

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

VOL. XXXVII.—No. 20

SUNDAY MAY 20, 1917

PRICE TWOPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

The War and a Future Life.

If it be true that the War has turned the thoughts of many men towards the question of a future life, it is certain that it has brought no new light, and generated no new conviction. How could it? Death, even in a violent form, is nothing new in the world. Death comes to all sooner or later. To many it comes in the form of loathsome or painful disease, and deaths by violence occur daily to hundreds, if not thousands. Death is of necessity as regular as birth, and the same questions about death front us in a time of peace as in a time of war. And size matters little. It is only the un-imaginative and the unreflective who are impressed by the size of things. The wickedness of war on a large scale is really no greater than war on a small one; although many who are aghast at the former accept the latter without demur. Therefore, the War may have directed attention towards the question of a future life—although no very clear proof of that has been offered. And, on the whole, one is inclined to regard the alleged growth of interest as due to the activity of professional pleaders who see in the War an occasion suitable to the end of urging their views upon the public.

* * *

For and Against.

Since the War began there certainly appears to have been a larger proportion of books issued on this subject than is usual. Two of this class are before us as we write, and they may be taken together because they are so entirely different in tone, in method, in purpose, and in conclusion.¹ Of Mr. Waddington's work we can offer, so far as it goes, nothing but praise. The case against the belief in survival is well and temperately put, although more detail would prove its strength to be much greater than is here shown. But all the elements of the attack are here, and they are brought out in a survey of the

¹ *Some Views Respecting a Future Life*, by S. Waddington (John Lane, 3s. 6d., net); *Faith and Immortality*, by the Rev. E. Griffith-Jones (Duckworth, 5s.).

opinions of leading minds from Buddha to Maeterlinck, with a running commentary by the author. Mr. Waddington's work is essentially an appeal to all that is highest and best in man against yielding to an illusion because of sustained appeals to emotion, and the authority of a traditional belief. Daintily printed and bound, we can think of no more suitable work that would serve as a gift-book from Freethinker to Freethinker, or better still, from a Freethinker to an enquiring Christian. * * *

Question Begging by Definition.

Mr. Griffith-Jones's work is of a quite different character. We are told frankly that it is written "not for Agnostics or Materialists, but for perplexed believers." Its business is not to investigate origins, trace developments, and balance evidence, but to say what can be said in favour of the belief in survival in face of what, we believe, are the damning presumptions against it. So far as that be, Mr. Griffith-Jones makes out as good a case as is possible. If he leaves the matter where he found it, his excuse might be that he cannot make something out of nothing. But he does his best. Mr. Waddington cites Confucius as saying to an enquirer: "While you do not know what Life is, what can you know about Death?" That is the caution of a wise man. Mr. Jones defines death—like a theologian. Death is, he says, physiologically "the dissolution of the vital bond between the soul as the living principle, and the body which is its organism," and, psychologically, it is "the end of our conscious life on earth." Well, if that is correct, no more is to be said. We know all about it, and survival is demonstrated. Only we venture to suggest that so long as we keep within the bounds of knowledge, or of even legitimate assumption, death is *not* the separation of soul and body, it is the cessation of a phenomenon which we call life. That it is continued elsewhere is pure assumption. Dr. Jones begs the whole question in his definition.

* * *

Evading the Facts.

Dr. Jones cannot be said to deal with the case against survival as presented by modern science. He sketches some of the arguments but refutes none. Sometimes, as in his dealing with the anthropological argument—to our mind the most convincing of all, he reminds one of the preacher who exhorted his audience to look their difficulties in the face and pass on. And this shows wisdom. For there is no adequate reply to the scientific case. All analogy forbids our assuming human life to be more permanent than other forms of existence. The primitive illusion of a "double" or "ghost," in which the belief in survival undoubtedly took its origin, is conclusive in itself. All scientific knowledge is in the one direction. We know nothing of mind or "soul" apart from organization. We cannot even conceive it apart from organization, and it is only believed in because so few people ever try to visualize their beliefs or their thoughts. Mr. Waddington puts the matter plainly when he says: "We have

no knowledge, nor are we able to imagine, any mind or thought apart from common matter—that is to say, apart from a material organism. History fails to record and imagination is unable to depict, the existence of a great mathematician without a brain, and until we meet a senior wrangler walking down Piccadilly without a head, we shall not believe in the possibility of thought without some corporeal accompaniment.”

* * *

From Absurdity to Slander.

Many people are far more impressed by what they consider the moral value of the belief in a future life than by anything else, although this is an appeal to cupidity rather than to reason. Dr. Jones lays considerable stress upon this, and promises dreadful consequences to society if the belief dies out. But, of course, against this is the awkward fact that people without the belief in a future life are at least as worthy as those who believe in it, and not infrequently more so. To this Dr. Jones replies that the springs of conduct had been fixed “before they became Agnostic,” and such a position “is not likely to be repeated in the second and third generations, as the history of families who have departed from the Faith abundantly proves.” So slander is added to absurdity. Starting with the ridiculous statement that morality, which is a social product or nothing, is born of the Christian faith, Dr. Jones proceeds to the slander that those who have left Christianity show a moral deterioration in the third and fourth generation. One would like to get the names of these cases. Until they are forthcoming, we can only characterize such a statement as a cowardly falsehood. Dr. Jones is trading on the fears of the unthinking to bolster up a belief which he sees cannot depend upon reason for its justification.

* * *

The Slump in Belief.

The absurdity of it all is shown by Dr. Jones's own admission that “the belief in immortality has unquestionably been losing its hold on all classes of society during the past half-century”; that on speaking to soldiers from the Front, he discovers “the majority do not seem to think about it at all”; that “the trend of scientific thought on its broader and more philosophic side during the last half-century has been distinctly, and, till quite recently, increasingly hostile to faith in a future life.” What, then, can be the moral value of a belief about which the majority do not trouble, which is losing its hold on all classes, and to which exact thought is increasingly hostile? The truth is, that next to the illusion of the belief itself, is the illusion that it is of some social or moral value. It has not, and never has had, any such value. Some of the greatest scoundrels in the world have been firm believers in a future life. Our prisons are filled with people who believe in it. And even in the pulpit it clearly cannot keep its professors faithful to the truth, nor save them from slandering those who disagree with them.

* * *

A Doomed Belief.

People who are not theologians are, however, not concerned with whether the belief in a future life is useful; they are more concerned with whether it is true. And that is far healthier. For, as one of Mr. Waddington's authors says, “A man can be good without being clever, but he cannot be good unless he desires the truth for its own sake, and uses his intellect to discover it.” The truth about this belief in a future life is known, and is permeating the people, despite the efforts of the pulpit to prevent it. We know the belief began in an illusion, and we know you can no more reach truth by refining an illusion than thirst-stricken travellers in a desert can

slake their parched throats by following a mirage. From the dreams and crude guesses of the primitive savage this belief came. It was developed into a philosophy before positive science came into its own, since when it has been steadily losing ground, in spite of the millions of pounds spent to secure its perpetuation. For every one to whom the belief has brought solace, it has made life for a hundred a veritable nightmare. Poets, philosophers, and theologians have done their best to give this belief an air of reality; still it remains true to itself—a legacy from the primitive savage, and with no greater warranty in our day than it had in his.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Christianity and the Churches.

THERE are Christian divines not a few who sorrowfully confess that the Churches are in a state of bankruptcy, and that, as at present constituted, they can have no brilliant future. No unbeliever ever judged them with greater severity than the Rev. Bernard Snell did in his pungent address from the chair of the Congregational Union a few days ago. Mr. Snell is described as “a powerful and original speaker, whose theological viewpoint is broad and advanced.” Even in his Newcastle days, upwards of thirty years ago, he was distinguished for the courage with which he expressed his convictions, which, at that time, were anything but popular. He may not be quite so heterodox to-day as he was supposed to be then; but he still displays the same bravery in all his public utterances. The following extract from the *Christian World's* report of his Chairman's Address illustrates the accuracy of our estimate of him:—

Principles were cheerfully accepted they had never dreamed of seeing in their time. The comradeship of officers and men was full of hope. The spirit of brotherhood was prevailing everywhere except in the Churches, which were created to promote it. That was the scandal. The Churches were the greatest laggards, the homes of hesitations—they were too largely an apparatus for keeping the people apart

According to the report in the *British Weekly*, Mr. Snell reminded the assembled delegates that “the Churches have become reduced to the necessity of defending the religion of Christ from the indictment that it has failed by saying that it has not been tried.” “Then why not try it?” he exclaimed amid a wild outburst of approving applause. In that question lies the crux of the problem. Dr. Frank Ballard and others have repeatedly assured us that Christianity cannot honestly be said to have failed because it has never yet had its innings; but the question forces itself upon us, Why has she not had them? According to all accounts, the Church was divinely organized for the one purpose of putting the religion of Christ into practice, for the fulfilment of which she was promised the perpetual presence, guidance, and power of the Holy Ghost. That purpose she has flagrantly failed to execute, and this is a fact recognized by all alike.

Dr. Ballard raised a larger issue than he was prepared to face. It is easy enough to perceive that the Church has failed in her mission; but her admitted failure is quite as difficult to explain as the alleged failure of Christianity, and certainly no less serious. What is the Church? Christ's body, the Holy Spirit's temple, “the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Jesus is reported to have said, “Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” To his Church, so built, he said: “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Now, surely, such men as Dr. Ballard and Mr. Snell must regard

the New Testament description of the Church as at once inspired and authoritative, in which case it is impossible to understand on what ground they acknowledge her impotence and deny that of the religion she embodies, or how they can say that the gates of hell have prevailed against the former and left the latter unharmed. As a matter of fact, if the teaching of Christ and his apostles, as recorded in the Gospels and Epistles, is to be accepted as divinely inspired and essentially true, there is positively no escape from the conclusion that the Church and Christianity are equally divine and infallible, and that it is equally impossible for either the one or the other to fail; but, on the other hand, if that teaching is not true, both are equally human and fallible, and their failure should occasion no surprise to anybody. Our contention is that the high claims set forth on behalf of both have been completely falsified by the events of the last nineteen centuries, and that the prospects of neither are calculated to hearten their professional champions. And incontrovertibly the failure of the Church is the failure of Christianity, because, apart from the Church, Christianity is non-existent. Those who distinguish between traditional and essential Christianity, alleging that the one is a waning belief and the other a waxing force, forget that the traditional species is the only one known to us, the brand called "essential" being, as yet, at any rate, entirely unhistorical. There are two types of the Christian religion in the world, namely, the natural and the supernatural. Those who affect the former call themselves Liberal Christians, while the representatives of the latter glory in the adjective "orthodox"; but both schools profess what they believe to be "essential" Christianity, the only difference between them being that they do not agree as to what the essence of Christianity is. According to the one school it is obedience or conformity to the teaching of Jesus, while, in the opinion of the other, it is the acceptance by faith of the finished work of Christ as the objective ground of salvation; but the one school is as certain as the other that it possesses and strives to exemplify the very essence of the Christian religion. Those two types we know as actually existent, but what "essential" Christianity, as distinguished from those traditional types, is we have not the remotest idea.

Orthodox Christianity is the Church's creation. It has gone through a long process of evolution, and there still await it, no doubt, many further modifications; but in essence it will always remain either a natural or a supernatural system of thought, accentuating either obedience or trust. The present point is, however, that Christianity, in any intelligible sense, is as colossal a failure as the Church. In point of fact, as a religion, it never was a success. Even when the Church dominated all departments of life, Christianity as a factor of social reform was a dead letter. When supernatural belief flourished throughout Christendom the morals of both clergy and laity were shockingly low. The Bishop of London asserted recently that London is to-day "less godly" than it was a hundred years ago, but he omitted to add that it is morally and socially considerably higher. In his excellent new book, *The Bankruptcy of Religion* (Messrs. Watts & Co.), Mr. Joseph McCabe says:—

If the bishop had a spare hour in which to study the London of a century ago he would discover that its godliness was allied with a comprehensive corruption which might surprise him. Prostitutes were then, in proportion to population, and according to the statements of the police (given by a writer of the time, the magistrate Colquhoun), *twenty times* as numerous as they are to-day, and general looseness of conduct was much

greater than now. Gambling was permitted on the streets and encouraged by the State-lotteries. Drunkenness was immeasurably worse than it now is. Pleasure was brutal and revolting. Wives were sold in public. Children were worked or beaten to death. Crime was so flagrant that one hardly ventured out after dark. Industrial oppression was absolutely unchecked. The political system was infamous. And the Bishop of London of that day and his colleagues did not know what social idealism meant (pp. 276-7).

We agree with Mr. Snell when he says that "for all who read the signs of the times a new spirit is moving such as men have never known"; but this new spirit was born and is being nurtured outside the Churches. While it was growing up the Churches were busily defending their doctrinal standards and their orthodoxies, their voice thus ringing false and their members largely ignoring its very existence. As soon as it had arrived at a certain stage of development and become influential, many of the Churches took it into their bosoms and called it their own fondly cherished child; but it was too late. As Mr. Snell himself declares, that spirit of brotherhood and progress is "prevailing everywhere except in the Churches." When Mr. Snell and others first realized what had happened, it was too late to remedy the evils that had persisted for many centuries. The outside world had found out how extremely false the voice of the Churches had rung throughout the ages, and under what absolutely false colours they had always sailed. Their Divine origin, the alleged presence and activities within them of an eternal, omnipotent, and all-loving Redeemer and Lord, the mighty miracles which they claimed to have been performed by the outpouring of the Spirit, all such pretensions are now seen to be but baseless myths, doomed to disappear wholly discredited. Natural knowledge is eliminating supernatural beliefs, the spread of Humanism is banishing all forms of religious magic, all theories of personal redemption by mystic union with a slain and resurrected Saviour-God, and the new spirit is enunciating ever more clearly the great principle that every vital problem "concerns us as human beings striving to comprehend a world of human experience by the resources of human minds" alone.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Voltaire of America.

We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star.—Emerson.

The infidels of one age have been the aureole saints of the next.—Ingersoll.

AN advanced movement like our own can have no better champion than a humourist. No human emotion is so readily awakened as that of which laughter is the sign. And if the cause be a great one, and if the arguments, barbed by wit and winged by laughter, have any intrinsic worth, they strike the deeper and take the stouter hold because of the humorous nature of their presentation.

In a theological discussion a laugh is a blessing, and a laugh-maker like Colonel Robert Ingersoll was genuinely our benefactor. The artificial solemnity of the subject make a joke more jocund, as the arms of a dusky maid give a double beauty to her pearls. The defenders of that transcendent imposture known as Christianity have lost themselves in trackless deserts of so-called evidence, and almost drowned the subject in oceans of verbiage. But Colonel Bob, the Voltaire of our day, challenged the defenders of orthodoxy with smiles. There was no point of real importance upon which the Colonel did not touch wittily. There were few fallacies in that enormous tissue of falsehoods which he did not laughingly expose. Nowhere is he so happy as

when he describes smilingly how religions grew out of the hot-beds of ignorance, fraud, and mystification. Although a master of the lash, he uses his whip caressingly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons like Jonathan Swift, nor, like Voltaire, sting like a thousand wasps. Rather is he a Voltaire into whom has passed the geniality and suavity of Renan. It is a mellowed and transformed Voltaire, looking upon a sadder and busier world with the laughing eyes we know so well. That was one of the many reasons why the Colonel had such bitter enemies among the long-necked geese of orthodoxy, who sought for many years to hiss him down. The defenders of the religion of the Man of Sorrows realized that it is ridicule that kills. Gravity was what they wanted, for they knew full well that opponents who treat religion too seriously play their game for them.

Robert Ingersoll occupied the position as a militant Freethought orator and writer which Charles Bradlaugh filled here. Both were big men physically and intellectually; both could sway popular audiences; but here the resemblance ends. Bradlaugh sought to beat down Christianity by sheer force of logic and law. His speeches read like judicial utterances by the side of the brilliant, sparkling orations of Colonel Ingersoll. America dearly loves rhetoric, and Pagan Bob as an orator had no equal in the States. He dealt rhetorically with elemental emotions, and he enjoyed the fame of being an apostle of liberty. Expressing the simple feelings of men, he made a universal appeal. "Give me liberty, or give me death!" That was the kind of thing; a sonorous and impassioned phrase flung out to thrill the hearts and flush the cheeks of thousands. Phrase after phrase has this special quality, and reads like prose-poetry, grandiose and sweeping:—

Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain.

You can almost see the outstretched arm, hear the thrilling, resonant voice. There is music in it; the trumpets sing to battle.

Colonel Ingersoll wrote, too, quite as brilliant and delightful a style as his spoken words. He was "answered" over and over again by ministers of all denominations, and even drew Cardinal Newman and Gladstone into the controversial arena. Taunted by the English politician with riding a horse without a bridle, Ingersoll retorted crushingly that this was better than "riding a dead horse in a reverential calm." Professor Huxley, indeed, claimed the victory for Ingersoll. "Gladstone's attack on you," he wrote, "is one of the best things he has written. I don't think there is more than fifty per cent. more verbiage than is necessary, nor any sentence with more than two meanings."

Ingersoll's masterpiece, *The Mistakes of Moses*, is a Freethought "classic," and still commands a huge circulation wherever the English language is spoken. A generation after his death his lectures are as widely read and discussed as during his lifetime. Such literary vitality is the surest test of his power, for it is rare that controversial matter is endorsed so richly as to survive the purposes of the moment.

It is good to find that Ingersoll is still discussed so many years after his death, for there are few Freethinkers whom it is more necessary to remember. He was of the race of the Sun-Treader, whom Browning once worshipped this side of idolatry. He was the mouthpiece of liberty and fraternity, believing, as he did, that freedom was the very breath of brotherhood. He was the orator of Freethought, with that all-embracing appeal which the mere rhetorician never succeeds in attaining.

His was a genius in which intellectual liberty appeared

as beautiful a thing as a flower, a bird, or a star. At heart a poet, he found the world a place of ethical ideals, and he was no less exalted when he spoke of the golden hopes of humanity than when he described the exquisite beauty of a little child's laugh:—

Strike with hand of fire, O weird musician, thy harp strung with Apollo's golden hair, fill the vast cathedral aisles with symphonies sweet and dim, deft toucher of the organ-keys; blow, bugler, blow, till thy silver notes touch and kiss the moonlit waves, and charm the lovers wandering amid the vineclad hills. But know your sweetest strains are discords all, compared with childhood's happy laugh—the laugh that fills the eyes with light, and every heart with joy. O rippling river of laughter, thou art the blessed boundary-line between beasts and men; and every wayward wave of thine doth drown some fiend of care. O laughter! rose-lipped daughter of joy, there are dimples enough in thy cheeks to catch and hold and glorify all the tears of grief.

Imagination and humour were the qualities in which Ingersoll surpassed the orators of his time; but his humour was most unassailable work. A handful of his jests are, perhaps, the finest contribution to Freethought literature since Voltaire. How good is his jest that "with soap, baptism is a good thing." Being asked if it were true that he feared to meet certain of the clergy, he replied cheerfully that he was willing to meet them all together. While he had his law-office at Washington, lightning struck and burnt a church close to his office. Ingersoll said: "An offended deity may have intended that bolt for my office, but what marksmanship!" In response to an inquiry about Robert Collyer, he said: "Had such men as Collyer and John Stuart Mill been present at the burning of Servetus, they would have extinguished the flames with their tears. Had the Presbytery of Chicago been there, they would have quietly turned their backs, solemnly divided their coat-tails, and warmed themselves."

A thorough humanitarian, Ingersoll's work is full of a fine and noble indignation, directed against all that is cruel and despicable in religion. From thousands of minds he lifted the awful belief in eternal torment, and banished those degrading conceptions of deity which oppressed his countrymen.

Ingersoll's enormous influence and personal qualities are undisputed. The Rev. J. M. Savage, one of the most scholarly of Transatlantic ministers, said that Ingersoll was "the most remarkable orator and a master over a popular audience." Frederick Douglass, the ex-slave, himself a Christian, has borne testimony to the welcome he met on Ingersoll's threshold when no one else in Illinois would take the negro in. His old antagonist, Gladstone, admitted that the Colonel wrote with "a rare and enviable brilliancy." One may not unfairly sum up Ingersoll's life in the words of Marshall Wilder, who wrote: "People may say all they like of his infidelity, but I wish a good many people I know had some of his religion." One thing, at least, quotations like this prove, they help to refute the absurdities of those persons who pretend that Robert Ingersoll was a commonplace antagonist. The Ingersoll we treasure in our hearts was a keen-eyed warrior, as well as a very noble man, who fought in the Army of Human Liberation, and who never wavered in holding aloft the standard of Freethought against all the gods in the Pantheon.

MIMNERMUS.

Religious revivalism is a social bane, it is far more dangerous to the life of society than drunkenness. As a sot, man falls below the brute; as a revivalist, he sinks lower than the sot.—G. Boris Sidis, M.A., Ph.D., "The Psychology of Suggestion."

Woman and Christianity.

II.

(Concluded from p. 284).

THE ascetic doctrines of Christianity cannot be wholly attributed to Paul. Jesus was a celibate, and encouraged the leaving of home, wife, and children, "for my name's sake" (Matthew xix. 29). See also Matthew xix. 12. A perusal of the New Testament yields no ideal conception of woman to compare with the best women in Pagan antiquity. Most Christian women are densely ignorant of the history of their faith, and seldom read the Bible with critical eyes. Their conceptions of Jesus are usually taken from pious tracts and parson's sermons in which a Christ of purely imaginary qualities is portrayed, having no sort of resemblance to the Gospel model. The Christian Church was not long in bringing back the worship of the Mother Goddess, for a woman can only satisfy her highest feelings in ideal womanhood. "When Cyril (d. 444) announced to the Ephesian that the Council of that place had decreed that the Virgin should be called the 'Mother of God' with tears of joy they embraced the knees of their Bishop: it was the old instinct peeping out: their ancestors would have done the same for Diana." And no one who has had any experience of Roman Catholic women will deny that Mary is loved quite as much as Jesus, for there is an instinctive feeling that only a woman can really understand and sympathize with a woman.

Madonna worship is an evolution from Paganism, and has no connection whatever with the mythic Mary of the Gospels, about whose character no authentic historic details are known. Like Pallas, Athene, and Aphrodite, she is the invention of man's soul. For God and Goddesses are abstractions endowed with the qualities which man, in the course of evolution, has come to revere himself. The little child Jesus appears on the arm of his mother Mary, as Horus did upon the arm of Isis. In the course of human evolution, the more sensitive masculine souls conceive woman as holy, and set the vessel of human life up above themselves. But this is not the work of Jesus or Paul. It is a return to Nature, to mother earth, to the natural feelings and instincts, something in which woman has a share.

At the Reformation, image worship was abolished, the mother and her son disappeared from the altar. Luther stresses the old ideals of the New Testament for women: "We have by nature a tainted sinful conception and birth" (Thesis xvi.). The Renaissance, through poetry and art, continued to elevate woman, and every movement for her emancipation, since Luther's day, has been made in spite of the Christian Churches. The Christian religion is the work of man not of woman. Every system of metaphysics and religious belief yet developed has primarily received its elements and proportions from the reasoning intellect of man, rather than from an intuitive perception of what actually exists in the human spirit claiming recognition and development. As man gains in moral sentiment and conception, so he revises his ethics and theology. Each system is logical enough, but the premises are continually changing as he evolves.

The freethinking woman refuses to believe that love, purity, beauty, goodness, are the monopoly of the Christian creed. The priest persuades the ignorant and credulous women that holiest emotions were discovered and preserved by Christianity, whereas the divine feelings are in reality Nature's fundamental impulses towards motherhood in every unspoilt woman's heart, arrived at a certain stage of consciousness in human progress.

They are the free gifts of Nature to every woman-soul who is conscious of the broad permanent elements of her being.

A free woman has no need of a father-confessor, knowing full well that even the best of men cannot hold a candle to a really good, natural woman. Her soul revolts from the preposterous notion that a man can absolve her from sin, which, in itself, is a theological invention. Some day it will be realized that woman produces and includes man, and, as his creator, sometimes knows him as he can never know himself. Nearly all the women pioneers are Freethinkers—Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Martineau, Eliza Farnham, Emily Bronte, Ellen Key, Clara Zetkin. Life for these women was not something devised to disappoint the human soul, but to afford it the fullest measure of satisfaction. It is impossible to see it otherwise, the moment we shake off the thralldom of systems and creeds, and find a living and sufficient faith in an ideal of Goodness and in human nature.

Herbert Spencer says:—

In the history of humanity, the saddest part concerns the treatment of women. The amount of suffering which has been and is borne by women is utterly beyond imagination. We may safely assume that multitudes of tribes disappeared, because the women were so ill-treated as to render them incapable of rearing a due number of children.

At the beginning of the historical period, woman was under complete subjection to man. Though women gained a certain amount of freedom in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, they fell victims to the social and political decadence in the Mediterranean world, of which the advent of Christianity was one of the chief expressions. Christianity lowered the position of woman. Modern humanism attempts to free the wife and mother and destroy the slavery to creeds. It has been said by a woman genius that "Woman does not dispute about the soul and its destiny because her inner consciousness testifies without dispute much that the masculine intellect attempts to prove or disprove."

The woman-soul breathes freely in love, purity, beauty, and goodness. All the priesthoods have taken advantage of this fact, and instilled the poison into woman's brain that *they* are the only custodians of these flowers of human sanctities. As the late Mr. Foote said, the balance between the intellect and the affections is not equal in the sexes. Most women have not the power to think into discipline the emotions of their hearts, and thus to work out their own salvation in this life. In their ignorance and credulity they lean upon the great ecclesiastical organization for emotional support, untroubled by the intellectual doubts which beset most thinking men. Freethought will make great headway only when more women have developed a love of truth. In the words of Lecky:—

Women rarely love Truth, though they love passionately what they call "the truth" or opinions they have received from others, and hate vehemently those who differ from them. They value belief rather as a source of consolation than as a faithful expression of the reality of things.

Men must help to free woman from the shackles of superstition, so that their energies may be devoted to the service of humanity, thus helping to free the race from its slavery under the self-constituted authority of the priest. "Can man be free, if woman be a slave?" asked Shelley.

Woman's real religion lies much nearer her heart than the Churches have yet discovered. In the course of human evolution there has developed, during the last century, in some women a clear-sightedness into the

essential nature of woman which is the charter of freedom for the mothers of the human race. Among these pioneer women are many who, like Eliza Farnham, "reject the dust of systems and creeds." Her philosophy centres round the idea that "a free, glad, spiritual (psychic) maternity is woman's highest religion, as a pure earnest searching love is that of man's." Woman is most divine in so far as her motherhood approaches the highest ideal she can conceive. In the lower civilizations woman's finer nature could not assert itself in the tough conflicts on the physical plane. Savages and barbarians are too low in the scale of consciousness to feel woman as a psychic power. The ideal begins to dawn on the mind in later civilizations. In more advanced civilizations woman is reverentially treated, love dominating the human relations. Honour to womanhood, reverence to maternity are dimly seen to be conditions of permanency in any people nation or race.

The humanistic mother finds in motherhood a higher ideal than obtains in any existing religion. She feels that all else in the world is for the best maternity, since where the most perfect humanity is produced, the highest end of human effort is attained. Woman is now beginning to conceive ideals for herself, out of her own nature, instead of meekly conforming to those of man. As it is, she has never burnt the martyrs or slain the prophets. It is the serio-comic man who thinks he has caught and exhausted truth in the institutions and organizations he has created, and is horrified at the thought of cutting through or breaking away from them. It is man who is capable of dying for the grossest error that age has made respectable. It is he and not the mother-soul who persuades himself that he is the heir to eternal misery, who believes in theories of total depravity, original sin, and eternal damnation. The mother-love in a woman's heart recognizes happiness as the consequence of existence, ultimate, if not immediate happiness. She is certain that no child of hers is pre-destined to eternal damnation. The more conscious woman feels that Nature demands perfection of woman as wife and mother. This love of perfection for herself, her children, and human society, has a natural basis and needs no supernatural sanctions. Many of the most vital moral truths essential to human welfare are self-evident to most women. No mother needs persuasion towards love, purity, and goodness on pain of punishment in the next world.

It is impossible that the world should remain for ever at the culture level and evolutionary stage of the early Christians. Freethinking women feel that Nature's wisdom is above that of the New Testament, whose doctrines have long ceased to be a spur and incentive to the times. These thinking women recognize the pious zeal of women working in the Christian cause; but they also recognize how the priests, all through the centuries, have exploited women in the interests of the Church, and they regret the ignorance and superstition which divert the holiest emotions in a woman's heart from the chief sphere in which they can be of lasting benefit to mankind, viz., a free and intelligent motherhood. In that office a fully conscious woman reaches her highest and purest self-hood. Nature, truth, and love are the grand Trinity. "Creeds may die, rites and ceremonies become matters of archæological interest," as Mr. Clodd says; but humanity, with its ideals, remains. Truth, beauty, and goodness still draws the human soul onwards. Nature is all that we know, for we can only know the universe to the measure of ourselves. There are souls whose larger consciousness and wealth of sentiment are the high blooming land of promise to mankind. Hitherto, the world has been led by the more gifted men; but side by side in the future will be

ranked the women thinkers with feminine ideals to match the masculine ones. The woman of the future will be intelligent enough to love truth for its own sake as the only means to the end of human development.

Then there will be an end for ever to the venerable falsehoods which bar the progress of humanity towards its ultimate bounds, and love and reason will be the only dogmas upon which the foundation of human society will be based.

FRANCES IVOR.

Correspondence.

A QUESTION OF STYLE: HEBERT AND THE FREETHINKER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I hope Mr. Farmer will not think me discourteous if I venture to remind him of the old proverb: More haste, less speed. To those of us who happen to have a recent and vivid recollection of Hebert's notorious journal, it must seem that he has tumbled over himself in his haste to correct Mr. Arch, whose articles in the *Freethinker* we have all been reading with as much pleasure as profit.

To me both these gentlemen seem to be pretty much in the same position. Mr. Arch admits ingenuously that he has not seen a copy of *Pere Duchesne*, forgetting, I suppose, for the moment, that there is such a place as the Reading Room of the British Museum, and that an hour or two spent there would have put him in the way of reproving the temerity of his critic.

I cannot, of course, commend Mr. Arch for his absolute dependence upon authorities; but, in this case, I am afraid Mr. Farmer has nothing to boast of on the score of accuracy. He claims to have examined the journal carefully, but it must have been so long ago that he has either lost his notes or forgotten what he read. However, that may be, Mr. Arch is emphatically right—at least as regards the wanton obscenities with which the Atheist and Republican journalist besmirched his curious and usually intelligent articles—while Mr. Farmer is, I am sorry to say, as emphatically wrong. I am not in a position to contradict him as to the sort of language likely to shock a Methodist mothers' meeting. But to suggest even the faintest comparison between Hebert's *style des mauvais lieux*—to use the expression of one of his French admirers—and that of the *Freethinker* is to offer an insult to the editor of the paper for which I have the honour to write. It is to ask the reader to believe that the *Freethinker* habitually uses language, the grossness of which would bring a blush to the cheek of an inebriated racing-tout.

What I suggest to Mr. Farmer is, that he should make a faithful English version of, say No. 102 of Hebert's journal, or, indeed, of any one of the articles, and then ask the editor of this paper to print it. I have no doubt of what the answer would be.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

TELEPATHY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The following extracts are from Mr. Edwin Greenwood's letter, which appeared in your issue of May 13, on "Psychism and the Supernatural":—

It is unquestionably established that certain persons are born with a highly developed "percipient" sense in being able to record thought-transference..... Fraud is easy to expose, where scientific tests are used, but the genuine cases are very difficult to account for, unless we are fully prepared to accept the now proven theories of telepathy and thought-transference.

I would therefore remind Mr. Greenwood that Mr. W. H. Massey, in March, 1911, advertised in the *Literary Guide* that £100 would be given to anyone who would produce evidence regarding the truth of telepathy that would stand cross-examination.

He wrote again in the *Literary Guide* for May, 1911, to say that the advertisement had "brought him nothing in the shape of evidence or proof," and he added "that the offers of £1,000 to three of the highest living authorities on tele-

pathy have, so far, not led to the production of any evidence that will stand cross-examination, and I think we may conclude that none exists."

That was six years ago, and as Mr. Greenwood now asserts that "it is unquestionably established that percipient telepathists exist," we "ought to accept the now proven theories of telepathy and thought transference," I would suggest that Mr. W. H. Massey's sporting offer should be claimed, and won, by the specially gifted individuals.

To the best of my belief the offers are still open.

E. B.

Acid Drops.

A correspondent asks us whether we really think that the desire of the clergy for exemption from military service is due to their being more cowardly than others. Well, we have never said so, and we do not believe it to be true. We quite believe that clergymen as a whole are as well endowed as others with physical courage. Had the clergy demanded exemption because they did not believe in warfare, one could at least have respected their attitude; but exemption was demanded in the interests of an order, and that is a quite different thing. At the bottom of the clerical attitude is the feeling that unless the "Black Army" is maintained at full war strength, the interests of the Church will suffer. To have enrolled the clergy with other citizens would have meant the closing of many churches, and that would have taught the people of what little consequence the clergy are. It would have been a great experiment, and one fatal to religious pretensions.

And, after all, most people are inclined—particularly in war-time—to overestimate the value and rarity of physical courage. The ease with which armies are raised, the readiness with which nations fight, proves that physical courage cannot be a rarity. All over the world we see that, with all sorts of races and peoples, a few months' training and discipline turns out an army of men prepared to face all sorts of discomforts and every kind of death. If physical courage were rare, wars would be rare also. The commonness of the one proves the commonness of the other. The rare thing in the world still is moral courage. More of that might make wars next to impossible. If the clergy had, then, resisted enrolment on any moral ground, we should have thought more of them, and so, we believe, would thousands of their one-time followers. But to stand out against war, when one's stand is based on conviction, requires the exercise of a higher courage than is needed to send one into the ranks at the urging of a "patriotic" impulse, which, however justifiable in operation, is quite unreasoning in origin. No difference of opinion as to the justifiability of this or that war, or of the soundness of the conviction on behalf of which a stand is made, ought to be able to obscure that truth.

At Sheffield the Chief Constable has issued an edict against Sunday opening of shops. Perhaps he thinks that, with so many edicts being issued, this one may escape criticism, and a little "authority" more or less won't matter. There is something to be said for that assumption. But the small traders are up in arms. They say it is a move on the part of Puritans and the large stores that want to crush the small traders altogether. And they are going to fight. As a start, numbers intend to board the City trams on Sunday, and decline to pay their fare, as it is Sunday trading. We hope the resolution will be carried out, and the officious Chief Constable taught a lesson he will not be likely to forget. It is high time that these Sunday laws were abolished altogether.

The clerical boast that Christianity and civilization are synonymous has little to do with facts. During the past month the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children dealt with nearly 4,000 cases of neglect and cruelty in England, Wales, and Ireland.

The President of the Baptist Union says that for the first time in the history of our land the Prime Minister was a

Baptist. He might have added that he also has the power of selecting the bishops of the Established Church.

A correspondent informs us that at Fort Matilda Camp, Greenock, the Y.M.C.A. is selling cigarettes to the soldiers at a halfpenny per packet more than they can be purchased outside the camp. More appeals for sacrifice, we presume.

The Young Men's Christian Association is extending its commercialism still further, and has opened hostels for officers in Grosvenor Gardens, Belgrave Square, Eaton Square, and other similarly dangerous parts of the fighting lines. They contain lounges, dining-rooms, billiard-rooms, bedrooms, baths, and kitchens. The Church Army officials will be lost in admiration at the business activities of their Unsectarian rivals.

The Rev. T. A. Lacey, M.A., contributes to the *Church Times* for May 11 a most remarkable sermon, entitled "Peril of Idolatry," being "The University Sermon Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford." It is one of the ablest, most original, and ingenious discourses we have read for a long time. The text is, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 21). The preacher begins thus:—

What is an idol? It is a fiction of the imagination substituted for the truth of God. If you would know God, you must keep yourselves from idols

St. John would probably be startled, if not shocked, could he but see that extremely clever definition. We confess that it has completely fascinated us, especially in its practical applications.

What strikes us most is Mr. Lacey's exceeding frankness. He says:—

We try to make an image of God by art and man's device; whether we use gold and silver, or such stuff as dreams are made of, matters nothing; we can hardly help doing this, but we can hold ourselves from thinking that the Godhead is like the image that we have made.

Capital! If God does not resemble the images believers make of him, what in heaven or on earth is he like, then? If the images are but idols, or fictions of the imagination, how can anybody *know* anything at all about God? We believe that all worship is idolatry, and Mr. Lacey says nothing that even tends to prove the contrary.

The most remarkable portion of this extraordinary sermon is that which deals with doctrine of God. Mr. Lacey speaks of the physical or cosmic side of this dogma, portraying God "as framing the universe in such sort that all proceeds according to a fixed order, unswerving, determinate, or inexorable necessity; and as framing ourselves in such sort that we can more or less accurately ascertain the course that is prescribed," that, in fact, "we shall be a part of the fixed order." Such is the scheme, and it is delightfully simple. "It affords a fairly consistent account of most phenomena, and can be squared with most theories of the universe." There is here a slight suggestion of what some scientists call natural knowledge; and it is barely possible that the preacher may have heard that there is such a thing as science.

Yes, the scheme is delightfully simple and wonderfully flexible; but with all its simplicity and flexibility, "will it fit in with Christian doctrine? Is it permissible so to image God? Or is this an idol?" Alas, it is but an idol, it does not fit in with "the phenomenon of sin." The scientific conception of the universe must be abandoned, the so-called facts of revelation and experience being in direct conflict with it. Mr. Lacey's conclusion, however intellectually absurd, is at least courageous and consistent with his creed. It is as follows:—

I am looking for the moment only at the fundamental doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the free sonship of man. Accept this, and that beautiful cosmic scheme of indefensible law falls to pieces.

No one can be at one and the same time a thorough-going scientist and a whole-hearted Christian believer.

In a leading article on "A Shakespeare Day," the *Daily Telegraph* points out that Shakespeare "belongs to all schools, except that of the Puritans and Philistines. With these he has nothing in common, and as they were his enemies in his lifetime, so are they his enemies still." There is a refreshing frankness in these remarks, but, it must be remembered, Shakespeare has been dead three hundred years, and newspaper writers find everything out in time.

Llanfairfechan Council have decided to ask all vendors of comic postcards in the town to cover them over on Sundays. Evidently, smiles are sinful to the followers of the Man of Sorrows.

A daily paper points out that "John Brown's Body" is an example of a song tune fitted to a hymn, and that a few years ago the air of "Poor Mary Ann" was used similarly. Why does the paper omit reference to the Salvation Army, which has adopted music-hall tunes for hymns for the past forty years?

Here is an amusing experience from a correspondent, home on leave, concerning "War Shrines":—

I arrived home late on a Saturday night, and on Sunday morning heard that a "War Shrine," given by a local lady to the village, was to be dedicated the same evening. I inspected same, to find my name thereon, and as it had plenty of religious references, I determined to be in at the kill. I arrived when the ceremony was in progress.

Scene: The vicar, the donor, and her husband surrounded by the villagers. I approached the husband, who was nearest, and voiced my objections. Hurried consultation with his wife, which seemed to upset the good lady, and I was assured it was all right. However, as the parson was still "carrying on," I again waded in and gave them to understand that I would speak out unless something was done. Here the vicar was called in to the conference, and I was informed my name would be taken off.

When the time came for the names to be read out I stepped in and told the parson I strongly objected to my name being connected with it.

My name was not given out, and at the close of the meeting the vicar announced that my name would be erased from the memorial owing to my objections to have it associated with religion. Caused quite a buzz in the congregation. Had the usual discussion with the vicar, who assured me that I could not be an Atheist. There is no such thing, he said, but declined to argue.

Where my name was is now a black mark. Quite an honour, eh!

We wonder how many Freethinkers have been pilloried as Christians on these War Shrines?

The Pope, who is making further efforts for peace, has given orders to all Catholic bishops to pray for peace, and has also written a new prayer to the Virgin, "Queen of Peace, pray for us." As the son has long been styled the Prince of Peace, there will soon be a Pacifist Royal Family in the Celestial regions.

The boycotting of Freethinkers is not often admitted by Christians, but Canon Maclean said at Church House, Westminster, that in a University calendar there was an entry, "Charles Bradlaugh died." When their attention was called to it, they substituted the name of King Charles the First.

The newspaper stories of the German body-boiling factories, which surely touches the high water-mark of war-time credulity, and the use of the products for—among other things—margarine, reminds us that in another "Holy War," the Crusades, human flesh was eaten when other food fell short. This is asserted by Christian, not Mohammedan, writers. Ansa Connena says that the Crusaders, who were led by Peter the Hermit, roasted young children and ate them; and, among others, the Abbot Guibert and Raoul de Cæn admit the practice. Von Sybel, in his history, cites an old French ballad which gives a circumstantial account of the practice. When the Crusaders were before Antioch, there was a popular leader nicknamed King Tafur, and:—

In evil case the army stood, their stores of food were spent;
Peter, the Holy Hermit, he sat before his tent.

Then came to him the King Tafur, and with him fifty score
Of men at arms, not one of them but hunger gnawed him sore.
"Thou Holy Hermit, counsel us, and help us at our need;
Help, for God's grace, these starving men with wherewithal to feed."

But Peter answered, "Out, ye drones; a helpless pack that cry,
While all unburied round about the slaughtered Paynim lie;
A dainty dish is Paynim flesh, with salt and roasting due."
"Now by my fay," quoth King Tafur, "the Hermit sayeth true."
Then fared he forth the Hermit's tent, and sent his menye out
More than ten thousand, where in heaps the Paynim lay about.

And the ballad goes on to relate full details of this pious cannibalistic feast. Quite nice and elevating things are these "Holy Wars," from the Crusades down to the War of 1914 —?

Owing to the paper shortage, the discontinuance of the weekly publication of a sermon by Charles Spurgeon is announced. There are some benefits from war, after all. These sermons have been appearing for sixty-two years, so the world will be none the worse for a rest.

The wife of "General" Booth expresses her alarm over "the inability of the masses to understand God." We do not know that this difficulty is confined to the "masses." It is pretty general. And how can one understand a God who manages the world in the way this one is managed? With millions of his children butchering one another in his name, and he all the time taking not the slightest notice, one does feel like asking what the devil God is after, anyway? Mrs. Booth doesn't know, evidently. All she does is to shake her head and say that God cannot be understood by the intellect, only the heart. Why not the liver? At any rate, we agree that the less one applies one's intellect to God, the better—for God.

The London County Council are making arrangements to employ "suitable clergymen" as teachers in their schools for the duration of the War. Eighteen have offered themselves, and fourteen have been accepted. Meanwhile, the London Teachers' Association have protested against the employment of ministers of religion as teachers in schools. It does, indeed, throw a strong light upon the value of the professed interest in education that, for the sake of the addition to the Army of a quite insignificant number of soldiers, the schools should be emptied of many of their trained men. We have no hesitation in saying that, of all our institutions, the schools should have been kept at their utmost level of efficiency. But we have had deliberate statements from Tribunals that education is not a work of national importance. And we are afraid that this is the attitude of large numbers of the public. The only profession wholly exempt remains that of the clergy. Were Carlyle still alive, he would have found no cause for modifying his famous description of the mental character of the British public.

Worth Consideration.

It is a fact that well within the reach of every one of our readers there is another person—a man or a woman—who would gladly become a subscriber to the *Freethinker* if he, or she, only knew of its existence. There is only one way in which these people can know of its existence, and that is by *you* introducing it to them.

This is a plan by which much help can be given the cause at a minimum expenditure of trouble.

The *Freethinker* is not a commercial concern. It does not make money, it does not exist to make money. It exists to promote the interests of a great cause, and to that end editor, contributors, and readers, are members of a "Great Company." The above suggestion indicates a way in which *everyone* may lend a hand.

We want to secure that neglected neighbour. The sooner his name is on the subscriber's list—either at this office, or at some local newsagents—the better.

The Bowman Case—A Final Triumph.

At last we are able to say something definite about the Bowman Case, and it is worth the saying. On Monday, May 14—we are writing this on the 15th—the House of Lords followed the judgments of the Courts of Appeal, the Chancery Court, and the hearing in Chambers by deciding in favour of the Secular Society, Limited. There were five Law Lords, each delivering an independent, a lengthy, and an important judgment. Four of the judgments—those of Lords Buckmaster, Parker, Sumner, and Dunedin—were strongly in favour of the Society, that of the Lord Chancellor was against. Of the nature and quality of that judgment our readers are in a position to form an opinion as we reprint it in another part of this issue. The other judgments—the favourable ones—will be published next week. We have still to get judgment as to costs, but the great decision is given.

We have neither space nor time to deal at length with the subject this week. There are many important issues opened by this judgment, and we prefer to write upon it more deliberately later. The fight has been a long and costly one. Personally, we have never had much doubt as to the result of the fight, but the law is an uncertain quantity, and it would be idle to pretend that we did not breathe a sigh of relief when that part of the affair was ended. Probably our opponents thought that we could be worn out, or that the case would break down for want of funds. Well, we are not easy folk to wear out, and we found friends who were quite ready to provide the necessary sinews of war.

So we conclude for the moment by congratulating the Freethought movement on a splendid ending to a great fight, and with a word of regret that the one who planned and established the Secular Society, Limited, was not present to share in the crowning triumph.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To Correspondents.

- F. ROSE (Bloemfontein).—Your letter safely to hand with remittance, which has been attended to. We are greatly pleased by your securing us the two new subscribers. That is a very practical form of assistance.
- R. F. MACKENZIE.—Instructions given to Shop Manager as requested. Thanks for compliments to the "Man at the Wheel." We do honestly think that ours is the "better job," but why call it thankless? We know that our work is appreciated by thousands, and if it were not, that would be an extra inducement until they appreciated the necessity of Freethought. And unless one works for that end in our movement, one soon ceases to work altogether.
- WILL the gentleman who left at this office a volume of the *N. R.* please send on his address?
- G. W. WHITFIELD (Prescot).—We have sent on the papers, but please write more fully on what it is you desire our help.
- J. W. HUGH.—The *Two Worlds*, a weekly paper, will give you full accounts of where such meetings are held. They are open to the public.
- S. A.—Yes, we are pleased to say that many of our readers are joining heartily in the work of getting new subscribers. It is the kind of help we like most, if only because it is a permanent help.
- SHAW MAXWELL.—Received. Will appear as soon as possible, but we are much pressed for space for a few weeks.
- F. H. CURTICE.—Quite a good story.
- F. DORRINGTON.—Letter received, and handed on.
- G. GROVE.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the "three glorious lectures" at South Place. It is good of you to undertake the responsibility for the extra copies of the paper.

Sugar Plums.

Owing to the sudden demands on our space due to the report of the Bowman Judgment, we are obliged to delete a deal of paragraphic matter this week, and to leave a number of letters unanswered. We beg the indulgence of our readers for the latter. We have received a number of letters and telegrams congratulating us on the result of the Bowman case, which we can only acknowledge this week in this way. Something of importance on the matter, and in connection with its effects on the future of our movement may be said at the Whit-Sunday Conference by Mr. Cohen.

In spite of the sudden burst of summer weather, there was a good audience at South Place on Sunday last to listen to Mr. Harry Snell. The lecturer was in first-class form, and his address received, as it deserved, the closest attention and the heartiest applause. Mr. Snell, we regret to say, is suffering from an accident experienced some time ago, and is arranging to leave London for awhile. Otherwise we had hoped to have him as one of the speakers at the Conference evening meeting.

On the Conference Agenda, published last week, there was a motion in favour of Secular Education in State Schools. That is of old standing, and generally may be taken as a reaffirmation of one of the Society's principles. But it is more than this. The new Minister of Education is a little different from those who have previously occupied that position, and there are special reasons why as many resolutions as are possible should reach him in favour of a policy of Secular Education. We cannot say more now, but we strongly urge upon Secular Societies all over the country, and all other Societies that believe in the policy of Secular Education, to send resolutions in its favour to Mr. Fisher as speedily as possible. Freethinkers who are on the councils of trade organizations might help considerably in this matter.

We warned Mr. Fisher, the Minister for Education, that the religious question in schools could not be overcome by saying nothing about it. It is there and must be faced. A sub-committee of the National Society is now about to issue a report demanding a more careful and more elaborate training of teachers in religious knowledge. The point of view taken up is, apparently, that "At present it is easy for young men and women to become certificated and trained teachers without any effective religious instruction as a part of their regular course, and we are thus in danger of finding our elementary education more or less secularized." This should be quite enough to show that our warning was justified, and against the constant interventions of sectarian interests in education there is only one defence. Leave religion to the Churches, and let the State keep to its own legitimate business.

The Conway Memorial Lecture for this year was delivered by Mr. Israel Zangwill, and the South Place Institute was crowded to its utmost capacity by people eager to hear it. It was an exceptionally brilliant performance, punctuated by frequent applause from an audience thrilled by its dazzling witticisms and sparkling epigrams. It is now published in a handsome little volume by Messrs. Watts & Co., and will amply repay careful perusal. It is entitled *The Principle of Nationality*. We can heartily recommend it, and promise a rare treat to those who read it.

The London County Council has not yet decided to withdraw its prohibition of the sale of literature in the public parks—but that sale still goes on. The *Freethinker* and various pamphlets were again sold on Sunday last—but nothing happened. No names and addresses were taken. We hope this is an indication that the Parks Committee is realizing the unreasonable and unwarrantable nature of its interference with a long-standing public right.

The Musical Scale in Primitive Culture.

There was no power more calculated to work in the region of divinity than the idealizing power which music must have possessed over rude minds.—J. Donovan, "Lyre to Muse."

MUSICAL scales, as we know, are purely factitious things, since there is, generally speaking, no reason, either musical or mathematical, why scales (*per se*) should contain just a certain number of notes. I do not intend to burden the reader with the various fanciful theses as to how our modern scale grew, from a one-note scale to a two-note scale, and so on, until it arrived at the *pentatonic* and the *heptatonic*. Indeed, what notes primitive man chose at the outset, as Sir Hubert Parry has said, were, probably, "very much a matter of accident," and, naturally, they were only approximate. It was only in the course of ages, when the social pact became more definite, that the consensus of opinion, possibly with the help of some primitive instrument, regulated the actual pitch of the notes. As to the actual number of the notes within the octave, which comprised the scale, it has often occurred to me, that primitive religious cults played no unimportant part in this, since in the early stages of culture the one factor which determined, or more properly we should say, consecrated everything, was the tribal or national cult.

Whether the *pentatonic* (or five-note scale) passed to the *heptatonic* (or seven-note scale), or whether they were of independent development, need not concern us. We know almost positively that the *pentatonic* scale belongs to the Eastern Asiatics, the Chinese, Japanese, Javese, Siamese, etc., whilst the *heptatonic* is to be found with the Western Asiatics, the Arameans, Egyptians, Arabs, etc. China was, probably, the cradle of the *pentatonic* scale, and I would like to point out that the number *five* was also the sacred or mystic number of the primitive cultus of the Chinese. They believed in *five* primordial elements, *five* antedeluvian emperors, *five* human relations, *five* virtues, *five* ranks of nobility, *five* points of the earth, *five* household gods, *five* colours, *five* viscera, etc. I think, therefore, that it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the *pentatonic* scale had its origin in, or was intimately connected with, this cult of a sacred *five*.

The music of modern Europe, however, is based upon the *heptatonic* or seven-note scale. This was borrowed from Greece, who received it, no doubt, from the Western Asiatics. With the latter, as I will endeavour to show, this *heptatonic* scale would appear to have had a similar origin, being bound up with the cultus idea of a "sacred seven." Gerald Massey tells us that *seven* was the primordial figure, the perfect number. J. M. Wheeler is of opinion that the idea of the "sacred seven" arose out of nature-worship. With three groups of the Western Asiatics, the Arameans, Hebrews, and Arabs, a decidedly common likeness is reflected in their religious beliefs. At certain stages, all the Semites adored various phases of nature, and sun-gods were common to the Arameans, Hebrews, and Arabs. Now, this nature-worship, which gave rise to the sacred periodic number *seven*, possibly played, as we have said, no unimportant part in the fixing of the *heptatonic* scale. With the Arameans this scale was closely related to the cultus. They associated the various intervals with the seasons, symbolizing the relation of spring to autumn by the fourth, and of spring to winter by a fifth and an octave. The Egyptians worshipped *seven* planets, and Herodotus tells us that they had *seven* castes, etc. They also associated their *seven*-note scale with the cultus, and the priests, says Plato, would not allow the slightest deviation from the system. With the Hebraic group

the number *seven* was equally sacred. The *Kabbalistic Sepher Yesirah* says that there were *seven* planets, *seven* gates in man, *seven* double consonants, *seven* worlds, *seven* heavens, *seven* lands, *seven* seas, *seven* rivers, *seven* deserts, *seven* days in the week, *seven* weeks from Passover to Pentecost, etc., "hence God," we are told, "loves the number *seven*." The Bible is full of the powers and significance of the number *seven*, and J. M. Wheeler, who has a chapter on "sacred sevens" in his *Bible Studies*, says very aptly, that the Holy Writ begins in Genesis with a *seven* and ends in the Apocalypse with a series of *sevens*.¹ What the actual scale was of the Hebrews, we have no precise information, but it is generally accepted that it was identical with that of the Arameans and Egyptians, *i.e.*, the *seven*-note scale.

With the Arabs of pre-Islamic and early Islamic days, the sacred and mystic *seven* was just as potent a factor as with the Arameans and Hebrews. They swore by *seven* bloody stones. When Umar went to Mecca to pay homage to Mahomet he was accompanied by *seventy* of the faithful. After the battle of Mount Uhud, which settled the fortunes of Islam, *seven* prayers were said over Hamza's body. Mahomet dreamt that he was conducted by the angel Gabriel to *seven* heavens. Here he saw the extraordinary angel with *seventy* thousand heads, each head having *seventy* thousand mouths, each mouth with *seventy* thousand tongues, and each tongue uttering *seventy* thousand different voices. When Mahomet approached the throne of grace, *seventy* thousand veils separated him from God. The prophet saw *seventy* thousand angels, with *seventy* thousand veils, and when the last veil was lifted *seventy* million more angels were revealed, besides *seventy* thousand others who looked after the veils. When Mahomet dreamt that he possessed the keys of the Kaaba, and set out for Mecca, he took with him *seventy* camels, which were attended by *seven* hundred servants. The Arabs, too, had a *seven*-note scale.

From this evidence of the prevalence of the extreme veneration for the number *seven*, it is not at all unlikely that the *heptatonic* scale arose out of nature-worship and the consecration of this periodic number. In primitive times, perhaps, none of the arts existed apart from the tribal or national cult, and music certainly did not. The latter formed the most essential part of ritual, and the slightest deviation from its rule and custom was sternly forbidden. The "hedging" of the notes of the scale with a certain "divinity," as we have mentioned with the ancients, has its survival in the Christian Church to-day. In the East they still consecrate certain notes of the scale to special church periods, and the Syrians devote a note of the scale to each day of the week. In the early days of Christianity the third note of the scale was looked upon with extreme veneration if not awe, as being symbolical of the Triune God, and its use as a consonance was tabooed. This opposition of the Church to the consonance of the third was, indeed, a stumbling-block to the development of harmony.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

¹ *En passant*, I would like to call the attention of those interested in the subject dealt with by Wheeler in the first chapter of his *Bible Studies: Phallic Worship*, etc., to a passage in the Bible which I have not seen alluded to by any other writers. It occurs in 1 Chron. xxv. 5 and 6, as follows: "And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.....all these were under the hands of their father for *song* in the house of the Lord." I suggest, that since females were not allowed in sacred precincts for this purpose, as we know from the *Talmud*, that *singer* is merely a euphemism for *kadeshah*.

In an article on the food question, a daily paper remarks: "Of course, corn-grinding is as old as history itself." Just so! And so is "grinding the face of the poor."

Science and Spiritualism.

X.

(Continued from p. 294.)

I say, advisedly, that scientists, however eminent, are emphatically *not* the people to investigate these matters. If Lombroso and Zollner could return again from the dead, and sit, with Sir William Crookes, as a committee to investigate, say the mysteries worked by Mr. Maskelyne, either on his own ground or on theirs, does anyone suppose that they would detect a single one of his secrets? Spiritualists may think so, but conjurers know better. The scientist who sits where he is told to sit and looks where he is told to look is the ideal subject for the wiles of the conjurer or the medium, and before him effects can be brought off that would be impossible before an audience of schoolboys.—William Marriott, "On the Edge of the Unknown," "Pearson's Magazine" (June, 1910), pp. 607-8.

All depends, not upon what is done, but upon the mental disposition of the spectator. Little by little, through neglect, through mal-observation and lapses of memory, through an unwillingness to mistrust the reports of an excited consciousness, caution is abandoned and credulity enters. Mediums are actually seen flying out of one window and in through another. The wildest and most far-fetched fantastic explanation is preferred above a simple one; the bounds of the normal are passed; real hallucinations set in; conduct becomes irrational, and a state hardly distinguishable from insanity ensues.Error, like truth, flourishes in crowds. At the hearth of sympathy each finds a home. The fanatical lead, the saner follow. When a person of nervous temperament, not strongly independent in thought and action, enters a spiritualistic circle, where he is constantly surrounded by confident believers, all eager to have him share their sacred visions and profound revelations, where the atmosphere is replete with miracles, and every chair and table may at any time be transformed into a proof of the supernatural, is it strange that he soon becomes affected by the contagion of belief that surrounds him?—Professor J. Jastrow, "Fact and Fable in Psychology," p. 132.

TABLE-RAPPING is one of the commonest phenomena of the Spiritualist seance. Once the knack of producing the raps has been acquired, it is the most mystifying, the easiest, and the safest of all the medium's bag of tricks. It requires no apparatus, and there is no danger of discovery; hence its popularity among mediums. Table-turning and table-rapping generally form the introduction to the greater marvels of Spiritualism. Once the beginner is firmly grounded in a belief in these phenomena as the work of spirits, the rest is easy; he abandons his critical attitude, and is ready to accept any tricks the medium cares to play.

Although the phenomena is known as table-rapping, the raps are in fact not produced on the table. The name itself is a fraud, for it leads the sitters to concentrate their attention upon the table and upon the medium's hands, neither of which are concerned with the production of the raps, which can be produced quite as well without a table. As a matter of fact, the inventors of this fraud—the Fox sisters, in America—first produced the mysterious raps while lying in bed. It is to these two sisters, aged respectively twelve and fifteen, that we may ascribe the birth of modern Spiritualism—not that they were the first to profess to communicate with spirits; but the interest created by the phenomena produced by these two children spread like a prairie fire. Professional mediums sprung up in all directions. . . It was, as we have seen, the performance of the Fox girls that first attracted Daniel Dunglas Home to Spiritualism. In fact, the movement started by these two skittish girls became world-wide.

It was in America, in a small farmhouse—about the size of an English labourer's cottage—in Hydesville, a little village in the township of Arcadia, in Wayne County of the State of New York, that the mysterious rappings were first heard in March, 1848. The house was then in the occupation of a farmer, one John D. Fox, a

Methodist by religious conviction, who had entered upon the tenancy during the previous year. The household consisted of the farmer, his wife Margaret, and two unmarried daughters, Margaretta and Katie. There was also a married son, living about two miles away, who plays no part in this history, and a married daughter, Mrs. Fish, afterwards successively Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Underhill, living in Rochester, N.Y., who appear to have been the real author of all the mischief, although it was through the two girls that the public first became acquainted with the rappings. According to Podmore: "On the evening of the 31st of March, 1848, the Fox family, who, by their own account, had passed several disturbed nights previously by reason of the raps and other noises in the house, went to bed early, in order to make up their arrears of sleep. What follows is based upon the testimony of the Foxes. The girls were already in bed, and their parents—who occupied another bed in the same room—were about to follow, when the raps were again heard. On this occasion, in reply to a challenge given by one of the girls, the raps repeated, sound for sound, the noises which she made by snapping her fingers, and again and again gave the number of raps asked for. At this proof of an intelligent cause for the raps, Mrs. Fox, prescient that the matter was one of no ordinary moment, resolved to call in her friends and neighbours, that they also might bear witness."¹

On the two following days hundreds of people came to witness the marvel, and in the course of the next two or three years the rappings spread throughout the greater part of the Eastern States. In 1851 it was estimated that there were a hundred mediums in New York City, and fifty or sixty private circles in Philadelphia. "The Fox family—the mother and the three daughters"—says Podmore, "practised no unwise parsimony of their spiritual gifts. In the course of the years 1849 and 1850 they appear to have given demonstrations of their power in several large towns before considerable audiences. Their claims to supernormal power did not, of course, escape challenge. Again and again committees were appointed to examine the subject and report. But for some time the source of the rappings remained inexplicable."²

Horace Greeley publicly testified to the genuineness of the Fox girls' performance. Commenting on a visit they paid to New York, in his paper, the *New York Tribune*, in August, 1850, he says that during a stay of several weeks in New York, they were subjected to every reasonable test; their rooms at the hotel had been repeatedly searched; "They have been all unconsciously placed on a glass surface concealed under the carpet, in order to interrupt electric vibrations; they have been disrobed by a committee of ladies appointed without notice, and insisting that neither of them should leave the room until the investigation had been made, etc.; yet we believe no one to this moment pretends that he has detected either of them in producing or causing the Rappings"; and concludes: "Whatever may be the origin or the cause of the 'Rappings,' the ladies in whose presence they occur do not make them. We tested this thoroughly, and to our entire satisfaction."³

But the day of detection was at hand. A fraud cannot be publicly exploited for ever. The very success which attends their career, which at the beginning carries everything before them, contains the seeds of their ultimate defeat; for a small circle who have been trained into implicit belief in the supernormal phenomena may be kept permanently at that stage of belief. But when the medium appears before the world and challenges

¹ Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. i., p. 180.

² *Ibid.*, p. 183.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

public inquiry, the rational-minded begin to apply the scientific method to these marvels, and they melt like ice before the fire.

In December of the same year, the Fox girls came to Buffalo, N.Y., where they stayed for some weeks, giving public exhibitions of their marvellous powers. Among those who visited them were three doctors—Flint, Lee, and Coventry. These gentlemen wrote a joint letter to a local newspaper, pointing out that the rappings could be explained by movements of the knee-joints, and stating that a lady of their acquaintance had actually produced similar sounds by that means. Mrs. Fish, the married sister of the Fox girls, promptly challenged the doctors to prove the truth of their theory at a personal interview, confident that nothing could prevent the raps from being heard, and trusting in the well-known difficulty always experienced in locating a sound unless the object causing it can be seen in motion. In the matter of preventing the rapping, they utterly deceived themselves; the three doctors were skilled anatomists, and came prepared with a very definite and, as it proved, successful test. The two Fox girls were seated on a sofa, and immediately commenced business with a series of loud raps in rapid succession. The spirits were then asked whether they would respond to questions; to which they rapped out an assent. The report continues as follows: "The two females were then seated upon two chairs placed near together, their heels resting on cushions, their lower limbs extended, with the toes elevated, and the feet separated from each other. The object of this experiment was to secure a position in which the ligaments of the knee-joints should be made tense, and no opportunity offered to make pressure with the foot. We were pretty well satisfied that the displacement of the bones requisite for the sounds could not be effected unless a fulcrum were obtained by resting one foot upon the other, or on some resisting body. The company, seated in a semicircle, quietly waited for the 'manifestations' for more than half an hour, but the 'spirits,' generally so noisy, were now dumb.....On resuming the usual position on the sofa, the feet resting on the floor, knockings very soon began to be heard. It was then suggested that some other experiment be made. This was assented to, notwithstanding the first was, in our minds, amply conclusive. The experiment selected was, that the knees of the two females should be firmly grasped, with the hands so applied that any lateral movement of the bones was made perceptible to the touch. The pressure was made through the dress.....The hands were kept in apposition for several minutes at a time, and the experiment repeated frequently for the course of an hour or more with negative results; that is to say, there were plenty of raps when the knees were not held and none when the hands were applied save once. As the pressure was intentionally relaxed (Dr. Lee being the holder), two or three faint, single raps were heard, and Dr. Lee immediately averred that the motion of the bone was plainly perceptible to him. The experiment of seizing the knees as quickly as possible when the knockings first commenced was tried several times, but always with the effect of putting an immediate *quietus* upon the manifestations." ¹ Thus, by a couple of simple scientific tests, the secret was revealed. "One Chauncey Burr," says Podmore, "earned some fame at this time by giving lectures on Spiritualism, in which he demonstrated that the raps could be produced by the toe-joints."

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Conference Notes.

THE appearance of the Conference Agenda in last week's issue is the final signal to our Branches to call their meetings for the discussions of the resolution, and the giving of the necessary instructions to the delegates who are to represent them at the Business meetings on Whit Sunday.

Individual members are reminded that their subscriptions became due on January 1, 1917, and only cards of membership covering this year will entitle them to be present at the Conference proper, and to speak and vote. These are obtained from me direct. Branch cards through their secretaries. The Conference meetings will be held this year at South Place Institute. This well known and somewhat historic building is most accessible from all parts of London, being bounded by Moorgate Street Tube and Electric Railway on one side, and Liverpool and Broad Street stations on the other. Just the proverbial "stone's throw" from all of them. Apart from the business transactions, this gathering gives London, as well as Provincial members, an opportunity of meeting the officials and becoming acquainted with each other. Lady members are specially welcomed.

Once upon a time, before the War, these reunions were most pleasurable and well attended, and the Conference luncheon and Monday excursion were functions eagerly looked forward to. But, alas! the difficulties of transit and the chameleon-like antics of the Food Controller have placed an embargo on the two latter, but such arrangements as are possible will be made. Still, we shall take our pleasures and food, like our medicine, in tabloid form, and cheered by the splendid victory achieved by the Secular Society, Limited, in the Bowman Case, confirming the legality of bequests to Secular Societies for all time, make no wry faces.

Attendance from the Provinces may not be great in the circumstances, but the quantity will be counterbalanced by the quality, and the success of our evening meeting is assured by reference to the list of speakers. In the matter of platform the N. S. S. has always maintained its traditions.

Friends who have not yet made their hotel arrangements can rely upon the best efforts of the office if they will state the length of their stay and the class of accommodation required, but this notice should be given immediately.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary, N. S. S.*

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MAY 3.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Brandes, Gorniot, Leat, Neate, Nearey, Roger, Thurlow, Wood, Miss Kough, Miss Pankhurst, Miss Stanley, and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting read and confirmed.

New members were admitted for Falkirk, Newcastle, Manchester, South London, Swansea, and the Parent Society.

Permission was granted for the formation of "The Swansea and District" Branch of the Society.

Final arrangements for outdoor propaganda were reported.

The President reported the decision arrived at by the last meeting of the L.C.C. Protest Committee, and the Executive reaffirmed their decision to continue the sale of the *Free-thinker* at all outdoor meetings on May 6.

The President and Secretary reported upon the case at Clydebank in which Police Court officials had deprived a witness of his legal right to affirm on March 12 last. Letters written to the Secretary for Scotland had received formal acknowledgment only. Failing some definite reply, arrangements were being made to publicly ventilate the matter.

Various notices of motion for the Conference Agenda were discussed, and remitted to the Agenda Committee.

Arrangements were also made for the Conference evening meeting.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

¹ Cited by Podmore, vol. ii., pp. 184-5.

Bowman and Others
V.
Secular Society, Limited.

HOUSE OF LORDS, MONDAY, MAY 14, 1917.

Lords Present :

THE LORD CHANCELLOR, LORD DUNEDIN, LORD SUMNER,
LORD PARKER OF WADDINGTON, LORD BUCKMASTER.

JUDGMENT.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR: My Lords, the question in this case is as to the validity of a bequest of residue to the Respondents, The Secular Society, Limited. The right of the Respondents to payment was attacked by the present Appellants, the next of kin of the Testator, upon the ground that the objects of the Respondent Society were such that the bequest was not enforceable. The Respondents took out an Originating Summons, dated November 25, 1914, for the payment over of the residue to them. Mr. Justice Joyce decided in their favour, and his decision was upheld by the Court of Appeal. The decision of the case must turn upon the proper construction of the Memorandum of Association of the Respondent Society, and the view to be taken of the law of England with regard to bequests for such purposes as are therein enumerated.

The Memorandum of Association so far as material is as follows:—

(3) The objects for which the Company is formed are—(a) To promote, in such ways as may from time to time be determined, the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief; and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. (b) To promote the utmost freedom of inquiry and the publication of its discoveries. (c) To promote the secularization of the State, so that religious tests and observances may be banished from the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary. (d) To promote the abolition of all support, patronage, or favour by the State of any particular form or forms of religion. (e) To promote universal Secular Education, without any religious teaching in public schools maintained in any way by Municipal rates or Imperial taxation. (f) To promote an alteration in the laws concerning religion, so that all forms of opinion may have the same legal rights of propaganda and endowment. (g) To promote the recognition by the State of marriage as a purely civil contract, leaving its religious sanctions to the judgment and determination of individual citizens. (h) To promote the recognition of Sunday by the State as a purely civil institution for the benefit of the people and the repeal of all Sabbatarian laws devised and operating in the interests of religious sects, religious observances, or religious ideas.

In my opinion the governing object of the Society is that which is stated in paragraph 3 (a) of the Memorandum of Association, and the other objects stated in the Memorandum under heads (b) to (c) of the third paragraph are subsidiary. I agree with what is said by the Founder of the Respondent Society in an article from the *Freethinker*, June 19, 1898, which is in evidence, "Clause A is of the highest importance and governs everything else." It was argued on behalf of the Respondents that some, at all events, of the objects of the Society are not affected by any taint of illegality, e.g., the Society are not affected by any taint of illegality, e.g., 3 (d) and (e), which state Disestablishment and Universal Secular Education as objects to be promoted, are in themselves harmless. It is, of course, the fact that either of these two objects may be advocated from motives which are entirely friendly to religion. But if (a) is the governing object, then these and all the other clauses in the Memorandum must be read by its light; in other words, all the other clauses in the third paragraph are so many ways of carrying into practical application the principle enunciated in the first paragraph of Clause 3. That clause, in my opinion, lays down quite clearly that human conduct should not be based upon supernatural belief. This amounts to a negation of all religion, including of course the Christian religion, as governing human conduct. If the influence of supernatural motives is to be eliminated, the Christian religion is discarded in common with all forms of religion in the ordinary sense of the term. I think, therefore, that the Memorandum shows that the object of the Society was to promote in various ways the principle that human conduct

should be based upon natural knowledge only, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. Is a legacy in favour of a Society which exists for such a purpose enforceable by English law?

Two preliminary points were taken on behalf of the Respondents. They contended, *firstly*, that the Certificate of Incorporation is conclusive to show that the objects of the Society are not unlawful, and, *secondly*, that some of the objects were not unlawful, and that it cannot be presumed that the legacy in question would be applied to any but lawful objects. We were informed that these points were argued on behalf of the Respondents in the Court of Appeal. No notice is taken of either of them in any of the judgments, and the Court must have considered that they had been disposed of in the course of the argument. In my opinion neither is tenable. The Society was registered on May 27, 1898, as a Company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act. The Statute then in force was the Companies Act, 1862 (25 and 26 Victoria, chapter 89). The 18th section deals with the effect of registration, and enacts that the Certificate of Incorporation shall be conclusive evidence that all the requisitions of the Act in respect of registration have been complied with, and Section 192 repeats this provision and adds that the certificate is to be conclusive evidence that the Company is authorized to be registered under the Acts. The amending Act of 1900 (63 and 64 Victoria, chapter 148) enacts by its first section that the certificate shall be conclusive evidence that all the requisitions of the Companies Acts in respect of registration and in matters precedent and incidental thereto have been complied with, and that the association is a company authorized to be registered and duly registered under the Companies Act. This provision appears to have been introduced into the Act of 1900 to get rid of some doubts which had been raised by what was said in the case of *The National Debenture Corporation* (1891) 2 Chancery, 505, to the effect that if, in fact, only six persons had subscribed the memorandum, incorporation would not have been validly effected, and it is repeated in the 17th Section of the Companies Consolidation Act, 1908 (8 Edward VII, chapter 69). It was argued before us that the Society could not have been properly incorporated if its objects were illegal, and that as the certificate is conclusive to show that the Company is one authorized to be registered and duly registered, it follows that it cannot for any purpose be contended that the objects are illegal. In my opinion this argument is an attempt to extend the effect of these enactments beyond their fair meaning and manifest object. What the Legislature was dealing with was the validity of the incorporation, and it is for the purpose of incorporation, and for this purpose only, that the certificate is made conclusive. This first preliminary point, in my opinion, fails. The second point also fails on the true construction of the memorandum with which I have dealt above. Taken in themselves, some of the objects, as stated in the memorandum, may be harmless, but they cannot be taken by themselves. They are mere applications of the governing principle stated in 3 (a), and we are driven back upon the question whether that object is legal.

Mr. Talbot, on behalf of the Appellants, contended that it was illegal on two grounds: *First*, that it is criminal to attack the Christian religion, however decent and temperate may be the form of attack. *Second*, that a Court of law will not assist in the promotion of such objects as that for which this Society is formed, whether they are criminal or not.

In support of the first of these propositions, it was contended that to attack the Christian religion is blasphemy by the Common Law of England, and that the view put forward upon this subject by the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge is erroneous. Lord Coleridge laid it down in the case of *Rex v. Ramsey and Foote* (15 Cox C. C. 231) that "if the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without the writer being guilty of blasphemy." This view was controverted by Sir James Fitzjames Stephens, who, in his *History of the Criminal Law*, vol. ii., pp. 449-476, on a review of the authorities, maintained that blasphemy consisted in the character of the matter published and not in the manner in which it is stated, and that any attack on the Christian religion, in whatever language expressed, constituted the offence of blasphemy at

Common Law. A reply to the arguments of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen was made by Mr. Aspland, of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law, in a pamphlet, entitled *The Law of Blasphemy*, published in 1884, in which the authorities up to date are collected and examined. If Sir James Fitzjames Stephen's view be right any pamphlet or speech in promotion of the governing object of the Respondent Society would be criminal and in every sense illegal. In my opinion the Appellants have failed to establish that all attacks upon religion are at Common Law punishable as blasphemous. There are, no doubt, to be found in the cases many expressions to the effect that Christianity is part of the law of England, but no decision has been brought to our notice in which a conviction took place for the advocacy of principles at variance with Christianity, apart from circumstances of scurrility or intemperance of language.

The earliest prosecution for blasphemy in the Common Law Courts was in the reign of Charles II.; in earlier times probably such cases were dealt with by the Ecclesiastical Courts. The main cases on this subject prior to *Rex v. Ramsey and Foote* are (1) *R. v. Taylor* (1676) (1 Ventris 293); (2) *R. v. Woolston* (1729) (Fitzgibbon 64, 2 Strange, 834) (1 Barnardiston 162); (3) *R. v. Paine* (1812) 26 Howell's State Trials 654 (in connection with which *R. v. Carlile* 3 Barnwell and Alderson 167 and *R. v. Eaton*, 31 State Trials 927, should be referred to); (4) *R. v. Waddington* (1822) 1 B and C, 26; (5) *R. v. Hetherington* (1841) 5 Jur. 529, and 4 State Trials, New Series, 563). In the cases numbered 1, 3, 4 and 5, it is apparent on the face of the Reports that the language used was scurrilous and offensive. This is less apparent in the Reports of No. 2 (*R. v. Woolston*). But examination of the libels in respect of which Informations in that case were filed, viz., Mr. Woolston's first, second, third, and fourth discourses of the miracles of our Saviour shows that the sacred subjects treated by him were handled with a great deal of irreverence, and in many passages language was used by him that was blasphemous in every sense of the term. It is apparently with reference to this element that in a passage in the Report in 1 Barnardiston, page 143, the Court, in dealing with the second point made on behalf of Mr. Woolston, observed "That as the Christian religion was part of the law of the land, whatever derided that derided the law." The true view of the law of Blasphemy appears to me to be that expressed by Lord Denman in *Regina v. Hetherington* (4 State Trials, New Series, 563), which is substantially in accordance with that taken by Lord Coleridge in *Regina v. Ramsey and Foote* (15 Cox C.C., 231), and followed by Lord (then Mr.) Justice Phillimore in *Rex v. Boulter* (1908) 72 J.P. 188.

We have been referred by Lord Dunedin to the law of Scotland on this subject, as stated in Hume's *Criminal Law* (volume i., page 568), and it appears to be the case that in Scotland scurrility or indecency is an essential element of the crime of Blasphemy at Common Law. Certain Scotch Statutes which made it a crime to contravene certain doctrines have been repealed. The consequences of the view put forward on behalf of the Appellants would be somewhat startling, and in the absence of any actual decision to the contrary I think we must hold that the law of England on this point is the same as that of Scotland, and that the crime of Blasphemy is not constituted by a temperate attack on religion in which the decencies of controversy are maintained.

The Appellants, however, contended that whether criminal or not, the objects for which the Society was formed were such that the law would give no help for the recovery of funds to be applied in their promotion. The principle on which this part of the Appellant's case rested was very clearly stated by Baron Bramwell in *Cowan v. Milbourn* (1867), Law Reports 2 Exchequer 230. In the course of the argument Baron Bramwell said, at page 233, "An act may be illegal in the sense that it will not be recognized by the law as capable of being the foundation of any legal right, or that it may even deprive what it accompanies of that capacity, although it is followed by no penalty," and in the course of his Judgment (page 236) he expressed himself to the same effect. The principle is very familiar, and has been applied in innumerable cases. The question whether the present case falls within it demands a careful examination of the authorities.

(To be continued.)

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH: 7, Members' Meeting at the Secretary's residence, to discuss Conference Agenda, etc.

MR. A. D. HOWELL SMITH'S DISCUSSION CLASS (N. S. S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street): Thursday, May 24, at 7.30.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Percy S. Wilde, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, George Rule, a Lecture; followed by Miss Kough, "The Success of the Secular Society, Ltd."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley Road): 7, Mr. Schaller, "Atheism."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, George Rule, a Lecture; followed by Miss E. M. Vance, "The Lord(s) on Our Side."

REGENT'S PARK N. S. S.: 3.15, A. D. Howell Smith, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, E. Burke, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station): 7, Mr. Miller, a Lecture.

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

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