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PRICE TWOPENCE

Nature proposes to herself no aim in her operations, and all final causes are nothing but pure fictions imagined by men.
—SPINOZA.

Views and Opinions.

Elijah the Second.

A curious story appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* for June 22. The account runs thus:—

Information has been received regarding a so-called Christian movement in Nigeria which is likely to have serious consequences.....The movement was initiated by a negro, a false teacher, who styled himself Elijah II., and claimed to perform miracles and even to raise the dead. The movement is described as of a most dangerous character and likely to undermine the Government in the districts where it is prevalent. Many of the more enlightened young men who are looking for something to replace the existing jujus are flocking to the banner of the new prophet, whose teachings are, however, likely to meet with serious opposition from the older men, who are still devoted to their juju.

More definite information is available from an official who has reached England from the districts more immediately affected. He states that the movement is very serious. It has spread to many districts in the interior and probably over 1,000,000 natives have identified themselves with it. Elijah claims to perform over 1,000 miracles daily. Powerful chiefs and common people alike do him reverence, and he retails his bath water as an infallible panacea for all ills. In one of his addresses he claimed to be able to stop the war, and declared that power is now passing from the whites to the blacks.

The movement, which is a kind of negro mahdism, has greatly affected trade, undermined Government authority, and Christian influence, while the fanatics have made a holocaust of a great number of juju articles, including valuable ivory. In retaliation the natives, who do not distinguish between real Christianity and this fraudulent type, seized the children of two native clergymen, and were about to sacrifice them on their new juju when they were rescued by the authorities.

* * *

A Parallel.

Somehow this item of news carries one back a long way. One can imagine the Roman governor of Judæa, about 1900 years ago, writing:—

Information has just been received concerning a new religious movement in this province. The movement has been initiated by one Joshua, a false teacher, who styles himself the Saviour, and who claims to perform miracles, and even to raise the dead. The movement is described as of a most dangerous character, and likely to undermine the Government.....The movement, which is a kind of Jewish mahdism, has greatly affected trade, undermined Government authority and religious influence, etc., etc.

Really, we do not see that this might not as well have been written of early Christianity as of this African Elijah. New movements generally threaten someone or something; they often undermine authority, and authority always writes about them in much the same manner

And we have no doubt but that in this case authority will discover some good reason for suppressing Elijah II.

* * *

Taking Christians at their Word.

There are many interesting features about this new religious outbreak. To begin with, it is an example of the type of mind to which Christian missionary propaganda appeals. The natives, we are told, do not discriminate between "real Christianity and this fraudulent type." But why should they? And in what does the fraud consist? The missionaries have taken to Nigeria a book which bristles with miracles; it also explains that miracles shall accompany those who believe; it narrates how the "voice of God" came to people from time to time, telling them to say and do certain things "in the name of the Lord"; and, presumably, the natives see no reason why, these having once occurred, they should not occur a second time. Elijah the Second has the Bible behind him, and the fault, if any, lies with those who have taken him the Bible. Christians must expect that they will sometimes be taken at their word; and when they tell a less civilized people than themselves that the Bible stories are true, they must not be surprised if their hearers—less sophisticated than themselves—conclude that things which occurred once may occur again. * * *

Miraculous Cures.

It is curious how events repeat themselves in the history of religion. Elijah II. claims to perform miracles and to raise the dead. His bath water is used as a cure for disease. Why, it reads exactly like a chapter from mediæval Christian history! Consider how many miracles were worked by the saints of the Church. Think of the efficacy of their nail-parings and hair-clippings, of contact with their clothing and of pilgrimages to their graves. Jesus himself restored a blind man's sight by rubbing some of his saliva on his eyes. Water in which the ring of St. Remy had been dipped cured lunacy, and the relics of St. Martin were famous for their efficacy in making the sick well. Really, when one thinks of the list of diseases that were cured by the intervention of the Christian saints—St. Ovid, deafness; St. Gervase, rheumatism; St. Gall, tumours; St. Hubert, hydrophobia—one ceases to wonder at the bath-water of this black Elijah being used for much the same purpose. He is in excellent company. Such men as he helped to build up the great Christian Church, and their work appealed to the same kind of intelligence that to-day does him reverence.

* * *

The Primitive Mind.

The advent of this black Christian Elijah does indeed bring us into touch with some of the conditions that lead to the rise of a new religion. We have a mass of people steeped in superstition, and who anticipate the activity of the supernatural on every hand. On these descend another and a "superior" people, claiming as one of the causes of their superiority a religion different in form from, but substantial in essence with, the native

creed. The intrusion of the new creed is enough to arouse doubt of the old belief; but, on the other hand, it requires no greater degree of intelligence or of culture to embrace the new faith than it did to follow the old one. And it not unnaturally happens that some adventurous spirit feels himself called upon to play a part that has been performed over and over again in the course of Christian history. He announces himself as "inspired of God," and he proves his inspiration by the time-honoured method of working miracles. That is the way in which Jesus said his disciples would show their genuineness. It is the way in which the Christian leaders and saints proved the authenticity of their message. It is the appeal direct to the supernatural, in other words, the appeal to ignorance and credulity, the essential of the religious appeal in all ages and under all conditions.

* * *

Candidly, there seems as much warranty for the inspiration of Elijah II. as for that of Elijah I. If Naaman was cured of leprosy by merely dipping into the waters of Jordan, I see no reason why the bath-water of Elijah II. should not prove equally efficacious. If the mere touch of the dead bones of Elisha could raise a man to life, why should not the living ones of this black Messiah prove equally effective? Christians have holy water in the Churches; why should there not be holy water in the bath? The main difference appears to me to be one of quantity only. The quality is the same. And yet I feel that this black Elijah is doomed to suppression. He is threatening trade, and most missionaries will resent that. He threatens established—white—authority, and they will resent that still more. Above all, he is born too late. Five hundred years ago the Catholic Church might have been induced to patronize him, and by recognizing his mission, have brought Elijah and his million followers into the Church. But nowadays, while there are still millions of white Christians on no higher mental level than those Nigerian believers, the leaders of white Christendom no longer believe, and they dislike any movement that lays bare the essentials of their faith. Heine said that one reason for the persecution of the Jews was that Jehovah resented their reminding him that he was only the God of a little Semitic tribe. And certainly none resent more than the modern Christian believer any movement that threatens to exhibit the stuff of which their religion is made.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Menace from Spiritualism."

SUCH is the title of a leading article in the *Church Times* for June 9, the central contention of which is that "Spiritualism of any kind is the ruin of Christian faith." The real meaning of that statement is that it is impossible to be at once a genuine Spiritualist and a devout Christian. What is meant by Spiritualism we are not told, except in vague, ambiguous terms; the whole emphasis being laid on the alleged fact that, whatever definition of it may be adopted, it is a species of superstition, which threatens the very existence of the Christian Church. Among the dangers of Spiritualism is "the peril of an entire mental or moral collapse." The present writer happens to be on terms of close friendship with several ardent Spiritualists, and he can honestly testify that they show no signs whatever of either intellectual or moral decline. The *Church Times* is guilty of bearing false witness when it asserts that "if our Lord's test, 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' is any guide at all, Spiritualism stands con-

demned." The supreme charge brought against it is as follows:—

It is not only an agent for the destruction of character, but it never results in the improvement or the refinement of character. Spiritualism destroys spirituality. It carries, on the other hand, the grossest materialism into the spiritual world. Worse still, there seems every probability that the practice of Spiritualism brings man into immediate communication with devils. Spiritualism starts with the assumption—and it is a pure assumption—that all the powers in the spiritual world are good and friendly to man, and that there is no danger in setting up communication.

Of course, every affirmation concerning the spiritual world rests upon a pure assumption. Nobody possesses a single shred of knowledge about that region, not even that it exists. On this point the *Church Times* is fully as ignorant as *Light*, the organ of the Spiritualist Alliance. The former assumes the existence of devils or diabolical agencies, an assumption that casts a serious reflection upon the moral character of God, as it is he alone who can be held responsible for the Prince of Darkness and his fell designs. To deny the existence of evil spirits is, according to the *Church Times*, to inflict an injury upon the human race. Such teaching is too wonderful for us; we cannot attain unto it. It is to us unthinkable that belief in evil powers behind the veil can be productive of any real benefit to anybody. And yet the *Church Times* has the temerity to tell its readers that "the loss of belief in the powers of evil is the greatest cause of the success of the new Spiritualism." Then comes the most amazing item of information, namely, that this loss of belief in devils is "the lamentable result of the Rationalist movement, the sole success of which has been to destroy in a very large number of people all belief in devils or in diabolical agencies." It is news to Rationalists that Spiritualists are in any degree indebted to them. But this is not true. Rationalists do not believe in the spiritual world at all. To them good and friendly spiritual powers are as non-existent as devils or diabolical agencies.

It seems that belief in evil spirits is as indispensable as belief in Christ. To be saved, we must believe in both. The menace from Spiritualism, then, lies in the fact that it denies the Devil and his angels.

If a person has come to disbelieve entirely in the possibility of possession, he will have no hesitation in running the risk of possession. And if a person does not believe in the existence of evil spirits, he will naturally scorn the suggestion that the practice of Spiritualism may bring him into contact with devils. That it may do so, however, we are firmly convinced.

Our contemporary evidently admits the fundamental truth of Spiritualism, and finds fault with it chiefly, not for what its creed includes, but for what it excludes. Simply because it does not believe in evil spirits, it brings people into contact with devils without their suspecting it, with disastrous consequences. It is this that makes it "an agent for the destruction of character," and that accounts for its never resulting "in the improvement or the refinement of character." But so far as it goes, it is admittedly true. There are clergymen who swallow it without a qualm. The writer of the leader says:—

It is this insidious infiltration of strange doctrines into Church teaching that causes us the gravest disquiet. Those who study popular theology know that this is a real danger, though it is one to which the bishops are not yet awake. But there are books published of wide circulation which are very dangerous in tendency. The clergy of the Church of England are not strong in theological knowledge because they seldom get a really scientific training in theology. The consequence is that

they sometimes assume a liberty of speculation that often becomes license.

Let it be thoroughly understood, then, that Spiritualism is a menace to the Church, not because it is a false system, but because, being true in the main, it leads men astray on a few points. It over-emphasizes communications with the departed. That there is a hereafter, and that the dead are still alive there, Christians and Spiritualists alike take for granted. "We know enough for the guidance of our lives," the article declares, "but not enough to satisfy all our curiosity." This claim to knowledge we regard as absolutely groundless. We are firmly convinced that the writer of the leading article under review knows positively nothing about the state of the departed and the life after death. We do not need to know anything about another world in order to lead the best and noblest life in this. If the clergy are ingenuous, they will say, with Tennyson:—

We have but faith; we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see.

What we maintain is that Christianity and Spiritualism are both rooted in superstition. We are told that "England is full of mourners at the present day, many of them with no strong Christian faith, but with more than a tinge of superstition, and eager to grasp at any chance to communicate with the departed." It is such persons that are "often an easy prey for the Spiritualist or Theosophist teacher," the *Church Times* assures us; but we venture to add that such are the people over whom the priests of the Christian Church have always exercised their benumbing sway. The consolations which Christianity offers to the bereaved are as illusory as they can be, for they are based upon unverified and unverifiable assumptions. The message of supernatural religion is this: "Your loved ones live on in the presence of the all-loving Father on high, and bliss ineffable is their lot." We admit that such a message ministers inexpressible comfort to those who can verily believe it; but it is incontrovertible that we do not possess a solitary scrap of evidence of its truth. Nature recognizes no hereafter, and she is supreme. The parsonry, who have the temerity to comfort the mourners with the assurance of Divine sympathy, and of a happy reunion by-and-bye, she smiles on, because "they read her with infant eyes"; and they are quite as superstitious as the Spiritualists whom some of them so heartily condemn.

The present writer is neither a Christian nor a Spiritualist, and he is convinced that the arguments used against the latter apply with equally discrediting force against the former. The divine revels in all sorts of speculation within the limits of his creed; but outside those limits, speculation is said to be "very dangerous." Speculations about heaven and hell are perfectly legitimate so long as they are nominally based upon or suggested by Bible passages. The Rev. Arthur Chambers has published book after book chock-full of interesting speculations about the spiritual world and its affairs. He is not ashamed to teach that spiritual beings have been seen, that spiritual manifestations have been witnessed, and that spiritual voices have been heard. He speaks familiarly of *visible* angels, as well as of other *visible* spiritual beings, and of *invisible* spiritual beings. He undertakes to inform us where the spiritual world is, and what different types of life and experience prevail in it. One of his works has passed through no fewer than one hundred and twenty editions, and it has been translated into practically all the languages of Europe. The Christian public takes infinite delight in speculations, and the wilder they are the more it enjoys them. But the *Church Times* denounces Spiritualists simply because they indulge in speculations about "the state of the departed and the life after death," and warns the Anglican

clergy against tickling the interest of the laity by groundless speculations, but to devote themselves to the preaching of the Faith. We venture to point out that the Faith itself is nothing but a collection of stereotyped speculations, as groundless as any that find a place in the present-day creed of the Spiritualists.

The conclusion to which we inevitably come is that Christianity and Spiritualism belong to the same general category, and that the arguments which Christian divines forge against "the new Spiritualism, which professes to be a religion," are of equally disastrous force against their own positions.

J. T. LLOYD.

An Open Letter to Eve.

A Cool Epistle for the Hot Weather.

To Mrs. Adam, London, England, 1916.
Late Garden of Eden.

MY DEAR RELATIVE,—

The Bible informs me that you were the first woman, and the mother of the human race. If this be so, you are, necessarily, our first female blood-relation. In fact, you are a relative of my own—true, a very distant one, but still a relation. The fountain of my far-off filial affection is stirred to its profoundest depths, and I cannot rest until I have written to you. My affection is not unmixed with admiration. Your "husband," Adam, need, however, be under no misapprehension. I am writing, if your biography be accurate, some six thousand brief summers after your appearance on this earth. I have no portrait which would serve to give me any idea of your beauty, and Mr. Moses, the Oriental gentleman who wrote a partial account of your life, has, unfortunately, omitted to tell us of your personal appearance. We could have dispensed, easily, with poor Moses' account of his own funeral for a few salient facts about yourself.

Whether you were a blonde or a brunette must ever be a conjecture. Even the colour of your eyes is lost in the twilight of history. You must, however, have been divinely fair. The Garden of Eden must have been more delightful because of your presence, the earth brighter where you walked. The flowers were never so beautiful till they were held in your hand, or twined in your hair.

That you were a most exceptional person is proved by the statement that you started life at full age. It was, doubtless, unpleasant to commence existence by being carved out of Adam's rib whilst he was sleeping, but you will be glad to hear that subsequent operations under chloroform have been of immense service to your suffering children. You will also be pleased to remember that your own courtship was the shortest on record.

I can well believe you were a pattern of the domestic virtues; but, pardon me for remarking, your first attempt at cooking was a failure. You not only cooked trouble for Adam about some apples, but your most distant descendants are still suffering from the annoyance. Permit me to mention that you were scarcely more successful at dressmaking. All the clothes yourself and Adam wore at first were the close of day and the mantle of night. Even fig-leaves are no longer in the fashion. This could scarcely annoy you, for you had no washing to do on Mondays. Nor did you have to sew buttons on your husband's shirts, patch his trousers, get his overcoat out of pawn, or even argue with him concerning a long golden hair on his manly shirt-front. You had, really, much to be thankful for.

One regret I have, however, and that is that Adam and yourself both got into trouble at the time of the first

assize. I shall not pursue this unpleasant matter, for it led to your partner losing his situation in the Garden of Eden. It must have caused you much worry and brought on financial embarrassment. Doubtless it accounts for the fact of your never being married to Adam. It is a thousand pities that he could never afford to pay for a marriage certificate; because, as a result, the whole human race is illegitimate.

Do not think for a moment I am blaming you in any way. Evidently it did not shorten Adam's life, for, we are told, that he lived to the very ripe age of nine hundred and thirty years. I only hope that he was not afflicted with gout or rheumatism during his declining centuries. I trust that he was tolerably well; he was intolerably old.

I notice that the trouble with Adam's employer appears to have been caused by a talking snake. You listened to him and the fat was in the fire. My own opinion is that the snake knew his business. He acted like our present-day clergy, who get hold of the women, and know that the men will follow.

I would have written sooner, but your address is not in any geography or directory I am acquainted with. Kind regards to Adam and the boys. Probably, I shall never see you, but if you will kindly forward your present address to the editor of this paper, I will get counsel's opinion on that left-handed marriage of yours, and see if there is any way of overcoming a grave ethical difficulty.

I am, Madam,
Yours to command,
MIMNERMUS.

Nietzsche and His Critics.

VI.

(Continued from p. 412.)

Thanks to the conception of some writers, Nietzsche and the Nietzscheans are gigantic brutes, a combination of Genghis Khan and Bismarck, terrifying apparitions, wearing moustachious like yataghans, eyes rolling in frenzy, with a philosophy that ranged from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter, and with a consuming Atheism as a side attraction. Need we protest that this is Nietzsche misled, Nietzsche butchered to make a stupid novelist's holiday?—*J. Huneker, "Egoists,"* p. 256.

Sin is a Jewish invention. This oriental God in heaven does not mind the natural consequences of a deed, if only His slave rolls repenting in the dust; sin is a crime against Him, *not* against mankind! How much more admirable is the Greek conception, compared to which ours is that of slaves. A Jesus Christ was only possible in a Jewish landscape over which hangs continually the gloomy and majestic thundercloud of the angry Jahveh. Only there could the rare and sudden outburst of a single ray of sunshine be held to be a miracle of "Love," as a ray of the most undeserved mercy.

In all periods of Nietzsche's career we find his predilection for classical culture, with its veneration and its breeding of great individuals, its naturalness in life and custom, its simplicity in scientific thought, and its measure in art.—*M. A. Mugge, "Friedrich Nietzsche,"* pp. 181-317.

As we have seen, Nietzsche was well acquainted with Wagner's music. He had met Wagner himself, and had been fascinated by his personality. Wagner, in his turn, seems to have been attracted to the young genius, and had invited him to visit him. Wagner at this time was living at Tribschen, not far from Lucerne, within easy distance of Bale, and Nietzsche had not long taken up his position at Bale before he visited Wagner at his home, and was enlisted as one of the fighters in defence of the new music, against Wagner's innumerable enemies in Germany. In August, 1869, Nietzsche writes to a friend:—

I have found a man who personifies to me as no one else does that which Schopenhauer calls "the genius,"

and who is entirely pervaded with that wonderful heart-stirring philosophy. Such an absolute idealism prevails in him, such a deep and stirring humanism, such a lofty seriousness of life, that in his neighbourhood I feel as near something divine.¹

Nietzsche spent many happy week-ends at Tribschen; so intimate a friend of the family did he become that Cosima, Wagner's wife—the daughter of Liszt—commissioned him to buy Christmas gifts for the children. To Wagner, says Schure,—

he dedicated his first book—*The Birth of Tragedy*—with a reference to his "sublime protagonist." Perhaps he conceived of the reformation of Germany by a school of philosophy, æsthetics, and morals, of which Schopenhauer would be the honoured ancestor, Wagner the artist and manager, while he, Nietzsche, would be the prophet and supreme law-giver.²

Nietzsche undoubtedly lavished more affection on Wagner than on anyone else. As a Freethinker and revolutionary, Wagner had been forced to fly from Saxony, and no doubt this appealed to Nietzsche, who idealized him and made a hero of him, as he did all his friends; and then, when he found their human weakness and failings, he was disappointed. It was so with Wagner. It was about this time that Ludwig, King of Bavaria, adopted the ideas of Wagner, and invited him to Munich to complete the *Ring des Nibelungen*. After this, rumours began to reach Nietzsche that the Master was about to compose a Christian Mystery—a *Parsifal*, a drama founded on the story of the Holy Grail. This was too much for Nietzsche, who knew what Wagner's real opinions on religion were. "Nothing was so displeasing to Friedrich Nietzsche," says Halevy, "as a return to Christianity; nothing seemed to him more weak or cowardly than such a capitulation to the problems of life."³ As Mr. Huneker well says:—

Nothing could be more unfair than to ascribe to Nietzsche petty motives in his breaking off with Wagner. There were minor differences, but it was *Parsifal* and its drift towards Rome that shocked the former disciple. What he wrote of Wagner and Wagnerism may be interpreted according to one's own views, but the *Parsifal* criticism is sound. That parody of the Roman Catholic ceremonial and ideas, and the glorification of its psychopathic hero, with the consequent degradation of the idea of womanhood, Nietzsche saw and denounced. "I despise everyone who does not regard *Parsifal* as an outrage on morals," he cried. To-day his denunciations are recognized by wise folk as wisdom.⁴

Wagner sent Nietzsche a copy of *Parsifal*, which crossed a copy of Nietzsche's *Human, All-Too-Human*, just then published. Neither acknowledged the receipt of their copy.

In 1870 war was declared between France and Germany. Nietzsche joined an ambulance corps, and was sent to the Front. Arrived there, he received orders to convey a batch of wounded to Carlsruhe. He set out, and was shut up for three days and three nights with eleven men, lying in a market cart closed fast against the cold and the rain. Two were attacked by diphtheria; all had dysentery. When he arrived at Carlsruhe he had contracted both complaints. His ambulance companion nursed him devotedly. His war career was ended. The horrors he had seen made an indelible impression upon him, but he would never talk about it. In the darkest hours he never flinched from his principles. Writing to his friend Gersdorff, who was fighting in France, he says:—

Yes, that conception of things which is common to us has undergone the ordeal by fire. I have had the same

¹ M. A. Mugge, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 18.

² Quoted by J. M. Kennedy, *Nietzsche*, p. 29.

³ Halevy, *The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 173.

⁴ Huneker, *Egoists*, p. 252.

experience as you. For me, as for you, these weeks will remain in my life as an epoch in which each one of my principles re-affirmed itself in me; I would have risked death with them.....Now I am at Naumburg again, but poorly restored to health so far. The atmosphere in which I have lived has been long over me like a dark cloud; I heard an incessant lamentation.¹

His health was shattered, and before he wholly recovered, he went back to Bale to take up his duties again. He fell ill, suffering from violent neuralgia, insomnia, eye troubles, and indigestion, which forced him to take a two months' rest at Lugano. In 1875 his health broke down again, worse and worse grew his health, until finally he broke down completely, and had to resign his professorship in 1879. The Senate of Bale University, in a very generous letter, thanked him for his services and granted him a pension equivalent to his initial salary.

Nietzsche went to St. Moritz, in the Swiss Ober-Engadine, and slowly recovered a little, but by Christmas his suffering had become almost unbearable, and he thought death was near, yet he lived through it, and a stay at Venice in the following spring had a most beneficial influence on him. After this we find him drifting from place to place, a solitary and restless wanderer, mostly in Italy, staying nowhere very long, with the exception of Venice, Genoa, Nice, and Sils-Marie, in the Engadine.

To those who picture Nietzsche as a bloodthirsty, unfeeling aristocrat, of low morals, leading a depraved life, the following account of his mode of living at this time, as given by Halevy, will be a revelation:—

He wished to make a stay at Genoa. After some trouble he found a perfect home: a garret, with a very good bed, at the top of a staircase of a hundred and four steps, in a house which looked out on a path so steep and stiff that no one passed that way, and that grass grew between the paving-stones—Salita delle Battistine, 8. He arranged his life in a manner as simple as his domicile, and thus realized one of his many dreams. Often he used to say to his mother: "How do the common people live? I would like to live like them." His mother would laugh. "They eat potatoes and greasy meat; they drink bad coffee and alcohol....." Nietzsche sighed: "Oh, those Germans!" In his Genoese house, with its poor inmates, customs were different. His neighbours lived soberly. He imitated them and ate sparingly; his thought was quicker and livelier. He bought a spirit lamp, and, under his landlady's teaching, learnt how to prepare his own risotto, and fry his own artichokes. He was popular in the big house. When he suffered from headaches, he had many visitors, full of concern for him. "I need nothing," he would say, simply: "Sono Contento." In the evening, in order to rest his eyes, he would lie stretched out on his bed, without light in the room. "It is poverty," opined the neighbours; "the German professor is too poor to burn candles." He was offered some; he was grateful, smiled, and explained the circumstances. They called him *Il Santo, il piccolo Santo*. He knew it and it amused him.²

He drew up for himself a rule of life, as follows:—

An independence that offends no one; a mollified, veiled pride, a pride which does not discharge itself upon others, because it does not envy their honours or their pleasures, and is able to stand the test of mockery. A light sleep, a free and peaceful bearing, no alcohol, no illustrious or princely friendships, neither women nor newspapers, no honours, no society—except with superior minds; in default of them, the simple (one cannot dispense with them; to see them is to contemplate a sane and powerful vegetation) dishes which are most easily prepared, and, if possible, prepared by one's

self, and which do not bring us into contact with the greedy and lip-smacking rabble.

On jumping out of bed he would pack his haversack with a bundle of notes, a book, and some bread and fruit, and start on the road. "As soon as the sun is risen," he wrote, "I go to a solitary rock near the waves and lie out on it beneath my umbrella, motionless as a lizard, with nothing before me but the sea and the pure sky."

Such was the life of this Atheist, this denouncer of Christian morality. And yet the pious pretend that the Atheist only wishes to abolish religion in order to gratify his passions, and lead a dissolute and debauched life. Probably very few of these slanderers, if they lived among the lower classes of an Italian town, would be given the title of "Il Santo" (The Saint); it would more probably be "canting hypocrite." W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

"THE FLORAL LOVES OF SHAKESPEARE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to the interesting communication in last week's "Sugar Plums," I observe that your correspondent intimates that Shakespeare probably does refer to "the chaste snowdrop, the forget-me-not, the delicate lily of the valley." But evidence for this alleged probability is not furnished, although it may exist.

Your correspondent, however, declares that Shakespeare does mention the foxglove "by its rustic name of 'dead men's fingers.'" But I am afraid that this assertion is open to question. The passage in Hamlet to which attention is directed runs as follows:—

There is a willow grows ascaunt the brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There, with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.

I was certainly unaware that the foxglove was known in rustic circles as "dead men's fingers," although the blossoms are sometimes called "dead men's bells." In Ireland, Wales, and other parts of the British Isles, there was a widespread belief, not yet extinct, that the foxglove flowers formed the habitation of elves, fairies, and other spirits, which presumably accounts for the name of dead men's bells.

The foxglove is a species of the genus *Digitalis*, and its botanical term was, I believe, conferred upon it by Fuchs, the German botanist, after whom the fuchsia is named. Its Latin term refers to its finger-shaped flowers, while its German name, "Fingerhut" (thimble), bears a similar significance.

But there is nothing in this to suggest that the foxglove and dead men's fingers are identical. According to the *Century Dictionary*, dead men's fingers is really the hand orchis, "so-called from its pale hand-like tubers. The name is also given to other species of orchis and some other plants."

Another, and an even higher authority is the monumental *New English Dictionary*, edited by Professor Sir J. A. H. Murray. Under "Dead man's (men's) fingers" occurs the following:—

A local name for various species of Orchis, properly those of the palmate tubers, as *O. maculata* and *latifolia*; in Shakespeare, probably, the early purple orchis.

Moreover, there is nothing in the foxglove to suggest the "grosser name" which the rude shepherds gave to dead men's fingers. But if your correspondent will turn to any illustrated standard work on Botany, he will note in the form of the tubers of the orchis a very striking resemblance to certain essential organs of human procreation. In the excellent drawing in *Chambers's Encyclopædia* this resemblance is unmistakable, and I have heard the hand-orchis referred to in the Midlands by a name which is, perhaps, unprintable.

¹ Halevy, *Life of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 93.

² Halevy, *Life of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 224.

Again, the orchis genus takes its title from the Greek term for testicle, and orchotomy is the technical term for castration.

T. F. PALMER.

"SCIENTIFIC HISTORICAL MATERIALISM VERSUS METAPHYSICS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Arch accuses me of wasting valuable time and energy in formulating false antitheses; this I deny, but perhaps it was the somewhat bald manner in which I placed the two questions, "Do conditions alter ideas? or ideas alter conditions?" that lent colour to Mr. Arch's accusation; but this was due to an effort to be brief and save the Editor's space.

I hold a brief for historical Materialism, not for the "vulgar" Materialism of certain mechanical Determinists, and I desire Mr. Arch not to confuse the two. "Vulgar" Materialists pretend to see in material interests a cause or an explanation of all the actions of all individuals—a position evidently not in accord with facts.

Historical Materialism, on the other hand, maintains, with the support of an immense amount of facts and data, that the dominant factor in the history of human society is the economic one, and that such human institutions as the form of government, the family, religion, ethics, science, literature, etc., are all conditioned and influenced by technical development in the arts of food and wealth production. Simplified, it means that a superior, improved, and more scientific form of food and wealth production produces a corresponding improvement or alteration in the human institutions enumerated above.

I have never tried to prove that the economic factor was the only factor in human progress, but simply that it is the dominant one. I do not say that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be traced to the economic condition of Shakespeare's times, but what I will point out is that he, the "master mind of all time," could no more shake himself free from the ideology of the dominant economic class of his time than he could fly; for example, the contemptuous manner in which Shakespeare treats the labouring class of his time, and his vile misrepresentation of the Peasant's Revolt and of Jack Cade in his play, the second part of *King Henry Sixth*.

Historical Materialism cannot be rejected because it does not explain every action of every individual; it does not set out to do that, but simply to explain why human society, with its institutions, has changed from stage to stage; to wit, from serfdom to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism, etc.; with an increase in civilization, and a progression in ideals and culture corresponding therewith.

Touching on the topic of Freethought and Freewill, I challenge Mr. Arch to answer my previous question, as to how, logically, a Freethinker can attack the Christian doctrine of Freewill whilst asserting the possibility of Freethought. The criticism of one applies equally to the other. It is Mr. Arch, not I, who equivocates on this topic; can Mr. Arch truthfully assert that any one single thought that has flitted through his brain has ever been free, in a genuine sense of the word. Can thought exist independent of matter? are not the very thoughts I am putting on paper now conditioned—even if in a semi-detached manner—by the stage of society I live in?

I could not have thought thus had I been born in some wild Central African tribe or in feudal days.

Mr. Arch, like Kant, and like too many present-day "Freethinkers," has never got out of the dilemmas and contradictions of the theologians, to judge from the manner in which he levels Kant's question, "How are *a priori* judgments possible?" Like Kant, he is living in pre-Darwin days, but whereas Kant could not help the date of his birth, there is not that excuse for Mr. Arch and modern "Freethinkers."

Surely Mr. Arch does not want me to think that he endorses the theologian's creed that things "are now as they have ever been, and ever will be, Amen"; but does he not see that that is where he is drifting. Mathematics are not a fiction, but eternal mathematics are; mathematical science, like chemistry, like astronomy, etc., has not always

existed, but has been slowly built up and improved as the human race has progressed.

To talk about *a priori* judgments is to accept the view prevalent in Kant's days, when the conception of evolution had scarce been reached. There must have been a time in those far gone ages, before man commenced his tortuous upward path, when our primæval animal ancestor had not the ability to think, but only possessed the predecessor of thought—his inherited and acquired instincts.

Kant's daring concept of a timeless and spaceless world of pure spirit, where the laws of nature, of cause and effect, did not operate, but where the eternal moral law held sway, saying to man, this thou shalt do, and this thou shalt not, is subject to the same objections and criticism as the idea of a Supreme Being of the religionist, as Mr. Cohen's ideas of Eternal Truth and Indestructible Ideas, and as Mr. Arch's "something inherent in Nature" (but outside of Nature's laws, as per his denial of my applications of the theory of the Materialist conception of history), and they must inevitably fall before the fire of scientific critical knowledge.

Where does the "Freethought" movement stand? it rejects historical Materialism, and rejects (apparently) supernaturalism. But when a "Freethinker" attacks the Socialist theory of historical Materialism, he uses the arguments and takes up the metaphysical position of the supernaturalist and *vice versa*; when a "Freethinker" attacks the theories and arguments of the metaphysical religionist, he uses the arguments and takes up the position of historical Materialism. I am therefore not satisfied with Mr. Arch's answer to my first letter, he neither admits nor disproves my position, but simply indulges in intellectual juggling.

Will he tell me now whether he stands with neo-Kantians and the metaphysicians, or with scientific historical Materialists, or whether he is like some of the pious pseudo-scientists, endeavouring to reconcile the irreconcilable and gloss over the contradictions?

A. E. COOK.

Acid Drops.

Everyone who has studied the Irish question knows that the principal difficulty in the way of a settlement is a religious one. The avowed ground of distrust between the two sections of the population is a difference of religion. Realizing this, we are not at all surprised to find the Irish bishops opposing the proposed Home Rule settlement. We believe they would, if they dared, oppose *any* settlement; and this for the reason that a settlement of the Irish question in a way that would satisfy the Irish people as a whole would go a long way towards breaking the power of the priests in Ireland.

Consider the position. The religion of England is mainly Protestant, that of Ireland mainly Roman Catholic. The opposition of the Irish to English government is thus sharpened by a difference of religion. This has served to identify the religious and the national question, and the priesthood has been shrewd enough to strengthen its position as a priesthood by standing forward as the champion of national aspirations. And so long as Ireland remains discontented, this identification remains. The power of the priest in Ireland is very largely based on national discontent. Obviously, then, one consequence of a settlement of the Irish question will be a separation of these two issues. The priest will have to make his appeal to the people as a priest, and the Church is well aware of what that will mean. The separation of secular from religious issues has everywhere meant the decline of the priestly power, and there is every reason for expecting the same thing to happen in Ireland.

But this makes the position of the priesthood in Ireland a difficult one. If the priests oppose the Nationalist aspiration they lose the support of the people at once. If they support it—in spirit as well as in speech—they know that the beginning of Home Rule is the forerunner of their downfall. They are between the Devil and the deep sea, and we are convinced that no class desires Home Rule for Ireland less than the Irish Roman Catholic clergy. So one moral of the situation remains clear—settle the Irish

national question, and you will have gone a long way towards breaking the power of the priests. And no one knows that better than the priest himself.

The press is trying to make an hero of the Bishop of London. A Sunday paper says he "was under shell-fire for a time last year at Ypres." We were under the impression that the Bishop preached sermons at the back of the fighting-lines.

Education by posters is proceeding apace. One placard counsels us to "Eat no eggs," and another informs us that to wear new clothes is "bad form." The question is, How can one eat no eggs? One can abstain from eating any eggs, but the other feat is impossible. As for the dress appeal, ladies seem to be as fashionable as ever, and the clergy appear to possess a plentiful supply of military uniforms to impress their congregations.

What a lack of humour religion usually implies. At the entrance to one of the City churches there is a notice, "Three Steps to God," and a few yards away another notice, leading to the church vaults, "Come in and Learn to Shoot."

Dr. J. Fort Newton, who is so soon going to enlighten London, stands in sore need of enlightenment himself. In a recent sermon he says that "the being of God is a closed question," and that "there are no more philosophic Atheists." Does he not know that there are upwards of five hundred million Buddhists in the world, the bulk of whom are "philosophic Atheists"? Is he not aware that many university chairs are filled by men who avow that they are "philosophic Atheists"? Has he not discovered that the majority of our leading scientists are philosophic unbelievers in God? We beg to assure him that the being of God is anything but a closed question; and when his knowledge of the world is a little more extensive, as well as a little deeper, he will see how entirely erroneous his present view is.

As a rule, Dr. Newton is dignified and polite in his allusions to those who differ from him, but in the sermon now before us (*Christian Commonwealth*, June 14), he has experienced a fall from grace. He admits that "there are practical Atheists who live as if God were not"; but such an admission is itself an insult, because they "who live as if God were not," must either disbelieve in his existence, which means that they are "philosophic Atheists," or they must believe that he is, and live as if he were not, which signifies that they are essentially dishonest and hypocritical. Then comes the following open and gross affront: "Also, there are a few speculative Atheists who are as innocent of philosophic insight as though they were babes." We hope that lack of acquaintance with the best works on Atheism alone accounts for the use of such undignified, offensive, and utterly unconvincing language.

What strikes one most forcibly, in this connection, is the utter unscrupulousness of the great majority of the clergy. Prior to the War, Rationalism was described as the quintessence of impotence, as a fact not worth taking into consideration in any serious estimate of the world's condition. Secularists used to be systematically taunted with their numerical insignificance. Now they are authoritatively declared to be numerous and powerful enough to have brought about the biggest and most disastrous war in all history. If the preachers told the truth about us before the War, then they are lying most barefacedly concerning us now. In either case, they are convicted of the crime of deliberately bearing false witness against the people whom they so Christianly hate.

There has been quite a lengthy correspondence in the *Daily Chronicle* on the Union of the Churches. Generally, each one thinks it an admirable thing—provided the other fellow will give in. But the Catholic can't give way to the Protestant, and the Protestant will never give way to the Catholic. The Church of England will not recognize the validity of the Nonconformist ministry, and the Nonconformist replies "you be hanged!" to the Episcopalian. And

now that they have all had their say, and the Lord Mayor, in addition to being photographed inspecting troops—of which he is doubtless as good a judge as we are—has initiated a newspaper correspondence, the whole subject will drop and Christians will continue their quarrelling as cheerfully as ever.

The Church likes to claim men and women of genius. At a Bronte Centenary Service at Haworth, Yorkshire, hymns by Charlotte and Anne Bronte were sung. They do not appear to have so honoured Emily Bronte. Perhaps her fine poem, "No Coward Soul is Mine," was too strong for the congregation.

"The Church has laid it down that it will not become a refuge for shirkers," said the Bishop of London. Presumably, we may now look for a few regiments of athletic clergy-men, instead of a minority of highly paid Army chaplains.

It is good news that our men who were taken prisoners at Kut by the Turks have received "excellent treatment," and that the sick and wounded are likewise well cared for. The Turkish authorities are also preserving the graves of the Australian and British soldiers who fell at Gallipoli. These reports of our Mohammedan enemy read very significantly in the light of the treatment of some of the prisoners of war in Christian Germany.

The *Weekly Dispatch* says "the refusal of the Archbishop of Canterbury to allow lusty and willing curates to take their stand in the trenches alongside the warrior-priests of France has done infinite harm to the Church." There is nothing to prevent "lusty and willing curates," or even vicars, from resigning the Church and joining the Army. As for the French priests, they are compelled to join the Army as non-combatants, and may volunteer for the fighting lines. A small percentage have chosen the latter course.

Mr. Ian Malcolm, M.P., has been to the Front, and, like a good Churchman, sees a deal of religion there. But he has discovered it in the French Army. There was a "tremendous revival of religion in France," he told a Church School Manager, although General Joffre, by the way, failed to notice it. He had seen regiments and battalions bowed in worship, and there were quite 40,000 priests in the trenches. Mr. Malcolm failed to point out that these 40,000 priests were there because France properly made no distinction between priests and laymen. They were all citizens, and all were called upon to render the same service. In this country the clergy are exempt, and while they advise everybody else to enlist, they remain behind themselves. Of course, they explain they would dearly love to go, but they dare not disobey their bishops.

The fact that a Protestant bishop attended the funeral of a Catholic bishop in Ireland has excited the admiration of the *Daily News*. Certainly it is a step in the right direction. In the course of a few more centuries Christians may learn the common decencies of life towards their opponents.

The *Daily Chronicle* recently referred to Mr. Bernard Shaw as "Saint Bernard." Certainly the famous dramatist is chilly in his treatment of religion.

The Young Women's Christian Association, like the kindred organization the Y.M.C.A., has joined the ranks of universal providers, and is appealing for £25,000 for the provision of restaurants and recreation-rooms for women workers. What Secularists these Christians are!

The Rev. R. J. Bryan Marshall, a Nonconformist minister says that "the Church of Christ represents the elite of the human race." Our own observation shows that the Christian gentleman prefers to be represented in church by his wife.

A religious contemporary heads a paragraph "Bishop's Plea for Fast Days." We hope that his lordship does not

wish believers to tread the primrose path to the place so often mentioned in sermons.

An indignant correspondent resents the remark that the clergy work only one day weekly, and says, "the clergy are not lazy men. They are thinking all the time." Judged by this simple standard, even the Weary Willies and Tired Tims are beggars for work.

An advertisement of a seaside resort mentions among its attractions, mixed bathing and nature study. Won't the evangelists crowd the sands?

We publish this week a review of one aspect of Mr. George Bernard Shaw's essay on Christianity, prefaced to his new volume of plays, and we intend writing at length on the subject at a later date. There is, therefore, no intention of criticizing here that production. All we desire is to say a few words on one of his critics. When Mr. Shaw set about advertising his book—much delayed in production by the War—he raised hopes in the breasts of certain sections of Christians that their faith had found a new champion. As a *Christian World* reviewer remarks, "he had seemed to show himself alive to the fascination of Christianity," and this made "one look forward with some eagerness to a more considered pronouncement from him upon the same subject." And now Mr. Shaw, having achieved his purpose of arousing interest in his book, has grievously disappointed his would-be Christian admirers. His essay is, to a Christian, rank blasphemy; it is "an outrage which all persons of right feeling will condemn." Mr. Shaw is also "temperamentally disqualified" for the task of writing about Christianity, because "there are certain subjects which cannot be treated without reverence," of which "Mr. Shaw possesses not an atom."

All this is very illuminating. Before Mr. Shaw wrote his preface, when the *Christian World* was expecting something from the "fascination of Christianity," his essay was awaited with eagerness. But the G. B. S. of the ante-preface period was also the G. B. S. of the post-preface era. The only distinction is that the expected convert turns out to be an incorrigible unbeliever. For the *Christian* Jesus he cares not a brass button. He doesn't even find him interesting, but dismisses him summarily as an insane subject. So "the spectacle of this man of nearly sixty cutting his capers on holy ground" is highly offensive to the *Christian World*. The truth is that there are few "capers" in Mr. Shaw's essay, and nothing of the "cap and bells." We do not agree with his view of Jesus as an amiable social reformer, who later became obsessed with a religious delusion; but criticism such as that noted above is a mere appeal to religious bigotry and prejudice.

The Vicar of Esher has been annoyed because the church clock was stopped by a pigeon that got into the works. Even parsons "get the bird" sometimes.

There was no consideration for conscientious objectors in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and even churches were entered and eligible young men carried off. Much later, John Wesley, whose open-air services were often disturbed by press-gangs, was himself seized whilst preaching in Cornwall. On another occasion the Women at Stockton rescued a young man, and, says Wesley in his Journal, "broke the lieutenant's head, and so stoned him and his men that they ran away."

At a seaside swimming-bath there is an announcement in its scale of charges, "Scholars, not less than twenty in charge of a teacher (including the use of one towel)." One towel for twenty-one bathers! This beats the historic occasion when Christ washed the disciples' feet.

How these Christians love one another! The Government ecclesiastics are very jealous of the work of the Young Men's Christian Association, which is an unsectarian body. The Bishop of Stepney says that when the soldiers return home "it will be no good to give them billiards diluted with

religious thought." Let his lordship try the billiards without the Beatitudes.

The sentence of two years' hard labour, passed on the Sunday-school teacher, James Hill a conscientious objector, has been commuted to 112 days. Doubtless he appreciates the blessing of living in a Christian country.

"There is need to-day for a new religion," says the Bishop of Stepney. Won't the 50,000 parsons in this country be pleased to hear this?

A Sunday paper quotes from Charles Reade: "Not a day passes over the earth but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrows." In the same issue there are pictures of ladies bathing, portraits of seven actresses, and a snapshot of a female cornet-player, eight columns of "society" scandal, and the customary allowance of police and divorce-court news. Evidently the editor knows his Christian public.

It is hard, says a writer in the *Times*, "to keep alive the spiritual passion in days of war." This, we may take it, is a way of saying that religion is not getting the profit from the War that was anticipated. The writer of the article suggests more prayer; and no doubt if enough people could be brought to practice that form of self-hypnotization, religion might reap some advantage. But the War does not make this. In the stress of the War we are made to realize that whatever our needs are, religion is not one of them. At the beginning of the War, when enthusiasm was at its highest, it was "Tipperary" that our soldiers sang, not "God, Our Help in Ages Past." And that fact carried with it considerable significance.

An apostle spoon of Edward VI. period fetched £52 at Christie's Sale Rooms recently, and another of James I., £50. Eight others averaged £25 each. This is a typical example of war-time economy among the "upper ten thousand." The spoons used at the "Last Supper" would hardly fetch higher prices.

Adversity makes strange bedfellows. At the Presbyterian Synod, one of the speakers quoted a saying of G. K. Chesterton on the War, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult, and not tried." The pawky Presbyterians might have perceived that twenty centuries is a reasonable time to test any superstition.

Some pious busybodies are sending out tracts to the fighting lines, bearing such titles as "Does Death End All?" and containing the comforting reflection "Death will not annihilate you; it will deliver you up to judgment." That is not so bad as the case of the old lady who distributed a tract entitled, "Prepare To Meet Thy God," outside the cheap City restaurants.

What noses the dear clergy have for nastiness! A Sunday paper announces that the clerical crusade against music-hall promenades is to be followed by a campaign against suggestive pictures on the hoardings. At a time when Europe is engaged in a life-and-death struggle, these high-minded clergymen are interesting themselves in prostitution and indecency.

Miss Ethel Gertrude Everest, of Chippers Bank, Hever, Kent, left the Chippers Bank Estate for the use of the nation as a public park, which is also to be a "bird sanctuary." Other charitable bequests are directed by the will, and orders were left for the body to be cremated, and that no religious ceremony of any kind was to take place.

Says Archdeacon R. C. Wills, "Religion is at the root of all mischief; that which should be as a triple cord binding us together is rather as a deadly torpedo dragging us asunder." The archdeacon is a trifle mixed in his metaphor, but we forgive this for the sake of his general accuracy.

To Correspondents.

- F. CHALLIS.—You are quite right! Actors have taken strange liberties with Shakespeare's words, and, indeed, often transposed entire scenes. There are also differences between the early quartos and the first and second folio editions of the play. Even later editors have played strange pranks, notably Dr. Bowdler, who expurgated Shakespeare in the interests of the young person, and added a new term to the language, Bowdlerism.
- G. INES.—We published the "Daily Life of a Soldier" some time ago.
- H. BARBER.—The copyright of Bradlaugh's *House of Brunswick* rests with his daughter, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner.
- T. FOWLER.—Thanks for account of your son's experience, which we are reserving for future use.
- S. ELLIOTT.—Received, and placed as requested.
- D. N.—Quite right. It is rubbish. But with the ordinary newspaper we fancy it is just a question of whether enough is paid to get the rubbish inserted.
- E. B.—The idea is much older than the witty author of *Hudibras*. It is at least as old as Xenophon, and was also made use of by Spinoza.
- A. G. BARKER.—Sorry we could adopt no other course than redirect your communication. Thanks for congratulations.
- J. HUDSON.—(1) We have had from other readers requests for an index of articles on the front page of the *Freethinker*. We have no objection, and if we feel assured that the majority of readers would like it, will have it done. (2) You will observe that the subject of your cutting was used and quoted in our last issue. (3) We shall be delighted to see you when you visit London, and shall look forward to a chat with you. For the rest, thanks.
- J. H. WEAVER.—We think there is a very flourishing time ahead for the Freethought movement. Shall be writing at length on the subject shortly.
- E. F. SEYMOUR.—Thanks for letter. We quite agree that Freethinkers, on joining the Army, cannot be too careful in guarding their rights. They should all bear in mind that they have a legal right to affirm, in place of taking the oath, and to have themselves entered under whatever term describes their position with regard to religion.
- C. HIRPER.—Undoubtedly children at a certain age "animize" natural forces and objects, and so may be said to be naturally religious. The point is, however, that, left alone, the normal play of the forces at work in civilized society would correct this. As it is, in many cases, it is a foundation upon which is built an elaborate structure of religious belief.
- S. M. PEACOCK.—Received quite safely. Thanks.
- J. BREESE.—Pleased to receive your congratulations. The cutting you enclose is decidedly humorous. Will use it later. No room this week. You are right in your surmise about the paper, although not so right as we should like.
- J. WILSON (Hobart).—Received, book dispatched.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., and not to the Editor.*
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.*

Sugar Plums.

The third of the present series of Demonstrations will take place this evening on Parliament Hill at 6 o'clock. The speakers will be Mr. Cohen, Mr. Rosetti, Mr. Davidson, Miss Kough, and probably others. There should be a very large attendance.

There was a very large audience at the Freethought Demonstration in Brockwell Park on Sunday last. All the speeches were excellent, and the weather conditions were ideal. Mr. Owen moved a resolution condemning the action of the County Council in prohibiting the sale of literature, and Miss Kough seconded in a neat speech. The resolution

was subsequently put to the meeting by Mr. Roger, and carried unanimously. Mr. Hooper gave a very telling Freethought address, and Mr. Cohen's speech seemed to send everyone away in a good humour.

Resolutions protesting against the action of the L.C.C. were carried in Victoria Park, Finsbury Park, Maryland Point, Parliament Hill, and elsewhere. These are all to the good, but we must press upon our readers the necessity for bringing individual pressure to bear upon their representatives. A postcard protesting against the Council's action will be enough.

Among newspaper comments we note the following from *Justice*:—"Many things of a petty reactionary character will be done during the War in the hope that they will pass unnoticed during this awful tragedy. How many country footpaths, for instance, are being closed to the public? How much common land is becoming private property? How many rights-of-way through woods are being lost? Perhaps the Commons Preservation Society can tell. And now comes the London County Council with the stoppage of the sale of all literature at meetings in the parks and open spaces. Here we have a specimen of pettifogging, irritating interference with a question which a few years ago was settled to the satisfaction of all concerned—Socialists, trade unionists, Secularists—even the L.C.C. itself! Now the matter has got to be fought over again, at a time when it is difficult to concentrate public opinion upon what at present appears to be a small matter."

We are indebted to the *Literary Guide* for the following:—

We warmly felicitate Mr. Chapman Cohen upon his election, at the Annual Conference held on June 11, as President of the National Secular Society. He is a worthy successor of Mr. G. W. Foote, and gives promise of bringing much increased strength to the organization. Youth is on his side, despite the fact that he has already a record of twenty-six years' service in the Movement; and, in addition he has exceptional ability and remarkable energy.

As will be seen by the report in another column, the N.S.S. Executive is acting in co-operation with the Union of Ethical Societies and the R.P.A. in endeavouring to improve the position of Freethinkers who have enlisted in regard to the disabilities they suffer on account of their opinions. To prevent waste of time, a form asking the necessary questions has been prepared, and, upon receipt of a postcard, the General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, will be happy to forward it to those willing to give their experiences as to the attitude of the authorities on the question of affirmation and attendance at church services.

The Pioneer Press has been fortunate enough to secure a further limited supply of Mr. H. C. Lea's monumental *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, and is able to offer it at the same reduced price. There is no need to praise the work here; it is the one authoritative work on the subject, and the stock in hand is the last edition, revised and enlarged by the author. The work is in two handsome volumes, and was published at 21s. net. They are being offered at 7s., with 7d. postage. Those of our readers who desire a copy should write at once.

The *Monist* is a quarterly journal published by the Open Court Co. of Chicago and London, and devoted to the Philosophy of Science. The April number contains some solid reading that should be of interest to Freethinkers of a philosophical turn of mind. Professor Picoli, of Cambridge, expounds the esthetic theories of the contemporary Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce, a worthy successor of Bruno, Campanella, and Vico. Professor Picoli's critical dicta are not always based on sufficient analysis, but none can appreciate the difficulty of gathering anything like a complete analysis of an elaborate and far-reaching theory into twenty pages. There are two essays on Indian Philosophy, the more interesting one being the "Vedantic Approach to Royalty." The approach is, of course, through mysticism, which may be good for those who can understand it; but we are ashamed to confess to being no better than

the scientist who remarked after reading an exposition of Vedantism, "that if he tried to decipher the meaning of the phrases they proved to be simple nonsense." To which the Vedantist will reply that our mind is closed to the highest truth. Professor W. B. Smith, of Tulane University, New Orleans, has a long review of Bonaset's *Kyros Christos*. He adds some more proofs to the modern theory that Jesus was not an historical figure but a symbol. From the Christian standpoint this subject of the historicity of the Carpenter of Nazareth may be important, but for the Freethinker it is not whether Christianity is based on fact or symbol, but is of an adequate theory of life. Dr. Paul Carus, a fervent Monist, writes a long poem in the blindest of blank verse on *The Trinity*. As an ingenious exercise of the hyper-serious Teutonic imagination it is amusing (if we may be allowed to make so irreverent an assertion) as poetry; we prefer Shelley and Blake, and even Francis Thompson, if we want mysticism. Dr. Carus is more interesting and more intelligible when he uses a medium more fitted to the needs of his genius. He has the will to write poetry but not the power, and it is the power only that counts.

We regret to see that the *Ethical World* is to be numbered among the papers slain by the War. The cost of production is now so high—and still rising—that all advanced journals are feeling the pinch, and with some the pinch is fatal. One may be sure of one thing, and that is the advanced journal that survives this War may fairly regard itself as indestructible.

From the other side of the Atlantic a more cheering piece of information comes to hand. The New York *Truthseeker* is the recipient of a gift, the annual income from which will appreciably add to its regular income, and appreciably lighten the burden of care which sits upon all who are responsible for the maintenance of a Freethought paper. We congratulate Mr. Macdonald on this deserved windfall.

We see the *Observer* of June 11 remarks that the question is under discussion of increasing all halfpenny papers to one penny, and all penny papers to threehalfpence. Even at that they will hardly meet the increased cost of production.

We have said, over and over again, that so far as this War serves men to reflect on religion, it will lead to a questioning, if not to a rejection, of religious teaching. The following, from a soldier in the trenches, bears this out:—

To me it is getting more difficult every day to reconcile the God of Love with the God of Battles. "I hae ma doots" whether we have got the right end of the stick in religion at all now. For me, *after this*, it must remain a simple personal equation. Possibly it may be that *apres la guerre* the old order will change in many ways.

And one may be certain that those who write or speak in this fashion are only a few of a very large number.

A large audience attended the debate at Finsbury Park on Sunday last between Mr. Miller, N. S. S., and Mr. Bowman, a gentleman who figures on the C. E. S. platform; the subject being "The Stupidity of Atheism." The discussion was well maintained, and appears to have given general satisfaction to the audience.

A well-deserved tribute to Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., who has been appointed Chairman of the Committee on Food Costs, appeared recently in the *Star*, which said: "Mr. Robertson was formerly Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade. His brain is one of the best in Parliament. He has a profound knowledge of economic problems. He is a clear and honest thinker. He has plenty of courage. He is altogether an ideal Chairman for such a Committee." This will be pleasant reading to those of us who have known Mr. Robertson for so long, and who will appreciate the compliment being paid to a militant Freethinker.

Publishers say that fiction is an excellent antidote to worry during war-time. Maybe this is why the clergy insist on their flocks reading the Bible.

Shaw on Jesus.

MR. BERNARD SHAW'S Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, now published in his last volume of plays, has the indisputable merit, from the Freethought point of view, of being certain to infuriate the Christians. Although entitled "Preface on the Prospects of Christianity," and purporting to give an appreciation of the Gospel Jesus, it is certainly calculated to please neither Rome nor Canterbury nor Little Bethel. The pious *Daily Express* has already devoted a column to more or less dishonest abuse of Mr. Shaw for the "outrage" of "impudently patronizing the greatest figure in the history of man" at a time when (in the opinion of Mr. Blumenfeld's scribe) the consolations of Christianity are alone enabling its votaries to tear one another to pieces on the field of battle with unruffled courage. So that, as Mr. Shaw is likely to get all the abuse needful for the good of his soul from orthodox quarters, there is no necessity for Freethinkers to join in the chorus. Nothing would please me more, in fact, than to be able to recommend Mr. Shaw's Preface to my fellow-Freethinkers as an epoch-making work.

However, "friends and truth are both dear to us, but it is a sacred duty to prefer the truth," says Aristotle. And while many many Freethinkers, including myself, count Mr. Shaw (in print, if not in the flesh) among their friends, it is necessary to express the considered opinion that, on this occasion, he has made a mistake. Not a preposterous and merely irritating mistake, such as people like the Rev. R. J. Campbell keep making in public week after week, but still a mistake. Everyone should know, of course, that Mr. Shaw is as much a Freethinker, and as little of a Christian or Theist, as any of the writers of this journal. His mistakes are therefore arguable and tenable, and I propose to examine this one accordingly.

Mr. Shaw thinks that the teachings of the Gospel Jesus, subject to the adaptations obviously necessary to-day, contain an ethical and political programme worthy of trial in the modern world. He professes to deduce the doctrines of human solidarity, Socialism, Humanitarianism, and the economic independence of the sexes, from what he reads in the Gospels. He expressly waives the question of authenticity, as "it is the doctrine and not the man that matters," and he is concerned with what he finds there and not how it got there. This does not prevent Mr. Shaw, in his rough summary of the four Gospels, from venturing certain decided opinions, including some bearing on the "higher criticism." In this he falls into one or two small errors on matters of fact, on which I do not want to dwell too long. He says that John the Baptist "substituted" baptism for circumcision—surely an error. He attributes the saying that "we are members one of another" to Jesus, instead of to Paul, to whom it belongs, and on the strength of it credits Jesus with "an organic conception of society" to which he was an entire stranger. He attributes to Jesus a declaration that "the common multitude" were the salt of the earth and the light of the world, whereas Matt. v. 13-14 purports to have been addressed to his disciples alone. He considers that the promise of Jesus to come again during the lifetime of some of his hearers proves that the Gospels were written during the lifetime of his contemporaries. This is a difficult point. It certainly proves that the *original* document which contained that saying must have been written within a lifetime of the crucifixion; but it does not exclude the possibility that somewhat careless compilers, like our first and third Evangelists, may have failed to cut it out when embodying that document in their Gospels. "Luke" is so

careless that he gives three different accounts of Paul's conversion, all conflicting with each other. Obviously a writer like that was quite capable of letting one anachronistic prophecy slip in. Again, Mr. Shaw includes the Fourth Gospel with the others as having been necessarily written at an early date, on the ground that chapter xxi. 22 ("If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?") presupposes that John was still living when the Gospel was written, and was in fact the author. To my mind, that passage looks remarkably like a quibble, intended to get over the awkward fact that the last of the apostles *had* died before the Second Coming. The earlier Gospel narratives had imprudently prophesied the return of Jesus in the lifetime of those who had seen him. The Fourth Gospel simply tries to whittle this away by alleging, firstly, that the words were only uttered with reference to one single disciple, and secondly, that even so they were so vague as not to amount to a prophecy at all. One other error of Mr. Shaw's is quite remarkable, coming from a Humanitarian. He says, "Of Jesus alone of all the Christian miracle workers there is no record.....of a malicious or destructive miracle. A barren fig-tree was the only victim of his anger." Mr. Shaw forgets the Gadarene swine.

As, however, Mr. Shaw expressly puts questions of historical criticism on one side, I do not propose to dwell on that side of the matter. The real point is the truth or falsehood of the interpretation he puts on the teaching attributed to Jesus. This he sums up as follows:—

1. The kingdom of heaven is within you. You are the son of God; and God is the son of man. God is a spirit, to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and not an elderly gentleman to be bribed and begged from. We are members one of another; so that you cannot injure or help your neighbour without injuring or helping yourself. God is your father: you are here to do God's work; and you and your father are one.

I am not going to complain of Mr. Shaw's use of the word "God." No doubt it is very confusing to use words in a different sense from most men, as he uses "God" and "Christianity." But so long as it is quite well understood that Mr. Shaw's "God" is not an almighty person, it would be waste of time to quarrel over terminology. Mr. Shaw means by God either Nature or evolution or the "life-force," whatever we may please to call it, and apparently, more particularly human nature and human evolution. But this does not carry us far. I do not see that Mr. Shaw's God is "to be worshipped in spirit and in truth," or for the matter of that, in any other way. Doubtless this "God" has produced Shakespeare and Milton and Mr. Shaw and the Fabian Society, all very worshipful; but unfortunately, he has also produced Torquemada and Calvin and the Prussian Junkers and the English Junkers, all very much the reverse of worshipful; and he seems to me to be about as responsible for one lot as the other. So I prefer to be an Atheist, *sans phrase*, and not waste time worshipping anything. A more serious point is that, whatever construction Mr. Shaw puts on the word "God," Jesus, for all the reason I find to believe the contrary, meant by God simply a personal sovereign of the universe, who rewarded the good and tormented the evil on the ordinary lines of human jurisprudence, as then understood in Palestine. What else is meant by his threats of hell-fire against anyone who calls his brother a fool, or blasphemes the Holy Ghost, or otherwise infringes the Nazarene code? And what else is meant by the promise to those who keep that code that "thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee"?

To return to Mr. Shaw's summary.

2. Get rid of property by throwing it into the common stock. Dissociate your work entirely from money payments. If you let a child starve you are letting God starve. Get rid of all anxiety about to-morrow's dinner and clothes, because you cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon.

It is true that Jesus tells his followers not to lay up treasure on earth, to sell all they have and give to the poor. But as Mr. Shaw points out that the entry of such precepts into practical consideration can only be furthered by a complicated political programme, of which Jesus naturally had no notion, they do not carry us very far. However, it is well that Mr. Shaw should rub in the fact that Jesus *did* advocate Communism, albeit of the voluntary and unorganized sort, and mixed up with deliberately inculcated mendicancy. It always annoys Christians.

3. Get rid of judges and punishment and revenge. Love your neighbour as yourself, he being part of yourself. And love your enemies: they are your neighbours.

Jesus certainly told his followers to love their enemies; and once more, it is well that Mr. Shaw should annoy such Christians as the Bishop of London and Sir George Makgill, by rubbing this fact in. Unfortunately, Jesus made up for this injunction by promising his disciples that their enemies should be well toasted in another place; so the net sum of magnanimity on his part was not great.

4. Get rid of your family entanglements. Every mother you meet is as much your mother as the woman who bore you. Every man you meet is as much your brother as the man she bore after you. Don't waste your time at family funerals grieving for your relatives: attend to life, not to death: there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and better. In the kingdom of heaven, which, as aforesaid, is within you, there is no marriage nor giving in marriage, because you cannot devote your life to two divinities: God and the person you are married to.

Here again, as Jesus had no notion of any political programme designed to further the economic independence of the sexes, this does not carry us far. What Jesus demanded was that his followers should discard their family obligations there and then.

So far as Mr. Shaw's insistence on the fact, that the teaching of Jesus *was* revolutionary, is calculated to vex, annoy, and infuriate the ordinary Christian, who regards his religion as a comfortable support to his reactionary social and political opinions, I am grateful. But when he implies that we have to go back to Jesus of Nazareth to discover the sanction for our modern social and political programmes, I fail to see the necessity. Socialism, Feminism, and similar movements are no more the teaching of Jesus than they are the teaching of Buddha or Confucius or any other ancient. What I imagine Mr. Shaw has been looking for, and thinks he has found, is a convenient historical symbol of the ethical ideas underlying his political creed. He finds it in Jesus; I find it in the French Revolution. "Liberty, equality, and fraternity" sound just as well as "The kingdom of God and his righteousness," and have the advantage of being clear conceptions from which conclusions may be deduced, and not phrases whose very terminology leads to confusion with all the poisonous miasma of Rome, Canterbury, and Little Bethel.

Lastly, if Mr. Shaw insists on providing us with a Messiah, why be modest? Personally, I prefer his own way of preaching his gospel to what he thinks was Christ's way. He may not be better than Shakespeare: I have no doubt whatever about his being better than Jesus.

ROBERT ARCH.

Exploring the Invisible World.

II.

(Continued from p. 406.)

It is perfectly plain, then, that these amazing particles travel in vacuo; but, as we have seen, the sparking which betrays their presence in the experimental tube, only becomes transformed into a luminous filament, which afterwards evolves into a stream of electrons, with the withdrawal of the contained air. In the tube the terminal impels the electrons forward at an immense speed until their motion is arrested by the glass covering of the vessel.

The necessity for some window arrangement through which the imprisoned particles might prolong their flight into the outer air was, therefore, a great desideratum. And serious as were the hindrances in the path of this requirement, they were brilliantly overcome. The author of this achievement was the distinguished German, Professor Lenard, who, whatever balderdash he may write about us for the period of the War, must still be considered as an ornament to science. Lenard contrived a vacuum tube furnished with an air-tight window which, nevertheless, permitted the passage of the electrons. This contrivance was not a transparent window of glass, but was composed of a thin sheet of the metal aluminium. When they reached the metal window the electrons rushed right through it. Certainly Lenard did not see the invisible electrons, but he witnessed their effects. As soon as the flying particles entered the open air they encountered the resistance offered by the atmospheric molecules. As a result of this collision, the molecules of the air revealed a glowing phosphorescence very similar to that which is set up, as we have seen, in an experimental tube.

This delicate glow is visible in dark surroundings only, and is confined to the near neighbourhood of the aluminium window. In the event of the electrons speeding directly through the metal window into a vacuum tube, they then display a more powerful glow, and by the utilization of a phosphorescent screen, they may be seen to advantage in ordinary air.

The flying career of the electrons is soon ended in the open air. Almost immediately these particles are absorbed by the atoms of the atmosphere. During their short period of atmospheric liberty they are known as Lenard rays. They are, without doubt, the same electrons we met with in the vacuum tube, although Lenard for some time regarded them as ethereal pulses only. Professor Schuster, however, demonstrated that the cathode rays and the Lenard rays were material particles, and the German scientist and other critics of this view were ultimately converted to it. The importance of Lenard's researches was now realized. It was a revelation that particles, such as the electrons were now admitted to be, could make their way through a solid metal sheet which was quite impervious to the atmospheric molecules or even to the atoms, almost unthinkable small as these gaseous elements are known to be. It became overwhelmingly evident that the electrons must be much smaller still. The tiniest atom on this planet is that of hydrogen gas, and yet this completely failed to pass through an aluminium sheet or window which proved easily pervious to the electrons.

We will endeavour to form a picture of the unspeakable minuteness of the invisible realms in which the electrons reign. A piece of dry salt may readily be reduced to powder, and a few grains of this almost invisible salt-dust may be scattered over a glass slide and examined under a microscope. The grains of salt

then present the appearance of fragments of very rough rocks, and in no way resemble the infinitesimal particles revealed to the naked eye. It is now apparent that the salt fragments are aggregates of infinitely smaller particles, and are immensely distant from the limits of divisibility. Many millions of molecules are massed together to build up the smallest appreciable particle of matter, and we must remember that the more powerful microscopes magnify more than 10,000 diameters. Beyond the molecules lie the atoms which compose them, and these are demonstrably billions of times smaller than the minutest speck of matter which is directly visible under the highest magnification. The electrons, again, whose presence makes possible the atoms, are probably nearly 2,000 times smaller than the atoms themselves. These are no mere figments of the imagination, but really represent the considered opinions of our foremost men of science. Moreover, these judgments of theirs are based on a solid and substantial foundation of sustained experimental research.

The atom may be pictured either as a miniature solar system or with its constituent electrons scattered, as are the stars of the Milky Way. Within their atomic environment the electrons revolve or oscillate with enormous speed. No concept can be formed of the nature of the spaces which separate the electrons one from another as they whirl in their atomic home. The very immensity of their motions would give rise to the appearance of solidity. In a similar manner a row of cokenuts might be arranged in a circle and spaces would exist between each nut, and, it has been suggested, that if one were to strike between the nuts, no resistance would meet the blow. But set the nuts spinning at a high velocity, and then, were one to strike the rapidly moving circle, one's cudgel would rebound, as though no spaces separated the whirling nuts. So far as man's unaided senses went, the revolving circle would present every appearance of a solid mass. Hence, the electrons by the stupendous velocity of their movements, indirectly reveal themselves to our consciousness as solid entities. The old contemptuous view of "dead brute matter" is gone for ever. We now know that every atom of dirt, dust, or diamond is the seat of a perpetual stream of energy. All forms of substance, whether organic or inorganic, are the centres of eternal motion.

Bodies so dissimilar as ice and copper, or any other material we choose to think of, differ from each other in terms of the number and arrangement of their electrons. The electrons themselves are all apparently resolvable into units of negatively charged electrical particles clustered in a group to create the atom. Now, were all the electrons composed of negative charges only, the units would repel each other. Cohesion would then vanish, and the atoms would undergo disintegration. It consequently follows that the atoms contain an equivalent measure of positive electricity, which is requisite to the maintenance of their equilibrium. We only know positive electricity when combined with the atom. But, as we have observed, the rushing particles of negative electricity—the electrons—may be manifested in vacuum tubes. Paradoxically enough, more is known about the electrons than the atoms they build up.

To assist them in their inquiries, physicists have mentally pictured a positive sphere of electricity within the atom. This positive electricity draws the electrons towards the atom's centre; the electrons repel each other and, in consequence, are inclined to fly off from the sphere they inhabit. Just as the planets are held in their orbits by the sun's gravitational pull at the centre of the Solar System, so are the negatively charged electrons held in bondage by the pull of the positively charged electrons,

and thus the stability of their miniature system is maintained.

The architectural arrangements of electrons in the evolution of the various atoms have been worked out mathematically. Also, many remarkable results have been experimentally reached with the aid of floating magnets and small electrified substances floating in water. The figures formed are found to vary with the number of substances employed, and there is, seemingly, no conceivable limit to the variety of pattern presented.

One simple experiment provides ocular demonstration of the manner in which magnetized bodies respond to the play of the forces which environ them. All that is necessary in this experiment is to magnetize some steel needles and to insert each of them in a little cork. When the corks are placed in water, the attached needles are suspended downwards in the liquid in a vertical position. The needles must be arranged uniformly, in order that every north pole or every south pole of each needle should stand uppermost. By flinging several such needles into a bowl of water we secure a representation of the position of the electrons comprising the atom. The needles repel one another, and this repulsion is shown by the needles moving away to the brim of the bowl, as if they were seeking to escape. It is supposed that the electrons repelling one another as they do, would, in a similar manner, fly away from their atomic habitation were it not for the pulling power of the positive particles which reins them in.

In experimental studies, the controlling charge of the positive electrons is pictured by arranging one pole of a magnet over the middle of the bowl. When the little needles are placed with all their south poles uppermost, the opposite, or north pole of the magnet, is suspended above the bowl, because the opposite poles attract each other. The results of such experiments are thus described:—

If three needles be thrown into the water, they arrange themselves so that they form the three corners of a triangle. Four needles take up their positions at the corners of a square; while five needles similarly form a pentagon, or "five-sided square." When we throw in a sixth needle we see a very interesting phenomenon. The six needles do not attempt to form a hexagon, or "six-sided square," but one needle goes to the centre and the other five arrange themselves in a pentagon as before. A seventh needle produces a phenomenon of even greater interest; one needle goes to the centre, while the other six arrange themselves in a ring at some distance from the central needle.

And by steadily increasing the number of needles, various striking changes are brought about in the figures they form.

Mathematical and physical considerations warrant the assumption that the architectural arrangements of the atom distinctly resemble those set forth above. There are various reasons for concluding that several different clusters of electrons resemble one another very closely. According to theory, the atom of one element is built up of six electrons assembled around a central electron; atoms of other substances possess an architecture which departs but slightly from the foregoing arrangement. Others, to be sure, depart widely in their mode of structure from this configuration. The judgment seems justified that if the internal arrangements of some atoms betray a close family resemblance, while others, so to speak, appear to be members of another race; then, those revealing the nearest relationship in their style of architecture should therefore display stronger likenesses in conduct than those erected on a different plan. In other terms, those atoms displaying kinship should possess similar properties. Now, as a matter

of fact, they do comply with these conditions, and this important truth was familiar to the chemist long prior to the recent endeavours to reduce the at-one-time indivisible atom to its constituent parts.

(To be concluded.) T. F. PALMER.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 22.

The newly-elected President, Mr. C. Cohen, occupied the chair. Other members present were: Messrs. Baker, Cowell, Cunningham, Gorniot, Leat, Neate, Nichols, Pankhurst, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Rolf, Samuels, Shore, Silverstein, Thurlow, Wood, G. Wood, Miss Kough, Mrs. Rolf, Miss Stanley, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read.

This being the first meeting of the new Executive, the usual officers were appointed. Miss E. M. Vance was re-elected General Secretary, the Benevolent Fund Committee and other officers also re-appointed.

The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for the Camberwell and St. Helens Branches, and the Parent Society.

The action of the L.C.C. in withdrawing permits for the sale of literature in parks and open spaces was discussed at great length, and the article on the subject in the *Freethinker* of June 11 highly approved.

It was reported that the resolution, carried unanimously at the public meeting at Queen's Hall on June 11, had been forwarded to the Council, and, in accordance with the Conference resolution authorizing "the Executive to take all necessary steps to induce the Council to reconsider its decision," it was unanimously agreed to invite representatives from other propagandist organizations to attend a meeting for the purpose of forming a Joint Committee to confer upon the matter. The President, Mr. Cohen, was elected to represent the Society.

The Secretary reported the arrangements made for outdoor Demonstrations, and that resolutions condemning the action of the Council had been carried at various out-door meetings.

Consequent upon correspondence from the Union of Ethical Societies, the following resolution was carried:—

That this Executive offers its cordial co-operation to the Union of Ethical Societies in endeavouring to secure the abolition of every kind of religious disability affecting Freethinkers on joining or serving in the Army or Navy.

Attention was drawn to the fact that this year the Sunday chosen to commemorate the life and work of Charles Bradlaugh—i.e., "Bradlaugh Sunday"—would fall very close to the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the N.S.S., and it was resolved to hold a meeting in London on Sept. 24, to commemorate the joint events.

Motions from the Conference Agenda, remitted to the Executive, were then dealt with. No. 8 (Mr. T. Shore's scheme for Secular funerals), it was resolved:—

That four members of this Executive be appointed to represent the N.S.S. on a Committee to be formed for the purpose of putting into execution a plan for carrying out the wishes of deceased Freethinkers with regard to Secular funerals.

The remaining items were adjourned till the next meeting.

Some small routine matters were dealt with, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

Owing to the War, there is a dearth of brace-buttons. The ordinary man might manage with a piece of string, but what will churchgoers put in the collection bags in place of the buttons.

Correspondence has recently appeared in the religious press concerning the inferior quality of communion port during war-time. May we refer to it as the cup that queers?

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON. OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, E. Burke, a Lecture; 6.15, a Lecture.

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

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Kennedy and Dales, "Views on Religion"; 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Shaller, and Smith.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley Road): 7, E. Burke, "What is Atheism?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 6, Free-thought Demonstration. Speakers: Messrs. Chapman Cohen, Rosetti, Davidson, and Miss Kough.

REGENT'S PARK N. S. S.: 3.15, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station): 6.45, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

COUNTRY. OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW (Jail Square): 3.30, R. Ogilvie, a Lecture.

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