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Views and Opinions.

English Christians and Russia.

The attitude of English Christian leaders towards Russia since the revolution will not have escaped the notice of the observant. Prior to the revolution we were deluged with sermons by muddle-headed clerics like the Bishop of London, and superficial writers like Mr. Stephen Graham concerning the intense piety and saintliness of Russia. It was Christian in spirit and in temper. Russia had the religious temper that was lacking with us, and it was, apparently, its function to permeate us with its unrivalled Christian idealism. And all this, be it remembered, of the Russia of the Czar! Of a Government that was, without doubt, the worst in Europe, which had for generations kept its people ignorant, drunken, and religious, in order to perpetuate its own power; which had made "Siberia" a synonym for the very grave of freedom, and had permitted, when it had not connived at, the murder of thousands of Jewish men, women, and children to gratify the engineered hatred of the more ignorant among its Christian subjects. Then came the revolution, and with it silence on the part of those pietists among us who had hitherto been so obtrusively vocal. Nothing more was heard of the "soul" of Russia. Bishop Ingram and Mr. Graham remained mute. Fulsome praise for the piety of the Government that for generations had treated its own subjects with a greater infamy than any conqueror would have done, which had forced Jewish girls to register as prostitutes before it would permit them to study at the leading universities. Chilling silence or rebuke for those who, whatever their errors and blunders, were at least animated by the desire for freedom, and had rid the nation of an intolerable tyranny. The attitude of English Churchmen before and after the revolution will be not the least instructive study of the part played by the Churches during the world-war.

* * *

Force and the Churches.

Those who knew anything about Russia, and who also understood our English Christians, were not at all

surprised at the sequence of events. Right through the course of this War, the Churches have shown themselves incapable of thinking of the conflict save in terms of physical force. They have never realized that, while the immediate task was to hold Germany at bay and rob her of dependence upon mere militarism, the greater task and the greater aim was to break the power of the militaristic ideal in all countries and among all peoples. And no mere military victory would do this work. We say that because no mere military victory has ever had this effect in the remotest degree. A military triumph always leaves the victor exulting in his military supremacy, and the nation doing homage at the shrine of the God that has served it so well. And a military defeat leaves the vanquished with no other lesson than that its own militarism failed because it was not powerful enough. If the one conclusion is justified, so is the other. The Churches have not realized that if militarism is to disappear from human society, or even to be considerably weakened, the clash of conflict must be lifted to a higher sphere. To put the whole matter in a sentence, the effectiveness of militarism sanctifies, in the minds of the people, its use. Its recognized ineffectiveness, its utter, hopeless breakdown, is the one thing that will make it a permanently discredited instrument in the eyes of men and women. Then only will it be recognized that, as in war as elsewhere, it is ideas that rule, so the end of war will come by the supplanting of lower ideals by higher ones. Our work, said Father Vaughan, is to keep on killing Germans. Our work is rather to keep on killing German ideas. We have to supplant the idea of force with the force of ideas.

* * *

Freethought in Russia.

The time-serving policy of the clergy is one reason of their attitude towards Russia. The other lies in the fact that the revolution was a blow at the Christian Church as well as at Russian autocracy. Church and autocracy have always worked hand in hand in Russia. Without the Church, the permanence of the autocracy would have been almost impossible. As it was, they fitted each other like the upper and lower jaws of a beast of prey. A late Procurator of the Holy Synod, M. Pobyedonostseff, made it quite clear in his *Reflections of a Russian Statesman*, that in Russia the weakening of the Church would mean the downfall of the throne. And in the clergy the autocracy possessed a force far more potent than its armies. The dragooning of the mind is preparatory to the dragooning of the body. But the makers of the revolution were, and are, in the main Freethinkers. The greatest figure of all at the moment, Trotsky—the man who is responsible for giving an idea to the peoples of the world around which they may rally—is an avowed Freethinker. And as in France more than a century ago, the revolution in Russia is making for the disintegration of the Christian faith. The *Church Times*, in a series of articles on the subject, refers with horror to the "tendency to associate Christianity and Atheism with the opposing political

parties," and, as an instance of the demoralization that has set in, relates that in one of the ports "the crew of a destroyer have met together, and after a lengthy and wordy discussion, passed a resolution that in their opinion the evidence in favour of the existence of God is altogether insufficient, and they are satisfied there is no God." Worse still, there is actually a freethinking paper now issued which publishes a caricature of Moses! We are not surprised to find the *Church Times* writer recording that "In the old days I never saw a peasant who looked unhappy; now the sullen, discontented faces increase in unhappiness every week," even though one may be a little sceptical as to the idyllic existence that has been disturbed by the revolution. Anything is forgivable when done in the name of God. Nothing is excusable if done in the name of humanity. That is the inevitable lesson of the situation.

* * *

Lest We Forget.

Had not the Churches been as incapable of giving a reliable lead in war time as during peace, they might have seen in the Russian revolution a message of hope to the world, and they would have welcomed it as something of an offset against the spirit of militarism. For consider the situation. Three and a half year's of war has pretty well convinced all reasonable men that on lines of mere physical force the position is as nearly hopeless as may be. Even politicians are beginning to realize this. To these millions of people obsessed with the power of armed forces comes a handful of, not as they are stupidly called impracticable idealists, but, in the best sense of the word, very practical realists. They see that the raising of armies, and yet more armies, leads nowhere, and ends in no tangible good. And into this international "suicide club" they threw, not a new army, not a high explosive shell, but something more powerful and more deadly than either—an idea. They appeal to the peoples of the world against the rulers of the world, to human reason against brute force. And that appeal has brought the world nearer peace than has three-and-a-half year's fighting. We are witnessing today, if we would only see it, one of the greatest fights in all history; and it is for we Freethinkers to note that in this supreme struggle not a word of help comes from anyone of the Churches of Christendom. That is a fact well worth remembering. In Russia, in Germany, in Britain, in Italy, the Churches have seen nothing beyond a continuance of war until sheer exhaustion brings an "inconclusive peace." It is due to the Freethinking leaders of the new Russia that they have seen a better way out. In a duel of big guns *versus* great ideas the guns may, for the moment, roar loudest; but the ideas will remain when the guns are silent, even if they do not shatter the guns with their own greater explosive force.

* * *

The Record of the Churches.

But, after all, this is only history repeating itself. The Churches have acted in this War precisely as they have acted in others. In Russia, as we have said, the Church was always the cheerful and willing tool of the Government, and it was largely by its agency that the autocracy persisted. Nor has it been vitally different in any other country. In the worst days of the old order in France it was the Church that gave that order its sanction and its blessing. And when the upheaval came and—to quote Carlyle—the shrieking thousands suffered instead of the dumb millions, and the "Rights of Man" were proclaimed instead of "Duty to God," the Church in this country allied itself with an alarmed conservatism, and poured upon the revolution an avalanche of slander and misrepresentation that a century and a quarter has not sufficed to remove. In Germany the Government

has found in the Church a ready instrument in its half-century work of militarizing the people. The Church made no protest there when the Government converted the schools into "training stables for the Army." It assists here when military drill and the paraphernalia of Army life is introduced into our schools. The record of the Christian Churches, from Constantine onward, is the same—time-serving, opportunist, and retrogressive. It cannot really be said that the Church has failed to lead the world along the higher path, since it has never seriously attempted the task. It has failed to make its own power permanent, but that is because not even so great an organization as the Christian Church is proof against the growth of human intelligence and the strength of human co-operation.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Newest Apologetic.

II.

It was in virtue of the faith of Christ, and of that alone, that the position of women was bettered, and respect for women increased, in the later Roman Empire and in the dark ages that followed, that the exposition of children was fiercely combated, and that slavery was practically extinct in Europe by the fourteenth century.—*Rev. J. K. Mozley, B.D., "The Achievements of Christianity,"* pp. xiii, xiv.

SUCH is the claim on behalf of Christianity advanced by an exceptionally, fair-minded Christian apologist, but in the form in which it is expressed we are bound to pronounce it utterly false. As regards the position of women in Rome prior to the establishment of Christianity, we have the authority of Lecky for stating that it was more satisfactory and honourable than it has ever been since. "They arrived," he says, "during the Empire, at a point of freedom and dignity which they subsequently lost, and have never altogether regained" (*History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 304). As Mr. Mozley is a classical scholar, he cannot be ignorant of the fact that Pagan philosophers and emperors advocated and legislated for the humane treatment of children. It was clearly taught that a parent had no right to kill his son without a trial, and Trajan made it illegal for a father to enslave his son. A young boy committed a serious offence, and his father put him to death, but Hadrian punished that brutal father with banishment. Alexander Severus treated the exposition of a child as a foul murder; and even Diocletian made the sale of children illegal. Has Mr. Mozley forgotten that the first Christian Emperor, Constantine, once more legalized their sale? And is it not a fact that in Christian Britain there exists to-day a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, under which serious prosecutions are by no means unknown? Much had been done for the benefit of the child in Pagan Rome before Christianity came to power, and, alas! much remains to be done for it in London at the present time.

We now return to the subject of slavery, and particularly to Mr. Mozley's assertion that "it was in virtue of the faith of Christ, and of that alone, that slavery was practically extinct in Europe by the fourteenth century." Of the truth of this assertion not a single shred of evidence is adduced, possibly because the author knows that none is available. Indeed, we confidently challenge him to prove his statement in its present form. Lecky, whom he sometimes quotes, does not agree with him, though he is more favourable to Christianity than the facts, even as cited by himself, allow. Whilst holding that we owe the emancipation of the slaves to Christianity, he frankly admits that two other agents rendered invaluable assistance. The first was Paganism. Under Nero, he tells us:

There appeared in the centre of Paganism a powerful reaction in favour of the suffering classes, of which Seneca was the principal exponent, but which was

more or less reflected in the whole of the literature of the time. Seneca recurred to the subject again and again, and for the first time in Rome he very clearly and emphatically enforced the duties of masters to their slaves, and the existence of a bond of fraternity that no accidental difference of position could cancel. Nor was the movement confined to the writings of moralists. A long series of enactments by Nero, Claudius, Antonine, and Adrian gave the servile class a legal position, took the power of life and death out of the hands of the masters, prevented the exposure of slaves when old and infirm on an island of the Tiber, forbade their mutilation or their employment as gladiators, and appointed special magistrates to receive their complaints (*The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, vol. ii., pp. 235-6).

The other influence favourable to the slaves was likewise non-Christian, namely that exerted by the barbarian invaders of the Roman Empire. Lecky justifies the description of them as "the representatives of the principle of personal liberty in Europe." They scarcely practised slavery at all, and when they did, it was in opposition to the dictates of their best instincts and habits. But the Church was always, even from the very beginning, a believer in, and supporter of, the Divine institution of slavery. St. Augustine justified it on the ground that it was due to man's fall, and regarded it as part and parcel of family government. Gregory the Great admitted that the original state of man was a state of freedom, and on this ground he was theoretically in favour of emancipation as an act of grace. It is also true that his holiness freed a few of his own slaves, but only as an act of devotion. Did he not present slaves to a convent, and is it not on record that he did his utmost to recover a fugitive slave of his brother? The truth is, as the Rev. Dr. Fisher, of Yale University, puts it, that "neither pope nor council pronounced slavery unlawful." (*History of the Christian Church*, p. 232.) Priests were often slave-owners on a large scale, and numerous were the bondmen who did the menial work at the monasteries. Alcuin was an Englishman of the eighth century, who became an eminent ecclesiastic, and an active believer in the revival of learning. He founded the Universities of Paris, Tours, Fulden and Soissons, and he held an honoured position at the French court, playing the part of instructor to Charlemagne and his family. And yet when he took charge of the Abbey of Tours it was the proud possessor of twenty thousand slaves. Dr. Fisher says:—

The emancipation of slaves and serfs was applauded, like any other act of beneficence. Even among the ancient Romans it was not infrequent for a master to give freedom to a slave, and it was always counted a generous deed. The mediæval Church denounced slavery only when it was the servitude of a Christian in bondage to a Jew or an Infidel. This was always regarded as something grievous and deserving prevention by law, or through a ransom in cases beyond the reach of law. The Church from ancient times insisted that anxiety about one's worldly condition, even in the case of a slave, was undesirable, and that the freedom of the child of God and the heavenly inheritance were the chief good. (*Ibid.*, p. 232.)

It is true that in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries slavery diminished considerably in Europe, but it is a radical mistake to attribute the diminution to the benign and humanizing influence of the Church, except in so far as the Church herself was being affected by the revival of ancient learning. Professor Fisher cannot be suspected of harbouring any prejudice against the religion of which he is a distinguished minister, and yet he has the courage to write thus:—

Serfdom disappeared, not by any religious condemnation of it, but as a consequence of the growth of towns:

a spirit of discontent and resistance among the peasants themselves, and other general causes. (*Ibid.*, p. 233.)

Speaking of the decline of slavery in England from the ninth to the eleventh century, John Richard Green significantly adds:—

The decrease of slavery went on side by side with an increasing degradation of the bulk of the people. Political and social changes had long been modifying the old structure of society; and the very foundations of the old order were broken up in the degradation of the freemen, and the upgrowth of the lord with his dependent villains (*A Short History of the English People*, p. 59).

Again, dealing with the Peasant Revolt in the fourteenth century, Green says that "the slave-class, never numerous, had been reduced by the efforts of the Church, perhaps by the general convulsion of the Danish wars." Yet, surely, the class that succeeded it was not much, if any, better, because—

All indeed were dependent on a lord. The manor-house became the centre of every English village. The manor-court was held in its hall; it was here that the lord or his steward received homage, recovered fines, held the view of frank-pledge, or enrolled the villagers in their tithing. Here, too, if the lord possessed criminal jurisdiction, was held his justice court, and without its doors stood his gallows (*Ibid.*, p. 245).

Does it not inevitably follow from all these testimonies that it was not "in the faith of Christ, and of that alone" that slavery declined in Europe towards the end of the Dark Ages? As a matter of simple fact, slavery was not abolished in Europe until the nineteenth century. In Christian England there was great rejoicing when a monopoly of the slave-trade between Africa and the Spanish dominions had been profitably bought through Marlborough in the eighteenth century, and we must not forget that England was directly responsible for planting slavery in her American colonies and her Indian islands. In 1760 there were 80,000 black slaves in the City of London; and in one hundred years, between 1680 and 1780, our British colonies alone imported fully 2,130,000 slaves; but at the close of the eighteenth century "the horrors and iniquity of the trade, the ruin and degradation of Africa which it brought about, the oppression of the negro himself, were felt widely and deeply;" and yet when, in 1788, Wilberforce, with the assistance of Pitt, brought in a Bill for its abolition, the feeling against it was so strong that the House of Commons threw it out; and it was only in 1833 that Great Britain abolished its slave-trade. And in this connection it should be remembered that, whilst Wilberforce was an evangelical Christian, his friend and chief supporter, Pitt, was an Agnostic. In America, also, slavery was abolished, not by the Church, but by its Freethinking President, Abraham Lincoln.

Mr. Mozley's allusion to the effect of the faith of Christ on slavery is thus seen to be both inaccurate and misleading. Even had complete emancipation been brought about in the fourteenth century, the Church could not justly have claimed the full credit for it, because already Humanism was a most powerful factor in moulding even ecclesiastical policy; and there were men not a few in Holy Orders to whom Christianity was only nominally true. It was the new learning, the ever-growing knowledge of Nature, not the faith of Christ, that was broadening men's minds, and opening their eyes to the grim realities of every-day life. This, however, is an aspect of the subject which demands serious attention.

J. T. LLOYD.

Tompkins: "Do you believe in the immortality of souls?"
Jenkins: "Well, not in the case of my shoes."

From a Mattress Grave.

The spirit of the world
Beholding the absurdity of men—
Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile
For one short moment wander o'er his lips.
That smile was Heine. —Matthew Arnold.

HEINE'S genius almost defies analysis. He is, and must ever remain, a problem. Multifarious, luminous, brilliant, he is like a diamond giving light from a hundred facts. To many he appears as a youthful champion tilting against the enemies of humanity; but it seems well-nigh impossible to reach the roots of the man's nature. He is a bundle of contradictions. A Jew who despised money; a convert without zeal; a model of resignation, and yet no Christian; a poet living amid the sternest conditions of prose; a comedian whose life was a tragedy.

In one vivid personality, Heine gathers all those influences of his time which are the live forces to-day. Such a nature was bound to be misunderstood. The puritanical Thomas Carlyle called him a "blackguard"; the pious Kingsley thought him "a wicked man." Thackeray, on the other hand, admitted his "great genius"; and Matthew Arnold hailed him as the mouthpiece of his stormy generation. These varying estimates are typical of the general attitude. He kindled enthusiasm or roused repulsion wherever he was read. If we would seek a comparison, we may find it in Voltaire. Both men championed Liberty, and produced the deepest effects on their generations, and left immortal legacies to posterity. The writings of both ring with a defiant note against "the lie at the lips of the priest."

Heine was born at a great crisis in European history. The long and terrible period during which the vampires of Church and State had sucked away the life-blood of the world was ending rapidly, and before his tenth year little Heine had lived through, and seen, great events. It was the day of Napoleon, and, as Heine puts it, "all boundaries were dislocated." As a boy, he found it hard to learn Latin declensions, which he was sure the Romans never did, "for if they had first to learn Latin, they never would have had time to conquer the world." Young Heine was so troubled that he broke into heterodox prayer: "O thou poor, once-persecuted God, do help me, if possible, to keep the irregular verbs in my head."

One memorable day the impressionable boy saw Napoleon ride through Dusseldorf on his famous white horse, and he never lost the glamour cast over him by the great commander. Republican as he afterwards became, Heine always had a tender place in his heart for Napoleon. Nor is this to be wondered at, for the Code Napoleon, to the Jewish race in particular, was a charter of freedom from the ghastly ghettos of the Middle Ages to the rights of free-born citizens, and the Jews justly hailed the Emperor on that account as their deliverer and protector.

A precocious child—Heine loved reading. His favourite authors were brave old Cervantes and witty Jonathan Swift, and he revelled in the fascinating pages of *Don Quixote* and *Gulliver's Travels*. At the age of seventeen a rich uncle at Hamburg tried in vain to induce him to choose a business career; but it was useless. The young poet, full of lofty ideals, regarded money-grubbing as an accursed thing. Later he studied law, and fell under the influence of Hegel. Years afterwards he referred, caustically, to this period as that in which he "herded swine with the Hegelians."

With the appearance of his first volume of poems he began to take his true place. He still talked of becoming a lawyer, but his thoughts were all for other things than

"wise saws and modern instances." For instance, he wrote:—

Red life boils in my veins. Every woman is to me
the gift of a world. I hear a thousand nightingales. I
could eat all the elephants of Hindustan, and pick my
teeth with the spire of Strasburg Cathedral. Life is the
greatest of blessings.

His energies were devoted to writing, and not to pleading. Instead of cultivating his clients he wrote his *Travel-Pictures*, a book so full of word-magic that it showed Heine to be as great an artist in prose as in verse. Its irony was so mordant, so disrespectful, that it was at once placed on the Index Expurgatorius. Indeed, as a writer, he never elected to dwell beside the still waters. To think of his career is to think of alarms and excursions, of church calling unto conventicle, of pamphlet answering pamphlet, of recriminations and vituperations manifold, and all the joys of literary battle. With all his love of fighting his enthusiasm burns for noble ends. The love of liberty shines through the mist of his dreams. And let a man love Freedom and live long enough, and there is no doubt with whom his place must be in the end.

In *The Romantic School* he poured vitriol over the literary chiefs of reaction in their tenderest spot. He compared their reversion to mediævalism to the hallucinations of Charenton, the Bedlam of Paris. This is how he ridicules Ludwig Tieck:—

He drank so deeply of the mediæval folk-tale ballads
that he became almost a child again, and dropped into
that juvenile lisp which it cost Mme. de Stael so
much effort to admire.

It was not roses all the way. There came an inevitable stage in which the poet could no longer—

Sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neera's hair.

But when the sad days arrived he never complained. For seven long years prior to his death he lay bent and solitary on a "mattress-grave," his back bent, his legs paralyzed, his hands powerless, his sight failing. His ungrudging nature found excuses for his friends' desertion of his sick-chamber in the reflection that he was "unconsciously long a-dying." As Matthew Arnold sings in his fine dirge on his brother poet:—

Oh! not little, when pain
Is most quelling, and man
Easily quelled, and the fine
Temper of genius so soon
Thrills at each smart, is the praise
Not to have yielded to pain.

"God's satire weighs heavily upon me," says Heine.

The Great Author of the Universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven, was bent on demonstrating with crushing force to me, the little earthly so-called German Aristophanes, how my weightiest sarcasms are only pitiful attempts at jesting in comparison with His, and how miserably I am beneath Him in humour, in colossal mockery.

The untameable humorist kept his most wonderful jest for the last. "God will forgive me," he said, "it is his trade."

Heine, after all, was a poet. He is at his best in verse. His melodies are as various as they are faultless. The cadences are more caressingly tender; now lulling, lingeringly mournful; now resonant as the blare of martial trumpets. The verse now rolls majestically, now dances airily, now rings like a peal of fairy bells:—

O lyric voice, half angel and half bird,
And all a wonder and a wild desire.

Fundamentally, Heine was a Freethinker, and he hated priestcraft with every drop of his blood. He never wearied of pouring scorn on the "molly-coddle homœopathic soul-doctors, who pour the thousandth part

of a pint of reason into a gallon of morals, and send people to sleep with it on Sundays." He loathed that "abortion called State religion, that monster born of the intrigue between temporal and spiritual power." He was not "over partial to anthropomorphism." The bolts of his unerring irony are often directed towards the most sacred characters in the Christian mythology. In an oft-quoted passage he says that God is dying, and, in a daring figure of speech, suggests the administration to him of the last sacrament of the Church. On another occasion, he suggests that the pervenu God of the Christians is angry with Israel for reminding him of his former obscure national relations.

In the lambent flames of his sardonic humour he searched everything that the Christian counts dearest. Writing of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, he says:—

Since his time Deism has vanished from the realm of speculative reason. It may, perhaps, be several centuries before this melancholy notice of decease gets universally bruited about; we, however, have long since put on mourning. Immanuel Kant has pursued the path of inexorable philosophy; he has stormed heaven, and put the whole garrison to the edge of the sword.

Even the idea of immortality did not escape his sharp satire. He suggests, mockingly, that the notion of living for ever must have first occurred to some young lover in the arms of his mistress or to some worthy citizen sipping his beer in the cool of a summer evening.

As a poet, Heine's fame has attained to that height in which praise has become superfluous; but in the character of iconoclast he has a yet higher and more lasting claim on the attention of Freethinkers. Heine himself said he knew not if he were worthy of a laurel-wreath; "but," he added, proudly, "lay on my coffin a sword, for I was a brave soldier in the war of the Liberation of Humanity." No one will deny the laurel-wreath, and assuredly to Henri Heine belongs the sword of a valiant soldier of Liberty.

MIMNERMUS.

Religion and the Boers.

NEARLY twenty years ago a little people in South Africa astounded the world by the prolonged resistance they made to the might of the British Arms. The healing and conciliatory measures of the conqueror have, to a large degree, softened the resentment of the more enlightened Boers, as admirers of General Smut's English speeches will be able to testify. Still, all is not well, and the recent disturbances, together with the rancorous race hatred, and obstinate prejudices of a powerful faction, have caused no little misgiving in the hearts of those who were looking for the signs of race fusion and mutual forbearance so vital to the progress of this country.

It is a well-known fact that toleration in politics very rarely accompanies bigotry in religion, and it is to this factor that the student of contemporary South Africa should pay attention before all else.

It would be difficult to find a parallel to the spiritual thralldom of the Boers, except in Scottish history; and, like them, the slavery is a willing one. So ingrained are the seeds of superstition in their being that even a finished education at the Universities often fails to awaken their reason in these matters. It is not so much their doctrinal credence that is remarkable (the average Boer is as ignorant as the veriest Pagan of the implications of his creed!) as their rigid conformity to tradition and custom, and this is so natural a characteristic that the very idea of a Boer iconoclast is startling to those who know him.

Bearing in their blood the heritage of the fugitive Huguenots of France, and the sturdy Netherlanders of William the Silent, liberty is for them a watchword and a passion, and, considering this, their spiritual subjection seems a perplexing anomaly. In this respect they too resemble the Scots, and I can hardly refer those interested to a better explanation than Buckle's account of that nation's religious evolution in his *History of Civilization*. Like them, the struggle for survival has condemned the Boers to a warlike, restless existence. Allowing no time for reflection, and ever in the van praying for them, cheering them, and fighting as one of them against wild native tribes, fierce animals, and the raging elements, went the "Predikant" (parson) himself, a rugged, sturdy son of the soil as they were. In the early nomadic stages of this people, these "Predikants," doubtless, served a very good purpose as a natural nobility of "best men," where no distinctions of rank exist. The greatest religious event in the Dutch Church is the celebration of "Nachtmaal," a term applied to a periodical gathering of the members of the Church ostensibly for the purpose of baptisms, weddings, confirmations, and the taking of Communion. The lonely veld dweller, who has not seen a town for months, will then wend his way through dust and storm, across great distances, to the nearest "dorp" (village), and "great is the joy of meeting." The writer has vivid youthful recollections of these gay gatherings—the bright frocks and sparkling eyes of the healthy country girls, the wooings and the weddings, the songs and dances 'neath starry skies, the *tete-a-tete* round wagon fires; all the pleasurable emotions which only a South African night can excite. For, mark you, your Boer is no pleasure-hating Puritan, and he has none of that sombreness and austerity which a starving of the senses begets. In fact, he is more often than not a glutton of the senses, and possessed of a very keen sense of humour too! In the remote sparsely peopled parts of this country, unhappy must be the lot of one who casts himself adrift from the life of the Church—the marooned islander would hardly find himself in a more desperate plight!

At these functions the "Predikants" are, as it were, the Directors of Ceremonies. They are listened to with deep respect, and credited with almost superhuman knowledge and foresight. The natural mischievousness of their flock is kept in check by a stern demeanour and keen watchfulness. In addition to his always liberal salary, gifts in kind are willingly poured upon him; in fact, his position is one of so much influence and comfort that it is the desire of almost every prosperous Boer family that at least one of its members should join the Church. As a rule the modern "Predikants" are well-educated, thoroughly practical men; and as the education of their countrymen is almost wholly left to their charge, they can safely be depended upon not permitting such enlightenment to penetrate their flocks as would jeopardize their positions!

These old "nachtmaals" must have been a priceless blessing to those old Boers of unsettled communities and nomadic habits. As South Africa develops and settles down, these conditions must disappear; in fact, already in the towns the young Boers are distinctly more rebellious to custom; but a great distance has still to be travelled before a thoughtful Rationalism can replace the pedagogic type of morality which they are just beginning to escape from.

Religion and morality are, to an overwhelming degree, absolutely dissevered in the Boer consciousness. The most profound profession of faith is often accompanied by startling moral delinquencies, and this is beginning to be recognized by the more thoughtful of them. This is the result of trying to force an other-worldly Cal-

vinistic creed upon a naturally buoyant and human people; and in saying it of them it is far from my intention to single them out from amongst the nations as *alone* in that respect. My idea is to check that habit which so many English people have of comparing them to their own Puritans of pious memory, which the figure of Paul Kruger and the Bible did so much to foster. *They are far better people* than your Puritans could ever hope to be, and it is this temperamental characteristic that makes one hope that, once rid of the deadening influence of the "Predikant," their natural bent for the "human" side of life may expand, until they become generous, open-hearted, and free, politically as well as religiously.

E. A. (Johannesburg).

"Spare the Rod and —."

THE adoption of Biblical statements as canons of conduct has been productive of more evil than one would credit from a cursory examination of the facts; and none more so than the adage "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Those of us who are interested in educational matters have noticed, with feelings almost of despair, the apparent dislike of children to education, and the indifference with which it is viewed by the adolescent. The growth of this dislike is difficult to understand, for there is none of us who have brought up children, but can recall the painful insistence with which the infants pressed their questions about letters and words.

We have just been watching some children playing at "school." Their antics, which might have been amusing had they not indicated a blemish on our educational scutcheon, pointed to the probable source of this baffling indifference to education. We refer to the retention of corporal punishment in schools. Most of the citizens of this island have a distinct recollection of the frequent, and, in mature judgment, uselessness of the "tawse" or cane. Abhorrent to all those who have a spark of humanity in their breasts, yet the rule of the cane continues. We know of a child, a girl aged ten, who suffered from valvular disease of the heart, and in respect of whom a medical certificate was lodged with the School Board, or its employees, that on no account was the child to be struck or in any way excited; and yet who, despite the certificate, was severely flogged. The School Board was informed, but the only step taken, although the virago was a probationer, was to remove her to another school, where, presumably, she might continue her physical exercise to her constitutional benefit.

Many of the profession, however, discountenance corporal punishment, and we think it is a matter for congratulation that they should have advanced so far from the barbarism of a Hebrew civilization. They fully realize that not infrequently resort is had to the tawse, when anger has supplanted intelligence. It might be of some value to point out that the cringing children of five years and upwards are not infrequently only objects upon which an enraged teacher may wreak his vengeance, something to smash—human flesh—no matter, it relieves the feelings; and that hateful as such an action may appear in cold print, it is unfortunately rather common in this super-Presbyterian-Christian country of Scotland; tolerated in a country which boasts of its educational system. Perhaps, however, we credit religion with being a humanizing factor, and on turning to the text-book of Christianity, we find we are in error. Corporal punishment is, indeed, mild when we read of the treatment meted out to stubborn sons.

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son which will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his

mother: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out unto the elders of his city; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die.

Thus is parental affection encouraged in Deut. xxi. 18 *et seq.*

With such an example of magnificent ferocity before one, it cannot be deemed surprising that those brought up on such a literature and such ethics cannot comprehend that the retention of corporal punishment in schools is a thing to be condemned; and it is here that the humane influence of Freethinkers could be exerted with great profit both to the generations to come and to civilization in general. In Scotland we find ministers of religion on every School Board; in England we find them in large numbers on Boards of management. Here, where Freethinkers ought to be present in large numbers, there are but few. Can it be that they do not recognize the great good that can be done by breaking up the religious atmosphere which pervades each Board, and discrediting the boasted support to education which is claimed by Christians?

We cannot view with indifference the direct and immediate effect which corporal punishment has on social life. One cannot walk of an evening through the town without observing how frequently parents strike their children for little reason or none at all. It is apparent that such a habit is contracted by constant association with the fact of striking, and that it is indulged in because public opinion has not yet condemned it. And what gives more substance to its reputed right than flagellation in schools? Were it to be treated as immoral, and that fact impressed upon the plastic minds of the children, we should, within two generations, find that parents would control their feelings; which act of discipline would be a great step towards the ideal of a sentient being.

JOHN McMILLAN.

Correspondence.

MALTHUSIANISM AND POVERTY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Dr. Drysdale insists that poverty is due to over population, and that "it is better in the face of shortage that the competent should be fully fed." If this be so, perhaps he will explain why the condition of the world—a Ireland has not been improved one iota by the decrease of population there since the famine of 1848? The population then was 8,000,000, and is now only 3,000,000, yet the poverty-stricken state of the Irish workers remains as bad as ever. Again, seven great landlords take £14,000,000 annually in ground rents in London, without doing a hand's turn to earn it. They are, certainly, fully fed, but in what way do they display their competence? They might all be congenital idiots, yet their unearned incomes would roll into their pockets just the same. John D. Rockefeller, the American oil king, has an annual income of some £5,000,000. If this is the just reward of competence, he must be a much more competent man than Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall, Spencer, and a good many more scientists rolled into one.

G. O. WARREN (Major).

[We have received a number of letters on the subject of "Socialism v. Malthusianism," for which we regret our inability to find room. The letters, too, are a little outside the scope of the original topic, which was "Freethought and Birth Control."—ED.]

The congregation at a Stevanage (Herts) church are asked not to put foreign coins in the collection. This is an improvement on the old, sad days when brace-buttons and bad money found their way to the alms-bag.

Acid Drops.

It seems that several people were "providentially" saved from the aeroplane bombs last week by being out of the way when the explosions occurred. When one comes to think, over six millions of the people of London were in the same position. And some of us are inclined to think the thing that calls for explanation is why the people who were killed happened to be "providentially" in the path of the German bombs. The victims do not appear to have been Freethinkers, or some explanation might be found in that direction.

There are about 50,000 sky-pilots in this country, and this large number is likely to be increased if the Catholic *Universe* is correct in stating that "hundreds of officers and men are to-day resolved that if God brings them safely through the hell-upon-earth, which they are experiencing, their thank-offering shall be a life devoted to His service in the priesthood or the religious life." And, let us hope, prayerfully, that no breach-of-promise cases will result.

The dear *Daily News* informs its readers that "the old gods are passing." This news should flutter the doves of Nonconformity.

The conferring of the vote on women has roused the Churches to a sense of its vast import, but Miss Margaret Fletcher, of the Catholic Women's League, lets the cat out of the bag in saying: "Catholic women must be educated to do their new duties well. They must be in a position that they would not through ignorance betray the cause of the Church." In other words, when the clergy pull the strings the marionettes will vote.

A generation ago many Nonconformists regarded theatres as "the door of Hell"; but things are changed nowadays. A leading London theatre announced recently a special performance in aid of the Young Men's Christian Association.

At an inquest held at Westminster on Timothy John Lee, a bootmaker, who committed suicide by cutting his throat, it was stated that he suffered from religious mania. This is a tragic testimonial to the value of religion. In the Coroner's Court it was stated that, as a rule, bootmakers were Atheistic, and a correspondent inquires if there is ground for this assertion. We believe it to be true that a large proportion of reformers *used* to come from this class, and the reason was that bootmaking—in the days when they were bootmakers, and not merely machine minders—was an occupation that gave opportunities for reflection and conversation. And these circumstances tend towards heresies of all kinds, by favouring mental development.

The piety of the Sunday papers is more fully flavoured than that of the weekly periodicals, but, curiously, the sporting pages of the *Referee* often contains the unadulterated article. Recently it expressed the touching sentiment that "the Huns, like Agag, must be hewn in pieces before the Lord by Christian men." Scratch a Christian, and you find a savage.

America is the home of fancy religions, and it is not surprising that a Christian Scientist has been appointed chaplain in the United States Army. He should have a holy time with the military doctors.

Bishop Taylor Smith, the Chaplain-General, declares that "what captured Jerusalem was what captured Jericho in the days of old." It requires the eye of faith to perceive the resemblance, for the Bible says the fall of Jericho was preceded by a procession and a blare of trumpets, and the walls of the city fell down. The bishop has enough brass in his forehead to make a trumpet. We wish he would go to Jericho—and stay there.

The *Christian World* explains to the public that Sir Arthur Yapp learned the art of public speaking in Primitive Methodist Chapels. This must be very consoling to those standing in queues in the hopes of getting food. It may also explain the general suspicion with which the statements of officials are now regarded—

From all sides comes the query,
Where's God in all this "scrap" ?
The answer comes, quite cheery
"Behold, He gave us Yapp!"

Since the above was written, Sir Arthur Yapp has resigned, and is returning to the Y.M.C.A. His reason is that now compulsory rationing is on us, his advocacy of voluntary rationing is no longer required. Sir Arthur might reflect that the advent of compulsory rationing is a commentary upon the success of his campaign.

There is no doubt whatever that the Churches are beginning to feel that they are losing ground rapidly, and that the War, which they hoped to turn to their advantage, is having quite an opposite effect. Thus, at the annual meeting of the Derbyshire Free Church Federation, the speakers were much concerned about the relation of the soldiers to the Church when the War is over. The Rev. W. F. Moulton suggested that they were on the horns of a dilemma. If they kept what was essential to the Churches, they might have the men. And if they got the men, it looked like having to throw overboard much of their teaching. Rev. M. Ackroyd followed on much the same lines, and it is quite clear that these gentlemen know quite well that thousands of soldiers who went out professing Christians are coming back more or less Freethinkers.

One of the latest manifestations of the tender mercy of Providence is a tidal wave and cyclone in Queensland, resulting in a loss of life and large destruction of property.

An illiterate shopkeeper in a poor neighbourhood put a notice in his window with the words "Annual Sell" upon it. The title would be a good one for many Church bazaars

Cardinal Bourne says that Russia has "lost all hold of Christian principles." Presumably, his eminence means that the Greek Church clergy no longer have a place in the sun.

The most popular Christian prayer contains the passage: "Give us this day our daily bread." The answer is to be seen in the food queues.

In spite of the need of the Government for money, we note that no attempt is being made to place a tax upon church buildings. A very large sum of money is lost to the State through all churches and chapels being freed from rates or taxes, and all of this might help pay for the War. But the parasitism of religion is unbounded. The clergy claim exemption from those duties of citizenship that are forced upon other people, and they are freed from paying rates and taxes that fall upon other people.

The tight corner in which the clergy find themselves is shown by the admissions many are making. Thus, the Rev. J. L. Harris, of Kingston:—

This kind of salvation offered to me by conventional soul-savers seems a selfish thing. It does not appeal to the best manhood in me. If the world is to be saved I want to help; I want to be a saviour too, and I decline to be saved as a special favour, even though churches and priests offer me theological passports and sprinkle me and absolve me. The Saviour who will reach the man of to-day will not only show us something we cannot do without Him, but also something He cannot do without us. He will not only make me feel that He is indispensable to me, but that I am indispensable to Him. I would rather keep my self-respect and go to hell like a man, than lose it and go to heaven like a coward or a pauper.

The closing sentence has been voiced by thousands of Freethinkers who have realized what a selfish and contemptible thing the Christian scheme of salvation is.

Scarcely a week passes in which we do not see a paragraph charging the Kaiser with blasphemy. This betrays on the part of those who write the paragraphs, and the editors who pass them, a deplorable ignorance of English. To blaspheme is to speak irreverently of, or to revile, God. A blasphemer is, therefore, a person who speaks irreverently of, or reviles, God. What evidence have we in any of the published utterances of the Kaiser that he speaks irreverently of, or reviles, God? None whatever. On the contrary, he addresses the Deity with profound reverence, with truly pious adulation, and humble but confident gratitude for favours past and future. This silly form of raving at the Kaiser would be better replaced by silence.

Laudatory paragraphs have appeared in the newspapers concerning a new comedian, Tom Paine, who is to appear at a London theatre. A comic Tom Paine suggests an age of unreason.

There was once another "Tom" Paine, whom the Churches found anything but a comedy. To them he was a tragedy. And although he played his part a century ago, the consequences of his life are still with us. And when history is written with truthfulness, instead of in the interest of established prejudice, it will be found that the nineteenth century produced no greater benefactor to the human race than he who first wrote "The United States of America," and who dreamed of a United States of Europe.

A new anonymous playlet, *Annajanska*, produced at the London Coliseum, has been attributed to Mr. Bernard Shaw, and among the lines quoted is "All great truths begin as blasphemy." The idea is excellent, but it is hardly original. Many years ago Ingersoll said, "The blasphemers of one generation are the aureole saints of the next."

For sheer mawkish sentiment, or pietistic piffle, we have not seen anything for a long time to compare with the leading article in the *British Weekly* for January 31. It is entitled "The Cross on the Battlefield"; and the writer takes it for granted that the soldiers in the trenches swallow without demur his antiquated and essentially immoral theology. To the dying on the battlefield, the Editor contends: "the Cross means salvation." Sir William Robertson Nicoll does not know that the Cross means anything of the sort to them, only he ventures "with great humility to conceive their outlook." Judging by what we have read in books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles, by many army chaplains, we do not hesitate to affirm that Sir William is radically mistaken.

Thoughtful young men of to day do not subject their necks to the yoke of such theological dictatorship as characterizes the *British Weekly* editorials. Of the dying soldiers it is said in the one now under consideration: "One look of trust saves them." Here is another worse than silly saying: "To be saved by what another has done is their hope." We give our soldiers credit for being too sensible to cherish any such wicked hope. And yet the article in question teems with sayings of that outrageous nature, and is, from first to last, a wildly emotional outburst.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc uses the eye of faith in political as well as religious matters, for he regards Lord Northcliffe as the dictator of this country. Surely, he does too much honour to the proprietor of *Comic Cuts*.

The Bishop of Carlisle has written to the clergy in Carlisle diocese, asking them to hold themselves in readiness to go out as Army chaplains. What patriotism! These men will go to the Front as non-combatants with the salaries of officers.

What queer ideas the clergy have! Here is the Bishop of Southwark, preaching in Southwark Cathedral on the attractive subject of prostitution. When will these bishops learn that the pressing problem of our time is that there are many millions of Christians arrayed for mutual slaughter.

Mr. Jerome K. Jerome, writing in a daily paper, has a sly dig at Mr. H. G. Wells' theological views. He points out that Mr. Wells "imagines his next god as a gentleman in shining armour. It seems somewhat out of date. Why not a tin-helmet and a gas mask?"

The mind of the new science, says a writer in the *Times Literary Supplement*, "is inclined to synthesis, to monism, to inspired naturalism." We are not quite sure what is *inspired* naturalism; probably the word is only introduced to help tone down the fact that modern science is irrevocably non-theistic. These are bad times for the kingly rule of gods and the godly rule of kings. Both began pretty well together, and they look like ending together.

The same writer—writing of a new work on the history of Science—asks "Did not both Wallace and Darwin receive the idea of natural selection in a flash of purest inspiration?" Note the "receive," and the "purest inspiration" in this sentence, and then consider the misleading associations such language is likely to set up. A flash of inspiration is a permissible expression, but it is inspiration from within, not from without. Had Darwin and Wallace not been trained naturalists, with minds well stored with information on a special subject, they could not have offered the world Natural Selection. In other words, their "inspiration" was the outcome of rapid and semi-conscious generalization on a mass of acquired data. There is no mystery in the machinery of inspiration once a little common sense is brought to bear. And for that reason it is not "received." That expression belongs to the pages of theology. There is no legitimate place for it in science.

There is more than an academic interest in noting the use of such expressions. All language reacts on thought, and when a person gets in the habit of using words with definite connotations in another and a special sense, such words are almost certain to mislead. The old associations are there, and they confuse subsequent thinking. "Receiving" a generalization by way of "inspiration" is certain to carry with it the theological connotation, and it establishes a mystery where there is only a rather complex problem to unravel. That is the root reason why we have so often protested against such expressions as the "Religion of Humanity," etc. "Religion" has a fairly definite historic connotation, and it is absurd to expect that it can be used to-day without giving an illicit support to supernaturalism in some form. If a man means that he believes in Naturalism, or Humanism, or morals, there is no reason whatever why he should not say so without associating therewith such an incurably misleading word as "Religion." Definite ideas are the outcome of clear thinking, as definite speech is the outward sign of its existence.

Primitive Methodists have complained to Sir Arthur Yapp that room could not be found for missionaries on boats that carried intoxicating liquors. The obliging Sir Arthur promised to see what could be done. It is very important that the missionary traffic should be encouraged. For while many in the commercial world are bent on capturing German trade, those engaged in the missionary business are equally alert and to the same end. And many of our traders know how much assistance is derived from missionary enterprise.

A new comedy bears the title, *A Cushy Job*. It is not so soft a job as that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who gets £15,000 yearly for preaching the Gospel of Poverty.

The King has expressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury his "profound thankfulness" for the general response to his appeal for the Day of Prayer, and the Archbishop has expressed his thanks for the King's help. This expression of pleasure by the two representatives of one of the oldest businesses in history is very touching. But what one would like to know is, what kind of response did God make to all the praying? Were the London and Paris air-raids an expression of his pleasure?

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 17, Leicester; March 3, Sheffield; March 17, Southampton; March 24, Manchester; May 5, Abertillery.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 10, Swansea; February 17, Manchester; March 17, Abertillery; March 24, Leicester; April 28, Nuneaton.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—R. D. Voss (Cape Town), 10s. 6d.; Kepler, 5s. 7d.

S. ELMSLEY.—Is the fault yours or ours? If you have lived so long on religious "slops" we are not surprised you find the diet we supply rather trying to the digestive organs. Our advice is to "stick it." You cannot expect to acquire robust mental health all at once.

"PUZZLED."—There is no ethical idealism in the "sacrifice" of Jesus Christ, save such as is imported into it by semi-rationalized Christians. Fundamentally, the death of Jesus is an exercise in god-making. Its roots are anthropological, not ethical. Christians claim to find the ethical ideal only when the true Christian idea is realized as intolerable. They would play the same game with "Old Mother Hubbard" if it paid them to do so.

G. McDERMOTT.—Reprints of the kind you submit, unless there is something on hand that gives them special pertinence, read a trifle forced and out of date. Thanks for the trouble you have taken.

"SAMMY."—You will have to take your choice. We were not at the discussion and cannot say, but we think it a questionable act of judgment on either side. Assertions of victory are best left to the judgment of the audience.

W. WILMER.—Have returned letters. Thanks, very much, for sight of them.

D. JACKSON (Derby).—Glad to learn you have recently secured "several new readers." Please keep at it. We consider it work of real national importance.

ONE of our readers has kindly volunteered to supply the *Freethinker* for a year to the club of which he is a member, and suggests that other readers might like to follow his example, and thus introduce the paper to new readers.

H. SIMPSON.—Fitzgerald's *Omar* can be obtained of Messrs. Macmillan. The price need not be more than 2s. 6d. There are various editions.

D. CORNOCH.—We do not know when we are likely to visit Portsmouth again. Glad you have arranged with another newsagent to supply the *Freethinker*.

J. R. KELLY.—Your P.O. received for *Sacerdotal Celibacy*. You have omitted to send address. Please let us have this to forward books.

R. D. VOSS.—We are doing our best, and are gratified our efforts are so widely appreciated. When easier times come we shall feel quite dull.

R. CHAPMAN.—Sorry the dislocation of the post—due to the air-raid, we presume—prevented your note on Mr. Lloyd's South Shields meetings reaching us in time for last week's issue. Anyway, we are pleased to learn that the meetings were "quite successful," and that the audiences were "delighted." We expected nothing less.

J. BREESE.—Too late last week. It is a good sign that so many of the educated men in the Army should be so strongly anti-militaristic. The sense of national duty that carried them into the Army will be needed when the War is over to fight the class in our own country who are almost certain to attempt some form of militarism here.

Mr. H. E. LATIMER-VOIGHT sends us a letter protesting against Freethought being mixed up with what he calls "crankyisms." He thinks the *Freethinker* should confine itself to the attack on Christianity and other religious superstitions.

L. W. R. SILKE (Cape Town).—Thanks for suggestion. We have had such a project in our mind for some time, and will seize the earliest opportunity for putting it into operation.

J. W. WOOD.—Very good news indeed. Will write further on the matter next week.

J. THACKRAY.—Thanks for suggestion. Will consider it.

J. BUNCE.—Addresses received. Specimen copies are being sent.

A. JOHNSON.—We make no charge for inserting lecture notice, nor for any other matter referring to the N. S. S. Lecture notices

should be sent on postcards as early as possible in the week, but must be received by first post Tuesday at latest.

A. A. WILDMAN.—Mr. Cohen has booked Southampton for March 17.

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

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

When the report of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services, required all communications, should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4 by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Lloyd pays his second visit to Swansea to-day (February 10). Judging from the accounts of his first visit the success of the meeting is assured. Those who were there before are certain to go again, and we hope that each will not fail to take at least one friend with him.

From our esteemed contemporary, the *New York Truthseeker* :—

The *Freethinker*, we feel confident, will "carry on." It is nearly as old as the *Truthseeker*, and in the same way indispensable. Its editor, Chapman Cohen, is a Freethinker with no reservation—a man of ideas, with remarkable skill in handling them; the compeer in this respect of his predecessor, George William Foote. The latter induced in us the habit of reproducing his "leaders," and Mr. Cohen makes it impossible for us to desist and reform.

It seems easier to think of the *Freethinker* and *Truthseeker* without either England and America than to conceive England and America without these two papers. And we are quite sure both would be poorer places without them. And on that score we are under no great fear. The struggle is hard, and gets harder every month. But both papers have too many friends for them to go under—even under the stress of a world-war.

We may as well do all our blushing this week at once. We venture to reproduce the following from an old subscriber :—

I enclose cheque for my subscription for ensuing twelve months, adding 50 per cent. as I consider that, under the prevailing conditions, the "Paper of Papers" is well worth 3d. a week.

Yours is one of the very few publications, at any rate, that have come under my observation, of which one might say that the articles penned *re* the War, in its earlier stages, could be reprinted practically without amendment to-day! So much for sane thinking and plain speaking. If I were hard-pressed for funds there are many publications to which I should give the "go-by" rather than forgo the weekly intellectual treat provided by the *Freethinker*.

Seriously, we publish the above because we are aware of the pleasure with which so many of our readers show appreciation of *their* paper. And whatever credit may be due to our own writings upon a very vexed topic, we can only attribute that to possessing principles, knowing what they are, and sticking to them.

We are glad to see that the new Branche of the N. S. S. at Nuneaton settling down to regular work. Several lectures have been arranged, and to-day (February 10) Mr. Clifford Williams, of Birmingham, will lecture in The Palace, Queen's Road, at 6.30 on "Freethought *versus* Christianity." We hope to hear of a successful meeting.

The paper famine continues to make itself felt. This week the *Clarion* raises its price to twopence, and we believe the *Labour Leader* is to follow suit. Naturally, it is papers representing advanced movements that feel the pinch most, and as they have no reserves of capital to fall back on, and no profits to eat up, even under normal circumstances. And yet the best work of the world is often done by those papers, the maintenance of which, under the most favourable conditions, is a labour of love.

We are pleased to see that the *Humanitarian* continues its monthly appearance, and that, in spite of nearly four years of war, it still stands for the better side of human nature. There are many better known journals that could be more easily spared. From a note in the last issue, we see that, in the interests, of "war economy," the diet of the inmates of prisons is to be reduced. At its best, prison diet is only just enough to keep a prisoner alive, and to further reduce this seems a doubtful economy, and an almost certain brutality.

Under the name of the New Era Union a vigorous Freethought propaganda has for some years been carried on in Abertillery. The members have now an opportunity of purchasing a very suitable hall, with a number of smaller rooms for committee meetings, &c., for a sum of £900. This is regarded as a good investment, and it is hoped will lead to more efficient work in the locality. A company is being formed to secure the hall, and the Committee will be glad to hear from anyone who feels disposed to invest in the proposed company. The shares are to be £1 each, and the Secretary, Mr. A. J. Cottle, 10, Park Place, Abertillery, Mon., will be glad to furnish all particulars.

We have had a number of applications for literature to be sent to men at the Front, the cost of which is defrayed from the £10 left with the Pioneer Press by Mr. N. Evans. All these requests have been complied with, and we feel sure the literature so sent will be productive of good. We are making this statement here in order to avoid individual replies to those who have written us.

The Orb of Day.

IV.

(Continued from p. 75.)

THE solar prominences, those great sheets of flame which leap from the sun's surface, as well as the wonderful solar corona, were first revealed by the aid of the moon. When the moon covers the face of the sun, and a solar eclipse occurs, the prominences and the corona are clearly seen through the telescope. Recent refinements, however, enable the astro-physicist to view the prominences without our satellite's assistance; but the solar student is still dependent upon eclipses for his observations of the mysterious corona. For it is only when the moon's dark body cuts off direct solar radiation from our globe that the corona which fringes the solar luminary becomes visible.

When viewed from the earth, the sun and moon possess the same apparent diameter. This arises from the remarkable fact that, although the sun's diameter is 400 times larger than the moon's, it is about 400 times distant. Thus the diameters of the solar and lunar orbs appear to us approximately equal.

It is now a mere matter of calculation as to the time of a total or partial eclipse of the sun. Just as the

astronomer is able to predict coming eclipses for the next 2,000 years, so can he tell us the date of thousands of eclipses in the past. The motions of the moon being determined, mathematical research resolves the rest. The period of solar eclipses known as the Saros is one of eighteen years and eleven days. Otherwise stated, whenever an eclipse has been visible anywhere on the earth's surface, another is certain to occur after an interval of eighteen years and eleven days. Unfortunately, eclipses frequently happen which cannot be observed, and many deep disappointments have been experienced by astronomers who have journeyed to the ends of the earth to view them, only to discover that clouds and mists precluded all prospect of observing them in the only countries in which they would have been visible.

A total eclipse never lasts more than eight minutes, and usually not more than three. The few minutes available to the observers are therefore of vital importance. When the astronomers have gathered together to witness an approaching eclipse, elaborate preparations are made for the purpose of economizing time and labour. Provided with spectroscopes, photographic telescopes, and various other scientific instruments, the assembled scientists rehearse their arrangements over and over again. The thorough efficiency of their apparatus is thus tested, and the observers become so expert in performing their several parts that, when the critical minutes arrive, every moment is fruitfully occupied in observing the eclipse and its accompaniments. As the moon steals near the sun, a notch is seen on the solar disc, and this, darkening steadily, increases during the succeeding hour and a half, when a narrow crescent is all that remains visible of the sun. The supreme moments are now very near. A mere strip of the sun remains; the orb of day becomes obliterated. A ring of ruddy light encircles the moon, and the pearly-hued corona starts into view.

Many observers have recorded their impressions of a solar eclipse, and all appear to have been immensely moved by the change which comes over the fair face of the earth as the sun vanishes behind the moon. Weird changes are witnessed in the sky. The clouds lose their coloured tints, and assume a solemn and funereal appearance. The temperature falls, and as the period of totality approaches, cold and darkness increase. Professor Smyth, who was present at an eclipse in Norway in 1851, tells us that:—

After a little time the eyes seem to get accustomed to the darkness, and the looming forms of objects close by could be observed, all of them exhibiting a dull green hue, seeming to have exhaled their natural colour..... Life and animation seemed, indeed, to have now departed from everything around; and we could hardly but fear, against our reason, that if such a state of things were to last much longer, some dreadful calamity would happen to us also, while the lurid horizon northward appeared so like the gleams of departing light in some of the grandest of the works of Martin and Danby that one could not at the time, and in that presence, but believe, in spite of their alleged extravagances, that Nature has opened up to the constant contemplation of their mind's eyes, some of those magnificent revelations of power and glory which others can only get a hasty glimpse of on occasions such as these.

The sun rotates on its axis in a period of about twenty-five days. As the circumference of the sun is over 110 times that of the earth, its speed of rotation is more than four times that of our globe to enable it to revolve in twenty-five days. At its equator, the sun rotates at a rate of more than a mile a second. Dark spots on the solar surface were observed in antiquity, but modern sun-spot research began in the seventeenth century, when the

spots were independently discovered by Galileo and others. The invention of the telescope in 1608 preceded the rediscovery of the sun-spots by two years only. These spots vary considerably in number and size, and it was noticed that they travelled across the solar disc in one direction. It was obvious, therefore, that the sun spun on its axis, and the period of solar rotation was thus ascertained by observation of the movements of the spots. When a spot is seen at the centre of the solar disc it will, in the course of six days, be carried to its western edge, and then disappear. At the end of about a fortnight, however, if still in being, it will reappear on the eastern edge.

The frequency of sun-spots fluctuates within a period of eleven years and forty days. In some years few, if any, spots are visible for about six months. This occurred in 1889, and also 1900. After such a dearth, a few will appear in the subsequent year, and during the following five years their numbers increase. Then they will commence to wane until they reach their minimum stage, when they resume their years of increase. From the days of Galileo, these periodic variations have been studied, but it was not until 1825 that Schwabe proved the existence of the law which governs the waxing and the waning of the spots. The year 1904 was a maximum period, while a minimum was reached in 1911. In 1922 few spots will appear, and five years later the spots will be at their greatest frequency, declining again to least frequency in 1933. The solar observer has also established the truth that the spots are mainly restricted to special regions of the solar surface. Very few are found on the sun's equator, but north and south of it they increase in number up to 15 deg. of latitude north or south of the equator, while from 15 deg. to 20 deg. north or south of the equator their frequency attains its maximum. At this latitude the spots decrease, until beyond 30 deg. sun-spots seldom appear.

There is little doubt that the spots are fleeting features displayed by that mantle of radiant clouds embracing the sun, which is termed the photosphere. The impermanence of sun spots arises from the circumstance that they are evolved amid those solar vapours which change almost as rapidly as the clouds of our own atmosphere. Titanic commotions are in constant operation in the photosphere, and spots appear where these disturbances are most pronounced. The old opinion that spots are depressions in the luminous photosphere is no longer tenable. Professor Hale has proved that vast eruptions of gas are incessantly occurring, but that these perturbations are more marked in sun spot regions than elsewhere, and that to these causes sun spot phenomena are due.

In 1885 the equatorial regions of the sun were in a state of constant agitation. In the following year the orb was quite calm, and during the late autumn of 1886 the sun betrayed scarcely a sign of commotion. Other stages of almost complete quiescence have been noted in periods succeeding a time of unusual activity. That huge convulsions are never really absent in the solar interior is a fair deduction. How, then, are we to explain the periodic fluctuations in the magnitude of our luminary's activities which, unquestionably, occur? Instability of the solar envelope exposed to our view presumably arises from the ceaseless interchange between the cooling gases at the exterior and the enormously heated materials from the interior which ascend to occupy their place. That such phenomena are subject to a periodic law is fully in harmony with our experiences of boiling liquids and other substances when heat is generated on a vast scale. Ball recalls Tyndall's brilliant theory of the periodicity of geysers, the truth of which that celebrated physicist established by designing an

artificial geyser which reproduced the requisite results. The chain of reasoning runs as follows:—

If the thermal phenomena of the geyser, depending as they do, on the passage of heat from the inside to the outside, take place, not gradually but by a violent outbreak at intervals which recur with tolerable regularity, is it not likely that a somewhat similar periodicity should be manifested in the sun? It is true that the interval between two outbreaks of a geyser is measured only by hours, or by days, while the interval between two periods of exuberant solar activity is measured in decades of years. But this discrepancy is not more than might be expected from a consideration of the mighty scale on which the phenomena of solar activity are exhibited.

Extending sometimes to a height of 300,000 miles from the sun's limb, there are vast sheets of rosy flame. These solar prominences are as much part of the lord of day as the atmosphere is of our globe. First revealed at times of eclipse, they are now studied with the telescope and spectroscope in normal sunlight, and splendid photographs are obtained by means of Professor Hale's spectro-heliograph. The luminous ball of fire that we ordinarily see is the photosphere, but beyond its margin vast volumes of gaseous materials float in the solar atmosphere.

It is now known that the sun is surrounded by a shell of coloured gas which fringes the photosphere. This shell is the chromosphere which, owing to the intense heat of the sun, is subjected to violent agitation. During these disturbances immense volumes of glowing gases are urged outwards from the chromosphere, and these form the fiery prominences. The methods devised by Huggins, Janssen, and Lockyer—those of spectrum analysis—have demonstrated that the chromosphere is composed of prodigious masses of glowing gas. So thoroughly have the prominences which leap upwards from the chromosphere been studied, that even the wavings of these giant masses of incandescent gases have been detected. Very frequently as he watches the movements of the prominences the astronomer witnesses the decline and extinction of a mighty sheet of coloured flame, while sometimes he becomes the fascinated spectator of the sudden appearance of a new solar display of flaming gas. These solar spectacles are, at times, extremely transient. The sun's flames rise and fall with remarkable rapidity. One observed by M. Trouvelot attained an enormous height, but its entire extinction was merely a matter of minutes. The velocity of these incandescent substances is amazing, for 375 miles per second is a quite moderate estimate of the speed with which they ascend from that shell of solar clouds—the chromosphere—when urged by the giant energies of the solar mass.

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

John Smith in Khaki.

A Note on His Manners, Morals, and Religion.

TOMMY ATKINS was once a specific type—the professional rank and file soldier. A better name, perhaps, for the present-day soldier would be John Smith; for he is no longer a type, but is become a whole nation. There are those who still endeavour to treat Tommy as the old Tommy, showering adulation on him while they throw cheap abuse on his countrymen. But it will not do. The Army is now England, and England is the Army. It should be understood, then, that these remarks refer, not particularly to soldiers as soldiers, but just to Englishmen (or Britons if you like), so far as it is possible to strike an average, where the vices and virtues, and views

and opinions, of such a heterogenous body of men as the citizens of this Empire are concerned.

Readers of this journal do not need telling that the clergy are very unreliable guides in this matter. Parsons are prepared, according to the particular "stunt" they have on hand, to dwell upon the intense religious feeling of the average soldier and sailor—to tell you how he treasures his devotional books and with what ecstatic joy he joins in the hymns, and with what regularity he says his evening prayers, or to make their hearers' flesh creep by doleful and grossly exaggerated accounts of his sexual irregularities when missionary work is the order of the day.

Everyone is familiar with Carlyle's summing-up of Englishmen as "mostly fools." Although all of us, at times, quote this saying with approval whenever we see the crowd bent on something which strikes us as foolish, this jibe cannot be accepted as an accurate statement of fact. The average Englishman is no fool. He is no genius, true; but he is very far from stupid, and it is the positive quality of stupidity that marks a man off as a fool as distinguished from the man of average intelligence who sometimes acts foolishly, as who of us does not?

The trouble with the Englishman's head is not its lack of brain power (for the Anglo-Saxon is quite as intelligent as anybody else) but a certain want of balance. He is so concentrated upon what he thinks of as the practical things of life, that he has no time for theorizing. Abstractions he neither understands nor respects. Enough for him to find out how to deal with the immediate problems of life as they arise. How to provide his daily bread, not to mention a little reasonable luxury; how to keep healthy, solvent, and amused—these are his first cares. Unfortunately, they are too often his last cares also. He is taught to perfect himself in the routine of life, and not bother his head with general principles further than may be necessary for the development of technical skill. He is supplied with a ready-made explanation of the Universe, and a ready-made code of morals. These are fixed on to him at an age when his critical faculties are in embryo. He is made to swallow them by fraud. I say fraud deliberately: it consists in teaching as unquestioned facts doctrines that the teacher knows to be the objects of bitter controversy. The interdependence of morals and religion is forced into him by constant repetition, until prejudice has taken possession of the youthful mind; and though, once freed from the influence of school, he may learn that the truth of his religion is open to question—or even that it is demonstrably false—he will rarely succeed in shaking off the feeling that, false or true, it is generally safer and more convenient to refrain from attacking religion on account of its connection with morality.

From my daily intercourse with him—and present conditions afford one far better opportunities of familiarity with all sorts and conditions of men than is possible as a civilian—I say without hesitation that John Smith is not religious. He has no belief in God or religion worthy of the name, though he rarely expresses positive disbelief in these things. In a word, he is indifferent.

In the Army, although no one really cares a tinker's curse about your religion, you are continually called upon to state it. Before you can have a tooth extracted or a stitch put in your hand, you must declare your opinion as to the origin of the universe and the destiny of all things, using the label of the particular sect with whom you have deposited your thinking apparatus. The favourite, by long odds, is the short and sweet "C.E." What this stands for depends upon the man

who uses it. To me (for I will shock you all, dear readers, by the admission that I use it frequently and unblushingly) it means, "Mind your own business." To the great majority it means, "I don't care a damn which"; while to a few—a very few—it denotes their firm belief in that highly respectable institution, the Church of England.

Church Parade is often optional, we all know. This means that, if you don't care a button what happens to you, you can generally get out of it. Not that would-be martyrs for Freethought can find any good field for their activities by valiantly refusing to attend "Divine Service." They would not find an enraged Chaplain clamouring to have them shot at dawn. He would probably be too busy playing dominoes to bother about that. They might find themselves spending their Sunday on some nasty "fatigue"—and the jobs that are reserved for troublesome men are most unpromising from the martyr's point of view. When you realize that going to church is just a military duty, like going on guard or cookhouse, it simply comes to a toss-up whether you elect to be bored for an hour at church or for several hours at the barracks. Here let me offer a useful tip to those whose exemptions are nearly up. Call yourself an Atheist if you feel like it, but, if not, "C.E." is the horse to back. Do not, for the love of Allah, go in for Methodism. They take you seriously there, and instead of a short, bright, and breezy sermon, your ears are tortured for what seems an age.

So much for Church Parade being "optional." I would wager a pound of sugar to a temperance tract that if only those went who really wanted to worship, the Chaplain would have to waste his precious words on empty pews. A few yawning anglers for promotion—a thin sprinkling of the devout—and that would be all.

Now, what does the man in the street that was, or the man in khaki that is, really believe? Not only in the Army, but perhaps out of it too, he would, if called upon to state his belief, say without any conscious hypocrisy, "Oh, Church of England," or "Catholic," or "Congregationalist." But pursue your investigation, if he will let you, and endeavour to get past his label and penetrate what Mr. Wells would call his "hinterland" of personality. If your experience agrees with mine, you will find that, in nine cases out of ten, a man's declared belief signifies little more than a lazy acquiescence in the adoration of the Lares and Penates of his parents. He comes from Dublin—he is a Roman Catholic; from Scotland—he is a Presbyterian. This applies, I say, to nine out of ten. The tenth man I will consider later. The religious belief of the great majority of men with whom I have succeeded in discussing the question has always resolved itself into a vague kind of *feeling*, rather than reasoned conviction, that somehow, somewhere—there is something; a power—a misty personality—they know not how to express it. Now, the one essential thing that marks the bounds of Theism and Atheism is a belief in *supernatural personality*. To say "God is Love" or "God is supreme Power," or things like that, is really to express Atheism if personality is not intended to be understood. "Love" and "power" alone are mere abstractions. The question is, "Does the average man believe in supernatural personality?" not "Does he believe in something he calls God?" My opinion is that he has a belief—ever so faint though it be—in the existence of a personal God. That belief, probed to the bottom, is so vague as almost to baffle examination and criticism, but it is there. In other words, though not an Atheist, he stands at the borderline of Atheism. Needless to say, this belief is not something attained, but something *retained*. It is the last rag of theological prejudice that the winds of common sense and human

experience have not yet succeeded in tearing from his naked soul.

The morals of John Smith are, perhaps, even more elusive than his religion. Here, again, you have to distinguish between the conventional views of morality which a man affects to hold and the real motives that dominate his conduct. Apart from the vigilance of the police and the retribution of the law, there is the far more significant influence of the development of social sense among the people. The line once so clearly drawn between ethical and mental aberration is fading away, and we are beginning to realize that crime, like madness, is a disease of the brain: It is to be hoped that some day the folly of crime will be so apparent that not only will it be applied to individuals, but the idea will be introduced into international politics. However, I am not now discussing nations but persons, and in that more limited province it is good to see that sane ideas of right and wrong are replacing the barbarous old doctrines of retributive justice, and the divine right of the Top Dog.

John Smith has a real respect for the rights of property—especially his own. Gradations of larceny are rather more finely cut in the Army than elsewhere. In the order from guilt to innocence you can "steal," "pinch," "win," or "take" a thing to which you have no established legal right. For instance, you "steal" a comrade's trousers (and God help you if you are caught) you "pinch" his blankets (these are not charged up to him; if lost he just has to pinch some one else's). Anything you can get from the canteen you "win," because canteens are always regarded by the soldier as dens of thieves, and there is no sin in getting a little bit of his own back when occasion allows. Not one soldier in ten thousand would rob a "Soldiers' Rest" of a penny piece, but very few would hesitate to win anything from a canteen. Lastly, you "take" a tool, or a pencil, or a broom without hesitation, and without a second thought, if you have mislaid your own *Ca va sans dire*. Possession is nine points of the law, and to secure the tenth you carve your initials on it and stick to it—while you can. Findings, I need hardly add, are keepings.

Ideas of sexual rectitude are so dependent on the constitution of the individual that it is very hard to generalize them. The difficulty is enhanced by the continual efforts of the "Moralist" to confuse the different issues of decency and chastity. Of all the ill services that the Christian religion has rendered mankind, perhaps the most lasting mischief has resulted from the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, with its necessary implication of the essential uncleanness of the sexual relationship. Animals do not revel in filth—they try to be as clean as possible, and, I believe, the human animal is no exception. The substratum of nastiness that underlies the superficial cleanliness of mind of so many men is not a natural part of their normal development. It is one of the nauseous excrescences of a prurient religion. Christianity dragged into the mire of indecency—the most prominent and essential attribute of humanity and all life, with the inevitable result that men and women have become ashamed of the very forms and functions that comprise their being. Christian priests have been dinning into the ears of the people the atrocious lie that the sexual act is the twin sister of beastliness for so many centuries, that it is small wonder the same lie has contaminated them as it has done. I say, without hesitation, that the greater part of the moral disease that afflicts us to-day is directly traceable to the Christian religion.

HERBERT W. THURLOW,

(To be continued.)

Society News.

West Central Hall (London).—During February we shall continue to hold meetings on Sunday afternoons, and we hope our London friends will advertise them as widely as possible. Mr. Snell's interesting address on Palestine was keenly followed by the audience, and led up to a lively discussion. To-day, Mr. Snell will lecture on Spiritualism, a subject which is causing a good deal of interest at the present time.—E. M. VANCE, Gen. Sec.

North London Branch N. S. S.—Mr. George Ives delivered a most enlightening lecture on "Primitive Man" to a very good audience. A good discussion followed. To-night, Mr. Baker and Mr. Wilde will debate. The subject, "Is the Roman Catholic Church an Enemy to Democracy?" should excite great interest in the light of present events.—H. V. LANE, Hon. Sec.

South Shields Branch N. S. S.—Our latest lecture ventures at South Shields have been quite as successful as, could possibly be expected in these trying times. Mr. Cohen's visit brought all his old friends who could secure travelling facilities, and welcome assistance from Sunderland, Newcastle, Cramlington, and Fence Houses well-wishers. Mr. Lloyd, in ideal weather following the storm and wreck, had a warm reception in the afternoon, and for the evening meeting every seat in the lecture hall was occupied. His logic and eloquence surprised the inquiring visitors who had been specially invited to attend to hear his interesting discourse upon various issues of Rationalism and supernaturalism. The new feature of vocal and instrumental music preceding the evening lecture also met with the heartiest approbation; and a few words of appeal from the local Secretary brought three new members to strengthen the Branch for future undertakings—a very satisfactory result, all things considered, and calculated to assure us that when the high-pressure system and overstrain everywhere passes away we can depend upon a fair measure of support for the Secular Cause.—R. CHAPMAN, Sec.

South London Branch, N. S. S.—On Sunday evening our hall was crowded with an audience of nearly 100 persons, who had gathered to hear a debate on "Did Jesus Ever Live?" between Mr. Noah Bayley (Christian Evidence Society) and Mr. Howell Smith, B.A. (N. S. S.). The debate was conducted on both sides with the greatest decorum and good temper, and the audience took a great interest in the question. It was certainly a novelty at a debate to allow the audience to ask questions of either disputant at the close, and several took the opportunity of getting obscure points cleared up. Next Sunday Mr. T. F. Palmer should have a good audience, when he will relate "The Story of the Evolution of Life."—V. ROGER.

Obituary.

The many friends of Mr. Jack Hecht, of Edmonton, will regret to hear that another severe blow has fallen upon him in the death of his mother. Mrs. Hecht, who had reached her 76th year, had endured much suffering both physical and mental in a long life of devoted self-sacrifice. Fate decreed that the son, whose home she shared, was debarred from taking a last farewell of the mother he so tenderly loved. To him and to his brave and loyal wife we extend our keenest sympathy. The Secular Burial Service was read on Tuesday last in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Hecht and their friends at Edmonton Cemetery by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, who had performed the same sad office for Mr. Hecht, senior, four years ago.—E. M. VANCE.

[Owing to dislocation of the post by air-raids, this Obituary did not appear in last week's issue. We tender our regrets to all concerned.—ED.]

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

LONDON SOCIETY, Morality based on Laws of Nature (West Central Hall, 31 Alfred Place, Store Street, Tottenham Court Road): 3.30, M. Destherbert, "The Natural Defences of the Organism." Lecture in French.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "Is the Roman Catholic Church an Enemy to Democracy?" Affirmative, Mr. Percy S. Wilde. Negative, Mr. W. O. Baker.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7, Mr. T. F. Palmer, "The Story of the Evolution of Life."

WEST CENTRAL HALL (31 Alfred Place, Store Street, Tottenham Court Road, W.): 3.15, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?"

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK. 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Dales, Kells, and Swasey.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Harry Snell, "Palestine as a New Jewish State."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, Mr. F. E. Monks, "The Theory of Malthus."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, first floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, "Recollections of a Leeds Veteran."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, High Street, Swansea): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Heroes of our Faith"; 7, "Secularism and Social Reforms"

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