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Views and Opinions.

Agnostic or Atheist?

A correspondent asks *apropos* of our notes of September 16, if we can tell him the difference between Agnosticism and Atheism. Candidly, we can't—at least so far as the question of the existence of God is concerned, and in any other connection the subject is of no consequence here. In a philosophical discussion there is a question as to the nature of "Reality"—something which is assumed to exist beyond the world as it appears in consciousness, and is the cause of our conscious states—and in relation to that we can conceive a state of mind that may be correctly described as "Agnostic." But in relation to the existence of God, we can see no distinction whatever between a logical Agnosticism and Atheism. Neither have we ever met anyone who could explain wherein the difference lies. All we know is that some people prefer the name "Agnostic" to that of Atheist. They prefer the new name; we prefer the old one. But as the Agnostic is one who doesn't believe in a God, and the Atheist is one who is without belief in a God, we find ourselves quite unable to point the difference between the two. To use an alleged Hibernicism, they are both alike, but one is more so.

Science and God.

The peculiar thing is that so many people, of whom one would expect better things, persist in debating the question of belief in God as though they existed in the eighteenth century instead of the twentieth. Let us bear in mind that for considerably over half a century anthropologists have been collecting, classifying, and analyzing facts, all of which go to show how the idea of gods originated, and how it has developed. Now, we admit, that one may reject the story of the origin of the God-idea as told by anthropology, and logically profess a condition of mental uncertainty as regards the existence of God. But if one accepts this story as true in only a general way, what is their left for discussion? Is not Atheism the logical—the only issue? If people

began to believe in gods because in their ignorance they misunderstood things, which we now understand, what is there left for discussion? A little more than two centuries ago the belief in witches was in full vogue. And, under the then existing conditions, one can conceive many people being genuinely puzzled as to whether witches really existed. But when the facts upon which this belief was based were properly understood, and differently interpreted, what room was there for doubt or debate? Clearly none at all. And this is quite on all fours with the belief in God. If the belief in gods began in a mistaken interpretation of natural facts, subjective or objective, what justification is there for regarding the conclusion as probably true when the premiss is dismissed as demonstrably false? No amount of reasoning can bring something out of nothing. You cannot extract a fact from a delusion. You may, if you like, dispute the anthropological date, but you cannot honestly ignore it, still less can you admit it, and then proceed with your argumentation as though it did not exist. If a reinterpretation of the facts upon which the belief in witches rested, warrants a complete rejection of the idea of witchcraft, why will not a reinterpretation of the facts upon which the belief in gods rest, warrant us in treating the God-idea in the same fashion?

* * *

Does Atheism Deny?

It may be said that the Atheist is one who denies the existence of God; the Agnostic merely suspends judgment. But this statement concerning the Atheist is, in one sense, not true, because it is impossible. In another sense it is as true of the Agnostic as it is of the Atheist. There is, even with the Agnostic, no hesitation in denying the existence of any of the god's figured by the religions of the world. The Agnostic is not in doubt concerning the existence of the God of the Bible any more than he is in doubt concerning the existence of the Mumbo Jumbo of an African tribe. The Agnostic is not in doubt here. His disbelief is complete and final. And if we reject the possibility of these particular gods one after the other, what have we left? All that remains is the bare word, and that by itself stands for nothing at all. Abstractions are—abstractions, they are not existences. Once all particular gods are negated the word "God" loses all significance or value. The Atheist, therefore, cannot deny the existence of a "God" because by itself the word is unintelligible. It stands for nothing that will carry affirmation or negation. And in repudiating or denying the existence of particular gods, he is doing only what every Agnostic is bound to do, and does without the slightest hesitation.

* * *

On Behalf of Clarity.

It may be said that we are trying to prove a negative. But this is not so. One can only attempt to prove a negative when the terms of a proposition admit of being brought together in consciousness. Mark Twain said that he believed Adam was buried in the place pointed out to him, because no one had ever been able to prove that he wasn't. But if anyone had tried to do so the

terms of the proposition—a dead man, a grave, an act of burial—were all realizable in thought. But in the case of the existence of "God" we are on different ground. Historically, "God" means a God believed in by some people, somewhere, at some time. Put on one side this consideration, and there is left the subject of neither affirmation nor negation. "God" in the abstract is not a possibly real existence any more than a tree in the abstract is a real existence. There is a pine tree, a pear tree, an apple tree, etc., but there is and can be no "tree" apart from known trees. So, if we accept the possibility of the existence of the gods worshipped by various peoples, "God does exist," or "God does not exist," becomes an intelligible proposition. Reject this existence, as Agnostics do, and there is nothing left. We have nothing of which we can plead ignorance, there is nothing concerning which we can profess a suspension of judgment. "God," by itself, means nothing. It is nothing. No one can deny its existence, for no one knows what it means. * * *

Atheism the Logical Issue.

The present position of affairs is curious. On the one side there is a crowd of theologians whose minds are naturally in the pre-evolutionary stage, and whose thinking is unaffected by the newer knowledge. From them no one expects a recognition of the truth that the gods have been explained out of existence, as witches and warlocks were several generations ago. But stranger still it is to see on the other side those who avow acceptance of the natural origin of the God-idea, and who yet, when they come to deal with current religion, talk as though it were a question of the inconclusiveness of religious arguments. It is nothing of the kind. The reply to the arguments set forth on behalf of Theism is not that they are inconclusive, and therefore leave one undecided, but that they are absolutely irrelevant to the question at issue. We cannot remain undecided because there is nothing to be undecided about. We know that the idea of God is pure myth, and that it was never anything else. A belief that began in error, and which has no other basis than error, cannot, by any possible argument, be converted into a truth. The old question was: "Can man by searching find out God?" The modern answer is an emphatic affirmative. Substantially we have, by searching, found out God. We know, substantially, the origin and history of one of the greatest delusions that ever obsessed the human mind. God has been found out. Analytically and synthetically we understand the God-idea as previous generations could not understand it. It has been explained; and the logical consequence of that explanation is—Atheism.

CHAPMAN COHEN,

The Reformation in Scotland.

I.

THE more we study the Protestant Reformation the more indubitable it becomes that it was a movement calculated ultimately to make, not for a higher type of spiritual religion than the prevailing one, but for the emancipation and glorification of the human reason. We do not affirm that it actually established religious liberty, or the right of private judgment. Its immediate object, as championed by Luther and Calvin, was to transfer the seat of authority from an infallible Church to an infallible Book. This change did secure religious liberty to the Reformers themselves, but not to the rank and file of their followers. There was absolutely no liberty to criticize any of the Reformed doctrines, and many were imprisoned, tortured, and put to death, simply because

they had the courage to commit that heinous offence. Professor Bury is quite right when he says that "nothing was further from the minds of the leading Reformers than the toleration of doctrines differing from their own," and that "so far as the spirit of intolerance went, there was nothing to choose between the new and the old Churches" (*History of Freedom of Thought*, pp. 77, 78). Furthermore, the Protestant Reformation was not even a religious movement, pure and simple. No doubt, Luther and Calvin were pre-eminently religious men, but the changes which they were the means of introducing were more political and social than religious. Now, what was true of the movement in Germany, Switzerland, and, to a certain extent in France, was truer still in England. Henry VIII. broke with Rome and established the Anglican Church, not on religious grounds at all, but on grounds exclusively personal and political. Had the Pope sanctioned the divorce between him and Catherine, there would have been no Protestant Reformation in England, at least during his reign. In Scotland, the movement, in its origin, lacked the religious element altogether. The first Protestants did not even pretend to be led by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of restoring religion to its pristine simplicity and purity, but were influenced solely by a desire to be revenged upon the Court and the Church. Their desire to reform the Church was the offspring of a stronger desire to punish the ecclesiastical leaders who, acting conjointly with the Crown, had done them such gross injustice.

In order to understand the origin and nature of the Reformation in Scotland, we must take a glance at the problems which confronted that country as it emerged from the darkness of the Middle Ages. During the Dark Ages, the Scots, though intellectually a superior race, were in a state of deplorable ignorance and stupidity. We are told by one, whose disposition was to exaggerate the noble qualities of his countrymen, that "from the accession of Alexander III. to the death of David in 1370, it would be impossible, I believe, to produce a single instance of a Scottish baron who could sign his own name" (Tyler's *History of Scotland*, vol. ii., pp. 239, 240). Buckle says that having no trades, or arts, which required skill or dexterity, upon which to exercise their intellects, the people "remained so stupid and brutal, that an intelligent observer who visited Scotland in the year 1360, likens them to savages, so much was he struck by their barbarism and their unsocial manners" (*History of Civilization in England*, vol. iii., pp. 38, 39). Naturally, in such dense ignorance, superstition luxuriated and priestcraft bore high-handed sway. Every department of the country's life was controlled by the Church. Even the national conscience was in subjection to priestly authority. No other country in the world, except Spain, was so absolutely loyal to what was believed to be Divine rule. The Scots could put their kings to death without a scruple, but they never failed to respect and obey their priests.

Now, the Scottish Church was steeped in the grossest corruption. The lives of the clergy were notoriously dissolute and openly dishonest, and there was nothing they would not do to gratify their lust and their greed. Buckle describes them thus:—

In the fourteenth century, when the sufferings of Scotland were at their height, the clergy flourished more than ever; so that as the country became poorer, the spiritual classes became richer in proportion to the rest of the nation. Even in the fifteenth, and first half of the sixteenth, century when industry began somewhat to advance, we are assured that notwithstanding the improvement in the position of laymen, the whole of their wealth put together, and including the possessions of all ranks, was barely equal to the wealth of the

Church. If the hierarchy were so rapacious and so successful during a period of comparative security, it would be difficult to overrate the enormous harvest they must have reaped in those earlier days, when danger being much more imminent, hardly had any one died without leaving something to them; all being anxious to testify their respect towards those who knew more than their fellows, and whose prayers could either avert present evil, or secure future happiness (*History of Civilization in England*, vol. iii., pp. 35, 36).

Wealth led to luxury, luxury to immorality, and the immorality of the clergy to that of the people generally. We know that in obedience to a papal order, issued in 1225, a council of Scottish ecclesiastics was held, at which the shameless licentiousness of the clergy was denounced "as a disgrace to the Church." But this violent denunciation of the assembled Fathers-in-God resulted in little if any improvement, for we find that towards the middle of the sixteenth century a Dominican, named William Arith, undertook the task of attacking the vices of his fellow-Churchmen. He preached several sermons at St. Andrew's, in one of which he argued "that the disorders of the clergy should be subjected to the jurisdiction of the civil authorities."

He introduced an anecdote respecting Prior Patrick Hepburn, afterwards Bishop of Murray. That prelate once, in merry discourse with his gentlemen, asked of them the number of their mistresses, and what proportion of the fair dames were married. The first who answered confessed to five, of whom two were bound in wedlock; the next boasted of seven, with three married women among them; and so on until the turn came to Hepburn himself, who, proud of his *bonnes fortunes*, declared that, although he was the youngest man there, his mistresses numbered twelve, of whom seven were men's wives (Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, vol. ii., p. 156).

Curiously enough, however, the Scottish Reformation did not originate as a protest against the appalling degradation and corruption of the Church, but rather, as an expression of the hostility of the nobles towards both Crown and Church. For generations Crown and Church had co-operated in numerous attempts to crush the aristocracy. As Buckle says, "in Scotland the power of the nobles was a cruel malady, which preyed on the vitals of the nation"; but the same was true of Crown and Church. James I. systematically oppressed the nobles, his object being to establish his own sovereignty throughout the land. In the Parliament assembled at Perth in the spring of 1425, he suddenly arrested a large number of them, including the Duke of Albany and his two sons, whom, together with the Earl of Lennox, he put to death, and confiscated the estates of several of them. Two years later, at Inverness, he laid hands on Donald of the Isles and fifty of his chiefs, three of whom were executed, and forty sent to prison. But in 1436 the nobles turned upon his Majesty and put him to death. James II. pursued the same oppressive policy, in which he was cordially supported by the Church, his confidential adviser being Kennedy, Bishop of St. Andrews. James III. exerted himself to the utmost with the same purpose in view, and was in his turn slain by his enemies. Taking a comprehensive survey of the whole subject, we agree with Buckle's following observation:—

Looking at the interest of the nation, it is evident that the power of the nobles, notwithstanding their gross abuse of it, was, on the whole, beneficial, since it was the only barrier against despotism. The evil they actually engendered was indeed immense. But they kept off other evils, which would have been worse. By causing present anarchy they secured future liberty (*History of Civilization in England*, vol. iii., p. 30).

In the Scottish commonwealth in the fifteenth century there were only three orders, namely, government, clergy, and nobles, and we find ourselves substantially at one with the same author in the following statement:—

The two first being united against the last, it is certain that if they had won the day, Scotland would have been oppressed by the worst of all yokes to which a country can be subjected. It would have been ruled by an absolute king and an absolute Church, who, playing into each other's hands, would have tyrannized over a people, who, though coarse and ignorant, still loved a certain rude and barbarous liberty, which it was good for them to possess, but which, in the face of such a combination, they would most assuredly have forfeited (*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 51).

As a matter of fact, the combined action of kings and priests utterly failed to break the power of the nobles. Between 1513 and 1524 they flourished abundantly until the management of affairs fell into the hands of the the Douglasses, who seized the person of the king, deposed the powerful Beaton from the office of chancellor, and put themselves and their adherents into every official position. But their prosperity lasted but a day. Cardinal Beaton's political ingenuity and priestly cunning triumphed, and by a well-organized conspiracy he rescued the king from captivity and recaptured for the Church all it had so recently lost, with the result that the nobles were completely robbed of all their gains and became objects of cruel persecution. Now, without a doubt, this sudden triumph of the Church, and the consequent downfall of the nobles, must be regarded as, what Buckle calls, "the proximate cause of the establishment of Protestantism in Scotland." It was not the love of spiritual religion, it was not the working of the grace of God in pure hearts, that gave birth to the Reformation in Scotland, but hatred of the existing Church, and the very human instinct of revenge.

J. T. LLOYD.

Two Graves at Rome.

Death, not armed with any dart,
But crowned with poppies. —*Julian Fane.*

A NEWSPAPER paragraph states that an attempt is being made to bring into British ownership the German-owned English cemetery at Rome. Such a movement should not fail of its object, for even among the unnumbered wonders of the Eternal City the tree-clad burial-ground outside the Porta San Paola holds a place apart. Pilgrims come from remote corners of the earth to linger in the quiet corner where John Keats lies beside his friend, Joseph Severn, his gravestone bearing the bitter words: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." Not far away rises the slope where the heart of Percy Bysshe Shelley lies buried beside the body of his friend, Edward Trelawny. It is curious that when Shelley visited the place years before his own death, he described it as "the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld," and, in the preface to *Adonais*, he says, "It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." Nor is this all, for Shelley's little son, William, was buried in the same cemetery, which afterwards received the body of Keats and his own ashes. No stone marks the child's grave, for Shelley and Mary were unable to superintend the erection of a tombstone.

Shelley's death was untimely. He was drowned in the sea he loved so well, and whose praises he had so often sung. From his early years the sea ever had a fascination for him. Even in his boyhood days he loved to watch the drifting of paper boats down a stream, and thought that drowning would be the most beautiful of deaths. Thrice he had narrow escapes from shipwrecks

—once flying with Mary across the English Channel, once with Byron on the Lake of Geneva, and, again, with his friend, Williams, in Italy. Shelley was luckless with all his boats. His unfortunate first wife, Harriet, sought the same mode of death which at last overwhelmed the poet. Shelley prophesied his own end, though few have noticed it. In *Julian and Maddalo* he makes Byron ("Count Maddalo") address to him a jesting warning:—

You were ever still,
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs.

And the warning concludes:—

Beware, if you can't swim.

A prophecy the more sinister for its levity, its unconsciousness of hastening destiny. The recurrence of this thought in Shelley's poetry is very singular. The last lines of *Adonais* might be read as an anticipation of his own death by drowning. In *Alastor* we read:—

A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone death on the drear ocean's waste.

The glorious *Ode to Liberty* closes on the same fateful and pathetic note:—

As waves, which lately paved his watery way,
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

The *Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples*, echo the same thought:—

And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

In a dirge, written in 1817, he gives vent to the idea:—

That time is dead for ever, child—
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever.

What Shelley might have done had he lived longer, or whether he would have lived much longer if he had not been drowned, are idle questions. His friend, Trelawny, was of opinion that the poet would have lived to a good age, as his father did. Shelley himself, shortly before the end, said, "I am ninety," meaning that he had lived and felt so intensely, that he felt older than his years. Nor was it an idle boast, for he was himself the Julian of his poem:—

Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth.

Shelley was the poet of the Great Revolution, and the poet and the Revolution were contemporary. On Shelley's birthday, August 4, 1792, it was decreed by the National Assembly that all religious houses should be sold for the benefit of the nation; and Louis XVI. was no longer recognized as King of France. It was on this same day of August that the Emperor of Germany and the King of Prussia issued their famous manifesto announcing their mission to put down the Revolution and "console mankind" by giving up "the city of Paris to the most dreadful and terrible justice." Nor is this all, for Mary Wollstonecraft, the mother of Shelley's Mary, had just published her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and proclaimed that "liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women are, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp, invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature." This was the world in which men were living on that quiet day when the poet of the Revolution first saw the light in that little chamber looking out on the peaceful Sussex pastures.

Talk of miracles! What marvel is like to real genius? In that room, in that quiet rustic dwelling, from a rough, country squire, and from a mother who was nothing remarkable, sprang *Adonais*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and some of the loveliest lyrics of a thousand years of English literature. If, instead of Shelley, an infant Squire Western had been produced on that August

day, everyone would have thought it natural, but instead of a bucolic squire, we have a master of poetical music, and a thinker five hundred years ahead of his own time. His own generation hated him, trampled upon him, and cast him out; but in the wilderness of exile he still delivered his message in deathless song, which a few brave spirits heard and treasured, and which now commands a wider audience, and which will be hailed ultimately as the Gospel of Humanity.

John Keats's grave is the older in this Roman cemetery. Shelley sang the younger poet's death-song in *Adonais*, having in that immortal rhapsody coupled the name of Keats with his own for ever. When Keats was dying of consumption, his friend, Joseph Severn, cheered his last days. "Poor Keats," he wrote, "has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend; he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall on me they close gently, open quickly, and close again, till he sinks to sleep." Is not this the true pathos and sublime of human life? Is there a diviner thing in the world than pure affection shining through the mists of death? At the last, Severn held his dying friend in his arms for seven hours. Severn outlived Keats for fifty-seven years, and his remains were removed from their original resting-place and buried beside those of Keats. It was well done. In the presence of such a perfect friendship—

Death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil.

Because of these infidel graves, generations of English and American visitors to Rome make pilgrimage to where they lie beside the Pauline Gate at the opening of the Ossian Way. Even Italians would desire that these few sacred acres should be for ever in English hands. The appeal itself is noteworthy, for it is a public confession that the two great Freethought poets confer glories upon one of the greatest cities of the civilized world, and that even the Eternal City is made more honourable and illustrious by their presence.

MIMNERMUS.

Science, Telepathy, and Communion with the Dead.

X.

(Concluded from p. 582).

The intense desire for some assurance that the conscious personality does survive the Great Change has indeed been inbred and developed in man in many countries and under many systems, both of Philosophy and Religion, for many ages. So much so, that we, in Western countries at any rate, are almost unable to conceive of any other aspiration as animating the human soul.

And yet the fact remains, that probably the greater number of human beings who have inhabited this earth since man appeared upon it have held a Faith to which this idea of an eternally surviving personality is absolutely abhorrent. The Buddhist's "Nirvana" appears to mean, as nearly as European thought or language can define it, a State of Bliss in which the personality has ceased to exist.

Are these great questions to be solved for us at last by paid professional mediums? Have Messrs. and Mesdames Sludge and Co. the key to the great secret which has baffled both Philosophy and Science since their inception?

Can I, indeed, expect to buy for a guinea in Bond Street, or for half-a-crown in East London, some trick which will enable me to lift the curtain behind which lies—that which Religions have been divided upon since man was endowed with a soul?—W. Cook, "Reflections on Raymond," pp. 92-3-4.

MAJOR COOK comments on Peters' communication as follows:—

Peters, on September 27th, refers to one group photograph in which Raymond appears with "other men"—

an experience common to hundreds, or thousands, of other young officers in the new Army. He mentions Raymond's appearance in this group with a stick—an appendage to uniform also common to, practically, all officers of the new Army, and carried by apparently every other officer in the group photograph reproduced in Sir Oliver's book.

So far, Peters' general reference to a group photograph (in which Raymond appears) was a perfectly safe one to venture on as regards, practically, any young officer of the new Army. Peters' further *particulars*, however, show conclusively that his reference to a group photograph can apply correctly neither to the particular group reproduced in Sir Oliver Lodge's book (upon which Sir Oliver relies) nor to Raymond; because, in the latter group, Raymond's stick is not under his arm, but on the ground across his foot, and not held by him in any way; and also because neither in this, nor in any other photograph in Sir Oliver's book, does Raymond show the slightest vestige of the moustache with which Peters supplies him elsewhere in the same "sitting." No one, not even a medium making "shots" at random, could have made more mistakes than Peters crowds into his short reference to photographs of Raymond on September 27th.

Peters finally "plumps" for three photographs only as in possession of Raymond's family at the date on which he (Peters) is speaking. "Two where he is alone and one where he is in a group with other men."

Sir Oliver himself counters this assertion by the "note": "Fully as many as that," *i.e.*, Peters has understated the number of photographs.¹

But above all (and this puts the matter out of court altogether as evidence), Peters states that this one group photograph was in the possession of the family before Raymond went away. As we have seen, it was not taken until he reached France, as Sir Oliver well knew. And yet Sir Oliver takes no notice of all these glaring discrepancies. He is so determined to find proofs, that he turns a blind eye to everything that tells against his position.

As Major Cook emphatically remarks: "The inference is plain that Peters' reference to photographs, whether group or otherwise, on September 27th, was merely a general and impudent 'shot' at random at matters of which he had no definite knowledge, whether 'supernormal' or otherwise—a random and bad 'shot' similar to his later attempt, at the same 'sitting,' when he says: 'You have in your house prizes' (athletic) 'which he won,' and which Sir Oliver dismisses as 'incorrect.'"²

The second reference to the photograph was at the sitting with the medium, Mrs. Leonard, on December 3, 1915; the spirit of Raymond communicating through "Feda," Mrs. Leonard's control, supposed to be the spirit of a little Indian girl. It would take too long to reproduce this communication, but we may take the description of it given by Major Cook as correct. He describes it as "vague and shuffling as regards several details with regard to which one of those who had sat for the original could hardly be in any doubt, but strikingly accurate as regards other details easy enough to be remembered by one who had merely seen, or had heard a description by another person who had seen, a copy; and to whom the existence of a 'key' was not unknown, but who had not a particularly good memory for names."³

One of the details described by Raymond through "Feda" through Mrs. Leonard—what a journey!—were certain horizontal and vertical lines on the background of the photograph. These lines are caused by binders and joints of the woodwork of the hut which

forms the background of the group. Now, as Major Cook points out, these lines would not have been visible to Raymond, as he was sitting with his back to the hut; neither, we may add, would he have thought them worth mentioning if he had noticed them. But to a person who had only seen the photo, they would appear most striking.

There is not the slightest doubt in the present writer's mind that Mrs. Leonard had seen the photo in question. Let us go over the dates again. Captain Boast sent the negatives to England, where they arrived on October 15, 1915. A large number of copies appear to have been printed—there were twenty-one officers and their friends to supply. On November 28, Mrs. Cheves had six in her possession, with a key to the names, and wrote offering a copy to Lady Lodge, but which was not sent until December 7, an interval of nine days.

On November 28, then, it was common knowledge in Sir Oliver's household that the photo existed. On December 3, five days later, Mrs. Leonard describes the photo at a sitting with Sir Oliver. Five days was ample time for her to obtain a copy of the photo, and the unfortunate delay of Mrs. Cheves in not sending her copy until the 7th gave just the chance needed to work the oracle.

Such is the evidence with which Sir Oliver Lodge would convert the world!

Sir Oliver Lodge prefaces this record of the photograph with the remark: "This is a long record, because I took verbatim notes, but I propose to inflict it all upon the reader, in accordance with promise to report unverifiable and possibly absurd matter, just as it comes, and even to encourage it."¹ But why should the spirits wish to communicate "absurd matter"? And why on earth should Sir Oliver encourage them in it?

That they did communicate absurd matter, the following extract from this sitting will show. Mrs. Leonard—we leave out the pretended spirits of "Feda" and Raymond—speaking of the spirit world, says:—

People here try to provide everything that is wanted. A chap came over the other day, who *would* have a cigar. "That's finished them" he thought. He means he thought they would never be able to provide that. But there are laboratories over here, and they manufacture all sorts of things in them. Not like you do out of solid matter, but out of essences and ethers and gases. It's not the same as on the earth plane, but they were able to manufacture what looked like a cigar.....Some want meat and some strong drink; they call for whisky soda's. Don't think I'm stretching it, when I tell you that they can manufacture even that.²

In the same sitting the supposed spirit of Raymond says: "My suit I expect was made from damaged worsted on your side.....You know flowers, how they decay. We have got flowers here; your damaged flowers flower again with us—beautiful flowers." And further, we learn: "He (Raymond) has brought that doggie again, nice doggie.....He's got a cat too, plenty of animals he says."³

Certainly, Sir Oliver seems to have some glimmering of the absurdity of this spiritual information; for in a footnote to the episode about the decayed flowers he remarks: "I have not yet traced the source of all this supposed information." Well, it came from the same source as the information about the photograph; for it was delivered during the same sitting.

A great deal has been made by Spiritualists of what they call "cross-correspondences"—a cross-correspondence being similar words, or a similar idea, expressed in

¹ W. Cook, *Reflections on "Raymond,"* pp. 79-80-81.

² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹ *Raymond*, p. 192.

² *Raymond*, pp. 197-198.

³ *Raymond*, pp. 199-203.

the automatic writings of two independent mediums. In this matter we are of the same opinion as Dr. Mercier, who observes: they "are so few, so ambiguous, and need so much amplification by the imaginative ingenuity of the believer, as to make very little impression upon anyone who is not ready and determined to believe in spite of his own reason.....There are very few of these so-called cross-correspondences on record; they are extremely obscure, and need a great deal of torturing and interpreting and glossing before they can be twisted into any appearance of referring to the same thing or of emanating from the same source."¹

A great deal more could be written to expose the folly and fraud responsible for the prevalent beliefs in Telepathy and Spiritualism, but enough has been said to convince any unbiased reader of the utter want of scientific evidence in favour of these delusions. If any one, after reading the evidence, still believes in these things, it is unlikely that any further evidence in any quantity will have any effect. This subject has been too long neglected by Freethinkers; they have been too prone to dismiss the subject as not worth discussing. This is the first time the subject has been discussed at length in these columns, with the exception of the Blavatsky case—and that was solely on account of Mrs. Besant's defection. Several years ago the present writer offered to write on the subject, but it was not considered worth powder and shot. In the meanwhile, this superstition has been growing by leaps and bounds. "That it is very extensive," says Dr. Mercier, "is shown in the first place by the enormous sale of the book *Raymond*, a sale that might be envied by the writer of the most popular novels." These articles will be reprinted in pamphlet form when paper is available, and every Freethinker should help to put it in circulation, in the attempt to stem this tidal wave of superstition.

W. MANN.

Better than Nothing!

THE facility with which the Nonconformist of to-day can accommodate himself to schemes for unions with State Churches is very suggestive. Believers of all sects have come to realize the value of combination. In the common anxiety for self-preservation, the Nonconformist of to-day finds it possible to pocket the principles for which the stalwart Dissenters of former times so strenuously contended.

Nonconformity hath waxed fat. The material circumstances of the majority of Nonconformists have vastly improved, and we shall all one day understand that what is *not* material is not worth considering. Are fat stipends and clerical motors the outward and visible signs of a deeper spirituality within? Modern conditions are not unfavourable to the laying up of treasure on earth. We have advanced upon the primitive methods of the hoarders of 2,000 years ago because we live in a more scientific age. Moth and rust—or even thieves? Pshaw! In any view, Nonconformity has surrendered to kid gloves and silver slippers.

We can estimate the value of Nonconformists, who pose as pioneers of Freedom, when we contemplate their attitude, for instance, to State ceremonials. Provided that they are furnished with a box at the show, they will outvie the representatives of the Government religion in a chorus of adulation and in expressions of gaping wonder at the "spiritual" significance of proceedings which have been worked up and rehearsed for weeks, and at last staged—at enormous cost to the country.

Nonconformity stands condemned for its grievous failure to find a solution of the education problem. A Unitarian clergyman was once heard earnestly to declare that, rather than have no religious manual of instruction in the day schools at all, he would welcome the Shorter Catechism. It was better than nothing! *Any religion rather than none at all!* That is the ultimate position of even the most unclerical of Nonconformists, and Freethinkers do well to keep it in mind. The War has had the effect of stimulating efforts for a more general union of Christendom because the War has revealed to professional religionists that the influences at work undermining supernaturalism are more potent than they supposed. They affect in the pulpit to ignore or minimize these influences; but "facts are chields that winna ding," and all the juggling in the world cannot blind observant people to plain statistics demonstrating the decline of Nonconformity. Nonconformity may not be dead, but it is doomed. By this we do not mean to suggest that all those who leave the sinking ship will embrace Freethought. Many of them will find a "spiritual home" in Catholicism. There are plenty of astute clerics still about who are not slack in their efforts to bring about combines, and to take what advantage they can of human fear and human weakness.

The clear conclusion to which all the facts point us is, that if the average Nonconformist of to-day were shut up to a choice between two positions, he would far sooner be a Roman Catholic than an Atheist. This may not be news to all of us, but it is something we should all keep before us in weighing up the existing situation. We are speaking of the Nonconformist of *to-day*; but every morrow that dawns makes the prospects of Atheism the brighter, because every day man adds a little more to his *knowledge*; meaning thereby, in its widest connotation, that *science* is gradually but surely supplanting superstition.

Every man who has the tiniest drop of the *virus* of religion in his blood is a potential Romanist. When France disestablished the Church, we heard frequent exclamations of horror from Nonconformists in this country about the "disaster" that had befallen that country because it had rejected God for Reason. And if the Unitarian can embrace Presbyterianism, what is to prevent him from transferring to Episcopacy, and from that to the original fold? The old man of Rome knows there is nothing to prevent him; and the farthest-seeing Romanists are biding their time. They look forward to the day foretold of old when there shall be "one flock and one shepherd." The wise old man knows there is no traditional or historical basis for the sects that have sprung up since the so-called Reformation. They are all wanderers from the Father's house. But these errant children are returning, says the patient old man. One day they will all be back again. Just give them time—give them time. And 300 years ago Romanist and Protestant burned one another! If your Faith is not sacred enough to justify the extremest measures in its vindication against heretics, what is your Faith worth? Let us get back to mediævalism by all means! We may practise it better than the Huns.

An examination of recent history does not suggest that we need entertain any regrets about the impending fall of Nonconformity. It will bring release to many prisoned minds; it will serve to simplify the issues in the future contest between Rome and Reason; and it will convince a certain nebulous type of sceptic that oil and water will not mix. Christianity, it has been suggested, destroyed two great civilizations, and is menacing a third. This War, as a contemporary event, has proved what Freethinkers have ever been maintaining is proved from the Bible—that the most frightful savagery is quite

¹ Dr. Mercier, *Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge*, pp. 110-111.

possible in association with the most fervent and most orthodox piety. The ancient warrior Jew is reproduced in the modern Hun. God is not Love, whatever else he may be. Everywhere, in so far as savagery has been replaced by humane conduct, we owe it to the ever-widening and ever-deepening current of secular advancement—and to that alone.

IGNOTUS.

Acid Drops.

By some means we missed an article in the *Daily News* of September 6, by the Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell—an omission rectified by the kindness of one of our readers. Mr. Russell's article is on the question of religious teaching by the State, and in that he frankly and fully accepts the principle of Secular Education. The following expressions are worth citing, not as anything new to *Freethinker* readers, but only as an endorsement of our position:—

If the State compels its citizens to pay for religious teaching in which they do not believe, it commits, in my opinion, a palpable injustice.

It is indeed unjust to make a Quaker pay for teaching the doctrine of the Sacraments, or a Unitarian for teaching the Deity of Christ; but it is equally unjust to make an Atheist pay for teaching the existence of God.

Churchmen will best serve the religion which they profess by joining with other "men of goodwill," though of different faiths, who desire the Secular solution. In that way only, as far as I can see, can the interests of Education be reconciled with the higher interests of Justice.

The unfortunate thing is that, to the vast majority of Christians, considerations of justice on a question of religion carries no weight whatever.

The one false note in Mr. Russell's article is struck in connection with the use of the word "Secularism." This word, he says, "has been converted in the past with a blatant form of negation, and also with a social doctrine which all decent people repudiate." It is true that many speak of Secularism as a "blatant negation," and the only explanation for that is ignorance or wilful misrepresentation. With regard to the social doctrine "which all decent people repudiate," by that Mr. Russell means, presumably, Malthusianism. And while that has no necessary connection with Secularism, it is little less than a libel to speak of it as a doctrine repudiated by all decent people, as though only indecent ones advocated it. Mr. Russell should acquaint himself with the names of those who have publicly advocated, and advocate Malthusianism before making himself responsible for such senseless slander. Malthusianism may be either sound or unsound in its philosophy, but it is childish—when it is not worse—to label a thing "indecent" because one disagrees with it. We agree it is an effective method—with the British public. For there is nothing that that public fears more than to be called indecent. To be indecent is quite a different matter.

The John Rylands Library, in Manchester, has been enriched by some Syrian manuscripts, among which is one entitled, "Discourse written by Shem, Son of Noah." Doubtless, it is as true as the Bible story.

A good story is retailed by the *Sunday Herald*, which has quite a profane flavour. Mr. Asquith was told once that a frank and full exchange of views had taken place between M. Cambon and Sir E. Grey. "In that case," said the late Prime Minister, who knew the linguistic limitations of both, "the Holy Ghost must have been present."

A press paragraph states that pilgrims bearing the Holy Carpet have left Cairo for Mecca. This is a gentle reminder that King George reigns over more non-Christians than Christians.

The playfulness of Providence has by no means been lessened by the world-war. At Weasenham, Norfolk, a cow

has given birth to four calves, which the newspapers describe as a record.

A bogus matrimonial agent with three wives, who was sentenced to three years' penal servitude at the Old Bailey, was said to have been a missionary and preacher. Judge Rentoul described the case as one of the worst he had ever tried. The restraining power of religion is not very apparent in this instance.

Professor David Smith says that when we go to heaven our dogs who love us will join us there. That is an exceedingly delightful prospect; but if the Professor's gospel be true, the majority of us are doomed to enter the other place, and one wonders whether the animals who love the ungodly will share their sufferings in hell. Will Bill Sikes' faithful dog be at his side for ever as he endures the torment of the damned? The curious thing is that Dr. Smith, who promises heaven to animals, does not know that there is either a heaven or a hell even for ourselves, beyond the tomb.

Archdeacon Holmes is perfectly well aware that there is no God who answers prayer, whether there is one who hears it or not; and yet the venerable gentleman wants his hearers to believe in God and practise prayer. In his plausible but fundamentally fallacious apologia for God he falls back upon the plea that, normally, there is no Divine action save through instrumentalities. As reported in the *Church Times* for September 14, he says:—

You must help. For remember this: to ask God to do without you what he will only do through you, is to make a mock at prayer.

Then there is absolutely no evidence that God does anything at all in human, or any other, affairs; and to pray at all is to make a mock at Nature's laws. Literally nothing happens or is done except in strict subjection to those firm laws.

It apparently never occurs to the Archdeacon that, if we do things ourselves, it is a piece of pious hypocrisy to ask God to do them. If parents must look after their children themselves, of what earthly or heavenly use can it be to invite the Heavenly Father to do it also? Mr. Holmes tacitly admits that if parents neglect their children, God won't act the part of "a glorified relieving officer." Quite so; then why drag an imaginary Divine Being into the case at all?

The Bishop of Hereford has always been regarded, and often violently denounced, as theologically a heretic; and yet it is he who, on his retirement, announces that he will not avail himself of the liberal pension to which he is legally entitled.

The Food Controller will be getting into serious trouble if he is not careful. The Vicar of Pinner says that to use War bread at Holy Communion is "absolutely illegal," since it is forbidden by the rubric, which declares for the best and purest wheat bread that may be obtained. But if the faith of the believer can transform bread into the body of Jesus Christ, it seems a little thing, by comparison, to change War bread into a pure wheaten loaf.

A correspondent wrote to the editor of a Sunday paper protesting against the constant abuse of the Kaiser, and adding, "in his private life he is a good, Christian man." Just so! He is a good man in the worst sense of the word.

The dear *Daily News* has been wondering how Cardinal Merry del Val came by his name, and says that an ancestor of his was an Irishman named "Merry." Not many followers of the Man of Sorrows can boast of being "merry."

The *Daily Telegraph* reports that the War has created a big demand in America for Bibles. We suspect the paragraph is one that has been sent round the press by some agency, but what we should like to know is the origin of the demand? Does it originate with the soldiers or with some professional

money-collecting agency for providing the Army with free copies? We strongly suspect the latter.

Nearly three years ago Professor Griffith Jones contributed an article to the *Christian World*, in which he asserted that Nietzscheanism was supreme in Germany, and that the War was largely attributable to that fact. In the *British Weekly* for September 13, the same divine is reported to have recently admitted that "the Kaiser is a genuinely religious man," but to have claimed that "he believes in the God who commanded the Israelites to slay the Amalekites, sparing neither man, woman, nor child." The Principal is still a false witness, for the Kaiser is as evangelical a Christian as Dr. Griffith Jones himself, and, possibly, a great deal more orthodox. But his being a fervent Christian does not prevent him from ordering, permitting, or winking at the unspeakable horrors of which the Germans are guilty during this War.

"Salvation Army officers have arrived in France for service among the American troops," runs a newspaper paragraph. "Now we shan't be long."

The Young Men's Christian Association should be making a good thing out of the canteens for the soldiers. Money is freely subscribed by the public; much service is given free; and goods are sold to soldiers at cost price *plus* a percentage to cover working expenses.

The poor bishops have a hard struggle to keep up their positions, but they sometimes manage to leave small sums behind them. Miss Jane Monk, of Cadogan Square, Chelsea, one of the daughters of the late Bishop of Gloucester, left £43,533.

The four hundredth anniversary of the sailing of the *Mayflower* will be celebrated shortly. This was the famous boat on which the Pilgrim Fathers sailed to America, where they landed at Plymouth rock. Colonel Ingersoll said, jestingly, that it would have been better for the United States if the Plymouth rock had landed on the Pilgrims.

Apropos of our paragraph last week referring to the Peckham tradesman who changed his name from Davies to Christ, a correspondent sends us a letter from the States who reports the name of one of America's new Army as "Goodall Holy Bible." That is indeed, hard to beat.

A writer in the *Sunday Chronicle* provides the following as a specimen of the rhymes unwritten by soldiers sentenced to terms of detention:—

King David and King Solomon
Led rather naughty lives;
They enjoyed themselves immensely
With their concubines—and wives
But as old age came creeping o'er
They experienced serious qualms,
For King Solomon wrote the Proverbs
And King David wrote the Psalms.

The Rev. E. Shillito confesses that all is not well with the Free Churches. They are not what they used to be fifty years ago. The congregations are not only restless and listless during worship, but they are audacious enough to indulge in cool and peevish criticism there upon. And that is not all by any means. The Free Churches are being deserted by growing numbers every year. Mr. Shillito thinks that one reason for this desertion is dissatisfaction with the mode and quality of the worship; but we venture to submit as the chief reason the fact that Christianity's days are numbered, and that already it is a back number so far as individual or national life is concerned. Only cranks trouble their heads now about what Jesus would do if he were with us.

It is sheer bunkum on the part of the Rev. Tolefree Parr, President of the Primitive Methodist Church, to declare that a million children could be gathered into the Sunday-schools

"if the Churches would focus their forces on this end, and if thousands of their leisured people would sacrifice themselves to become effective teachers." That "if" throws a flood of light upon the situation. The Churches are powerless because they lack faith, and they lack faith because Christianity has ceased to be a living reality to them. These men of God are wilfully blind to the fact, so patent to most others, namely, that the Christian religion is, to all intents and purposes, already obsolete, from which state no power on earth, or from heaven can recall it.

In the recent severe thunderstorm in Paris the cathedral of Notre Dame was struck by lightning, and in London's air-raid the windows of a church were blown out. "God" appears to care as little for his houses as for his children.

Lord Leverhulme says that after the War every able-bodied man and woman must work. This is a hard piece of advice for the clergy and others who play in the Lord's vineyard.

A correspondent sends the following true story. A man was trying to sell a copy of Jack London's *When God Laughs*. To him came a horrified member of the Plymouth Brethren with the query, "And when is that?" "Why," replied the other, "it is when you go round the doors with your tracts." A neat retort.

At Brentford, John Hopkins, a Wesleyan minister, and Superintendent of the Wesleyan Circuit, was summoned for obtaining sugar under false pretences. A form was filled up asking for 80 lb. of sugar for preserving own-grown fruit, and 36 lb. was sent. Inquiries showed that Mr. Hopkins possessed only four plum-trees, and that there had only been half a dozen plums on them. We like sweet things ourselves, but twelve pounds and a half of sugar to one plum does seem a trifle excessive. Mr. Hopkins was fined 40s.

"General" Booth is still spending money in advertisements asking for cheques for the "War Work" of the Salvation Army. The most warlike action of this "army" is the singing of "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

Churches are often advertised like cinemas and theatres. A prominent notice in the City reads: "St. Mary-at-Hill. Photos. Phonos." If the stories *Noah's Ark* and *Jonah and the Whale* were made the subjects of the films there ought to be full houses.

The wife of a Grimsby parson has given birth to triplets. There is at least one Christian family obeying the Biblical command, "Increase and multiply."

On a recent fete-day, the Vicar of St. Katherine's, Southbourne, Hants, the archdeacon called at the vicarage—in trousers. This reminds us of Mark Twain's description of church parade in one of the South Sea islands, where the congregation was partially dressed in European clothes. One wore a hat only, another a waistcoat, and a third was resplendent in a coat, which he wore as a pair of trousers, with his legs crowded through the sleeves.

The Right to Affirm.

By the Oaths Amendment Act of 1888 affirmation may take the place of an oath in courts of law and in all other places where the taking of an oath is necessary.

Affirmation may be claimed on one of two grounds. (1) On the ground of having no religious belief, (2) on the ground of an oath being contrary to one's religious belief.

A judge or other official may ask on what ground affirmation is claimed, but no further question is warranted, and all such additional questions should be respectfully and firmly declined.

In all cases where any trouble or difficulty occurs it would be well to inform us of the circumstances at once.

To Correspondents.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

September 23, Birmingham Town Hall; September 30, Swansea; October 7, Failsworth; October 14, Leicester; October 21, Manchester; October 28, London; November 4, Abertillery.

- A. WILLIAMS.—Pleased to hear from one so earnest in the Cause. The MSS. sent is promising, and although not up to our standard, we advise you not to be discouraged. Writing, like other things, is not learned in a day. And you have ideas. That is the main thing.
- J. HUDSON.—It is good that you wish you were able to send ten times as much. For your sake we wish you could. But we are quite content with each one doing his or her share.
- CAPT. LATHAM.—Thanks for card. The building looks fine. Pity such magnificent structures are not put to better uses. Glad to hear you are well.
- J. CLOSE.—We have no doubt your hope that "the rank and file of the Freethought Party" will do their share towards the Sustentation Fund will be realized.
- J. BREESE.—We agree with you as to your estimate of H. G. Wells. But a man who writes so much cannot be expected to think soundly—unless he happens to be a genius.
- A. HARVEY.—We are not surprised that your knowledge of "the business side of things" led you to anticipate the opening of a Sustentation Fund. Gratified to have your praise of the *Freethinker*. We are "dreaming dreams" of its future, and if we do not break in the making, some of those dreams are going to be realized.
- T. FOWLER.—We remember the description, which was a very apt one.
- F. C. WILLIS.—Help and appreciation from one who describes himself as "one of the workers" is doubly welcome. And we know that the description is deserved.
- A. CLARKE.—Thanks for cutting.
- G. J. RENDLE (Uganda).—Thanks for letter. Trust you will have a safe and pleasant trip home.
- W. W. FORD.—The passage in Josephus commencing "About this time was Josephus" is given up by nearly every authority worth citing. Some of the older and more orthodox writers, such as Lardner, Giles, and even Dean Farrar, are emphatic in its rejection. The passage was unknown to anyone before the time of Eusebius, and he is generally credited with having inserted it. If you take the passage immediately before the one referring to Jesus, and the one after it, you will see they form a natural sequence. The Jesus passage interrupts the sense of the narrative and makes some of it nonsense. With reference to other quotations, it must be remembered that neither "Chrestus" nor "Christians" have a necessary reference to an historical Jesus. Both terms are independent of the New Testament story. Sorry we cannot use MSS.
- E. G. DAWSON.—There is no Branch of the N. S. S. at present in Southampton.
- E. LECHMERE AND OTHERS.—There is really no need to apologize for the smallness of a subscription to the Sustentation Fund. Those who help to the limit of their opportunities are doing their share equally with those who help in a larger way. And we have the best reason for knowing that nothing pleases the larger givers more than to see *all* showing in a concrete manner their interest in the common cause.
- J. STANWAY.—We are quite content. If we had been looking round for an easy, well-paid job, we should never have taken on this one. We are doing what we like, and that is everything.
- F. S.—If we ever have to make that journey, we would not ask for better companionship on the road. We feel assured that you are helping in all ways to the limit of your opportunities, and no one could ask for more.
- W. J.—(1) The title of "Freethinker" is fully warranted as a title for a paper in which opinions are expressed free from the distorting prejudice of social convention. (2) We do not agree that Huxley and Spencer used "agnostic" solely for the reason that the limitations of knowledge forbade dogmatism. The question of the limitations of knowledge had little or nothing to do with it. And they were confusing the "Problem of Reality" with the belief in God—two quite distinct things.
- J. BLAIR WILLIAMS.—Thanks for letter, which shall appear in our next issue.
- W. DODD.—Your delight at the subscription list in last week's issue is shared by all our readers who have written. There seems a general determination "to be in it" this time.
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*

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

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.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

As will be seen, our Sustentation Fund is going along merrily. It looks, indeed, as though the wishes of many of our subscribers will be realized, and, in addition to clearing off last year's deficit, there will be left in hand a substantial contribution towards meeting the recurring weekly loss. In that direction I am quite in the hands of my readers. In any case, I can only thank in a general manner all who have subscribed, and even those who would have done so had their means permitted. I have been much encouraged by the letters which accompanied most of the subscriptions. It is good to feel that one's efforts are so appreciated, and that one has so warm, and even enthusiastic, a backing.

I am again compelled to severely restrict the number of letters from which I quote.

C. W. writes:—

For well over a year I have been impressed by the fact that I have been receiving weekly for twopenny a journal for which I ought to have paid at least threepence. I have now much pleasure in enclosing all these withheld pennies in one lump sum, and hope that all your readers will follow suit. Of course, in reckoning this way, I am looking at the *Freethinker* commercially. From any other point of view a cash computation is quite inadequate.

If considerably less than all our readers followed this plan, we should be free of all financial worries until the end of the War.

This is echoed by H. C. who, in sending P.O. for 4s. 4d., says:—

I am willing and wishful to make my *Freethinker* 3d. per week. Its worth it. You have never written better than you are now doing.

Mrs. E. Adams encloses cheque, and writes:—

I am so very glad to see so good a response towards the Sustentation Fund, and I do hope that it will continue for a time, so that you may be relieved of all financial worry. I think it is wonderful what you have done at a time like this.

Mr. O. Friedman writes:—

I have been reading the *Freethinker* for seven years, in which I have gained much knowledge and good food for the intellectual part of my anatomy. So, for this pleasure, please find my cheque for £3 10s., and should your appeal not meet with the success I anticipate, I shall send you another cheque. Freethinkers should prove to such men as Mr. H. G. Wells and others their impertinence and calumny by supporting heartily and generously the cause of emancipation. The *Freethinker* is a great means of bringing light to those who, unfortunately, have had their brains cobwebbed and their ears closed to reason.

Mr. S. S. Leech regrets that his subscription was not among the first received, but adds:—

I was extremely glad on opening my paper this morning to see how Freethinkers have responded. I am inclined to think that one of the reasons is this: To every other paper the definite article attaches, and we take the *Morning Post* or the *Times*, as the case may be. But with the *Freethinker* nothing but the possessive adjective fits the case. We look forward to receiving *our* paper with its brilliant incisive articles, all based on good common sense, and with profit and pleasure we hasten

to help our editor out of his difficulties. Every good wish and success to him.

Mr. H. Irving wishes to know why it should be necessary to explain at length the reasons for needing so small a sum as £250 at a time like this, and wonders how much would be needed if the Editor and staff "were paid for the brilliant articles appearing weekly." He adds:—

"The Guards want powder, and, by God! they shall have it," said Corporal Brewster. Editor Cohen should only say, "The best of causes wants £250," and every Freethinking son of a Brewster should get away and buy a P.O., saying, "And by George (Meredith or Foote)! he shall have it."

Mr. Irving will realize by now that this appears to be the spirit animating our readers. By the time the Fund is closed we have not the slightest doubt that not only will the loss of last year be cleared, but that a substantial contribution will be made towards meeting the deficit that is bound to recur under existing conditions. As to saying why it is needed, we prefer always that, where possible, reasons should be given. It prevents misunderstandings.

Mr. W. B. Columbine, in sending cheque, writes: "Great credit is due to you for the able manner in which you are conducting the *Freethinker*, and your efforts to keep the flag flying in these difficult times should receive generous support from the whole of the Freethought Party." We are, we think, getting it.

The West Ham Branch of the N. S. S. forwards a subscription in recognition of the high quality and the propagandist value of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. J. B. Palphryman, in wishing us health and strength to continue the work, says:—

How you have kept the Freethought flag flying under the abnormal conditions which have obtained since the advent of War is little short of marvellous. That this is recognized by many of your readers is evident from the prompt and handsome response to your appeal as shown in the last issue of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. James Ralston writes:—

The *National Reformer* did not survive the great personality of Charles Bradlaugh. The *Agnostic Journal* did not survive "Saladin." I am very pleased with your splendid and very successful effort. You have kept the *Freethinker* going through three of the worst years in the history of journalism.

We can only blush, and remark that but for the loyal support of friends and readers our "successful effort" would have been impossible.

Mr. S. Scott says: "Will you allow me once more to express my pleasure at the high standard still maintained—and even heightened—by the *Freethinker* since it has come under your editorship. It is really splendid."

Mr. J. Shields hopes that "the mental and financial anxieties which every business man knows must have been yours during the last three years will now be at an end."

Mr. J. Middleton hopes that all *Freethinker* readers will appreciate the difficulties of the situation and help accordingly.

Second List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £198 18s. 6d. Andrew Harvey, £1. J. W. Wood, 10s. 6d. Oscar Friedman, £3 10s. J. Shepp, 5s. C. W., 5s. B. B., £1. E. Parker, 5s. F. C. Willis, 5s. Tony and Tiny, 5s. J. G. White, 10s. S. S. Leech, £2 2s. W. Bailey, £1 1s. Jas. Rowland, 5s. Mrs. A. Brook, 5s. Miss E. Lechmere, 4s. X., 10s. 6d. James Ralston, 10s. Deneb, 2s. 6d. E. J. Jones, 2s. 6d. J. B. Palphryman, 10s. 6d. J. Stanway, 10s. F. S., 1s. J. Hamilton, 10s. J. Hopkins, 2s. 6d. G. Smith, 10s. 6d. Mrs. E. Adams, £4 4s. West Ham Branch N. S. S., £1. A. J. L., £1.

Sapper Cheetham, 3s. G. Smith, 10s. W. Dodd, £1. Harriet Baker, 5s. J. B. Williams, £5. E. Thurlow, 5s. H. C., 4s. 4d. S. E., 1s. Total: £226 19s. 4d.
Correction—"G. Samuels" in last week's list of acknowledgments should have read "G. Saunders."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (Sept. 23) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Town Hall, Birmingham. There will be two meetings—one in the afternoon, at 3, subject, "Morality Without God"; and in the evening, at 7, subject, "Why Men Believe in God," with special reference to Mr. H. G. Wells. Admission is free to both meetings, but there are reserved seats, tickets for which may be obtained of Mr. J. Partridge, 245 Shenstone Road, Rotton Park, Birmingham. We hope that Birmingham Freethinkers will do their best to see that the meetings are as widely known as possible.

Next Sunday (September 30) Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures in the Docker's Hall, High Street, Swansea. We are asked to state that visitors from a distance may have tea provided between the afternoon and evening meetings on communicating with Mr. B. Dupree, 12 Short Street, Swansea. It is necessary to write owing to war-time difficulties.

Mr. J. Turnbull (Falkirk) writes: "Does the following constitute a record. For every year of my life I can count a convert to the Cause of Freethought, not considering those who stopped at the half-way house for refreshment. The method I adopt is to send literature to any who have become interested, starting with the *Age of Reason* and ending with *Determinism or Free Will?*" Whether any of our readers has a better record than this we cannot tell. But we do say the record is a fine one. It is such disinterested labour that makes one proud of Freethought and Freethinkers.

The new Manchester Branch has arranged a series of monthly lectures, to be opened by Mr. Cohen on March 21, and followed by Mr. Lloyd, Mr. T. F. Palmer, and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner. The Secretary of the Branch, Mr. H. Black, 446 Great Cheetham Street East, Higher Broughton, Salford, appeals for the support of both members and friends in making the meetings a success. Those who cannot help financially can help in making the meetings well known, and some may help in both ways. For the general work of the Branch, a large room has been taken in the Bakers' Hall, Swan Street, Shudehill, for Sunday evening meetings. The first meeting is to be held here on October 7, at 6.30.

We wonder how much of the interest in *Songs of a Miner* (Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 2s. 6d., net), is due to an unaffected love of verse on the part of the reading public, and how much to the knowledge that the poet, Mr. James C. Welsh, has been a pitman for some twenty years, and is now employed as a checkweighman at the pit-head. For some of us the association of rhythmic emotion with the more elemental forms of labour seems natural enough; indeed, even more natural than its association with the dull routine of journalism or the duller routine of the Civil Service. Mr. Welsh, we are pleased to see, would have us judge him as a poet, not as a *miner*-poet. And in this we feel he is right. It is this insistence, in all probability, that prompted Mr. Bernard Shaw to decline to write an introduction to the book. But Mr. Shaw knows little about poetry and cares less. He would have introduced Mr. Welsh to us as a super-pitman, a sort of companion in verse to Mr. W. H. Davies, whom he once induced to pose as a super-tramp; and, most likely, we should have been tempted to give our new acquaintance the cold shoulder. Mr. Welsh, however, is well able to stand on his own legs, and needs the support of Mr. Shaw as little as did Mr. Davis.

The longest and most ambitious poem in the book is the one with which it begins, "The Crusade of Youth." Written

in loosely rhymed pentameters, it is a dithyrambic indictment of the wrong done by man to man, especially the colossal stupidity and brutality of war. The words vibrate with genuine emotion, and at times glow with the white heat of an imagination purified by the fire of suffering. If, in the end, the dream of brotherhood is vague and unreal, the passion of the appeal is none the less moving. In "Labour" and "The Miner," Mr. Welsh has evidently forced himself to see only the violent, sombre, and ugly aspects of life, the result being a want of balance. Yet the majority of the shorter poems reflect a temperament which rejoices in beauty and sane emotions. The poems in Scots dialect, especially, have a rhythmical beauty marked enough to demand a musical setting. In a less obvious vein, "A Picture in Grey" curiously reminds us of Verlaine or Whistler. The best poem in the book are the four stanzas "To My Wife." It has a firmness of touch, a subtle simplicity of feeling, and a shapeliness which come as a pleasant surprise to those of us who have had the misfortune to be obliged to wade through the verse of our much-belauded soldier-poets.

We are asked to remind those of our friends who attend the outdoor lectures that in consequence of the earlier closing of the parks each Sunday, the time of all Evening Lectures has been changed. The exact hour will be found by reference to our Lecture List.

The Rise and Progress of Mental Power.

VII.

(Continued from p. 573.)

ALTHOUGH an awareness of self as an active and feeling organism exists in animals and infants, this consciousness is mainly objective in character. That conceptual self-consciousness which permits an animal to think of itself as such, in other words, subjectively, is feebly represented in organisms below man. Still, the germs of the higher ideation are there. As Darwin remarked in his *Descent of Man* :—

It may be freely admitted that no animal is self-conscious, if by this term is implied that he reflects on such points as whence he comes or whither he will go, or what is life and death, and so forth. But how can we feel sure that an old dog with an excellent memory and some power of imagination, as shown by his dreams, never reflects on his past pleasures and pains in the chase? And this would be a form of self-consciousness.

The young child invariably regards itself objectively, although clearly conscious of its own personality. After the child commences to speak, it long refers to itself in the third person, and never as "I" or "me." And its phraseology does not, in this respect change, until its third year, while it is questionable whether this change would occur at a stage so early were it not hastened by the influence of example. As Sully says, the distinction between personal and outside existences, and the difference between the "I" and the "you" is constantly presented to the child's notice by the language of its elders. Step by step, from this stage onwards, complete awareness of self as a separate personality is steadily reached. Yet there appears to be a period in infant life when full consciousness of individual existence emerges. Wundt dated the dawn of this complete consciousness of self in his own case to the occasion when he, as a child, suddenly and unexpectedly rolled downstairs into a cellar.

But beyond this critical stage the increase of mental capacity in each creature becomes a matter of slow and sometimes painful progress. Little children long regard all moving objects as living things, and frequently fear them on that account. Savages, the

surviving representatives of the pre-historic childhood of the civilized peoples, everywhere endow inanimate objects and the blind forces of Nature with psychic attributes, and our own growing children are apt to address their toys as if they were alive. Even European rustics habitually read their own thoughts and emotions into the involuntary activities of rain, wind, clouds, and streams. Yet, grotesque as such fancies appear to the educated rationalist, they survive in many unexpected quarters, and probably in the past have served to raise us to superior mental planes. The lower animals display alarm at novel sights and sounds of a harmless kind, until they are satisfied as to their nature. All such phenomena, whether ejective or objectively considered, have helped to promote the mind's advance both in animals and in man.

It is now evident that the human mind has been evolved from that of the lower Primates. Yet the critics of the doctrine of the natural genesis and development of man's intellect have persistently asserted that language alone presents an insuperable obstacle to the acceptance of this truth. But, both in substance and in fact, this assertion is false. Blinded and bemused by traditional preconceptions, the majority of modern philologists were, until the nineteenth century, quite adverse to the idea of a natural development of language. Still, alike in ancient Greece and Rome, the problem had been studied from a scientific standpoint, while the yet earlier thinkers of India had made remarkable progress in their analysis of grammar. In later Europe a few pioneers, such as Sir William Jones, Grimm, Bopp, and Pott laid the foundation stones of that contemporary comparative philology which now furnishes some of the most conclusive evidences of mental evolution.

Philologists are all evolutionists now. Even the conservative Max Mueller candidly admitted in the preface to his *Science of Thought* that "no student of the science of language can be anything but an evolutionist, for wherever he looks he sees nothing but evolution going on around him." The eminent Schleicher declares that "the development of new forms from preceding forms can be much more easily traced, and this on an even larger scale in the province of words, than in that of plants and animals."

In addition to the various dead languages, more than one thousand tongues are still spoken on our planet, not one of which is ordinarily intelligible to the user of another. These numerous modes of speech may be arranged into one hundred families, and the latter lend themselves to further reduction to three orders. From these three forms the 1,000 living languages are the probable descendants.

The root terms out of which languages are evolved comprise their elementary constituents, although many of these radical words admit of still further reduction to still simpler forms. Chinese is a monosyllabic language, and consists of some 500 separate words. Renan reckoned the roots of Hebrew at the same number. Professor Skeat has traced English to 461 Aryan roots; Benfey discovered over 1,000 roots in ancient Sanskrit, but more critical researches reduce this estimate very considerably. Max Mueller found 121 roots only in Sanskrit, the tongue from which all the Indo-European languages have been developed. But comparatively simple as these "roots" are, investigation reveals them, not as original, natural words indicative of concrete ideas, but as terms expressing general or abstract notions, and far in advance of the lost language from which Sanskrit was elaborated. Moreover, the Sanskrit radicals betray a remarkable amount of repetition, which also proves that the language of ancient India was much removed from primitive speech. As a matter of fact, the Aryans

of old had attained a relatively high stage of culture. Again, all the terms in Mueller's list denote actions or states. Now, substantives or nouns came before verbs, for as Farrar observes: "The invention of a verb requires a greater effort of abstraction than that of a noun.....We cannot accept it as even possible that from roots meaning to shine, to be bright, names were formed for sun, moon, stars, &c." Plainly, therefore, we must seek in far lower levels of culture for any approximation towards the speech of aboriginal man. In the words of Prof. Sayce, in "all savage and barbarous dialects, while individual objects of sense have a superabundance of names, general terms are correspondingly rare."

In the infancy of our race, as in the infancy of our children, the principle of onomatopœia—the formation of sounds or words which mimic and resemble the things signified—must have operated on a very extensive scale. Most of these primitive terms have become obscured as their applications have been enlarged. The same is to some extent true of the various interjections so naturally expressive of our several states of feeling or emotion. To a biological disciple, Darwin imparted some interesting particulars concerning one of his own grandchildren which prove how terms of onomatopœic origin employed by the young become obscured as they become generalized. Thus:—

The child who was just beginning to speak, called a duck "quack"; and by special association, it also called water "quack." By an appreciation of the resemblance of qualities, it next extended the word "quack" to denote all birds and insects on the one hand, and all fluid substances on the other. Lastly, by a still more delicate appreciation of resemblance, the child eventually called all coins "quack," because on the back of a French sou it had once seen the representation of an eagle. Hence, to the child, the sign "quack" from having originally a very specialized meaning, became more and more extended in its signification, until it now serves to designate such apparently different objects as "fly," "wine," and "coin."

A mere modicum of scientific insight is, therefore, needed to grasp the significance of Goethe's aphorism that the original meanings of words slowly wear away like the letters and image on a piece of money. And there remains this further fact to be observed with reference to imitative names, that in the early stages of articulation, the words derived from the sounds they mimicked, in large measure depended upon accompanying gestures for their complete intelligibility. Apart, however, from conjectural cases, overwhelming proofs exist of the onomatopœic origin of numerous words in ancient, modern, and savage languages. Needless to state, such imitative terms are most common in uncivilized speech. To the formation of articulate language onomatopœia, instinctive cries and calls, and capricious naming have all contributed. Words otherwise entirely destitute of meaning are invented by most children to name receipts or pre-concepts, and many of these arbitrary inventions will persist in families and among neighbours as nicknames generations after their original significance has been obscured or forgotten.

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

A Note on Wilde's "De Profundis."

THERE are some people who like to think that every one of us in this world gets precisely what he deserves. No doubt, for many of us, this is true enough; but it is emphatically not true for the man of genius. Let us look for a moment at one or two examples. The official life of Walter Pater, a refined scholar and a master of

English prose, is written, not as one would expect, by Mr. Gosse or Mr. Arthur Symons, but by a Mr. Wright, of Olney, who was apparently intended by Nature for the biographer of some company promoter or pushing "captain of industry." Pater may not have been the saint his friends are so anxious to make him out to be, but even Dante would not have punished him in so barbarous a fashion. Again, what had that dapper little prig, Canon Ainger, in common with the exquisite humourist and Freethinker, Charles Lamb? What he ought to have written was the life of another prig, say that of Jowett, who was not only a prig himself, but the fruitful cause of priggishness in others. That would have been a sort of poetic justice. But it may be that Nature is an ironist, and loves a paradox even better than does our friend Mr. Chesterton.

In the case of Oscar Wilde, all the moral depravity in the world would not justify the philistine denigration of his biographer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. With a few honourable exceptions, notably an article by Mr. Ernest Newman in the *Free Review* (1895), and Mr. Ransome's little book, Wilde has suffered more than any other writer from vulgar and incompetent scribblers. He is just beginning to get the criticism he deserves. Still, it must be pointed out that he himself was partly to blame for the niggardly appreciation of his critics. He always found pleasure in saying—paradoxically, perhaps—that he had put his genius into his life, and into his books merely his talent. He said this so frequently, and it was echoed so faithfully by men of letters and journalists, that it came to be accepted as the truth by even the most intelligent of his critics. It was therefore possible for M. Andre Gide, in 1901, to insist upon reminding his French readers that Wilde was not a writer of any value. By 1910 the French critic's opinion had been profoundly modified, and he deplored the unjust severity of his earlier opinion. We are at last coming to see that Wilde stood in closer relation to the artistic ideals and inspirations of his time than any other writer; that he is a more representative man of letters than Pater, largely because of his richer vitality; that his prose style is perfection; that he handles the English language in his *Intentions* and *De Profundis* with a natural grace and a command of subtle rhythms that make even some of the finest styles appear lumbering and monotonous.

It must have been noticed by anyone who has given attention to the attitude of the critics to Wilde's work that many of his detractors were quite certain that they could detect the note of insincerity in *De Profundis*. But the charge of insincerity is as easy to make as it is difficult to make out. Some objected to the style as out of keeping with the subject. Others were annoyed by the paradox; the incoherence in the thought. They could not see that if Wilde had thought and written in any other way—that if his style, for instance, had been as plain and as unlovely as that of some of his critics—the charge of insincerity would have had a solid foundation. It was not the sort of book the critics would have written, therefore it was insincere. Imperfect sympathies have never been too scrupulous. The critics more or less unconsciously found insincerity where there was only inconsistency.

De Profundis, whatever else it may not be, is patently sincere. It was written, Mr. Ross tells us, during the last moments of Wilde's imprisonment. It was his last work in prose. The manuscript passed into the hands of Mr. Ross, but it was not printed in its entirety. The omitted portions, or a part of them, were made public through an incredibly foolish libel action. For the student of Wilde's work, there is as much of him in *De*

Profundis as there is in the *Intentions*. And yet the two books are, in some respects, worlds apart. The earlier one, written in his most prolific period, when his genius was at its highest and clearest, has all that exquisite feeling for form, all the blitheness, the acumen, the varied knowledge, which made Wilde as great, if not a greater, critic of art than J. A. Symonds or Walter Pater. *De Profundis* seems, in some respects, the antithesis of *Intentions*; M. Gide calls it a palinode. Throughout it is extremely confused and incoherent; the broken utterance of a man whose lamentable suffering has exhausted his cerebral energy. It is written in tears of blood. The saddest and deepest emotions of the human heart are vibrant on every page. Although for many of us analysis is an essential factor in all criticism, it seems rather unreasonable to bring to a book like *De Profundis* the test of absolutely clear thinking. From first to last Wilde was as much an impressionist as Ruskin. At times they both thought and spoke of the reasoning faculty as a kind of machine, and prided themselves on saying the first thing that came into their heads. It is futile to reject the good in such writers as Wilde and Emerson because they are not, as De Quincey would say, non-sequacious. Inconsistency is, no doubt, irritating to the merely rational type of mind; but we do a foolish thing if we reject wisdom and beauty when they do not reach us by the way of a logical train of thought, by the discussive understanding. But a discussion of the claims of intuition or insight as against an abstract intellectualism, however interesting it may be, is outside the scope of this informal note. GEO. UNDERWOOD.

(To be concluded.)

Separation and Divorce.

[The following letter, written in reply to a communication from Lord Halifax, was refused publication by the *Times*. It has been sent to us with an application that it might be allowed to appear in the *Freethinker*, and we gladly comply with the request. The writer might have concluded appropriately with the following extract from an article which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* for January, 1890, by the eminent churchman, Archbishop Magee: "It is not possible for the State to carry out, in all its relations, literally, all the precepts of Christ, and a State which attempted this, could not exist for a week." But if there be any person who maintains this, his proper place is in a lunatic asylum, and the only person called on to discuss this question with him would be his medical attendant.]

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES."

SIR,—Lord Halifax is undoubtedly correct in asserting that a very large number of people will oppose, "to the very utmost of their power," any legislation for the relaxation of the matrimonial bond. Large numbers opposed "the damnable heresy" of the Copernican Theory and the teaching that the world was spherical, and "the very utmost of their power" went to the extent of burning, at the stake, Giordano Bruno. The abolition of slavery was gained in the teeth of bitter opposition; the use of chloroform was strenuously opposed when it was first discovered; the education of the masses has plenty of opponents even yet. Cremation—the most sanitary method of disposal of the dead, marriage with a deceased wife's sister, the advance of scientific research, have all been assiduously opposed, and the antagonists of all liberal evolution have nearly always claimed God as their ally—very similarly to the way in which the Kaiser has constituted him his ally in the cruelties of Louvain and the present War generally. To ask you to give space for arguments would be more than inconsiderate, but I hope you will permit me to make two points. There may be such a thing as "holy matrimony," there is certainly such a thing as *unholy* matrimony, and it is the latter, not the former, on which the reformers seek to lay hands. Most of those whose opposing voices are heard on all occasions where reforms and benefits to suffering

humanity are advocated, are in complacent ignorance of the suffering it is sought to alleviate:—

The toad beneath the harrow knows
Exactly where each tooth-point goes;
The butterfly, upon the road,
Preaches contentment to the toad!

To some of us, the suggestion that "God has joined together" many of the ill-assorted couples we know of is little short of blasphemous. It is an accusation of failure and incompetence. The next point is the amazing "lesson" which Lord Halifax has learnt from the War, viz., "that the real welfare of mankind depends on adherence to Christian principles"! This, the most murderous of all wars, a crime which has staggered the world, was engineered and is being prosecuted by adherents to Christian principles. No Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu, Mohammedan, Taoist, Parsee, Animist, or Jew, has had anything to do with it except to follow the dictates of the Christian nations. It is pre-eminently a war of the Christian nations. And yet Lord Halifax is conservative enough to suggest the old, old remedy of the hair of the dog which has bitten. I am not attacking the teaching of Christ. There is a limitless difference between the teaching of Christ and Christian teaching. Nietzsche once said: "There was one Christian; he died on the Cross."—Your obedient Servant, "PROGRESS."

Correspondence.

"COMMUNION WITH THE DEAD." TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should like, if you will allow me to do so, to congratulate you upon the *Freethinker*. Until a copy of it came into my hands a few weeks ago, I did not know that any publication existed where plain facts are so simply and frankly stated. I once wrote the sentence, "I believe that those who are capable of thinking should think for themselves," and was jeered at by the reviewers for having uttered a self-evident truism. Yet there is nothing, in my experience, less free than thought. Probably not one man in a hundred thinks for himself upon every subject.

I am puzzled, however, by the attitude taken by your paper, which in other respects exhibits a conspicuous and refreshing freedom from prejudice, towards the question of the survival of personality over death. No real Freethinker, as it seems to me, can have a prejudice; he *must* approach every proposition on its merits, and either accept or reject it or suspend his judgment after weighing the evidence. In regard to matters resting solely upon "revelation," there is no evidence to be weighed; therefore, the Freethinker, bringing everything to the tribunal of his reason, is justified in brushing them immediately aside. But the question of the survival of personality is fundamentally a scientific question. It rests ultimately, not upon "revelation," not upon vague and pious beliefs, but upon experience. It rests also, in some measure, upon logic. Thus: If a thing once exists, it must always exist, for annihilation is inconceivable; you cannot turn something into nothing. The human personality is an existing, positive thing. How, then, can it be annihilated? It may be transmuted or disintegrated, certainly. But why is it more scientific that a thing should be transmuted or disintegrated than that it should remain what it is?

Mr. W. Mann's articles on this subject are clever, but they are candidly *ex parte*, they betray prejudice. They make no pretence to be judicial or investigatory. So far as I have read them, and so far as I know, there is nothing stated in them which is not true. But there is much omitted that is also true. By such selective methods as Mr. Mann permits himself to use, it would be easy to make it appear that the idea that the earth moves round the sun is stupid and farcical.

It is known—if for a moment, for convenience, I may look at the subject from an angle which appears to beg the question—that memory is carried over in a very imperfect state; it is known, too, that communications become involved with mental stuff belonging to the subconscious strata of the person through whom they come; and it is known, of course, more generally, that the world holds any number of impostors who are prepared to prey upon human credulity. It is unneces-

sary for Mr. Mann to labour those points; they form part of the data with which the investigation of this subject is approached. Nevertheless, your contributor thought it worth while, for example, to devote a whole article to the case of Mme. Blavatsky, who was exposed by the Society for Psychological Research so long ago as 1885.

If Mr. Mann has formed a deliberate opinion on this question, after weighing all the evidence available, and wishes to elucidate it for those who have not had similar opportunities or have not his analytical gifts, he should fasten, not on the incorrect statements, but on the true ones, those regarding matter demonstrably outside the possible knowledge of the percipient which have been verified—he will find a great quantity in the twenty-nine volumes of the impartial records of the Society for Psychological Research—and offer his alternative explanation. For it is the *true* statements that form the crux; anyone can explain the false ones. If responsibly conducted experiments had produced only one per cent. of veridical statements, they would amount to a considerable mass in the aggregate, and would need to be explained. But I think they have produced considerably more than one per cent. I myself have carefully studied the records of many of the investigations exhaustively reported in the voluminous *Proceedings* of the Society of Psychological Research; and I cannot but say, as an honest witness, that after all the incorrect statements and all the non-evidential matter have been eliminated, and after the theories of telepathy and of the “subliminal consciousness” have been stretched to the extreme (far further than the results of experiments warrant), there emerges a very considerable residuum, to explain which the *prima facie* hypothesis of discarnate communicating intelligence stands at present alone in the field. If Mr. Mann, instead of labouring admitted facts and telling us things which everybody knows or could know, apparently for no purpose—I hope I am not doing him an injustice—but to sow prejudice, will deal with this difficult residuum, he will be writing to the furtherance of the understanding of mankind, and, incidentally, will show that he approaches his task without bias and is thinking freely.

One word in conclusion. If anyone should have a thought that I may be inclined to superstition, will he read *The Rationalist*, my last published book?

HUBERT WALES.

BIRTH-RATE AND INFANT MORTALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—In his letter last week, Mr. McGhee has brought up a number of interesting points to set against the contention that high birth-rates and high infant mortality rates are in close correlation, and, doubtless, there are exceptional instances where the direct correlation between the two is obscured. It is, however, only by taking statistics for millions of people of all classes, over long periods, that we can arrive at a true generalization.

So far from the Jews having a high birth-rate, in Mr. Israel Cohen's book, *Jewish Life in Modern Times*, (Methuen, 1914), we find the following: “Although modern Jewry has such a favourable record in regard to morality and disease, it has a remarkably diminishing birth-rate, which is lower than the birth-rate of the general population in all the countries of Europe,” which statement he then supports by the actual figures.

Ireland, also, is decidedly not a high birth-rate country. For the period 1881-1906 her birth-rate was between twenty-two and twenty-four per thousand. There are many parts of Ireland where families are large, and, as Dr. Prudence Gaffin remarked in the Carnegie Report, infantile mortality is not deplored in Ireland, where the life here is considered but a prelude to the world to come, and the babies that are cut off short have at least gained the boon of everlasting life. Miss Rebecca West in the *Sunday Pictorial* of June 3, advises mothers to “disregard the advice of bishops who are unable to grasp the implications of the fact that the eight European countries with the highest birth-rate are also the eight with the highest infantile mortality rate.” The most effectual answer to the whole argument would be to show a country that has a *high* birth-rate and *low* infantile mortality rate. Where is it?

Y. C.

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): Wednesday, Sept. 26, at 7.30.

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA PARK BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.15, a Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 5, R. Miller, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, R. Miller, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 5.45, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley Road): 7, a Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 3.30, E. Burke, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3, Miss Kough, “He Can't Do Anything.”

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

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): C. Cohen, 3, “Morality Without God”; 7, “Why Men Believe in God.” With special reference to H. G. Wells.

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