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THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL AND FREE SPEECH.

For nearly two years we have been warning the Free-thought Party, and incidentally everyone interested in reform movements, to be prepared for reaction as one of the consequences of the European War. At such a time popular liberty is of necessity curtailed, and people submit with as good grace as they can muster. But reaction grows rapacious with opportunity. Where so much is done in the name of national interest, a little more may be accomplished, and there exists a class to whom freedom of speech and freedom of publication are never anything better than hateful necessities. The upshot of this is that the danger of which we spoke has manifested itself earlier than was anticipated. Free-thought in London—and by Free-thought we mean, for the moment the propaganda of all advanced opinion—is threatened with the destruction of one of the oldest of its liberties.

It is well known that some members of the London County Council have always regarded with disapproval the right of public meeting enjoyed in the London Parks. It has not been found possible to suppress this, but attempts have been made to restrict it, and to cripple the propaganda of advanced opinion. A move in this direction was made several years ago. It was known that many struggling societies had no other means of gaining the financial support necessary to their work save by collections made at the meetings. So a start was made by a decree that before a collection was made permission must be obtained from the Council. The ostensible reason for this was to prevent the Parks being used by private adventurers. Then quite suddenly—in 1912—it was decided that no more permits should be issued. The purpose of this was so obvious that the National Secular Society resolved to fight the question. Collections were made in defiance of the Council, with the result that about twenty summonses were served on members of the N. S. S. Only one—that against Miss Vance—was heard, the rest being held over by agreement. Eventually, as a consequence of the agitation aroused, and because it was known that the N. S. S. intended carrying the matter to the High Courts if necessary, the Council gave way, and permits for collections were issued as hitherto.

Now a new attempt at crippling popular propaganda is being made. The sale of literature has never yet been interfered with in the public parks. It existed before the London County Council came into being; it has continued right through the Council's existence. The only modification of the existing liberty was made in the bye-law stipulating that a permit to sell literature must be obtained, such sale must be confined to the

sites on which public meetings are held, and that copies of the publications to be sold must be submitted to the Council.

It will be seen that the Council had by this bye-law not only established every reasonable precaution against visitors to the parks being annoyed by solicitations to purchase, but, by demanding copies of the publications, actually made itself responsible for the character of the things sold.

But even these precautions did not satisfy the reactionaries of the London County Council. The other day Miss Vance called my attention to a newspaper paragraph stating that the sale of literature was to be prohibited altogether in the London Parks. Inquiry elicited the information that at the Council's meeting on May 30 the following resolution was adopted, on the recommendation of the Parks Committee:—

That the existing permits to sell literature at certain parks and open spaces under the control of the Council be determined as from 30th September, 1916, and that no further permits be issued as from that date.

So far as I am aware, it is not suggested that the existing permits had been abused, or that the societies responsible for the meetings held had not loyally kept their undertakings. The only reasons given by the Parks Committee were that:—

For some time past we have entertained doubts as to the necessity for allowing the sale of literature, even to this limited extent (*i.e.*, the extent indicated by the permits), as there are such ample facilities for obtaining books and other forms of literature elsewhere, and we cannot eliminate the possibility of the parks being utilized for the purpose of private gain or profit.

I have no hesitation in saying that a more contemptible justification for the destruction of a public liberty was never offered. Putting on one side the fact that all publications representing advanced opinion are more or less subject to boycott, I submit it is no business whatever of the Council whether this literature can be obtained elsewhere or not. It is solely a question of exercising a right that has always existed, and which has never yet been called into question. As to private profit, the Council itself, by granting permits to societies only, had taken every precaution against this being the case. As well close the parks altogether because the Council cannot eliminate the possibility of murder being committed.

Let me say at once, and with all deliberation, that I do not believe for a moment that these are the real reasons for the Council's action. The true grounds of the Council's decision, I firmly believe, is the opportunity

seen by the reactionaries on that body to work their will at a time when curtailments of popular freedom are considered necessary for the successful conduct of a great war. How far these gentlemen will succeed in their endeavour remains to be seen.

For the moment I am confining myself to the barest outline of the facts, in order that the public may be informed as to what is taking place. The immediate question is, "What is to be done in order to defeat this latest attack on freedom of speech?" For let us be under no delusion on this point. Freedom of speech and freedom of publication go together, and to prohibit the sale of literature is to strike a blow at one of the most important means of ventilating opinion. It concerns all propagandist societies alike, and I sincerely hope that all will realize this. Differences of opinion should not stand in the way of united action on a question of the importance of this one. I hope the opposition will be prompt enough, general enough, and united enough to force the Council to reconsider its action.

Of one thing I am certain. The National Secular Society will never submit tamely to a regulation of this kind. So far as the Council desires to maintain order and decorum in the parks, we are on its side. So far as it seeks to restrict the use of its public spaces to the genuine advocacy of opinion, we are also with it. But we cannot and we ought not to tamely submit to a regulation that is uncalled for, and is a tyrannical abuse of authority. I think I may safely say that Freethought literature will continue to be sold in the parks—I hope with the consent of the Council, but it will continue to be sold. After the N. S. S. Conference, when the Executive of that body meets, this ought to be one of the first matters with which it should deal.

Meanwhile, I suggest to Freethinkers and other lovers of liberty all over London that they should get to work without delay. Time is precious, and none should be lost. Write or interview your representatives on the Council at once. See that they realize all that such a resolution involves, and that the protest against it is likely to be wide and vigorous. The County Council is an elected body, and there are ways of bringing such a body to book. Wherever meetings are held—Labour meetings, Trades Union meetings, even Christian meetings—see that a resolution condemning the action of the County Council is proposed and carried. The fight is theirs as well as ours, and all should lend their assistance. And see that the Council know what has been done. To-day it is the sale of literature that is to be prohibited. To-morrow it may be the abolition of meetings that will be proposed. We may be quite sure that a success here will inspire to further efforts elsewhere. Give reaction an inch, and it demands an ell.

So far as the N. S. S. is concerned, it will, I feel sure, gladly welcome the co-operation of any and every organization. But whether it gets that co-operation or not, it will carry the question to an issue. After all, a bye-law of the London County Council is only a bye-law, and it may be necessary to teach the Council that it is *not* the ultimate authority even in the public parks. Theirs is a public trust, and it must be discharged with due regard to the public welfare.

Again I beg everyone to get to work *at once*. No time is to be lost. For my own part, I am making a start by sending a copy of this week's *Freethinker* to every member of the London County Council. It is too late to prevent the resolution being carried. It is not too late to induce the Council to reconsider its decision.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Fatal Admissions.

THE Correspondence of the Rev. Professor David Smith, D.D., in the *British Weekly* for June 1, deals with God the Father in relation to God the Son. A correspondent, "W. B.," observes that "Christ equal in essence and age with the Father at once suggests an older person." Dr. Smith tells "W. B." that he has "lighted, no doubt unwittingly, on the argument of Arius, the notorious heresiarch of the fourth century, the forerunner of the Socinians and their modern successors, the Unitarians." We rather suspect, however, that "W. B." is not so ignorant of the notoriously bitter controversy as the Londonderry Professor seems to imagine, and that his real object is to pull the reverend doctor's leg. Be that as it may, Dr. Smith avails himself of the innocent observation to declare his adherence to the Athanasian Creed. It should be borne in mind that, though Athanasius was present and took a prominent part in the discussion that took place at the Council of Nicæa, the Creed that bears his name is not identical with the Nicene Creed, but was probably composed in Southern Gaul in the last quarter of the fifth century. The controversy between the Athanasians and the Arians lasted a very long time, and is not quite at an end even to-day. Dr. Smith states the Arian position thus:—

If the Father begat the Son, the Begotten has a beginning of existence; and from this it is plain that there was a time when the Son was not; and it follows of necessity that he has his substance of things that are not.

Put into plain language, that extract, according to the Professor, mean this:—

The filial relation implies the priority of the Father to the Son, and two consequences are inevitable: (1) that the Son is not eternal, and (2) that he is a creature. He is neither co-eternal nor co-essential with the Father.

To us that sounds like supreme commonsense. Arius may not have been a subtle theologian, but he had reason decidedly on his side, and Dr. Smith admits that the argument has the appearance of being conclusive. Having conceded its exceeding plausibility, however, he immediately proceeds to characterize it as nothing but "a shallow quibble." Commonsense is evidently at a discount in theology, and reason has to take a back seat. It is amazing to Dr. Smith that anybody has the audacity to assume for a moment that "fatherhood in God is identical with fatherhood in man, and to argue that whatever is true of the latter is true also of the former." Arius was by no means alone in his stand for reason against metaphysical faith. Two Egyptian bishops, the majority of the bishops of Asia, seven presbyters, twelve deacons, and, significant to relate, seven hundred virgins, vigorously supported him; and even Eusebius, the father of ecclesiastical history, and an intimate friend and flatterer of the Emperor, as well as his namesake of Nicomedia, who was at once statesman and saint, and whose letter was ignominiously torn up at the Council of Nicæa, held at least semi-Arian views. Indeed, it must not be forgotten that for several centuries Arianism was politically and religiously a great power. The Goths, in so far as they were Christians, held the Arian Creed; Ulfilas, the celebrated missionary bishop and translator of the Scriptures into Gothic, was an exceptionally bright and shining light in the Arian school. The Visigothic chief, Alaric, first conqueror of Rome, and Genseric, King of the Vandals and first conqueror of Africa, were Arians. Theodoric the Great, founder of the Ostrogothic monarchy, hero of the German epic poem, "Nibelungenlied," and for three and thirty peaceful, prosperous years King of Italy, was an Arian. The

Athanasians eventually won the victory, but, as a class, they were narrow-minded, intolerant, and cruel-hearted. Even on the memory of this Theodoric they took delight in wreaking their vengeance, for they savagely destroyed the porphyry vase in his massive tomb at Ravenna, in which his Arian subjects had enshrined his ashes. Arius himself, we learn, was distinguished for his learning, irreproachable character, fascinating manner, and sweet disposition. Immediately after the Council of Nicæa he was banished, but three years later the Emperor recalled him, and at the Synod of Jerusalem his faith was approved.

Now, all the illustrious men who professed Arianism are condemned by Dr. Smith because they were swayed by an argument which he rudely dismisses as being "in truth no better than a shallow quibble." Let us now examine the so-called orthodox doctrine as taught by Athanasius and his followers, and fully endorsed by the reverend gentleman. Everybody is familiar with "the Creed of Saint Athanasius" as embodied in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. Its subject is the Trinity, in which "none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another," and in which "we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord," but "are forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords." Dr. Smith says:—

The Father, in the subtle terminology of the Alexandrian theologians, is "unbegotten," and the Son is "eternally begotten." "We believe in one unbegotten God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things both visible and invisible, who hath being from Himself; and in one only-begotten Word, Wisdom, Son, begotten of the Father without beginning and eternally." That is to say, the Divine "generation," as Cardinal Newman expresses it, denotes "not so much an act as an eternal and unchangeable fact in the Divine Nature." St. Augustine, the supreme master of the Latin Church, in a letter to the Arian Pascentius, enforces the argument by a metaphor from the apocryphal Book of Wisdom. There Wisdom is called "the effulgence of the Eternal Light," and he asks if the Light was ever without the effulgence begotten by it. The Father is the Eternal Light, and the Son the effulgence; and the Father is never without the Son. "What say we then? If the Son of God was born of the Father, the Father has now ceased to beget, and if he has ceased he began. If, however, he began to beget, he was once without the Son; but he never was without the Son, because his Son is his Wisdom, which is the effulgence of the Eternal Light. Therefore the Father always begets, and the Son is always born."

Curiously enough, whilst frankly admitting that this method of reasoning has little or nothing to recommend it to the scientific modern mind, Dr. Smith yet maintains that there is "profound truth in it," which only "needs to be translated into modern speech and adapted to modern ideas." We, on the contrary, are disposed to dismiss the whole thing as "a trivial subtlety, a mere verbal juggle." The fatherhood and sonship, of which he speaks, are mere words devoid of contents. A father who is no older than his son is no father at all. It is impossible to conceive a father eternally begetting and a son eternally being born. There is not the faintest trace of such a doctrine in the Bible; and the very idea of Eternal Generation is infinitely preposterous. St. Augustine's illustration only emphasizes the absurdity of the doctrine. Of course, light and its effulgence are of necessity coeval, because they are not two things, but one. Light without its effulgence cannot exist at all, because it is the nature of light to shine. But father and son are two distinct persons, existing apart from each other. In the Egyptian Trinity there is a mother as well as a father, and Horus is the son of both. In

the Christian Trinity there are Father and Son but no mother, and the Son is represented as being in the impossible process of eternally being born. To complicate and mystify the subject still more, we are told that "human fatherhood is a copy and shadow of the Heavenly Fatherhood," and that "when we think of the Divine Fatherhood and the Divine Sonship we are in the domain of the Eternal, where time and space are not, where there is neither beginning nor end, and the very idea of priority has no place." Such language is utterly unintelligible, even to those who employ it. Timeless and spaceless existence is absolutely inconceivable, and is never heard of outside metaphysics and theology. St. Augustine's God is the most chimerical being ever invented. He is infinite, and yet the whole of him is everywhere at one and the same time, but he is visible and tangible nowhere. He is timeless, and yet he says "I am." Where is he if not in time and space? Science teaches us that the physical universe is infinite and unbounded, both in extent and duration, but that fact deprives it of neither past, present, and future, nor of existence in space. Both time and space are immeasurable, but they exist, if only in thought.

Theology condemns itself absolutely by its extravagances, by its utter disregard of reason and common-sense, and its greatest enemies are those who pose as its uncompromising and enthusiastic champions. To say of the first person in the Trinity that he did not *become* the Father, but *is* the Father Eternal, is to treat him as an altogether impossible being, a fantastic creature of the human intellect. Dr. Smith informs us that it is the fact of his eternally begetting the Son that makes it possible for him to be Eternal Love, because "he could not be Love if he were single and alone." But he is single and alone, on the reverend gentleman's own showing, for the Father and the Son are one Being. Can light love and hold fellowship with its own effulgence? Yet God, prior to creation, could have loved and communed with only himself, for the Son did not exist, but was and still is eternally being begotten. The mere statement of such a doctrine is a prolific begetter of Atheists. Professor Smith could not have rendered our cause a more substantial service than by writing such a column as the one now under criticism. The day of belief in such a logically and ethically self-condemned doctrine is past for ever.

J. T. LLOYD.

The English Zola.

I would rather have written *Salammbo* than have built Brooklyn Bridge. It was more difficult, and it will last longer.—*Edgar Saltus*.

THERE is not now the prejudice there was years ago against Mr. George Moore, for he has helped to break it by the force of his genius. Hence a story of his has a far better chance now than in the old days, when, for his sake, that lamented tradesman, the late Mr. Mudie, assumed the functions of the "Bishop of Rome," and started an *Index Expurgatorius*. Although Mr. Moore enjoys the rare privilege of being one of the few English authors who are boycotted, he has had his revenge, for he has reached the proud position where he can dispense with praise or blame. His forthcoming story, *The Brook Kerith*, will flutter the doves of orthodoxy, and cause much hectic discussion, for Mr. Moore gives a new version of the life of Christ, which will astonish ordinary Christians who have made a Cook's excursion through the Gospels and afterwards relied upon an ever-waning recollection.

If the publication of *The Brook Kerith* does but draw attention to one of the foremost of present-day writers, it will have served its purpose. Since *The Mummer's*

Wife, one of the most brilliant realistic novels in the language, first frightened a squeamish public, Mr. Moore has added masterpiece to masterpiece. His *Esther Waters* turned the tables on his pusillanimous Puritan detractors, and by the sheer force of genius compelled their unwilling admiration. From *A Drama in Muslin* to *The Untilled Field* he revealed a cleverness of invention and construction, united to fine writing, that has built his reputation "four square to all the winds that blow."

In *The Untilled Field* the author traces many of the woes of Ireland to the despotic rule of the priests, which has sapped the will-power of the Catholic laity, who find themselves unable to hold their own against the steadily increasing Protestant population. Thousands of Irish Catholics emigrate every year to escape the despotism of priestcraft. That is Mr. Moore's view, and the cultured writer, travelling by a vastly different route, reaches the same conclusion as the despised Free-thinkers. The book seems to be written with the idea of exposing the Great Lying Church. Nothing escapes the author, and even the chastity of the Irish Catholic is regarded as an evil. "There are no bastards in Ireland," says Mr. Moore, "and the bastard is the outward sign of inward grace." Says Mr. Moore again, "There is as little free-love in Ireland as there is Freethought; men have ceased to care for women, and women to care for men. Nothing thrives in Ireland but the celibate, the priest, the men, and the ox." Ireland for him is "a country without past or future, melancholy and ineffective as bog-water." The great churches and monasteries stand amid uncultivated lands, daily going to greater waste, and ruinous hovels hourly falling into greater ruin.

But Mr. Moore's greatest work is *The Mummer's Wife*, a masterpiece by a master-artist. The central idea of the book, an elopement by a married woman, is not unique. Many of the sentimental novels, freely selected by the libraries, have used this. But the erring wife of *The Mummer's Wife* is the wife of a middle-class shop-keeper, and the author shows in plain English the fatal decline: how the divorced woman becomes a dipsomaniac, and, step by step, loses propriety and decency, until she dies the dreadful death of a drunkard. Had she been depicted as a lady of title; had her sin against society been clothed in decorative phrases, and smothered in sentiment, then, probably, no outcry would have arisen. But because Mr. Moore chose the right method of depicting vice as it really is, the result disgusted the chaste readers of the circulating libraries, but it enriched English literature with a most powerful and realistic novel, and a superb picture of contemporary middle-class and Bohemian life.

Mr. Moore has other sides to his genius, and his unique and brilliant *Confessions of a Young Man* startled even his admirers. It is without a parallel in modern autobiography. Reckless and irresponsible in its criticism, it is wonderful how much underlies the biting epigrams. Its intimate knowledge, too, of the art of France, literary and pictorial, marks it off from other books. To consider *A Mere Accident* after this volume of caustic criticism is a curious task. For in it the love of epigram and paradox have vanished. In its pitiless sequence of an awful tragedy, that, evolved from a mere accident, destroys one life and darkens others; it is true to nature, and a superb example of conscious art. Unhappily, publishers nowadays are men of little courage, and while the old "Vizetelly" edition of the book is complete, all the later issues of this tragic story have been mutilated to please the innocent and sentimental daughters of Mrs. Grundy, who are supposed to be the only readers in a nation of "God's own Englishmen."

Who need apologize for his admiration for Mr. Moore's magnificent work? His power of investing the common life of to-day with profound tragedy is surely the true romance. Content to leave all the machinery of the supernatural, to lay aside the well-worked properties of sensationalism, to abjure Dumas and Poe alike, and yet move his thousands of readers with the truthful record of elemental passion in modern life, is certainly akin to great art. Perhaps, because of his reticence in quantity, the early reputation has been less in peril; and now with a collection of books that show fully the power and the limit of his art, it is right he should receive recognition, not merely as a magician that has charmed away dull hours by his "so potent art," but as a personal force in literature, which, to be candid, has mocked every imitator. Historians of English literature will, one fancies, be compelled to consider the work of Mr. George Moore even more seriously than contemporary critics have done. His detractors have called him "the English Zola," and paid him an unwilling compliment. It is precisely because France values her "intellectuals," instead of smothering them, that she is so great as a nation. In associating his name with that of Emile Zola, even his enemies have unwittingly set the seal of approbation upon a writer who most worthily carries on the literary traditions which have made the sons of France the vanguard of the Army of Progress. For France is one torrent of splendid scepticism, from Abelard to Anatole France, and the Gallic intellect—

Ravishing as red wine in woman's form,
A splendid mœnad, she of the delirious laugh,
Her body twisted flames with the smoke-cap crowned.

MIMNERMUS.

Nietzsche and His Critics.

III.

(Continued from p. 358.)

From first to last, wherever you open his books, you light on sayings that cut to the core of the questions that every modern thinking man must face..... Nietzsche desires to prove nothing, and is reckless of consistency. He looks at every question that comes before him with the same simple, intent, penetrative gaze, and whether the aspects that he reveals are new or old, he seldom fails to bring us a fresh stimulus. Culture, as he understood it, consists for the modern man in the task of choosing the simple and indispensable things from the chaos of crude material which to-day overwhelms us.—*Havelock Ellis*, "Affirmations" (1898), pp. 79-80.

What disgusted Nietzsche, and what shocked him when he looked at his picture of Christianity, was that cloud of insincerity of blindness and knavery, that lying innocence which, according to him, characterized men of faith. The deepest instincts of his aristocratic nature, his ungovernable conscience, his love of physical and moral "cleanliness," his courage in thinking out his ideas to the very end, all rose in revolt against such duplicity. He turned away with intense disgust from those men in whom this voluntary illusion has become such an integral part of existence that they do not know themselves when they are deceiving and when they are sincere, and who even lie quite innocently without their conscience troubling them, the voluntary prisoners, or, perhaps, more often, the involuntary prisoners of the illusion in which they live. And he solemnly declares that Christianity was guilty of having soiled, corrupted, and poisoned the intellectual and moral atmosphere of all Europe.—*Henri Lichtenberger*, "The Gospel of Superman" (1910), p. 151.

MR. BARKER goes on to point out that, if one man is to be picked out in particular as the instigator of the present War, that man should be, not Nietzsche, but Treitschke, who, as he says:—

Unlike Nietzsche, who was unknown to his own generation, Treitschke had great and abounding vogue during the twenty-two years, from 1874 to 1896, in which he lectured in Berlin. The German professor has always

been more closely in contact with affairs of State than the teachers of our English Universities.....None of them has left a deeper mark than Treitschke. His lectures at Berlin were attended by soldiers and by administrators as well as students, and the version of German history and the interpretation of political theory which he taught are living and moulding forces to the present day.....Treitschke, greatest of them all, writes his *German History* to point the moral that Prussia is the chosen nation of Germany. Thus he has served, in the national politics of Germany, to aid the movement towards Prussianization.¹

It is to the sword that Treitschke appeals as the final arbiter between State and State. He taught that "war is justified, and must be conceived as ordained of God.Nor is war only the sovereign remedy of States; it is also the nurse of the finest virtues of the individual." Mr. Barker quotes Treitschke as saying: "What a perversion of morality it were, if one struck heroism out of humanity.....But the living God will see to it that war shall always recur as a terrible medicine for humanity." And, as Mr. Barker observes, "while Nietzsche loved neither nationalism nor militarism, Treitschke is the lover of both."²

Mr. W. H. Dawson, who is admittedly our highest authority on modern Germany and Germans, dismisses Nietzsche's influence in Germany as trifling, says "Treitschke, through his political and historical writings and lectures, has been by far the greatest power," and adds: "Because Treitschke's influence has been so conspicuous, his statement of the German theory of State life may be regarded as representative." And again: "Since the death of Ranke, no one has disputed Treitschke's pre-eminence amongst contemporary German historians, omitting, of course, Mommsen, whose dominion was unique."³ But, as we all know, Mommsen was the historian of ancient Rome, and not modern Germany; so that his pre-eminence does not affect the case.

It is Treitschke, the "stern Protestant," as Mr. Barker calls him, who should bear the title of "The Preacher of War." Mr. Dawson tells us that, when he was at Berlin in 1887, he heard Treitschke lecture, and testifies in unstinted language to the singular brilliancy of his style:—

His command of language was complete, and once you were able to follow him there was no resisting his charm. Without haste, yet literally without rest, he would pour out from the treasure of an inexhaustible vocabulary a continuous stream of language, every sentence as perfect in construction as though read from a book. A number of his brother professors attended his lectures, and formed a guard of honour when, at the end of his oration, he went out to the accompaniment of thunderous applause. Only the foremost lecturers enjoyed this flattering attention from their peers. Thus there went forth from his lecture-room many influences and impulses which reached into every part of the national life (pp. 37-38).

Bismarck gave Treitschke access to the jealously guarded archives of Prussia, with the cynical comment: "You, at all events, will not be shocked to find that our political linen is not as white as it might be."⁴

On the other hand, Nietzsche was almost unknown in Germany right up to the time of his death in 1900. He was much better known in France at this time than in his native country, owing to the influence of the

cosmopolitan Danish critic Brandes, who introduced Nietzsche to the world outside of Germany.

How, then, has this legend of Nietzsche being the cause of the present War arisen? Mr. Leslie Stewart, who is Professor of Philosophy at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, says plainly that no one but a fool would believe that Nietzsche "made the War," yet he has written a book with the purpose of showing the wickedness and immorality of Nietzsche's teaching. It should be noted that Mr. Stewart is an earnest Christian, and the book in question, *Nietzsche and the Ideals of Modern Germany*, was first delivered in a series of Sunday afternoon lectures, "under the auspices," he tells us, "of an Association which exists to infuse Christian ideals of character into our University life" (p. 1). Further on, Mr. Stewart observes, dealing with Nietzsche's want of system and consistency:—

He chose just that epigrammatic and aphoristic style which makes consistency impossible. Fierce paradoxes abound, conflicting not only with common opinion, but with equally fierce paradoxes, which our author has fulminated elsewhere. It would, of course, be absurd to bind down a writer of this sort to anything like literal exactness; he is a stupid pedant indeed who would interpret the words of a poet as if they were legal formula (p. 5).

After this deliverance, one is naturally prepared for a fair and candid discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy; but Mr. Stewart soon forgets all about the principles that *should* rule his criticisms, and we find him again and again taking Nietzsche in the literal sense when he is only using figurative and metaphorical language.

But, simultaneously with the publication of Mr. Stewart's book, a defence of Nietzsche was also published by Mr. A. Wolf, of the University of London, entitled *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*. It forms No. 45 in the series of monographs, entitled "Studies in Economics and Political Science," by writers connected with the London School of Economics and Political Science.

If Mr. Wolf had read Mr. Stewart's book—which, of course, he had not—he could not have written a better reply. The book is a complete refutation of the view taken by Mr. Stewart of Nietzsche and his philosophy. Mr. Wolf easily shows that Nietzsche was no Devil's Advocate for militarism. In fact, he goes so far as to say that "His political views remind one of the peace societies and the Society of Friends rather than of Bernhardt and Treitschke." As he points out, Nietzsche's weakness for epigram and paradox too often betrayed him into extravagance. It was therefore perfectly easy to dress up the Chauvinists', or Jingoist, poverty of thought in the brilliant raiment of Nietzsche's picturesque language. Mr. Wolf shows how it has been done, as follows:—

Bernhardt has adopted as the motto of his war-cry, *Germany and the next war*, Nietzsche's dictum that "war and courage have done more great things than the love of one's neighbour." Even more notorious has become the dictum, "Ye say that it is the good cause that halloweth even war? I say unto you, it is the good war that halloweth any cause." Now, both these murderous-sounding dicta occur in the same passage in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, and a careful reading of the context shows that what Nietzsche is really speaking about is the war of ideas. Here are some of the sentences which precede the dicta under discussion: "If ye cannot be saints of knowledge, then, I pray you, be at least its warriors..... Your war shall ye wage for the satisfaction of your thoughts! And if your thought succumb, yet will your uprightness proclaim its triumph!" Nietzsche, it should be remembered, was not a professional soldier, but a thinker and an ardent student of Greek philosophy. To him the term "war" did not primarily suggest battle-fields, but something quite different.¹

¹ A. Wolf, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, pp. 18-19.

¹ E. Barker, "Nietzsche and Treitschke," *Oxford Pamphlets* (1914), pp. 16-17.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

³ Dawson, *What is Wrong with Germany?* pp. 22-27-35.

⁴ Stewart, *Nietzsche and the Ideals of Modern Germany*, p. 166.

If those who quoted these sayings of Nietzsche had really read them in the original, they had very good reason for not quoting the titles of works from which they were taken.

As Mr. Wolf observes:—

The fact is, that to understand Nietzsche, he must be studied with more than usual care, while his style appears to invite, on the contrary, the most casual reading..... But Nietzsche's writings must be read through almost from beginning to end, and in their chronological sequence, if one is to carry away a correct impression even of the main drift of his thought.

Mr. Wolf adds that he does not mean to say that it is worth everybody's while to take such pains with Nietzsche. "But I do say that, until one has studied him with such care, one may praise him, or one may blame him, but one does not know him" (pp. 29-30).

We may add that most philosophers may be read and understood without the slightest reference to their personal lives and characters. If we never knew any particulars of the life of Herbert Spencer, it would make no difference to our understanding of any one of his books. But it is not so with Nietzsche. The works and the man must be studied together. Nietzsche lived his philosophy.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

"The Dark Side of Christianity."

From an Old Freethought Document.

NEARLY forty years ago my old friend the late Chas. C. Cattell (of Birmingham), who was a frequent contributor to the *National Reformer* when Charles Bradlaugh was the editor, wrote a pamphlet with the above title. It had a very good circulation, and ran into a second edition. A few weeks ago I was looking through a number of old Freethought pamphlets I collected in my youth, and I came across this one, and was curious to see how far the statements and arguments advanced by this well-known propagandist all those years ago were still valid and up to date. To my astonishment, I found that very little revision was necessary to make the statement of the case and the arguments just as true and forcible as they were at the time at which the pamphlet was written. All this shows that, though the creeds of Christendom have undergone many changes and modifications, the main objections of Freethinkers to Christianity as a scheme of salvation for mankind are as strong and unanswerable as ever.

Mr. Cattell began by observing that, "As I believe it is not legal to say that Christianity is not true, I only contend that it is unreasonable and impracticable." Well, Christianity is still part and parcel of the law of the land. It is true that you may criticize its doctrines, and even call in question its fundamental teachings; but you have to do it in a grave and reverential manner, or you will render yourself liable to prosecution.

Although it is considered quite fair to ridicule any other teaching, either political, social, or scientific, it is regarded as extremely wicked or in very bad taste to expose to laughter or ridicule any teaching of the Christian Faith, however childish or absurd. Is not this a sign of weakness? I have seen some of the noblest plays of Shakespeare burlesqued; but nobody ever objected, nobody even suggested that the writers or the players should be prosecuted. And I have heard the teachings of Darwin ridiculed by ignorant parsons, who probably had not read a line of his writings, and I never heard either a Christian or a Freethinker suggest that we ought to send for a policeman.

"Think of the millions of people," says Mr. Cattell,—known to live on this globe, and then listen to the talk of the Christian, you would imagine that all the world followed his prophet and professed his faith. The fact is, only a few of the millions even profess to be Christian; and these are so divided that we may say with truth the Christian party in this world is split up into sects. The sects are so numerous that a man may many times change his Church and yet continue to be what is called a Christian. When dissatisfied with the church he may take refuge in the chapel, and chapels exist in almost endless variety; and if all these fail him, he may set up on his own account and be a free churchman!

Now, this statement is as true to-day as it was forty years ago. Have we not had the case of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, who a few years ago was a clergyman of the Church of England, and then became a Congregational minister, pastor at the City Temple, and began to preach the New Theology, in which he gave up belief in miracles and other doctrines of the Christian Faith, and, after having weakened the belief of the members of his congregation, returns to the Church as a truly orthodox preacher of the one and only true faith?

The great point upon which all Christians were agreed, forty years ago, Mr. Cattell tells us, was "that the unbeliever ought to be put down." Well, the Christians are agreed upon that point still; but they have not quite so much power as they had then. "He that believeth not shall be damned" is still an important item in the Christian teaching.

This assumes that a man can believe or not, by his own effort, as though evidence—facts—had nothing to do with either belief or unbelief. Custom and interest can make liars and hypocrites, but evidences control belief. The truest sentence ever uttered cannot influence any man unless he understands the language in which it is expressed.

Mr. Cattell finds no difficulty in showing the contradictory character of Bible teaching. He is able to quote passage after passage to prove that. He is able to prove, moreover, that Paul was just as strong against the unbeliever as Jesus. "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers; what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. vi.). Paul grows quite fierce on the subject (Gal. i.): "If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed"—"which, I presume, means something disagreeable."

This condemnation of all unbelievers, this separation of men into believing and unbelieving, and this cursing of all teachers contrary or opposed to Christ, lie at the root of that terrible movement which was carried on for centuries by fire, sword, and chains, till the sceptical spirit arose which shamed the Christian world and bid it hold its murderous hand.

Mr. Cattell, like Thomas Paine, saw that the story of the alleged Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden was the real foundation-stone of the Christian Faith.

The penalty attached to the act of disobedience is death, and if this plan had been carried out, there would have been no sinners, no Christianity, no Saviour, and no salvation—in fact, no human race, according to this tale.

But, of course, Adam only died spiritually. This was necessary in order that the theologians could introduce Jesus on the scene four thousand years later, and allow him to be persecuted and crucified, and by his death to blot out the sins of mankind.

Mr. Cattell drew up a strong indictment against the wickedness of the Bible God, and showed that the Jews only imitated their God—Jahveh—when they persecuted Jesus, and finally put him to death.

"There is no escape from the conclusion," says Mr. Cattell,—

that whatever happened in the Garden or in man, was

in accordance with the will and plan of God, who is maker and ruler of all things. To admit any other power would be to limit the power of the Almighty or to recognize more gods than one. An unbiassed reader of the third chapter of Genesis would infer that before the Fall no labour except that of tending the Garden of Eden was contemplated. After the Fall, Adam is discharged from his situation, and is sent forth, or, as we should now put it, is "condemned to hard labour for life" among thorns and thistles. Now, is it not a fact that the whole of our modern civilization is the result of the combined labour of the human race? Every ship that floats, every train that runs, everything in our houses, or on our bodies, every comfort we possess, every science, every printed word we read, attest the value of human labour! Yet in spite of all these world-wide facts, this book speaks of labour as the punishment for some fabled sin against some imaginary God who once dwelt in some corner of the earth, when its inhabitants consisted of himself, his gardener, and his gardener's wife! This is indeed a tale for children in understanding. Yet the Christian often boasts that civilization, which is the result of continuous labour, is owing to his faith and his book.

Mr. Cattell has some very good remarks to make on the story of the Atonement. Let me quote a few sentences:—

To rectify the evil doings of mankind, God did not send a race of Christs with absolute power over sin and temptation, but only one innocent Christ to suffer for the guilty sinners—and still the sinners go on sinning, just as though he had not come. What would the civilized world say if we proposed to hang one innocent man to save all the murderers? What would virtuous men and women say if all the Governments in the world combined and put one innocent person to death in order to release all the offenders against the laws of morality of the whole world? The unsophisticated moral sense of the world would be shocked at such a proposal. What a strange story! The Son dies to appease the wrath of God the Father; the Son being equally God and equally wrathful, why not the Holy Ghost die to reconcile him? And lastly, the third person being equally God, and equally wrathful, why not the first person die to reconcile him? In the end, all the three persons of the Trinity would have been crucified, and no God would have been left.

These selections from this old pamphlet by Mr. Cattell will be enough to show my readers that the Freethought Propagandists of nearly half a century ago worthily upheld the Cause in which we believed, and exposed the weakness and absurdity of the Christian Faith without malice, and brought to the consideration of the problem a truly judicial spirit of free inquiry.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Acid Drops.

The Archbishop of Canterbury says he has been conducting prayer-meetings at the Front, where at any moment the gatherings might have been dispersed by the bursting of enemy shells. We have read before of the terrible dangers run by the dignified clergy at the Front, and we must confess that the stories would read more convincingly if the names of some of them appeared now and again in the casualty lists.

Replying to a question in the House of Commons, Mr. Tennant said that he could not withhold his respect for the person who, "on religious grounds," was prepared to undergo prosecution rather than do violence to his conscience. "On religious grounds"! One cannot be surprised at members of local tribunals saying that a Freethinker cannot have a conscience when we find a member of the Government confining cases of conscience "to religious grounds." Perhaps when Mr. Tennant has the time he

will pay a little attention to a manual of ethics. Or Lord Haldane might be able to give him a little instruction in philosophy. He will then be able to steer clear of such inanities as the one noted above.

The International Sunday School Lesson for to-day is the second chapter of First Corinthians, in which Paul explains the Christian Gospel and his method of preaching it. Before he went to Corinth, he had visited the intellectually brilliant city of Athens, though by no means so brilliant then as it had been three, four, and five centuries before. In his notes on this Lesson in the *British Weekly* for June 1, Professor David Smith makes the startling announcement that at Athens, Paul had committed the fatal blunder of adopting the method of the Greek sophists, and of presenting his audience with a philosophy of religion, instead of treating it as a company of lost sinners who needed the Gospel of free forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

Professor Smith's point is that the Apostle, realizing the mistake he had made at Athens, gave the Corinthians the simple Gospel without any rhetorical adornments, with the result that a society of converts was soon formed. Unfortunately for him, however, the membership consisted of the riffraff of the population, and was split up into four or five acrimonious and irreconcilable factions. To this church Paul is believed to have addressed several letters, two of which are extant, and from these we learn what a corrupt, drunken, and wrangling church it was. Though he calls it a company of saints, who had been sanctified in Christ Jesus, yet the first of the two epistles is so full of bitter complaints and censures that one is bound to conclude that their conversion to Christianity had done them very little, if any, good. And such has been the character of the Church from that day to this. Generally speaking, conversion is an emotional experience which rarely touches conduct or transforms the character. First Corinthians is a wonderfully illuminating document.

In the list of Birthday Honours, Mr. A. J. Balfour figures as having received the Order of Merit for his philosophical writings. We cheerfully concede that the honour might easily have been bestowed upon a less worthy person. But Mr. Balfour would confer a real favour upon his readers if he would let them know exactly what kind of a God he imagines he has rescued from the theological wreckage.

The Church of Christ, according to the Bishop of London, is out of touch with the world of labour. "How is it," he asked at Queen's College, "that the Church of the Carpenter of Nazareth has not the confidence of the present-day carpenter?" His lordship thought the answer was that the Church was too "starchy." We wonder if he winked when he said it.

The Wesleyan church being erected at Southall is to be fitted with a cinema apparatus. Will the programme include films of Noah's Ark, Jonah and the Whale, Adam and Eve, and other Biblical subjects? "The animals going in two by two" should be as funny as Charlie Chaplin.

Kenya City, U.S.A., has been destroyed by a tornado. The slow, clumsy destruction of a city by big guns is contemptible at the side of Providence when once it gets to work. No wonder an army is always anxious to have God on its side.

A male correspondent in the *Evening News* writes: "Some time ago I said to my vicar: 'What a pity it is that the clergy of the English Church seem to be on the whole on the side of the skunks.'" We imagine that the vicar prefers to talk to the girls.

What daredevils Christians are! The Young Men's Christian Association has invaded Sloane Square, and are erecting a hut there.

The use of cinemas in churches has been suggested by the *Church Times*, which says that "the art which can reproduce Pavlova's dancing is a benefit to humanity." The clergy

had better avoid a film showing King David dancing before the Ark.

So long as the schools were under the control of the clergy these gentlemen had the teachers in their power, and parsons naturally sigh after these good old times. From the *Schoolmaster*—which we are glad to see is keeping a vigilant eye on the clergy—we see that Father Hanrahan has been finding fault with the teachers in Roman Catholic schools. He says:—

Our teachers are not taking the active part in the spiritual interest of the children that they should do, and this apathy has crept in very much since the Education Bill of 1902 was passed. Ever since then the teachers are not taking the same interest in the children. Before that we had far more children attending Mass than now, although the teachers are far better paid now than then. They are too well off, and it is the person who pays them that they respect the most. They are paid now by the local Education Committee, so that we are not paying them any longer, and their whole interest is centred in their own needs.....I know we have some excellent teachers in the diocese, and everything depends on the head teacher. If he wishes he can have all his teachers there looking after the different standards on Sundays, and he will see that all the children are present. I feel that I must speak about this, because I find that the teachers are not doing what they should and did before the Education Act came into force, and they ought to work better now for the Church than ever they did.

It is quite clear that what Father Hanrahan desires is that the head teacher shall induce—or coerce—his assistants to drive the children to Church, and then leave it to the clergy to do the rest. "Suffer little children to come unto me," says Father Hanrahan, "and I will see to the rest." We are glad to see that the teachers in even Roman Catholic schools take a more dignified view of their profession than this implies.

From the *Daily Chronicle* of May 31:—

SIR,—There are large numbers of men of military age and fitness of health who are exempt, by virtue of their profession, from military service. I refer to the clergy and ministers of all denominations.

Why should not these be called to serve the State by doing some of the urgently needed work on the farms? Mr. Acland has shown us how serious the position is, that though women are willing to do their part, more than they with the best intentions can accomplish, is necessary. Why not, therefore, fill up the gaps as far as possible with workers from the ranks of the clergy? There are surely enough of the older and more spiritually mature men in the Established, the Free, and the Catholic Churches to attend to all necessary duties of their order. I believe that an organized piece of national service of this kind would not be a hindrance to the Church. Rather do I believe it would have an enormous moral effect on the masses of the people.—G. L.

We expect the clergy will continue to sit tight, and thus fully demonstrate that theirs is a heavenly calling which serves no earthly purpose.

Christians nowadays are thankful for very small mercies. Because Mr. Bernard Shaw, in his preface to *Androcles and the Lion* and other plays, attaches a little importance to the sociological and communistic views in the New Testament, the *Daily News* refers to the matter as "The Religion of G. B. S.," and compares him to "his namesake, Saint Bernard." They need not be in such a great hurry to claim Mr. Shaw as a convert, for he expressly states that the gospels are the "history of a psychopathic delusion."

"Breakfast at Church" is the novel suggestion made by the Rev. E. G. Saville at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London. It should be an irresistible appeal to hungry parishioners. Will the breakfasts be served *a la carte* or a la "Lockhart"?

In the *Church Times* a correspondence has been going on for several weeks on "Islam in Africa," which is a startling illustration of the utter unreliability of Christians as judges of other religions than their own, and, consequently, of their own as well. Mr. Athelstan Riley calls Mohammedanism "the deadly religion of the False Prophet, which is spreading rapidly, like a canker, through Africa." Canon Dale politely

asserts that it is of the Devil, and can do nothing but harm. The late Bishop of Mombasa admitted that Mohammedanism is, on the whole, a good religion, and has improved those African tribes which have been converted to it. The Bishop of Zanzibar, on the other hand, condemns it, and holds it responsible for the glaring immorality of those who profess it. Mr. Webb warns us against judging Islam by what we see in Egypt and India, "lest we form too good an opinion of it"; while Mr. R. E. Hatton is of opinion that, judged by its influence anywhere and on any people, it does not compare unfavourably with Christianity.

One objection against Mohammedanism is that its benefits are intended only for Mohammedans. Allah is said to be merciful exclusively to Muslims, the fate of all others being to be cast into the flames, and therein burn until they feel and taste the torment. But is not the same thing true of the alleged blessings of Christianity? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." In our judgment, both religions are false; but looked at simply from the ethical point of view, of the two, Mohammedanism is the higher and healthier; and in this opinion a Christian, here and there, reluctantly concurs.

Bishop Gore, preaching in Westminster Abbey lately, made the following statement: "The root of all things is God, and God is good, and the end of all things is God, God at last coming into his own in the whole of the great universe of things." How exceedingly fortunate for his lordship that there is no God to call him to account for such a foolish utterance! If God is the root of all things, he is directly responsible for all things, for "this horrible world of war and slaughter, this horrible world of hostility and enmity, of bitterness and lying," this horrible world of injustice and oppression, and the Bishop has the candour to admit his responsibility. But we utterly fail to see the ground on which his lordship believes that the God "who made and sustains" this horrible world is eternal and omnipotent Love. As a matter of fact, he confesses that he has no ground whatever for such a belief save the fact that the Gospel Jesus says so, though the world was as horrible in his day as it is in ours. What miraculous credulity!

Bishop Gore repeats the threadbare fallacy that it is not Christianity that has failed, but that it is we who have failed to be real Christians. That is merely a sophistical apology for the failure of Christianity, which fact alone accounts for our not being Christians. The Gospel Jesus has signally failed to fulfil his confidently made promise to draw all men unto himself, or to build up his kingdom of love, righteousness, and truth upon the earth.

Dean Henson predicts that after the War all things will be made new. The old order is being violently broken up, but on its ruins a new cosmopolitanism will be established. At present, Christ has lost the central place in the Church, but after the War he will regain it, and reign as king everywhere. The clergy are all optimistic prophets just now, and perhaps as false as they have always been in the past.

Mr. Arthur Mee, writing in *Lloyds' Weekly News*, says, "If you will pick up your Bible you will probably find a shameful thing there, a dedication to King James I., the very words of which disgrace our language; and while you are tearing this thing out of your Bible for the sweetness sake, it will interest you to think that this evil King of England, with his own hands, tortured a poor old man for causing a terrible storm at sea." Mr. Mee overlooks the fact that the Bible countenances this abomination in the text, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

The Y.M.C.A. is nothing if not respectable, and it likes to grace its platforms with people of consequence. At a recent meeting in London, among the old English families represented were Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, Princess Christian, and Mr. Will Crooks, M.P.

To Correspondents.

BARGOED.—The address of the Malthusian League Secretary is Queen Anne's Chambers, Westminster, S.W.

APROPOS of the Propagandist Fund, an old friend of the Movement, M. E. Raggett, writes: "Am delighted to see such a noble response. I wish you and your staff of Nature's noblemen all the blessings this world can give. There seems to be an awakening on all sides so far as I can see." We quite agree with the last sentence. There is an awakening of Freethought, the reality of which we hope to prove in the near future.

H. E. ANDERSON.—We are obliged to Leicester friends for their substantial help towards the Propaganda Fund. Pleased to have your congratulations on "the improved *Freethinker*."

T. DORRINGTON.—The will to which you refer was set aside on the ground of illegality, not insanity. The question of insanity never arose.

C. M.—If you will write Mr. Cohen, giving fuller details, he will do his best to advise you. The information you give is not enough on which to base an opinion.

A. M.—We have our eyes open concerning the matter to which you refer, and may be trusted to keep wide awake where the interests of the *Freethinker* are concerned.

H. PEARCE.—Sorry we had no room for your note in our last issue. We often wish we could stretch the pages. Perhaps the secret of what you call our "untiring energy" is that the work is a labour of love; when that is the case work becomes occupation—and the distinction is vital.

C. F. BENNETT.—Mr. Cohen has had many requests to republish a volume of selected articles of his from the *Freethinker*, and he may do so at a later date.

J. MASTERMAN.—The notion of the year one thousand being the date for the second coming of Jesus grew naturally out of the expected "second coming" of the primitive Christian ages. Both beliefs were equally crazy, although there are people—outside asylums—who still entertain the belief.

H. POOLE.—Your letter is not sufficiently explicit. *What* branch of reading is it you wish to pursue? The world of books is very wide, and it is almost impossible to reply clearly unless one knows in what direction your interest lies. You would probably find Samuel Laing's books a good introduction.

T. H. PERKINS.—Why not try and reawaken things in your district? Between now and the autumn two or three of you might succeed in getting affairs in trim for a revival.

A. J. COTTLE.—"The Secretary, Leicester Secular Society, Humberstone Gate, Leicester," will be enough address.

JOSEPH CLOSE.—We can find no trace whatever of the volume of lectures by Ingersoll to which you refer. It is difficult to trace a book after so long a time, but if we do come across it will let you know.

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.

There is not much utility in writing now (Tuesday) about the delegates who will be attending the N. S. S. Conference on Whit-Sunday. Those who are coming will have already decided, and there is every reason for believing that the attendance will be a good one. The morning meeting starts at 10.30 prompt, the afternoon one at 2.30, and there will be an evening demonstration, addressed by a number of speakers. Their names may be seen on reference to the last page of this issue.

We desire particularly to call attention to the evening meeting, and to beg the co-operation of all London friends towards making this a success. If that help is given, the meeting should be a replica of the G. W. Foote meeting when the doors had to be closed to prevent overcrowding. The action of the L. C. C. with regard to the sale of literature is an additional reason for Freethinkers making it a point of being present. Something more will be said on this subject and a resolution submitted. Tickets advertising the meeting have been printed and sent round for distribu-

tion, and these may be had on application. Admission is quite free, and this gives an excellent opportunity of introducing inquiring friends. And we feel quite safe in guaranteeing that the speaking will quite repay the attendance.

We are pleased that notice is already being taken of the action of the L.C.C. with reference to the sale of literature in the parks. The following resolution was unanimously adopted by the Executive of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values at its meeting on June 5:—

This Executive notes with great regret the retrograde step taken by the London County Council, at its meeting on May 30th, in proposing to annul, as from Sept. 30th next, the existing permits for the sale of literature in connection with public meetings held in the Council's parks, and expresses its earnest hope that the Council will reconsider its decision before the summer recess.

Our article on "Shakespeare and Jesus," which led to Mr. Cecil Chesterton's criticism of the character of Shylock, and our reply thereto, has led to an extended correspondence in the *Jewish Chronicle*, and also an interview with Mr. I. Zangwill and a lecture from Dr. Gollancz. Withal, we observe that none have controverted our main contention, which was that of the two, Shakespeare or Jesus, the man was greater than the god.

By law, soldiers are allowed to affirm instead of taking the oath. Still, there are cases where recruiting officers decline to accept affirmation. We should, therefore, be pleased if any of our readers in the Army would send along brief, but explicit, answers to the following questions:—

1. Were difficulties experienced in making affirmation?
2. On asking to be relieved from church parade, was the request granted, and on what conditions?
3. Have they been enrolled as members of the Church of England or other religious body, despite their describing themselves as Freethinkers, or of no religion at all?

A list of cases giving verifiable particulars will enable the question being placed before the authorities in a satisfactory manner.

The *Merthyr Pioneer*, in noting Mr. Cohen's recent lectures at Bargoed, wishes that "the 26 years he has been lecturing against 'religion' had been given to some progressive movement for the uplifting of the masses." The *Merthyr Pioneer* has evidently yet to realize that Freethought propaganda is for the elevation of both "masses" and "classes." We dig deeper than the *Pioneer*, that is all, and so provide the only enduring basis for social reform—that of mental freedom. Without that, reforms are difficult to get, and live but a short life even when, by a stroke of good fortune, they are obtained. After twenty-six years of work, we are more convinced of this than ever.

A Candid Conversation.

SAINT PETER stifled a yawn as he glanced cursorily at my credentials, and without taking the trouble to speak, waved his hand towards the custodians of the golden gates, who languidly swung them open and allowed me to pass through. No guardian angel accompanied me. I was left to find my way along the golden pavements alone.

To my great astonishment, heaven was deserted and silent. Not one of the angelic host or saintly throng could be seen. The harps hung loose-stringed. The trumpets were piled in heaps like soldiers' rifles stacked at bivouac.

The streets seemed interminable. Getting tired, I was devoutly thankful when my eyes caught the glaring reflection from the sea of glass and beheld the jasper throne.

The surprises I had received prepared me for much, but not for this. The throne was vacant, and the

space around it empty. An angel stood at an affair shaped like the ventilator of an ocean liner, and listened carelessly to the prayers and praises that floated up from earth. It was a fearful babel, English and German predominating. The angel pointed to the back of the platform. Going behind, I found four-and-twenty elders engaged very differently from what John describes in Revelation. Their golden crowns were lying in a dusty heap under the steps of the throne. They themselves were seated on comfortable benches; my nostrils caught the fragrance of latakia, and silver vessels full of ambrosial nectar stood at their feet. "Have evidently taken example from the Greek gods," I reflected, as I stood for a moment. The conversation was mainly reminiscent, interspersed with jest and anecdote. One elder had just concluded a rich story, and all laughed till their long beards wagged. Then one of them saw me. "What wantest thou, youngster?" he said, regarding me suspiciously. "How—why—God Almighty," I gasped.

"Oh," said the spokesman, "You've come to the wrong place. Go down this road, and you'll find him somewhere in the forest," and he indicated the direction with a wave of his long-stemmed pipe. Feeling dismissed, I departed abruptly.

The beauties of the celestial forest, its painted birds and springing beasts, need no description; they have been sufficiently recounted as bribes to make people religious.

After wandering some time I came to a river, whose waters flowed as crystal. Following its windings, I came to an enormous tree, with gnarled roots uptwisted like snakes out of the ground. In a hollow formed by a mass of these roots, sat an old man, his head resting on his palms, and his beard trailing on the ground. Hearing footsteps, he slowly raised his head and regarded me apathetically. "I seek God," said I, timidly. The old man groaned. "Go away. I'm sick of listening to the complaints and requests of mortals."

"But I've come for neither. I want a quiet conversation with God."

"In that case, sit down," said my *vis-a-vis*, brightening. "I feared you were going to pray. If you talk sensibly you are welcome."

I sat down on the velvety grass at God's feet, whilst he gazed into the river and seemed oblivious of my presence.

I waited for a few minutes and then spoke. "Almighty, I'm puzzled."

"What at?" said God dully.

"Why, everything. Where's the angel host, the communion of saints, all that we hear so much of on earth?"

God gave a gesture of weariness, saying, "That sounds very nice on earth, but it became very tiring. I got bored with the whole proceeding, and stopped it at last, especially as the performers were slacking frightfully."

"Yes," I interposed, "the four-and-twenty elders look happy enough now."

A fleeting smile lit up God's face as he said, "Poor old chaps! They all got crick in the back from bowing down constantly, and were hoarse from crying 'Holy! Holy! Holy!' Besides, the crowns were battered from being cast down so much, and since Mulciber accompanied Lucifer to Hell, I have no seraph competent to work in metals. So I told the ancients to take their Old Age Pensions, and imitate the Greek gods in Elysium."

"They have," I said. "You've done one good action, at least."

A look of remorse and some anger passed over the deific countenance, and I hastened to change the subject.

"But the deserted streets; where are the multitudes that none can number?"

God smiled, chuckled audibly, then said: "All these changes have been since August, 1914. When the European War broke out, the excitement in heaven was immense. You know we are hot stuff on battles, both in earth and heaven. I couldn't keep the angels at work, and the English and German saints flew at each other's throats, and both lots had to be interned. Michael and Gabriel put the lid on it. There has always been rivalry and jealousy between them. You've been told in Sunday-school that Michael watches over battles and Gabriel over births. These two made a big bet in August, 1914. Michael bet Gabriel that the deaths would exceed the births during the War."

"Michael looks like winning," I remarked.

"Yes. All the other angels made a sweepstake on it, and would do nothing but watch the earth. So I disbanded the heavenly organization for the period of the War. All the angels are leaning over the parapets watching, except those guarding the interned belligerent saints, and certain other duties. They take it in turns, and one listens to the prayers by the Throne."

"Yes," I commented; "I saw him. He looked bored."

"Poor beggar! It's a rotten job at that listening-tube now. He has a double dose of ambrosia after to restore him."

"The Angels at Mons," I ventured.

God looked at me quizzically, then laughed outright. "Oh, they were enthusiasts who wanted adventure. Some actually wished me to take sides, as I used to. I refused; but a few hotheads got permission to descend to earth. You know the results. The experiment will not be repeated."

"No," I murmured; "that I can quite believe."

A faint smile continued to play round the Deity's mouth. Seeing him thus good-humoured, I came to business.

"The War," I said, seriously; "what part are you taking in it?"

"None at all," said Yahweh promptly.

"None at all!" I repeated in surprise.

"Certainly," continued God. "I gave up business long ago. More exactly, I gradually took less and less share in terrestrial affairs, and at the outbreak of War, determined to retire altogether and do nothing. I had done very little for some years before. I began to slacken at the French Revolution, and since then have steadily reduced the amount of participation in mundane events. Now I am neutral and inactive."

"You surprise me!" I exclaimed.

"Why? If you knew everything, as I do, you would not be surprised. I once tried full direction of every action, with the Israelites. It was a failure. My interposition always was a failure. Whenever I take part, disasters ensue. Man has never been so wicked, cruel, treacherous, and inhuman, as when he was inspired by me. So I kept reducing the amount and directness of my interposition, and now have abdicated, and intend to leave man alone. No doubt my name will be invoked to excuse all manner of crimes, but I shall not be there. Besides, man was finding me out. The rottenness of my incursions into human affairs was getting apparent—too obvious. Historians, Scientists, Atheists, Free-thinkers, have shown how much better the world would be without my meddling, and I am convinced they are right. I have set man against man. I ought merely to have spoken the creative word, and then left the earth alone, and man to his own ways, as Zeus advised me. It would have been best. I made confusion worse confounded. I only succeeded in making the tangle more

involved. I left behind a bigger muddle for man to clear up than there was before. I have failed, so I am going to keep absolutely out of human concerns. I am glad some of your wise men have the courage to show that life would be happier without me. When all people realize that, I too shall be happy, for I shall be relieved of all responsibility."

"Yes," I assented. "James Stephens wrote: 'That star was always wrong, and from the start I was dissatisfied.'"

"True," agreed God heavily. "But I cannot destroy it now. I feel sure I have taken the wisest course—to stand aside and let man work out his own destiny. He can do it, if he will but leave me out of his calculations and trust entirely to his own resources, as Rationalists and Freethinkers tell him to do."

God sighed, as if the memory of man's blood-stained career weighed on his mind. Then he resumed. "Yes, man has a wonderful destiny if he will trust himself; but there is one vital principle; he must realize his possibilities as well as his limitations."

"But the War," I urged.

"It is a sad business," replied God, "and I feel largely responsible, because I can trace the causes back for centuries. I am not solely or chiefly responsible. I blame man for trusting too much to authority. If you allow one man to dominate millions, evil is bound to follow. No man is good enough to exercise dominance over others. All should be free and equal, as I created them. Man has practised too much the vice of obedience, and is now paying the price—for vice brings its consequences. Authority has raged rampant on earth, and should have been checked by the virtue of disobedience. Man has yet to learn the supreme duty of rebellion. I hurled Lucifer out of heaven for disobedience and revolt, but I see now that he was right, both in his reasons and actions. I regret it, but cannot undo the past."

"Kaiser Wilhelm," I hinted.

"He's not the only one," returned God, scornfully.

"There are dozens of Kaisers, in every walk of life and in every country. I have fetched down many such, but ignorant man allows others to arrogate the same pretensions. Man will know better some day. He is learning by bitter experience."

God meditated for some minutes; then I said, "So you think mankind capable of rejuvenating itself and making the earth habitable?"

"Certainly. But it is an enormous task. There is so much lumber to clear away before the constructive work can begin. He can do it, if only he will cease calling on me and tolerating supermen, and shift for himself. I am sick of man's prayers and praises. It got unbearable, seated on that throne, listening to the never-ending stream of cries and wants and pretences. In this spot I never hear the prayers. The listening angels bring me a *precis*, but I anticipate the day when nothing will come up the tube but the sound of man working and talking fraternally. Then will be joy in heaven."

"Are there no dissentients from this new arrangement of heaven?" I queried.

"Very few. We are satisfied, and shall be contented when humanity takes care of itself, and forgets us. The leading dissentient is my Son. He has a quaint idea that some day all the world will believe in him and call upon him."

"No sign of that," I commented.

"Not in the least. The earth gets less Christian and less religious. The day will come when the only religion professed will be that of living healthily and doing good."

"May that day be soon," said I, fervently.

"Is that a prayer?" asked God, starting in alarm.

"No!" I said, emphatically. "Unless to myself."

"That's all right," said Yahweh, settling comfortably back in his seat. "I was afraid — But to return to my Son. After I vacated the throne, I found him practising on it, with the apostles bowing down, except Thomas. "*Respice finem*," I said to him, "Beware the rope's end."

God laughed, and resumed: "That offended him. He has sulked ever since. He has no sense of humour. I believe he has a hankering for some more worlds to be created, for him to redeem."

"Of course, you won't do so."

"Not likely! One was enough. I'd rather —"

At this point I caught sight of a solemn, sad-faced figure coming towards us through the trees. I rose hastily and withdrew, whilst God's features assumed a comical look of bored resignation as he saw the cause of my hasty flight.

A. R. W.

Virgil and Dante.

II.

(Concluded from p. 362.)

IF we consider the normal life of a man to be seventy years, we shall find that Dante begins his stupendous task exactly midway, at the age of thirty-five. At this period he describes himself as lost in the middle of a dark wood. He is beset by a leopard, a lion, and a she-wolf; and the shade of Virgil appears, "hoarse from long silence," and protects Dante from these animals. When he recognizes his presence, he exclaims:—

"Thou art my master and my author; thou alone art he from whom I took the good style that hath done me honour." That, with other words of praise seems to us to be a very generous appreciation. *Let us not forget that it is in the midst of peril that Virgil is greeted by Dante.* Leaving aside the various interpretations which may be made as to the meaning or symbology of the animals, we come to another outburst, made, let us note, in the extremity of danger:—

Poet, I beseech thee by that God whom thou knowest not: in order that I may escape this ill and worse,

Lead me where thou now hast said, so that I may see the Gate of St. Peter, and those whom thou makest so sad.

What patronage! By that God whom thou knowest not!—and those whom thou makest so sad. Do you not see, my courteous readers, in what a tangle we find ourselves when we try to take a just survey of the Catholic and Pagan? Here is one enjoying the guidance of another, and at the same time indicating his secular limitations. It is a trick as old as the hills, and none know it better than Freethinkers. Oh, yes, say our opponents; Bradlaugh was not a bad sort of man, but he lacked faith—he did not know God. Now, nobody but a self-centred Christian would be capable of such a charge. Patronage, with a slight hint of ignorance concerning those affairs about which they themselves cannot agree. "By that God whom thou knowest not —" Yes, with our minds fresh with the tale of Æneas, we emphatically assert that Virgil, the gentle, the tender poet, did not need to be inspired by Dante's God when he wrote of his Trojan hero. We quote from Dryden's translation:—

Haste, my dear father! ('tis no time to wait)
And load my shoulders with a willing freight,
Whate'er befalls, your life shall be my care;
One death, or one deliverance, we will share.
My hand shall lead our little son; and you,
My faithful consort, shall our steps pursue.

We think that Dante might have gone further and fared worse in his search for true nobility. The times have not changed. Noble actions cannot spring from man unless he be in touch with those higher powers, say our friend the enemy. In the meantime, those higher powers may mean one God, three gods, a woman, or any interpretation of divinity to suit the occasion—or audience. We are tempted to ask whether Æneas, on his flight from Troy, would have received the same masterly treatment from the hand of Dante? Any favourable answer is doubtful. In the acrid fumes of the mediævalist's mind we shall seek in vain, for Catholic mysticism makes this world of shadows more mysterious without offering anything to fortify us on the grand voyage.

A great desire to smile overcomes us when we find ourselves in the first circle of hell. Bear with us, readers, for brief will be our stay. This place contains the spirit of those men, women, and children who died without baptism or Christianity. A child, pulling off the legs of a fly, could not be more spiteful than the one who busied himself with this bosh. Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan are here. Socrates, Plato, Democritus, are also in limbo. We trust we shall never be found in worse company. The second circle contains Dido, Cleopatra, and Helena. And so the poet, in his genius, continues through the Inferno. In canto vii., Dante notices many that are tonsured, who were once high dignitaries of the Church. Dante was, indeed, a most thorough man. Of them he says, "Ill-giving and ill-keeping has deprived them of the bright world." Whilst we, as Freethinkers, cannot love our enemies, we do not feel disposed ever to agree with him in his malicious and petty spite.

With artistic fitness, Judas Iscariot is left to the last for treatment in the Inferno. Such mild forms of punishment as walking about hell with head in hand, used as a lantern, is much too good for Judas. Judas, Brutus, and Cassius are champed by the teeth of Cocytus in his triple mouth. To Dante, Virgil says: "That soul up there which suffers greatest punishment is Judas Iscariot, he who has his head within, and outside plies his legs." The Catholic, it seems, would indeed pull off the wings of the fly too. Poor Judas! but a pawn in the great drama—as necessary to the consummation as a scene-shifter on the stage; but for thy betrayal, the world would have been lost! We should be now wallowing in the slough of heathenism but for thy crime. To thee we owe our thanks that we live in the glorious light of the twentieth century and this divine dispensation. Friendless and despised, he whose mission it was to make life more confounded, did thee the honour to leave thy extremities sticking out. For such mercies, in thy name, let us thank him! With these few remarks we will now leave the confines of the Catholic hell, and enter the portals of Purgatorio.

Here the atmosphere is lighter and brighter. Virgil still takes care of Dante, and by some mischance the gentle poet who "knew not God," is made to say that the more of any material thing one man has, the less of it there is for others; whereas the more peace or knowledge or love one has, the more there is for all the others. There is something wrong here, surely. Virgil knew not God, yet he could speak in this manner—in a manner to be endorsed by all those who refuse to have the wooden cross on their mental shoulders.

Again, we quote from R. H. C. in this connection: "A pure Agnostic would so order his life that, whether there is or is not a supreme being, it would make no difference." We venture to suggest that in this respect Virgil has less to fear than the fanatical Dante. We have said that Dante was thorough; his rage and indig-

nation are revealed in the twilight of Purgatorio, in canto xvi. The corruption of human nature cannot be blamed. The evil of the times is caused through the worldliness and ambition of the clergy, who have grafted the sword upon the crook. If this be so, why patronize Virgil. Let us turn to Matthew Arnold. In his essay on Religious Sentiment he says: "Perhaps in Sophocles the thinking-power a little overbalances the religious sense, as in Dante the religious sense overbalances the thinking-power." That, we believe, is a just estimate of Dante. Virgil, personifying worldly wisdom, departs, or is pushed aside by Dante, when danger is no longer near. Upward and onward he mounts towards his beloved Beatrice, among the clouds of mysticism which are meaningless—to us, who grovel on the earth, surrounded by societies for the prevention of cruelty to children and animals; with our schemes for keeping the poor alive; with our culture, which produces little else but a mass of picture papers for those whose power of thinking is gone.

We conclude this short study of Pagan and Catholic by concluding very little. If we have broken ground on this subject, we are satisfied. We are convinced that the rich fields of classicism invite us as Freethinkers, and that the clouds of mysticism do not repel us if we be worthy of our name. The time for our venture in the latter sphere is not yet. There are too many ugly phases of life; there is discord, there is hatred, there is disorder, and all happening in a half-blind stumble from the cradle to the grave. When Freethinkers *do* advance, we trust they will spare their enemies all the exquisite tortures existing in the imagination of Dante. We trust, did we say? That is one of the lessons reposing in our negation. Our positive philosophy forbids us to imitate those whose race is nearly run, thank Heaven! and our place is with the gentle Virgil, who secularized hell, and made earth the place where Nature could—

A full return of bearded harvest yield
A crop so plenteous, as the land to load,
O'ercome the crowded barns, and lodge on ricks
abroad.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

THE TWO FREETHOUGHT RELIGIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In their somewhat blind hatred of the name of religion, English Freethinkers injure their cause by lumping every moral discipline that bears the name in one equal condemnation. Thus they smite their friends without knowing it, and gain, not altogether undeservedly, the reputation of being narrow-minded dissidents, who fight shadows and formula rather than realities. On the other hand, the numerically greatest of the two Atheist religions does injustice to itself by aping Christian affectation and shallowness in the hopeless hope of captivating the dupes of sacrificial cannibalism. The Buddhists make a great mistake in insulting the real or legendary Buddha by pitting him against the almost certainly legendary Christ and calling him Lord and Master—titles of honour invariably associated with sacrificial cannibalism and legendary sacrificial monsters such as Adon Bel and Moloch. On the other hand, these titles are not, so far as I know, applied by the original followers in Asia of their respective fountain heads of wisdom, either by Buddhists or Confucians, or even Mohammedans. Again, to-day, to Euro-Christian folly, Buddhists minimize the Atheistic side of their noble religion, alienating thereby the sympathies of many who would otherwise be disposed to give them a hearing. This, at any rate, in the Hinayana division of Buddhism seems to me a mistake, for the followers of it are quite as explicit in their scepticism about the god-idea as English Freethinkers themselves, and perhaps more so. Not only is

the idea of personal deity explicitly rejected as quite incompatible with Buddhism, but any hankering after deity or deities is considered wholly superfluous, if not detrimental. Thus, in the story "You may go farther and fare worse," the idea of so absolutely impersonal and inconceivable divineness as Brum is admirably satirized. I may also note in passing, one great superiority of the Buddhist religion to Christian cannibalism, viz., that it does not exclude wit, satire, fun, and humour, whereas the latter dreary creed has not a single humorous or witty passage, good, bad, or indifferent. Lastly, the Buddhists have adopted various words such as charity, pity, mercy, and lovingkindness, so besmirched by Christian usage and the practice of these very dubious virtues by Christians, that the nobler creed would do much better in boycotting them altogether, for their transference conveys to Buddhism not a little of the antipathy they confer upon, and conform towards, the arid creed that invented them.

We may admit that Buddhism ascribes as great importance to emotional purity and the elimination of lust, etc., as Christianity; but, at any rate, it refers love to the true source of it, viz., the body and the organs of love, and does not attribute it to a shadowy deity without one or the other. We can infer this with certainty. In the first place, Buddhism recommends the "awakening" one to cultivate a heart of love towards all the organic beings similar to that of a mother to her child, and I need hardly say that maternal affection is more wholly and entirely a bodily function than any other form of it. I can quite understand, indeed, monks and celebrates regarding maternal love as "beastly, sensual, devilish."

But how completely mutually exclusive Christian and Buddhist love can be, is best seen in the Buddhist admission that anyone who has performed the rite of Origen cannot attain to sainthood; whereas a married person can, though with difficulty. Here the close affinity between the higher forms of Hinduism, e.g., the Rajah Yoga and Buddhism, is unmistakable. In both, religion consists not in believing something, but in bringing about an equilibrium between the bodily mental and emotional and the eternal, by practices designed to discipline the former. Thus, in both, castration renders the application of the discipline impossible. Further, the whole scope of Buddhism being the minimizing of suffering, the idea of "perfecting by suffering," i.e., by war, lopping off hands, gouging out eyes, etc., which Christianity fully accepts, sanctions, and sanctifies, is wholly out of place in it.

I have not gone into the physiological theory of the Rajah Yoga which fully justifies these statements, but can do so if you desire it.

W. W. STRICKLAND, B.A., Trin. Coll., Cam.

[We feel compelled to raise a protest against Sir W. W. Strickland's description of English Freethinkers as condemning "every moral discipline." So far as we are aware that is not the case.—ED.]

SCIENTIFIC HISTORIC MATERIALISM VERSUS METAPHYSICS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It was with something like amazement that I perused your front page article in your issue of May 21, under the heading of "Views and Opinions." The *Freethinker* would, one would think, be the last paper to surreptitiously open its pages to admit the contentions of the metaphysical school of thought, and back up the claims of the Supernaturalists.

This, friend Editor, you do in your article. There you reject the theory of causality, indulge the doctrine of free will, and slyly re-introduce Kantian metaphysics. I therefore challenge you to justify these grave admissions with the claims of scientific Atheism. You start out with an illustration of the connection between ideas and revolutions by a reference to the Dublin rising. From that you go on to state that "all revolutions, nay, all reforms, are wrought by ideas. That is the great lesson of history." Then, endeavouring to analyse the nature of an "idea," you say "it comes as near the quality of indestructibility as anything we know." Finally, you say, "the one thing that denies all, and finally conquers all, is the truth which a strong man sees, and for which brave men fight."

All the apologists for Supernaturalism, from before the great German's time down to our present day two-a-penny theologians, have used arguments closely alike to those presented in your statements which I have quoted. To the Religionist, the dynamic factor in human progress is something outside of man and nature, a supernatural force or cause, which he terms God, Spirituality, Eternal Truth, etc. This cause of human progress is to him uncaused, it is free, eternal, and indestructible, and in its qualities and attributes, bears a close resemblance to your "indestructible idea," and your "truth that denies all and conquers all."

The thesis which I place in opposition to all other explanations of human progress is that laid down by the foremost historico-economist of our time, Marx, namely, that ideas and all social institutions (and under these headings come religions, ethics, the family, the State, etc.) are all dependent on, and conditioned by, the economic conditions of human society. I cannot here, without encroaching too much upon your space, elaborate the proofs and argument that buttress this explanation of history, I am only desirous of knowing on what grounds you can hold the untenable position you do, and, therefore, I submit three questions, to which I trust you will be good enough to give a reply.

First.—Will you explain the nature and origin of ideas? You say that the Church and the State build on ideas, and that ideas are not realities, but psychological facts.

Now, the word "psyche," from the Greek, means soul, mind. Are we to take it, then, that a "psychological fact" is a spiritual fact, and, therefore, your terminology is taking an "Obscurantist" flavour? Again, if the Church is built on ideas, and if ideas are, as you state, practically indestructible, may I ask you how you are going to destroy something that is "practically indestructible"? It is no explanation to distinguish between good and bad ideas—a tacit admission of the old fable of God and the Devil—nor does it avail to say to me that the Church represents one of two sets of ideas—those that represent the past—while your set of ideas stand for the future. This is admitting that ideas are not the cause of progress, but are conditioned by something else. If the idea actuated the conditions, how would it be possible for conditions to change and not the idea? Again, you re-utter the contradiction when you say that "ideas are the only agents that can adequately correct the faults of institutions, which even good at their inception become injurious through altered conditions." First you say that ideas are the only agents which correct the faults of institutions, etc., and then you directly proceed to contradict it by saying that these institutions, good at their inception, had become injurious through altered conditions. Now, will you tell me which opinion you adhere to? Do conditions alter ideas or do ideas alter conditions?

Secondly.—Will you explain why you would, if taxed with it, deny the Christian doctrine of free will, and yet you admit the possibility of such an absurdity as the free play of ideas when you state that "the prime condition of progress is the free play of ideas"?

If such a thing as free play of ideas is possible in a universe governed by cause and effect, and conditioned by environment and circumstances, then so is the free play of the will possible. If either are true they rebut the theory of causality; for if ideas and will are free they must be uncaused and unconditioned.

Thirdly.—Will you answer my contention that I previously made, namely, that you have no historical-scientific backing to your metaphysical flights, which are nothing more than toying with Neo-Kantian argumentation and a return to the exploded "Absolute Idea" of Hegel? That the only explanation of history and of human progress that is acceptable to the unbiassed scientific mind is one that has never yet been controverted—the Materialist conception of history. On the ground that the material factor is alone the dominant one, and nothing is "absolute," and "eternal truth" and "indestructible ideas" are fictions and illusions, is the only stand possible to the scientific Atheist?

A. E. COOK.

[We regret we have not the space in which to reply at length to our correspondent's criticism. We can only refer him to a series of articles we wrote on "Freethought and Reform" in the *Freethinker* for May 29, June 5, 12, and 19, 1910. All the points above raised were then dealt with.—ED.]

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INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham Place, W.): 6.30, Public Meeting, following Annual Conference of the N. S. S. Addresses by Messrs. Chapman Cohen, J. T. Lloyd, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, R. H. Rosetti, and F. E. Willis.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): No meetings.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park); 6.30, Stephen Hooper, M.A., a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: No meeting.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Kells and Dales "Religious Ideas"; 6.30, Messrs. Beale, Hyatt, and Kennedy.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): No meeting.

REGENT'S PARK N. S. S.: No meeting.

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