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Views and Opinions.

The Supremacy of Truth.

Truth, like murder, will out. It may be suppressed for a time, but it turns up in the most unexpected manner. It is difficult for even the most confirmed liar to avoid spoiling his record by sometimes lapsing into truth. Perhaps it is because perpetual lying is a greater strain upon one's memory and upon one's powers of invention than is merely speaking the truth. If eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, eternal carefulness is the condition of unblemished lying. Moreover, truth will out, because facts cannot be eternally suppressed. We may ignore them, but they remain; demanding, and eventually receiving, recognition. Sooner or later, the man who has been loudly asserting that two and two equal five is compelled to admit that he cannot make the sum more than four. Even a goat engaged in butting a brick wall will presently see the immovability of the object. Truth may not be all-powerful, but it is eternally insistent.

* * *

Outgrowing Religion.

One of the truths that will out is that human development is away from all forms of religion, orthodox or heterodox. Thousands of clergymen are for ever protesting that religion is an indispensable and indestructible element in human nature. Hundreds of writers with an over-developed sense of the marketable value of the unthinking and the credulous, emphasize the same proverb in articles and novels. And yet the fact of the world growing less religious is always before us, the fact of man having got rid of an “indestructible” element is continually demanding recognition. And every now and again this recognition is forthcoming. The other day, the writer who supplies the *Times* with a weekly essay on religion remarked, at the opening of an article on “The Modern Distrust of Religion,” that “Many people of all classes have now a deep distrust of religion, as if it must imply some kind of dishonesty, moral or intellectual.” This frank admission is worthy of note, not merely because it is true, but because its truth is becoming

so obvious that even religionists cannot ignore it without making themselves ridiculous.

* * *

A Significant Phenomenon.

It is certain that a “deep distrust” of religion has not developed without some very powerful cause. To realize this, one need only recall how powerful are the inducements for people to at least profess a faith in religion. By prescriptive right, religion enjoys a position such as is possessed by no other social force. Its reign has been long and, until yesterday, unquestioned. The ignorant still accept it as a matter of course, and another class protects it from motives of self-interest. The avenues of promotion are still largely controlled by religion, and an army of professional defenders are always busy in its defence. Many thousands who do not really believe in religion hesitate to openly express dissent, and others pathetically cling to the name long after all it properly stands for is surrendered. Like Madame de Stael and ghosts, they do not believe in religion, but they are afraid of it. The social dice are heavily loaded in favour of religion. There are few inducements to break with it; there are many favourable to the maintenance of friendly relations. Consequently, for us to have reached a position when even defenders of religion are compelled to acknowledge that a deep distrust exists “in all classes of society,” is a striking illustration of the way in which the logic of facts overcome the logic of theory.

* * *

An Impossible Creed.

So far as Christianity is concerned, that is becoming an impossible creed for multitudes, and a difficult one for all who think. Its doctrinal scheme, its “plan of salvation,” its whole theory of man and the world, is simply ridiculous in the light of modern knowledge and modern needs. What has the world of to-day to do with its special creations, its miracles, its blood atonement, its virgin-born and resurrected saviours? These things do not belong to our world at all. And how can any civilized and educated man or woman fail to see the savage behind it all; to realize that these things belong to the age of a flat earth, a solid sky, and a world of supernatural beings actually concerned in the doings of mankind? But the world of to-day no longer *questions* whether these things are true. It knows they are false. Not alone do laymen know they are false, best part of the clergy also know it. Try how they will, they cannot square their teachings with modern knowledge. They may explain, and trim, and modify; but the salient features of their creed is too plain. And can it be wondered that when men see this horrible divorce between knowledge and faith, they have a “deep distrust” of religion, and feel that its profession implies “some kind of dishonesty, moral or intellectual”? Stupidity or dishonesty; the choice of the professing Christian is rapidly becoming a choice of one of these two. He may escape the one charge, but only by pleading guilty to the other.

The Disease that Kills Religion.

Of all the diseases to which religion is subject, there is but one that is fatal—that of being found out. And, quite beyond question, the world is finding out religion. It has seen all its claims to world supremacy shattered one after the other. Its claim to act as a law-giver in the world of the physical has been broken beyond possibility of repair. Science to-day treats religion with complete indifference—sometimes with absolute contempt. This world, say the clergy, is God's world, but by a strange irony no one goes to God's agents on earth to find out anything about it. How could it be otherwise? The teachings of Copernicus shattered its claims in the world of astronomy. The physics of Galileo and Newton killed its pretensions in another direction. Lyell in geology, and Darwin in biology met it with shattering results in other departments. The heavens no longer declare the glory of God, the earth no longer shows his manipulative skill, they bear witness only to the all-conquering intelligence of man. "God" is to-day a discarded hypothesis, an atrophied organ of the body social. Gods are useless in a world where human intelligence has reached maturity.

* * *

Outgrowing Religion.

The world is outgrowing religion. That is the plain, unvarnished truth. Let us emphasize this fact of growth, because it is that which makes the future of religion hopeless. People do not, in the overwhelming majority of cases, discard religious belief as the result of a reasoned process. In the main, they outgrow it. The pressure of life is perpetual and insistent. It is neither a party nor an organization that religion has to fight to-day. It is the pressure of a whole civilization that is the real enemy of religion. And how can any Church, or combination of Churches, fight that? Once before in the history of the world Christianity was able to overthrow a civilization, but that can never happen again. The fault of the old civilization was that culture was confined to a few. Books were few, and the means of transmitting knowledge limited. To-day knowledge has been democratized. Books exist in their myriads, and something of a sane knowledge of the world is the property of all. Civilization may experience reverses, but a complete overthrow is beyond the bounds of reasonable probability; and nothing short of that catastrophe can give religion a new lease of life.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Futility of Theodicies.

CHRISTIANS generally assume the existence of God and the absolute perfection of his character, while professional theologians have always made vigorous attempts to prove the former and to vindicate the latter. Apologetics is the most fundamental and important department of dogmatic theology; and it is profoundly significant that every age, as it comes, must formulate its own apologetic system. The famous *Theodicy* elaborated with such rare distinction by Leibnitz, is practically valueless to-day. We still read it with unstinted admiration for the genius of its author; but no one believes that it possesses much, if any, practical value for us of to-day. And yet the facts of life are the same now as they were then, and have been since human history began. To doubt is natural, while vitally to believe is the most tremendous of tasks, and while the facts remain essentially unchanged, fresh aids to belief are required almost every year. The significance of this phenomenon is usually overlooked, even by the divines. The belief is that the human race is the offspring of a Supernatural Being who loves and cares for it, but to

keep that belief alive tens of thousands are set apart to interpret, justify, and defend it, otherwise it would soon die out completely. These officials put forth their utmost efforts to perpetuate it, but in spite of their most faithful ministrations, its constant tendency is to fade away. This is a fact which no one can gainsay.

Let us face the problem anew in company with a twentieth century apologist in the person of the Rev. Francis E. Powell, M.A., Vicar of Bromyard Parish Church. Judging by one of his published sermons, entitled "The Father-Heart of God and the World Agony of War," which has fallen into our hands through the kindness of a friend, we infer that Mr. Powell is a broad-minded and fine-spirited gentleman, who has the courage to think for himself, and who enjoys the privilege of being under a bishop who has often been branded as a dangerous heresiarch. In the sermon just mentioned the reverend gentleman ridicules the idea that the War "is sent as a punishment," saying:—

What folly, then, to throw blame upon Germany. For the Kaiser and his myrmidons have been but the puppets of the Divine Will. According to this view, the real author of all this misery and woe is God, who has sent it to punish the world.....And upon whom has the punishment fallen? Are Belgium and Serbia so very much worse than Holland and Denmark? Does the Continent of Europe need chastisement more than that of North and South America?

Mr. Powell has no faith in prayer as a means to bring the War to an end. He alludes to the audacity of a bishop who was not ashamed to state in St. Paul's Cathedral "that God was, as it were, sitting on the fence to see which side would importune him most." Then he adds:—

A father sitting on a fence watching his children rob and rape, and maim and slay in fratricidal warfare! No wonder people find religion—or that which passes under its name—to be so unsatisfactory, and that, in consequence, so much indifference abounds.

In equally scathing terms the preacher dismisses the angels of Mons as utterly unworthy of credence, saying, "If angels at Mons *during* the War, why not angels at Berlin and Vienna *to prevent* the War?"

So far as the negative position of this discourse is concerned, we are in hearty agreement with it; but when Mr. Powell undertakes to discern the traces of a Divine Father's heart in the existing European situation, we find ourselves in uncompromising opposition to him. He affirms that "there are two ideas in Fatherhood which we do well to keep apart." Why must we keep them apart? Simply because the one gives the lie direct to the other. The two ideas are "the communication of life and the outpouring of love." As the communicator of life, God "stands for the great world-process which seems to us so ruthless, unfeeling, and harsh; for those tremendous elemental forces which are stern as fate, absolute as tyranny, and merciless as death; which are too vast to praise, too inexorable to propitiate; which have no ear for prayer, no heart for sympathy, no arm to save." By "God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," we are to understand Nature and her various processes. Mr. Powell says:—

This is the scientific conception of God, true in all its awful force and grim rigidity. The name stands for that stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being. For, as Herbert Spencer once most truly said: "Amid the mysteries which are becoming more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the absolute certainty that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." Of such a Father, who is only stern Nature personified, whose will are the universal uniform-

ities we call Nature's laws "which shall not be broken," we may well exclaim:—

Who dares to name his Name,
Or belief in him proclaim,
Veiled in mystery as he is,
The All-Enfolder!

What we maintain is that this is not the scientific conception of God but an unscientific conception of Nature. To call Nature God is a most deplorable instance of misnaming. Science, as such, neither affirms nor denies the existence of God, but simply ignores it, treating it as if it were not. Science confines itself exclusively to Nature and her laws, knowing of nothing above or beyond her. The poet may, and does, personify her, as students of Shelley, Keats, and Meredith are well aware. Meredith, indeed, now and then uses the theological name "God," but he takes care to explain that by it he only means Nature's "firm laws" of heredity and environment. But Mr. Powell believes in and preaches a God above and beyond the God of Nature. He takes special pains to impress upon our minds that there are two Fathers, namely, "the Father of Revelation and experience and the Father of science and philosophy," though he naively confesses that he does not know how to reconcile the two. The truth is that they cannot be reconciled, being in their very natures opposed to each other. We have no means of ascertaining to what extent the reverend gentleman is loyal to the Thirty-nine Articles; but if he is at all orthodox he bows down to two different and antagonistic Deities. The Father of revelation is tender-hearted and compassionate, while the Father of science is stern and unbending; the one forgives, the other does not; the one visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto many generations, the other drowns the law of causation in the river of redeeming grace. Now, evidently, and of necessity these two hostile Fathers cannot possibly co-exist; and since Nature and her laws do exist, and we are inextricably under their sway, it inevitably follows that the other Father, the Father of revelation, must totally depart, as there is neither room nor need for him.

Mr. Powell is convinced that it is in the spiritual and not in the physical world that we find this higher relation of Father and Child. That is to say, the reverend gentleman must have a Gospel of salvation by faith to preach to a fallen and sinful world, and because there is no such Gospel to be got out of Nature, he adopts an imaginary supernature wherein dwells and reigns the God of love, who sweeps Nature aside, transcending her and crying: "I am all in all." Whence issues this supernatural Gospel? Confessedly from the Gospel Jesus, who is said to be God manifested in the flesh; an impracticable teacher of ethics whom his own professed followers have never taken quite seriously; a visionary who was never in living touch with time and earth, but who spoke continually of the Father's house beyond the stars into which he would enter at death, and from which he would return ere long for the express purpose of taking his own back with him there to live for ever above the world and its woes. That is the admitted source of the Christian Gospel which has been in the world, like a beautiful but ineffectual dream, for nigh two thousand years. Has it redeemed the world from its evils and wrongs? No. Has it justified its existence by the moral miracles it has performed? No. The world is still the battle-field of opposing forces.

Towards the end of his discourse Mr. Powell substantially admits this himself. After all his glowing descriptions of the teaching, life, and, above all, the personality of Jesus, which leads him to claim that "whatever else God may be he is, at any rate, all that I can see is good

in the personality of Christ"; after his glorification of the spiritual world as the sphere of superhuman forces which sweep down into the interior of humanity with the object of transforming it, this is the key in which the oration closes:—

It may be that this Universe is that in which the Father-heart is seeking, amid difficulties of which we can have no conception, ever more and more to realize itself, much as the sculptor is doing with the marble upon which (all unconscious, too, as it is of his difficulties) he is expressing his craft. The process is slow and painful; but, comparing the capacity of the human spirit for love and wisdom now with what it was, say some thousands of years ago, it is most emphatically sure. For Creation is yet in process, and the process is one of struggle towards the sure and certain triumph of the far-off Divine event towards which the whole is moving even while it groans and travails together until now.

This is virtually a falling back upon evolution as the only ground of hope for the future of humanity. It is by human struggle alone that progress is being achieved, and apart from struggle no improvement has ever taken place. The cant about the Father-heart of God as having been at work from the beginning until now betrays its hollowness the moment we glance at history, and particularly at "the world-agony of war now upon us in all its frightfulness and heart-breaking horrors." Man's only hope lies in himself, and a general realization of this truth would result in an all-round advance. Far too long has been the period of our nerveless passivity, and the time has fully come for the commencement of a new period of energetic, whole-hearted activity, of the manifestation of the will to growth and development of that brother-heart which will make the whole world kin, abolishing nationalities and establishing that universalism under which alone the enjoyment of perpetual peace and prosperity will be possible.

J. T. LLOYD.

Seers at Sea.

The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies.—*Lucretius.*

The carpenter said nothing but

The butter's spread too thick.

—*Lewis Carroll.*

AGREEABLY to the law of supply and demand, prophets have in all times arisen to foretell events, smooth and otherwise, at prices absurdly cheap considering the value of their services. From the days of the Roman augurs, who, it is said, could not look one another in the face without laughing, down to those of the present-day fortune-teller, who giggles in her dainty sleeve until an infidel magistrate usurps her calling, and prophesies that she will spend some months in prison, an unbroken line of more or less inspired personages has existed.

The universe has been ransacked for information on coming events. The stars that glitter millions of miles in the empyrean have been thought of as deeply interested in the careers of the inhabitants of Dunghill-on-the-Snazle, and the sediment at the bottom of a paltry tea-cup, has been held to be fraught with profound meaning to blushing maidens and proud suitors. Comets have been imported into the solar system for the purpose of warning people of approaching disaster, and insects commissioned to prepare persons for approaching dissolution by "tapping" in the woodwork of old houses. Even dogs consent courteously to hold weird conversations with their distant friends in the "wee sma' hours" for the same dread purpose.

The apparently inconsequent nature of the events that befall mankind engendered the idea of a super-

natural control which, of course, according to the prophets, was to be bribed. The rain-doctors and prophets of uncivilized peoples, however, are kept to their contracts. They are expected to bring rain when it is required, and if they do not the consequences are summary and unpleasant. But the prophets in civilized countries retain all the advantages of their savage prototypes without any of the risks and dangers. The civilized dupes allow the prophet to play his little game on the principle "Heads I win, tails you lose." If the prophet is unsuccessful, they ignore the mistake; if he is correct, they put it to his credit, or he puts it to his credit—which is much the same thing.

The phenomenon is not unknown in this country, and we can estimate the cases of some notorious folk more correctly than those of the lesser luminaries. In the early years of the nineteenth century, Joanna Southcott was a well-known prophetess in the time when the great Napoleon was identified as the "beast" in "Revelation." Joanna was a bold lady, and she predicted that she would be mother of the Messiah—a prophecy that proved to be due to the mundane disease of dropsy. Before she died she left plenteous examples of her artful prophecies, of her long-winded wranglings with Old Nick, and of the intolerable verse that flowed from her saintly pen, that not even divine inspiration could make tuneful or grammatical.

Another nineteenth-century Messiah was Lieutenant Richard Brothers, a half-pay naval officer, whose portrait was engraved with rays of light descending on his crazed head. The word came to Dick that he would be revealed to all men as the King of Jerusalem and Ruler of the World. But the message fell on stony ground, and the world proved obdurate. After Richard had invited King George the Fourth to deliver up his crown, and had ordered the Houses of Parliament to meet for receiving his message, the Messiah was led away into that house of bondage where so many sons and daughters of high Heaven have suffered restraint at the hands of unbelieving keepers and sceptical doctors.

Innocent folk of a later generation revered the utterances of that portentous prophet, the Rev. Dr. Cumming, who demonstrated that the Biblical prophecy of the locusts, whose sting is in their tail, was fulfilled by a Turkish general having used a horse's tail as a standard. Dr. Cumming also contended that the Pope was "Anti-Christ," and that the French people were the persons aimed at in "Revelation." This modern Jeremiah preached before Queen Victoria, and the avenues of his church were as crowded as the approaches to a theatre. But nemesis came at last, and he fell from his pinnacle of popularity. In a moment of religious recklessness he named the year 1861 as that in which most awful events were to take place. The year was not uneventful, but it failed to fill the prophet's programme, and from that time his fame declined. His dupes subscribed handsomely to place him above difficulty and want, and he passed his last years in peace and comfort, "basking in the sunshine of the countenance of God."

There was still money in the prophetic business, and Cumming's mantle was soon on the shoulders of another man. For many years the Rev. W. Baxter's name was a household word in religious circles. To multitudes he was a heaven-sent seer, commissioned by a benevolent deity to receive the light of prophecy and throw it over a naughty world. Good people reserved a warm corner in their hearts, over and above their loyal obligation to the House of Hanover, for a spiritual guide who taught them precisely to whom they might point as "the whore of Babylon," and the "beast" of "Revelation." That quintessence of nonsense, *Forty Coming Wonders*, was

purchased with unabated credulity, although the error of Baxter's pretensions to be regarded as a prophet were proved again and again by the logic of facts to the satisfaction of reasonable persons.

Few prophets would find it easy to go on year after year delivering a succession of silly prophecies destined to utter failure. But Baxter's dupes were the most greedily credulous of their kind. The prophet gravely announced the ascension of 144,000 Christians, without dying, in 1896, and the great Persecution from 1896 to 1901. The Second Advent of Christ was fixed for the same year. The prophet once had an amusing adventure with the City Corporation. He applied for the lease of a site for a newspaper office, and it was pointed out to him that he had asked for a lease extending a quarter of a century beyond that he had fixed in his prophecies for the end of the world. But nothing daunted the prophet, who was familiar with thrones, principalities, and powers.

These are notorious cases. Cumming and Baxter found fortune-telling a pleasant and profitable hobby. They did not advise ladies how to find husbands, or furnish any of their congregations with the names of "winners." They made bolder dashes into futurity, and their courage met with its golden rewards. But they were as much imposters as race-course fortune-tellers. They pretended to possess which neither they nor other people possess. So are thought-readers, clairvoyants, mediums, and the whole troublous tribe of dabblers in the alleged "super"-natural. But whereas an ordinary person who tells fortunes is fined or sent to prison, the same fraud may be practised with impunity if one uses the jargon of the Christian religion. The Vagrancy Act provides that all persons professing to tell fortunes shall be liable to a fine or to imprisonment. Such is the modern and merciful form of the Divine commandment; "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Selden, in his *Table Talk*, says that the old laws against witchcraft do not prove witchcraft to have existed. That is so, for it never did exist. As a fact, tens of thousands of women, perfectly harmless and innocent, were legally murdered on fantastic evidence, which ought to have been incredible, for doing what was physically impossible, in supposed obedience to a legendary command of a doubtful deity.

Fortune-telling to-day means fines and imprisonment for poor vagrants, but the careers of these clergymen show how it may be turned to the best account by Christian gentlemen who remember the soothing fact that a large number of their co-religionists are uneducated and foolish.

MIMNERMUS.

The Emergence of Man.

III.

(Continued from p. 118.)

THE clear thoroughfare afforded by the uninterrupted pathway into Europe from Asia and Africa, which permitted a wealth of floral and faunal life so vast to enter our continent is not devoid of interest with respect to the advent of man. The discovery of the fossil remains of a representative of the Trinal race in Java, which dwelt among animals nearly akin to those of the lower Himalayas, and more distantly related to the faunal organisms of Southern Europe, has an important bearing on the problem of the origin of the human family.

The Dutch surgeon, Dubois, in 1891, discovered, near the Bengawan River in Java, a tooth which he thought to be that of an ancient type of ape. A further exami-

nation of the deposit disclosed the presence of part of a skull, another tooth, and a left thighbone. These were the long-buried relics of the now world-renowned *Pithecanthropus erectus*—the erect ape-man. Dubois declared that this creature represented "the transition form between man and the anthropoids which the laws of evolution teach us must have existed. He is the ancestor of man."

Whether *Pithecanthropus* is an ancestor or not, he is certainly a near relative. The geological stratum in which these fragments were found was considered by Dubois to be of Pliocene age. In this conclusion he was supported by other scientists, while some regard it as a little more recent. In summing up all the now available evidence, Professor Osborn states that:—

Subsequent researches by expert geologists have tended to refer the age to the early Pleistocene. According to Elbert, the Kendeng strata overlying the *Pithecanthropus* layer corresponds to an early pluvial period of low temperature and, in point of time, to the Ice Age of Europe. For even in Java one can distinguish three divisions of the Pleistocene period, including the first period of low temperature to which the *Pithecanthropus* layer is referred.

A careful comparison of the fossil mammals preserved in the deposit which yielded the remains of *Pithecanthropus* nevertheless seem to sustain the soundness of Dubois' original judgment. The many animals disinterred from this deposit are distinctly Pliocene in character. The various data as a whole seem to warrant the conclusion that the geological antiquity of the Trinil ape-men is either extremely late Pliocene or of very early Pleistocene date.

The discovery of *Pithecanthropus*, the at present only known representative of what was presumably a widespread stock, proved the occasion of an animated controversy. Some hailed the Java ape-man as the confidently awaited missing link; others asserted it to be the cranium of a long extinct giant gibbon, and denied that it was in any sense human. Then dispassionate science stepped in to pronounce an opinion, and it was pointed out that the top of the skull carries an unmistakable resemblance, both when surveyed sideways or when viewed from above, to the long-departed Stone Age men of the Neanderthal race. That very competent anatomist, Professor Schwalbe, contends that the cranium of *Pithecanthropus* much more closely approaches the skulls of this ancient stock than those of the superior apes. Schwalbe likewise insists that all the primitive human peoples were dolichocephalic, or long-headed; while all contemporary apes are broad-headed. Whether an ancient progenitor of modern man or not, the ape-man was a member of the human group, however humble, and was far nearer the apes than any other known variety of extant or extinct mankind.

Efforts have been, and are still being made, to augment the fragmentary discovery of Dubois, but so far with scanty success. "The Selenka expedition of 1907-8," we are informed,—

brought back a human left lower molar as the only result of an express search for more *Pithecanthropus* remains. Dubois is also said to possess the fragment of a primitive-looking lower jaw from the range known as the Kendeng Hills, at the southern base of which lies the village of Trinil.

The cranial capacity of the Javan ape-man was smaller than that of any savage race recently or long since extinct, while it was distinctly superior to that of any of the apes. But the animal had evidently gained the erect posture, thus emancipating its arms and hands for nobler purposes than those of mere progression. The extended demands put upon the lower limbs as organs

of support and locomotion led to their strengthening. Their powers of movement being thus amplified, we may accept the conclusion of Professor Elliot Smith that—

these upright simians emerged from their ancestral forests in societies, armed with sticks and stones, and with the rudiments of all the powers that eventually enabled them to conquer the world. The greater exposure to danger which these more adventurous spirits encountered once they emerged in the open, and the constant struggles these first semi-human creatures must have had in encounters with definite enemies, no less than with the forces of Nature, provided the factors which rapidly weeded out those unfitted for the new conditions and by natural selection made real men of the survivors.

The Interglacial Stage in Europe already mentioned was succeeded by a second glacial invasion. Various land areas began to sink, and cold currents from the arctic regions swept over the seas. Professor Geikie estimated the decline of temperature in Western Europe during this time at about 20 deg. F. This second Ice Age was far more severe than any of the others experienced either in the Old or the New World. In the Pyrenees, glaciers of colossal dimensions were formed. Ice rivers flowed from the Pyrenees southwards into Spain for nearly forty miles from their original home, while to the north they occupied the Garonne valley in France for a distance of forty-five miles. It is considered that, even where it had spread out at its lower levels, the Garonne glacier retained a thickness of half-a-mile.

But the greatest European ice-sheet came from the bitter north. The tremendous Scandinavian glacial wave swept over our Island, filled the valleys of the Vistula, Rhine, and Elbe, and closely approached the Carpathians. So intense was this frigid invasion that insignificant hills were crowned with an icy covering, and even the Atlas range in Africa was glaciated. In North America, the vast ice-sheet descended much further south than in the antecedent or in any subsequent glacial time. Centuries came and went, during which the Northern Hemisphere was held in bondage by ice and snow. Then the harsh grip was relaxed, and milder conditions returned. A prolonged period of genial aspect followed, and this era is distinguished by the first unequivocal evidence of man's residence in Western Europe. This is the epoch of the Heidelberg race, as yet identified by one jawbone given up by the Mauer deposits near Heidelberg in 1907.

That the second Interglacial period was of immense duration is manifested by the extent of the channeling and denudation of the "drifts" transported southwards both in Europe and America during the preceding Ice Age. In the opening stages of the decline of the intense cold, the climate of the Northern Hemisphere was raw and damp. But as the ice retreated, the atmospheric conditions became warm and dry; so much so that the glaciers of the Alpine regions terminated at points much higher than their present levels. Flowers bloomed in the highlands of Central Europe which require a temperature equal to that enjoyed on the sunny slopes of the mountains of Northern Italy to-day. In Southern France, plants such as the warmth-loving laurel and sweet bay were flourishing, while the fig survived the winters then prevailing. Yet, despite the persistence of these southern forms of vegetation, the animal life discovered south of the mouth of the Neckar in the strata disclosing the remains of Heidelberg man indicate that the general conditions were of a temperate character. In proximity to the human relics, the fossils include those of elephants, rhinoceroses, horses, wild pigs, many members of the deer group, oxen, bears, lions, wolves,

and beavers. Schoetensack, who found the jaw of Heidelberg man, referred these numerous mammals to the First Interglacial Stage, and this conclusion was supported by Geikie. Osborn, however, dissents from this view, and contends that:—

The presence of the Etruscan rhinoceros would appear to point to such great antiquity, but the evidence afforded by this primitive animal is overborne by that of three mammals which are highly characteristic of Second Interglacial times; these are the straight-tusked or ancient elephant (*E. antiquus*), the lion, and the Mosbach horse. Excepting only the Etruscan rhinoceros, all these species frequenting the ancient stream Elsenz, and deposited with the "sands of Mauer," occurred also in the forests and meadows of the region now known as Baden, where the fossil mammal deposits of Mosbach, near the Neckar, are found.

Although a debatable point, it appears probable that the earliest human race so far recorded in Central Europe resided in Germany at the commencement of the Second Interglacial Stage. The animal fossils indicate the presence of wide woodlands as well as spacious pastures. The Heidelberg savages must have been of a very low type, judging from the jaw discovered. The teeth are distinctly human, but the protrusion of modern man's under-jaw, which makes possible the chin, is entirely absent. Apart from the very regular teeth, so extremely dissimilar to those of any living or extinct ape, the jaw would have been regarded as unquestionably simian. The dental organs are so small in comparison with the brutal jaw, that they could scarcely have been used for fighting purposes. And as regards the remarkably retreating chin, the crania of the ancient Neanderthal and other prehistoric peoples "rank exactly half-way between the most inferior races of recent man and the anthropoid apes."

The more an organ is exercised, the more fully developed it is likely to become; and judging from the circumstance that the contemporary Eskimos, and the surviving or recently obliterated native races of Australia and elsewhere, were known to employ the jaws as tools, it is a fair inference that the Heidelberg folk utilized their mandibles for a like purpose. This in some measure explains the abnormal development of the Heidelberg jaw. Doubtless, as further relics of this savage stock are made known, the upper part of the cranium will denote an intellectual advance beyond that of the ape-man of Java.

The arrival of man in Europe, then, was apparently during the mild interval which separated the second Great Ice Age from the third Glacial visitation. The mammalian fossils of later deposits indicate the return of colder conditions. The northern reindeer gradually spread over continental Europe, and it may have migrated as far south as the borders of Spain. American testimony is of a kindred character, and all the available data conspire to prove that after the advance of the glaciers of the Second Ice Period had been stayed, and their recession had begun, the climate remained moist and chilly until a more genial stage supervened. Throughout this very temperate time forests flourished, but the warm interval was succeeded by a period of cold and dry conditions, which in its turn gave way both in Northern Europe and America to the raw, perhaps foggy, and most certainly frigid, epoch known as the Third Glaciation, which, according to Penck's extremely conservative calculation, commenced about 120,000 years since, and lasted from its opening to its close for at least 20,000 years. This would consequently carry us down to Europe and America as they existed only 100,000 years ago.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

Death of a South African Freethinker.

THERE died a little while ago in Cape Town, Mr. G. W. Martin, who for many years kept the Freethought Flag flying here. Mr. Martin used to speak every evening under the statue of Van Riech, near the water's edge, and as near the spot where the first Governor of the Cape landed as could be ascertained. Among his audience were many who were very regular in their attendances, while the casual passer-by was frequently attracted by the truths that fell from the speaker's tongue. They were the wiser men who took heed; not like Goldsmith's fool, who came to scoff and remained to pray. Without being an eloquent speaker, Mr. Martin made up for that lack by efficiency and earnestness. He was a great admirer of the *Freethinker*, and frequently read from it at his meetings. On one occasion he attended the funeral of a lady friend of his, the obsequies, or whatever the clerical term is, being conducted by the Rev. William Balmforth, a Free Unitarian, who is a Socialist and a man who does not revile another because the one's doing is not his. Mr. Martin remarked to Mr. Balmforth: "I would like you to be at my funeral. If you pray over my coffin and I don't get out of the shell, you will know I am dead." Well, Mr. Balmforth was at the funeral. If he prayed, Mr. Martin stayed in the shell.

This much must be said of Mr. Martin, he lived a clean and honest life. On week-days he was a good worker. He was free in dipping his hand into the pocket where his money might be. On Sunday evening he spoke in the great effort to remove superstition from the minds of the people. Africa has been called the Dark Continent. It is in more ways than one, and in no other more so than in the darkness of religious superstition. The predicants have for years been whispered of as the curse of the country. But few dare to speak aloud. Mr. Martin was one of those who dared.

W. BAXTER (Cape Town).

Acid Drops.

We cited at length, last week, from Mr. Ralph Hall Caine's lecture before the Douglas Debating Society. (Mr. Caine is, by the way, a brother of the novelist, not a son, as was then stated.) The *Publishers' Circular* also gives a summary of the address, and to Mr. Caine's statement that, if only one book could be saved out of an assumed catastrophe, he would vote for Shakespeare, and not the Bible, the editor of the *Publishers' Circular* adds the note: "Mr. Ralph Hall Caine appears to forget that but for the Bible there would have been no Shakespeare."

Now, we don't know who the editor of the *Publishers' Circular* is; but whoever he is, we raise our hat to him. For that comment is a gem of the first water. Of its kind it is unsurpassable. Even Prophet Baxter Bottomley could not beat it. Its downright drivelling idiocy, unredeemed by even a reflection of common sense, makes it a thing of joy—something that one preserves in a treasured notebook, only to be glanced at when one doubts whether life is worth living. Many people have written volumes of diluted rubbish claiming how much Shakespeare was indebted to the Bible for ideas, inspiration, imagery, and so forth. But their work has been depressing rather than entertaining, since it was not all nonsense, and the presence of some sense made one resent the nonsense. But the editor of the *Publishers' Circular* beats the band. He will have no compromise. There would have been no Shakespeare at all but for the Bible. Neither would there have been any Chaucer, or Spenser, or Marlowe, or Drayton, or Bacon, or Montaigne, or Newton, or Lyell, or Darwin. We shall certainly keep an eye on the *Publishers' Circular*—if the editor provides us with many feasts of this description.

Now that the world-war is nearing its climax the British clergy, who are exempted from fighting, are anxious to get credit for doing something in order to save their faces. The Bishop of Norwich is advocating clerical help in the cultivation of small plots of ground. If a score or two of parsons

grow spring onions or cultivate a few potatoes, it will not save the clergy from the reproach that they did nothing valuable in this awful time.

The Bishop of London has been in Scotland, and the account of his visit in the *Church Times* for February 23 is headed: "Revival in Scotland." The advent of his lordship anywhere spells Revival. Simply because the largest church meeting ever held in Dundee took place when Dr. Ingram was there, it is taken for granted that Caledonia is ablaze with new-kindled religious zeal. But the inference is radically false, as the Scottish people well know. The fact that folk rush to see and hear so notorious a man as the Bishop of London is no proof that they are religiously awakened. As a matter of fact, a most remarkable awakening is going on north of the Tweed, but it is of an entirely intellectual character, and it results, to the gratification of many, to the chagrin of more, in the gradual decay of religion in all parts of that interesting land.

The Bishop assured his Dundee audience that the hope of the world is the Church, only it must be a brand new church. How such a church is to be obtained he did not, because he could not, say. He forgets that the Church is old and full of disease, and that it has never been a success, except as a purely business concern, though, it must be admitted that, in this respect, its success has been quite phenomenal. Instead of setting himself up as a purifier of public morals, his lordship would evince much greater wisdom were he to confine himself to the stupendous task of reforming the Church, whose morals need looking after much more than those of the world. It would do the Bishop of London incalculable good if he could realize the truth of the old adage: "Physician, heal thyself."

All the Bishop does is to show that he can be as silly in the far north as in the far south. He is hoping for a new world after the War, but he asks:—

Have you ever thought what is going to stop wars in the future? Beating Germany? A good preliminary. But what is going to stop the dangers of another war? What if the unconverted Chinese arise in their millions? There is only one way to stop wars. You will find it in the prophecy of Isaiah: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." This can only be arrived at when a successful Church brings the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its hand.

This fear of "unconverted Chinese" is delicious. Who is it but the Christian nations that have made nearly all the wars of the past five centuries? And who but the Christians are trying to drag China into the present War? China unconverted is a danger to none. China converted may become a danger to the world.

At the Leeds Wesleyan Mission Anniversary, Sir William Middlebrook, M.P., said: "No one could realize the amount of good the War had brought about; to-day thousands of men in the Army were leading useful and good lives. The teaching of Christianity throughout this country had laid the foundation of goodness in the hearts and lives of these men." After that one need feel small surprise at the ineffectiveness of Parliament. One can understand people who talk of the necessity for the War, however regrettable it may be. But to talk of the amount of good done by it is either sheer imbecility or deliberate knavery. And at the very moment that we are being told of the good done by the War, and its beneficial effects on the lives of men, the papers are full of accounts of a growing immorality, and committees and judges are warning us of the outbreak of immorality that may be expected when the troops come home. A determination to go through with the War is understandable, so is the conviction that we were bound to enter the War, and that we are fighting for laudable objects. All these things are, we repeat, understandable. But to speak of the present wholesale slaughter of human beings, the ruin of thousands of homes, the sacrifice of one civil liberty after another, and the orgy of hatred, lying, and misrepresentation that the whole of Europe has witnessed for over two years and a half as doing good is, in itself, a decisive disproof of the War's moralizing influence.

The vicar of Burton Wood is annoyed that women talk in church instead of paying attention to his sermons. He advises them that it "is better to knit for Jacks and Tommies in sermon time than to talk, whisper, laugh, and giggle, flirt, and misbehave, to judge our neighbours, to criticize hats, gowns, and fur coats." Perhaps a change of parsons in favour of one who could preach sermons sufficiently sensible to command attention might serve the purpose for which knitting is recommended. But why can't the women do their knitting at home?

The Master of the Temple, preaching in the Temple Church, said he was quite convinced of the existence of an evil spirit, active in the world; but to go beyond that and to particularize on the form of that activity was to enter the realm of superstition. That is, we ought to believe in an evil spirit, so long as we refrain from saying what it is like, where it is, or what the Devil it is doing. That, we admit, is religion. Be hazy in your thinking, and indefinite in your speech, and you will continue religious. And the Master of the Temple is an educated man talking to an educated audience!

"Clergymen will be accepted for agriculture and other forms of national service," says the editor of an evening paper. The trouble is that these Christian gentlemen are so coy in making advances.

A deputation from the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress recently waited upon Lord Derby at the War Office and urged the removal of the exemption from military service granted to the clergy, of whom there are 50,000 in this country. Lord Derby replied that this was a matter for the House of Commons. The men of God will breathe more freely on hearing this.

That the Government religion is hedged around with Acts of Parliament, and is a slave of Parliament, is seen in the Bill now under consideration by the Upper House authorizing the omission of certain services on account of war conditions. And Parliament, be it noted, is composed of representatives of many religions, and no religion.

The Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Bourne, has advised the faithful to continue to abstain from flesh-meat on Fridays. Presumably, those who fail to observe the restriction will have a prolonged fry-day when they die.

The clergy, who are pretending that London's morals are those of Sodom and Gomorrah, have upset some of their own supporters by their hysterical nonsense. Mr. A. C. Cotton, speaking at Southwark Diocesan Conference, said: "I have known London for over seventy years, and I say clearly that, compared with fifty years ago, London is an open-air Cathedral." The clergy will wish Mr. Cotton in the place they so often mention in sermons.

On the one side the clergy have been busily engaged, in their capacity as recruiting agents, in dwelling upon the access of moral strength the nation has derived from the War. On the other side we have been warned—often by the same parties when they have had other ends in view—of the increase of immorality produced by the War. The public may, therefore, take its choice of either view, or adopt both. But on this latter view the eminent surgeon, Sir Malcolm Morris, remarks in connection with the spread of venereal disease: "It is greatly to be feared that these figures, appalling as they are, have been seriously augmented since the War, owing to what can only be described as the wave of immorality which has swept over the country. Excitement, hysterical sentiment, intemperance, unbridled control, as well as lust, have helped to break down the ordinary barriers and safeguards. Opportunities and temptations to indulge promiscuous passion have been multiplied, with most disastrous consequences to the youth of both sexes, but especially to the young, vigorous, and often inexperienced manhood of our country and Empire who have joined the colours." Thus do the moralist and the pathologist administer quite un-

consciously, a "knock-out" blow to the parson, and at the same time help to kill a piece of cant that must be killed if armed conflicts between nations are to be replaced by civilized intercourse.

The police have been very active of late in dropping down on fortune-tellers, crystal-gazers, and a number of spiritualistic mediums. For our part we do not see that much good at any time can come from such prosecutions. Folly will out, and the real cure for such things is to lift the public above them. And we quite agree with the letter from Major Warren, in last week's *Freethinker*, that, in many respects, the hostility shown towards spiritualistic mediums by preachers and religious newspapers is motivated by professional jealousy. Why one person should be prosecuted for claiming to provide messages from the dead, and another person should be allowed to receive money for saying prayers for the benefit of the dead, and others get large salaries for performing, among other things, magical hocus-pocus with a little bread and wine, is puzzling until one remembers what an amount of stupidity is always current.

What essential difference is there between the thaumaturgist in Bond Street and the thaumaturgist in the pulpit? None we can see, save that in the one case the income is precarious and in the other assured. But both trade upon human ignorance and fear, both pretend to a knowledge of the unknown which we are quite certain neither possess. And can it be wondered that while the Churches have done, and are doing, so much to encourage superstition in general, that it should manifest itself in directions not contemplated by those teachers of superstition as established by law. After all, the only true distinction between religion and superstition is that pointed out by Hobbes. Religion is superstition allowed—superstition is religion disallowed.

It is well known that different and more or less conflicting schools of religious thought and practice exist and assert themselves in the Anglican Church. For some months the question of the reservation of the Sacrament has been diligently discussed in the columns of the *Church Times*; and in its issue for February 16, there is a lengthy report of a debate on the subject which took place in the Upper House of Convocation. To outsiders, whose acquaintance with the theme is purely academic, the controversy seems unspeakably silly. The reservation is primarily intended for the sick, and the idea is to set apart at the open Communion in the Church "so much of the Consecrated Bread and Wine as shall serve the sick person (or persons), and as many as shall communicate with him (if there be any). And, the open Communion ended, he (the priest) shall on the same day and with as little delay as may be, go and minister the same." It appears from this that the consecration holds good only for a very short period. The sick must receive the Sacrament on the very day of consecration, or all its virtue will have gone out of it. One night's exposure might destroy it altogether.

The point on which the Church seems hopelessly divided is whether the Reservation of the Holy Sacrament is to be allowed "under such conditions as suggest that the faithful should habitually 'visit' it as an object of devotion and worship." Here the Bishop of Oxford parts company with the Catholic party, which until recently he was supposed to represent. He would prohibit Reservation for any purpose whatsoever other than that of communicating the sick. The Bishop of London favours the idea of reserving the Sacrament in tabernacles or monstrances, to which the devout should enjoy free access. And thus the disputation proceeds, and is entirely concerned with mere shadows, with matters that lie completely outside the sphere of knowledge, with gorgeous illusions which obscure the genuine realities of life, and whose only contribution to human welfare consists of empty ghostliness, as to the real nature of which no two persons agree.

It has often been pointed out in these columns what a large proportion of present-day novelists are Freethinkers, or show a freethinking tendency. In itself it is an illustration

of the truth that a virile art is always more or less allied with scepticism. Now, in the *Church Times*, we have the admission, by way of hostile criticism, that a large number of contemporary novelists are hostile to Christianity. We are not concerned, for the moment, to discuss whether the *Church Times'* view of the character of modern novelists is correct or not. It is the admission as to their heresy which is interesting:—

They have acquired a smattering of psychology, of sociology, of medical science, and believe themselves omniscient. In particular, they display an ignorance of the spiritual factor in mankind that would be ludicrous if it were not tragic. The blunt truth is that a morbid dwelling upon animalism has atrophied their own powers of spiritual perception. They take every opportunity of deriding the Church. They assume that every person of intellect regards it as based upon effete superstitions. They view its clergy with supreme contempt—a contempt which, did those of real life resemble the clergy figuring in these novels, would be amply deserved. They take for granted—as certain society journals take for granted—that churchgoing is a practice utterly outside the normal life of to-day of all people of intelligence.

It no doubt *sounds* serious to be told that one's spiritual nature is blunted; but, as the *C. T.* understands "spiritual," we hardly suppose it will disturb those against whom the charge is made.

Middlesex Hospital has decided to abolish a bye-law which stipulates that the superintendent and officials shall be members of the Church of England. We hope this means that in future no religious test of any kind shall be imposed upon officials. To merely extend the regulation so as to admit all Christian sects and exclude others is not much of an advance, although it is what many Christians court as progress.

In an appeal for funds the Salvation Army states that they are "helping young people to be straight and true." They do not appear to be very successful, for magistrates are overburdened with juvenile delinquents.

Mr. J. H. Shakespeare, President of the Free Church Council, advises ministers to ask their congregations to stay behind after the Sunday morning services in order to discuss the question of food production. Mr. Shakespeare, with a view to the implied desecration of the "Sawbath," says: "They will have no scruples about doing this if they remember that Christ fed the multitude, and that he asked the Pharisees whether it was lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath Day." This is very ingenious; but we would remind Mr. Shakespeare that Christ did not call a committee to discuss how to grow food; he simply took a few loaves and fishes, and fed a multitude. The job was simple—to him. It is not quite so simple with us. And we do not see that his example helps us in any way. Now, if Jesus were alive to-day, and would repeat the trick as, say, Parliamentary Secretary to Lord Devonport, he would be extremely useful.

In the Divorce Court recently a decree nisi was granted to Mrs. Opie on the ground of the cruelty and misconduct of her husband, the Rev. W. M. Opie. The misconduct took place in a disorderly house near Piccadilly. The clerical mission, which is looking after soldier's morals, had better keep its eyes on the parsons as well.

A sermon by the late Canon Fleming, published in 1892, has realized £1,821, over 70,000 copies having been sold. No wonder a distinguished Frenchman said English people take their pleasures sadly.

Some of the Y.M.C.A. huts have been taken over by the Military Authorities. The soldiers will appreciate the change, for they will not be annoyed continually with inquiries concerning their eternal welfare.

The Temperance Council of the Christian Churches, comprising thirteen organizations, has issued an appeal for total abstinence, based on "Christian Citizenship." When will these parsons remember that the population of the British Empire is over 400,000,000, the overwhelming majority of whom are not Christians at all?

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 11, Birmingham; March 18, Leicester; March 25, Manchester; April 1, Portsmouth; April 8, Swansea.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.**—March 25, Avondale Hall, Clapham.
- A. R. W.**—Thanks. As soon as possible.
- S. LENG.**—People in a state of great emotional tension are very much more liable to unreasoning conclusions than when in a normal state. That is all there is in the spiritualistic "boom"—assuming that it exists.
- J. BROWN.**—We note the Vicar of Biddulph has been lecturing on "Why I am not an Atheist." We do not know the gentleman, but we could hazard a reason. But we cannot see why, if the Vicar is able to lecture on the subject in a church, he cannot permit questions there. To meet questioners "by appointment" looks a trifle suspicious.
- D. RICHARDS.**—We have no knowledge of any preacher named D. Charles Davies ever having debated with Charles Bradlaugh. That Mr. Davies "wiped the floor" with Bradlaugh we can readily believe. It was such an easy thing to do, and so many did it—or said they did. Anyway, we compliment your friend on his imagination.
- E. S.**—Pleased to know that you think we "got right home" in our notes on the Bishop of Oxford in last week's issue.
- E. GREENWOOD.**—The subject is an important one, as you say. But we could form a better opinion if we saw a chapter or so of the proposed work.
- IVOR.**—We have no other information on the matter save such as we have already published. That seems to us quite enough for any unprejudiced person. We hope you will succeed in giving the pietists a lively time.
- "VERITAS."**—We fail to see any connection between the teaching that "thinking good" helps and "thinking evil" injures—which are only valid as general truths—and the philosophy of "Christian Science." In your sense the teaching is wrenched to an illegitimate use. And in its legitimate sense it will not fit your teaching.
- MISS RHODA LYND** writes:—"I have read with pleasure the article in last issue by Mr. George Underwood. The example he quotes of Dekker's apologues is very interesting; but why did he not quote more of them? A page or so of the original would be more informative than ten times the amount of criticism. Not that I wish to undervalue Mr. Underwood's criticism which could not be bettered by any of the writers in the professedly literary weeklies. By the way, will you allow me to ask him if he will be so kind as to recommend me a few works of fiction in which freethought is given a prominent position; in which it is represented sympathetically or unsympathetically? I believe many of our novelists are, nowadays more or less freethinkers, but they do not seem to use their art to further the good cause. Is not that so?" We pass the suggestion on to Mr. Underwood.
- Our last Australian post brought us two very flattering letters, one from an old subscriber, Mr. S. Brooking, who writes that "The dear old paper gets better than ever."—Another, a new subscriber, Mr. J. Jackson, writes: "I wish to add my appreciation of your paper, which is the best I read. I have been free from religion for two years, and the *Freethinker* is my principle food for thought. Its standard is a credit to you." We are very pleased to have such cordial support from old readers as well as new ones.
- A. F.**—Thanks for reports of Professor Alexander's lectures on *Space and Time*. We have read them with great interest, and we shall look forward to their publication in book form.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- 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.

Next Sunday (March 11) Mr. Cohen lectures in Birmingham. The Town Hall has been engaged, and as this is a very large building, capable of seating several thousands, we hope that all local friends will do their best to make the meeting a success. The meeting will be, of course, well advertised, but personal effort is very effective on such occasions, and those who would care to help in any way should apply to the Secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 245, Shensstone Road, Rotton Park, Birmingham.

The timidity of many English Socialists where religion is concerned is well known to most people in England, and it has earned the contempt of the majority of advanced thinkers—in the Socialist and other movements—abroad. And now we seriously ask our readers' opinion of the following incident reported to us by one whose word we have no reason whatever for doubting. On a recent Sunday some copies of the *Freethinker* were exposed for sale at two I.L.P. meetings in Liverpool. The sight was too much for many of the members. At one of the meeting-places some threatened to resign if the paper was permitted to appear there again. At the other place a heated discussion took place at such an outrage on the susceptibilities of members, and by an overwhelming majority vote it was decided to burn all unsold copies. Really, if burning copies of this paper gives the Liverpool members of the I.L.P. any pleasure, we shall be pleased to quote them special terms for large quantities.

But, again, we ask our readers, and especially those who are Socialists, what is *their* opinion of conduct that even a great many Christians would be ashamed of? The state of mind disclosed by such conduct is more than pitiable, it is contemptible. And if that is the temper developed by the I.L.P. teaching and associations, what is its value as an instrument of social reform? We could feel some little respect for these people if we believed they were really Christians. But we do not believe they are. Their conduct is dictated by mental cowardice, which lacks even the pitiful justification of convinced religious belief. If Freethinking Socialists have any real respect for either their freethought or their Socialism, they will realize it is high time that they let their opinions be heard, and made their presence felt. If the I.L.P. does not wish to have Freethinkers in its ranks, it should have the decency to say so. A Socialism that bows before a bigotry such as that displayed in the above incident, and hands the directions of its mental life over to Sunday-school teachers, local preachers, and opportunist parsons, is, so far as any valuable reform is concerned, damned beyond the possibility of redemption. For the present we leave the subject, again asking the Freethinking members of these two bodies what *they* have to say on the matter.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Lloyd had a very successful meeting at Nottingham on Sunday last. There was a well-filled hall, and, needless to say, the audience was delighted with the lecture. There was also a good discussion. We have good hopes of a very successful movement being founded at Nottingham. There are plenty of freethinkers there. All that is needed is their resolve to get on with the work.

The further restrictions on the importation of paper, with a still further rise in price, has initiated almost a revolution in the newspaper world. Some of the halfpenny papers are being raised to a penny, and penny ones to twopence. That is to be expected where the sole reason for maintaining a paper is a commercial one. But it is noteworthy of British public life that even this cannot be done without a display of cant. Some papers are frank enough to say that the price is raised because they can only be published at the old price at a loss. And that is a quite sufficient reason. But the *Times* discovers a moral reason for it. It is charging 2d. in order to reduce sales, and thus help the Government to save tonnage, is a spirit of pure patriotism. How much easier it

would have been to save *all* the tonnage involved in producing the *Times* and suspend publication altogether.

For ourselves the outlook in the future is made the more serious by this new development, but we shall hope for the best. The *Freethinker* has no income from advertisements. (It is the falling off from this source that is chiefly responsible for the increased cost of newspapers, and not the rise in the price of paper). So we are free from anxiety on that head. But with paper three or four times the price the position is serious enough for a paper like the *Freethinker*, without capital and without reserves. Still we are determined to keep the *Freethinker* as it is, both as to size and price, so long as it can be done. And with the continued help of our readers we think it can be done. We shall shrink from neither hardship nor struggle. And every month we struggle through brings the War nearer to an end. And when the end does come the story of *how* we survived will make interesting reading.

We are asked to announce that on Wednesday, March 14, Mr. C. Saphin will lecture at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on "The Solar Origin of Christianity." The lecture will be illustrated by lantern slides, and admission will be free—with a collection. We do not know the time of the meeting, but we presume it will commence about 8 o'clock.

Mr. Israel Zangwill is to deliver the next Conway Memorial Lecture at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, on Thursday, March 8, at 6.30 p.m., the subject being "The Principles of Nationalities." Mr. Percy Alden, M.P., will preside, and admission will be free, except to a few reserved seats.

Mr. Edmond Selous writes to the *Daily Telegraph* of February 17 that his brother, the late Captain C. F. Selous, was a Darwinian evolutionist, and had no belief whatever in any creed, dogma, or revelation. Religion, as distinct from right conduct, did not enter into his thoughts, and he estimated men entirely by their characters.

"Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity."

A REVIEW OF DR. F. LEGGE'S BOOK.

BOOKS on Christian origins and on the Pagan and Jewish environment of Primitive Catholicism have been on the increase during recent years, though, of course, the War has lessened the amount of interest in the subject. The striking likenesses between Christianity and its religious rivals of the Roman Empire attracted the attention of independent thinkers so far back as the eighteenth century. Among the pioneer names of that date and of the earlier part of the last century those of Dupuis, Robert Taylor, and Godfrey Higgins are not the least noteworthy. At that time scattered notices in the writings of Christian Fathers and Pagan historians, poets, philosophers, and romancers comprised nearly all the data available for the student. The gaps in our knowledge of this particular past are still very great, and there is consequently a strong temptation to indulge in hasty generalizations and ill-grounded hypotheses. During the last half century thousands of inscriptions and bas-reliefs have been brought to light, which not only help us to fill in a considerable number of gaps, but have served to confirm the statements made by ancient writers.

In the light of these new discoveries, the problem of the rise of Christianity is being attacked with fresh vigour by many English and foreign scholars, who have made the cults of the Roman Empire their special study. Among the best recent works on the subject are Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, Cumont's

Oriental Religions in Modern Paganism, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, and Legge's *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*.

It is with the last of these that this article is concerned. Dr. Legge's treatise, which is published by the Cambridge University Press, covers the period from 330 B.C. to A.D. 330. It is well worth a serious study, but the price (£1 5s.) puts it beyond the reach of most purses, especially in war-time.

The starting-point of Dr. Legge's investigations into ancient religious cults is Alexander the Great, and the profound changes, political and intellectual, brought about by his victories in the life of Egypt and Western Asia. The establishment of Greek as the *lingua franca* over so vast an area was not the least important. How greatly this assisted the progress of the Christian Church has been emphasized by historians and theologians time and again. Less attention has been drawn to the modifications of religious feeling and speculation resulting from the Alexandrian conquests. Among Polytheists the shifting fortunes of men are imagined to imply alternations of failure and success in the divine world. A conquering king is overshadowed by his conquering god, who reduces the divinities he has overthrown to the rank of servants or inferior allies. The rise of an empire is favourable to Monotheism, in the sense of a supernatural hierarchy culminating in a supreme providence, a king of kings and lord of lords. Of course, it does not follow that every god of the conquered will take a subordinate role in the pantheon of the conqueror. Another psychic tendency, which is probably quite as common as the first, is to identify deities whose attributes are similar. Among the philosophic few a lead is thus given to Monotheism, in the stricter sense, the doctrine that there is one God, whom men variously image and variously name, but who transcends every human conception. Some may even be induced to take the bolder step of Pantheism, which, indeed, is but an inconsistent form of Atheism, and the one God becomes resolved into the infinite substance of Nature, thinkable only under its myriad changing modes.

The fostering of a Monotheistic bias and the fusion of religious cults and creeds effected by the work of Alexander the Great are fully recognized by Dr. Legge. He further notes the growth of the spirit of proselytism, which necessarily flowed from the break-up of so many national and racial barriers, with the ideas that had depended on them. His own words are well worth quoting:—

Before his coming we see the ancient world divided into separate communities, each with its own pantheon and forms of worship, and neither knowing nor caring greatly about those of its neighbours. But immediately after, all this is changed. The interchange of ideas between East and West has thrown the different religions of the world as it were into a melting-pot, in which the germs of a different grouping of the human race are dimly visible. The spirit of proselytism is abroad, and man now wants to impress his own ideas of the Divine upon his fellows.¹

¹ Vol. i., p. 26.

Dr. Legge may well declare, on the strength of these considerations, that "from the scientific point of view, there is none among the forerunners of Christianity who did more to prepare and make ready its way than Alexander."

A whole chapter, "The Alexandrian Divinities," is devoted to a delineation of the Egyptian cult of Osiris, or Serapis, and the goddess Isis, and to the modifications it underwent through the influence of Greek ideas. Our author deals, in a very lucid and interesting way, with its many resemblances to the less ancient Mysteries of Eleusis, which promoted the worship of Demeter, the

goddess of the corn, her daughter Kore, and the babe Iacchos. Not less striking are the parallels between these cults and Christianity. The idea of a divine being slain by the powers of evil, or going down to the underworld and returning in triumph from the dead, is common to all three, and was, in fact, the central feature of those mystic religions of the Nearer East that were invading the Roman Empire at the time when the Christian Church was beginning to make headway. Dr. Legge, in drawing attention to the parallels between the Osirian cult and Christianity, discusses how far the latter may be held to have borrowed from the former. He denies the likelihood of any of the Christian doctrines having originated in this way, but admits the passage of numerous ritual elements from the worship of Osiris and Isis to that of Christ. He even goes so far as to surmise whether "the tenets of the Alexandrian religion may not have had some influence on the discussions which raged around the definition of the Divine nature and attributes at the earlier Ecumenical and other Councils of the Church.The conception of the Supreme Being as a triune god was a very old one in Egypt, and reappeared, as we have seen, unchanged in the worship of Serapis, Isis, and Horus."¹ But he holds that the "deepest influence that the Alexandrian religion exercised upon the Church was probably not direct, but through those scattered and heretical sects which, although finally condemned and anathemized by her, yet ever acted as feelers by whom she obtained converts from among the heathen."²

To the extremely detailed study of these sects Dr. Legge now turns. They may be all summed up under the title of the "Gnostics," that is, the "Knowers," pretenders to a superhuman insight, not unlike the Theosophists of our own day. The Gnostics have been largely regarded hitherto as rebels against the Catholic Church; but, as a matter of fact, the first Gnostics were pre-Christian. They had much in common with Judaism, especially the less orthodox Judaism of the Dispersion, on the one hand, and with the Pagan Mystery Cults on the other. The New Testament contains many Gnostic ideas and terms, as well as protests, in the later books, against Gnosticism itself. The Gnostic doctrine of redemption, even the figure of the Gnostic Redeemer, may be traced to sources that lie quite outside historical Christianity. We may reasonably surmise, though Dr. Legge does not do so, that the identification of the Gnostic Redeemer with the Christ is due rather to Jewish than to Christian contacts. No one who has studied the phenomena of religious syncretism will deem it improbable that Christ, and even Jesus, were divine names, fraught with the conception of salvation, for some among the Pagans as well as the Jews before the advent of Jesus of Nazareth (assuming his historicity). As yet, however, we cannot demonstrate this.

Among the pre-Christian Gnostics, Dr. Legge ranks the followers of Simon Magus, the Essenes, and the Orphists. The last of these are traceable in ancient Greece at least as far back as the sixth century B.C. They based their teaching on forgeries attributed to the mythical Orpheus. Their system of moral culture was highly ascetic, purporting, by means of mystic sacraments and purificatory rites, to restore the human soul, after a long series of transmigrations, to the divine source from which it sprang. It had its dying and rising Saviour-God in Zagreus or Dionysus, with whom his worshippers sought to become one by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a sacrificed goat or young bull.

In the chapters dealing with the post-Christian Gnostics, Dr. Legge considers the Ophites, the Valen-

tinians, and the Marcionites, who clearly show the influence of the young Church. Many of the adherents of these sects did not entirely dis sever their connection with Catholicism, for whose founders they generally expressed their veneration. The post-Christian movement, however, carries on the tradition of the pre-Christian, and is continuous with it in form as well as in spirit. Gnosticism, although a serious thorn in the Church's side, did her valuable service in acting as a medium with Paganism. The ceremonial of Gnosticism, such as the use of religious statuary, was, in large measure, only an anticipation of what Catholicism did in the heyday of its triumph.

I have no space here to do more than draw attention to the two excellent chapters in which Dr. Legge deals with "The Worship of Mithras" and "Manes and the Manichæans." The former religion, which came nearer to Christianity in its theology, its worship, and its ethic than did any of the other Mystery Cults, seemed at one time likely to become the established religion of the Roman Empire. Its decline was due, in no small measure, to the weakness of its organization.

The last great rival of Christianity was Manichæism, which, spreading rapidly from its birthplace in Persia, fought a persistent battle with the Church for a century or so; nor did it finally succumb until late in the Middle Ages. Manichæism was the only religion of the Roman Empire to possess a highly centralized organization like that of Catholicism, the Manichæan "president" of Babylon (later on, of Samarkand) corresponding to the Christian bishop of Rome. In this, no doubt, lies the explanation of its greater tenacity, as compared with other Pagan cults. The sociological lesson of the fortunes of the creeds should not be lost on Freethinkers. The form of a movement or a society is no less important than its objects and its spirit.

Dr. Legge avoids theological disputations, and leaves us somewhat in the dark as to his exact intellectual position. But the whole tone of his work is decidedly humanist, and his researches are conceived and carried out along thoroughly scientific lines. Dr. Legge significantly remarks that "if, *per impossible*, we could approach the origins of Christianity with the same mental detachment and freedom from prejudice with which we might examine" other religions, "we should probably find that the Primitive Church had no need of the miraculous powers which were once assigned as the reason for her gradual and steady advance to all but universal dominion."¹ This alleged impossible feat the Freethinker has actually accomplished. For him Christianity, like other religions, is a human product, and not a superhuman portent; and he is thus far more open to the arguments of men like Dr. Legge than any theologian can ever be.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

The French Revolution.

V.

DEMOCRACY MILITANT.

(Continued from p. 125.)

THE Convention now addressed itself to another burning question, the fate of Louis XVI. The democratic party throughout France looked upon Louis as a traitor caught red-handed, and demanded his trial. A new batch of papers was found in a secret cupboard in the palace, and supplied the Government with fresh evidence of his treason, revealing the secret correspondence with Mirabeau etc., and corroborating the fact (if corroboration had been needed) of the King's collusion with the

¹ Vol. i., p. 88.

² Vol. i., p. 89.

¹ Vol. i., p. 361.

enemies of his country. After long discussion, it was decided to try Louis before the Convention itself. He appeared at the Bar on December 11. The preliminaries, with the prosecution and defence, dragged on over many days. The Girondists, though just as convinced of Louis' guilt as the "Montagnards," were snobbishly shy of regicide, and tried several shifts to get the King off. They proposed, among other things, to take a referendum of all France on the question of the penalty! Finally the Convention decided to take three votes: (1) On the King's guilt, (2) on the proposal for a referendum, and (3), if the referendum were rejected, on the penalty. Louis was pronounced guilty *nem. con.* The referendum was refused by a large majority. Finally, sentence of death was voted by a narrow majority of 387 to 334. The leading Girondists, who had striven hard to shirk the issue, voted for death when it came to the point. On January 21, 1793, Louis XVI. died by the guillotine. The Royalists continued to form projects of rescue up to the last moment. After the execution, one of the members who had voted for death, Lepelletier St. Fargeau, was shot by a Royalist in a cafe. He was given a great funeral, and reckoned as a martyr for the Revolution.

The execution of Louis XVI. destroyed the last possibility of reconciliation between the majority of the Convention and the Royalists, and, in this way, no doubt, it prolonged the life of the Republic. At the same time, it precipitated war with England: the English Government under Pitt was already alienated by the French annexation of Belgium, the opening of the river Scheldt contrary to treaty, and the "war on the world" resolution already mentioned. On learning of the King's execution, the French ambassador in London was given his passports. Holland and Spain also joined the coalition against France.

So long as the Republic appeared to be safe from invasion, the Girondist party continued in power, though damaged in prestige by the attitude it had cut at the King's trial. The "Mountain's" attacks on it were as yet only desultory, and mainly in retaliation for Girondist attacks on them. The serious opposition to the Government came from the democracy of Paris, by whom the Girondists were now thoroughly hated as social reactionaries and as political twisters. The working-class wanted to know when those measures of economic relief were coming, for which they had waited in vain for four years. The high price of living grew more and more intolerable, being aggravated now by war conditions. Agitators in the "sections," or ward-meetings, demanded the fixing of a maximum price for corn, demanded measures against profit-mongers and speculators, and abused the Government. These views, bordering on Socialism, were echoed by the municipality of Paris, which had been lately re-elected, and by Marat in his old *L'Ami du Peuple*, which had changed its title to that of *Journal de la Republique*. On February 25, after the Girondists had opposed a State grant to meet the distress in Paris, Marat wrote an article to the effect that, if the rights of the people were not an empty phrase, the forestallers of food-stuffs should be hanged at the doors of their shops for causing thousands to perish of want. A riot occurred, in which some shops were pillaged by the poor. The Girondist party attacked Marat in the Convention and called for his arrest, but dared not proceed further. Similar agitation occurred at Lyons, the second great manufacturing town of France.

Soon after this the war took again an unfavourable turn. General Dumouriez, who had never ceased to be a Monarchist at heart, was meditating treason against the Republic. At the beginning of March he allowed

the Austrians to win a victory. Danton, who had been to Belgium to take stock of the situation, returned to Paris with an evil report. At the same time the peasants of La Vendee rose against the Revolution. The immediate cause of this was a new levy of 300,000 men for the Army. It has already been mentioned that the south and west of France did not yet feel the pressure of the war. This was particularly so in La Vendee and Brittany, where the peasants were fervent Catholics, with no love for the Revolution. When the levy was announced they rose, led by their priests, and began massacring all Republicans, constitutional clergy, and enemies of the Church that they could find. Thus the Republic was faced with civil war as well as foreign war.

Worse was to come. On April 3, Dumouriez replied to a commission sent to him by the Convention, by arresting the commissioners and handing them over to the Austrians. He then tried to induce his army to march on Paris and restore the monarchy, and failing in this, rode over to the Austrians with his staff. The Republic seemed, once again, to be beset with treason on every side.

The Convention was now forced to bestir itself. The men of the "Marsh," who were patriotic and not only Conservative, turned against the Girondists, who could do nothing but pursue their party feud while France was in danger. A new Revolutionary Tribunal was created, composed of judges and jurymen nominated by the Convention, to try traitors. To supervise the Ministry, and make the Government really responsible to the Convention, a Committee of Public Safety was elected, from which the Girondist party was excluded, and which became, for practical purposes, a Cabinet. Danton was the principal member. This step (April, 1793), marks the transference of political power to those who put the winning of the war first and foremost. It was also decreed that a maximum price should be fixed for corn, and that a compulsory loan and a highly graduated income tax should be imposed to raise money for the war. All these measures were carried in the teeth of Girondist opposition.

The party scored one last outward success. They demanded and carried, in April, an order of arrest against Marat for the article about forestallers already referred to. He was sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal; but, although that Tribunal as yet consisted of more or less moderate men, he was acquitted. The people carried him in triumph back to the Convention.

For some time democratic Paris had made up its mind that no trust was to be placed in the Convention so long as the Girondists had power to obstruct measures of public safety and essential reforms in the name of empty theories. The "sections" had begun to petition the Convention from time to time to decree the arrest and detention of twenty-two principal members of the party, including Brissot, the leader, Vergniaud, the ablest speaker, Petion, Buzot, Barbaroux, and others. The municipality of Paris and the Jacobins' Club (now entirely under the influence of Robespierre) associated themselves with these petitions. The Girondists induced the Convention to decree the formation of a Commission of Twelve, packed by their own party, to investigate the actions of the municipality. The Commission ordered the arrest of Hebert, a leading member and official of the municipality, and a working-class agitator named Varlet. This set the match to the straw. Varlet was a popular exponent of social reforms, such as the limitation of landlordism, and the confiscation of "unearned increment," which are now common-places of Radicalism, though, in those days, they in-

spired incredible terror and alarm. Hebert, a much less pleasant individual, edited a periodical called "Pere Duchesne." A sort of Bottomley of the Revolution, Hebert made it his business to "give the public what it wanted," and, like our modern commercial journalists, took the line of playing down to the lower tastes of his readers, interlarding his articles with the vilest slang of the gutter, and achieving circulation at the expense of dignity and decency. Though no Socialist, and, indeed, nothing but an easy-going fellow out for popularity, Hebert was feared by the Girondists, and arrested along with Varlet. Deputations from the "sections" forthwith demanded their release and the abolition of the Commission. The President of the Convention, Isnard, the most pig-headed and rancorous of the Girondist party, replied with a threat that if any violence were attempted against the representatives of the nation, "Paris would be destroyed, and the traveller would have to ask on which side of the Seine it had stood."

More than once in the Revolution it was proved that to threaten the people of Paris with awful penalties, if they did a certain thing, was the surest way to induce them to do it. The "sections" now openly prepared for a new insurrection. The release of Hebert, conceded under pressure, no longer satisfied them. Robespierre and the "Montagnard" deputies, who had hitherto stood aloof, now threw themselves into the movement. Robespierre detested Marat, Hebert, and the semi-Socialist agitation which they voiced, but was willing to support them against the Girondists for reasons of his own, which will appear later. On May 30, the delegates from the "sections" took their places in the municipal council, which became thus an insurrectionary body, and sounded the alarm bell. At this time-honoured signal for action the armed populace collected, and in the course of May 31 surrounded the Convention hall, and pointed cannon at the building. The Convention had to suppress the Commission of Twelve, and the Girondists escaped arrest for that day. But Marat and the "sections" were not content. They wanted to make sure of the business by breaking the Girondist party once and for all. Roland (who had resigned from the Ministry some time ago) and his wife were ordered to be arrested. Roland had fled, but Madame Roland was committed to prison. On June 2 the "sections" again surrounded the Convention, demanding the resignation or expulsion of the twenty-two chief Girondists. News had just come from Lyons that the wealthy classes in that city had seized the upper hand and crushed the workers, as the Girondists had wished to do in Paris; and the Parisians were taking no chances. Threatened by the "sections" and their cannon, the Convention decreed that the obnoxious members, and those who had formed part of the Commission of Twelve, thirty-one in all, should be excluded from its sittings, and put under guard in their own houses. Three were exempted at the last moment by the intercession of Marat—moderate in the hour of his victory. That there was no intention of taking the lives of the Girondists is proved by the fact that several "Montagnards" offered to give themselves up as hostages to the constituents of those members who were arrested. This offer was refused by the Girondists, who had no intention of allowing any compromise of the kind.

Those who regard a representative Assembly, however faultily elected, as the incarnation of democracy, will look upon the proceedings of May 31 to June 2, 1793, as an outrage on democracy. Yet let us submit these theroies to the test of facts. The Convention was far from being a democratically elected Parliament. Theoretically there was manhood suffrage; practically,

the system was that the people in each department of France elected an intermediate body, who, in turn, elected the deputies to the Convention. This obviously put a spoke in the wheel of popular representation, and was equivalent to "plural voting" and "co-option" at their very worst. Democracy, *i.e.*, the accurate reflection of the general will in an elected body, can seldom or never be perfectly achieved; but to arrive at it even approximately, that body must be elected by the *direct* votes of *all* men and (as most modern democrats, at least, hold) of *all* women in the territory concerned, and preferably by proportional representation. From this point of view the events of May and June, 1793, are not a violation of democracy, but a rude, yet effective, example of direct democratic pressure brought to bear on an undemocratic Assembly.

ROBERT ARCH.

(To be continued.)

Thought for the Morrow.

OUR always lively contemporary, *Business* (a Monthly devoted to the Insurance Business), writes as follows on "Clericalism":—

We have published in *Business* during the last few years a large number of paragraphs relating to the Wills of obscure clergymen, who have left huge sums of money. It is a popular belief that the clergy are poor, in view of their constant cadging—an art in which they excel. That belief is not based on fact. As a class, they are the richest professional men in England. It is the *Curates* who do the drudgery of the Parish Priest, and are unmercifully pinched by their bloated "nigger" drivers. These shorn lambs have no money for insurance, but their employers have, and plenty of it. Go for them, Mr. Agent. Dig a trench round them. They are always open to a good investment. Times are hard, but poverty does not afflict clergymen. The following advertisement indicates a curious appreciation of the realities of the present day in a country parsonage (says *Truth*):—

WANTED, December 15, Upper Housemaid and to Mend Lady's things; used to valuable china: *two* in family; *five* servants, including Under Housemaid; £30.—Mrs. de Kilpeck, Rectory, Corfe Castle, Dorset.

A clergyman who can afford to keep six servants is obviously in a fit position to take out a policy to meet death dues, and there are thousands in the same position of affluence. And why not ask Bishops to increase *their* life assurance? They thoroughly believe in the system. The Bishop of London is a bachelor, but he may have poor relations, or may wish to provide a fund for the conversion of the Germans! Anyhow, they are all rolling in wealth. It is on record that 39 Archbishops and Bishops annually share £180,700 between them. They suggest that they spend their money in the upkeep of the dignity of their positions. That suggestion is not borne out by facts, as revealed in the Wills of departed Bishops. Twelve of these self-sacrificing heroes left a total of over half-a-million. Obviously, clericalism is a splendid field for the wide-awake agent, who can summon moral courage enough, and who understands ecclesiastical formulæ, to work this lucrative profession. Who will undertake it?

We are surprised that the editor of *Business* should look on the clergy as likely game for insurance agents. Their creed is to take no thought for the morrow, and to trust in a Providence which knows whenever a sparrow falls to the ground. Still, it is just possible that in these degenerate days some may indulge in an insurance policy—in case the attention of Providence happens to wander.

The brain of man is Jove's eagle and his lightning on earth—the title to majesty henceforth.—*George Meredith.*

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 22.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, occupied the chair. Also present: Messrs. Baker, Brandes, Gorniot, Leat, Lazarnick, Neate, Neary, Quinton, Roger, Thurlow, Miss Kough, Miss Pankhurst, Mrs. Rolf, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for the Kingsland, Liverpool, North London, and South London Branches, and for the Parent Society.

A further letter from the L.C.C., declining to accede to the Executive's request for a permit for the sale of literature during the coming season, was reported, and it was resolved to inquire on what grounds the Council now withdrew a permit held continuously by the Society from the first issue.

Arrangements were made for outdoor propaganda in London, and, in view of the heavy losses in speakers and workers occasioned by the War, it was resolved to recommend each Branch, whilst in no sense abating its efforts, to restrain itself to one meeting per day.

The usual circular notifying Branches of the Annual Conference on Whit-Sunday, May 27, was ordered to be sent out.

Mr. Cohen's recent visit to Manchester and other internal matters were discussed at some length.

The affiliation fee to the Secular Education League was ordered to be paid.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

LIKELY!

A recruit in one of the training camps vouches for the truth of the following:

One morning a squad of recruits were learning to ride on horseback. They were slow and awkward beyond the usual, and the Sergeant acting as Riding Instructor grew more and more irritable, rapidly exhausting the common stock of expressions and expletives used in the Army, as well as ordinary language.

Finally, he gave a stentorian "Halt!" and when the raw stuff had brought their horses to a standstill, he eyed them in silence, his eyes rolling and his moustache bristling. For a moment it seemed as if he would choke instead of speak, then he calmed himself and said: "My Gawd! If Christ rode into Jerusalem the way you have ridden this morning, I don't wonder at the Jews crucifying him!"

MODERN.

A Sunday-school teacher in the East End of London tells the following anecdote:

The school is run on modern lines, and one method adopted is to call upon a pupil to stand before the class and recapitulate the lesson, or tell a Bible story in his own words. A boy was engaged doing the latter, his subject being Abram offering up his son Isaac as a sacrifice. The scholar proceeded fluently, the attention of the class was kept, and though his language was idiomatic and even racy, he went on so well that the teacher refrained from comment or interference.

The story drew near its end. Every eye in the class was rivetted on the reciter, every ear listened carefully. With a slight gesture the lad concluded: "And Abram heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Abram, Abram, lay not thy hand upon the lad. God was only swanking.'"

Obituary.

We regret to announce the death of Mr. E. Fulcher, an old member of the West Ham Branch N. S. S. He was at one time an alderman of the local Council, and did good work for Labour and Freethought. He was one of the most ardent supporters of the late Mr. Keir Hardie in politics, and Mr. G. W. Foote in Secularism. Many old residents of the neighbourhood will have pleasant recollections of Mr. Fulcher's universal goodwill and manner.

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.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate, "The Teachings of Samuel Butler." Introduced by H. J. Stenning.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Avondale Hall, Landor Road, Clapham, S.W.): 7, Open Debate, "Is the Bible Worth Preserving?" Introduced by J. R. Duncanson, affirmative.

MR. HOWELL SMITH'S DISCUSSION CLASS (N. S. S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street): Thursday, March 1, at 7.30.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Dales and Kells; 6.30, Messrs. Shaller and Yates.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Thirty-sixth Anniversary of the Opening of the Hall.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): 7, J. Hammond, "Spiritist Absurdities."

MR. ISRAEL ZANGWILL will deliver the EIGHTH CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE at SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL, Finsbury, on Thursday, March 8, at 6.30 p.m., the subject being "THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONALITIES." Mr. PERCY ALDEN, M.P., will preside. Admission free; reserved seats 1s. each, to be obtained from the R. P. A., Ltd., Nos. 5 and 6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, E.C. (by post 1s. 1d.).

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