

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

Vol. XXXVII.—No. 14

SUNDAY APRIL 8, 1917

PRICE TWOPENCE

CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>More About the Soul.—The Editor</i>	209
<i>The Roots of the Christian Tree.—J. T. Lloyd</i>	210
<i>In the Name of the Prophet—Lies.—Mimmermus</i>	211
<i>Science and Spiritualism.—W. Mann</i>	213
<i>Letters to the Editor—The Clergy and the Schools</i>	214
<i>Acid Drops</i>	217
<i>To Correspondents</i>	217
<i>Sugar Plums</i>	217
<i>An Amazing Flight.—Arthur B. Moss</i>	218
<i>The Monarch of Cereals.—T. F. Palmer</i>	218
<i>Evil and God.—A. D. Howell Smith</i>	220
<i>Stories Concerning Authority.—Geo. Underwood</i>	221
<i>N. S. S. Executive Report</i>	221
<i>At a Graveside.—Nevil Bourn</i>	222
<i>Obituary</i>	222
<i>Notice of Meetings</i>	222

Views and Opinions.

More About the Soul.

Last week we were concerned with Mr. Norman Pearson's attitude towards Materialism as expressed in his work *The Soul and Its Story*. We left untouched there the question of the nature of the "soul" as well as that of the nature of the sense of personal identity persisting amid continuous change, which forms so large a part of the religio-philosophical case for survival. And against that the argument may be reckoned as fairly decisive. Personal immortality must mean the survival of *me*. If I am to survive death then it must be the *I* which is known both to myself and others by certain bodily and mental peculiarities. To say that something survives which does not possess these peculiarities—which looks, feels, and thinks differently to what I do, is to say that it is not *me* that survives but someone or something else. Under such conditions I should be unrecognizable either by myself or others. It would be a change, not a perpetuation of personality. Everybody would survive as somebody else. And, thus, while on the one hand, the survival of a changed personality renders the whole case absurd, the survival of an unchanged *me*—unchanged in all those mental and physical peculiarities that make up my personality, is so ridiculous in the light of present knowledge that no educated person believes in it.

* * *

"Self" and "Soul."

What, then, is it that survives death? An easy and popular answer is—the soul. But this answer only serves to raise the further question of "What is the soul?" General thinking identifies the soul with the "self," or with a consciousness of personal identity. Neither of these are satisfactory. Mr. Pearson is careful to discriminate between the "soul" and the "self," treating the "self" as the medium through which the soul is revealed to us. He sees that a man's "self" is made up of more than his bodily organs, or of even these and his mental powers. It includes all that has

any influence upon him. As Professor William James says:—

In its widest possible sense, however, a man's self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes, and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and houses, and yacht and banking account. If they wax and prosper he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down.

Self—the ego—is not, in short, an indivisible, or insoluble, or indestructible fact, it is something that is gradually built up. It can be caught in the act of construction, and it can be observed undergoing destruction. A newborn child has no conception of "self." One can observe it being created, in the first place, probably by the sense of touch, later by intercourse with the family, the school, the outside world, and all that these things involve. And as we can watch the self being created, so we can watch it being disintegrated under the action of disease. Loss of memory, the psychic side of neural derangement, may create a complete gap between the "self" that is and the self that was. The phenomena of dissociation furnish us with an example of two "egos" accompanying the same organism. And these two sets of facts seem to be absolutely conclusive against any theory of a "self" as being either in itself, or in its manifestations, the expression of an independent entity. Under normal conditions we can watch the creation of the self, and under normal conditions we can observe its disorganization and disintegration.

* * *

Progress and the Individual.

In a rather oblique manner Mr. Pearson recognizes all that is here said. But, so far as we catch the drift of his argument, he assumes the necessity for a soul for two reasons, first because it is the essence of his metaphysic that there should be a continuous development of the "soul," and, second, because social influences are quite inadequate to account for the fact of moral development. Now, we think the answer here is that continuous *individual* development is in no wise essential to *human* development as a whole. The last may be a fact, while the first remains an illusion. When we look at the problem carefully we see that the individual does not, and, indeed, cannot, progress indefinitely. Old age and death is an assurance of that. The *growth* of an individual may be great, his acquisitions rapid, but neither are without limits. Man, we say, has evolved from the lower animals, but man the individual has not. The evolution of man is true only of the species. And when we take statements that are only true of the species and apply them to the individual, we are necessarily led into error. This seems to us a root fallacy of Mr. Pearson's, as it is of the ordinary religious writer on the subject of a future life.

* * *

The Condition of Progress.

Why is progress not as true of the animal as of the human world? Animals are educable in a degree; they

possess the capacity of acquisition; they learn, within their degree, from experience. Why, then, do animals not present the spectacle of continuous progress? The answer is that in the animal world there is lacking a true social medium—of which language is so great a part. But for this true social environment, the experience of the individual would count for no more in the case of man than it does in the case of animals. With it the experience of the individual is conserved, reduced to a formula, and handed on to the next generation as a part of its inheritance. What one generation thinks, the next re-thinks. These thoughts, experiences, inventions, discoveries, become stereotyped in laws, principles, and institutions. The racial inheritance becomes gradually greater, and man progresses because a new generation commences its career with a greater inherited capital. It is capable of more because it inherits more. Indefinite progress is, therefore, not really a fact of individual human nature; it is a quality of the species. It is expressed through the individual, who becomes greater because of that expression. And it is by a trick of the imagination that we transfer the capacity for unlimited progress, achievable only by the race, to the individual. The only conceivable—perhaps the only desirable—immortality is that of the race. And to the expression of Christian egotism which professes to find all vanity unless each individual has a guaranteed immortality, we may well prefer the old Greek idea of successive generations to a swift runner carrying a torch, whose duty it is to receive it from the one who preceded him, and hand it, still burning brightly, to the one who follows.

* * *

An Inherited Guess.

We are sorely tempted to follow Mr. Pearson in the discussion of the many interesting issues raised by his book; but space forbids. His work is an able presentation of what we cannot but regard as a bad case. And the theory of a "soul," however ably argued, is really unnecessary. As William James says, a "soul" is quite "needless for expressing the actual subjective phenomena of consciousness as they appear." It explains nothing that cannot be better explained without it, and it adds a number of new difficulties to those which already exist. James also agrees with Shadworth Hodgson that the soul is an outcome of that sort of philosophizing whose great maxim is, "Whatever you are totally ignorant of, assert to be the explanation of everything else." To explain a thing is to bring the unknown within the category of the known. The believers in a soul reverse the process. They attempt to explain the known by referring it to the unknown. And that way nothing but confusion lies. Moreover, when both the metaphysician and the theologian have had their say, the fact of our knowledge concerning the history of the "soul" remains. We know how the belief in a "soul" began; we understand the conditions that gave the belief birth; and that knowledge is conclusive. When Johnson was asked how he came to insert a certain definition in his dictionary, he replied, "Ignorance, sir, pure ignorance." That, in a word, is the history of the beginning of the belief in a soul. Ignorance, pure ignorance. And nothing that plausibility or special pleading may do and can make the belief in a soul more than a guess hazarded by the primitive savage, perpetuated by false sentiment and priestly self-interest.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Some people's minds are like a place of public meeting— all kinds of opinions appear there in turn, and leave it just as they found it, empty and open to every comer.

Arnold Toynbee.

The Roots of the Christian Tree.

II.

WHAT is Christianity? Professor Fisher, of Yale University, in his *History of Christian Doctrine*, defines it thus: "Christianity is a revelation of God through Jesus Christ, whereby reconciliation and a new spiritual life in fellowship with himself are brought to mankind." That will serve as a fairly accurate description of orthodox Christianity throughout all the ages of its history. Of Christianity as thus defined there is, as already intimated, no trace whatever in the Synoptic Gospels, though they contain certain phrases which were evidently interpolated from time to time while the new cult was in the making. Among such passages are those referring to baptism as a condition of salvation, and the Lord's Supper as a symbol of mystical union and communion with the slain and resurrected Deity. The Fourth Gospel marks a farther stage in the evolution of the Christian myth, and is a metaphysical treatise rather than a biography. In the Pauline Epistles the process has reached a much more advanced stage, and may indeed be regarded as being, in all vital points, complete. That is to say, the Epistles represent the Christian religion as a distinct cult which claims, not only superiority over all other existing cults, but also to be the only absolutely true one, all the others being utterly false. The truth is, however, that Christianity cannot boast of even one original idea or tenet, but is an ingeniously constructed patchwork. Its conceptions of God, revelation, and tradition were taken over, with scarcely any alteration, from Judaism, while its doctrines of the God-man or Saviour-God and of redemption through mystic union with him as slain and risen from the dead, it borrowed, with but slight modifications, from the Oriental mystery-religions which inundated the Græco-Roman world during the first and second centuries of our era. Those religions had their origin in Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, Persia, and even India, and from each of them was taken what was considered most deserving of preservation, or at least what was believed would prove most useful to the new religion. Osiris, Adonis, Attis, Dionysus, and Mithra were all Saviour-gods in their respective cults, who died and rose again for the salvation of their votaries. The chief difference between Christianity and those religions lies in the personality of its Redeemer, whose life and work are delineated in the Gospels.

To some orthodox divines the foregoing statements may seem extravagant or far-fetched, but it must not be forgotten that they are largely endorsed by several first class Christian scholars. Professor Wernle, of Basel, says:—

It is no doubt true that Christianity is a daughter of the Jewish faith; yet it strikes its roots deep down into a soil which we may call beliefs common to all the religions of antiquity. In that soil the characteristic features of the various religions of the ancient world are not as yet distinguishable. Among these common beliefs may be included the whole body of ideas concerning the earth, nature and man, the soul, and the world of spirits (*The Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. i., p. 1).

Dr. B. W. Bacon, Professor of New Testament Criticism and Exegesis in Yale University, whilst fully recognizing the indebtedness of Christianity to Judaism, is fully awake to the fact that even Judaism itself was more or less tinged with Pagan ideas, and more particularly to the ever-growing evidence that the Pauline Gospel owed its distinguishing characteristics to Heathen mythology. To him there is a fundamental contrast between the apostolic or Jerusalem Gospel and the Pauline, and he is convinced that the latter borrowed

its central tenets from ideas current in the Gentile world. He says:—

Hellenism contributed the individual ideal: personal redemption in mystic union with the life of God.....The influential religions of the time were those of personal redemption by mystic union with a dying and resurrected "Saviour-god," an Osiris, an Adonis, an Attis, a Mithra. Religions of this type were everywhere displacing the old national faiths.....The starting-point of Paul's own conceptions was not Israel's bondage in Egypt, but a conception already tinged, like the late book of Jewish philosophy called the Wisdom of Solomon, with the Stoic conception of "flesh" as prison-house of "Spirit," already inflamed, like the contemporary Jewish apocalypses of Esdras and Baruch with lurid visions of a Universe rescued by Super-human power from the thralldom of demonic rule (*The Making of the New Testament*, pp. 53, 50, 51).

In an important article, "The Mythical Collapse of Historical Christianity," in the *Hibbert Journal* for July, 1911, Dr. Bacon makes the following significant admission:—

For Paul, with his Hellenistic culture and purely inward religious experience, it may have been inevitable that his interpretation of "the things concerning Jesus" should take the form of an incarnation doctrine. To admit this is to admit that mythology has entered into Gospel story.

There may be a certain amount of truth in Dr. Bacon's assertion that "legend is but history in the making, the embroidered robe of traditional fact"; but we have noticed that the great aim of Liberal Christian critics of the Gospels is to disentangle fact from legend, to discover the historical Jesus in a heterogeneous mass of legendary and semi-mythical elements. With another of Dr. Bacon's assertions we are in hearty agreement, namely, that "myth is but philosophy in the making." Philosophy, metaphysics, theology, these three, in the scholastic acceptance of the terms, are founded almost exclusively upon mythical assumptions. The Yale Professor says:—

We cannot conceive any other vehicle of thought or speech through which the preachers of the new religion could give utterance to their undisciplined sense of the teleological significance of what they themselves had witnessed. To what else could they resort if not to the transcendentalized Messianism of Peter and the Hellenistic incarnation doctrine of Paul? Our difference from the monistic idealists lies not in any unwillingness to recognize the sources and character of these primitive speculations, or to reinterpret the data from the standpoint of modern psychology and philosophy of religion, but in the fact that we have some appreciation of the facts of history as well, and therefore recognize that neither in the Apostolic age nor to-day could Christianity be successful if speculation and fact were inverted in relative importance (*The Hibbert Journal*, July, 1911, p. 752-3).

Let us test Professor Bacon's "appreciation of the facts of history." On his own showing, it is one of the facts of history that the Gospel of Jesus differed in quality from the Gospel about Jesus. Of this difference the erudite Professor makes great capital. Now, in the former Gospel, as held by the pillar apostles at Jerusalem, and as advocated in the Epistle of James, there is no Atonement, no salvation by faith, no Saviour-god; the whole duty of man consisting of conformity to the teaching of the Lord Jesus. As James puts it: "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." But the Gospel about Jesus practically ignores the life and teaching of the man Christ Jesus, and concentrates its attention upon the death on the Cross by which the eternal Christ became a propitiation for the sins of the

whole world, and salvation is the outcome of a mystic union with him both in his death and resurrection. This conception of salvation is foreign to Judaism in all stages of its evolution, but in Heathen religions nothing was more common long before Christianity made its appearance. This is admitted by Dr. Bacon himself, when he says that modern criticism has come to see that the difference between the Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel about Jesus "was in higher degree a difference of quality. Paul's whole message of redemption through the Cross and Resurrection started from other premises than those of the Galilean apostles, and was conceived in other terms. For this reason it leads over to a new Christology." This admission is of first-class importance, because it shows that Christianity not only took over its leading ideas from other religions, but also omitted to acknowledge the fact. Paul went the length of boasting that they had been specially revealed to him from heaven. But, according to Professor Gilbert Murray, Gnostic sects were "scattered over the Hellenistic world before Christianity as well as after." Tarsus was probably one of their centres even prior to the reputed date of Paul's birth; and this is the Oxford Professor's testimony concerning them:—

Their Saviour, like the Jewish Messiah, was established in men's minds before the Saviour of the Christians. "If we look close," says Professor Bousset, "the result emerges with great clearness, that the figure of the Redeemer as such did not wait for Christianity to force its way into the religion of Gnosis, but was already present there under various forms." He occurs notably in two pre-Christian documents discovered by the keen analysis and profound learning of Dr. Reitzenstein: the Pimandres revelation printed in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and the sermon of the Naassenes in Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, which is combined with Attis-worship (*Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 143).

Our only possible conclusion, face to face with the evidence, is that the author or authors of the Pauline Epistles appropriated, not only the Gentile moulds of thought wherein to formulate Christian theology, but even the substance of the Gospel that came to be known as Pauline. Had it not been for the few Oriental cults that were aiming to win and dominate the Western world, Christianity would never have been heard of. And yet, after enriching itself by pursuing a policy of wholesale robbing of its stronger rivals, Christianity, as soon as it gained political ascendancy, initiated a system of persecution, which eventuated in the forcible suppression of all the cults by the help of which it had obtained the supremacy.

J. T. LLOYD.

In the Name of the Prophet—Lies.

John P.

Robinson, he

Sez they didn't know everythin' down in Judee.

—Lowell, "Biglow Papers."

The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies.

—Lucretius.

NONE of the four Gospels profess to give an exhaustive account of the acts of Christ, and "John's Gospel" concludes by saying:—

There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

It must be confessed that tradition does make startling demands even on the childlike faith which is nurtured on the fairy-tales of the Gospels. No more instructive volume could be placed in the hands of anyone interested in the Christian religion than the tabooed Scriptures known as the *Apocryphal Gospels*,

of which few Christians have much knowledge. Even the Old Testament *Apocrypha* has been pushed into the background by astute ecclesiastics, and when Queen Victoria placed a quotation from the volume upon the tomb of the Prince Consort, she fluttered the doves of orthodoxy. Yet down to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the *Apocrypha* was an integral portion of "God's Word." Since that date it has almost disappeared from the public eye, and is mainly read by students who are interested in the origin and history of Christianity. The far more interesting *Apocryphal Gospels* are not easy to obtain. An edition was issued by Hone and sold for many years, but it was a cumbersome volume; and a more scholarly version, edited by a Mr. Cowper, published later, was too expensive for ordinary readers. Some day, perhaps, an enterprising publisher will put a handy edition of these Gospels upon the market at a low rate. For in these accounts of Christ one finds the gospel legend in the making, the studies for the completed painting of the "Old, Old Story." And the fact of the volume being taboo to the religious world is all the more reason why it should once more appear in an easily accessible form.

Much of the matter in the *Apocryphal Gospels* covers unfamiliar ground. Listen to this passage from the *Second Gospel of the Infancy*, piously attributed to "Saint Thomas":—

1. When the child Jesus was five years of age, and there had been a shower of rain, which was now over, Jesus was playing with other Hebrew boys by a running stream; and the water running over the banks stood in little lakes.

2. But the water instantly became clear and useful again; He having smote them only by His Word, they readily obeyed him.

3. Then He took from the bank of the stream some soft clay, and formed out of it twelve sparrows; and there were other boys playing with Him.

4. But a certain Jew, seeing the things which he was doing, namely, His forming clay into the figures of sparrows on the Sabbath day, went presently away and told his father, Joseph, and said:

5. Behold thy boy is playing by the river-side, and has taken clay and formed it into twelve sparrows, and profaned the Sabbath.

6. Then Joseph came to the place where He was, and when he saw Him, and said, Why doest that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day?

7. Then Jesus, clapping together the palms of his hands, called to the sparrows, and said to them: Go, fly away, and while ye live remember me.

8. So the sparrows fled away, making a great noise.

9. The Jews, seeing this, were astonished, and went away, and told their chief persons what a strange miracle they had seen wrought by Jesus.

This story is elaborated in the *First Gospel of the Infancy*, where it is stated that the extraordinary boy performed a similar miracle in his seventh year, astonishing his playmates by making clay figures of asses, oxen, and birds, walk, fly, eat, and drink, as he commanded them; and the account concludes:—

When at length the boys went away and related these things to their parents, their fathers said to them: "Take heed, children, for the future, of his company, for he is a sorcerer; shun and avoid him, and from henceforth never play with him."

A childlike credulity runs through the entire Ages of Faith, manifesting itself in a thousand ways. Tradition, that "lying jade," says that the ass has borne a cross on its back ever since Christ made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, "sitting on an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." We strongly suspect that this great discovery was made by some forgotten genius like the man who first elaborated the dogma of the Holy Trinity, and who tried to make a religion out of the multiplication table.

According to Didron, the praises of the Cross were sung in the ninth century in like manner as people celebrate those "of a god or of a hero," and right reverent and most ignorant Fathers of the Great Lying Church did not fail to remark that its figure was "engraven in the productions of Nature, seen in the works of men, in the position of inanimate objects and the gestures of the living." Joyful indeed must have been the heart of the early Christian who, gazing on the coat of an ass, was first struck by the illusion that the markings were cruciform.

Attention being once called to the evidence of Christianity supplied by the ass, it is natural that it should be used in pious encounters with Freethinkers. It is to be hoped that it proved a more effective weapon in the hands of some than it did in those of the Abbe who endeavoured to subdue the Atheist Boindin. The pious Abbe had brought all his artillery to bear against the Atheist without avail, and, when almost in despair, broke in, "Well, Mr. Boindin, will you deny that since the day Our Blessed Saviour made his entry into Jerusalem on an ass, they bear a cross on their backs." "Very forcible," replied Boindin, "turn round, if you please."

This carefully cultivated credulity of pious folk blinds their eyes to facts. The Gospel legends are poured into their ears from earliest childhood, and the "Old, Old Story" has a familiar ring even when half believed. But the unblushing mendacity of the *Apocryphal Gospels*, being in an unfamiliar setting, should make the most bigoted believer rub his eyes. And one thing must be evident to every honest reader. The Christian religion is based upon similar nonsense, for Christianity is based upon miracles. It is on the truth or falsehood of miracles that the very personality of Christ must stand or fall. According to the Gospels, it was by miracles that he attested his divine mission. It was by miracles that he won his first following. It was by miracles that he proclaimed himself the "Son of God," and without credulous belief in miracles, Christianity would have long since died out. It is not a creed of "love" and "brotherhood" which has fascinated ignorant millions through so many centuries, and caused them to fill the priests' coffers with gold.

Christ claimed that he was "God," and his "proofs" were that he multiplied loaves and fishes, healed the sick, and restored the dead to life. The whole question is reduced to one of facts. If we can believe that Christ was really born of a virgin, that he performed prodigies, that he died and was buried, and afterwards left the earth by ascension, then we need not hesitate to accept the priestly pretensions for Christianity. If, on the other hand, we believe that the proofs for the miracles are inadequate, or that natural laws are never broken, no talk of "love" or "brotherhood" will make believable the nonsense upon which Christianity is based.

The most important Christian body—The Roman Catholic Church—recognizes this, and affirms that its own miracles are a continuation of those wrought by Christ, his disciples, and the saints. They tell us that the so-called "cures" at Lourdes, and elsewhere, and the questionable liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius, are precisely such as those mentioned in the Bible, and that the apparition of the Virgin to children at La Salette is as genuine as the miracles in Judæa. The priests of the Greek Church take the same attitude, and contend that the theatrical revelation of the Holy Fire at Jerusalem every year is simply the latest link in a great chain that extends back to Biblical times. The two greatest Churches of Christendom leave Humanity chained within the prison of Superstition. It is the life-purpose of Freethinkers to break those fetters and set Humanity free.

Science and Spiritualism.

V.

(Continued from p. 205.)

The present promoters of spiritual phenomena divide themselves into two classes, one of which needs no demonstration, while the other is beyond the reach of proof. The victims like to believe, and they do not like to be undeceived. Science is perfectly powerless in the presence of this frame of mind. It is, moreover, a state perfectly compatible with extreme intellectual subtlety and a capacity for devising hypotheses which only require the hardihood engendered by strong conviction, or by callous mendacity, to render them impregnable. The logical feebleness of science is not sufficiently borne in mind. It keeps down the weed of superstition, not by logic but by slowly rendering the mental soil unfit for its cultivation.—Professor Tyndall, "Fragments of Science" (1876), p. 321.

"The chronic belief of mankind," says Professor James, "that events may happen for the sake of their personal significance is an abomination." It is this chronic mental habit that broods upon the problem of subjective experiences, and is ready to recognize in signs and omens the guiding principle of rationality.....The victim of this unfortunate habit will remain logically unfit to survive the struggle against the occult.—Professor Jastrow, "Fact and Fable in Psychology," p. 41.

SPIRITUALISTS claim that mediums are, like poets, born, not made; that they are different to other men in that they are sensitive to spiritual influences unfelt by the average man, just as the dog can detect scents and sounds inappreciable by our senses.

It is true that to be a successful medium requires a combination of qualifications not often found in the same individual; but they are not by any means supernatural or supernatural. He must be of prepossessing appearance—an ugly medium might be suspected of dealings with the Evil One. His personality must also inspire confidence and trust, with an outward appearance of innocence and simplicity.

Do the mediums themselves believe in Spiritualism? It will be replied that they must know that Spiritualism is false because they manufacture the phenomena. It is true that they know that the physical phenomena is a fraud. But let us be perfectly fair. I see no more reason to doubt their belief in the spiritual world than I doubt the repeated statements of travellers and students of the mental habits of the lower races; that the witch doctors and medicine-men are themselves, in spite of their abominable frauds, strong believers in the spirits they pretend to commune with.

There is no more inconsistency in their conduct than there was in the late Mr. Jabez Balfour calling for his Bible after he was arrested. To say that Mr. Jabez Balfour did not believe in the Bible and religion because he was a swindler would be quite false.

I once knew a man of good natural ability, clever and clear-headed above the average, not at all religious. I had known him intimately for several years, conversing with him daily, when one day he confided to me a very singular belief he firmly held. We were talking of hypnotism, when he suddenly remarked: "Do you know that, if I am in an assembly, I can make anyone in the audience in front of me look round if I fix my eyes on them and exert my will?" It appeared from further remarks that if, as occasionally happened, the person stubbornly refused to turn round in response to this optic bombardment, that did not disprove his power; it only proved that the person he was practising upon possessed a stronger will than his. I knew it would be futile to argue with him; the effect would be only to close him up on the subject. It appeared from further conversation that he had some years previously been to a public exhibition of hypnotism and mesmerism, and had come away convinced of the power of mind of one person to

work on the will of another, provided it was the stronger. This led him on to the purchase of several of the trashy (some of them expensive) works on Will-Power and How to Hypnotise, so widely advertised in the popular press. These had confirmed him in his belief. He was an unread man, quite unacquainted with the scientific explanation of these now well-understood phenomena. Here we have a medium in the making, and I should never be surprised to see my one-time friend on the platform as a professional mesmerist; and I know that he would not be above helping out his performance by trickery if the chance availed. Probably most mediums have commenced their career from similar beginnings.

Daniel Dunglas Home was the cleverest and most gifted of all the mediums. It is the standing boast of Spiritualists that Home was never caught practising trickery and fraud. Home was the very Napoleon of mediums. He hobnobbed with princes, kings, and emperors; he held several seances at the Tuilleries with the last Emperor and Empress of the French, also with the Czar at the Russian Court, and many other royal and noble families. He succeeded in marrying the young and charming daughter of a noble Russian family, possessed of a moderate fortune; and after she died he married another Russian lady, also possessed of a fortune. This made him independent of the spirits, and he rarely disturbed them to fetch and carry for him after this.

Home appears to be the only recorded case of a medium who rose from poverty to wealth, and maintained his prosperity to the end; most of the others ending miserably, like Slade, victims of drink. The only real spirits they were acquainted with were those in the bottle.

Home's only serious fall happened when he had to disgorge a sum of £24,000 bestowed upon him by Mrs. Lyons, a wealthy widow, who changed her mind a few months later, and brought an action for recovery. Even the late Mr. Andrew Lang, who was more than a half-believer in Home, admits: "The judge held, and I think rightly held, that the gift was prompted, at least to some extent, by what Home declared to be spiritual rappings. That quite destroys his moral character, as far as this case went."¹

"It seems certain," says Mr. Podmore, "that Home began life in extreme poverty, and probably as an illegitimate child. From the age of seventeen onwards he lived by the exercise of his mediumship, none the less if he never actually received payment in cash down. Throughout his life, first in the Eastern States of America and later in every country of Europe, he found wealthy patrons to welcome him. Such formal education as he received in his youth was paid for by the New York committee to which I have alluded. When Home was not actually a guest in their houses, his patrons, in one way or other—by taking tickets for his lectures, by commissioning busts from him, by subscribing to pay his debts, by making him presents of costly jewellery—managed to provide for his wants."² Thus Home lived, not merely in comfort, "he lived in what is commonly called the 'best' society, the society of persons of rank, wealth, and fashion, and occasionally of intellectual distinction."

Home is described as having been "slight, fair, and, without being actually handsome, attractive and even distinguished-looking," and "produced on most persons the impression of a highly emotional, childlike nature, full of generous impulses, and lavish of affection to all comers.....he was a good performer on the piano; and his recitations, whether in the drawing-room or on the platform, are said by competent judges to have been

¹ Long, "Historical Mysteries," *Cornhill Magazine*, April, 1904.

² Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. ii., p. 226.

distinguished by brilliant dramatic faculty and emotional expression. Even on those who were brought only into momentary contact with him he produced commonly the impression of frankness and sincerity; in those who stood in more frequent and intimate relations with him the confidence which he inspired seems to have been unlimited. The belief in the honesty of the performer became for them hardly less instinctive than the belief in the trustworthiness of the senses which took note of the performance. The trust upon which other mediums relied was built up mainly by adventitious devices; with Home it was inspired and maintained by the charm of his personality. But there were two other causes which contributed in no small degree to the confidence felt in Home's integrity. Home himself professed a fervent belief in his own mission as a teacher of the truth of immortality; and in his trances habitually delivered discourses on religious themes"¹

We have no doubt that Home had a genuine belief in Spiritualism. When nine years of age he was taken to America by an aunt; about five years later the spirit-rapping epidemic—started by the Fox sisters—broke out in America, and proved the starting point of modern Spiritualism. Home was infected with the belief, and two years later, at the age of seventeen, left his aunt's house, and went out into the world to live by his wits.

Home's success was due mainly to two causes: first, the manner in which he inspired people with a belief in his honesty and sincerity, and so putting their critical faculties to sleep; and second to the fact that he did not come in the guise of a common paid professional, but as an honoured guest, not to be spied upon and suspected.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

Correspondence.

THE CLERGY AND THE SCHOOLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Following up your comments on the keenness of the Scottish ministers to get into our schools as teacher substitutes, may I state that some weeks ago a committee, composed of the two large Presbyterian bodies, circularized the School Boards over the country for information as to the time devoted to religious knowledge education in the schools under their management? This is undoubtedly the first move in an effort to get more in touch with the children in the day-schools. Some of us anticipated such a step would be taken; for in conferences and district meetings of the clergy it was urged that, owing to the alarming decline in Sunday-school attendance, and also at church services, means should be taken to get access to the day-schools. This is the official or trade reason, but no doubt not to the School Boards' further action will be founded on concern for the better moral upbringing of the young; just as, some four years ago, what is known as the "Rural Schools Question"—an agitation to bring free, higher education to the children in the remote village and lonely glen—was discussed in all the presbyteries, and the chief reason urged was the scarcity of students for the ministry, and the prospect of an increase if the country youth could be tutored without leaving his locality, as formerly, in Scotland, in Latin, Greek, and those subjects that would enable him to pass into the university. When the same clerics appeared at education conferences, there was nothing said about students, but great concern manifested for justice for the poor man's clever children—his "lad o' pairts"—that he might be enabled to pass right from the parish school into the university. Let Scottish readers watch particularly the development of the clerical raid on the day-schools. Observe that the clergy wield a double power, and more, in such matters; they largely predominate in School Boards and National Education Associations, influencing decisions; while, on the other

hand, they memorialize Education Departments from their several presbyteries.

ANOTHER SCOTTY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The letter of "Scotty" in your issue of March 25 prompts me to pen a few remarks on the state of the Free-thought movement in Scotland.

As one of the very few active Scots Freethinkers, I have been amused and somewhat amazed at the "sheepishness" of Freethinkers of all kinds in this land o' cakes. As a member of a very small, and very reactionary, School Board, it has been my privilege to strike one or two shrewd blows for freedom of thought, and I must say that the extreme modesty of the rest of the Freethinkers, both locally and nationally, in ignoring the issues raised, surprised even me. In fact, I may state here, that on any occasion when my name was mentioned in controversy it was Englishmen who wrote me in support and sympathy, while on one occasion a letter of mine on "Hell" brought one souvenir—from a Frenchman residing in Leith—of all places.

I share my diffident countryman's concern as to the fight the Church will make to get control of the schools, and as one behind the scenes, I may say that the meenisters will be very welcome to the average School Board—as teachers, if they act as unpaid, or very poorly paid, substitutes. Thus a very interesting situation will arise. The greed, however, of the "meenister" class will, I think, on the whole, equal the niggardliness of the School Board members; and as the War cannot last much longer, there may be no great invasion of the schoolrooms by the clergy. But let "Scotty" be under no illusion. It is only by chance, or the mutual distrust of parson and the average member as to the money, that has kept the meenister from indoctrinating the minds of our Scots youth with that aforetime abomination—the Shorter Catechism.

A word with "Scotty" privately. Dinna, ma freen', be ower crouse on the waning influence o' the Auld Kirk. If the meenister gets into the schoolroom, the Auld Kirk will renew its youth like the eagle's. Are ye, ma freen, if ye hae weans at schule, gettin them taught the beliefs and doctrines ye ken to be false? If so, why? Please reply—and dinna be blate—sign yer name—like

JAS. W. K. LEIPER.

Acid Drops.

The question of the nation's food supply should bring into special prominence the ancient and pre-Christian festival of Easter. For the celebration of Easter is nothing more than a carrying over into civilized times of the primitive magical performance intended to assist vegetation in its recovery from the sleep of winter, and to secure food for mankind. In its primitive form this involved the sacrifice of a victim—literally the creation of a god or ghost—to watch over the crops. Hence the story of the sacrifice of a number of gods—Attis, Osiris, Jesus—at or near the spring equinox. Try as they may, Christians cannot successfully hide the nature of Easter. The fact of its being a movable festival is alone enough to prove its origin. It is a festival connected with the sun, and the sun is the parent of vegetation. In the less advanced Christian communities the connection is open and confessed. The peasantry of Russia and of various parts of Europe still perform the magical ceremonies of their far-off ancestors in the name of Christ. And amongst the peasantry of Greece we may meet with the expression, "If Christ does not rise to-morrow, we shall have no corn this year." A vegetation god evolved from the ignorance of primitive man—that is the origin of the Christian Saviour. To the informed student, "Christ" is no more than one of the groups of gods whose death and resurrection stood for the revivification of vegetation. The Christian of to-day remains on the stage of primitive savagery in religious practice, and often enough in his thought.

The end of March saw the end of the public sale of opium in China. For years China protested against its sale and though the old East India Company did not engage

¹ Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. ii., pp. 228-9.

directly in the traffic, with characteristic Christian hypocrisy it supplied the opium to those engaged in smuggling the stuff through. By the Treaty of Teinstein the preaching of Christianity in a large part of the country was forced upon Chinese by the British, and also the legalization of the opium trade. China continued to protest both against the evils of the opium trade and the insolence and provocative nature of Christian preaching. But Great Britain treated these protests with the contempt a Christian power usually displays towards a pacific people. Gradually, public opinion in this country was educated and excited against the traffic, and two years ago China was permitted to refuse the admission of, and prohibit the sale, after a given date. But it is well to observe that here was an evil forced upon a non-Christian country by a Christian one, and with no other possible justification than that of reaping a pecuniary benefit.

One must give the Church credit for the part it took in the anti-opium agitation. It said nothing when the trade was forced on China; it blessed our Government in the war that established the traffic on a legal basis; but, let the fact be stated to its credit, it did form an Anti-Opium Committee. It did this in 1906—when it was recognized that the trade would have to be abolished. In this it was true to its policy, its traditions, its own interests. Support anything so long as it pays—that is the one guiding principle of our glorious Church.

The town of Mexboro is a pious place with a pious council, but, alas! there is a fly in the ointment. Some shops are open on Sunday, and the Sunday Closing Association appealed to the Council for "Moral Support," and a Mr. Ward moved that this be given. Other members of the Council agreed that the opening of shops—other than Gospel shops—on Sunday was disgraceful, and Mr. Ward's motion was carried. The only dissident was a Mr. Athion who said he did not see why the Council should take the bread and butter out of the mouths of people, many of whom were widows. Mr. Athion evidently knew his fellow councillors, as he said he did not expect to get support, nor was support given. Pious humbug had its way, and the sale of sweets, etc., is morally condemned by the Mexboro Council. Oh, the colossal impertinence of little people!

The following extract from the *Daily Telegraph* of March 27 is interesting:—

Mr. J. W. Barnett, probationer officer at the Westminster Police Court, told the Cinema Commission that he had brought together as many as ninety married couples who otherwise would have separated. "I take them to a picture show," he said, "and they can squeeze together as closely as they can, and very often the picture and their appreciation of them bring a new understanding into their life.

Here is testimony to ninety cases of "conversion" brought about by purely rational and non-supernatural methods. No penitent form, no holy guest, no miraculous intervention, no, nothing but a simple picture telling a moral story which pulled these poor couples and set them on their feet again. Had ninety couples been so reunited in St. Paul's Cathedral, our imaginative friend, the Bishop of London, would have predicted the immediate coming of the King of Glory.

Replying to the reproach that 30,000,000 Christians are trying to murder one another, a pious journalist says that Indians and Turks are not Christians. Just so! But the Indians and Turks were forced to fight by Christian nations.

The House of Commons Tribunal says that a verger's work is not of national importance. Yet 50,000 parsons and theological students are exempted from military service.

The dear clergy have told us that war benefits religion; but the National Mission is a frost, and there is no prairie-fire of piety among the soldiers. The Rev. N. S. Talbot, Assistant Chaplain-General, says "on the whole there is not a great revival of the Christian religion at the Front."

The Rev. W. C. Piggott, a Nonconformist minister, declares that Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and Arnold Bennett are

"enemies of the Church." To-day the impeachment will invite a smile, but in the days of faith it would have meant death and dishonour.

We have been so accustomed to read in the religious and secular press, hypnotized by religious writers, of the hymns that are always sung by persons in circumstances of extreme danger, that it is instructive to find that in a well-authenticated recent instance hymn singing was not the case—as probably it was not in some other cases, had impartial witnesses been there to report. The *Cape Times*, describing the splendid behaviour of the troops on board the mined steamer *Tyndareus*, off Cape Agulhas, says:—

As soon as the roll had been called and the order "Stand easy" had been given, someone started "The Long Trail," and in a few seconds the whole gathering from end to end of the ship had taken up the haunting refrain of the latest marching song. Then came the oldest favourite, "Tipperary," and for half an hour afterwards, while the ominous incline of the deck towards the bows became more and more noticeable, chorus after chorus swept along the lines and over the sea, where both the other steamers were racing to the rescue.

The heroism of these gallant fellows is by no means lessened, but rather heightened, by the fact that when they were apparently *in extremis* they did not give way to superstitious fears or invoke divine assistance—which had failed to protect them—but faced the situation like men.

Some of the clergy do not like Sunday labour, even when it is for the national welfare, and the Rev. A. D. Belden, of Westcliff-on-Sea, says it is "sheer humbug and wicked nonsense," and that "the suggestion to close local churches on Sundays had made Southend the laughing stock of the country." Brother Belden protests too much. Surely he will want bread for his Communion services, even if he sniffs at the meat that perisheth.

Appeals for additional literature for soldiers and sailors have been made by Sir Douglas Haig. Evidently the boys are not satisfied with the Bibles which are sent to them by the ton.

Clocks have been put forward an hour in order to effect daylight saving. Yet millions of Christians believe that the world's clock struck at Jerusalem two thousand years ago, and has never moved since.

The general discussion of what is euphemistically called "the hidden scourge" has naturally given rise to much wild talk, and has been a perfect boon to bachelor parsons, moral purity crusaders, and crowds of those who either love to indulge their taste for dabbling in unsavoury subjects with a "moral purpose" or furthering their interests in other directions. And as it is the fashion to idealize everything in khaki, it is the men—the poor, innocent, undesigning men—who must be protected against the wicked, designing woman. Withal, there is no clear evidence that the evil is to-day greater to any appreciable extent than it was before the War. But the War serves as an occasion, and the desire to protect our innocent, ladylike soldiers enables those to pose as social reformers who are eternally tinkering with effects, while lacking both the courage and the intelligence to grapple with causes.

For some reason or other, special attention has been directed to the Waterloo Bridge Road and Victoria Station, and Australian soldiers. We have all along regarded these stories with considerable suspicion, and we have now had in our hands evidence from a number of responsible persons, some of them connected with Church Army hostels and Y.M.C.A. huts, who flatly deny the stories that have been so freely circulated. The stories are said to be eighty per cent. exaggerated, and that in the majority of cases where Australian soldiers are seen in the company of women, the women are respectable and well-behaved, and there is little more than the attraction of the uniform for the girls and the pleasure of the soldier in getting feminine companionship. Naturally, there is vice; but those who remember the boom in "white slave" stories only a few years back will receive the stories current with considerable care.

All over the country thousands of "one-man businesses" are being broken up on the plea of national necessity. Many of these will never be revived, since their closing will mean the diverting of custom to the large stores, and these will certainly not allow their patriotic fervour to stand in the way of the capture of trade, even though the trade be that of their fellow-countrymen. But there is one "one-man business" that remains inviolate. The Government continues to allow thousands of able-bodied clergymen to remain at large. Their business interests are to remain untouched. Surely, if the Government can do nothing else, it might arrange a substitution scheme. It need not shut up the Churches; it could provide women substitutes for parsons. The change, we think, would be for the better.

Alone amongst our Allies freethinking France has set the example of treating its clergymen as ordinary citizens. And the irony of it is that our own clergymen, skulking behind their pulpits, are using the fact of the French clergy being in the Army (because there is no exemption in France) as evidence of their own greatness. Christian Germany, like Christian England, considers the clergy too important to put them in the Army. It remains to be seen what the new Russia will do when it has had time. The probability is that the mass of the Russian people are too illiterate to be ready for a secularization of the State, as in France. And although the majority of the leaders of the Russian Revolutionists are Freethinkers, it would perhaps be as well for them not to jeopardize the safety of the new *regime* by a too extreme policy in that direction.

Should Russia declare in favour of a Republic, we shall then have China, America, Russia, France, and Portugal all republics, and it will be a moot question as to how long the other monarchies of the world will survive. And once monarchy is rejected and militarism crushed, the two great props of religion will have disappeared.

The publication of a life of Spencer by Mr. Hugh Eliot has enabled a lot of newspaper men—some of whom are quite obviously unacquainted with his work—to express an opinion on the value of his philosophy. The writer, who is responsible for the weekly religious article in the *Times*, declares quite authoritatively of Spencer's teaching: "We do not attack it, we ignore it." "It does not answer, it does not even ask the questions we ask." The "we" is impressive to many, but it is much in the nature of a bogey to frighten those who are not accustomed to do their own thinking. Modifications of Spencer's teachings are naturally called for by the developments of thought, but a large part of Spencer's work remains quite unaffected by these. If it was once the fashion to praise Spencer, it is certainly becoming the fashion with a set to belittle him. We observed Mr. W. L. Courtney selecting for special depreciation *The Study of Sociology*—one of the wisest and most suggestive volumes Spencer gave to the world.

The motive actuating the *Times* writer is disclosed in his closing words. The intellect of the world he tells us is turning towards the belief in God. "And we reject the philosophy of Spencer because there is no hint or promise or hope of religion to be found in it." There, the murder is out! If Spencer had provided any room for religion "We" might still have found some good in him. As he did not, as he demonstrated that all religious belief rests upon the ignorance of the primitive savage, "we" have no use for him. And, perhaps, after all "we," if he were known, would turn out to be some mentally enæmic parson who, having failed to impress the limited circle that knows him, hopes to impress a larger circle in virtue of his anonymity.

Billy Sunday, the famous baseball player of U.S.A., has made the pilgrim's progress from notoriety to respectability, from "Billy" to "Mr.," and, later, "the Rev. Mr. Sunday." The process has left him with a high opinion of himself. He recently announced that he would turn his tabernacle into a recruiting office in case of war, and preach war as a religious act, and ask "the servants of the Lord" to fight.

It sounds like a far-off echo of the utterances of another Bill, of Berlin.

The Free Church Presbytery of Inverary has put on record its "grief and apprehension of the introduction within its bounds of the timber felling on the Sabbath Day." It also declares its conviction that such a policy is directly responsible for the prolongation of the War. So there you are! Archdeacon Wakeford says God kept the War going to spiritually benefit *us*, and the Inverary Presbytery says God is prolonging it on account of our desecration of the Sabbath. And these gentry are all exempt on the ground of their being indispensable to the welfare of the nation.

"The revelation of the aloofness of the majority of young men from the Church, especially the soldiers in the cities," was driving the Church into conference, said the Rev. Dr. Ogilvie at a Church conference in Glasgow. We wonder what they expect as a result of their conference? They can't really throw the old religion overboard without throwing themselves with it. And it is quite certain that the younger generations are drawing away from the old creed. It would be quite fitting if this old man's War killed the old man's religion, and so left the world clearer and sweeter for the younger generation.

The Rev. Dr. J. M. Littlejohn, of Thundersley, Essex, says Christianity will no longer be the religion of material forms. Perhaps he will advise his congregations to abstain from singing "Oh! for the pearly gates of heaven, Oh! for the golden floor."

Transatlantic Spiritualists profess to have held a conversation with Mark Twain in "heaven," and the great humorist is stated to have said, "I hope they won't throw me out." It sounds too good to be true, unless the other "Mark," who wrote one of the Gospels, was jealous.

Twenty thousand State schoolmasters are serving in the Army and Navy, but the 50,000 clergymen are exempted from military service. And now some of the parsons are attempting to take the place of the school teachers. Thus the instruction of the rising generation is likely to be entrusted to men "too proud to fight."

From *The Autobiography of an Irish Octogenarian*, by J. F. Fuller, F.S.A. (1916), p. 121. "The Rev. Augustus Toplady, philosophical Calvinist, who went carefully into the matter, says that, because we always fall short of that perfection which God requires, we commit a sin every second, so that at ten years old a man might reckon on a debit account against him of 315,036,000, and an octogenarian, like myself, on 2,510,288,000."

"The religious instruction given in Elementary and Secondary Council Schools, in Roman Catholic and Anglican Schools, is still in the pre-Darwinian stage," says the Rev. R. Roberts. Pre-Darwinian! Such stories as those of "Adam and Eve," "Noah's Ark," "Jonah and the Whale," are nearer the Stone Age than the Victorian era.

"To-morrow the issue will be between Christ and utter Paganism," says the Rev. R. J. Campbell. Dear, Dear! And Christ has been dead two thousand years, and to-morrow never comes.

The Rev. Dr. Westwood, of Winnipeg, says that Colonel Ingersoll "was one of the greatest servants religion ever had." Indeed! The Colonel laughed at the mistakes of Moses, but Dr. Westwood and his colleagues get their living by retailing them.

A foreigner was charged at Bow Street with begging and failing to register as an alien. The defendant denied all knowledge of the War. He reminds us of those dear Christians who have never heard of evolution.

Cardinal Gibbons says Jesus was not a pacifist. Prodigious! Catholics are not encouraged to read the Bible, but a Cardinal might look at it now and then.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

April 8, Swansea.

To Correspondents.

- A. MILLAR.—We do not of necessity endorse the opinions of all our contributors, but so long as what they say is worth the saying, it is the wisest policy for an editor to "keep the ring" and give them all a free hand. Glad you find our "Views and Opinions" to your liking.
- G. LAWRENCE writes that on Sunday afternoon, April 22, at 3.15, the Vicar of Willesden is opening a "Conference" on "Why I believe in God," and suggests that some Freethinkers might like to attend and "confer."
- MR. J. A. CROSS writes: "I am pleased to say that although I have been in five different battalions since I joined the Army, I have always enjoyed religious liberty, and no responsible officer has wished to force me to attend church." We are very pleased to hear this, and regard it as complimentary to both Mr. Cross and to his officers.
- C. E. RATCLIFFE.—The whole of the *Freethinker* is a reply to your question of what are we doing to counteract the growth of Spiritualism. It is possible to spend too much time on side issues, or in pursuit of a passing hobby, and so overlook the main issue.
- S. H. HAYSMAN.—It is rather exasperating for an Atheist who has reached his position after serious thought to be looked down upon by a professed Christian who has never, perhaps, devoted five consecutive minutes to thinking about his religion. The only remedy is to treat such superior persons with the contempt they deserve.
- NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY (Manchester Branch).—All applicants for membership are requested to attend a meeting at 7.30 on Monday, April 16, at the Merchants' Hotel, Oldham Street, for the purpose of electing officers and discussing future work.
- E. ROBERTSHAW.—We read Bronterre O'Brien's book many years ago, and our present impression of it is that it was an able work, but hardly deserved the rank of a first-rate authority. Certainly Robespierre did not deserve the character of a "blood-thirsty barbarian" given him by orthodox historians. One must allow for the English prejudice against the French Revolution.
- L.—We agree with you as to the evil of taking the early morning hour, when the children are freshest for imparting the religious lesson. One day, when people are tired of discussing the various "rights" connected with education, they may commence considering the rights of the child.
- ERIC A. MACDONALD.—We deeply regret to hear of the loss of your brother in France. It is pitiful to see so many promising careers cut short in this barbaric contest. It is the death of such as your brother that constitutes the vital wastage of the war. Thanks for good wishes and congratulations on the upkeep of the *Freethinker*.
- H. J. BAYLIS.—Mr. Arthur Machen writes very interesting newspaper articles, but we do not think any competent person is likely to take him as an authority on philosophical subjects. The man who thinks he has disproved Hume's wise counsel to treat with suspicion doctrines favoured by our passions, by taking it as analogous to the attraction offered by food to a hungry man, has nearly reached the limit of banality. And for Mr. Machen to say that Huxley believed in the "absolute justice of things" is to say that which is the reverse of the truth.
- E. B.—We are very pleased to have your opinion. You will see from our last issue why we do not adopt the plan of raising the price of the paper, and we hope the reasons there given will appeal to you as adequate.
- F. B. G.—Thanks. Will use as soon as we can make room. The amount of good "copy" we have in hand makes us long for a paper double the size of the present one.
- KERIDON.—Hope to publish next week.
- W. C. HOLT.—We quite fail to see anything more in a "sense of connection with the Divine" than a refinement of theology. The sense of a connection with something greater than one's own individual existence is no more than an expression of the social side of human nature.
- S. HARDING.—Thanks for congratulations, but we are not yet out of the wood, and so do not feel inclined to crow very loudly. But if we do get out unscathed, we really feel we shall be entitled to one good, loud "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" And we believe our readers will be pleased to hear it.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Pleased to hear there is a promise of renewed activity on Tyneside. Will consider your suggestion *re* pamphlet.

H. G. FARMER.—Your letter reached us too late for this week's issue.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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. 4 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. 4.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office 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.

To-day (April 8) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Elysium Hall, High Street, Swansea, at 3 o'clock. His subject is "Will Christianity Survive the War?" and judging by his previous experience in Swansea there should be no fear as to the success of the meeting. There are reserved seats at 1s. and 6d., with a silver collection in other parts. Tickets may be obtained at 60 Alexandra Road, Swansea. Those willing to assist at the meeting should send their names to same address.

In the evening, at 6.30, Mr. Cohen will meet all the local friends interested in Freethought propaganda, with a view to founding a Branch of the N.S.S. in Swansea. It should be a good centre for such a movement.

To the books offered for sale by the Pioneer Press, there has just been added one of more than passing interest. The criminal prosecution of animals, with all the elaborate formulæ of an ordinary trial, and their subsequent execution with all the formalities accompanying the execution of human beings, offers one of the most curious of superstitions that flourished during the Mediæval period. Such studies as those presented by Mr. Evans in his *Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, sheds a strong light on the type of mind that for so long dominated Europe, and incidentally enlightens us concerning many surviving superstitions. The book was originally published by Messrs. Heinemann at 7s. 6d. net. It is now offered at 2s., postage extra.

We have received from the Vicar of Bromyard a rejoinder to Mr. Lloyd's article dealing with the former's criticism, which, we regret, did not reach us in time for insertion in this week's issue. It will appear in our next.

An unexpected result from one of our readers on the "Paper Famine":—

Dear Editor, the "Paper Famine" should make papers thinner. The *Freethinker*, however, might be brought out on "Tissue." No "Food Controller" interferes to stop my mental dinner, Which satisfies and pleases more with every weekly issue. You bravely fight that fear of death, from which most men are shrinkers, And show how "Man for Man" is best to help us on through life; You prove the utter fearlessness of genuine "Freethinkers." So keep on thinner paper, as "Cartridges" mean STRIFE.

An Amazing Flight.

As Easter approaches the minds of Christians are, naturally, turned towards the incredible story of the crucifixion and the substantial symbol of hot cross buns; their thoughts are also centred on the equally incredible stories of the resurrection and ascension of their Lord and Master Jesus. Most of them seem never to have heard the theory of Jesus being nothing more than a sun myth, the whole story of his existence being related in the most remarkable manner to each phase assumed in the twelve signs of the zodiac.

But incredible and contradictory as the stories of the crucifixion and resurrection are, as narrated in the Gospels, the story of the alleged ascension of Jesus into heaven is no less difficult of belief to any person who relies upon reason and experience as his guide in such matters. According to the Bible story, Jesus, after having had a personal interview with his disciple Thomas, who would not believe in the resurrection unless he had ocular proof that the resurrected Jesus was the same person who was crucified, dead, and buried, and would not believe in the story unless he could feel the wound-prints—a few days afterwards, Jesus ascended bodily into heaven. But where is heaven? Nobody knows. If, however, you ask the first Christian you meet, he will, without hesitation, tell you that heaven is somewhere "up above." But if you tell him that there really is no up above, that the question of position is purely relative, that what is up above in England is down below in Australia, he will merely shake his head and say that "heaven is somewhere above the stars," but where precisely he cannot say. But if, when Jesus ascended, he was only going somewhere above the fixed stars, if he travelled at sixty miles an hour, he would not have reached his destination yet, and he would have had to stop several times on the way for refreshments. Is such a statement as that blasphemy? Surely a material body, whether on the earth at rest, or in rapid movement in the heavens, needs some kind of material food to replenish its lost energies? During the past two years and a half, I have seen scores of aeroplanes in flight. Some of them go at great speed, the latest going at something approaching one hundred miles an hour; but such a speed cannot be maintained without an adequate supply of petrol. During the past two years I have seen several Zeppelins in flight. They can attain a great altitude; but let them fly never so high they could not reach the nearest fixed star; in fact, if they only went up about thirty miles, the atmosphere would become so rarified that the occupants could not possibly breathe. But Jesus, the Christian will tell us, went up without the aid of a machine; he did not even require the aid of wings. He simply glided along, and ascended up and up, until he was lost to the wondering gaze of mankind. If Jesus thus ascended where was he going? Did he not know that the universe was practically without limit? If he did not know it, he was not God, and if he did, what was the object of his journey? Was it merely to mystify his followers?

When I was a boy I was a witness of a very extraordinary performance. I saw a "flying man." A gentleman, who evidently believed himself capable of doing something out of the ordinary—essayed to fly in the air. He manufactured a machine with wings, let himself up into the air by the aid of a balloon, and all of a sudden cut himself free, and flew for a minute or two in the air, when, one of the wings failing to act, he was precipitated headlong to the earth beneath, and was taken up a mangled and bloody corpse. Yes, I saw him fly, and thousands of other people in various parts of

London witnessed the spectacle. Many of them, no doubt, are still alive, and would be willing, if necessary, to swear or affirm that they saw a man fly with the aid of some artificial wings.

Well, now, if Jesus ascended into heaven, his ascent must have been witnessed by thousands of spectators. Yet who saw him fly?

Profane historians are silent about an occurrence which, if it happened, was one of the most extraordinary in all history. Why do they not mention it? Because it never took place. The story is pure fiction. If we turn to the Gospels we shall discover that neither Matthew, Mark, Luke, nor John was an eye-witness of the ascension. Indeed, Matthew says nothing about it. John is equally silent, while Mark and Luke merely declare that when Jesus had finished talking to his disciples, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. All this is strange indeed, and, if we wished to be hypercritical, we might say that as God is now represented as a Spiritual Being, he had no hands, either right or left, to sit upon, or to sit by the side of. We may, however, reasonably ask whether Jesus in the flesh was able to defy the law of gravitation, and ascend as easily as ordinary mortals fall to the ground?

According to the Bible, Elijah did a similar flight to heaven hundreds of years before Jesus made his appearance on the earth. And his ascent was even more sensational than that of Jesus. For when Elijah was about to do "the vanishing trick," there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And, like Jesus, he never came down again; he went travelling on through space for ever and ever. Some theologians say that although Jesus showed himself to his disciples after the resurrection it was not in a material body; it was "in a glorified body," whatever that may mean, that he appeared, and then disappeared. But how are we to know "a glorified body" when we see one? The doubting disciple Thomas evidently thought that the body of Jesus was material enough, otherwise he would not have demanded to thrust his hand into the wounded side of his Master, or to have felt the wound-prints made by the nails that fixed him to the cross.

The rational explanation of these stories is less ingenious and more straightforward than that of the Christian. It is easy to understand how years after Jesus had mingled with the dust—assuming that he ever existed—his followers invented the story of his resurrection and ascension, how expecting and desiring a Messiah who should save them from the Roman yoke, the early Jewish Christians manufactured these legends of a risen and ascended Redeemer who was soon to return and restore the kingdom of Israel.

When it is further remembered that the world was already familiar with legends of the sun-gods, who rose again from the death of winter to midsummer glory, it will be seen how easily the ignorant masses could be persuaded to exchange Osiris or Adonis for Jesus of Nazareth.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Monarch of Cereals.

II.

(Continued from p. 204.)

AT the season of sowing, soon after the seed is scattered over the soil, the wheat grass commences to sprout. The grain sends forth a root called the radicle, and the appearance of this is succeeded by two secondary roots, and the three together form the seminal or temporary attachments. This root group usually penetrates to an inch

below the surface, and from these, in their turn, develop whorls of permanent roots. The roots at the base of the plant grow directly downwards, while lateral roots spread sideways through the surrounding soil for a short distance, and then dip down into the earth. The main roots will descend to a depth of from four to six feet in search of moisture, but beyond this distance there is no appreciable growth, although a depth of seven feet is on record. The root arrangements are elaborate, and it has been proved that if the appendages of a single plant were placed end to end they would measure a length of 1,704 feet. And while mean soil is very unfavourable to the well being of the roots, copious spring and summer showers promote shallow rooting, while dry conditions impel the plant to send its roots deep into the soil. From seed to harvest the life of the cereal is a constant series of chemical transformations. Its several food materials are mineral substances such as potash, phosphate, lime, and magnesia salts, and these, in company with nitrogenous compounds, and its indispensable water, are secured from the soil, while the whole of the carbon is obtained from the atmosphere. The complex workshop in which all the food stuffs of the wheat are fabricated is the leaf. The various substances prepared in the green leaf are ultimately stored in the grain as nutrient matter for the wheat of the ensuing year. Acted upon by light, the leaves absorb carbonic acid from the air. This they decompose, and while eliminating the contained oxygen, they construct from the residue of the acid sugar, cellulose, and all their other compounds composed of oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon. Every part of the plant is penetrated by a network of canals which contain water that is sucked up by the roots from the soil. The leaves themselves—the breathing organs of plants—absorb little moisture. And the water filling the canals, which circulates through the plant, much as the blood moves in the animal body, is in constant motion until it is exhaled by the leaves. And just as an animal is sustained by the blood stream, so, along these channels of flowing water are distributed the raw materials utilized in the plant's cell factories for its life and growth. In seasons of warm rain the cells toil ceaselessly, produce rapidly, and the plant grows fast.

A further resemblance to animal metabolism is furnished by the fact that wheat cultivated on suitable soils in the northern hemisphere where there is a brief but rapid period of growth, produces an abundance of glutinous substances and a smaller amount of starch than when raised on more parsimonious land, and in countries where the season of growth is longer. In young and growing creatures muscle and bone develop when the animals are properly fed. Surplus food supplied to developing organisms leads to the production of fat, and the super nourishment proves deleterious to the animals. And with our cereal the initial stages of growth are chiefly concerned with the elaboration of the chemical compounds corresponding to the bony and muscular framework of the animal organism, while the later stages are devoted largely to the evolution of starch, which is analogous to the fattening processes of the animal. Now, if the normal growth of wheat is in any way obstructed, its kernels appear prematurely, and form poor material for man's sustenance. Well grown and ripened wheat is highly nutritious, containing 67 per cent. of carbo-hydrates, 13 per cent. of albuminoids, in company with small quantities of such mineral substances as soda and potash, all immensely beneficial to body and brain, while its average water content is only 14 per cent. The quantity of moisture in wheat, however, varies very considerably. As a rule such fluctuations do not exceed 6 per cent., but, in special circumstances, they may reach 25 per cent. As Hunt has

noted:—

When wheat is shipped, especially if it is transported long distances, this may be a matter of great commercial importance. Wheat transported from the dry atmosphere of the inland of California to ordinary temperate regions will invariably gain from 5 to 15 per cent. in weight. In a voyage from San Francisco to Liverpool the increase in weight due to moisture absorbed en route may be sufficient to pay all expenses of transportation. Every portion of the wheat grain is so susceptible to influence from hygroscopic conditions that all the products of wheat exhibited similar oscillations in weight. Two days equalized the moisture content in samples of flour varying from less than 8 to over 13 per cent.

Gluten is one of the most valuable ingredients of wheat. This substance is composed of several nitrogenous elements, and the wheat loaf owes its supreme quality to the special properties of gluten which confer its digestible character as well as its lightness. In these respects wheaten bread ranks higher than loaves prepared from any other cereal. But in very white bread many of these invaluable nitrogenous ingredients have been discarded because they coarsen the appearance of the loaf. The almost universal fashion in pre-war days was to prize the tasteless and innutritious, starchy snowlike bread despite the plain truth that whole-meal or even standard bread is better for the brain, body, blood, and bowels. The genuine brown loaf was too unprepossessing in appearance, and much too rough in texture for the modern fastidious palate.

Contrary to common opinion wheat is a flowering plant. Some evolutionary botanists regard it as a degraded lily. The spike, which at maturity, bears the golden grain, may be observed in the opening stages of the plant's growth, and it develops within a hollow stem. As Edgar states in his *Story of a Grain of Wheat*:—

As the plant grows and larger leaves are produced, the earlier leaves become less active and give up their substance to the plant, the heads are unwrapped from their leafy covering and the grain passes through the various ripening stages to maturity. The blossoming stage is one of the most interesting periods in the development of the plant. The floret is complete in itself having all the parts and organs of an ordinary flower, including ovule, stamens, pistils, filaments, anthers, and pollen.

Cross-fertilization occurs with comparative rareness in wheat, which is essentially a self-pollinating plant. At the flowering season, the male organs—the anthers—are thrust upwards and burst, when their contained pollen grains are showered upon the stigma. This represents the normal process of wheat reproduction; but occasionally a few pollen grains become scattered, and the inconspicuous flowers expand sufficiently to permit the male element of one plant to fertilize the female organs of another.

Among the civilized peoples of antiquity, the culture of wheat reached a moderate stage of efficiency; but with the decline and fall of Pagan power, agricultural darkness descended on the face of Europe. During the Christian Middle Ages, in the words of Professor Dondlinger, "agriculture ebbed to the lowest degree of respectability. It was revived by the Saracens of Spain, and by their successors, the Moors, and it was carried to a height perhaps not surpassed in Europe before the last quarter of the nineteenth century." This is one only of several instances of the reintroduction of civilizing agencies into a Church-cursed continent by a non-Christian race. Scientific husbandry is a quite recent institution, and the constitutionally conservative farmer is now being drawn into line with the advancing activities of the age. The progressive tiller of the earth no longer attaches any real importance to prayers for sunshine or for rain, or willingly pays the priest to bless his

cattle or crops. To again quote Dondlinger, the modern agriculturist "no longer relies for information upon the elucidations of subtle shamans revealing the will of elusive, evasive, and ever-vanishing gods, creations of the fancy. In nearly every civilized country of the world he is supported by scientifically grounded institutions."

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

Evil and God.

THE existence of evil in a world said to be the work of a perfectly good being, unlimited in knowledge and power, who continues to sustain and direct what he has made, has always presented a serious problem to the theologian. It is, moreover, the crux of Theism for the man-in-the-street. Metaphysical arguments for and against the existence of God generally leave him puzzled, but "of the same opinion still," whatever that opinion may happen to be. A sense of unreality attaches, from his point of view, to idealistic and materialistic controversies alike. He is inclined to agree with Byron that "when Bishop Berkeley said there was no matter, it really didn't matter what he said." But confront him with the query, "If God can prevent suffering and sin, why does he not do so?" and at once the argumentation of Atheism against Theism assumes a human glow, and takes philosophy out of the region of academic studies.

It is best to put the issue in the simplest form by way of homely illustration. A group of pious enthusiasts are holding an evangelistic meeting at a street corner. By the aid of a melancholy harmonium and untuneful voices they are seeking to persuade the passer-by that God watches over and cares for every one. "Father-like, he tends and spares us, well our feeble frame he knows, in his hands he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes"—that is what they are singing. How soothing and consoling for those who, unlike George Eliot, are only too willing to "take opium"! But presently a tiny girl breaks away from her fond mother and rushes into the middle of the crowded road. Before it is possible to attempt to save her a motor-car has knocked her down and crushed and mutilated her poor little body; and what had been so beautiful but a few moments before has become revolting ugliness. Can the stout withers of orthodoxy remain unwrung in the teeth of such a challenge to its affirmation that "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world"? Will the evangelists of the street corner venture to sing over the baby's corpse "Father-like, he tends and spares her"? Will they tell the weeping mother that the "Friend of little children" has graciously permitted a piece of soulless mechanism to run over one of them?

"Well our feeble frame he knows." The words have a devilish ring about them for one who candidly faces the world as it is, refusing to deceive himself with the coloured spectacles of theology. Yes, the omnipotent "Father" knows "our feeble frame" so well that he has furnished the world with an infinity of hideous contrivances for inflicting tortures surpassing those of the Spanish Inquisition. Kepler prayed that he might think God's thoughts after him. If Kepler's prayer had been granted and Kepler's thoughts had become deeds, what should we have said of Kepler as a man? If the lamb is an actualized thought of God, so must the tiger be. If God is smiling in the morning light, he must also be frowning in the storm-cast sky. If Florence Nightingale is the expression of God's love, must not Catherine de' Medici be the expression of God's hate? Did the "Friend of little children" design the fiendish brain of Gilles de Retz, the violator and torturer of little children? Or was it the Devil who did so? Who,

then, designed the Devil? And why, as Man Friday asked Robinson Crusoe, does not God kill the Devil?

There is any amount of beating-about-the-bush in the various attempts to handle this question. Numbers of theological "red herrings" are made to do service in obscuring the real issue. Nor do the apologists of Free-thought always go straight to the bed-rock of the matter.

A favourite "red herring" is to try to strike a balance in favour of Omnipotence, and to urge that the preponderance of good over evil is greatly to the Divine credit. As though it were a question of less or more! Omnipotent goodness is as much compromised by a single evil as by a billion evils. Other theologians argue that evil is a mere shadow, or only a lesser degree of good. But they do not act as if they felt so. Then we are told that evil is the necessary condition of good, that the one implies the other. This is quite true, but it proves too much—for the theologian. If evil is the necessary condition of good, it is as eternal as good, that is, on theological premises, as eternal as God. Ahriman must be inseparable from Ormuzd.

It may be said that a universe without evil, if, indeed, such is conceivable, would be insipid. I agree. Heaven is the quintessence of boredom. One would wish for a "lost soul" to come and introduce a spice of wickedness into the interminable angelic tea-party from time to time.

You bid me lift my mean desires
From faltering lips and throbbing veins
To seraph souls, ideal choirs,
Unwearied voices, wordless strains.
My mind with fonder welcome owns
One dear, dead friend's remembered tones.

Man does not want to get rid of evil; he wants to get rid of evils. Evil is a valuation. So, too, is good. Nor do we all value in the same way. The progress of civilization involves a continual "transvaluation of all values"—Nietzsche's pregnant phrase—and what is this but a continual creation, or rather re-creation of good and evil? The disappearance of evil from human society is quixotic nonsense, although some "advanced" persons, who think themselves emancipated from theology, profess to be working to bring this about. The raising of the conflict between good and evil to higher and higher planes, the increasing enrichment of life—an enrichment that involves immorality as well as morality (I speak as unto wise men)—that is a reasonable hope and a reasonable task.

The realization of the fact that good and evil are valuations, human points of view, and not qualities inherent in things or persons, proves the futility of arguing that one bulks larger than the other. There is just as much good and evil in the world as we feel there is. Weights and measures have no meaning in this connection. If good and evil are just valuing, what does this imply? Simply two different types of reaction to stimuli. If I feel ought to be good, my will goes out to it, accepts it, and seeks to assimilate it. If, on the other hand, I feel it to be evil, my will is by that very fact conscious of limitation, frustration, injury, and is impelled by its own nature to seek to subdue or destroy the hurtful person or thing. That we are not, in every case, aware of striving for a good or against an evil shows only the difference between what John Henry Newman termed notional assent and real assent, between an attitude determined by convention and an attitude determined by imagination and sympathy. The real scale of values for the individual is measured by the degree of volitional response that is evoked in each case as it arises.

To believe in good and evil is to take sides. Mr.

Balfour, in his Gifford Lectures on Theism, published a few years ago, asserted that he believed in a God who "takes sides." He was logical in doing so. A personal creator must "take sides." Creation means selection, and personality means preference. But how all this is consistent with the attribution of omnipotence and infinity to God has never been made clear. "Taking sides," valuing in terms of good and evil, selecting this and rejecting that, are ideas implying limitation, and the sense of obstacles to be overcome. We discover, then, that the God of the modern Theist has a limited infinity, and is conscious of hindrances to his omnipotence! To state the position frankly and clearly is to abandon it.

Is our evil God's good? If so, how can there be a moral tie between us and him? To say that evil might vanish for us, if only we could view everything *sub specie aeternitatis*, is virtually to admit that evil is relative, and this implies that good is relative. The transcendental standpoint must needs reduce both to nullity. But, in sooth, to use such a phrase as "transcendental standpoint" is to indulge in a counter-sense. Unfortunately, that is what all theistic argumentation and definition finally reduce themselves to. The apologist for God seeks to conjoin infinity with personality, goodness with omnipotence, will and intelligence with freedom from limitations. He seems unable to see that he is piously engaged in destroying the very doctrine that he is out to defend against Atheism. The Atheist, *as such*, is not committed to any counter-construction. It is sufficient for him to point out that the modern theologian, no less than the Freethinker, rejects as absurd the more anthropomorphic ideas of deity that have flourished and continue to flourish among peoples of lower culture, while the theologian's own alternative to all this concrete mythology falls, not by the test of evidence, but by the test of analysis. To refute Theism one need only try to make it perfectly consistent. A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

Stories Concerning Authority.

By "MULTATULI" (EDUARD DOUWES DEKKER).

I.

SOCRATES.

SOCRATES was a presumptuous fool, and the Athenians did well to condemn him to death. But in my opinion, they let him off too lightly. Mere death is not in itself a severe punishment. Everyone must die, even those who have never done a good action in the whole course of their lives. It was flagrantly unjust that a man who had given the whole of his energy to the public good should have the same sentence as the the most insignificant of imbeciles. The Athenians were in too much of a hurry, just as the Jews were when.....

But now let us see what Plutarch says: "In Athens the accused, when he was brought before the judges, generally defended himself in beautifully rounded sentences, and tried to draw sympathy by tears and supplication. Socrates disdained to use such means....."

I have already remarked that Socrates was a fool.

"In his simple defence he called their attention to the facts of his life, which were well known to everyone....."

Surely but another piece of fatuous simplicity! Evidently he thought they would be interested in what he had *done*. That, without a doubt, was nothing to the point, O Socrates! You should have said: I am "liberal" or "conservative," according to the fashion of the day; you should have talked about your religion, "orthodox" or "modernist"; you should have proclaimed your adherence to such or such principles; you

should have sustained some thesis or other, always following the fashion of the moment. It was there that you went astray. Plutarch was right when he said your defence was simple. It was even less than simple—it was silly.

Well! he continued his defence by talking about his life. But Plutarch tells us: "This form of pleading found no favour in the eyes of his judges who condemned him to death....."

You will notice here the foolish weakness of the Athenians, who, as wretched Pagans, were ignorant of the beneficent effects of Christian torture.

"In accordance with the Athenian custom, the accused was allowed to indicate the punishment which he considered he had merited. This question being put to Socrates, he declared that he had as much right to be kept at the expense of the State as any victor in the Olympian games....."

Now, are you inclined to quarrel with me for calling Socrates a fool? Why, he hadn't the faintest shadow of Christian humility! Is it any wonder that "by this reply he only irritated his judges"?

How amusing it must have been to hear a man claiming a reward when his judges had made up their minds to condemn him to death without any unnecessary formalities! Surely their irritation is pardonable enough. "Many of them who at first had spoken against the sentence of death, now voted for it. He was condemned....."

So much for Plutarch's narrative. It must be said that this dry-as-dust historian has not a single word of praise for these irritated and angry judges.

I fancy that he must have been "liberal" and the judges "conservative," or *vice versa*. For in Greece they never praised anyone who belonged to the opposite party. —*Ideas* (1862-1874).

(Translated by) GEO. UNDERWOOD.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 29.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Baker, Bowman, Brandes, Gorniot, Leat, Lazarnick, Neate, Neary, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Thurlow, Wood, Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting read and confirmed. Monthly cash statement presented and adopted.

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

The death of Mrs. M. E. Pegg, Vice-President of the N.S.S. and Secretary of the Manchester Branch, was formally reported, and a letter of condolence ordered to be written to the family.

The President reported the result of his attendance at a specially summoned meeting of the Manchester Branch. In view of the special circumstances, a fresh start was considered desirable. It was then formally resolved: "That the present Manchester Branch be, and hereby is, dissolved." The application for the formation of a new Branch at Manchester was granted.

A letter from the L.C.C. solicitor, declining further information as to the reasons for the withdrawal of permits, was read, and the proceedings of the last meeting of the Protest Committee reported.

Invitations and suggestions from Branches for the holding of the Annual Conference on Whit-Sunday were read, but no definite arrangement could be made at that stage in consequence of the difficulty in procuring a suitable hall. It was finally resolved: "That in the event of the present negotiations falling through, the matter be left in the hands of the President and Secretary."

Outdoor propaganda was discussed at some length.

The President called attention to the press reports of the illegal and insulting treatment of a citizen who desired to affirm, and from the chair moved the following resolution:—

That this Executive, having had brought to its notice the case of a witness in the Clydebank Police Court on March 12, in which the witness was denied his legal right of affirmation, and treated as an offender by the officials present, resolves to call the attention of the Secretary for Scotland to the matter, with a view to eliciting an expression of opinion from him regarding the conduct of the officials, and to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in the future.

The Secretary was instructed to write, calling the attention of the Chief Secretary for Scotland and other responsible officials to the matter. E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

N.B.—In order that the strongest possible protest may be made against the action of the officials of the Clydebank Police Court on March 12, who debarred a witness from his right as a citizen to make an affirmation, friends in the neighbourhood who are in possession of further facts, or who are willing to take some little trouble to ascertain them, are earnestly invited to at once communicate with me. The strictest confidence will be preserved.—E. M. V.

At a Graveside.

(E., ob, EASTER EVE, 1916.)

I.

COULD wizard tune or sainted vehemence
Bid pitiful life its wanted days resume,
I, for thine own dear sake, would bid thee hence,
Yield not, O never more, the kinder tomb;
Yea, though the Trumpet bray to better birth,
Stay—the Best-possible bore tragic Earth.

II.

Son, thy grave-fellow, I shall perish here,
Fearless, familiar, native where thou art;
The coil of conscious change shall disappear,
And from the living whole no Self dispart:
Immortal Evil doles one grace supreme—
Last nothingness without perchance of dream.

NEVIL BOURN.

Obituary.

We regret to announce the death, at the residence of his son, Mr. Victor Collins, 60, Queen's Road, Finsbury Park, on Friday morning, March 23rd, of Councillor John Collins, of Crispin Street, Spitalfields. The deceased gentleman, who was seventy-four years of age, was a very well known and respected public man in East London. He was an ardent Radical in politics, and a zealous advocate of freedom of thought and speech. He never concealed either his political or his religious opinions, and he openly avowed his Free-thought. He was an enthusiastic follower of Charles Bradlaugh, of whom he always spoke in strong terms of admiration and affection. Universally respected, he was known as "Honest John." He was a member of the Stepney Borough Council from the time of its inauguration, and before that had been a member of the old Spitalfields Vestry. He was also recently elected to a vacancy on the Whitechapel Board of Guardians. The doctor who attended him in his last illness, himself a Freethinker, was specially struck by the strength of his views. Conscious and in full possession of his keen intellect to the last, he upheld his convictions to the end without wavering or faltering. The fear of death was not in him; and his last expressed wish was that a Secular Service should be read over him, a wish which was faithfully carried out. We offer the bereaved family our sincere condolence and sympathy.—J. T. L.

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.

MR. HOWELL SMITH'S DISCUSSION CLASS (N. S. S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street): Thursday, April 12, at 7.30.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Kells and Dales; 6.15, Messrs. Hyatt and Yates.

CANTON HALL (Westminster): April 11, at 8, Social or Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

SWANSEA (Elysium Hall, High Street): 3, Chapman Cohen, "Will Christianity Survive the War?"

ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL ENDOWMENTS,
by Wilkins and Fallows; price 6d.—WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION, 14 Red Lion Square, London, W.C.

92 pp., cloth, 1s. net, by post 1s. 3d.; paper cover, 6d. net, by post 8d.

THE DARKNESS, THE DAWN, and THE DAY

By J. C. THOMAS, B.Sc. ("KERIDON").

Author of "Man: The Prodigy and Freak of Nature."

The late Mr. G. W. Foote wrote to the Author: "Your book requires no introduction; why did you get a Foreword written for it? Its excellence is the only reason why I have not yet reviewed it." London: WATTS & CO., 17 Johnson's Court, Fleet St., E.C. 4.

The Religion of Famous Men.

BY

WALTER MANN.

A Storehouse of Facts for Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians.

Price ONE PENNY.

(Postage ½d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

Population Question and Birth-Control.

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE.

MALTHUSIAN LEAGUE,

QUEEN ANNE'S CHAMBERS, WESTMINSTER, S.W.



LATEST N. S. S. BADGE.—A single Penny flower, size as shown; artistic and neat design in enamel and silver; permanent in colour, has been the means of making many pleasant introductions. Brooch or Stud fastening, 6d. Scarf-pin, 8d. Postage in Great Britain 1d. Small reduction on not less than one dozen. Exceptional value.—From Miss E. M. VANCE, General Secretary, N. S. S., 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

THE TRUTH SEEKER.

FOUNDED BY D. M. BENNETT, 1873.

CONTINUED BY E. M. MACDONALD, 1883-1909.

G. E. MACDONALD - - - - - EDITOR.

L. K. WASHBURN - - - - - EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTOR.

Subscription Rates:

Single subscription in advance - - - \$3.00

Two new subscribers - - - - - 5.00

One subscription two years in advance - 5.00

To all foreign countries, except Mexico, 50 cents per annum extra. Subscriptions for any length of time under a year, at the rate of 25 cents per month, may be begun at any time.

Freethinkers everywhere are invited to send for specimen copies, which are free.

THE TRUTH SEEKER COMPANY,

Publishers, Dealers in Freethought Books,

62 VESEY STREET, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

A New Pamphlet that will prove Useful to Freethinkers
and Enlightening to Christians.

PRAYER: ITS ORIGIN, HISTORY, & FUTILITY
By J. T. LLOYD.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

(POSTAGE ½d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

Two New Pamphlets by Chapman Cohen.

WAR AND CIVILIZATION.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

(POSTAGE ½d.)

RELIGION AND THE CHILD.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

(POSTAGE ½d.)

Special Price for Free Distribution, Six Shillings per Hundred.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

Pamphlets by G. W. FOOTE.

	s.	d.
BIBLE AND BEER. 40 pp.	post ½d.	0 1
WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM? 32 pp.	½d.	0 1
ROME OR ATHEISM? 32 pp.	½d.	0 1
MRS. BESANT'S THEOSOPHY. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
MY RESURRECTION. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
THE NEW CAGLIOSTRO. 16 pp....	½d.	0 1
THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER. 32 pp.	½d.	0 1
HALL OF SCIENCE LIBEL CASE. 58 pp. ..	1d.	0 3
CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM? 120 pp. ..	1½d.	0 4

Pamphlets by COL. INGERSOLL.

A CHRISTIAN CATECHISM. 48 pp. ... post	1d.	0 3
WOODEN GOD. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. 24 pp.	½d.	0 1
MISTAKES OF MOSES. Pioneer Pamphlet, No. 3. 32 pp.	½d.	0 1
DO I BLASPHEME? 28 pp.	½d.	0 1
HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE. 28 pp.	½d.	0 1
MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
THE GODS. An Oration. 47 pp.	1d.	0 1
LIVE TOPICS. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
ABRAHAM LINCOLN. An Oration. 30 pp. ..	½d.	0 1
LIMITS OF TOLERATION. 29 pp.	½d.	0 1

	s.	d.
ROME OR REASON. 48 pp.	post ½d.	0 1
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED? 39 pp.	½d.	0 1
CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
SUPERSTITION. 48 pp.	1d.	0 2
SOCIAL SALVATION. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
WHY I AM AN AGNOSTIC. 23 pp.	½d.	0 1

Other Freethought Pamphlets.

REFUTATION OF DEISM, by P. B. Shelley. 32 pp.	post ½d.	0 1
UTILITARIANISM, by J. Bentham. 32 pp....	½d.	0 1
PAGAN MYTHOLOGY, by Lord Bacon. 60 pp. ..	1½d.	0 3
ESSAY ON SUICIDE, by D. Hume. 16 pp. ..	½d.	0 1
MORTALITY OF SOUL, by D. Hume. 16 pp. ..	½d.	0 1
MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA, by M. Mangasarian. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
CODE OF NATURE, by Diderot and Holbach. 16 pp.	½d.	0 1
FREEWILL AND NECESSITY, Anthony Collins. 82 pp....	1d.	0 3
ESSENCE OF RELIGION, by L. Feuerbach. 82 pp.	1d.	0 6
LIBERTY AND NECESSITY, by D. Hume. 32 pp.	½d.	0 1
CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS, by Chapman Cohen	½d.	0 1

About 1d. in the 1s. should be added on Foreign and Colonial orders.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C. 4.

Books Every Freethinker should Possess.

HISTORY OF SACERDOTAL CELIBACY.

By H. C. LEA.

In two handsome volumes, large 8vo., published at 21s. net. Price 7s., postage 7d.

This is the Third and Revised Edition, 1907, of the Standard and Authoritative Work on Sacerdotal Celibacy. Since its issue in 1867 it has held the first place in the literature of the subject, nor is it likely to lose that position.

THE WORLD'S DESIRES; OR, THE RESULTS OF MONISM.

An Elementary Treatise on a Realistic Religion and Philosophy of Human Life.

By E. A. ASHCROFT.

440 pp., published at 10s. 6d. Price 2s. 6d., postage 5d.

Mr. Ashcroft writes from the point of view of a convinced Freethinker, and deals with the question of Man and the Universe in a thoroughly suggestive manner.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL MORALS.

By CARVETH READ.

Professor of Philosophy in the University of London.

8vo 1909. Published at 7s. 6d. net. Price 3s., postage 5d.

A Fine Exposition of Morals from the standpoint of a Rationalistic Naturalism.

PHASES OF EVOLUTION AND HEREDITY.

By D. B. HART, M.D.

Crown 8vo. 1910. Published at 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

An Examination of Evolution as affecting Heredity, Disease, Sex, Religion, etc. With Notes, Glossary, and Index.

THREE ESSAYS ON RELIGION.

By J. S. MILL.

Published at 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

There is no need to praise Mill's Essays on Nature, The Utility of Religion, and Theism. The work has become a Classic in the History of Freethought. No greater attack on the morality of nature and the God of natural theology has ever been made than in this work.

Recent Acquisitions.

WILLIAM HONE: HIS LIFE AND TIMES.

By F. W. HACKWOOD.

Large 8vo. With numerous Plates. Published 10s. 6d. net. Price 3s., postage 5d.

William Hone was one of the group of Radical Reformers who played so conspicuous a part in the battle for free speech and a free press in the early part of the nineteenth century. The accounts of his trial before Mr. Justice Abbott and Lord Ellenborough for publishing parodies of the Athanasian Creed and the Lord's Prayer are of interest to all Freethinkers.

THE ENGLISH WOMAN: STUDIES IN HER PSYCHIC EVOLUTION.

By D. STAARS.

Published 9s. net. Price 2s. 6d., postage 5d.

An Evolutionary and Historic Essay on Woman. With Biographical Sketches of Harriet Martineau, George Eliot, and others.

By THE HON. A. S. G. CANNING.

INTOLERANCE AMONG CHRISTIANS.

Published 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

RELIGIOUS STRIFE IN BRITISH HISTORY.

Published 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 5d.

THE POLITICAL PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Published 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

The Three Volumes post free for 5s.

THE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT OF ANIMALS.

By E. P. EVANS.

A Careful Study of one of the most curious of Mediaeval Superstitious Practices. There is an Appendix of Documents which adds considerably to the value of the work. Published 1906. With Frontispiece.

384 pp. Published 7s. 6d. Price 2s., postage 5d.

DETERMINISM OR FREE WILL?

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

CONTENTS.

I. The Question Stated.—II. "Freedom" and "Will."—III. Consciousness, Deliberation, and Choice.—IV. Some Alleged Consequences of Determinism.—V. Professor James on "The Dilemma of Determinism."—VI. The Nature and Implications of Responsibility.—VII. Determinism and Character.—VIII. A Problem in Determinism.—IX. Environment.

Cloth, 1s. 9d. (*now binding*).

By THE SAME AUTHOR.

SOCIALISM, ATHEISM, AND CHRISTIANITY.

Price 1d., postage ½d.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS.

Price 1d., postage ½d.

A BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF FREETHINKERS.

By J. M. WHEELER.

Price 3s. net, postage 5d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.

By G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL.

For Freethinkers and Enquiring Christians. New Edition 162 pp. Cloth. Price 1s., postage 2d.

FLOWERS OF FREETHOUGHT.

By G. W. FOOTE.

First Series, with Portrait, 216 pp. Cloth. Price 2s. 6d. net postage 4d. Second Series, 302 pp. Cloth. Price 2s. 6d. net, postage 4d. The Two Volumes post free for 5s.

BIBLE STUDIES.

By J. M. WHEELER.

Essays on Phallic Worship and other curious Rites and Customs. Price 1s. net, postage 2½d.

About 1d. in the 1s. should be added on all Foreign and Colonial orders.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

Printed and Published by THE PIONEER PRESS (G. W. FOOTE AND CO., LTD.), 61, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.