought removes?

The line takes us through Foote, Bradlaugh, Carlile, Hetherington, etc.; they suffered from the restrictions of brute force, open or legalized. Because of them we are to-day comparatively immune from such hindrance. But there is another kind of restriction which limits the electors in a democratic system, the restrictions of their own knowledge and understanding. Freethought has made it possible for them to speak what they think. They have yet to learn how to think and what to think about. Education? Alas, the semi-conscious youth who is the product of our democratic home and school is converted by a period of adolescent training into a competent specialist, detained, however, at a state of culture which leaves him a prey to quackery of every kind, religious, commercial, political. Study for him must mean £ s. d., or it is aimless. The cross he makes on a paper is no guarantee that he has taken the trouble to familiarize himself with the questions at issue from all angles, that he has prepared considered, unbiassed opinions on problems of the utmost importance. A well-conceived examination would eliminate impostors, unwilling impostors though many are. And it is time we rid ourselves of the notion that equality of opportunity entails subsequent equality of intellect and ability to direct national affairs; such is to make equality a god. Democracy makes a superficial leveling in a region where equality cannot apply. Thus, the Freethinker who defends democracy accepts as a Freethinker the man who is not even a thinker, and penalizes the genuine Freethinker by accepting his opinion as of no more effective value than that of a moron.

* * *

Any criticism of a functioning institution carries with it the responsibility of indicating where a better system may be found. Now the renunciation of Democracy means neither the renunciation of Freethought nor the acceptance of Dictatorship. For the point is not, how many people shall rule, but, how are the best rulers to be obtained? By uninformed mass "opinion"? Or by trained, travelled, tested legislators? It is the old opposition of reason to authority, the mob being the authority, and the expert few the reasoners and scientific investigators, reaching their decisions, not by dogma and convention, but by knowledge and reason.

The favourite objection to such a scheme is that such power might lead to abuse. With unconscious humour, this is supposed to be very inferior to democracy. Yet does not every scheme repose power in the hands of fallible human beings? The guarantee against its abuse lies not in the fact that leaders can be removed from below, as in democracy. This rather works the other way. Leaders of a democracy must cater for votes, and in so doing may be tempted to act contrary to their judgment. Further, they are placed in a sea of competition and struggle for votes, the necessity of gaining which may stimulate them to all kinds of deceitful or hypocritical devices. No, the guarantee lies, can only lie, in the character of those who wield such power. Both the democratic and the oligarchic leader must listen to the braying of asses. But the former must take heed, or get out. Democracy demands, not that people shall be convinced, but that they shall vote.

How the transition is to be made is not relevant to the present title. The hope of educating a democracy to rule with intelligence is less, I think, than that of educating it to surrender its power to tested specialist legislators. The reconstruction of the Second Chamber opens up another expedient.

The risk of favouritism and infringement on liberty is also considerably less, I suggest, than in a system where majorities invariably persecute minorities.

Under the rule of an expert group free criticism may obtain, and may help the legislation without committing it to the renunciation of its considered policy for the purpose of vote-catching. Such criticism is an outlet for what would otherwise turn to secret channels, producing terrorism and counter-terrorist. Can a state, then, prosper, can Free-thought obtain, without a mobocracy trained in the science of government, and versed in sociology and economics? Yes, so long as they are relieved of the onus of making decisions in matters they do not understand. No, if they have that responsibility. Then we see them surrendering their lives to Fascist dictatorships, as in the Saar, or giving support to the suppression of minorities, as in the Soviet, or tolerating such an institution as the B.B.C., as here. Thus does Democracy eat up Freethought.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Burlap

SOME folks might have blamed the lobster, which they had tried to assimilate too late, the night before. But in my case I must really saddle Mr. J. W. Dunne, who has acquired a reputation in the world of philosophy. Among other books, he has written *An Experiment with Time*, and *The Serial Universe*, which latter, it is claimed, compels not only Relativity, but the "quantum" itself, to testify to Human Immortality. I notice a proviso is put in the claim, "if the arguments are sound."

Well, these arguments are too deep for the "man in the street," though I daresay the commonsense of that much-advertised person may be as capable of dealing with intricate problems as the next one, but the most of us are duly impressed with these "fourth dimensions," "Continuums," "quantums," and "pure durations," and we are apt to think that our high-browed philosopher has an "inner light" on abstruse questions, denied to ordinary mortals. We are apt to take philosophers at their own valuation. I would suggest that Mr. Taylor deals with these prognostications of a brave new world.

I had had a busy day. Busy that is for a person of my indolent habits. I had read with much appreciation *The Letters to the Lord*, and was wondering what form the reply would take—if reply was possible. I had followed Mr. Brighton to a neighbouring village in the hope of finding a "scrap" on the part of some who were quite unused to Freethought propaganda, and instead I found a large and most attentive audience, who apparently could find no chink in Mr. Brighton's armour. Dealing with the Evolution v. Bible Story, he contrived to leave very few loopholes. Mr. Brighton is impervious and good-natured withal.

And so to bed, as the great diarist remarked. To sleep, perchance to dream, as someone else said. But there's the rub. I had also Mr. Dunne to reckon with, for had I not decided that I too, would indulge in an "experiment with time"?

I have no desire to misrepresent our philosopher, for I find him lucid, readable, and in nowise dogmatic in his assertions. He is a good example of the scientific spirit which demands proof for any proposition. He suggests rather than dictates, and his writings are imbued with a "sweet reasonableness."

Briefly, his experiment asks the student to note carefully, at the time of waking, the dream last recorded in his Consciousness. For good results, he ought to write down the chief data. These are often associated with events of the past, but they may also have reference to future happenings. He offers several remarkable instances of this having occurred, notably a forecast of that terrible upheaval at St. Pierre. The number of fatalities in his dream was 4,000. Actually it was 40,000. Still, it was a manful attempt, and we must not be too censorious over the lapse of one cypher.

Throughout the book are given various diagrams, showing the working of our cerebral states, when our subconscious is busy with Time and space dimensions. As I

say, it is rather weird, and, to the materialist, depending solely on *experience in the past* a trifle uncanny.

Mind you, I am not wedded to any new theory. If science can prove that Time and space are not as generally regarded; if it can show that events in the past have a direct bearing on those unfolded in the future, well, we may as well all take advantage of the fact, and proclaim the advent of the new Psychology.

Human Nature is such that most of us rather prefer a royal road to success. We like "infallible systems." We are apt to lend a credulous ear to anyone who can paint a glowing picture, or place within our grasp the possibility of a "dead cert." We may be fooled again and again, but we like to be fooled. This year! Next year! Sometime!! Mr. Micawber has a big family.

So, when I awoke on that trial morning the first name my muddled consciousness could construe was "Burlap." There was also some suggestion of Hamlet and a mixed-up quotation which I could not recall. But "Burlap" was paramount. "Burlap" was first out of the ivory gates. It would seem as if "Burlap" was inclined to "make all the running."

The mention of "running" calls to mind turf associations, and it is said that some lucky persons have "spotted" winners by the simple device of dreaming them. I disclaim any faith in this system for myself, but, in the silent watches of the night, when a name like "Burlap" comes flashing from, apparently nowhere, well, really, it seems to be an offer just to help yourself. So before I went over once more I had hammered "Burlap" very definitely into my mental list. I was convinced that the time-dimension or the continuum, or the quantum or fate, or providence, or something, was about to behave quite generously toward me and, perhaps, allow me to reap where I had not sown. Muttering contentedly the blessed word "Burlap," I fell asleep.

I do not claim for this tale an unhappy ending. I don't mind providing sops for both the Spiritist and the Materialist. Certainly in that midnight hour I had no recollection of "Burlap." Besides, it was my first experiment, and if I failed to spot the 3.30 winner by psychic means that is not to the discredit of our newest "ology." Experiments must have fair trial. No fair-minded student would rashly deery one meagre attempt. Perhaps the gods, or the subconscious or is it "quantum" may provide better results after a series. I cannot tell. All I know is that at 2 a.m. "Burlap" was first past the post—in my mind. Then I had no previous recollection of the name. Alas! for my hopes of a permanent release from all financial embarrassment. I remembered, after being fairly awake next morning that "Burlap" was the name of a character in Aldous Huxley's Novel, *Point Counterpoint*, which I read some time ago. And I am sorry to have to add, "Not a nice character."

ALAN TYNDAL.

Vae Victis!

HELPLESS we gaze on this impending rape;
The old baboon is ready now to spring;
Upon his victim he himself will fling
And seize the Ethiopian by the nape.
Once in his grasp there can be no escape;
Though all the bells of Ethiopia ring
Their supplication to the Heavenly King,
He will not spare the crushing of this grape.

The Ethiopian cannot change his skin,
His superstition, slavery, and dirt,
But black-shirt Rome, who now commits this sin,
Will one day change the colour of his shirt:
The Lion of Judah, though he lose his crown,
May bring the bully Mussolini down.

BAVARD SIMMONS.

Adam was the first man. God created him a big booby, who, to please his wife, was stupid enough to devour an apple which his descendants have never been able to digest.—*Voltaire*.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER,"

WOMEN IN RUSSIA

SIR,—What a pity H. Preece should try to put the damper on F. G. Cooper's excellent article (*Freethinker*, July 14), on "Women in the U.S.S.R." by an irrelevant reference to "capitalism" in an ancient quotation.

What were the conditions in the U.S.S.R. in 1921? The land in a state of turmoil from intervention by practically all European capitalist countries who wanted to prevent Socialism developing, the people suffering in consequence from shortage of nearly everything and creating internal unrest, boycott and vilification by other nations and the Bolshevik Party itself having to contend with trouble makers, defeatists, etc., in its own centre. Had not the leaders to turn where they could for aid in starting their industry? Is not credit due for what they have done?

Loans from capitalists in foreign countries are not large enough to make room for exploitation and those made internally are only equivalent to a deferred wage. H. Preece probably cannot understand that a worker should prefer to invest his wage in a loan to the State to assist in building Socialism and a better standard for the future in preference to enlarging his personal leisure now, but to those workers under Capitalism, such as myself, suffering under a permanent frustration of our powers, the effort to attain a Socialist State is recognized and appreciated.

I know you cannot, and do not wish, to spare space for a controversy on Socialism in the U.S.S.R., but in closing would invite H. Preece to read what has happened in Russia since 1921, and gain an understanding of how Capitalism is unable to develop there—to see how not only women have developed, but how the great mass of 175 millions have risen from a backward nation to a world power with a future, and none of those millions exploiter or exploited.

AUSTIN FORBES.

SIR,—Your correspondent in current issue of *Freethinker*, H. Preece, writing under "Women in Russia" may be interested in the article in "Russia To-day," dated July, 1935, page 10, headed "Soviet Loans." This paper is obtainable through Smiths or any newsagent.

VIOLET I. MITCHELL.

SALADIN

SIR,—Your reference in "Acid Drops" to Mr. Belloc's denunciation of Saladin made me look up a general Biographical Dictionary issued one hundred years ago, and I quote the following: "Saladin, Sultan of Syria, disputed the holy land with Richard Cœur-de-lion and other crusaders, signalizing himself during the contest by an uncommon degree of refinement, generosity and valour. He died at Damascus in 1193, viewing the vanities of the world with such philosophical eyes that just before his decease he ordered the winding-sheet prepared for his remains to be publicly exhibited while a Herald proclaimed aloud, 'This is all that Saladin, who has subdued the East, can retain of his conquests.'"

J. MACKINNON.

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