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Views and Opinions.

On Authority.

We confess to being but little affected by the argument from authority. This is not because we are constitutionally a "rebel," but really because it is so seldom concerned with authority in any genuine sense of the term. Real authority is worthy of all deference; a false authority is wholly mischievous. And the truth is that most of us are an authority in some direction. We defer cheerfully to the authority of a gardener on the burning question of planting potatoes, but should expect him to respect ours on writing a *Freethinker* article. To be eminent in one department does not of necessity imply eminence in others; and to have great names with us, while it may flatter our vanity, adds nothing to the strength of our position. Authority is only genuine when it is speaking on its own field; in other departments it may be of no greater value than that of the man in the street. It is only in the political world that being Minister of Agriculture prepares one for the work of First Lord of the Admiralty; or an apprenticeship as Under Secretary to the Board of Trade fits one to become Minister of War. Everywhere else a knowledge of the subject is counted essential to the expression of an authoritative opinion.

An Important Book.

What has been said must be taken "without prejudice," as the lawyers say, to an inquiry undertaken by Professor Leuba, of Bryn Mawr College, U.S.A., as to the belief of certain classes of people concerning God and a future life.¹ Professor Leuba has already written several interesting works on religion, which have been favourably noticed in these columns, and *The Belief in God and Immortality* may be taken as a continuation of these. And if we confine our attention chiefly to the statistical part of Professor Leuba's work, this must not be taken as a depreciation of the other portions.

¹ *The Belief in God and Immortality: a Psychological, Anthropological, and Statistical Study.* (Sherman, Trench, and Co., Boston.) 8s. net.

On the contrary, the author's examination of the origin of the belief in a future life and its subsequent developments is of great value. It well prepares the reader for a due appreciation of the statistical inquiry, although one is left with the old problem of explaining the persistence of a belief on behalf of which no valid evidence has ever been forthcoming, and which we know to have had its origin in pure delusion. That belief *ought* to have disappeared with the conditions that brought it into existence. It *is* in process of disappearance; but the process is, admittedly, a slow one.

* * *

Religion and Authority.

The pretence that the belief in God and a future life is so general that affirmations to the contrary may be treated as a mental aberration, is sedulously maintained in the religious world, and it must be admitted that the moral cowardice of public men in this country lends support to the pretence. Every now and again we are treated to inquiries amongst more or less eminent men of science to prove that all "authority" is against the *Freethinker*. Of course, the questions are framed with deliberate vagueness, and the inquiries are made in safe quarters; but they serve their purpose, and the unthinking Christian is lulled to rest with the comforting reflection that nearly all "authority" is on his side. Now, it must be admitted that if numbers are not decisive against *Freethought*, neither can they be decisive for it. But they are symptomatic; and when, in spite of the inducements to conformity, the rejection of religious beliefs proceeds to an increasing extent, one is warranted in taking that as a quite significant phenomenon. They are symptomatic of a movement of opinion under the pressure of social and intellectual forces, and it is this that makes Professor Leuba's work of first-rate importance.

* * *

The Test of Facts.

Professor Leuba sent out two sets of inquiries; in each case the inquiries being carefully framed so as to avoid ambiguity. One set of questions dealt with the belief in God, including an inquiry as to the difference the belief or non-belief in God made in life to the person addressed. The other set dealt with the belief in immortality, addressed in the first case to the students of a number of colleges. To avoid long tables of figures, it will be enough to quote here the salient facts. One striking result was that the percentage of disbelievers increased as the students pass from juniors to seniors, and as their intellectual powers developed. Thirty-three per cent. of the whole were "unable to profess a belief in immortality, and a considerable additional number (are) evidently indifferent to it." There were, roughly, twice as many women as there were men who professed belief in a personal God, and a large number considered that the disappearance of the belief would make no difference to their lives. Professor Leuba sums up his own impression from the reports as follows:—

The deepest impression left by these records is that, so far as religion is concerned, our students are grovel-

ling in darkness. Christianity, as a system of belief, has utterly broken down.....Their beliefs, when they have any, are superficial and amateurish in the extreme. There is no generally acknowledged authority; each one believes as he can, and few seem disturbed at being unable to hold the tenets of the Churches.

Professor Leuba does not lament this. On the contrary, he shows quite conclusively, in the concluding chapters of his book, that there is neither intellectual warranty nor utilitarian justification for the belief in God and a future life.

* * *

Scientists and Religious Belief.

The more interesting and conclusive sets of figures are, however, concerned with the groups of scientists amongst whom Professor Leuba made his enquiries. Again, groups of 1,000 names were selected in various branches of science which were subdivided into greater and lesser men of 500 each. The questions asked were in no sense leading questions, but so framed as to permit a clear answer either in the positive or negative, or to indicate a state indecision. The result of this inquiry was very striking, and far more favourable to the Freethinking position than many would have anticipated. Thus, taking the lesser and greater scientists together, the believers amounted to no more than 41·8 per cent. The number of avowed disbelievers 41·5 per cent. If, however, we add those who returned themselves as Agnostics, we get no less than 58·2 per cent. of non-believers. The result, we repeat, is striking. Christians are fond of quoting the *number* of believers on their side; it is something to be able to remind them that amongst the most educated class in the United States more than half have thrown over altogether the belief in God and immortality.

* * *

How the Sciences Affect Religion.

An interesting feature of this investigation is the classification of men according to their special science: Physics, Biology, Sociology, History, and Psychology. Of these the physicists provide a greater number of believers than the biologists, the figures being: physicists, 43, biologists 30 per cent. Historians are on about the same level as the physicists, while sociologists and psychologists approximate to the biologists. These results certainly indicate some connection between one's studies and one's religious beliefs, and Professor Leuba is on right lines in saying that:—

When the student of physical laws has often come to accept determinism in the physical world, he may often and does keep for the less generally understood biological and sociological phenomena, the traditional belief in divine intervention. The biologist and sociologist, however, better acquainted with the natural causes of these phenomena than their brothers of the physical sciences, find it just as impossible to admit God's action in the biological and sociological domains as in the physical.

This is an inference we have often dwelt on in relation to Spiritualism, where the favourable scientific testimony is usually that of physicists, and very rarely that of trained psychologists or even biologists.

* * *

Religion and Ability.

There is one other feature of Professor Leuba's important and interesting investigations. The amount of religious belief not only bears a relation to the subject of study, it also bears a relation to the degree of intellectual attainments. Whether physicists or biologists, there is less belief among the greater men. The smallest percentage of believers is found amongst the greater biologists; they count only 16 per cent. of believers in God and 25 per cent. of believers in immor-

tality. Professor Leuba's enquiry shows beyond the possibility of successful questioning that—

in every class of persons investigated, the number of believers in God is less, and in most cases very much less than the number of non-believers.....that among the more distinguished, unbelief is very much more frequent than among the less distinguished, and, finally, that not only the degree of ability, but also the kind of knowledge possessed, is significantly related to the rejection of these beliefs.

Hitherto inquiries of the kind with which we are dealing have usually been conducted in the interests of Christianity. The inquirers set out to establish a result and, naturally, achieved their end. Professor Leuba's investigation is about the first one really designed to get at the truth. And the truth is startling—to the Christian. Freethinkers know how much Christianity has lost ground. The chief trouble is to get people to speak out, and thus place Freethought in the commanding position it deserves. We are certain that *The Belief in God and Immortality* will encourage the avowed Freethinker to press on with his work. We hope it will encourage the more timid to lend a ready hand to that great task.

* * *

We may return to other aspects of Professor Leuba's work next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Reformation in England.

III.

NOTHING is more indisputable than the fact that the English Reformation did not even aim at purifying the Church. As on the Continent, so in England, it was a movement calculated eventually to lessen considerably the oppressive power of ecclesiasticism. In some countries, such as France and Spain, the authority of the Church was so generally recognized and submitted to by the generality of the people that such a rebellious movement could not possibly be initiated and conducted on any comprehensive scale. In England, at the commencement of the reign of Henry VIII., ecclesiasticism was a form of hateful foreign tyranny, against which the masses were in a chronic state of silent revolt. It was this unfriendly, if not openly hostile, attitude of the English race towards the jurisdiction of Rome that made it possible for Henry to get his revolutionary measures passed by Parliament. Had the clergy and their flocks been strongly in favour of the Roman domination, the king could never have won his way to the Supreme Headship of the English Church. It was the weakness of ecclesiasticism in England that rendered practicable the divorce of Catherine of Arragon. So far, then, as Henry VIII. had to do with it, the English Reformation was the most discreditably selfish movement in all history. The king did everything for the sole purpose of furthering his own personal ends. And yet it must be admitted that, in spite of the high-handed and despotic character of the ecclesiastical changes introduced by him, their ultimate effect upon the nation was decidedly beneficial. Let it be specially emphasized, however, that even he, cruel tyrant though he was, could not have brought them about had not the people been more or less prepared for them. Had the clergy's loyalty to the Pope been a burning passion, and had they been heartily supported by their parishioners, Henry would have been powerless, for he had not a standing army at his back to enable him to force his will upon his subjects. To the poor within his realm he was uniformly kind, and he did much to protect the workers against the greed and oppression of the rich. On this point both Buckle and Froude are

in complete agreement. Alluding to Henry VII. and Henry VIII. in their relation to private wars, Buckle says:—

Those princes, despots as they were, mainly oppressed the highest classes; and even Henry VIII., notwithstanding his barbarous cruelties, was loved by the people, to whom his reign was, on the whole, decidedly beneficial (*History of Civilization in England*, vol. ii., p. 108).

Speaking of the working classes, Froude observes:—

They enjoyed an abundance far beyond what in general falls to the lot of that order in long-settled countries; incomparably beyond what the same class were enjoying at that time in Germany or France. The laws secured them; and that the laws were put in force we have the direct evidence of successive acts of the legislature justifying the general policy by its success; and we have also the indirect evidence of the contented loyalty of the great body of the people at a time when, if they had been discontented, they held in their own hands the means of asserting what the law acknowledged to be their right. The government had no power to compel submission to injustice, as was proved by the fate of an attempt to levy a "benevolence" by force in 1525. The people resisted with a determination against which the crown commissioners were unable to contend, and the scheme ended with an acknowledgment of fault by Henry, who retired with a good grace from an impossible position (*Henry the Eighth*, vol. i., p. 23).

Thus is explained the comparative ease with which Henry VIII. completely changed the character of the English Church, severing all outward connection between it and the Papacy, and placing it under secular control. It was the deadliest blow ecclesiasticism had ever received, and it is becoming more evident every year that it was the beginning of the end of Christianity in Britain. It was, verily, the laying of the axe to the root of the tree which rendered its eventual fall an absolute certainty. Ever since the Church of England has been a schismatic body, a mere sect, a breach in the unity of Christendom. Indeed, that may serve as a fairly accurate definition of the Protestant Reformation in its entirety. It was a movement which, from its very nature, could make for nothing but the ultimate disintegration of Christianity. It is known as the Protestant Reformation, and its promoters are honoured as the Reformers; but, in reality, to re-form the Christian Church is to demonstrate its fallibility, and this can only be done when the people's faith in it is weak. Luther's mission would have been a total failure had not the popular temper been favourable to it. "In Spain," Buckle says, "the Reformation, after a short struggle, died completely away, and in about ten years the last vestige of it had disappeared," simply because the masses loved the Church, and successfully resisted all attacks upon it. So complete was the dominion of the priests, that it was possible for Philip II. to act upon his famous maxim, "That it is better not to reign at all than to reign over heretics." But in Germany the soil was ready for the revolutionary seed, which was no sooner dropped in than it began to germinate; and in a wonderfully short time the Reformation harvest was gathered in.

The same thing occurred in England, and for the same reason. The Church had sunk into such a depth of all sorts of corruption, the lives of the clergy were so notoriously scandalous, that there was a general, though not openly expressed, discontent throughout the country. While the people remained excessively superstitious, their belief in the Church and her ministers had been on the wane for generations. By Henry's time the measure of the Church's offences was full, which enabled him to put his policy in operation without any opposition from the populace. The Reformation initiated by

him was almost exclusively of an ecclesiastical and political character, and did not affect moral and social life in the least. A new Church was created with a secular head, which in course of time formulated for itself a new creed. In these changes the people peacefully acquiesced, and for a considerable period, apparently, it mattered little to them which religion was supreme. There were always a few fanatics who revolted and lost their lives. Even during Henry's own reign and for twenty years afterwards there was no religious stability, Catholic and Protestant doctrines triumphing alternately; and without exception the religion that was up persecuted that which was down. As Freeman succinctly puts it:—

It was a time of constant change, of change backwards and forwards; the result was that, by the middle of the reign of Elizabeth, there was an established state of things wholly different from the established state of things which had been in the middle of the reign of Henry VIII. (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. viii., p. 333).

Three facts of vast importance stand out in great prominence. The first is that the Reformation of the English Church involved a complete break with the past in creed as well as in polity. The Rev. R. J. Campbell is radically mistaken when he says: "The Church of Augustine and Colman is the same Church in which I minister to-day" (*A Spiritual Pilgrimage*, p. 274). He forgets that Augustine was a Benedictine monk sent from Rome to convert the Anglo-Saxons, and according to tradition their labours were crowned with abundant success. This happened in the year 689; but in the wars that followed the young Church was practically annihilated. Then came another monk from Rome to do the work over again, and in 669 he was consecrated archbishop of Canterbury by Pope Vitalian, whilst Colman, after being defeated in a violent controversy about the correct date of Easter at a conference in 664, had already forsaken his see and settled at Iona. Surely at the Reformation the English Church ceased to be a Branch of the Roman Church, and became a separate, independent organization. The second fact is that in the Anglican Church there are two contending schools, the one cursing the Reformation as the greatest ecclesiastical calamity on record, and the other perpetually returning thanks to God for it. Mr. Campbell now belongs to the former school, and, like all the other members of the Catholic party, has his face towards Rome. Many members of the latter school are gradually drifting in the direction of Free Thought. Between these two great parties there are multitudes of little factions among which no love is lost. This state of things is one of the fruits of the Reformation.

The third and most momentous fact is that the Reformation not only dealt ecclesiasticism a stunning blow, but set in motion a process which can only end in the total disappearance of the Christian religion. It was the revival of classical learning that made the Reformation possible, and it is to the Reformation that we are indebted for the triumph of modern science. Once admit the rights of private judgment, once recognize the claims of reason as the supreme arbiter in all human affairs, and you thereby sound the death-knell of all external authority. Under Elizabeth Protestantism had free scope, and as a result Puritanism arose. Puritanism was ruthlessly persecuted, and the various Nonconformist sects gradually appeared. These all hated the Church from which they went out, and most of them cordially hated one another, in the name of the Lord whom they all alike professed to love and follow. The outcome of it all is, that now at last an overwhelming majority of the population never darken church or chapel doors. Thousands of them are avowed unbelievers,

thousands more are wholly indifferent, neither actively believing nor disbelieving, while the number of genuine believers is growing smaller every year. The clergy assert that Christianity is on the verge of its final conquest; but the facts show that it is being increasingly abandoned, and that its ministers have ceased to count in the national life.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Iron Hand Under the Velvet Glove.

If Christians would teach infidels to be just to Christianity, they should themselves be just to infidelity.—*John Stuart Mill.*

I have searched over the grounds of my belief, and if wife and child and name and fame were to be lost to me one after the other as the penalty, still I will not lie.—*Professor Huxley*

The State has to take man's religion under its control.—*G. W. Foote.*

CHRISTIAN apologists never tire of boasting of the tolerance of the religion they profess. Yet the Bible reeks with bigotry and persecution, and the Old Testament Hebrews were expressly ordered to kill heretics. The earliest apostles of Christianity were also imbued with the spirit of persecution. Paul smote Elymas with blindness for opposing him, and John, the "beloved disciple," said, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Even in the infant Christian Church the unbeliever is to be shunned like poison, and the history of Christianity after its accession to power justifies the Freethinker in regarding bigotry and persecution as of the essence of that religion. While Christianity survives, the recrudescence of religious persecution is always possible. To say that a superstition which threatened eternal hell-fire for unbelief is opposed to persecution on earth is but to gloss plain facts. The Blasphemy Laws are still on the Statute Book, and are at any moment liable to enforcement. They are the standing menace of a dying creed to those who smile at its childish fables too ostentatiously.

If we turn to the pages of modern history we see at a glance the fruits of superstition and tyranny. Freethinkers suffered terribly for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason*. Richard Carlile, a paladin of progress, endured over nine years' imprisonment in this terrible struggle. The clergy hesitated at nothing. They even attacked women, and Carlile's brave wife and sister were dragged to gaol for two years each. His shopmen stepped into the breach, and one after the other went to prison, and eventually divided among them forty years' imprisonment. Think of it! One small circle of Freethinkers served between them over fifty years for the rights of free speech in a country pretending to be in the van of civilization. Prosecutions marked the whole of the nineteenth century, and in the famous *Freethinker* trials the intellectuals were roused to action. Petitions for release were signed by almost everyone of real eminence in England, and the world-honoured name of Herbert Spencer headed this memorable protest. An agitation was commenced against the Blasphemy Laws, which Judge Stephen well described as "ferocious," but which still disgrace the Statute Book of an Empire which to-day numbers far more non-Christian subjects than Christian. The prosecutions, indeed, elicited such widespread and universal condemnation that for some years the law fell into abeyance; but during the past few years there has been a revival of persecution, directed

mainly against isolated and unimportant Freethinkers. But the retention of the Blasphemy Laws for such purposes is none the less a danger to liberty. As Professor Bury has pointed out in his *History of Freedom of Thought*, a great poet like Swinburne was allowed to publish with impunity blasphemies which, put into prose and uttered by an uneducated Freethinker, would certainly have entailed persecution. It is not merely the Swinburnes who ran a risk. The distance is not immeasurable between Matthew Arnold's description of the Christian Deity as "three Lord Shaftesburys" and the efforts of less educated delinquents. It is on any view a most unworthy course to punish the uneducated man for his lack of culture, whilst the utmost license of expression is allowed on Christian platforms and pulpits in attacking Freethinkers.

Imprisonment was by no means the only indignity imposed. Daniel Isaac Eaton, the Freethinker who was championed by the poet Shelley, was not only prosecuted seven times, but had the pillory inflicted and £2,500 worth of books destroyed. Shelley and his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg were expelled from Oxford University for publishing a Freethought pamphlet. Years afterwards Shelley was declared judicially to be unfit to be the guardian of his own children on account of his opinions. Many years later a similar dishonour was inflicted on Mrs. Annie Besant, who was at that time a prominent Freethought leader. A large number of the prosecutions of the unstamped press were simply disguised blasphemy trials. The authorities covered the odiousness of their acts under cover of proceeding against unstamped papers and pamphlets. Charles Bradlaugh had to fight for thirteen long years for his right to represent Northampton in the House of Commons, and the persecution shortened his life. Only his alertness and extraordinary legal knowledge prevented his imprisonment for blasphemy. A former Marquis of Queensbury was deprived of his seat in the House of Lords on account of his known infidelity. Last, but certainly not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed for Freethought were diverted to other channels; but, happily, the genius of George Foote stopped this highway robbery. In addition, Freethought leaders have been involved in constant and costly lawsuits, deluged with personal abuse, and have also been the victims of a concerted press boycott.

The plain fact is that superstition is scotched, not slain. Fortunately, the clergy no longer have poor and isolated Freethinkers to deal with, but are now confronted with a compact army, upon whose banners is inscribed the significant and stirring phrase of the great Voltaire, "Crush the Infamous." Such an army is not easily to be quelled by a small minority of shouting fanatics.

MIMNERMUS.

A Degrading Religion.

"My dear Stanley," said Charles Penfold to an intimate friend of his, "I have often wanted to have a chat with you on religion, and I should be glad if you would state what are your chief objections to the Christian religion."

"Well, Charles, I have so many objections that it would take me some time to state them all. But take a few. Of course, my chief objection to Christianity is that it is *not true*. If that objection holds good, it would not be necessary to state any other, because I do not suppose you would be prepared to argue that a religion that was not true could be so useful to mankind that it would be worthy of being upheld even when it was known to be false?"

"No," said Penfold, "I should not take that ground."

But it is merely an assertion on your part to say that Christianity is not true—you could not prove it, or at all events you could not prove it to my satisfaction."

"Another objection I have to Christianity is that it is a degrading religion?"

"A degrading religion! What do you mean by such a statement?"

"Sit still for awhile, and I will tell you. Christianity is a degrading religion because only mental slaves or moral cowards can accept it. A believer must begin by abandoning his reason and end by shifting the burden of moral responsibility from his own to other shoulders. Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, in stating his noble eightfold path to happiness, put first the acceptance of 'right views.' But in order that a man should know what views are right, he must have freedom to think. Gautama saw this, and therefore urged his followers to inquire diligently after truth."

"But surely Jesus did the same?" said Penfold in earnest tones.

"Wait a minute," replied George Stanley, the Rationalist advocate in this little controversy. "I want you to hear me for awhile, and then you may reply. In my judgment, the founder of Christianity was not so wise as Gautama in his desire that men should learn the truth. In fact, he cared not how stupid or thoughtless men were so long as they believed in him. He declared that he was 'the way, the truth, and the life,' and that no man could be saved from the wrath of a merciful God but by accepting him. 'Believe and be saved; disbelieve and be damned' was the foundation-stone of all his teachings."

"But does that not show, my dear Stanley, that Jesus thought he was the Christ?"

"No doubt; but you, as a Unitarian Christian, could not possibly accept such a claim on the part of any man, however great or good."

"No; I admit that."

"Well, Jesus, as a peregrinating preacher, became so arrogant and dogmatic that he led many to suppose he was God Almighty, and Christians to-day are driven into the position of regarding Jesus as the very God or of repudiating him altogether as an impostor."

"Not quite that," retorted Penfold, with some warmth.

"I remember Dr. Sexton used to talk like that in his debates with the Secularist, Charles Watts; but I do not think either Secularists or Unitarians take that ground to-day. Unitarians believe Jesus was the Son of God in the sense that all good men are the sons of God."

"But most Christians," responded Stanley, "even to-day say that Jesus must have been a supernatural being or he would not have made such bold pretensions. There was no hesitancy about Jesus. He spoke as though he knew everything. But nearly all religious enthusiasts do that."

"Yes; I quite admit that," said the other.

"Dr. Parker and the great Charles Haddon Spurgeon were little God Almighties to their respective followers. Sidney Smith once satirically remarked: 'I wish I could be as cocksure of anything as Tom Macaulay is of everything.' And Christians to-day take the strong declarations of Jesus as being sufficient guarantee of their truth because they are foolish enough to imagine that his boldness would have been tempered with a little discretion if he had not been certain of their truth. But when Jesus said, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned,' he laid the foundation stone of a religion that is degrading to humanity."

"Although I admit that there is some truth in your declaration," said Penfold, "I cannot go all the way

with you when you affirm that Christianity is a degrading religion. You do not take into account the value of the moral teachings of Jesus."

"I am prepared to consider them on another occasion; but for the present I will continue my argument," said the other.

"Well and good."

"It is the first duty of every man to think for himself, and examine the credentials of whatever system he is asked to accept. Is that not so?"

"Agreed."

"Well, then, every man must do his own thinking and express his own views."

"Agreed again."

"Why should Jesus state the whole truth, which persons must not disbelieve on penalty of damnation, in an obscure corner of the earth, to a number of ignorant and fanatical followers, and leave mankind without a written statement of them, except that which was supplied by persons who never saw nor heard him, nor even lived until years after he was dead?"

"Why ask me these conundrums, my dear Stanley, when you know, or ought to know, that I do not believe in the divine inspiration of the Gospels any more than you do?"

"Then why call yourself a 'Christian Unitarian' when you really do not believe in the divinity of Christ at all?"

"I think that Jesus was divine only in the sense that all good and noble men are divine. And all men are inspired who speak imperishable truths in noble language, like Shakespeare, Milton, or even Shelley."

"And do you not think it is a degrading feature of the Christian faith that it asks the believer to accept the death of the innocent as the only medium by which we can have our sins blotted out? I cannot help thinking that the doctrine of the Atonement is very immoral."

"I cannot agree with you, Stanley, on that. Does not every great moral reformer suffer, and in some cases die, for his fellows? In other words, he offers himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of his fellows. Look at Bruno, Vanini, and other great heroes. Did they not offer themselves up for their fellows on the altar of truth and honour and justice? And all the reformers really do the same, do they not?"

"But do they by their death blot out the sins of the guilty? You cannot answer in the affirmative. You are using the word 'Atonement' in a new sense, and the story of the death of Jesus on Calvary and his alleged atonement for the sins of mankind will not bear such interpretation. Anyhow, I thank you for hearing my statement of the case against the ordinary orthodox Christian. Though we disagree on many points, there is one thing I like about you: we can agree to differ, and part good friends. *Au revoir!*"

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Superstition.

The Bible versus Little Children.

WHEN reading Addison's *Essays on Popular Superstitions*, it occurred to me that superstition begins its work early; it has done, and is still doing, great harm to the young. The case that I am going to quote from among the many that he mentions is, apparently, very simple, yet, nevertheless, very mischievous, for it fills the child's mind with ideas of wonder, awe, and mystery.

Mentioning how rife superstition was in his days (1672-1719), Addison states that on one occasion when visiting a friend, a little boy at the lower end of the table told his mother that he was to go into "join-

hands" (writing in which the letters are joined, running hand) on Thursday. "Thursday," says she. "No, child, if it please God, you shall not begin on Childermas Day. Tell your writing master that Friday will be soon enough."

He went on to say he wondered that any one could establish it, as a rule, to lose a day in each week. Upon his return home he fell into a profound contemplation on the evils that attend these superstitious follies of mankind: additional sorrows that do not properly come within our lot and how they subject us to imaginary afflictions.

Let us see what is the meaning of Childermas Day. It means Holy Innocents' Day, to commemorate the massacre of 14,000 children two years' old and under (Matt. ii. 16). Three days after the advent of Christ, Church Anniversary put and held as December 28, it was, probably, first celebrated at the fifth or early part of the sixth century.¹ The word comes from Child, Mass, and Day.

So far as the advent of Christ is concerned, there is not a particle of evidence, either Biblical or traditional, for the claim or December 25 to be the birthday of Christ. Archæologists and professors of the Church own this (see Vivian's *Church and Modern Thought*).

Again, a little child when put to bed, was told, like many others, that God would protect her. Suddenly a large black cat sprang on to her bed, awakening and frightening her more than I can adequately describe. That terror gave her her first doubts as to the all-protecting God, consequently she asked many questions, all unanswerable.

In another case a mother, obsessed with superstition, was putting her child to bed, and with the usual platitudes, after bidding her good-night, turned to take the light away. "Jesus is with you, dear," she said. "Mother, take Jesus away, and leave me the light," said the little one. That was what superstition had done for her.

We read in history of a terrible calamity caused by superstition—that tragic crusade of the children to the Holy Land. The imaginative nature of a French boy wrought upon by preaching was the starting force. He had a revelation from heaven, he said—this highly strung imaginative child—and possibly he had just as much revelation as a good many grown-up mystics of his day. This little Stephen, just twelve years of age, was obsessed with the idea that Jesus wished him to save the Holy Sepulchre or tomb of Christ from the Mohammedans. His alleged revelations caused great excitement; men and women believed that he might be right, for was it not stated in the Bible that "a little child shall lead them." So 20,000 dear little French children gathered at Marseilles, and were allowed to start on their crusade. Many of them sailed for Palestine, but were sold as slaves by those who were taking them. Many thousands sailed from the eastern coast of Italy, and were never heard of again. Christ did not protect these children who went in absolute faith to save his tomb.

Turning to the Scriptures, I cannot see tangible teachings of love and care for little children. Certainly Christ said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me," for even his followers and imitators rebuked them. Suffer means to allow or permit. In Proverbs we find: "He that spareth the rod, hateth his child." All true Humanists are against the beating of children, for it mostly leaves hardness of heart and a bitter outraged feeling. Ingersoll says: "I would have the photograph taken of the angry parent when beating the child."

¹ This day of the week throughout the year corresponding to that on which Holy Innocents' Day fell; considered unlucky by superstitious persons.

A leading newspaper recently stated: "It is urged that experience has shown the futility of flogging for juveniles as for adults."

In the Psalms we find: "Let his children be vagabonds and beg.....Let his children be fatherless.....Neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children.....Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against stones."

In 2 Kings ii. 23, 24, Elijah the prophet was annoyed at little children calling him bald head, and he cursed them in the name of the Lord; and, apparently, in answer to that curse two she bears came forth out of the wood, and did tear forty and two children of them.

Esther is known as the poetry of hatred, and so on. Yet Christians call this book "the Holy Bible," and it is put into the hands of a child of tender years to read as he or she may choose.

Children should have every care and protection. Superstition is a danger to their highly strung nerves. Mystery brings terror into their lives at what should be their happiest time. We should be honest with them.

How many of us are so contented and happy in this world that we are anxious to bring others into it to share our sorrows and joys! Since, through no will of their own, children are brought into this world, we should at least live for their happiness, as something that we owe to them. Bright, healthy, happy children are an asset to a country.

Happiness is conducive to health. When I look at a little child, and see all its innocence and sweet ways, I often wonder how anyone can do anything to crush that happiness, or bring a shadow of fear across the sunshine of that young joyous life.

I have noticed that a child brought up with simply a religion of love, and kindness, and rational teaching, free from fear, from ghosts, goblins, bogies, darkness, and every form of superstition, will be twice as happy as those brought up in a religion of fear, with all its attendant ignorant and irrational omens. Moreover, the nerves of that child will be twice as strong.

When the latter is finally a thing of the past, when truth prevails in its stead, all these things will be. May the great work of Rationalism continue, and speedily attain its noble ends.

I have given just a few cases of the mischief of superstition which is directly or indirectly caused through Holy Writ. Parents would do well to adopt the advice of Professor Bury, M.A., F.B.A., in his work *A History of Freedom of Thought*. "Nothing should be left undone to impress upon the young that freedom of thought is an axiom of human progress." He also says: "It should be a part of education to explain to children so soon as they can understand, when it is reasonable and when it is not, to accept what they are told on authority."

We might at all times apply the following lines to this great cause of Rationalism:—

Plough deep and straight with all your powers,
Spare not, nor look behind.
Your labour is for future hours.

H. J. BAYLIS.

While, however, there is an enormous improvement, if we compare the administration of human affairs by Jehovah (*i.e.*, the Old Testament God) and by God (*i.e.*, the God of the New Testament), there is, nevertheless, a blot upon the character of God (*i.e.*, the God of the New Testament) which suffices, if rigorously balanced against the failings of Jehovah, to outweigh them all. It is the eternity of the punishment which he inflicts in a future life. No amount of sophistry can ever justify the creation of beings whose lives are to terminate in endless suffering.—*Viscount Amberley*. "Analysis of Religious Belief," vol. ii., p. 371.

Acid Drops.

The attempt to re-establish a monarchy in China was crowned with success—for less than a week. Then the Republic reasserted itself, and the boy emperor retired once more into obscurity. A people who have once experienced republican institutions do not easily return to a monarchical regime. It is true that the English people did re-establish monarchy in the seventeenth century, but it is questionable whether that would have occurred had not religious bigotry under the Commonwealth paved the way. But in China the re-establishment—for a week—of the monarchy was entirely a military manœuvre. And it is curious how militarism, monarchism, and religion hang together. They hang together for fear of hanging separately.

The latest appearance of the Rev. A. J. Waldron is on the film. He figures in a new comic picture entitled "Men Were Deceivers Ever," and some who know the late Vicar of Brixton may find something suggestive in the title. Mr. Waldron's posturings have always been amusing, and never more so than when he aimed at being serious. We should not be at all surprised if his acting in a comic picture play moves the audience to tears.

The Congregationalists claim that last year showed an increase in the number of their adherents everywhere, except in Great Britain. In Great Britain the decrease of Sunday-school scholars alone totals nearly 60,000 in four years. The important thing about these figures is, that even where an increase is shown, they never mean more than a shuffling of the cards. An increase to one Church is at the expense of other Churches. Meanwhile, in relation to the non-Christian world, there is a decrease all round. The number of non-Christians steadily increases, and it is that which is, after all, of vital importance.

The exemption of the clergy from military service is not unnoticed among Christians. A letter was printed recently in the *Spectator* from a correspondent who admitted his orthodoxy, and who wrote: "I am hot with shame whenever I see a lusty and hearty curate, with white hands and sleeky parted hair, selling woolwork at bazaars." And there are thousands of "lusty and hearty" parsons of military age.

In an interesting note on modern slang expressions, particularly the word "blooming," the *Daily News* refers to an intelligent anticipation of the expression in one of Charles Wesley's hymns, in which Satan is said to essay his "thousand arts" to "blast the blooming work of grace." This is almost as amusing as the line in another hymn, which introduces a more popular expletive, "All hail the bleeding lamb."

An advertisement in a daily paper invites subscriptions for the "War Work" of the Salvation Army. Surely, the Salvation Army is engaged in a spiritual fight with Satan; whilst England and the Allies are fighting the godly Kaiser and his satellites.

Speaking at the Annual Meeting of the Scottish Women's Protestant Union, Miss Augusta Cook said that Germany was no longer a Protestant nation. The Protestantism of Luther had gone. What does she mean by such a statement? Is this only another way of saying that Germany is not a Christian country while Britain is?

A correspondent to a Glasgow daily newspaper, signing himself "Country Minister," says the prestige of the Church has diminished enormously, and is steadily diminishing. Forty years ago nearly half the membership was composed of men; now there is scarcely one man to three women. He says the Church, instead of re-charting the kingdom of heaven, which is righteousness, keeps on prattling of the lost continent far above the bright blue sky. Now, what would happen to a Freethinker if he were to make such a declaration? He would run the risk of being prosecuted for blasphemy. Yet this "Country Minister" openly states that the

kingdom of heaven is "righteousness," and is not a place beyond the sky.

The Church of England has much resemblance to Mr. Facing-both-ways, of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The Archbishop of Canterbury and some other bishops have condemned reprisals in war; but the Bishop of Birmingham considers that they are justifiable "in self-defence." Probably, the Fathers-in-God find their justification in the Old or New Testament, just as it suits their purpose. For, as a famous old Protestant once pointed out, the Bible is a nose of wax, which is moulded at pleasure.

Special appeals have been made in countless churches and chapels on behalf of "Baby Week"; but this newly found zeal requires much explanation. If the Churches really cared for children, there would be little need for a National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which for a generation has shown how thin is the veneer of civilization in a Christian country.

"Poplar is the apple of my eye," said the Bishop of Stepney. Did his lordship wink with the other eye?

Canon Gamble points out that "the abolition of the Crown would mean the dissolution of the British Empire." He probably means that the Crown and the Church support one another, and in the event of the abolition of the Crown, the Church would share the fate of Humpty Dumpty.

In view of the Irish situation, the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland have issued an "Instruction" to priests, warning them against movements opposed to the "Church or lawfully constituted authority." Priests are forbidden attending meetings outside their parishes, and are reminded that "the authority by which temporal rulers govern their subjects comes from the same divine source as that by which God's kingdom on earth is maintained." One wonders whether one is living in the twentieth century or the twelfth on reading this; but then one remembers it is the Roman Catholic Church that is speaking, and that explains things.

We can quite appreciate the dilemma of the priest in Ireland. No one knows better than the higher priesthood that self-government in Ireland means their downfall. English mis-government identified the religious with the national cause, and with the national aspirations satisfied there will come the inevitable separation of the secular aspect of life from the religious. This means a weakening of priestly power, and the priests know it as well as we do. But to oppose the national aspirations is to lose the support of the people. To help its realization is to pave the way for their own downfall. Thus the priest stands between the devil and the deep sea, and a realization of this position helps to explain much that is otherwise confusing in the Irish situation.

The City Tribunal gave exemption to a man who acts as representative for a firm which collects beeswax for the Russian Orthodox Church, the wax being used for making candles. The vagaries of these Tribunals are almost past understanding.

Convocation has decided to eliminate from the Church Service the whole of the fifty-eighth Psalm, and a number of verses of a similar character from other psalms. As a sample of religious "cussing," the fifty-eighth Psalm holds an easy first place, and it is illustrative of the mental digestion of the average Christian that he could sing of the blessings of love and brotherhood, and the virtues of meekness and at the same time exhort the Lord to "Break their teeth in them, O God, in their mouth," "Let them melt away as waters which run continually," "The righteous shall rejoice, when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked," etc., etc. The *Daily Telegraph* remarks that such language "may be apt to the services in honour of the tribal divinity of the House of Hohenzollern, but they ill become the offices of the Christian Church." We would

remind the *D. T.* that the Bible is not a German production; it is the *Christian* Scriptures. The House of Hohenzollern has nothing to do with it. If the *D. T.* means that parts of the Bible are fit only for savages, we agree. And we would add that it is this book which the *D. T.* thinks ought to be kept in schools for the benefit of children.

An article in a labour paper suggests that the workers should have £7 weekly. This should make the Bishop of London smile, for this bachelor-parson enjoys a salary of £200 weekly, which is sufficient to keep fifty working-class families in comfort.

A parallel between the German folk-tales of the Twilight of the Gods and the threatened disaster to the house of Hohenzollern is drawn in a recent publication. The parallel is not so complete as one could wish, for the Kaiser is not a God, but only the friend of one.

Although there are prayers for rain and fine weather in the Government Prayer-book, Christians never seem to get satisfactory results from their earnest supplications. In the recent rain-storm, affecting the Southern and Western counties, enormous damage was done to kitchen-gardens and allotments, growing crops being washed out of the ground.

The War, says *Life*, a Melbourne monthly magazine, is creating in the keenest minds of to-day a sense of the necessity of Christianity. That is quite an easy thing to say, but we should much like to know where these keen minds are to be found that are clamouring for Christianity? The keenest minds have been giving up Christianity for several generations, and it would be passing strange if this War, with its unanswerable indictment of Christianity, had sent them back again. We take it that what *Life* really means is, that the War has made Christian leaders realize that it is best to pretend the world is clamouring for Christianity. That may impose upon fools, and it is numbers always that the Churches are after.

Bishop Frodsham was one of the speakers at the Trades Union Conference held last week at Gloucester. Opposing the introduction of coloured labour, he said, in justification of certain labour restrictions, "It was no insult to the Chinese and the Japanese, and even to the less developed races of the world, to say that they were lower organisms than the English and Americans and the white races." So much for the Bishop's professional belief in the brotherhood of man. He evidently believes in the right of every Englishman to kick his own "nigger"; and "nigger" includes everyone who has not a white skin.

The impertinence of Bishop Frodsham speaking of Japanese, Chinese, and Hindoos as "lower organisms" would make one gasp if it did not express a common and a familiar mental attitude. And the conceit of the assertion is only equalled by the stupidity of believing that these hundreds of millions of non-white races will submit to be kept in a state of perpetual servitude or labelled inferiority. To Germany, the rest of Europe is filled with "lower organisms" that need be kept under control. To the European and American, Africa and Asia are filled with "lower organisms" that must be kept well in hand. The mental attitude in both cases is identical. And it is the root cause of our present trouble. A straightforward course of robbery or piracy is comparatively harmless. It is the piratical exploitation of these "lower organisms" by the white man in the name of religion and morality that is the difficulty. For it helps to disguise the real character of the operation, and so makes the cure the more difficult. The great evil of "Prussianism" is, after all, that it does not belong to Prussia. It flourishes to some degree all over the world.

Dr. Henry Van Dyke, late U.S. Minister to Holland, says that he hates Germany with a "holy hate" on scriptural grounds. Well, we are quite certain that if a man wants to do any "hating," he can always find scriptural justification

for it. The Bible has been responsible for more hatred than any other book in the world.

Lately, no less than 5,000 mentally and physically defective children belonging to Glasgow were entertained by the Corporation to a day's outing in Ronken Glen Park. And yet Christians affirm that man was made in the image of God. What an image! and what a God!

Speaking at the 238th Anniversary of the Battle of Bothwell Brig, the Rev. Mr. Black said the Covenanters did not fight for Scotland's rights so much as to make Scotland right, and to make the Scottish people a people of God. I am afraid the Covenanters would get a great surprise if they were to return to-day if they only knew how little their efforts have succeeded in making the Scottish people a people of God, and to know how many people in Scotland were doubting even the existence of such a being. And while on this subject we should like to know how many of the vast crowd turned out to hear the preachers, and how many turned out to hear the band?

Father Bernard Vaughan has been advocating four children to each family. Yet his Church has consistently upheld sexless ideals, and filled Europe with monasteries and nunneries.

We are rather pleased to find the Bishop of Southwell declaring that "it is now or never for a united effort on the question of religious education." It bears out what we have said many times as to the importance of the friends of Secular Education being alert. For, if it is now or never for the Churches, it is certainly a question of *now* for us. When the Churches are active, we should be active also. And it is absolutely certain that the Churches are hoping to make capital out of the present situation.

We do not, and never have, shared the anticipations of an outbreak of beneficial social enthusiasm after the War. We shall have all we can do to recover our lost liberties, and fortunate if we recover the whole. And the case with which the suggested educational reform is put off time after time is itself significant. But there will be a very determined attempt to re-establish a more definite form of religion in the schools, and it is against that we shall have to be on our guard.

July 17 is "Mascot Day." Captain Berley, who owns a mascot in the form of a small pre-Inca idol, is having a number of replicas made to be sold at one guinea each, which will entitle the holder to a "draw" for the idol itself. The proceeds are to go to private hospitals for officers. It seems that the mascot is supposed to exercise a wonderful influence over the health of the patients in certain hospitals. The whole thing is another illustration of the strong hold superstition has upon masses of the people; and also that its hold on the "upper" is as great as on the "lower" classes.

Mrs. Besant has been forbidden by the Madras Government to speak in public, and ordered to reside in certain specified areas, and angry letters of protest have appeared in the press. The protestors appear to overlook the fact that the power of the Mahatmas is limited by a few Madras policemen.

Dr. Lang, Archbishop of York, addressing the Leeds Chamber of Commerce, prophesied a bright future for labour after the War. This will raise hopes in the breasts of Church organists, choristers, and bellringers.

"General" Booth has appointed an official to extend the work of the Salvation Army in Russia after the War. By that time the Russians ought to have had enough of "Blood and Fire."

Providence doeth all things well. A plague of caterpillars has appeared in Derbyshire, and has done much damage to vegetation.

To Correspondents.

- W. O. JONES.—Thanks for verses, which we much regret we are unable to use.
- C. UNDERWOOD.—We can only say once more that we care very little about the character of the clergy, so far as our rejection of Christianity is concerned. If they were all good men, it would not prove Christianity either truthful or useful. It would only prove that good men may be mistaken. And few sensible persons will question that.
- S. HAMMOND.—The worst that was ever said of us was that we had once been in the Salvation Army. After that, anything else would be, by contrast, a compliment.
- J. BURRELL (Lanark).—Adding four more new subscribers to your previous ten is great work. A hundred like yourself, in different parts of the country, would, indeed, ease our "worries." We are inclined to agree with you so far as what you say of the "Covenanters" is concerned.
- T. MORLEY.—We had planned a whole series of new pamphlets, but the paper shortage stopped our going on with the work. Still, the plan is only suspended, not abandoned.
- E. SMITH.—Thanks for copy of your friend's letter. We quite appreciate its tone and contents.
- J. G. BARTRAM.—Pleased to have portrait. It is an anxious time, and you have both our sympathy and good wishes.
- S. R. (Belfast).—We gave you one reference to the opinions of Luther and other early Protestants on persecution. Chandler's *History of Persecution* and Bohn's edition of the *Table Talk* of Martin Luther will give you further information. The latter will also give Luther's attitude towards the peasants when they rose against their feudal lords.
- J. MURPHY.—It was good of you to so promptly send copies of the paper in response to our appeal last week.
- VERA.—We are doing both, we hope. And surely conducting a direct defence of a threatened public privilege in no way conflicts with the aim of educating the public intelligence.
- F. DE LISLE (Auckland).—We are obliged for copy of magazine. The religious policy of misrepresentation and exaggeration seems much the same all over the world.
- J. EFFEL.—Next week.
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4 by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.*

Sugar Plums.

In the course of a few days the reprint of Mr. Cohen's "Massacre of the Innocents," from the *Freethinker* of July 1 will be ready for circulation. The leaflet is issued by the National Secular Society, and the price will be 9d. per hundred (postage 3d.), or 6s. per thousand (postage 7d.). The leaflet is timely in its message, and, now while the massacre of the London children is fresh in everyone's mind is the time to give it the widest possible circulation.

Sheffield Freethinkers will please note that Mr. Percy Wild, of London, will lecture in Poole Square, Sheffield, to-day (July 15), at 7 o'clock. His subject will be: "A Criticism of Christianity." Mr. Wild is lecturing under the auspices of the N.S.S., and it is hoped to follow up this meeting with others.

We are asked to announce that on June 4 the Societe Londonienne de Morale Fondee sur les Lois de la Nature was constituted at an enthusiastic meeting held at the Emerson Club, W.C. An energetic programme of lectures (in French) is being arranged to start at the Club in October. Dr. Lionel Giles was appointed President; the Secretary is M. Deshumbert, of 4, Dunheved Road, West, Thornton Heath, to whom communications and adhesions may be made. On Sunday, July 15, the Society starts a series of social functions by a visit, organized under its auspices, to Kew Gardens. Members and friends will meet at the principal entrance at 3.30 p.m., and will be conducted by a guide. Mr. Heaford will be glad to meet there English sympathisers with this French and Belgian effort to keep aflame the principles of naturalism in ethics.

We learn from Mr. Heaford that the Secretary of the Portuguese Federation of Freethought at Lisbon, Senhor A. J. Vieira, has just reported to him that, in spite of the War, the Freethought movement in Portugal is in a flourishing condition. The Federation has now 248 Branches in Portugal and its Colonies, and a membership of 39,842. The Federation, whose President is Dr. Magalhaes Lima, the founder of the Portuguese Republic, sends its greetings to English Freethinkers.

Birds of a Feather.

A FIELD of ripened corn—tawny, yellow, creamy, golden, rich, quiet, satisfying in the autumn haze, not in marked contrast either, but comingling with hedgerow, woods, and green fields, and solemn skies, hushed in the calm of matured content.

An easy chair in the evening and the *Freethinker*: exquisite hedonism! and the day dying out of the sky, and the gaslight yellow on the gray page: another harvest. The reaper and the sower in serious mood sadly seeking truth, wistful for wisdom. Waving corn—waves on the sea of thought—nor wanting music and sparkle and foam where falls

.....that faint thin line upon the shore.

Suddenly the seeker laughed, and at nothing, to wit: "where ignorance is bliss. A stitch in time gathers no moss." In the next paragraph he was grave again, moved, suffused, inspired, to whoo! "*En passant* it may be said that ignorance leads us blindfold through the beauties of youth, and age rudely snatches the bandage from our eyes to show us the glories we've left behind." That is worth being said again. It is deeply and profoundly true. Heaven is behind us, not before. We cannot return. We cannot "become as little children." But Tristram and Joan may collaborate in the creation of a quite delectable paradise—a delightful Ingersollian world, congenial to "The Owl" and his confrere.

THE CROW.

The Hymn of Love.

(Sung by the Bishop of L.—n.)

SAFE at home in my Holy Sec,
 Full of wisdom and sanctity,
 This is the message revealed unto me,
 This is the anthem the angels sing:
 "Nature is red in tooth and claw,"
 And man was born that he might kill;
 This is the Ever-lasting's law,
 Thus we fulfil the eternal will.
 The Lord of Love is Lord of Hell,
 'Tis he who sends the submarine;
 He watches o'er the bursting shell,
 Incarnadines with blood the green.
 For some are good, and some are bad,
 And all have sinned at birth;
 So let them rot, it is their lot
 To stain with blood the earth.

P. A.

The Sense Organs of Man.

III.

(Continued from p. 422.)

As we have seen, the senses of taste, smell, and hearing are all modifications of the primordial sense of touch. The auditory sensation is initiated by the touches of the moving air particles, while taste and smell arise from the touches of sapid or odorous substances. And in vision, the eye is affected by a highly attenuated material whose vibrations transmit movements which affect the organs of sight, evolve the sensations of light, the perception of objects around us, and even enable us to view celestial orbs untold millions of miles in space. The medium for the transmission of light is the luminiferous ether, whose vibrations generate changes in the optic nerve and in the brain, when we become conscious of the existence of external entities.

Extremely sensitive, the eye is well shielded from harmful influences. Seated in soft fat, the eyeball is fixed in a socket of strong bone. The lachrymal gland secretes a watery fluid which keeps the eye moist, while the eyelids and eyelashes protect the delicate organ from dust and other detrimental substances. The ball, or globe, of the eye is a circular body, which moves easily in its receptacle, the orbit, an opening in the skull. The optic nerve, which is rooted in the brain, enters the back of the eye-globe, and, having penetrated the globe's integument,—

it spreads out into a very delicate membrane, varying in thickness from 1/80th of an inch to less than half that amount, which lines the hinder two-thirds of the globe and is termed the retina. This retina is the only organ connected with sensory nervous fibres which can be affected by any agent in such a manner as to give rise to the sensation of light (Barcroft).

The light which enters the eye is regulated in amount by variations in the diameter of the pupil. The iris is provided with contractile fibres, and when these contract the pupil expands; but if the light penetrating the pupil prove too strong, a round band of muscle fibre placed close to the pupil's margin contracts and the pupil—an aperture in the iris—decreases in size. In producing the sensation of sight, the most important function of the retina consists in its ability to convert the ethereal vibrations which form the physical basis of light into a stimulus of the fibres of the optic nerve. Nerve fibres converge from all regions of the retina, and become massed together to form the optic nerve. The phenomena of visual sensation are lucidly summarized by Professor McKendrick and Dr. Snodgrass, in their *Physiology of the Senses*, as follows:—

The optic nerve from each eye passes backwards, and entering the hollow of the cranium by a passage at the back of the orbit, joins with its fellow in a union called the *optic commissure*. At the commissure some of the fibres pass directly upwards into the brain, but in the human eye the most of the fibres from the inner or nasal half of each retina decussate, or in other words cross over, and pass backwards to the half of the brain opposite to the eye from which they have come, while fibres from the outer or temporal (next to the temples) side of each retina pass back to the brain on the same side of the eye from which they have sprung. Hence it will be seen that almost all the fibres affected by rays of light which come from objects on the left side of the body will transmit impressions to the right side of the brain, while luminous impressions from the right side of the eyes will be transmitted to the left half of the brain. The bundles of nerve fibres continued behind the optic commissure are known as the *optic tracts*, and they pass to certain ganglia at the base of the brain,

from which again fibres pass to the occipital or posterior part of the cerebral hemispheres, the stimulation of which gives rise to the sensation of light.

The brain centre for vision is termed the visual sensorium, while another area which forms the seat of the sensation of hearing is known as the auditory sensorium. It must, however, be clearly understood that the sensation of light is brought about in the visual sensorium, and does not arise in the retina. The retina is, of course, an essential instrument in evolving visual impressions, but it has been demonstrated that if certain brain centres are destroyed, or even diseased, no visual sensation arises even if the retina and the entire optic nerve remain intact. In these circumstances blindness results because the visual sensorium is unable to function.

Waves of light, again, when falling on the optic nerve, fail to excite it. The fibres of this nerve in themselves are as insensible to light as any other region of the body. But in the course of evolution the highly complex structures of the retina have been adapted so completely that they are capable of transforming the almost unthinkable delicate throbbings of the luminiferous ether into light-creating stimuli of the optic nerve fibres.

Thus we, in company with our fellow-animals, derive the totality of experiences which builds up our mental existence from the external world. Moreover, those latent powers which are ours at birth, and are therefore not the outcome of our individual experiences, must have descended to us through inheritance from our ancestors, who bore in their germ-plasm the accumulated mass of registered impressions gathered by the race during its development. The mental powers potential in the infant's brain represent the evolutionary outcome of the countless centuries' experiences which have been slowly stored, to be subsequently bequeathed, principal and interest, in terms of heredity, to succeeding generations. For it is essential to understand that in sober truth heredity is really the transmission of the experiences, bodily and mental, which our ancestors, immediate and remote, have amassed through their contact with the environing conditions which have constituted their lives.

External energies generate all the multitudinous phenomena to which the several senses of man respond. Light, sound, and other agents act on special organs, and along these, nervous impulses are transmitted by the sensory nerves to the central nervous structures. Within these central nervous structures molecular activities arise which, on their subjective side, constitute our states of sensation; and ancestral experience, combined with individual experience, has constrained us to instinctively regard certain phenomena in the outside world as the immediate causes of consciousness. The feelings which arise within ourselves as the result of the impact of external forces on our sensitive structures may manifest themselves either as voluntary or involuntary actions.

Many are the body organs that are subject to impressions from without. All our higher mental activities are directly or indirectly determined by our converse with surrounding Nature. The same principle applies to physical activities. These are largely voluntary, into which the group of feelings termed the "will" enters. But there are also the involuntary movements which are all practically automatic. The increased throbbing of the heart, the quickening or arrest of breathing, the irrepressible smile, the pale face of anger or fear, and the rosy hue of nervousness or shame, are all the outcome of reflex action. But the functions of the central nervous structures and those of the sensory organs are so nearly related that it is hard to say where involuntary

or reflex actions end and those of volition begin. It is important to realize that the entire nervous system operates as a whole, and although certain organs are more complex, both in structure and function, than others, all branches of the nervous mechanism perform their part in rendering us aware of the happenings around us.

Presumably, no one can think without having something to think about; and all the problems presented to the mind are the resultant of the impressions received from without, either in the present or the past. For we are conscious not only of immediate events, but of those that happened at a recent or remote time. Generally speaking, we cannot really think of coming things; we can only speculate concerning them. In dealing with past events we revive old impressions, while in our anticipations concerning approaching occurrences we are unable to range, except in imagination, beyond that circumscribed region of legitimate expectation which is invariably based upon our experiences of the apparently eternal processes of natural causation.

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

New Testament Legends for Young Readers.

I.—BABY HEAVEN'S-GIFT.

THE Greek people told the tale of the maid Danae, who was shut up in a tower of brass, so that she might never be free to be a wife and mother; for her father had heard the wise voice of an Oracle say that his daughter's son would slay him. One day, a shower of gold fell in glittering rain from the sky; and the gold was the gold of Zeus, the Heavenly Father. Danae's child was born in the tower of brass, and her father, not daring to kill the wee Son of Heaven, put mother and babe in a wooden box, which drifted and drifted near to an island-shore, where it was entangled in a fisherman's net, and drawn to land. The boy became the hero Perseus, who, with wings on his feet, and a magic bag slung over his shoulder, and a sickle-shaped sword in hand, and a helmet that made him invisible, flew to the place of the horrid Gorgon Medusa. This creature was like an octopus, and Perseus cut off its head. It was Perseus, too, who saw the girl Andromeda chained to a seaside rock, and about to be devoured by a dragon. So the hero slew the dragon and married Andromeda. He killed his grandfather, but not meaning to, for in the games of the Greeks, he slung a flat stone discus, and it slipped aside and killed the old king who looked on. Such is the tale of the Son of Heaven, who made war on dragons, and delivered the Dawn-maiden from the Monster of Darkness; or we may say he delivered the earth, chained by winter, from the Monster of Cold.

And now we will hear of other babes and other wonders.

* * * *

An old priest, bearded, white capped, and robed, held a handful of powder before the altar. On the altar top were spread red-hot bits of charcoal.

"Incense!" cried a voice.

At this command, the priest dropped the powder on the altar fire, and smoke rose up to the roof of the Temple of Jerusalem; and a murmur of prayer rose from the crowd of Jews in the hall near by, as, with uplifted arms, they watched the smoke, and thought of heaven.

Then the old priest saw, as it were, a shining man on the right side of the altar, and at the sight of this angel his knees shook and hands trembled.

"Fear not," said the bright one; "your wife Elizabeth

will have a son, whom you must call Heaven's-gift, or John. A great man shall he be, strong, though never drinking wine; and, as a messenger, he shall teach the people to be good and wise."

"But,—but," stammered old Incense-burner, "but—but".....

"Ah, you don't take my word," said the angel; "then I tell you I am Gabriel, courtier in the halls of God in heaven. You shall be dumb, and not a word will your lips speak till baby Heaven's-gift be born."

So, of course, the priest could not walk out and say to the crowd, "Go, and peace be unto you." He moved his silent lips, and waved his wrinkled hands, and the folk went home, wondering much and chattering much. They had not seen the angel.

About six months after that, the bright one entered a small cottage in the town of Nazareth, in Galilee; and there was a maid there named Mary, or Maria.

"Hail, Mary, favourite of God," he said, "Blessed among women are you."

Like Incense-burner, she trembled.

"Fear not, Mary. I come from heaven to tell you that you will be mother of Jesus the Saviour of Men. Great shall he be, and God, his father, will give him the throne of David, and King Jesus will rule his kingdom for ever."

Mary bent low in a salaam before Gabriel, the courtier of heaven, and she answered meekly,—

"I am the maidservant of God."

Gabriel flew back to cloud-land.

Mary packed a little bundle for a journey, and set out, at a quick pace, across the hills, to visit her elder kinswoman, Elizabeth; for the cloud-land messenger had told her Elizabeth's secret.

The two women smiled and chatted together; and if the fig-trees, and the olive-trees, and the grape-vines in Elizabeth's garden could have heard, they would have heard the maid Mary sing,—

"My soul praises the Lord, for all people in days to come shall call me the Blessed Lady, humble though I am. The Lord pulls down the mighty folk, and lifts the lowly ones; and he richly feeds the hungry, and sends the rich empty away; and he forgets not his people the Jews; he forgets not the children of Abraham."

Of this praise-song, the old priest heard every word; but he could speak no word to this happy girl of Nazareth.

About three months later, Elizabeth's neighbours, with laughter and chatter, and joyous greetings, swarmed into her house, telling how glad they were to hear she was mother of a babe; and it was a pleasure, indeed, to be present at his naming, when he was eight days old.

"Blessings on the little Zacharias!" cried the friends.

"No, no, no, kinsfolk," said Elizabeth. "His name is John,—Heaven's-gift."

"Nonsense! it is not a family name."

"Yes," she insisted, "John, John, John."

They turned to the old man, whose name was Zacharias.

He moved his hands as if holding a pencil, or pointed stylus.

They understood, and hastened to lay before him a tablet of wood, over which was smeared a smooth varnish of wax. Every eye followed the motion of his stylus, and in the silence, all could hear the scratching, as he wrote,—

"The child's name is John."

They stared; and yet more did they marvel when the old priest flung up his arms, and shouted,—

"Praise Heaven for Heaven's-gift!"

Crowds gathered in the village street to talk of the

wonder ; and every shepherd, and ploughman, and vine-dresser in the hill-country gossiped for days about the dumb man's speech, and the naming of John.

"It will be a wonder-child," said everybody.

The old priest also had his song to sing,—

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. Our horn is lifted up in triumph ; our foes will be laid low ; and my little Heaven's-gift will be the great Runner-before, and he will go before the king, and give news to the people of the coming Dawn. Light, light, light to the folk in the shadow ! Light to lead our feet in the way of peace !"

In after-years, a young man dwelt in the wild region of the hills ; his food was plant-food, his drink was water from the rippling burn ; his coat was rough ; he climbed rocks with the sure foot of a goat ; his thoughts were of the Dawn, and of the Light, and of the King who would come to burn the Wrong in the fire of the Right.

The young man was Elizabeth's son, John the Fore-runner, John the Pioneer. Strong man of the wilderness was he ; and when he shouted, the echoes of his voice rang from cliff to cliff.

* . * * *

Such is the legend given in the gospel known as the gospel of *Saint Luke*.

The Fore-runner who lived in the wilderness was a sort of monk, or Essene. These Essenes were Jews who dwelt apart, in lonely places, in a society of their own. They all sat at one table to eat their simple meals. All wore garments of like pattern. All laboured, either in tilling the soil, or at some craft for the making of things. They placed all their goods in one store, and the overseers bought for all whatever was needed. If any man was sick, the Brethren nursed him. No slaves were kept ; no monk sold any wares that he made ; and none ever handled a deadly weapon. Often and often they washed, and such was their zeal to wash at day-break that they were sometimes called Morning Baptists. They sent gifts of incense to the Temple at Jerusalem, but never went there themselves. They never slew animals for sacrifice. If sickness fell on any, they deemed it the work of demons, or devils, and sought to cast out devils by whispered magic words, or the use of magic roots and herbs. Listening, they thought they could hear voices from heaven ; and in cloud-land they believed there was a happy realm, where winds blew soft, and souls might live in peace.

Some people think that John the Baptist (Heaven's gift), and Jesus, son of Mary, were Essenes.

And some people think.....

Oh, there is no end to what some people think, and other people think ; and, after all, I am only telling legends.¹

F. J. GOULD.

Going ! Going ! Gone !

THE *Fra* readers will permit me to apologize to them for an erroneous article published some months ago, entitled "Blatherskite Billy." Therein I called Billy Sunday a grafter, a rogue, a charlatan, a soul-snatcher, a money-changer in the temple, a master of chicanery, a braying ass, a crooked seeker for effects, a mountebank, a clown, a tawdry egotist in grease-paint, a trafficker in the trite, a shrewd seducer of the people, a contemptible, low fellow, a vile-tongued betrayer of "the Word," a spiritual harlot. Twenty of his sermons I had read thoroughly

for their mob psychology. Ten men, whose judgment I respected, had attended his tabernacle-feast, given me their minute and unprejudiced impressions in writing. The Baltimore newspaper accounts I had devoured with the zeal of a convert. I thought I knew ball-player Billy, the hell-devil Evangelist. I had never heard Sunday—never seen him, but I thought I knew his mind, his kind. God help me—I erred. I must apologize.

Billy Sunday is now in Buffalo. Last night I saw him—heard him—sat at his feet. East Aurora sent in a special train. Four hundred and fifty of us made the trip. We bought Peter's chocolate and salted pea-nuts in lieu of supper. Streaked it for the revival shed.

Fifteen rows from the rostrum we found seats directly in front—an ideal situation. Five people constituted the immediate party : a Protestant Christian, a Roman Catholic, a Swedenborgian, a neutral and me, Myself ! Probably we formed a complete unit in that vast concourse of human varieties, Philistines and Publicans, Greeks and Romans. We expected all there was to expect—yielded he who could draw together such multitudes must offer *something*.

'Twas yet early. Then the tabernacle contained not more than two hundred people. Soon the mass flocked in—thousands—14,000 I believe is the capacity. 'Twas filled when Mr. Rodeheaver appeared with his trombone to lead a picked choir of 1,200 voices. First surprise ! Rodeheaver is, unquestionably, able. How he ever became ambitious to blow strange and fearsome noises through the twin pipes of a trombone I cannot say. God moves in mysterious ways his blunders to perform. Rodeheaver has brains.

He welcomed the invited groups, including the "East Aurora Bunch," with aplomb and well-measured patronage. Asked each to name a favourite hymn. Requested some safe and sane groups to sing their selection. Passed out a few Class B jokes and complimentary personalities. Excellently well-opened up the meeting. Turned over to Sunday an assembly warmed up, cheered, jollied a bit, pleased with *its* part in the show, in an altogether complacent, non-resisting frame of mind. A thankless task, sympathetically and artfully carried through. "Khody," by the cut of his clothes, his selection of vests and neck-wear is not a "gentleman" ; by his paucity of words, and slurrings, and repetitions, he's not educated. Yet for a' that he's a considerable man. There lurks animal power behind the easy exterior !

Hear me say it—I apologize. Sunday is sincere—he believes every word he preaches. He's not a grafter, a rogue, a charlatan—he's not in it for the money. I doubt whether he gets much more than his board and clothes for his share. Driven into a corner, a personal decision demanded, I am sure he would offer to preach Christ free.

I doubt he knows the feel of the thousands that have poured into his consecrated tin pans ! Poor Billy Sunday is a blithering, babbling, grimacing paranoic. Once before I used this word to describe Sunday. But then lightly, contemptuously, as one who designates a crafty crank. Now I weigh my word, seriously, as one who wishes to earnestly convey to you that Billy Sunday is a crazy man—a loon, beset by hallucinations, seeing visions, hearing voices, talking direct to heaven and hell ! Please do not mistake my intent, I do not desire to disparage his theology. For the sake of this article I will accept the Sunday religion, in its entirety, without equivocation. I want to hold your attention to the most ghastly joke, the most tragic fraud ever foisted on the American people.

What I saw made me sick in the pit of the stomach,

¹ In this series of sketches, the chief authority for details as to geography, manners, customs, etc., is the *Encyclopedia Biblica*. 4 vols., edited by Canon T. K. Cheyne and Dr. J. Sutherland Black.

weak! (We were all expectant—we especially wanted to hear his "Oratory"!) He came on the high platform, and sat down on the lone kitchen-chair. His mind seemed far off. He put his hand up to stroke his face, and when he touched his face, it twitched horribly. When he removed his hand, the face and neck continued to twitch strangely; now here, now there! Now the chin and behind the ear at the same time! If I exaggerate a word of this I hope Billy Sunday's God will paralyze me where I sit!

Soon his time came to speak. Rodeheaver motioned him, signalled him. He stood, tottered, and then ran the fourteen feet that separated the chair and the pulpit, *on his toes*, tilted forward. Oft I have seen men drunk and men heavy in drugs make progress like this. I could not believe my eyes. I dare not look at my companions—what were they seeing?

Rodeheaver knows. He stands by Sunday every minute. He permits Sunday no duties but the sermon. He sustains him; holds him together.

Sunday announced the text: "God commanded all men to repent!" "Get that!" he squealed. "Not me! God! God commanded—not Billy Sunday—God!"

Some one to my left murmured: "Egomaniac!" But 'twas more than ego! His poor emaciated body served simply to hang clothes on. His long, thin shanks failed him as he walked. His physical deterioration is marked. His nerves are gone. His brain cannot remember more than one paragraph. He may never get more than three feet from his notes. Yes—he talked with note!

For one hour and ten minutes he excited himself, raved, stood on one leg, shook his fist, made faces at the Devil, talked to God, exhausted his voice, shrieked with diabolical laughter that sent shivers along the spine. "Oh, Felix," whispered the young woman next to me, "he's crazy!" "Aye, poor man, he is!"

Unbalanced! Deranged! Obsessed! Gone—his mind gone! No wonder he attracts crowds! And not by what he says—I assure you that. He said not a single memorable word—not one. Not a thought. Not a joke. Not a vulgarity. Not a story. Not an apt illustration. Not a word-picture; nothing!

He ranted and he tore his body for physical reinforcement! His body lacks virility to help him. He was *flat!* and dull! He is flamboyant without force. Erratic without originality. Jocular without humour. He talked from his vocal cords. He never went below them for power. Imagine the condition of his voice—hoarse, wheezy, disagreeable. Imagine the agony of his facial expression as he tried to reach 14,000 with a worn-out voice, a sick mind, a wandering will, and a body that stumbles.

Applause seems to surprise and delight him. In mid-air he stops his harangue, retires behind the pulpit, walks up and down, rubs his hands together, smirks and gibbers to himself, apparently oblivious of his audience.

Twelve words he mispronounced—either through mental lapses or ignorance. Five times he started sentences, and when half through lost his thought, and never recovered it.

Lincoln and Douglas in the historic debate averaged 100 spoken words a minute. Practically no variation in the vocal speed of the two. Sunday would seem to average 200; when frantic he goes up to 300! When he finished, just seventeen people of the 14,000 voluntarily "hit the trail." Then the man-to-man solicitation began. "Secretaries" struggled behind every row of seats to reach the individual. Three times in twenty minutes I suffered while some person to me unknown wrapped his arm around my shoulders, breathed dewy

breaths in my face, asked me: "Are you ready to take Christ?" "Take him where?" I answered the last salesman. He tartly responded: "The Devil has got *you* all right!"

Compared with the impertinence, the embarrassment, of the solicitation, any ordinary person will find the sawdust trail and Sunday's aspen a haven of refuge! His originally small undisciplined mind stressed emotionally, driven by a tremendous physical energy, has become addled, muddled, witless! No wonder in his religious frenzy he sounds the call of Brotherhood to other undersized, unused, undeveloped, withered minds, balancing on the brink, amazed at the immensity of life's proportions, the human odds and ends that clutter his sawdust trail. For years over-worked! Night and day with one subject, and that one subject the contributing cause of more than two-thirds of all insanity, Billy Sunday has reached journey's end. 'Tis a crime against civilization to let him go on. The night he falls frothing on his platform will drop the curtain on Protestant Christianity in America. Not that that would be fatal in itself, but think of the reaction on his thousands of dupes!

Billy Sunday's "light that shines" is the phosphorescent glow which hovers over the dead.

Readers of the *Fra* are urged to go and hear Billy Sunday. Do not take my word. Invite a friendly doctor to go along professionally. What he notes, what you see with your own eyes, will largely explain the "eccentricities" of this pathetic figure, like John Brown, another crazy man who came down and took the town.—FELIX SHAY in the *Fra*.

Correspondence.

CIRCUMSCRIBED JUDAISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—There is one consideration which, to my mind, presents an insuperable difficulty against the Divine authority of the Jewish religion—inasmuch as it shows an absurdity—which I have never seen put forward except, indeed, as a hint coming from Julian, surnamed the Apostate, given in Schaff-Herzog's *Encyc* (third ed., art. "Infidelity"). The difficulty is that of believing that an ubiquitous God of infinite power should have allowed his religion to have remained shut up within the narrow limits of Palestine during so many centuries. From Moses to Christ was fifteen centuries, or thereabouts.

JAMES MASTERSON.

THE DAVENPORT BROTHERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In his article of June 24, Mr. Mann tells us that the report of the exposure of the Davenport Brothers "is a fable circulated by our great and glorious free press." Let me assure you that Mr. Maskelyne did expose them, and that most effectually. A full account is to be found in a work written by Mr. Maskelyne, *Modern Spiritualism*, published by Warne & Co. It bears no date, but was apparently issued in the late seventies. Chapter vi. is devoted to "The Juggling Gemim!" which was Maskelyne's playful way of designating the Davenport Brothers. He tells us how he discovered their tricks:—

Being present at a morning cabinet *seance* given by the Davenports at the Town Hall, Cheltenham, I was elected a representative of the audience, and by the accidental fall of a curtain, hung over a window to exclude the light, I got a key to the *knotty* problem, which I have ever since used with such effect to reproduce all the tricks of the Brothers, that Spiritualists are in the singular dilemma of either branding them as impostors, or of claiming Mr. Cooke and myself as mediums. The latter is the course usually adopted.

The Brothers failed to release themselves on many occasions. The "Tom Fool's Knot" that Mr. Mann mentions, was cut

by a coadjutor, and the performance abruptly terminated. Mr. Maskelyne informs us:—

In Ireland, at a private *seance*, Ira Davenport and William Fay were baffled by a gentleman whom they thought to be a Spiritualist; and after sitting an hour without manifestations, they were untied at their own request.

A search through the files of the Freethought journals of the period, the *National Reformer* and the *Secular Chronicle*, would probably discover many references to the Davenport Brothers.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Mann's articles will be produced in book form. That his previous series of articles on Nietzsche were not reprinted is regretted by many.

A. G. B.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your comment on an article taken from the *Salt-coats Herald* is obviously due to the fact that you have in mind only those professed Socialists who claim that religion and Socialism are in harmony. We Socialists claim that Socialism is a science based on the materialistic conception of history, and, as such, quite impossible to reconcile with any religious beliefs. The Socialists' case against religion differs widely from the usual Freethought position.

There are Rationalist superstitions as well as Christian. Religion was not the wicked invention of charlatans, nor is the passing of superstition simply to be explained by the triumph of reason." The progress of science, and, therefore, the decay of religion, is ultimately explicable only from the evolution of economic conditions. Ideas play a secondary part in social development. They are the effects of the material environment upon human beings. Therefore, in his worship of the "idea," the *bourgeois* Freethinker is like the Christian, attributing miraculous powers to the figments of mens' brains. We Socialists are under no illusion as to the value of religion as a means of keeping the working-classes in subjection. Meekness, mildness, and contentment are the essence of religion. Many Christians have never been under any illusion as to Socialism being opposed to religion. Dr. Shadwell, at the 1909 Church Congress, held at Swansea, said "The purely materialistic view on which Socialism is based is absolutely opposed to the Christian teaching." And I could quote many others who speak in a similar strain. In conclusion, may I suggest that you have been led astray by the remarks of pseudo-Socialists?

M. STREIMER.

[It would help considerably to an understanding of the dictum that "the decay of religion is ultimately explicable only from the evolution of economic conditions," if we were informed on what the evolution of economic conditions depend. Until that is done the phrase reads like one of those "blessed words" which satisfy without enlightening. Further, the Freethinker does not attribute miraculous powers to ideas; what he does see is that man is always under the dominion of his ideas, and it is these that are the chief determinants of social conditions. And, presumably, the *idea* of Socialism plays some part in the making of Socialists. Finally, no human society exists, or ever has existed on an economic basis. The social bond is essentially a psychologic one.—EDITOR.]

Consolation.

ONLY add

Deeds to thy knowledge answerable,
Add faith,

Add virtue, patience, temperance,
Add love—

By name to come called charity—
The soul

Of all the rest; then wilt thou
Not be loth

To leave this paradise, but shalt
Possess

A paradise within thee,
Happier far.

MILTON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

MR. A. D. HOWELL SMITH'S DISCUSSION CLASS (N. S. S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street): Thursday, July 19, at 7.30.

OUTDOOR.

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

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley Road): 7, Mr. Thurlow, "Christianity v. Miracles."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 6.30, Miss Kough, "He Can't Do Anything."

REGENT'S PARK N. S. S.: 3.15, H. J. Stenning, 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, H. Spence, B.Sc., "Has Man Fallen?"

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Yeates; 3.15, Messrs. Dales and Hyatt; 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Beale, and Kells.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N. S. S. (12A Clayton Street): 6.30, Members' Meeting.

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SHEFFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (Poole Square): 7, Percy S. Wilde, "A Criticism of Christianity."

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