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The religious belief of more than ninety-nine hundredths of mankind is determined by the geographical accident of birth.
—G. W. FOOTE.

Views and Opinions.

A Knotty Question.

We are fully aware that to deal with the question of conscientious objection to military service is, to use a colloquialism, asking for trouble. And there is an easy way of avoiding trouble of this kind—that is, to leave it alone. But that course is neither courageous nor honourable. It is the questions that are the most difficult and upon which people differ most that call urgently for discussion, and if we cannot agree at the end, we may at least see our differences in a clearer light. A Freethought that does not allow for differences of opinion is not a Freethought worth having—indeed it is not Freethought at all. It is intolerance masquerading as such. We should not be usefully human if we had not in our midst a variety of views on most questions. And we should not be Freethinkers if we could not state those differences without shattering our devotion to the central principle upon which all of us profess to set so much value.

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A New Religious Disability.

In the old days the Freethinker who declined to debase himself by a religious oath in a court of justice found himself in many respects virtually an outlaw. The theory was that a man without a belief in God was not worthy of trust, or else that it was so difficult for a Christian to tell the truth that nothing less than invoking the sacred name of God could get him to do it. This disqualification has now been removed, and a Freethinker's promise to speak the truth is held to be enough. But the Military Service Tribunals have re-created the old objection in a new form. The new theory is that only a religious man can possess a conscience. On Tribunal after Tribunal, the conscientious objector, who happens to be a Freethinker, is told that he cannot be without belief in God and have a conscientious objection to anything. In one of the reports that lie before us (a Birmingham case), in which the applicant had belonged to more than one anti-militant society for years, and was also a member of the National Secular Society, the military representative declared "Your society is secular, it is rationalist, it is not religious, it is merely political." That is the theory. An objection not based upon religion must be political. Any religion will do—there is a delightful catholicity about it—but it must be a religion. Otherwise it is political. And it is evidently held that conscience and politics have no connection whatever.

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The Conscientious Objector.

Now, we quite recognize that it is not an easy task to determine whether a man possesses a conscientious objection to anything or not. And this because it is not at all a subject for debate. A conscientious objection is a conscientious objection. It may be concerned with an

admirable object or otherwise, but there it is. In religion the Jew has a conscientious objection to eating pork and the Mohammedan to drinking wine. It is no use arguing about it, it is there. You must either accept it or ignore it. You may ask for proof that pork is indigestible, or that wine is injurious, but the religious objection to these things does not rest upon either ground. It is a conscientious objection, and there it ends. And if a man says he has a conscientious objection to military service, you must, in the same way, either accept it or ignore it. He cannot demonstrate its presence and you cannot prove its absence. But the whole theory becomes ridiculous if you say that a man may have a conscientious objection if he tacks "God" on to his statement, but not if it is based on moral and humanitarian grounds. And, as we said last week, it is in effect the creation of a new religious disability. People are placed outside the benefits prescribed by an Act of Parliament because they do not happen to belong to a religious sect. It is against this new religious disqualification that we protest, and I hope will keep on protesting until this form of religious impertinence ceases to exist.

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An Illogical Position.

We said last week, and we repeat it here, that the whole treatment of the question of conscientious objection to war has been a blunder. There are only two logical positions, and much as the average Englishman hates logic, the logical road is most often the better one. Voluntaryism—the principle that each person shall be left free to decide for himself whether he will join the Army, is quite intelligible. So also is the principle that the State has a right to enforce military service when occasion demands. A State which follows either course is logical, and in the genuine sense of the expression, just. But it is illogical to explicitly and deliberately say that there shall be compulsion for military service, and that those who are genuinely against it may be exempt. For the State in declining the right to compel all, declines the right to compel anyone. And the anomaly becomes the more glaring when the State, having deliberately exempted certain people on a definite ground, proceeds through the mouths of its officials—legislators and judges—to pour scorn upon those who are acting as the State contemplated. If these conscientious objectors are not doing their duty to the State, the State has no justification for helping them to evade their duty. If, on the other hand, in acting up to their conscience these objectors are obeying a higher law than any on the statute book, it is those who vituperate them who are dealing with life from a quite lower level.

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What is Conscience?

Now, in putting the issue in this way I am not under the impression that there are any human "rights" which do not spring from society itself. As it has been said, man is not born with a Bill of Rights in his hands. Such rights as he possesses are of social origin. And what is true of "rights" is equally true of "conscience." Put this word on one side altogether, and let us talk

instead of the sense of right and wrong, and we see more clearly where we are. How could one man alone have a sense of "right"? He would feel pleasure and pain. Certain things would be desirable or undesirable, but they would not be "right" or "wrong." An ethical value only begins to exist with a relation between beings of the same species. In other words, conscience is born of the group, it is the creation of the group, and must always be referred back to the group for its final justification. Is this belief, or this action, in the interests of the larger and more permanent interests of society? That is the crucial question which faces—properly faces—all questions of conscience.

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A Difficulty.

But here we immediately find ourselves in difficulties. If every person is allowed to plead his sense of what is right and wrong; or, in other words, his conscience, as a complete justification for all he cares to do, anarchy would result. Organized social life would become impossible. Not alone would war become impossible, but almost everything else. For there is nothing, no institution, compulsory education, a police force, sanitation, nor a thousand other things, that a number might not decline to support on the ground of their being contrary to their sense of right. And it must be admitted that the conscience of some may be as imperative for the suppression of the Atheist, as that of others may be for the suppression of the congenital criminal. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the better interests of the race have often been served by those who have pitted their individual sense of right against that of the community to which they belonged. The conscience that is common to all may be as fatal to the well-being of social life as the unfettered exercise of the conscience peculiar to individuals may be to its coherence. Indeed, it needs no more than merely pointing out that advances in the liberties of men and women, in the freedom of the press, in the choice or rejection of religious beliefs, etc., have all been initiated by the stand of the individual conscience against that of the community. The stand of the individual conscience may thus be made in the interests of a larger social life; and it is well to bear in mind that the capacity for this represents a factor of tremendous importance to the welfare of society. The society without it is doomed to stagnation and decay.

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The Individual and the Community.

But these considerations neither condemn the revolt of the individual against the commands of the State, nor do they condemn the State for insisting upon obedience. So long as a man is a member of a human society he cannot, in fact, dissociate himself from the good or bad fortune of the whole. He reaps the benefit of the one and shares the penalties of the other. Personally, I cannot but honour the man who, on behalf of an opinion, is ready to stand up against all that the community may do to coerce him. Nor can I help regarding this as, in itself, of greater consequence—even when wrongly directed—to a healthy social life than the sheeplike habit of passive obedience, even in a right direction. But I cannot see that this takes from the State the right to use compulsion in what is considered to be its own interests. This is exercised on a variety of things, and I must confess that I see no clear general principle that can be said to govern the matter. The protest of the individual, dictated by a sense of right which is itself born of the community, and expressed in the interests of the community, must always be at the individual's own risk and responsibility. Against the coercive—often fatally coercive—action of the community, individual resistance is

the only safeguard. That is a fact which Freethinkers, above all, can never afford to ignore. And a wise community would recognize the value of such protests even while insisting upon its own right to use compulsion when its safety is seriously threatened.

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An Age-long Conflict.

The question is essentially one that has been raised over and over again in the history of the race. It was raised in connection with the freedom of the press, and with the right to liberty of worship. In a wider sense it is part of the age-long conflict between the all-embracing coercion of the primitive community and the demand for individual freedom. In the matter of religion the question was settled by the agreement that choice of religion was one which might be safely left to the individual, the State only concerning itself when its manifestations plainly threatened social peace. In the matter of Military Service the trouble is that we have been brought up under a regime which, while compelling all to support an army, left actual service to individual choice. I know it will be said that the State has never formally renounced its right to use compulsion if needed, and with that I agree. But it cannot be denied that to resort to compulsion is a step backward in the history of freedom, a return to a more primitive type of social life. That, too, is a point we should all bear in mind. The trouble now has arisen because the question has been dealt with in a quite illogical manner. And want of logic has brought its nemesis. The State has asserted its right to compel all, while giving to all the right to decline that compulsion. It would have been better to have left the refusal to the individual on his own responsibility. I believe that refusal would still have been forthcoming, as it has been forthcoming in other matters. But there would have been exhibited less intolerance, less injustice, and less injury to the higher life of the community.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Lonely Cardinal.

I claim no place in the world of letters; I am, and will be, alone.—*Walter Savage Landor.*

Reason is a rebel unto faith.—*Sir Thomas Browne.*

PROFESSOR HUXLEY said that, if he were called upon to compile a primer of Freethought, he would save himself the trouble by making a selection from the works of Cardinal Newman. "A sceptical intelligence and a profoundly believing soul" is the verdict upon Newman passed by M. Henri Bremond, a noted French critic. Seldom has there been a more complex character than that of John Henry Newman. On one side there was the feminine tenderness; on the other the hardness of the man. Newman was as cultured as Gibbon, yet he took pleasure in denouncing culture. Fewer plummets, except that of Herbert Spencer's, have taken deeper soundings of the oceanic depths of the intellect. Yet Newman, at times, envied the simple mind of the ignorant, and he had fits of fanaticism. Of remarkable intellectual gifts, he used reason to abase reason. If he had not been a Catholic, he would have been a Freethinker.

Such a mind as that of the Cardinal's was bound to be lonely and self-sufficient, so different to the restless, acquisitive instincts of men of keen perception only. Maybe such serene detachment betokens a certain narrowness of outlook. Yet the sight of a man single-hearted, deflected by no fears, searching for truth, and never startled out of his serenity, is deeply interesting.

This association of saint and sceptic is as remote from the ordinary world as "the horns of Elfland faintly blowing." Its rarity has attracted and baffled many critics who have searched for its secret.

"I am a stranger upon earth" was Newman's plaintive confession. In truth, he was a John-a-Dreams moving among a world of shadows. In the luminous mists of his childhood he had been wandering through mystical gateways. To him, always, the world was illusion and phantasy, and men but passing fancies. Did he not say:—

I used to wish the Arabian tales were true. My imagination ran on unknown influences, on magical powers and talismans. I thought life might be a dream, or I an angel, and all this world a deception; my fellow-angels, by a playful device, concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with a semblance of a material world.

The future Cardinal looked through the eyes of the musing child.

Newman's literary genius was extraordinary. He was the master of a style of singular grace and charm, at once delicate and lively. It has something of the coolness of falling water, something of the music of rustling trees. *Callista*, the *Apologia*, and *The Dream of Gerontius* would, in any case, have placed Newman among the remarkable English writers. But he is at his best in his prose writings. The tendency of the best prose writers of the nineteenth century had been to employ prose in a prosaic manner. Landor aimed at a classic austerity of style, like beautifully modelled marble. Macaulay brought to perfection a bright, balanced method of statement, like the sharp blowing of silver trumpets. Carlyle wrote from another point of view, and used words which shine like pigments.

With these Newman had little in common. The writers, with whom he is more akin are Charles Lamb, De Quincey, and Matthew Arnold. He was, like Lamb, in the delicacy of touch. He has a nearness to De Quincey in the autobiographical tendency, the fondness for retrospect. He is akin to Matthew Arnold in respect of the restraint, the economy of effect, and in suavity. But there is no echo, for none of these probably exerted any direct influence upon him:—

His intellectual power through words and things
Went sounding on a dim and perilous way.

It is, however, as a controversialist that the great Cardinal is so remarkable. He boasts such weapons as few have wielded. His sentences stab, his invective destroys. There is no other force in English theological literature of such surpassing power. Even in France his only superior is the master-swordsman, Voltaire, that—

Sharpest, shrewdest steel that ever stabbed
Imposture, through the armour-joints, to death.

Unlike Voltaire, Newman did not court warfare; but in the heat of battle he bore himself like a paladin. In the lectures *On the Present Position of Catholics in England*, his opponents were slaughtered. They would be forgotten but for the fact that they are embalmed in great English prose, like flies in amber. Greatly daring, Charles Kingsley ventured to attack Newman, but he soon went down before his remorseless steel. Kingsley's shallow criticism led to the publication of Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, one of the most remarkable books of religious autobiography ever written, for its author infused the banalities of theology with humanity.

After all, it is the theologian who is the chief interest to Freethinkers. Nor is this to be wondered at. Newman seemed to despise his own magnificent literary gifts. Scholar that he was, there are but few references to literature in his writings. He wasted his genius in

pouring out tracts for the times, lectures on justification, and the essays elaborating the *Via Media*. Newman's finest work is, in the last resort, but a powerful apology for a special aspect of Christianity. Faith to him was the only alternative to Freethought. A keen critic, a great writer, a dignified personality—this may be conceded to him. No apostle of Humanism, no light-bearer in social crisis, no inspirer of liberty, Newman's relentless questionings have their use so long as we remember that they are questions, and nothing more. To ask of him any positive contribution to human knowledge, is to ask what he is powerless to give. His was a rare personality, and, under happier conditions, he would have been a free man. As an ecclesiastic, there were others to rival him, for he had little care for the petty politics of religion, and small liking for the manipulation of his fellows. But as a man, this lonely and majestic scholar "is enshrined in all his fragrance in our memories."

MIMNERMUS.

The Mystery of God.

IN the *Sunday Herald* for March 19 the Rev. R. J. Campbell expatiates on "The Mystery of God and Man." Apologetically he excuses the former mystery by drawing attention to the fact that Man himself, and even all Nature, animate and inanimate, are also objects of profoundest mystery. He thus evidently assumes that the mystery attaching to the god-idea is of the same order as that belonging to natural existences. It is difficult to credit Mr. Campbell with a simplicity so naively innocent. A better example of comparing "Cheese and Chalk" could not be easily found.

Mr. Campbell defines God as "the power that produced us and keeps us going." He then makes the astounding statement that "there are no Atheists except in practice.....The blankest Materialist believes in that power, only he refuses to call it God." Very true; there never has been outside bedlam a disbeliever in "the power that produced us"; but the imports of the respective beliefs—in Nature and in God—are as wide as the poles asunder, and Mr. Campbell cannot but know it. He seems to be unconscious of the disguised sophistry he is guilty of in combing the word "Atheist" with such a definition of the term. The "blank Materialist" would refuse to call it God because it would involve mental dishonesty to do so. The term God, through long established usage, has a very special meaning in Christian countries. It signifies the *man-like* source of the so-called revelations embodied in the Christian Creed and the man-like object of its worship.

Mr. Campbell is not a Christian merely because he is willing to call "the power that produced us" God. If his creed has evanesced to that degree, he is, from the Christian standpoint, a blank Atheist. Few Materialists, I fancy, would have any great objection to calling "the power that produced us" by the name God if the term were as free from superstitious implications as the God of Plato and Aristotle.

Mr. Campbell speaks of "the fact of God" as having for "those who really want to believe in the innate spirituality of existence," "as thoroughly reliable evidence as the fact of man or the fact of the universe itself." Possibly enough for "those who really want to believe." To such, there is nothing really incredible. But those who are not divinely blessed with an efficient "will-to-believe" require evidence of an objective kind.

Mr. Campbell characterizes Tyndall's magnificent descriptions of Alpine beauty and grandeur (for I sup-

pose he alludes to those) as "rhapsodizing"; with much greater justice may Mr. Campbell's article be described as a piece of "rhapsody" about "the fact of God."

If "the fact of God" be so palpably evident, it is remarkably strange that his own worshippers, after two millenniums of learned discussion by the combined intellect of Christendom, should be as far as ever from coming to any agreement as to what the term God should mean.

Mr. Campbell, in common with all metaphysical apologists and clerics, betrays no less an anxiety for retaining the word than he does for emptying it of its ancient meaning. The first is absolutely essential to the continued survival of a religion which is founded upon the primitive meaning stereotyped in its sacred books.

The second is equally imperative, for its anthropomorphic or man-like connotations betray too palpably its earthly origin, and point too obviously to man as the creator of his deity.

They fondly imagine that when the grosser attributes of man—the body (save the eyes and ears), the appetencies, and the more savage and brutal passions—are suppressed and eliminated, that God has ceased to be anthropomorphic! As if Father was less man-like than a despot; or seeing and hearing less characteristic of man than smelling and tasting; or pity less human than anger! Just as if a Zeppelin was thought to be getting out of the reach of gravity as it shoots upwards when relieved of its ballast weight!

A vain conceit. The diaphanous God of our metaphysicians is as essentially man-like as the original model—all human attributes, only magnified, etherealized, or sublimed. The human activities of hearing, seeing, knowing, thinking, feeling, and doing, are too deeply and too firmly rooted in the term God for "man" ever to take his final exit from the word.

As it is thus a gratuitous piece of imagination, many a mind has felt the necessity of blending with it a little *reality*; and so they subtly introduce into the term as much as possible of Nature, in the hope of "fixing" the fluid and mobile image. The practice is resorted to under the pressure of dire necessity, for there is no kind of kinship or congruity between the two conceptions—Nature and God. They stand related to one another as personality does to impersonality.

Should anyone desire to give to *ultimate* reality some epithet to denote its incomprehensible nature, a more honest policy would be to adopt the famous Spencerian phrase and call it the Unknowable (with a capital U if desired) than to apply to it a term that is already saturated with notions rooted in primitive credulity.

MAN-MADE MYSTERY.

Let us now return to the question of "the mystery of God" and see *why* it tends to turn believers into Atheists. The mystery of Nature, as Mr. Campbell bears unintentional witness, engenders no unbelief in itself. Atheism is, therefore, not due to *incomprehensibility*. If the object or phenomenon be a known fact, or a part of our daily experience, its being incomprehensible never leads to unbelief in its existence. Not so much as a transient doubt is ever possible, even if we tried.

Electricity and gravitation are incomprehensible enough in all conscience; but no one ever entertains any doubt in their existence or reality for that reason.

The mystery of Nature, save that belonging to ultimate reality, is due to the tragically meagre equipment with which man is naturally endowed for the attainment of knowledge; but the "mystery of God" arises from the fact that the conception itself is a tangle of incongruities and contradictions. It is the *clash of inconsistencies*, and not incomprehensibility, that makes for Atheism.

The ideas which make up the meaning of the term are either mutually inconsistent or are in flat contradiction to his reputed doings in Nature, history, and experience.

It is essentially a mystery of our own making, and therefore wholly artificial and arbitrary. It all arises out of the attributes, powers, and ideals we put into the term as its meaning.

EXCHANGE OF MYSTERIES.

The earlier "editions" of the idea were too true to the model—too man-like—to be accepted by a people of a more civilized age. They therefore set about to relieve it of its mysteriously divine savagery and barbarism, but succeeded only in replacing a lesser mystery by a greater one.

That is to say, the primitive crudity of the conception made direct for Atheism. So a process of refinement and idealization began; but then a new difficulty arose. The more intelligent and reflective of the educated class saw that though the image itself was more acceptable as a deity, yet it was incomparably more difficult, or indeed impossible, to harmonize the loftier attributes and powers with the record of actions and conduct attributed to him in his own inspired books, or with the operations and laws which obtain in the organic and physical worlds.

Such is the impossibility of effecting any reconciliation, when his character is idealized and powers magnified, that certain thinkers, like the late William James, have reverted to the idea of a finite and evolving God!

And of having one at all, the move is certainly in the right direction; for the nearer the conception is to primitive man in all his ignorance, caprice, and brutality, the easier it is to harmonize the conception with the gruesome, woeful story of sentient life.

If, however, the attenuating process is continued to its vanishing point, the mystery and its problems vanish with it. There is nothing left to reconcile. It is the only solution which mankind has hitherto found to the so-called mysteries of God, and I will hazard the prediction that it will never find another. Now the name of this solution is "Atheism." But as the Church preferred "the mystery of God" to the solution, they saturated the term with the most venomous odium so as to be used as a weapon of abuse and vilification. The reader will now, I trust, realize the subtle sophistry of using the term Atheism in reference to Nature—an object susceptible of neither doubt nor denial.

Next week I will exemplify the foregoing contention by reference to the Christian dogmas.

KERIDON.

The Freethought of Thomas Hardy.

It is significant that Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in *The Victorian Age in Literature*, should have distinguished himself by calling Thomas Hardy "a sort of village Atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." The phrase itself, of course, is merely an instance of the tendency of those who have no case to abuse the plaintiff's attorney. But Mr. Chesterton is not as a rule, on paper, at any rate, a bad-tempered man; and the fact that he singles out Mr. Hardy for abuse shows that he knows that, in him, he is up against a very formidable adversary of his creed. No two creeds could well be more antipathetic. Mr. Chesterton thinks the world on the whole is, in the words of Genesis, "very good," and only spoilt by a few tiresome Freethinkers, social reformers, Germans, Jews and the like who persist in forcing themselves on his attention. Mr. Hardy, on the other hand, thinks the world a manifest cockpit of pain and cruelty, which

intelligence and sympathy, under a terrific handicap, are trying to mitigate. There can be no doubt which is the more comfortable philosophy, and very little doubt which is nearer the truth. It will take more than the off-throwing of the buffoon of Beaconsfield to upset Mr. Hardy's reputation as an exponent of the ironic truth.

Mr. Hardy has given his view of life to the world implicitly in his novels and stories, explicitly in *The Dynasts*. In the Preface to the latter he openly signifies his adherence to the monistic theory of the universe; and in the play he presents the "immanent will," as set forth in theory by Schopenhauer, "working unconsciously eternal artistries in circumstance," without evident design or regard for happiness or woe, justice or injustice. In this system, human history is a blind play of tendencies or forces, resembling nerve-currents in the obscure brain of a monstrous organism. Whether fuller consciousness of itself will ever inform this organism with unity of purpose, is a question which hope can ask more easily than understanding can answer.

The distinction between judgments of fact and of value, between the intellect that discerns causes and tendencies, and the moral sense of sympathy that endorses or repudiates them, is vital to the thought of Hardy, as to that of every competent modern writer. In antique and in Christian thought, the admission that something was a law of nature, or "the will of God," carried a kind of implication that it was good and right. This fallacy persisted down to the eighteenth century, and it is to be met with still in slipshod thinkers. It is now recognized, however, that it is possible to describe actualities quite independently of any value or disvalue we may assign to them. The chief service of the pessimist school in philosophy, and the realist school in art and literature, have been to illustrate this truth. The greatest literary artist is able to put his ethical conceptions in the background, set forth the facts of life as they present themselves, and leave the moral to the judgment of his readers, which may or may not coincide with his own. This is the method of Zola and Anatole France, and it is also the method of Mr. Hardy. These writers are at no pains to portray heroes or villains in their novels. The *bête humaine* is usually capable of heroism under certain circumstances, and, on the other hand, there is a little of the villain in the composition of most heroes. This is the answer to those who complain that writers like France and Hardy write of "unpleasant" subjects and people. The fact is that people, on the whole, are unpleasant; every person, in his heart, knows this of himself or herself, and it is only insufficient acquaintance, coupled with politeness, that prevents our passing the same verdict on others generally. This is not incompatible with recognizing that they have their pleasant sides also; and no one who reads Hardy, instead of only reading about him, will deny that he gives this side as well. The main object, however, with good novelists is not to make people out pleasant or unpleasant, but to show them doing the sort of things they really do; whether the result is liable to be labelled "pessimism," should not affect the work.

If, then, we find the unsympathetic side of Hardy's characters much accentuated, it is because it is this side, unfortunately, which does actually assert itself in the real world of history and newspapers. Take his characters at random. Such men as Angel Clare—the man who, with all his refinement and enlightenment, cannot get away from the humbug of the "double standard" in sexual ethics, and lets his wife go to ruin on the strength of it; or Michael Henchard—the coarse and brutal, self-made "Mayor of Casterbridge"; such women as Bathsheba Everdene—a fickle coquette, exacting everything for nothing; or Arabella in *Jude the Obscure*—a

designing animal without any higher human trait; these are "unpleasant," but dare anyone say that they are not typical of large classes? It is in *Jude* that the episode comes, so characteristic of Hardy's irony, where the landlord doubts if his lodgers are properly married, till "by chance overhearing her one night haranguing Jude in rattling terms, and ultimately flinging a shoe at his head, he recognized the note of ordinary wedlock; and concluding that they must be respectable, said no more." Naturally, the ordinary critic calls this a cynical libel on marriage. Actually, it is no more than a necessary pinprick to the conventional fiction of Victorian optimism, which regards wedlock and felicity as synonymous, and marriage-bells as the necessary and natural conclusion of every well-written tale. Again, if Hardy's more sympathetic characters come to grief, as in the cases of Jude and Tess, it is because it was necessary in this respect also to protest against the "live-happy-ever-after" convention. If the novelist's object is to show life as it is, and not to supply romantic youth with pleasant dreams, or weary age with a narcotic, the idea that justice, poetic or otherwise, actually governs the world must be repudiated and dislodged by illustrating the contrary truth. It may be that Mr. Hardy occasionally goes beyond absolute probability in doing this. Personally I think, for example, that any modern Home Secretary would probably have reprieved Tess. But the strain on probability in such cases is independent of the framework of the story, e.g., if Tess had been sent to penal servitude, the point of the story would have been equally effective.

It is Hardy's attitude to Christianity that must especially interest readers of this journal. A criticism of Christianity is, of course, implied in the whole outlook of the novels as exemplified above. There are also, however, direct references to it in the various works. In *The Dynasts*, in depicting the coronation of Napoleon at Milan, we find the following:—

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES.

What is the creed that these rich rites disclose?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS.

A local thing called Christianity,
Which the wild dramas of the wheeling spheres
Include, with divers other such, in dim
Pathetical and brief parentheses,
Beyond whose span, uninfluenced, unconcerned,
The systems of the suns go sweeping on
With all their many-mortaled planet train
In mathematic roll unceasingly.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES.

I did not recognize it here, forsooth;
Though in its early, loving-kindly days
Of gracious purpose it was much to me.

Mr. Hardy's most terrific indictment of Christianity, however, is to be read in *Jude the Obscure*—not in any particular passage so much as in the book as a whole. No greater assault upon supernaturalism has ever been made in a novel. The whole work is set to the Lucretian note—"So great the evils to which religion could prompt!" The village boy Jude begins as a simple and serious believer, who thinks of Christminster (Oxford) as a city of light, and whose highest ambition is to be able to study there and to read the New Testament in Greek. This does not save him from being trapped into marriage with the unspeakable Arabella. After she has quarrelled with him and left him, he meets his cousin Sue Bridehead, who works as an artist in an ecclesiastical warehouse at Christminster, but who is, all the same, a Freethinker, a lover of Pagan art, and a reader of Swinburne. The rest of the book develops the history of their mutual relations. Jude's religious fervour is cooled by his failure to realize his ambition of studying at the university; he takes to drink, and recites the Nicene Creed in Latin for the amusement of the patrons of a public-house; and the seeds of scepticism are sown in him by

the Swinburne-loving Sue. The discussions between them are highly interesting:—

"Jude," she said brightly,..... "will you let me make you a *new* New Testament, like the one I made for myself at Christminster?"

"O yes. How was that made?"

"I altered my old one by cutting up all the Epistles and Gospels into separate *brochures*, and re-arranging them in chronological order as written, beginning the book with Romans, following on with the early Epistles, and putting the Gospels much further on. Then I had the volume rebound. My University friend, Mr. ———— but never mind his name, poor boy—said it was an excellent idea. I know that reading it afterwards made it twice as interesting as before, and twice as understandable."

"H'm," said Jude, with a sense of sacrilege.

"And what a literary enormity this is," she said, as she glanced into the pages of Solomon's Song. "I mean the synopsis at the head of each chapter, explaining away the real nature of that rhapsody. You needn't be alarmed: nobody claims inspiration for the chapter headings. Indeed, many divines treat them with contempt. It seems the drollest thing to think of the four and twenty elders, or bishops, or whatever number they were, sitting with long faces and writing down such misinformation."

Jude looked pained. "You are quite Voltairean" he murmured.

"Indeed? Then I won't say any more, except that people have no right to falsify the Bible! I *hate* such humbug as would attempt to plaster over with ecclesiastical abstractions such ecstatic, natural, human love as lies in that great and passionate song!"

Sue, however, contracts a mis-alliance with a middle-aged and orthodox schoolmaster, whom she does not love. They cannot get on, and she claims her liberty, to which he agrees. She goes to Jude; her husband divorces her; Jude also divorces his fugitive wife; and Jude and Sue should, by rights, have been free thenceforward to live their own lives in freedom and happiness. Circumstances, however, prevent their marrying, with the usual socially inconvenient results. The catastrophe comes when Jude's little son by his former wife kills Sue's two children and himself, leaving a piece of paper to say, "Done because we are too menny." This quite deranges Sue's mind; she loses her intellectual balance, and becomes religious after her convalescence.

"We must conform!" she said mournfully. "All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God."

Jude, her own convert to Freethought, reasons with her in vain. She gets it into her head that she must return to her former husband the schoolmaster; and at length, in violence to her natural instincts, she does so. Jude falls again into the toils of the odious Arabella, who by dint of drink and bullying induces him to re-marry her. Eventually she lets him die like a dog in a deserted lodging, worn out with illness, mental and physical, the curses of Job upon his lips, his life and Sue's both blasted by religion, with its restraint upon human liberty and happiness.

Those who have read *Jude the Obscure*, can judge best as to the accuracy of Mr. Chesterton's criticism of Mr. Hardy. "A sort of village Atheist, brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." If for common men and women to desire liberty and joy is "idiocy," if to describe their struggles is "brooding," if to indict the conventions and superstitions which fetter them is "blasphemy," this criticism is one of which Mr. Hardy can afford to be proud.

ROBERT ARCH.

Skeleton Sermons.

V.—St. Paul and Woman.

ST. PAUL was a good stump-speaker, and if he were alive to-day he would probably be Labour Minister for Education, or of the Public Works Committee; but he was a bit soured on women. Paul is responsible for getting the eternal and everlasting woman question a trifle more mixed than it was before, although he knew how to keep the fair ones good church-goers:—

But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one has if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

The right of self-interpretation which led to the greatest religious reformation the world has ever seen, is as free to one as another, and though "The Owl" does not claim to be a Biblical authority, he believes he can see in this text of St. Paul's a wisdom, a foresight, and a knowledge of feminine nature which proves the old evangelist to have been one of the astutest men who ever lived and preached. Paul looked ahead and saw the fashions coming, and he delivered that text out of his own head, so that no woman would ever be compelled by any dogma of the Churches, or any by-laws of the churchmen, to take off her new spring bonnet when she went to church on Sunday.

Now, supposing St. Paul had not laid it down in 1 Corinthians xi. 5, 6 that women were not to take off their hats in church, where would many of the Churches be to-day? Although praising the ladies for their devotedness to the House of Prayer, this remark does not apply to those of the "nobler" sex. The men come not, to any very great extent, but are only found dotted here and there—few and far between—like currants in a hot cross bun. This backwardness in coming forward to church is inexcusable, and inexplicable also. Why should man, who stands more in dire and desperate need of his soul's salvation, be so poorly represented at church on Sundays? Ask the first male offender in this respect that you meet, Why he doesn't go to church? and he will probably say, "Oh, hang it all, a busy man like me must rest one day a week, surely!" Then he goes off and hires a boat, and rows like a galley-slave to some favourite fishing-ground, where he catches a lot of whiskey and no fish, and returns at night too fatigued and tired to even speak.

"What shall I do in order to induce little boys to come to my Sunday-school?" That was the problem once put by a perplexed clergyman to a band of young urchins, and it was instantly solved by a budding bandit, who piped out, "Give 'em sixpence each, and let 'em kiss all the little girls!"

Evidently that trouble has spread to children of large growth, for one of the missionaries sadly said, "I fear heaven will be monopolized by women; and, consequently, I'll feel very lonely there. Hardly any men are found in the churches, but the seaside excursion boats are full of them."

(This was in the piping times of peace, before the War started; but now, with Conscription in the air, the men are absorbed elsewhere.)

Judging from that complaint, the depressing fact remains that many congregations are chiefly composed of bonnets and babies clouded o'er with flower-garden picture hats.

No doubt the majority of men think it sufficient to allow their wives and sisters and daughters, their female cousins and aunts, to represent them. So long as women have something on their heads for other women to look

at and criticize, the churches will be crowded—with petticoats. And well St. Paul knew this.

THE OWL.

Pernicious Pars.

An interesting case has recently been brought to our notice. It appears that on Sunday, April 9, an old lady removed her widow's weeds during Divine Service at St. Bluff's, and aroused the righteous anger of Mr. Looneybunn the verger, who, by the way, has always attended to the comfort of the congregation. It is stated that when the old lady removed her widow's weeds and bared her head, Mr. Looneybunn, whose faithful service in the House of God for sixty years has given him a very exact sense of what is right and proper in a sacred edifice, crept very slowly towards the old lady and, in a low voice, demanded that she should immediately replace her widow's weeds and cover her head. Every eye in the church was fixed with intense indignation upon the old lady, whose beautiful silver hair detracted attention from the Rev. Tommyrotte, who was preaching his famous sermon upon moral leprosy. It appears that the old lady immediately tottered out of the church, widow's weeds in hand; she brushed Mr. Looneybunn aside, and did not even drop a penny in the offertory-box. The case is without parallel.—*Church Conduct and Guide.*

A remarkable statement was made yesterday by Bishop Bosh, of Bilgetown. "I was," he says, "walking down the Strand wondering where on earth I was going to raise sufficient money for our proposed special meeting in aid of the Arsenal Anthems Society, when who should I meet but Jesus Christ! 'This is indeed fortunate,' I exclaimed, gripping his hand. Drawing him gently aside, I explained exactly how the funds stood, the object of our meeting, and the number of people expected. He thereupon promised me that he would himself fill the church on that particular night. I patted him upon the back, and went on my way rejoicing. Sure enough, on the following Monday evening, the church was filled, and all our expenses covered by the collection, which amounted to over one hundred pounds. After such an experience, who among us can say that Christ is not with us?.....We make no comment on the Bishop's story, it speaks for itself.—*Heavenly Hooter.*

Our special correspondent, Mr. Bluddymind, was yesterday invited to the Utopian College, where he inspected the new methods of educating young people in those things which really matter. Mr. Bluddymind was deeply impressed. Militarism is, no doubt, an evil thing; but only when its object is sheer forgetfulness. No one will deny this fact. National interests must at all costs be preserved, and to this end we must see to it that the young people are specially prepared for emergencies. Good soldiers must be at the disposal of the Government, and this is where the New Utopian College comes in. Young people are carefully trained in the peaceful crafts of war; they are initiated into the mysteries of machine-guns, bayonets, hand-grenades, swords, revolvers, poison gas, and wire entanglements. And, as our Mr. Bluddymind says, they thoroughly enjoy the various instructions. Good luck to the New Utopian College.—*Educational Euthanasia.*

ARTHUR F. THORN.

"Silent Workers" is a headline in the *Daily News*. It does not refer to the workers in the Lord's vineyard.

Over 200 Easter eggs were distributed at St. Mary Woolnoth Church. The custom is said to be about 800 years old. We hope the eggs were less ancient.

A leading article in a recent issue of the *Evening News*, London, was headed, "A German Hell." Is this the one the clergy mention so frequently in their sermons?

Acid Drops.

What a lot of people have claimed to have silenced Charles Bradlaugh on the platform! Charles Coborn, the well-known comic singer, in relating some of his experiences to a representative of the *Weekly Dispatch*, said that he once had "a duel of words" with Bradlaugh, and one of Bradlaugh's friends told him subsequently that the great Iconoclast remarked, "I was never put in a dilemma but once in my life, and that was by a music-hall comedian named Charles Coborn." Of course, someone *may* have said that to Mr. Coborn, but we should have imagined that he would have been quite familiar with the process known as pulling one's leg.

Refused exemption, a man has since joined the Christian ministry, Essex Appeal Tribunal was told, and is consequently exempt. "Blessed are the meek."

Religion appears to be booming in Kent. At Lamberhurst the Bishop of Rochester confirmed a white-haired grandfather and fifteen grandmothers. The age and sex of the candidates are expressive.

Curates are so scarce that at Bow a lay-reader has been employed. This is the unkindest cut of all. The ordinary Christian may try to reach heaven without clerical assistance.

When clergymen get cold feet they always "out-Herod Herod," and the religious newspapers cater for them. The *Church Times* draws a parallel between Martin Luther and present-day German diplomatists by saying "the disregard of solemn treaties as mere scraps of paper has its analogue in Luther's broken vows; the ruins of Louvain and Rheims and Ypres are of a piece with the havoc he made of the Catholic Church and Creed; the gross living of so many Germans of to-day is the reflection of his table-talk." Dear, Dear! That last touch about the eating of German sausages being due to Protestantism is almost enough to drive the Prussian Catholics to vegetarianism.

Miss Marie Corelli is usually supposed to be a very pious lady. Writing in the *Daily Chronicle* on the subject of woman's work in war-time, she said, "The curse of the Jew who wrote Genesis and swore to Eve 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow,' has been upon woman ever since the days when courteous old Abraham yoked her with his cattle and drove her with his sheep." This has been a commonplace on Freethought platforms for over a century.

Ordinary Christians are not so obsequious to the clergy as they were formerly. When a deputation, representing the Church League and the Free Church Council, attended before the Southend Corporation to protest against the serving of refreshments in Chalkwell Park on Sundays, Councillor Scott said, bluntly, that the deputation would be better occupied petitioning God to stop the War, than worrying about people drinking tea on Sundays. Councillor Newitt remarked that the deputation was composed of "strange bedfellows."

The belief, expressed by Mr. Hedderwick, the well-known magistrate, that "there is no more healthy place in this world than an English prison," is interesting. Perhaps that is the reason why sinners return again and again.

The following gem is taken from the *Daily Mail*: "What do you women think of all this? Women don't think; they wear petticoats!" How delightful! If skirts hamper the thinking powers, what brains priests must have.

"If we would come to a simpler standard of living and discard for ever the old love of comfort, a new Britain could save the world." This was the "inspiring Easter Message" of the Bishop of London, delivered at St. Paul's

Cathedral. It will not prevent the Bishops from using luxurious motors, or cause them to blush when they parade in expensive military uniforms.

Pastor Heyne, one of the Kaiser's Court preachers, has decided that he cannot, as a Christian and a German, join in united prayer with the Christian Churches of Britain. This is sad news—for the recording angel, or whoever it is that has to listen to record these prayers. He might have got the lot at one sitting. Now he will have to take them separately, to say nothing of them both praying at the same time, with the risk of their petitions getting mixed, or asking for quite irreconcilable favours. Anyway, German Christians and British Christians will not meet together in prayer. They will only meet to fight.

Pastor Heyne's reason for his decision is that "if there is to be common religious action there must be mutual veracity, and the British Christians are not veracious." This is exactly what the British clergy say of the German clergy, and it is not for us to contradict either. On the contrary, we agree with both; or, if an exception to the general truth is to be found, it is contained in the indictment itself. The clergy, as a whole, are not veracious. They cannot afford to be veracious. Their profession forbids it. We do not mean that they are untruthful in the sense that an ordinary man is untruthful when he tells or acts a falsehood. What we mean is that pulpit ethics sanction a form of untruthfulness, such as would receive censure in ordinary life. And of this the proofs are numerous and convincing.

The whole training of the clergy is such as to develop a disregard for accuracy and veracity. They are educated to accept, not to inquire. They are trained to instruct, not to convince. Their doctrines are not founded upon verifiable data, nor do they appeal to the reason of mankind for acceptance. An opponent is an enemy to be silenced at all costs, and in the treatment of outsiders, almost any course is held to be justifiable. Slanders and misrepresentations are winked at where the destruction of unbelievers is desired. There is no wonder that the clergy are notoriously careless of the truth. Theirs would not be normal human nature were it otherwise. Subjected to the same circumstances, doubtless others would act in the same way. It is a case of "There, but for the grace of God go I"—with training and environment substituted for "God."

A recently published book by J. W. Sibree on *A Naturalist in Madagascar*, mentions that copies of the Malagasy translation of the Bible have been boiled by the native diviners and the water sold "as a very powerful charm."

The *Weekly Dispatch* recently taunted English people with being afraid of bogies. The allegation is true as regards Christians, but the Spiritualists are very friendly with them.

"I see nothing incongruous in a music-hall artist taking a deep interest in Church matters," says Mr. Charles Coborn. We agree; for there are plenty of comedians in the pulpits.

The Bishop of Birmingham, who has been photographed in khaki, pleads for "universal national sacrifice" in the *Weekly Dispatch*. Let him begin with the clergy, of whom there are 50,000 in this country, many of whom excelled at sports in their college days.

"Let your light shine before men" is a good text, but it does not appeal to policemen. The Secretary of a Catford Baptist Chapel has been fined ten shillings for failing to shade the lights during a service.

Mr. Charles Coborn, the music-hall singer who years ago made such a hit with "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo," has been appointed a sidesman at St. Mark's Church, Kennington. Mr. Bottomley will have to look to his laurels.

The marriage of the Earl of Westmoreland to Miss Yeale has aroused much interest in Nonconformist circles, for it is stated that "no other case is known of the daughter of a Free Church minister becoming a peeress." The newspaper comment reveals the snobbishness of the Government religion.

Dr. Horton says that "that apologetic is barren which meets Rationalism with Rationalism." Don't his ministerial brethren know it, too!

The Rev. F. B. Meyer, like Silas Wegg, occasionally drops into poetry. Speaking at Christ Church, Westminster, he said, "The Dying Gladiator is not the symbol of Christianity." Brother Meyer is right. So many Christians are "too proud to fight."

Owing to earthquake shock, panic was caused at the Aquila Cathedral, Italy, and the preacher was thrown out of the pulpit. The congregation bolted, and camped out in the open. Obviously they did not realize that heaven was their home.

The Bishop of London wants to know how long we are to spend £190,000,000 annually on drink. A beginning in reform might be made by the substitution of raspberrade for communion port.

"Two Immortals. King Alfonso to King George," were headlines in a London paper. It sounds a little previous.

"In twenty years," says Mr. Pemberton Billing, "the aeroplane will bring about universal peace." If so, it will have done what Christianity has failed to do in 2,000 years.

The Dorking Urban Council has been presented by one of its previous members with a Bible and Prayer Book to guide it in its deliberations. If the members do read these contentious books, the results may be like Donnybrook Fair.

At a dinner given to Sir Herbert Tree in New York, one of the speakers referred to King Henry the Eighth as "the monarch who made marriage popular." Surely, King Solomon better deserved the compliment.

The *Daily Mail* has been girding at the "Intellectuals," who, it says, are "pitifully lacking in intelligence." Of course! They are far below the level of the ha'penny Christians who read the *Daily Mail*, *Comic Cuts*, and other crude publications.

Counsel in the High Court held that "a halo round the head removes a picture out of the category of portraiture." This is hard on the twelve disciples, and other Oriental ladies and gentlemen.

The goody-goody *Daily News* was unintentionally humorous in its leading article on the Tercentenary Celebrations on Shakespeare and Cervantes. It said, "There never was greater need of the tolerant, wise, good-humoured sermon, which with the profound wisdom, which is called supreme wit, they both preach." The Reverend William Shakespeare and Father Miguel Cervantes ought to be welcome additions to any clerical portrait gallery.

England will never be saved by Conscriptio, by munitions, by wealth. So says the Bishop of Chelmsford. Still, we are sure to be saved, because Germany has lost her soul, and we are finding ours. Now we can rest content. And as so many people are talking about a dictator, why not dismiss the Government and appoint one of the Bishops?

From the *Daily Chronicle* we learn that a question agitating Germany is, "Is Christ dead?" The agitation is, however, connected with a soldier of that name who has disappeared from his regiment, and not the stock character of the same name.

Special Propaganda Fund.

THE many letters received in connection with this Fund have quite removed any compunction about appealing for money so soon after the close of the Memorial Fund. These communications have been of the most encouraging and personally flattering character, thanking me for my efforts in both keeping the *Freethinker* going under very difficult circumstances, and for my activity in the lecturing field during the past winter. At present I do no more than gratefully acknowledge their receipt; only remarking that they encourage me to go forward in the knowledge that I possess the full confidence of the Freethought Party. It will not be my fault if I do not maintain this to the end.

It will save a lot of explanation as to the reason for this Fund if I reprint the offer made:—

I hereby offer to give to the Freethought Cause, through Chapman Cohen, to be expended as his judgment approves, such sum of money, not in excess of two hundred pounds sterling, as may equal the sum of those donations which shall be actually in the possession of Chapman Cohen, which shall have been given as a result of this offer; said sums to be used in the same way. Mr. Cohen's written statement of the amount due under this offer, dated and signed, to be written on the back of this paper; on receipt of it I will at once remit draft for the amount.

I had imagined that this offer, together with my article last week, was sufficiently plain to prevent any misunderstanding. But at a meeting of the N. S. S. Executive the other evening, some members propounded the theory that as I was a member of the Executive I had no right whatever to appeal for funds except through the Executive, and that some would subscribe under the impression they were giving to the Executive. With regard to the first point it is quite clear that any member of the Executive has a full right to raise money for any work in which he happens to be interested. And, as a matter of fact, I had no choice in the matter. The £200 was offered me on condition that it was spent as my judgment approved, and that I raised another £200, "such sums to be used in the same way." I had either to reject this offer, and so lose the whole sum to the Cause, or accept it. I fancy every well-wisher to the Cause will say I did right in accepting it.

With reference to the second point, I do not see how any person in the possession of his or her senses could imagine that in giving to this Fund they were handing money over to the Executive. If any have given under that impression I shall be very pleased to return it. But I ought, in justice to myself, to say that on March 30, before any appeal was made, I mentioned to the Executive that I hoped to shortly have money at my disposal for propaganda work, and some of this would be at the direct control of the Executive. I also promised to find money for any work which the Executive cared to undertake—an offer which I had made on previous occasions, in order to inspire them to greater activity.

I also guarded against complaints as to individual administration of funds by laying the matter before Mr. Lloyd, whose name is a guarantee, if any were needed, of the right use of the money, and inviting his co-operation. To this he cheerfully assented. I must point out that this was a quite voluntary act on my part, but I desired to run the thing on what I considered the right lines.

Having behaved in this quite frank manner, I thought I had guarded against misapprehension. I believe I have, except for deliberate misrepresentations, and against these no guard can be so effective as to prevent

their being made. But to make assurance doubly sure, I would point out:—

1. The Fund, when completed, will be used in the furthering of the work of Branches of the National Secular Society throughout the country, for the opening of new Branches, and for the encouragement of Freethought work wherever opportunity offers.
2. The whole of the Fund will be administered by a committee composed of myself, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and one or two others. This has been arranged because I have a lively sense of the possible activity of malicious tongues, and because, on general principles, I object to the personal administration of public funds, except where no other course is possible. I trust that the existence of this committee will be considered adequate to guarantee the right disposition of the Fund.
3. As the intending donor saw fit to make his unsolicited offer through me, I am not making this appeal on behalf of the National Secular Society, although the Fund will be expended in the advocacy of those principles for which the Society exists. If Freethinkers elect to complete this Fund, knowing its purposes and constitution, well and good. If they would prefer that their help be given direct to the N. S. S., that is also well. My sole desire is that the work of Freethought shall go forward.

There is no need to say much more this week. I hope that the Fund will reach the desired sum by the end of May, and I feel certain that the results will be beneficial to the Freethought Cause. There are endless opportunities for work, and in some respects these opportunities are better now than before the War. There are many old centres of activity that might be strengthened by the expenditure of a few pounds, and many new places that might be opened. The whole of the West of England and South Wales is, for example, ripe for a strong forward movement. The North, too, sadly needs attention. Around such a centre as Birmingham there are a number of towns—Dudley, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Coventry, etc., in each of which there ought to be a strong and active Branch established. I have done a little during the winter to awaken interest in a number of places, but the little done has only made me the more conscious of how much remains to be accomplished.

Above all, I cannot get from my mind the situation that will arise at the end of the War. I feel certain that we shall have then to fight the forces of reaction, determined to make the most of a period of disorganization. It will be well for us to make preparations while we may, and to see that these preparations are effective.

Below will be found a list to date towards the £200 required to secure the additional £200. It will be seen that only another £60 is required, and I am sure there are several thousand *Freethinker* readers who will see this is obtained. Every sovereign given to this Fund counts two on the grand total:—

Previously acknowledged, £104 12s.—S. Gimson, £10; J. Partridge, 10s.; R. Wood, 10s.; G. R. Harper, 10s.; H. Tucker, £2 2s.; A. D. Corrick, £1; H. C. S., 6d.; V. Massey Crone, £2 10s.; F. G. Griffiths, M.D., £1; J. Willey, 10s.; "Disgusted," £5; Sergt. W. R. Snell, £1 1s.; S. Clowes, 2s. 6d.; R. H. Side, £2; E. D. Side, £2; J. Shields, £1 1s.; J. Witherby, £1 1s.; W. R. Munton, £4; J. B. Palphryman, 10s.; J. Barton, 10s.—Total, £140 10s.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Mr. C. Cohen's Engagements.

To Correspondents.

V. P. (Plymouth) writes expressing his gratification of the Special Shakespeare Number, and informs us that he is taking extra copies weekly in order to secure new readers through their distribution. He adds, "I would like to tell you that I am more than pleased with your conduct of the little journal, and I have great hopes for its future." So have we, and it will not be our fault if that future fails to arrive. But we appreciate this testimony from an old and loyal friend of the Cause. Thanks, also, for friend's subscription and your own. As you say, "the idea has caught on." It is a gratifying evidence that when work is to be done, the means will not be wanting.

J. C. (Aberdeen).—You appear to have effectively stirred up the pious in your locality. Keep at it by all means.

R. C. YOUNG.—Thanks for cutting. We have delivered your message as requested.

F. J. ARCHER.—Of course we agree that every reader should do all in his power to increase the circulation of the *Freethinker*, and we are glad to say that many are working well in that direction. You are showing your appreciation of our work in the way we like best.

C. S.—See if a hall is obtainable, and Mr. Cohen will soon find a date on which to pay you a visit.

A. D. CORRICK, in sending subscription to the Propaganda Fund, says:—"All honour to the gentleman who has offered the substantial donation to the Freethought movement, and I only wish I could do the same or more. It now remains for Freethinkers to rise to the occasion. I enclose my subscription in the form of a £1 note, and trust the £200 will be far exceeded."

B. EVANS.—We are obliged for the fight you have made with the Library Committee on the question of the *Freethinker*. Constant vigilance is necessary. Mr. Cohen will be quite willing to revisit your district whenever arrangements can be made.

H. C. S.—Your offer to pay 26s. yearly to a *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund is one that we fully appreciate, but we have no intention of resorting to a fund of that kind yet. When it becomes necessary, we feel quite sure that our readers will give all the support necessary. You will see that we have placed your subscription to the credit of the Propaganda Fund, and we beg to say that none we have received has given us greater pleasure. The story of the widow's mite is one of the few human touches in the New Testament that we have always appreciated.

J. BREEZE.—Sorry that pressure of work did not allow our joining in the correspondence.

R. H. E. (Canada).—Remittance received with thanks. To your opinion that what we have done "under adverse circumstances makes one confident that you will be able to accomplish, under favourable circumstances, much more than has ever been accomplished before," we can only add that such expressions of confidence encourages us to try. No one can do more.

"DISGUSTED."—We are not surprised at your *nom de plume*. Raising your intended subscription of £2 to £5 is an emphatic and pleasant way of expressing your feelings.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss F. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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

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

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

We regret that our readers will not find an article from Mr. Lloyd's pen in this week's issue. This is through no fault of Mr. Lloyd's nor ours. It is entirely due to the vagaries of the Post Office. His article was written and posted in due course, but it did not reach this office. And as Mr. Lloyd was away in the provinces, there was no time to reach him, so that he might have written a second article for this issue.

In spite of the sudden burst of warm weather, the first of the two lectures at South Place Institute on Sunday last was a complete success from every point of view. The audience was a large one, the address was freely punctuated with laughter and applause, and was "alive" from beginning to end. The experiment proved that we were right in believing that London lecturing had been too long neglected, and quite justified our assuming responsibility for these meetings at a time when responsibilities ought not to be lightly incurred. Mr. A. B. Moss gave the meeting exactly the right note in his brief introductory speech as chairman, and that is a point of no small importance to the success of a public meeting.

The second of the South Place lectures will be delivered this evening (May 7) by Mr. J. T. Lloyd. His subject, "Heroes of Our Faith," being a most attractive one, we hope London Freethinkers will see that the hall is crowded. Mr. Lloyd has hosts of friends in London, and if they all come, we are afraid he will have to hold an overflow meeting. Mr. Cohen has a Sunday evening off, and has promised to take the chair. It is a case of a "busman's holiday," but he could not put a spare evening to a better use.

Several subscribers to the Propaganda Fund have written saying that they would prefer to have seen a *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund in its place. Presumably they are afraid that something may happen to the paper in these stressful times. Their concern is encouraging, but we can assure them the paper is in no danger. We do not mean by this that there is no cause for anxiety; it would be misleading to imply that. With so many papers dying, and with others like the *Clarion*, raising £2,000, and the *Christian Commonwealth* £1,000, as Sustentation Funds, it would be strange if the *Freethinker* did not feel the pressure. When we took over the paper, as Editor, we assumed responsibility for a concern without capital, and with the prices of everything rising by leaps and bounds; naturally, therefore, the time has been an anxious one; and we may say without conceit it has been no small achievement to keep the paper alive under such conditions. We can, however, assure all well-wishers that there is no cause for immediate alarm. Eventually—perhaps at the year's end—we hope to make a full statement on the subject. But the history will not be nearly so thrilling as the experience.

Mr. Cecil Chesterton sends us a letter dealing with our republication of Ingersoll's comments on whiskey, in which he says:—

Your first three "Acid Drops" this week possess a peculiar interest for me, because I have for some time entertained a suspicion that Ingersoll was a humbug. I assure you that this suspicion has nothing whatever to do with religion; for I know that Bradlaugh was not a humbug, nor was the late Mr. Foote, nor, I believe, are you.....The rhetoric about whiskey in the first passage which you quote is not much to my taste as rhetoric.....but the main point is that, according to your quotation, it is clear that Ingersoll sent whiskey to a friend accompanied by these encomiums. With that I should be the last to quarrel; it is quite the sort of thing I should like to do myself. But I hope that I should not subsequently "in my serious mood" say of the substance which I had thus recommended and invited another man to consume that "I believe that from the time it issues from the cooled and poisonous worm of the distillery, until it empties into the hell of crime, dishonour, and death, that it demoralizes everybody who touches it," etc.

Mr. Chesterton's proof of hypocrisy strikes us as slender, and we doubt if he would count it as worth much in the case of any other person than a well-known Freethinker. A fanciful eulogy on a bottle of whiskey sent to a friend, and a serious denunciation of the evils that accompany the abuse of whiskey-drinking, are distinct things. Ingersoll never intended that the first should be taken literally—and said so. His real error lay in his forgetting that a Freethinker who does not use the language of a mathematical proposition, is always exposed to attack from those religious persons who are ready to see proofs of moral turpitude in expressions which, used by pietists, would be passed by without comment.

Mr. Chesterton also has in the *New Witness* a lengthy essay dealing with Mr. Cohen's article on "Shakespeare and Jesus." Mr. Cohen did not see this in time to reply to it in this issue of the *Freethinker*, but he will deal with it next week.

Now that Easter is over it is time that Members and Branches of the N. S. S. began to busy themselves with the Annual Conference. It will be held in London this year, and it is important that there should be a good attendance of members and delegates. There will be many important topics for consideration, and there is every need for every member of the N. S. S. doing all that he or she can if the Society is to do in an efficient manner the work for which it exists. There will, of course, be the usual evening demonstration, and as Freethought meetings in halls have been scarce in London of late, this should be a good one.

The War has been a drain upon societies of all kinds, in the taking of so many men for military service. Naturally, the National Secular Society's propaganda has felt this, and at present the approach of the open-air lecturing season has revealed a shortage of chairmen. Chairmanship of an open-air meeting is a post that is more important than it looks, and in addition it offers opportunities for exercise in public speaking that are not to be despised; or probably some of the older men who have been resting on their laurels may care to lend a hand. Will those who have the time and the inclination to act as chairmen of these open-air stations be good enough to forward their names to the General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance? She will be able to tell them where they will be most useful.

We are pleased to see that a number of correspondents have protested vigorously, in the *Birmingham Weekly Gazette*, against the treatment of Freethinkers by the local Military Service Tribunals. We are also glad that these protesters are keeping the issue quite clear—which is, not whether a man ought to be able to plead "conscientious objection," or whether his objection is a genuine one, but against a Tribunal ruling that, being a Freethinker, the possession of a conscience is impossible. Whatever the value of a conscientious objection, it should be the same for both Christian and Freethinker. We suggest that one moral of the whole business is the need for making more Freethinkers. Where religion is concerned, Christians seldom deal fairly by Freethinkers until they are brought under the Compulsion (Public Opinion) Act.

The Annual Meeting of the Rationalist Peace Society takes place at Durham House, John Street, Adelphi, W.C., on Thursday, May 11, at 6.30. The chair will be taken by Mr. J. M. Robertson, the President of the Society. The Rationalist Peace Society was formed some years back to provide means of co-operation with those who do not care to see the question of peace between nations associated with religious beliefs in such a manner that the public is led to believe that one cannot exist apart from the other. We hope that all Freethinkers will give such a movement the support it deserves.

Want of space compels us to hold over until next week a rather long letter from the Hon. Bertrand Russell on the question of conscientious objectors.

Who Made the Gods?—II.

*A Lecture delivered in Chicago by M. M. Mangasarian.
(Continued from p. 285.)*

If more proofs were needed to show that the gods are the property of man because he has spent labour on them—made them, named them, and supported them, we could cite also the fact that man *remakes* his gods from time to time. We repair our gods as we repair the houses we live in. The early man lived in a cave because that was the only home he could build for himself. In those days his gods were as crude as the hole in the ground which he called home. Why did not the savage build himself a modern apartment, with bathrooms, provided with hot and cold water—and parlours and a library? He was not advanced enough. For the same reason, his god was a stone or a tree or a cow. But, as he developed, he introduced improvements into his hut or cottage; and, as he enlarged his house and improved its equipment and furniture, he improved his gods. It is very curious to observe that a man remodels his gods just as he remodels his house. If his house is small, he enlarges it. If it is old-fashioned, he brings it "up-to-date;" and if the house he lives in is inadequate for his needs, he changes it. He takes precisely the same liberties with his gods. If they are narrow, he broadens them; if they are intolerant, he makes them more generous; if they are ancient, he imparts modern ideas to them; if they are clannish or tribal, he universalizes them; and, finally, if they no longer answer his needs, he changes them. When a Mohammedan or a Chinaman becomes a Christian, or an Englishman becomes a Buddhist, he changes his god—just as a man changes his house or his country.

At the book-store I asked for a Bible. "Do you want the Old or the Revised Version?" the salesman asked me. Ah, they have got two Bibles! Is not that a proof that the Word of God is the work of man? Just as man remodels or repairs his other properties, he revises his Bibles—adds to them, takes away from them and rewrites many of its passages. Why did he not have a Revised Bible in the first place? For the same reason that he did not start with a modern dwelling for a home. He was not able to write one before. Man started with such gods and bibles as he could produce, improving both as he advanced in knowledge. But we never think of repairing planets, for example, because we are not planet makers. What we have not made we cannot remake. We repair our temples, we revise our bibles, we enlarge our gods, because what we made we can remake. But we did not make the sun, and, therefore, we cannot remake it.

One of the New Theology ideas is that revelation is progressive. According to this teaching, God reveals as much of himself as we can understand to-day. Later on, he reveals more of himself, because we are prepared to understand him better. "God does not change," say the liberal theologians; "it is we that improve." This is the prevailing argument to-day in all the so-called advanced pulpits. God did not make as much of himself known to the savage as he has to us, because the savage would not have been able to grasp the fuller revelation. That is why, they contend, the god of the savage looks different from the god of the civilized man, although they are both the same being. This argument is not sound. Suppose we wanted to explain the doctrine of evolution to a child, as much, of course, as the child could understand. Would we begin by telling him solemnly and on our oath that the universe was created by miracle, and all in the space of a few days? Is that the way to begin a course on evolution? Or

suppose we wanted to teach the savage that God is love, must we begin by telling him that God is jealous and cruel—that he is a sectarian, or a hater of all except those who belong to a certain tribe? Do instructors in mathematics begin by teaching their pupils that twice two make three? Do instructors in morality begin by setting an example of immorality? Is the best way to teach truthfulness by telling a lie? On the supposition that man makes his own gods, it is perfectly intelligible why the gods of the savage were clumsy and crude, like his cave or tools. But, on the theory that God made man and revealed himself gradually to him, it is inconceivable that he should reveal himself as made of clay or carved wood to one, and as a tree or a cow to another, and as a spirit to still another, all living about the same time, and to people on the same level of civilization. The American Indian, for example, believed in a Great Spirit about the same time that his fellow savages worshipped an onion. And does not a Catholic priest make his God out of bread and eat it?

But why did man make gods for himself? There are many answers to that question. First, he made gods for company. The human creature was quite lonesome in the early stages of evolution. Like Adam in Eden, he suffered from what the French call *ennui*. He was bored. Man is a gregarious animal, he is fond of society, and, if I may be permitted the phrase, he is not only fond of society, but the more "swell" the society the better he is pleased with it. That is why he made himself gods with big names and great pedigrees. He not only called on his gods, but they also called on him in his tent. They exchanged visits, they interchanged presents, they made covenants and treaties, they corresponded, they sent messengers to one another, they swore allegiance to one another, and now and then they quarrelled and then "made up" again. All of which proves how indispensable to man is society. When man is alone, he imagines he has company, and he personifies the forces of nature that he may talk to them. Just as a child makes dolls to keep house with, or to play with, or to quarrel with, the primitive man made gods to keep him company.

But, as I have already intimated, his gods, by their title and importance, helped also to give him distinction. It pleased the pride and *amour propre* of the primitive man to say to himself and to his neighbour: "Yesterday, God So-and-so called on me," or "He met me at the crossing of the road," or "in the bush," or "He supped with me and my family at the tent." We read in the Bible that the gods visited Abraham and ate a meal with him, and what is true of the Jews is true of other primitive races. Moreover, this pretended intercourse with the gods enabled the clever ones among them to lord it over their fellows: "I am on good terms with the gods!" said the shrewd savage to his less alert followers. And that was the beginning of the long line of chiefs and kings and emperors "by the grace of God." We have fewer gods to-day than formerly, because we have more company, and we do not have to put on airs by claiming ourselves related to the gods as the kings of old did, because we live in a democracy. When the king becomes a president, Jesus becomes a brother, and a brother-god is not very much of a god, even as a citizen president is a servant rather than a sovereign.

Again, man made gods because he was lazy. He made the gods to work for him. He made such gods as would be willing to shed their blood for him, even to die for him. He made gods who would stay awake while he slept, so that no harm would come to him—in fact, his gods never close their eyes. They are ever on duty. They watch over man night and day. The fact that man made gods who never sleep shows that self-

preservation was the motive which prompted him. He was not thinking of the comfort and the welfare of his gods, but of his own safety; that is why his gods never sleep. Again, he made gods who *reveal* the truth to him without any effort on his part. He made gods who reveal things to him so he would not have to study. In the same way his gods fight for him, die for him, or send food from on high, and carry him in their arms. But more remarkable than all this is the fact that man made such gods as would be willing to be punished in his stead. Is not that remarkable? The gods he worships are those who are willing to be scourged and spat upon and crucified for *his* sins. Stranger than this even is the fact that man made such gods as would consent to practice the virtues in his place. It is too much of an effort for man to be righteous, hence he makes gods who will be righteous for him. The gods who say to man: "You stand still, we will fight for you," and "Do not try to save yourselves, we will save you," are the gods to whom man will build temples and upon whose altars he will burn incense. Man is too lazy to save himself, that is why he has invented saviours. The majority of the people whether religiously, politically, or economically, demand to be saved. Their cry is "Save us!" They will mob the man who says to them, "Save yourselves!" Why are there such great multitudes in the Catholic and the Protestant Churches? Because in those churches people do not have to save themselves—they have a saviour. These multitudes do not come to our Society because here we have no saviour; here we have to save ourselves. That is why the lazy take no interest in Rationalism, because a Rationalist must be his own saviour. Who made the gods? The lazy man; and laziness is a most deeply rooted and universal failing of human nature. It is the lash upon our backs which makes us work. It is the fear of poverty that reconciles us to toil. It is the fear of sickness and death that makes us observe the laws of health. If there is more ignorance than knowledge in the world it is because knowledge is acquired through labour and the majority of people shun labour.

Once more, a god is a wish. You cannot prevent a man from wishing. He has many wishes, big and small, and his wishes change. What is true of his wishes is true of his gods. Why was the tree or the cow divine at one time? They satisfied the wish for food. Man wished for food and he had food gods. He wished for rain and he had a rain god. He wished for fire and he made a fire god. He wanted victory over his enemies and he made a god of battles. He wanted wealth and he created Pluto. He wanted pleasure and he made Bacchus and Venus. He wanted a safe passage across the sea and he created Neptune to care for him when he was sailing. A god is a wish. In the same way man wanted his enemy damned and he made the Devil to accommodate him. All the wishes of primitive man were gods. The savage had no science and could not hope to gratify his wants except by a miracle, which fact explains his magical divinities, who were invented to grant him his wishes.

And do you know why a poor man or a sick man, as a rule, is more devout than a man who is well or rich? His wishes are more pressing. A hungry man must have food immediately, hence his prayers are more frequent, more insistent—louder. A sick man craves for health, hence his offerings to the gods, his promises of devotion to their cause are more generous and earnest. We do not appreciate health or liberty fully until we have been deprived of them. People whose wishes are satisfied are not apt to be very religious. The reason a poor country is more religious is because of the many unfulfilled wishes of the people. Hard times are very

favourable for revivals, because the distress and deprivations of the people intensify their wishes. In time of war or a plague the Churches are crowded many times a day, because of the urgency of the wish to be delivered from the disaster. There were more gods formerly because fewer of the needs of man were supplied, and that explains also why people are more devout in poorer countries. When Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven," he did not realize, perhaps, the psychological reason for it. The rich man is satisfied, he has no pressing wishes, he is not pursued by danger; while the poor man must be heard now and immediately, else he will perish. Poverty and sickness are the two great allies of the gods. As the people prosper, as they conquer health and riches, the Church audiences dwindle in size and enthusiasm. Where there are many churches be sure there is also great poverty or suffering; that is to say, many unfulfilled wishes.

And is not the attitude of the worshipper—with clasped hands at the altar, and on his knees—his head bowed, his voice tremulous with emotion, the tears running down his cheeks—that of one expressing a wish? And his language, "Please, Lord," and "We beseech of thee, good Lord," shows that it is the wish which creates and peoples the spaces with gods to do the will of man. Curious as it may sound, the gods who answer our prayers are not so popular as those that do not. The gods who are angry, or who afflict man severely, have more earnest votaries than the milder gods. This is quite in keeping with the statement that it is the unfulfilled wish that makes us devout. After we get what we want we are apt to become independent, indifferent sceptical, or even rebellious. But as long as our prayers remain unanswered, and our wishes unfulfilled, we remain on our knees. The gods who answer all prayers soon lose their worshippers. As the preachers say, "It is hard times"—that is to say, calamity, disaster, floods, cyclones, and earthquakes—which make us remember our Creator.

(To be concluded.)

Jehovah was a Merry God.

JEHOVAH was a merry god,
Who never shed a tear;
And yet he was a sorry god,
And bungled his career.

He made a world—it took a week
To bake it and to brown it;
But when the world gave him cheek,
It took a month to drown it!

He made a world out of his head,
With birds and beasts and fishes;
But Mrs. God she up and said,
"And *who's* to wash the dishes?"

Seven days of dirty mess,
And seven nights of litter;
Besides a week of restlessness!
Jehovah, I'm a quitter."

"Now, calm yourself," her husband cried;
"Just leave this job to me."
But Mrs. God sat down and sighed;
She knew how things would be.

Jehovah said, "Now, here's a plan
I'll go into the study
And *think*, until I think—a man,
Middling, muddling, muddy.

His dust shall be of flesh and bone,
And one thing and another;
And as he could not live alone,
I'll think for him—a mother."

Mrs. God made such a noise;
"Great Scot, you beat the band!
Mothers come *before* their boys
In any Christian land."

"There's sense," said God, "in what you say,
We must be true to life;
His mother I will think away,
And think instead—a *wife*."

Mrs. God lay back and sighed;
"I think your brains are blisters!
The neighbours they will think you're daft,
Unless you start with *sisters*."

"My dear," said God, "What's in a name?
Mothers? Sisters? Wives?
Three in One, they're all the same;
Crutches for men's lives.

The point is, I will think a man,
And think for him three wishes;
Mother—Sister—Wife (in one),
And she shall wash the dishes."

Mrs. God just smiled—like that—
And stared upon the ground;
And then she yawned, and said, "My Hat,
It is a long way round!"

F. L. B. G.

Correspondence.

WOMEN AND FREEMASONRY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In a recent issue of the *Freethinker* an article written by Mr. Trebells, entitled "Religion in America," states that women are admitted in the Masonic Lodge.

I would like to correct that statement, as no women are ever allowed to learn the secrets of F. and A. M.

A lodge called "The Eastern Star," the members being made up of women, is a sort of sister lodge, that is, in a narrow sense of the word.

LEONARD L. BROOME.

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment, which are in a manner *peculiar* to myself.....Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter, more than the rest of the year.....there is something even in the—

Mighty tempest, and the hoary waste
Abrupt and deep, stretched o'er the buried earth

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to everything great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of the wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and roaring over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him* who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, "walks on the wings of the wind."—Burns, "MS. to Mr. Riddel."

TAG-END OF A DISCUSSION.

Atheist: Well now, you have failed to prove the existence of your God.

Preacher: I can prove his existence and presence in all things, but you *will* not see him.

Atheist: O, you *can't*.

Preacher: To all who say I *can't*, I say I can.

Atheist: Now you are right.

War-time economy is spreading rapidly. A provincial rector has been advertising for an "organist-chauffeur." We hope the salary is commensurate with the double duty.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

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INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE: 6.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Heroes of Our Faith."

OUTDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park); 5.30, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, E. Dales, a Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller, "Relics"; 3.15, Messrs. Kells and Dales, "Quack Remedies"; 6.30, Messrs. Hyatt, Cutner, and Kennedy.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, Miss K. B. Kough, a Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK N. S. S.: 3.15, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station): 6.45, E. Burke, "Christianity and the Spirit of War."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

FAILSWORTH (Secular Schools, Pole Lane); Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, 2.45, "John Huss: the 500th Anniversary of His Martyrdom"; 6.30, "Belief, Makebelief, and Unbelief."

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