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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Views and Opinions.

What Will You Put in Its Place?

What, says a correspondent, is the best reply to make to a man who asks what we propose putting in the place of Christianity? Well, the best reply, and so far as we are concerned the only reply, is "Nothing." Why should we put something in the place of Christianity? If it were admittedly good and serviceable, the question would be pertinent. If one is removing the foundations of a house, the nature of what is to be substituted is of first-rate importance. But if the foundations are being weakened because water is percolating through the soil, the question of what will be put in the place of the water we purpose diverting is quite irrelevant. When it was proposed to make factories consume their own smoke, that man would have been looked on as a lunatic who had demanded, "What are you going to put in its place?" If the suggestion had been to remove the atmosphere, the question would have been pertinent. When the Germans send over the Front a cloud of poison gas, no soldier inquires of his officer what is to be put in its place if the wind blows it back from whence it came. There is no need to put anything in the place of a thing that is injurious or dangerous. Its removal is all that is needed. That is why we say that the only correct answer to "What will you put in the place of Christianity?" is "Nothing."

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Begging the Question.

As is not unusual, when the Christian states a proposition, he does so in a way that begs the whole point at issue. If Christianity is useful, if it is performing some beneficial function in life, then there is need, before it is removed, that we should have some idea of what is going to take its place. But no Freethinker believes this to be so. His whole case is that Christianity is, at best, harmless, and normally it is obstructive and dangerous. "What will you put in its place?" is a question that one Christian may properly ask of another; but it is a question that a Christian is never justified in putting to a Freethinker. If a man believes that some sort of a god is necessary, he is bound to provide a new one before he destroys the one already established. And human nature is such that, provided a new absurdity is substituted for the old one, most people are convinced that an improvement has been effected. But the question of putting something in the place of Christianity does not trouble the Freethinker. It is not his concern. The Christian makes the same blunder when he asks the Freethinker to account for the existence of evil. That, again, is the Christian's concern. And the Christian has really no right to manufacture a lot of conundrums and then look to the Freethinker to supply answers to them.

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Our Aim.

What is it that the Freethinker is trying to remove? Our whole aim may be summed up in a sentence. We wish to destroy the belief in, and the influence of, supernaturalism in science, in morals, in sociology. That is the negative aspect of our work. The positive aspect is that of encouraging the growth of true ideas in all these departments. And, of course, if a man believes that you cannot have a sound science, a healthy morality, or a progressive sociology without supernaturalism, he is warranted in asking for something equally effective in its place. But in that case the discussion obviously turns on whether supernaturalism is necessary or not. The Freethinker says it is not. He asserts that the whole influence of supernaturalism in all these departments is to mislead and to obstruct. It serves no useful purpose whatever. His function is not that of a surgeon faced with the problem of finding a new leg for a man after he has amputated a useful one; it is that of a physician removing a stricture in the social artery. The physician knows that when the obstruction is removed, the normal recuperative powers of the patient will do the rest. The Freethinker knows that when the poison of Christianity no longer operates, human life will freely supply all that is necessary to life and happiness.

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The Persistence of the Savage.

Christianity has had a long run, religion has had a still longer one. And during its lengthy career, religion has become more or less closely associated with a thousand and one things with which it has no real connection. But to ignorance and unreflection, when things are seen together in fact, their separation in thought is almost impossible. Religion has always been associated with morality; people have expressed their ideals in terms of religion; therefore, says ignorance, without religion of some sort our morality and our ideals cannot stand. That is exactly the way we can imagine some fear-stricken savage thinking the first time someone suggested that seed should be sown without sprinkling the ground with blood as a sacrifice to his God. The two things had always been associated, therefore they could not be separated. But when courage had its way, the blood sprinkling was seen to be useless. The savage didn't have to put something in its place, he simply cancelled it, and applied his intelligence and energy to the work before him. And, as here, so elsewhere. Religion has no organic, no necessary connection with the real things of life. Its association is always accidental. Ignorance created the union between religion and life, and is still fearful that the social structure will collapse when a divorce is pronounced.

If Religion Goes ?

But suppose we imagine this country subjected to a devastating epidemic of common sense—of all things the most unlikely—and religion to disappear as a consequence, what would be the result? Would anything be lost of real value? Clearly the human relations between parents and children, husbands and wives, friends and friends, would remain. The State would remain. Society would remain. The beauties of art, the wonders of science, the glories of literature would remain. The world would remain with its problems infinite in number and seductive in character. Babies would still be born, boys and girls would grow up, men and maidens would marry, human beings would continue to laugh and cry, and love and hate, to toil, to triumph, or flounder to despair; all that is now would go on then exactly as before, save for the one thing that we should cease to squander our energy in a useless manner, and rid society of something that has never yielded real help to any human being during the whole of its history.

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Human Nature Enough.

That is why we say there is no need to put anything in the place of Christianity. We do not want to take away one God and recreate another. We do not want to take away the Christian heaven and hell and give another heaven and hell in their place. Any exchange effected along that line is not worth the trouble of making. When a gardener sets about pulling up the weeds from a flower bed he doesn't put something in their place; he knows that the weeds are absorbing nutriment the flowers should receive, and that if he removes the weeds the natural strength of the plants will do the rest. Our work is to weed the garden of human nature. We realize that human nature contains within itself the potentialities of its own greatness, and that if we clean out the weeds of superstition and ignorance we may trust to the sun of reason and the pure air of human fellowship to produce a better race from the fruitful soil of human society. We do not want anything in the place of Christianity; our aim is to rid the world of a superstition that has been a canker in the heart and a cramp in the intellect of humanity ever since its inception.

Chapman Cohen.

"The Unashamed Church."

It is our contention that practically there is no distinction between Christianity and the Church. Some theologians, on the contrary, for apologetic purposes, declare that the two are fundamentally different, and that what is true of the Church is the very opposite of true of Christianity. They admit that, though the Church has often proved a lamentable failure, the Christian religion has been an unqualified success whenever people have been sufficiently courageous to give it a fair trial. Clergymen of the type of the Rev. Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury Chapel, openly acknowledges that if the Church had been but loyal to her ideals the present deplorable War would not have broken out. In our judgment, however, the Church *is* Christianity in practice, organized Christianity as it has existed in the world being the only Christianity known to us. In an article in the *Christian World* for April 11, the Rev. Arthur Pringle says that "to-day the Church is much blamed or, what is worse, despised as simply not counting." In this reverend gentleman's opinion, her being despised does not matter so long as she is not despicable. Of course, being one of her ministers, Mr. Pringle cannot be expected to speak slightingly of her, much less to admit her total failure; but whatever her condition may be, it is his firm conviction that "in the fierce flame of the present tragedy one of two things must happen—destruction or purification." He is confident "there can be no middle result: we shall come out either dead or mightily alive." Then he quotes Paul Sabatier's description of what happened in France at the close of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The famous French divine tells us how at that time the more or less superstitious crowds invaded the old cathedrals, being deeply stirred by the heart-breaking calamity that had overtaken the nation—how even "notorious heretics, members of more or less Masonic associations, contended for seats with professed devotees, and were only remarkable for their attention." But it is the following sentences of which we wish special notice to be taken:—

> The people of France were returning to their Mother, quite simply and sincerely, to sit down at her table..... Now the board was not laid. The old Mother had no fatted calf to kill, nor even energy to prepare a little substantial food for the famishing.....They went away irritated, incensed, and with bitter regret that ever they had come.

Those are the words of a Protestant in condemnation of the Catholic Church; but they are tragically true of the Church as a whole, by whatever name she may be known. Now, Mr. Pringle has the audacity to affirm that many of the Churches have no need to be ashamed of the way in which they are meeting the position that faces them to-day. He supplies his readers with the following manifesto:—

> With our own accent and significance, we have good reason to say with Paul that we are not ashamed of the Gospel, because it answers to the facts of life as nothing else does. For, so far from the Christian faith having been shattered by the War, it stands illumined and vindicated as never before within living memory. It has, so to speak, anticipated and underlined all that is happening. To put a great matter in fragmentary outline, our faith had already prepared us for the heights and depths of human possibility, which the War has so wonderfully and disconcertingly revealed: how man has it in him to be less than the beasts or more than the angels. The centre of our faith has always been the Cross that is the supreme example of that "greatest love" by which men lay down their lives that their friends or their country may be saved. And, *pace* Mr. Wells, it has from the beginning been part of the fibre of Christianity that God is not a quiescent or occasionally intervening spectator, but man's fellow-sufferer and fellow-conqueror in life and death and on to all-compensating immortality. It is not our province or pretence to dissolve all difficulties; but at least we have a faith that, soberly reckoning with all that the darkness means, promises at last to turn it into light.

We have cited that long passage in order that Mr. Pringle's case may be fully and fairly before us. That it is a hopelessly bad case is beyond all possible doubt. Of all attempts to exonerate God from blame in connection with the War, or to explain away the utter failure of Christianity either to prevent or to end it, this by Mr. Pringle is surely the most glaringly and absurdly futile. It amounts, in reality, to a complete negation of the Gospel preached by St. Paul and embodied in the great creeds of the Church. Instead of being the Saviour of the world, God in Christ is represented here as a sharer in the sufferings and sorrows caused by human sins. Instead of delivering mankind from the guilt of that original depravity which is the root of all the evils and miseries which darken and curse our life, Christianity is said to promise nothing better than at last, in another world, to turn the prevailing darkness into light. No wonder the reverend gentleman confesses his inability

to "dissolve all difficulties," when, as a matter of simple fact, he dissolves none, but creates a great host. New Testament Christianity represents God as being in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, as redeeming, cleansing, elevating, and ennobling it; but, according to Mr. Pringle, it portrays the Heavenly Father as simply "man's fellow-sufferer and fellow-conqueror in life and death." To St. John, God is light and love, St. Paul calls him the God of peace, whose supreme gift to the world is good will engendering universal harmony; but to this twentieth-century preacher, as to some Old Testament writers, he is "a man of war," "the Lord mighty in battle," "the God of Hosts." Mr. Pringle's Gospel is a new thing under the sun, of which no one ever heard the lightest whisper until now, and which pictures the Deity as anything but a Divinely beautiful and noble character. In other words, our divine has flung Christianity down the wind, and reduced God to the position of man's fellow-worker.

Can it be true that the Church has no reason to be ashamed of her record? Of what benefit have her ministrations been to the world at large? She has doubtless provided her clergy with rich and comfortable livings; but what has she done towards lifting society to a higher level of life? Mr. Pringle puts that point thus:—

> What is the Church doing? What is there to show at the end of its day's work? That the Church has failed dismally from the outwardly impressive, spectacular point of view must be admitted. It could not prevent the War, neither can it stop it; and there, in the eyes of many, lies its final condemnation. Must it, therefore, close its doors?

Should not the Church's success be outwardly impressive, seen and read by all? Will Mr. Pringle be good enough to specify some of God's providential ways which are not marked by outwardly impressive, spectacular happenings? Will he tell us what so-called "acts of God" can be clearly distinguished from "acts of man"? It is easy enough to characterize those events which are beyond human control as "acts of God"; but no such occurrences can be discovered in human life. Neither is there any difficulty in stating that there are things which even God cannot do. "Even Christ had to shed helpless tears over the city he would fain have saved. Is there no lasting significance in that"? Yes, certainly, and it is this: that neither immediately, nor yet through the Church, God either does or can do anything at all. Mr. Pringle asserts that "there are many Churches in the land that need have no shame as they meet the test of results." We admit that clergymen, not a few, have been excellent recruiting officers, and that from the Churches tens of thousands of fine young men have gone to the Front to kill Germans; but does the reverend gentleman verily believe that Christ instituted his Church to serve such a purpose as that? We hold that the Church ostensibly came into the world to save it from all its evils, and to sow therein the seed of universal peace and prosperity, and that she has lamentably failed to answer the alleged end of her existence. Great Britain is at last finding out that she owes none of her good things to the Church, and that she could and would get on much better without her ghostly ministrations.

J. T. Lloyd.

How frightened Christians are at admitting that a man of genius can be a Freethinker! Swinburne's heterodoxy is as well known as that of Shelley, but the dear *Daily News* will not admit the soft impeachment. In a review of *Swinburne's Letters*, it points out that the poet's correspondence "show him as a man with a religion; he would testify to beauty wherever he saw it." Let us hope that the *Daily News* is not so unscrupulous in its political propaganda.

A Secular Teacher and His Work.

> Spirits are not finely touched
> But to fine issues. —*Shakespeare.*
> To bear all naked truths
> And to envisage circumstance, all calm;
> That is the top of sovereignty. —*Keats.*

Letters published in the *Freethinker* from time to time show that there are many Secularists who retain traces of their early religious training. This lends point to the oft-quoted remark, attributed to a Catholic ecclesiastic, that if a child were in his care in its early years, he did not mind who had the child afterwards. Yet there have been few attempts on the part of Freethinkers to supplant the thousands of schools of the Christian majority by educational establishments in which superstition has no place. So far as I know, there were recently but two schools in the country in which the curriculum was entirely secularistic, and one of these was compelled to close down owing to the adverse conditions caused by the World-War. With this one I was well acquainted, and a few notes concerning it may be of interest to others.

My first acquaintance with Ruskin House School, Southend-on-Sea (alas! now no more), arose under peculiar circumstances. A friend showed me a beautifully written piece of dictation, in which some passages from Ingersoll were transcribed by a child's hand. Seeing my look of wonder, he informed me that it was the ordinary work done at a school conducted on Freethought lines. The next day I visited the school, and was surprised and delighted at what I saw.

There was an air of novelty about the institution. On the walls were portraits of Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Huxley, Walt Whitman, Bradlaugh, and other intellectual worthies, and the scholars were familiarized with the life-work of these pioneers by daily talks from the principal and staff. These chats ranged over a variety of subjects, principally scientific, historic, and biographic. Birthdays of great or famous men and women were honoured. Even the school-books had a novel appearance, for they included Gould's *Children's Plutarch* and *Brave Citizens*, Dennis Hird's books, and Ingersoll's works, all being freely drawn upon for purposes of dictation. The classes were mixed, boys and girls sat together, and the tuition was precisely the same for both. Experience proved that the girls became more self-reliant, and the boys more amenable and courteous. Physical culture was in use, the rudiments of science were known to all, and every scholar had a sound groundwork of knowledge. Even the youngest children knew the star-groups and the fundamentals of science. The elder scholars were also instructed in bookkeeping and shorthand, and thus fitted for commercial life immediately on the termination of their school careers, and in many instances situations were found for them by the principal.

During the summer months weekly rambles were arranged, and the scholars journeyed to the heart of the country or the seashore, and learned to read directly from Nature's "infinite book of secrecy." A short walk or train journey was usually sufficient, but once a year the children went to London and visited the Zoological Gardens, or the Natural History Museum. On one of these visits Sir E. Ray Lankester was interested in the young visitors, and had a kindly word for the little students.

Every opportunity was given to the pupils for mental experiment, and the critical faculties were kept alert. One day the scholars would be told the story of Henry VIII., and, may be, on the next day that of Socrates. Then they were asked to contrast the per-

sonalities. These are but instances of how unconventional was the work at this school. Another point worth noting was the entire absence of corporal punishment. Discipline was maintained by moral suasion, the principal believing that a teacher who had to rely upon a stick was unworthy of the care of the young. The whole school was simply one happy family of boys and girls, and the teaching staff foster parents. The education imparted was quite sound, and boys who left the school were enabled at once to take appointments as bank clerks and other positions of value.

The principal of this school, Mr. W. H. Thresh, made a gallant attempt to supply a long-felt want in the Freethought movement. For ten years he maintained the school in the face of enormous difficulties, which would have daunted any but the most ardent and enthusiastic Freethinker. Full of a high and unflinching courage, he was only beaten in the end by the dire results of the present World-War. Among schoolmasters of his time he was what Dr. Arnold was at Rugby in the school-days of Judge Hughes. Animated with the idea of the high nature of his calling, he threw himself into forwarding the education of some of the rising generation, free entirely from the "lie at the lips of the priest." Men and women may come after him and accomplish what he bravely attempted, but the credit will always belong to the pioneer schoolmaster, whose ten years' crusade for the young forms a high and perfect tribute to the ennobling ideals of, what George Meredith called, "the best of causes."

Mimnermus.

Freethinking.

The habit of mind engendered by Freethinking, a condition of careful watchfulness combined with patient scepticism, is one which is highly creditable to humanity, but which, in common with all things of real value, is rather rare; which rarity accounts for the slow permeation of ideas, in themselves neither revolutionary nor revolting, but which contain the germs of great progressive movements. Contrasted with the normal type of mind, it may best be described as energetic as compared with lazy, and intrepid as against pusillanimous. It is the mind of the scientist, of the discoverer, of the thinker.

Freethinking is not necessarily relative to religion, although it is in this connection that the term is mostly used—a subtle compliment unwittingly paid to those who have discarded the beliefs of savages by those who hold them. It is, properly speaking, the examination of facts urged to support a conclusion, and the acceptation or rejection of the conclusion as a result of personal decision. Among the troubles that beset the Freethinker, such as unpopularity due to heterodox opinions expressed, is this most serious drawback, which appears, perhaps, unnatural to the inhabitants of these islands, of having to exercise his mind rather frequently, instead of drifting whither popular papers decide. It is certainly much more comfortable to have one's thinking done for one; but there is just as much virtue in such ease as there is in lying abed till noon each day. The iconoclast who smashes ideas which have ruled for years, been made idols, and been expressed in maxims, does work the value of which cannot be immediately appraised, but which can be recognized as of infinite use, as it is only through keeping the minds of the people in a condition of ferment that progress is possible, and, when possible, made.

A favourite argument against the practice of Freethought is that it is destructive without being constructive; and the connection between the ideas of destruction and construction is so close that not infrequently one is tempted to launch out on a tentative scheme of construction, to the joy of the opponent, who uses the scheme to cover up the weakness of his own position. Destruction is necessary; it clears the ground. It may or may not be necessary that a substitute be provided for what is destroyed. One can scarcely imagine a farmer substituting one weed for another which he has been at great pains to destroy on his farm; and yet, not unusually, those who kill ideas are asked to provide a substitute. The crux of the question is whether the old idea was beneficial or harmful. If beneficial, the aim of the new idea is to eliminate such parts as reduced its value; if harmful, there can only be substituted the idea of abandoning the old idea, which is complete destruction. Illustrative of this contention is the existence of the office of President of the United States. When the Constitution of that Republic was being drawn up, Paine pointed out both the uselessness and the folly of having a President; but so strong a hold had the idea that construction involved the substitution of one head for another, that he was unable to convince the 1787 Convention of the value of his suggestion.

Mental laziness interferes with progress in many minor matters, no less than in large ones, and it was a matter of minor importance that first drew our attention to the prevalence of the disease. During a discussion on "Education and Social Democracy," one lady deplored the imposition of "home lessons"; and no sooner had she sat down than up sprang another lady, who held that education must be made difficult and distasteful because life itself was full of annoying incidents, and none could get his own way, and that, in short, a relatively speaking unhappy time at school inured the children to these vexations. We should not have noticed the statements so particularly had we not been amazed to find that they had considerable support from other members of the audience. Why diseases common to children should not be allowed to spread in order that we may have the survival of the fittest, in a precise biological sense, appears to us due to that reason which urges that school life ought to be pleasant. The hardships of life are to a great extent due to causes which could be removed were they to be efficiently tackled; and, in any case, school is not a training-ground for hardships; it is presumed to be a training-ground for life; or, properly speaking, the art of living.

The development of machinery has progressed in the direction of relieving man of the arduous manual labour which obtained for many in the early days of manufacture. Many things which before were only fashioned at the cost of much sweat, are now made by automatic machinery. One of the simplest illustrations of the benefits derived from the use of machinery is in the hoisting up of goods. In the days before the windlass no inconsiderable amount of effort was required to hoist articles such as stone. The windlass made the work much lighter, but now, in those places which have machinery something short of ancient, we find an electric hoist which places on man only the necessity of pulling a rope.

This is an obvious advance, and the application of the illustration to the case of education points out that the whole tendency of life and work is towards ease. This feeling of ease must be recognized by educational experts. It is useless mimicking the ostrich. Economically, work tends to become lighter; learning is work; therefore, learning ought to become lighter or easier. There is no doubt but that advance has been made in the right direction. A child is curiosity personified. It is the simplest thing in the world to encourage that curiosity. In schools more time should be devoted to the study of natural history, to botany, and kindred scientific subjects, and that study should not be of the nature of a grand assimilation of nomenclature, the which sickens whilst it stultifies, but should be the assimilation of facts, and the discussion of reasons. Nine years at school under the present methods and subjects finds a child bright and full of initiative, and leaves him a respectable ha'penny with no character. It is of primary importance that every means be taken of encouraging children's curiosity, for only by such action will it be possible to have men fully capable of being citizens in that Utopia for which pioneers work and mankind hopes; it is necessary, if progress is to be at all rapid, that children should not be so inured to vexation in school as to make them incapable of perceiving vexations in after life; it is essential that the children should think for themselves in order that they may grow up efficient in the art of living. Such a training would allow the child to retain its curiosity, to develop its confidence, to control its temper, and to appreciate the art of living; and of that appreciation springs happiness.

John McMillan.

Acid Drops.

The Government policy in first including and then excluding the clergy from the operations of the Man Power Bill gets "curioser and curioser." Sir George Cave explains that the Government originally acted because of representations from "authorities and ministers of certain Churches, who felt it somewhat of a grievance that they were not put in the same position as the rest of the manhood of the country." Then the Government withdrew it because, after allowing for "Conscientious Objectors" and those in ill health, and also allowing for the religious needs of the country, there would not be many left. But Sir George might have remembered that it is not really a question of how many are left; it is a question of treating the clergy as a privileged body, and relieving the whole of them of an obligation that rests on all other citizens.

A still more curious sentence is that "the Government did not think it worth while to run counter to the strong feeling which existed in the matter" in order to obtain the number available. But seven per cent. is all that is reckoned on, and surely there are seven per cent. of clergymen fit for military service. And how comes it that the Government speakers, after heaping all sorts of abuse on Conscientious Objectors, go out of their way not to hurt them when they happen to be clergymen? Moreover, where is the strong current of feeling against the clergy being conscripted? If the representations from the clergy were so strong as to induce the Government to put the clause in the Bill, what becomes of the strong feeling against it which caused the withdrawal? When Sir George Cave was arguing in the Appeal Court against the Secular Society, we said he was about the worst hand at conducting an argument we had come across. What he now says, and unsays, proves it.

One other point remains. The tone adopted by some of the clergy: "I would be pleased to join the Army, but the Act does not apply to me" is sheer hypocrisy. The Act does not compel them to join, but it does not prevent their joining. It is open to any clergyman to join the Army, and there is nothing on earth to prevent his doing so. If, therefore, it be true that any clergyman feels it a grievance that he is not in the same position as "the rest of the manhood of the country," his is a grievance that can be removed at the nearest recruiting office. The whole thing seems to us, as we said last week, an elaborate piece of humbug played on a people that are becoming as subject to the hypnotic influence of an "official" statement as is any Prussia.

The Archbishop of Canterbury assured the House of Lords "that the clergy had not been exempted at their own request, and they were ready to respond to any call made on them." We presume if they had been enrolled along with others they would have had to respond. And they can still go. Sir George Cave said the number available would be very small. The Archbishop, who ought to know, admitted that had the clergy remained in the Bill "there would have been a considerable number" enrolled. Sir George Cave also said there was a strong feeling against it. The *Christian World*, again a better authority, says: "it is clear that public opinion on the whole rather resents the exemption of ministers and clergymen from national service." When placed together these statements only confirm one's opinion of the "fishy" nature of the whole business.

Then we have the *Church Times* declaring that the clergy were finally exempted owing to the opposition of the Roman Catholics and the dissenting ministry. But the *Church Times* admits that the "greater part of what the clergy busy themselves with can either be spared for a time or done by laymen." The really necessary work is "the ministration of the Sacraments, and the care of the sick and the dying." But, surely, laymen and women are as capable of attending the sick and the dying as are the clergy? And we do not think anyone will be injured if the Sacrament is not administered, or if it is passed over to the district visitor. All it means is that the clergy must stand as a privileged class. When that is said all is said.

Finally, it should be noted that in exempting the clergy we are following the example of our pious enemy—Germany. She also keeps her clergy at home in order to look after the morals of the people. France and Italy make no such exception. Somehow or other Frenchmen and Italians can keep all right without having the clergy told off to look after them. We Britons are evidently made of poorer stuff.

A Welsh Baptist minister has just been fined £40 for slandering the W.A.A.C.'s. We have often commented on the tendency of the pulpit to make statements without adequate foundation on fact, and usually these statements escape without reproof. If every Christian minister who has slandered Freethinkers had been fined £40, the total would mean a big reduction in the national debt.

Whilst waiting for a train at Oxford, the Rev. T. W. Martyn, Vicar of Aston Abbotts, Aylesbury, dropped dead. Had he been a Freethought lecturer, it would have been regarded as providential.

In shuffling off this mortail coil, the Rev. Robert Mays, of Corsham, Wilts, left estate of the value of £43,540. This sum should be sufficient to prevent the reverend gentleman from handling a harp.

The *Church Times* protests against a notice exhibited by a provincial clergyman: "A special service for men is held in this church on Sundays from 2.30 to 3.30. Subject next week: The Missing Link. The Vicar."

The announcement that the Bishop of Hereford would appear at Bloomsbury Baptist Church caused a flutter in religious circles. Apparently, Christian brotherhood is more honoured in the breach than the observance.

"St. Mark's Vicarage, Peterborough, worth £300 a year and a house, is going a-begging," says the *Evening News*, which adds: "the living has been vacant four months." The hesitating clergy should remember, prayerfully, that the founder of their religion was a poor man.

From a leading article in the *Manchester Guardian* of April 9 we gather that the endeavour to excite feeling against the Bolsheviks for dissestablishing the Church has broken down. It says:—

> Western Europe hardly noticed that the Bolsheviks, among other things, had broken up one of the oldest, closest, and as it seemed most firmly welded marriages between Church and State.....On February 3 they issued a decree separating Church and State, and prohibiting any religious qualification or disqualification for public office.....Thus Russia has with a stroke of the pen secularized education and the State, separated Church and State, and disendowed the Church (and other ecclesiastical societies) and declared it incapable of owning property. For the disendowment there is precedent in the eighteenth century, when the State took over the Church lands. The "bourgeois" press anticipated that this decree would initiate a bitter war between Church and Government. When the Government took over the great Alexander Nevsky Lavra in Petrograd a monk was killed in the struggle, and an immense religious demonstration, numbering 200,000 or more persons, protested. The Patriarch, too, anathematized and excommunicated the Bolsheviks, and adjured the believing children of the Orthodox Church to have no intercourse whatsoever with such scum of the human race. Nothing serious, however, seems as yet to have happened.

In other words, the overwhelming majority of the Russian people recognize the change as for the better.

Miss Atkinson, President of the Women's League, said at the London Congregational Union meeting that the day had passed in which the Church treated women as spiritual char-

women, fit only for cleaning and renovating. Just so! Even the Church must be polite to its only remaining customers.

The wife of the vicar of Tollerton was fined £5 at Nottingham on April 3 for stealing £12 worth of food tickets from a munition works. The vicar had previously received six weeks for the same offence. The clergy have received exemption in order to guard and nourish the moral strength of the country.

Undeterred by the Easter week of prayer, which was followed by a rapid German advance, the Wesleyan Methodists held a ten-hours' intercession service at the Central Hall, Westminster. The Rev. Dimsdale Young pleaded for "splendid tenacity" in prayer—which means, we assume, worrying the Lord until he does something. Another minister said the enemy was supernaturally checked at Mons, and prayed for the intervention of "angel hosts" to-day. But the Government seems to place infinitely more reliance on a "comb-out" and on raising the military age. Perhaps there is a strict age-limit for angels, and all are now exempt from further service.

The *British Weekly* exhorts those who are troubled and bereaved in these terrible times to go to God for the succour and comfort which they so greatly need; but they are reminded that they must repair to him along the road which he himself has appointed, which "road has two steps. *Offer unto God thanksgiving:* that is the first. *And pay thy vows to the Most High:* that is the second." Here are parents who have lost four sons in the War, whom they willingly offered up on the altar of patriotism. On what conceivable ground of reason can they be expected to feel grateful to God? Their hearts are broken; their brightly burning hopes are extinguished; a pitch-black night has fallen upon their spirits; but God flatly declines to comfort them unless they approach him with thanksgiving upon their lips. And yet the *British Weekly* is surprised that there are people who refuse to believe in such a cruel-hearted Deity!

In a case now before the Privy Council, involving the ownership of seventy-two million acres of land in Rhodesia, some interesting letters were quoted that passed between Queen Victoria. In one of them, Lobengula complains that the white men are "troubling too much about gold," and also that, after signing a document, he was told he had parted with his mineral rights. This is a trick that has been played on natives all over the world, and illustrates Christian methods of "peaceful penetration." There is also a note of satire in a reply to Lobengula, written by Lord Knutsford on behalf of the Queen:—

> The Queen understands the trouble caused to Lobengula by different parties of white men coming to his country to look for gold, but wherever gold is, or wherever it is reported to be, it is impossible for him to exclude.

The same thing may be said of rubber, or oil, or anything commercially valuable. Given a coloured race with valuable soil, and the whites become acutely anxious for his religious conversion and for his instruction in the arts of civilization. Given a country where no commercial exploitation is possible, and the natives are permitted to go to hell in their own fashion. "Blessed be ye poor"—especially when the white Christian is around.

Another letter from Lobengula to the Queen complains that white men stole his cattle, and shot thirty of his soldiers when they were sent to bring them back. And he plaintively adds:—

> The white men told my people that they had bought the country, and the people who live in it. Your Majesty, what I want to know from you is if people can be bought at any price?

But Lobengula was only a savage; had he been properly Christianized, he would have known better than to have put such a question.

A prayer offered at the annual meeting of the London Congregational Union included a special petition for the "frivolous and flighty young girls of England." This petition ought to move the heart of a bronze statue.

We can quite appreciate Sir George Cave's belief that he would be demoralizing the country by sending clergymen into the Army. We see that the Rev. J. Griffiths, of East Corwick, Yorkshire, was summoned by his wife for not providing her with a reasonable allowance. Whereupon the Southport magistrates ordered him to pay her 15s. per week. We think the Army allowance would be 12s. 6d., so Mrs. Griffiths is half a-crown better off through her husband being kept in England to keep up the moral tone of the country.

Both Lord Kitchener and Lord Roberts are dead. Religious paragraphers might, therefore, refrain from converting them into drivelling idiots. Yet the *Midland Daily Telegraph* solemnly records that when, in the early days of the War, the Germans turned back from the apparently certain capture of Paris, Lord Roberts said, "Only God Almighty could have done this." And Lord Kitchener added, "Somebody must have been praying." We know very well the type of religious liar who concocts this sort of story. Our difficulty is to mentally picture the type of idiot who really believes it.

The spectacle of Christians murdering each other by the million is not lost on, what the dear clergy call, "the heathen," and a striking instance occurred at the West Ham Police Court. A West-Indian seaman was asked: "Are you a Christian?" His reply was disconcerting. "No, sar, we quiet men."

"Billy Sunday will be heard in London soon," says a daily paper. Students of philology will be glad of the opportunity of hearing the American language in all its purity.

From the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*:—

> A wounded soldier who had been in a comatose state for several days told the doctor on recovery—that during all that period he thought he was dead. Whereupon the doctor asked the patient why he was sure that he was really now alive.
>
> "Oh," replied the soldier, "If I were in heaven I should not be hungry, and if I were in the other place I should not have cold feet."

The *Globe* opens one of the stock stories about the Prince of Wales offering an umbrella to a man during a storm, thus: "During his recent stay in London an American officer found himself in a severe storm. One afternoon a young man in civilian clothes was passing," etc. Now we wonder how long that storm lasted? For "one afternoon" while he was standing there the incident happened. And one wonders how many afternoons he stood there in the rain waiting for the Prince to pass.

"The following is an extract from a Palestine officer's letter: On the day after the official entry I got leave to go into Jerusalem and have a look round, to see some, at least, of the places with whose names I had been familiar. I particularly wanted to find the Mount of Olives. Seeing one of my own platoon, I walked up to him and said, '——, where's the Mount of Olives?' He looked at me in a puzzled way for a moment, and then blurted out, 'Dunno, sir! I don't know wher' any o' the pubs. is.'"—*Daily Chronicle.*

The editor of the *Daily News* was fully justified in stating, in one of his Saturday articles, that "what the War has revealed is the inadequacy of organized Christianity as it exists in the world to deal with a moral question when it is complicated with political interests." In an article, entitled "The Great Problem of God," which appeared in the *British Weekly* for April 11, Sir William Robertson Nicoll furnishes a striking illustration of the truth of that statement. The reverend knight—like the Kaiser—claims God as the avowed Ally of his side in the bloody conflict. Each is equally certain of Divine approval and support; and yet the War, a purely political concern, goes on exactly as if no God had any share in it at all. Sir William lays great stress on God's promised deliverance, while the facts of the battlefield give that promise the direct lie every day.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

May 5, Abertillery.

To Correspondents.

J. T. Lloyd's Lecture Engagements.—April 28, Nuneaton.

T. Fowler.—Pleased to hear of your son's distinguished career in the Army. As he has been through all the heavy fighting since 1915, and remains unscathed, it is evident that brains, good physique, and "luck" does quite as well as much prayer. We hope his good fortune will continue to the end.

E. A. McDonald.—We agree with you as to the stupidity of much of the writing on Nietzsche. As you say, "it is ridiculous to interpret his Zarathustrian discourse on war as giving sanction to the present kind of warfare. If he had lived to-day, he would have dreaded the triumph of 'Kultur.'" Sheer ignorance is, we think, the best explanation of the newspaper writing on Nietzsche. We are glad to know that we have your "fullest confidence in piloting the dear old paper through present difficulties."

A. Radley.—D.O.R.A.

E. Harvey.—Too late this season, but if all goes as we anticipate, we hope to do still greater things next autumn; we also anticipate seeing a number of new centres of activity opened. We have set ourselves the ambition of planting a Society in all the big centres, and we shall not rest content until it is done.

E. Ilsley.—We hardly think that a lengthy discussion on the subject would be justified with the restricted space at our disposal. We can only say that "abstraction" is not identical with "unknowable." An abstraction is a generalization based on sensible qualities. An "unknowable" cannot be a concept, since that implies something positive, and "unknowable" simply means the absence of everything knowable. It is a pure negation, and an absence of anything to think about cannot well provide the material for thinking.

J. McKenna.—We do not think the Salvation Army ever attempted a reply to Mr. Manson's exposure of its methods. It probably judged silence, and reliance on the forgetfulness of the public, the wiser policy.

H. Dawson.—Closed for the present. We quite appreciate your comments, and we know that your interest in the Cause is sincere. The length of your letter needs no apology; a letter is never too long when there is nothing superfluous.

Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—N. S. S. Benevolent Fund: Chingford, 5s.

T. Courden.—If the conditions for printing were more favourable we should have no hesitation in reprinting the "Views and Opinions" of last week for distribution as a leaflet. We are flattered by your opinion of the notes as a "biting exposure" of the "Black Army."

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.

The Goldthorpe "saints" were highly delighted with the success of Mr. Cohen's meetings on Sunday last. These were the first Freethought meetings held in Goldthorpe, and the attention given to the lectures was all that could be desired. The interest of the audience was indicated by a good sale of literature, and an accession of members is anticipated. Visitors were present from Sheffield, Barnsley, and other localities. As the restricted train service involved a walk of from four to five miles from some of these places, their interest in the Cause was manifest, and augurs well for future operations.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (April 28) at Nuneaton. This is Mr. Lloyd's first visit to the new Branch, and we hope the meetings will be worthy of the lecturer. We are quite sure the lecturer will be worthy of the meetings, however large and enthusiastic they may be.

It is not easy to get printing orders undertaken or executed nowadays, and the state of the labour market is the cause of the delay in publishing the report of the Bowman Case. However, it is now ready, and we publish this week a verbatim report of the House of Lords' Judgment. The speeches of the five law Lords give between them a full and interesting account of the law of blasphemous libel, and so constitutes a volume of first-rate importance. It is one that every Freethinker should have as reference to a long-maintained injustice, and of a great Freethought triumph. The volume, issued by the Secular Society, Limited, is published by the Pioneer Press at 1s., postage, 1d. An introduction is contributed by Mr. Cohen, who gives a brief history of the Bowman litigation, and a summary of the present legal standing of Freethought.

The Pioneer Press is now offering for sale at a reduced price a limited number of copies of *Mary Wollstonecraft*, by G. R. Stirling Taylor. The life of Mary Wollstonecraft will always be of interest to Freethinkers, and her "Vindication of the Rights of Woman" gave a great and genuine impulse to the movement for the legal equality of the sexes. As Mr. Taylor says: "The advanced women of to-day are saying and thinking, with very little change, what was so brilliantly put down" by the subject of his memoir. The book is handsomely produced, and is enriched with fine portraits of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin—two Freethinkers too little known to the present generation. The volume was published at 7s. 6d. net, and is being offered at 3s., postage, 5d.

A Leeds correspondent writes: "It is nothing short of a scandal the way in which the black Army is singled out for special treatment. I consider now is the time for Freethinkers to let their voice be heard." So do we, and if all Freethinkers would speak up some people in the country would be greatly astonished. Their exemption is a manifest injustice. And to be told that grown-up men and women require a body like the English clergy to look after them is a downright insult.

Mr. F. Norman Crosby, Secretary of the Federation of Discharged Soldiers and Sailors, writes:—

> I see in this weeks "Acid Drops" a report has reached you that religion is a feature of our Federation. May I point out that although I am Honorary Treasurer of the above Branch it has not prevented me undertaking the organization of the Portsmouth Branch of this Society, and also that the Chairman is one of our most esteemed members.

We are glad to have the above note, and hope that it expresses a truth over a wide area.

Progress is Secular not Christian. The true Christian ages were "the Dark Ages" when men lay prone at the foot of the altar and the throne. The light of Arabian science flashing upon Europe was the daybreak of our modern era. The infidel Mohammedans had homes of science and seats of learning when the Christian prayed and hymned in mental darkness, and the Mosque had its school when the Church had none. Science lifted her head in Christendom, and the Church crushed her down. It made Galileo recant what everybody now knows to be true; it burnt Bruno at the stake; it plucked out the tongue of Vanini before reducing his body to ashes. It fought against reason with the ferocity of a tiger. It revelled for ages in blood. It broke men on the wheel even in the days of Voltaire. The world grew pale and breathless at its crimes. But that stupendous genius, the greatest Freethinker of France and of the world, challenged its pretensions and impeached it at the bar of humanity. And the peoples have gathered round the tribunal, marvelling at the great indictment, and still more at the weak defence.—*G. W. Foote.*

The Mechanism of Man.

III.

(Continued from p. 233).

The skeleton is built up by an architecture of osseous substances. These solid bony structures are animal tissues which have become petrified. There are over 200 bones in the human framework, but this number is not constant. Various bones that are distinctly separate in youth and early manhood become compacted together in old age. There are, for instance, thirty-three separate vertebræ in the spinal column in the young, and the upper twenty-four usually remain distinct during the whole course of life; but five of these bodies unite at an early period to form one large bone, the sacrum, while four other vertebræ usually run into a single bony structure, the dwindled tail, or coccyx. In the springtime of manhood the skull is composed of twenty-two distinct bones, but in childhood the number is much greater, and in advanced life considerably less.

The bones serve to support, protect, and move the body. The anatomical mechanism is constructed by long, flat, and irregular bones. Thick and solid bones provide support. Broad and flat bones furnish protection; while long and straight structures are the instruments of manipulation and locomotion.

The femur, or thigh-bone, is an elongated hollow shaft of solid, compact bone. Its cavity is occupied by yellow marrow. This marrow consists of fat and blood-vessels, and assists in nourishing the bone. Long bones, such as the femur, are confined to the upper and lower extremities of the body—the arms and the legs. Ribs and other flattened bones possess no yellow marrow; they are spongy internally, and hard and dense externally. A red marrow is found in the cavities of the spongy parts of bones. In this special marrow red blood corpuscles seem to be developed. Vascular vessels and connective tissue unite to form a closely adhesive covering for the bones. This substance is termed the periosteum.

Bones are composed of animal and mineral matter. The organic matter is gelatine, and the mineral substance which comprises about two-thirds of the weight of bone is mainly lime. In later life and old age the organic gelatine decreases; the bones consequently become light, and are more susceptible to fracture, and they heal less easily than in earlier life.

The mammalian organism, including man's, is composed of head, trunk, and limbs. The spinal or vertebral column forms the axis of the skeleton, and with this column all the other bones of the body are immediately or mediately connected. The trunk is divided into the thorax or chest, and the abdomen or belly, and its leading bones are those of the shoulder-blades, hip-bones, collar-bone, chest, and spine. The vertebræ of the spinal column are arranged in a series, one above the other, and their three projecting processes serve for the attachment of ligaments and muscles. The main body of each vertebra, however, serves to sustain the weight of the upper column of bones. At the dorsal or rear side of the thick region of a vertebra is an orifice, and each opening, situated as it is in succession, in the chain of bones, forms a long canal for the spinal marrow. Proceeding along the channel of the vertebral column, the spinal cord ultimately enters the cavity of the skull which houses the brain. The brain may be regarded as an enlargement of the spinal cord, and the two together constitute what is known as the cerebro-spinal system. Between the vertebræ thick gristle pads are interposed. These cartilages function as cushions, and thus prevent jars, while their elastic nature permits the easy bending of the bony column.

Attached to the rear of the vertebral column there are twelve pairs of ribs, which extend round the ventral or front part of the trunk in hoop-like fashion. The true ribs—the first seven pairs—are directly attached to the sternum or breast-bone. Each of the three succeeding pairs—the false ribs—is attached to the pair above it. Beneath these, again, there are the two pairs of floating ribs, which, unlike the others, do not form a girdle, but remain free in front. Then we possess the collar-bones, the shoulder-blades, and the pelvic girdle. The hip-bones and the extremity or base of the spine combine to produce a bowl-like structure termed the pelvis. To this structure the lower limbs are attached.

The skull consists of the cranium or brain cavity and the bones of the face. In the progress of evolution the skull has assumed an arched form, and this modification is well adapted for opposing pressure, and mitigating the effects of blows. All flat bones are furnished with a spongy layer which is placed between the harder layers of bone composing the inner and outer surfaces. The flat bones forming the skull are thus protected, and their elasticity helps to shield the skull from serious injury when struck. The eye is guarded from danger by the nasal organ, the cheek bones, and brow. The spinal cord is safely secluded within its osseous covering.

In all the higher mammals the bony structures of the fore and hind limbs are fundamentally the same, and the modifications undergone in these organs have all been effected through functional and anatomical adaptation to changed conditions of life. In that upright mammal, man, each extremity is provided with thirty bones. The upper arm bone (humerus) corresponds to the thigh bone of the leg (femur). The bones of the fore-arm (radius and ulna) correspond to the shin bone and splint bone (fibula and tibia). Of wrist bones there are eight, and there are seven ankle bones. There are respectively five bones to the palm and instep, and fourteen finger and fourteen toe bones. No bone is present in the elbow which corresponds to that of the kneecap, but the wrist possesses one bone more than the ankle. Each arm and leg consequently consists of thirty osseous structures.

The junction of two bones forms a joint. The joints of the pelvis, and of the various bones which compose the skull, are so firmly interlocked that they are immovable. On the other hand, movable joints possess a couple of cartilages which enable the bones to turn. The most important mobile joints are those of the limbs. Coleman thus describes the ball-and-socket and hinge joints:—

> When one end of the bone is rounded and fits into a cuplike hollow, the joint allows motion in all directions, and is known as a *ball-and-socket* joint. The hip joints and shoulder joints are examples. A *hinge* joint allows motion in only two (opposite) directions; for example, the to-and-fro motion of the elbow.

Pivot joints permit of rotary movement, while gliding joints possess the power of sliding one upon another.

Movable joints are held in position by the ligaments which bind the bones together. Bones are safeguarded from injury by means of a coating of cartilage lying at their terminals, while friction during the bending of a joint is lessened by the synovial fluid which lubricates the cartilages. The escape of this fluid into the adjacent tissues is prevented by the collar-like capsule which embraces the joint. The free surfaces of bones upon which they glide over each other are coated by a delicate membrane and this membrane secretes the lubricating liquid scientifically known as the synovia.

The blood channels enter the bones from the periosteum. The bone's life is maintained by its supply

of blood. With the removal of the periosteum, the larger vascular vessels are eliminated, and when this happens the adjacent bone perishes. But the bone itself may be removed, and if the periosteum be permitted to remain, the bone will be restored. Experiment has proved that the circulation of the blood throughout the osseous structures is surprisingly rapid:—

> A curious proof of the active circulation in the bone is furnished when madder is mixed with the food of pigs. In a few hours the bones become a darker pink than usual; and if the madder is fed to the pigs for a few days, their bones become red.

(To be continued.) T. F. Palmer

The Leicester Secular Society.

A Few More Notes.

The friendly hand of "Mimnermus" has given an interesting account of the Leicester Secular Society (*Freethinker*, April 21). As I was Secretary and Organizer of the institution, 1899-1908, and am still a member, though located in a very churchy London suburb, perhaps I may be allowed to add a few more notes. So long ago as 1883, when the chair was taken for me by Thomas Wright (son of Michael Wright, one of the founders), I gave my first lecture on its platform, and, the year after, George Jacob Holyoake presided when I lectured the second time. And as, only a few months ago, I had the pleasure of talking to the Sunday-school, as well as speaking to the adults, in the old familiar hall, the reader may agree that I ought to know something of (as Patrick Geddes would say), the Place, the Work, and the People.

I doubt if any hall in Europe, or America, or elsewhere, quite fulfils for its social environment just such a function, both intellectual and municipal, as this at Leicester. Perhaps it would be difficult now to establish another of like pattern. When it was founded (1881), movements which are now strong—labour, free libraries, Sunday lectures, and the non-theological press—were then relatively weak, and eager spirits discovered in the hall at Humberstone Gate a unique centre for learning and discussing new ideas on religion, history, literature, economics, and the rest. Leicester has since developed a big Socialist activity; it has a fine Shoe-trades hall; it possesses some thirty Council schools, a group of free libraries, and a good museum—open on Sundays. This social and civic life has been all the time, and for nearly forty years, leavened with a wide-viewing Freethought. There are churches and chapels in the town quite juvenile compared with the Secular Hall, and the present generation, accustomed to the sight of this Rationalist cathedral, only smile at the recollection of the orthodox groans that greeted the opening in 1881.

I have used the phrase "wide-viewing Freethought," because I had in mind the five busts which adorn the front of the building, and which were selected by the Father of the place, Josiah Gimson. The five busts represent Robert Owen, Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Sokrates, and Jesus. When the bust of Jesus appeared, and smiled engagingly at Leicester's priests, Nonconformists and shoe-hands, the local clericalism passed many sleepless nights. But time heals all, and I remember that a distinguished Baptist of the town attended one of our Secular bazaars, and handed me, as Secretary, ten pounds; and, to make the gift more golden, his mace-bearer accompanied him. Often, as I have passed those five remarkable busts, I have spiritually saluted Josiah Gimson for his choice. To me, they symbolize Socialism, English Common-sense, French wit, Greek Philosophy, and Catholic Poetry; though I rather fancy that, to Councillor Gimson (Josiah was a member of the Town Council), the figure of Jesus would have stood for what he called Christian Secularism. Yet "Mimnermus" will agree, if no one else does, that Poetry and Secularism ought to go well together. And this reference to poetry calls to mind the fact that a portrait of the poet Thomson, B.V., hangs in the Hall. It was given by Mr. John Barrs, with whom Thomson lived once as guest at Kirby Muxloe, near Leicester, and who, as "Jack," appears jocularly in Thomson's lines on "Belvoir Castle."

As descriptive reporter, I might fill columns with tales of the Debaters, Co-operators, Socialists, Individualists, Critics, Artists, Scientists, Clergy, and Cranks, who, as members, or lecturers, or visitors, have fluttered in and out of Larner Sugden's red-brick temple for more than a generation, and helped to preserve the soul of Leicester from decay and dulness. Many I have only heard tell of; many I have known face to face; and at the graves, or the cremation-rite of many, I have uttered a serious, but never gloomy, farewell.[1] Some brisk young veterans (if the term may pass) still recall the early and stormier days of the Society. Such a one is William Lee, whom I lit upon in a remote Nottinghamshire village recently, still permeating his neighbours with progressive notions, and thrilling the local Adult School with sensible questions.[2] Another such is William Wilber, who never forgets the Bible which he studied in Christadelphian days, and who can make excellent use of Scripture in discussion. Long would be the list if I named the sons and daughters of the hall who are worthy of honourable remembrance. Such, for example, was William Holyoak, the ancient bookseller, who was born in the time of George III., whose soul was staunch as granite, whose manner was simple and gentle, and who cheered us with his quavering ballads. And another was Mrs. Perkins, who, unskilled in book-learning, possessed vigorous common sense, and an extraordinary spirit of devotion to the Society. For bazaars, "socials," teas, operetta-preparations, excursions, and the like, she had a genius of resource, enthusiasm, and good temper, and no saint of the Middle Ages surpassed her genuineness of service.

I would sooner not say anything at all about the Leicester Secular Society if I had to omit the name of Josiah's son, Sydney, the President for many years past. When I was an officer of the Institute, a sort of etiquette would have prevented my praising him. But now that I am removed from his immediate circle, I trouble not to ask his august permission, and I affirm here that he is a most honest and just man, a capable and straightforward administrator; and, as a Town Councillor (though I am sorry he does not belong to the same political party as I do), he is respected and valued by people of all varieties of opinion. He can give you his reminiscences of William Morris, who lectured at the Hall some thirty years ago or more. If he wrote a book of anecdotes, he could enliven it with little tales of visitors to the Hall platform—Holyoake, Foote, Watts, Touzeau Parris, Joseph Symes, and many others, over whom now hangs the purple banner of death; and I am glad that so many co-workers still live to lend his Society the aid of their voices. As he sits in his well-stocked library, and conjures up the faces of living or dead comrades in the great Thought Exploration, to which Leicester has so richly contributed, he must have a large vision of fellowships,

[1] Yes, but it perplexes one why Freethinkers should approve (and rightly so) of funeral addresses, but attempt little or no provision for ceremonial at marriage, or for the welcoming of infants.

[2] Mr. Lee is father-in-law to Mr. Joseph McCabe.

and behold a gallery crowded with brave and genial figures. Yet none is more brave and genial than himself. I know that I speak for a multitude when I express the wish that he may, many and many a time, still preside at the Sunday evening meetings in the Secular Hall, and look down with joy at the people who come to listen, to criticize, to appreciate, and to applaud.

F. J. Gould.

The Soul of Beauty.

How wonderful is a tree—as wonderful as a man, and as likely to have a soul, and with as much need for it. Soul is but the abstract essence of the ideal, the mystery, metaphysic, or romance with which the natural psychology of the rational being invests the objects, etc., of experience. Man, for instance, thus transforms his environment, or his environment transforms him.

How beautiful is night—still, quiet, dusky night, lustrous with the stars. Orion blazoning himself abroad in the heavens, the Pleiades overhead, and near these, a solitary blazing orb, the brightest of all. But we are no astronomer, much less astrologer, or dealer in mystery or magic of any kind, however "orthodox"; the natural interpretation sufficeth us, the monistic soul of beauty in the quiet country road, under the trees, under the stars; nor do we, in cant phrase, look through nature up to nature's God; it were as legitimate to look through nature, down or up, to nature's Devil; for there are good and evil, more or less evenly balanced, and apart from the idiosyncrasies of mannikin himself; good and evil sufficient to prove, or disprove, either, but between the two is the soul of beauty and the compensation of life.

It was a mild, clear, night in mid-winter, more like Spring, or early or late Summer, on the winding way the trees almost met overhead, all jewelled with the stars! Never had jewels such a setting, and never was setting adorned with such perfect gems. The tall trees with their lofty brooms swept the skies, and the star dust on the floor of heaven sparkled the brighter. Notwithstanding, the road was dark below, and lonely, and, resting in the grateful gloom, we only feared we frightened the passing woman with the lamp, timid and brave, bent on some errand of duty or mercy, so we lit our pipe to reassure the solitary maid, or matron, as she might be, but, to us, the Lady of the Lamp. The footsteps died away, and we lingered still. Seeing and feeling, thinking and imagining, are sometimes eerie occupations. Frankly, we grew afraid. Of what? Nothing! we thought of "the child in the world," and feared—everything. We had been reading *L'homme que Rit*, "The Man who Laughed," that amazing production of a gigantic and exuberant, often extravagant, genius, re-reading it, and pondering its purple passages, its significant sentences; its lurid light on English history; its terrors of legal and religious ghouls; its poignant glances into the deepest deep of human psychology. To think deeply is to be alone. To know is to be armed—or defenceless—against a thousand dangers, Concentration, says Victor Hugo, is solitude. How well our author loved, how completely he understood, children.....The philosopher had fed and bedded the foundlings:—

> The little boy and girl, lying naked side by side, were joined through the silent hours, in the seraphic promiscuousness of the shadows; such dreams as were possible to their age floated from one to the other.....Such innocence in such darkness, such purity in such an embrace, such foretastes of heaven are only possible to childhood, and no immensity approaches the greatness of little children.....Innocence is higher than virtue.....They slept. They were in peace. They were warm.....They were there as in the nest of the abyss.
>
> Their lips were four red roses on a stem,
> Which in their summer beauty kissed each other.

Frankly, this is a digression. Up from the sylvan valley came the music of a stream, filtered, diffused, making the "hush" audible. We thought of Byron's Bonnivard and his prison floor, "worn until his steps had left a trace": and also, in a psychological sense, of this narrow environ of our own, but made beautiful and boundless in the subtle chemistry of habit, time, and reflection. From the printer's "Mercury" to the Prime Minister, a rut of habit and custom awaits us all at last; but—

> Stone walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage.

The mind is the monarch always.

> Eternal spirit of the chainless mind!
> Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art!
> For there thy habitation is the heart.

And has not Scotland's own beloved bard said:—

> The heart, aye's, the part, aye,
> That mak's us richt or wrang?

But these are matters too high for the humbler muse..... Not by night alone, in this denizen, is the soul of beauty found. Here the day also has its riches, that grow more alluring with every fresh experience, every supreme psychological moment of deep sadness or great joy. Shakespeare, we said, as we walked by the stream, on its fantastically rooted banks of brown mould carpeted with living green, with its cascades, and sermons in stones; Shakespeare, we mused, and Burns, were vastly over-rated persons. Why, they were merely natural and truthful, as most other men were false and artificial. Thus the great men are little; thus only they are great. Such is the great idea of a little man. It is simple—and profound. The vast learning of a Victor Hugo is forgotten, and out of his rational, humane, simple, loving touches is formed the enduring statue of his fame—or, perhaps, the one may breed the other.

But great learning, it seems to us, while not to be despised, is often mere sophistry—a middle flooring, too high for earth, too low for heaven—a wondrous new heaven and new earth, but in the midst of which its creator, self-exiled, dwells, unhappy and alone, and only its shadow falls on those below. .....These were night thoughts, of the midnight of the year; as we recall them it is April, and Winter lingers in the lap of Spring. Cold is the passing wind, reminding us of the passing years, but most of wasted time and mistaken efforts. However, it is our —th birthday. One cannot *begin* life with the wisdom of fifty years!.....The further bank is hung with tattered fern, and ivy tendrils, pendant, stray and swing, and the glade beyond is brown with littered leaves, and all but the winds and the waters are still; the soul of peace and beauty and music broods and mingles in the scene.

The birds are silent. Only the winds and waters make perpetual sound. From whence to where those winds of yesterday and to-morrow? To what and whither blowing us on their constant, austere, inexorable, viewless wings? Ah! ask the inexorable—and incorrigible—War Lords; supplicate the jack-boot and the iron heel. *Davus sum non Œdipus.* Nor are we Alexander the Great.....Underneath are the roots of memory! Growth in the soil, gravitation in the water, sculpture in the stones; in all, health, hope, happiness, peace, content, the soul of beauty; and we would not gain the whole world and lose this, our own soul. No, a thousand times, no!

Andrew Millar.

A Christian's Prayer.

(When duty calls him to cross the ocean in war-time.)

Oh, thou who once on stormy Galilee
Did'st bid the mighty billows "Peace, be still";
Who hushed the raging of the angry sea,
And walked upon the waters at thy will,
Forgive me if my faith be cold and mean,
But canst thou circumvent a submarine?

Two thousand years ago thou could'st do aught;
E'en mountains would remove if thou decreed so;
But hast thou kept apace with modern thought,
And made innocuous the Hun torpedo?
The Galilee of which thou wert so fond
Is somewhat shallower than the Herring Pond.....

Dear Lord, I hesitate to hint a doubt
Of thy goodwill or power to succour me,
But sons of every Church go daily out,
And daily their dead bodies mar the sea.
Oh God, until the day of peace shall come
I'll praise thy saving grace—and stay at home.

G. H. Bosworth.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "The Vitality of France."

OUTDOOR.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Maryland Point Station): 7, Mr. Burke, A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GOLDTHORPE BRANCH N. S. S. (14 Beaver Street, Goldthorpe): 3, Members' Meeting. Important Business.

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

NUNEATON, GEORGE ELIOT BRANCH (The Palace, Queen's Road): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Secularism and Social Reform"; 6.30, "Self-Reliance *v.* Trust in God."

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Mr. H. Snell, "The New Religion for Democracy."

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President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

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> Name.....
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> Address.....
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> Occupation .....
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> Dated this.....day of.....19.....

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