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Views and Opinions.

God and the World.

Dr. Lyttelton’s last article raises several points, with all of which I am unable, owing to want of space, to deal. But one or two call for a word of comment. First, I am glad to find him recognizing Sir James Frazer’s position to be that the original kinship of Jewish and Christian customs with those of savage peoples divests the former of all claim to validity. I prefer “validity” to “respect,” as being less ambiguous, and I do not anticipate that the distinction will cause demur. Needless to say, I agree with Frazer. Robertson Smith, it is true, called himself a Christian to the end. What other Christians called him is well known. And he was certainly deprived of his Professorial chair on account of his heretical views. But I fail to see how Smith calling himself a Christian can dispose of my point. This is, that if the bulk of Christian beliefs had their origin in certain savage practices, and if these practices originated in a mistaken view of man and Nature, no amount of apologizing can give them validity. To say that God guides mankind through delusion to truth might suffice if the same persons existed at the end of the process that were present at its beginning. But this is not the case. The individual lives and dies without coming near the alleged truth. Those individuals who at length receive this have experienced none of the preparatory training. And it is small comfort to those myriads of men and women who died in the grip of degrading superstitions that thousands of years later someone will reap the benefit of their travail. I question whether any earthly parent would care to undertake the education of his children on a similar plan.

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The Value of Martyrdom.

I cannot forbear a word on Dr. Lyttelton’s remark that Christians declare they have a clue to what is called the problem of evil, and that they are ready to die for their faith, with the added query, “Has anyone ever heard of a martyr-Atheist?” Personally, I quite fail to see what martyrdom has to do with the question at issue, or with the truth of any proposition whatever. People have shown themselves ready to die for any and every opinion, religious and non-religious. There are people ready to die for the preservation of a monarchy, and there are plenty in Russia to-day ready to die for much-abused Bolshevism. Pagans were as ready to die

as Christians for their beliefs, and if the flat earth theory were made a subject of persecution, I have no doubt it would in course of time produce its martyrology. As to martyr-Atheists, I think I could produce that article, but I am afraid it would lead to digression on the degree of martyrdom and the reality of the Atheism. At any rate, Dr. Lyttelton will recall that Vanini was burnt as an Atheist; and that the same charge was brought against Bruno and many others. But the query reminds one of the famous comment that Homer showed deplorable ignorance, inasmuch that in the whole of the *Iliad* there was no reference to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. In the modern sense of the word, as a considered and complete rejection of the idea of God, Atheism necessarily stands as the final term of a process. Historically, Atheism meant the rejection of a particular god, as against the later sense of rejection of the idea of God. And, therefore, to look for the end in the process is futile. The real and justifiable antithesis is Christianity *v.* non-Christianity, or heresy *v.* orthodoxy. And the martyr has ever been the heretic. Whether the heretic was Christian, Pagan, Catholic, Protestant, Deist, Theist, or Atheist, was a matter of historical and geographical accident. * * *

Evil and Good.

Now let me come to Dr. Lyttelton’s reconciliation of the existence of God with that of misery, strife, and bloodshed. Here I have to notice the confession that “from outside” we have nothing to go on; that is, independent, objective, and verifiable data are wanting. There is nothing to go upon but a theory, which the Christian believes he proves because he believes he has been in communion with God. And it seems to me quite clear that here it is not the facts (counting all experience as part of the facts) that have suggested the theory; it is a previously accepted theory that calls for a special interpretation of the facts. The Christian starts with the theory that God is wise and loving, and he ends with interpreting the facts so as to produce apparent harmony between fact and theory. Dr. Lyttelton really admits this when he says the wonder is not that men have come back from the War disbelieving in God, but that others have come back with their faith strengthened. But is not the reply obvious? Those who came back believing went out believing; and there may be here no more than persistence of belief in facts that logically tend to their overthrow. Those who come back disbelieving have recognized a group of facts that do not fit in with their preconceived theory, and the theory is discarded. And, surely, the evidence of those who have discovered a discordance between theory and fact is more important than the circumstance that others have failed to notice it. Not to see spots on the sun may not justify scepticism regarding their existence, but the evidence of those who *have* seen them is far more impressive.

* * *

Character and Freewill.

Dr. Lyttelton’s proffered explanation is that God “created man free to make as many blunders as he

likes," leaving him "free" to make "a mess of his life if he chooses," and he did this because only in this way could "character" be developed, God setting "more store by character-training than by anything else." Moreover, while "there are a good many people who talk as if they ought to have been consulted at the creation," we are not "entitled to say that some other arrangement would have been better." I put on one side, as involving a too lengthy discussion here, the fact that "Free" in connection with "will" is completely irrelevant, since if it denies causation in conduct it is unthinkable, if it affirms it the argument breaks down, but I may point out that no man "chooses" to make a mess of his life. He may make a choice which leads to disaster, but that is due to want of judgment, weakness of character, etc. Now, suppose God, when he endowed man with freedom, had endowed him with enough judgment to choose the better instead of the worse. Would he, then, have made a mess of his life? Are we not, then, driven to the conclusion that God gave man freedom to wreck his life, but failed to give him judgment enough to avoid disaster? He acted as a parent would who gave a child a packet of gunpowder and a lighted taper to play with without explaining what might result. It would hardly be a valid defence to explain to the coroner that he was training the child's character. Moreover, should we really be worse if our characters had been formed perfect? The value of a process lies in its end. The end of the process of character-training is a perfect character. And if God had secured the end at once how should we have been worse off? A training that does not result in an improved or perfect character is, *ex hypothesi*, useless. And, if it does, what advantage is secured by getting at the end of the process what might have been as well secured at the beginning? Finally, it is only by confusing the individual with the race that the process of character-training receives justification. When man makes mistakes and ruins, not alone his own life but also the lives of others, whose character is trained by the process? Not the individual's who blunders, he dies in misery or disaster as the consequence of his mistaken choice. The one who benefits has not sown the seed, he simply reaps the harvest of good sown by another's sorrow. And, as a result of this age-long process, involving the misery of unnumbered millions, a few perfect specimens are turned out. Was it worth while? Had not all those who suffered the same claim at the hands of God as have these late and favoured few? God gives man the freedom to do wrong, but dowers him with an initial bias that makes the wrong seem preferable to the right. Millions of lives are wrecked before the initial blunder is repaired in the case of a fortunate few; and the fortunate ones exclaim: "Behold, the process is good, for it has produced me!" Humility has assumed strange garbs, but none stranger than in this apology for God.

Helping God.

"Are we entitled to say that some other arrangement would have been better?" asks Dr. Lyttelton. I think we are fully entitled to say this. And the proof is that we are all the time trying to enforce another arrangement. God makes man, and leaves him to find unaided what is right. Dr. Lyttelton, as a Christian clergyman, is all the time pointing out to people what is wrong, and asking them not to try and learn from experience, but to avoid it. He is following the human instead of the "divine" plan. God leaves man free to choose without adequate judgment for choosing. We train children from infancy so that they may choose sanely and certainly in the right direction. We decline to hold a child, because of its ignorance and helplessness, responsible for

all it does. God leaves his children helpless and ignorant, and punishes them for making mistakes that could not in the circumstances have been avoided. People may well talk "as if they ought to have been consulted at the creation." They are certainly called in to correct its blunders, and they who are called upon to correct faults at the end might reasonably ask why they were not consulted at the beginning?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Cross Symbol.

THE tendency of words is to harden, solidify, and become exact, rigidly scientific, rather than literary and poetical, in their usage. The term "god," for example, was originally employed in a loose, fluid, indefinite sense. To the Greeks of the Great Period, the fact of success was a god, and more than a god; to recognize a friend after long absence was a god; so was wine, whose body was poured out in libation to gods. Parmenides, Xenophanes, Æschylus, and other great thinkers, were too wise to attach any hard and fast meaning to the word, their gods being almost entirely formless, though even in them we notice an anthropomorphic trend. In the hands of modern theologians the word has become excessively stiff, personal, and anthropomorphic. The same thing is true of the term "cross," though in a somewhat different order. Primarily, the cross is an instrument of punishment and death, a gibbet formed of two pieces of wood intersecting each other at right angles; but secondarily, or metaphorically, it signifies suffering and loss, and hosts of other things. To the Persians the cross was a charm against evil and death, while the natives of Central and South America worshipped it as the symbol of the god of rain. As Mr. J. M. Robertson well says:—

Ages before the Christian era the symbol had been mystic and sacrosanct for Semites, for Egyptians, for Greeks, for Hindus; and the Sacred Tree of the cults of Attis, Dionysos, and Osiris lent itself alike to many symbolical significances. The cross had reference to the equinox, when the sacred tree was cut down; to the victim bound to it; to the four points of the compass; to the zodiacal sign Aries, thus connected with the sacrificial lamb; and to the universe as symbolized in the "orb" of the emperor, with the cross-lines drawn on it. The final Christian significance of the cross is a composite of ideas associated with it everywhere, from Mexico to the Gold Coast, in both of which regions it was or is a symbol of the "Rain-God" (*The Jesus Problem*, p. 62).

From all the evidence at our disposal it is undeniable that the Christian cross possesses absolutely no uniqueness. It is candidly admitted even in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, (vol. i., l. 957) that "the magic virtue ascribed to the cross has doubtless a non-Christian origin." It was customary for Saviour-Gods to suffer crucifixion, and so establish their saviourhood. Osiris was crucified, and so in all probability was Prometheus; and "the marks of the Lord Jesus" mentioned by Paul are doubtless the same in character as the Syrian *stigmata* which figured so conspicuously in the Osirian worship. And yet Christian divines treat the cross of Christ as if it stood utterly alone in history, while Christians generally fervently sing,—

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

Like almost every other element in it, Christianity borrowed the cross from Paganism without acknowledging its indebtedness. Is it any wonder, then, that the cross

of Christ, like prophecy, is of "private interpretation"? In *The Life of Faith*, for the 13th of November, the Rev. A. Stanley Parker insists upon the duty of loyally adhering to the teaching of the Bible on this subject, but the most illuminating fact is that, although there are at least a score of different theories of the Atonement, it is confidently claimed by their respective champions that they are all fairly founded on Scripture. Mr. Parker alludes to a historic gathering of Wesleyan ministers, at which an ex-President of the Conference related a remarkable experience. Some fifty years before he had listened to a sermon by a famous minister, whose text was, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross." That sermon, he declared, revolutionized his life. There and then he dedicated himself to the preaching of the cross alone, and to that resolve he had remained true to that day. In his ex-Presidential year he also had preached a sermon on the same central theme, and this discourse, likewise, had changed the whole outlook and ambition of an outstanding Wesleyan minister, who ever since had made the cross the very centre of his message. The ex-President just referred to was the Rev. Dr. J. M. Simon; but no sooner had he sat down than another reverend gentleman rose, who, being of "the liberal theologian" type, is thus reported:—

The cross was, of course, our message; but it all depended upon what we meant by the cross. Was there, he asked, anything in the cross save a wonderful display of self-sacrifice? Was there anything more in the death of Christ than in the death of our men upon the battlefield? To his mind there was no difference, and in each case the same principle operated. Is there any difference? Is there any significance in the death of Christ which is not to be found in the supreme sacrifice the soldier makes at the front?

The obvious inference from Mr. Parker's narrative is that there is no agreement even among preachers as to what the Cross of Christ does really signify, and that the success of preaching it depends wholly, not upon which of the many versions of it is presented, but upon the oratorical gifts of the preacher. We frankly concede that Mr. Stanley Parker supplies an accurate statement of the so-called orthodox doctrine of the Atonement as it is expressed in the principal Creeds of the Church. Now, it is well known how unscrupulous the preachers have been in their exploitation of the War to further their own interests. Soon after it broke out they began to inform their hearers what a beneficial effect it was having on the men in the Army, how Godly those in the trenches were becoming, and what mighty lessons they would have to teach us when they returned to their homes. One popular London divine went so far as to predict that if an Atheist went to the Front his Atheism would very quickly become a bad dream of the past. Even Mr. Parker is not entirely free from that culpable weakness, saying that "the men on the field would be the last to claim that their sacrifice was to be compared with Christ's; that the very suggestion would seem to them to savour of blasphemy." The truth is that the bulk of the soldiers did not concern themselves about theological problems at all, their chief anxiety being to see an end to the inhuman slaughter that they might return to their homes. As to their general attitude to religion we have the testimony of many chaplains, and, in particular, of the Rev. Mr. Spurr, who confessed that they were, as a class, anything but reverent believers. At the same time, Mr. Stanley Parker has the courage of his theological orthodoxy when he boldly affirms that "the death of Christ differs fundamentally" from that of patriotic soldiers on the field. He boldly declares that "Christ died because he would not use force; they in

the employment of force"; that "Christ's death was from first to last absolutely voluntary"; and finally, that "Christ's death was a sacrifice for the sin of the world, and made possible the Divine forgiveness." Beyond a doubt, this is orthodoxy, the orthodoxy which gained the supremacy after many centuries of bitter controversy, brutal conflict, and bloody persecution, which, in spite of its apparent triumph, has never reigned unchallenged, and which to-day is being increasingly discredited on every hand. We are told that opposition to the doctrine of the Atonement is not nearly so pronounced as it used to be. Multitudes of people do not consider it worth their while to denounce it in angry terms; they show their disbelief in it by leaving it severely alone. Without saying a word they turn their backs upon and utterly ignore it. They cannot endure a Saviour who does not save, or believe in a God who cannot forgive his erring children without the sacrifice of his own beloved Son. To them the Christian cross is the symbol of a gigantic lie. Mr. Parker quotes the following verse as a summary of New Testament teaching:—

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good;
That we might go at last to Heaven,
Saved by his precious blood;

but, in our judgment, that verse enshrines the quintessence of immorality. In point of fact, it is utterly false, and to repeat it believingly would be to commit the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of Truth.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Part and the Whole.

Mother of mysteries!
Sayer of dark sayings in a thousand tongues,
Who bringest forth no saying yet so dark
As we ourselves, thy darkest! —Francis Thompson.

If one were a psychologist in search of entertainment, one could not do better than read the biographies of those who suffered from religious delusion. A most curious feature in the history of fancy religionists is that their votaries often include men and women of business ability and social acumen. Some of these persons are, from a purely business point of view, people of resource, however ill-balanced and credulous they may be from other standpoints. It is the recurrence of these manias that forms so interesting a problem in psychology.

Sometimes this abnormal mental tendency can be traced to some direct cause. Thus the sect known as Jezreelites owe their doctrine and existence to a sunstroke which affected Private James White, a British soldier in India. White, who had been merely a roistering private, with a habit of twisting the vine-leaves in his hair, began to have revelations after a sunstroke. He took the name of "James J. Jezreel," and founded the sect which partially built the huge temple near Chatham.

The matter is not so easy of solution in the case of Lawrence Oliphant. Of commanding ability, he had been a diplomatist, traveller, war correspondent, member of Parliament, and society favourite. Yet this man was entrapped by one of the worst religious imposters that ever the land of tall buildings and twisted theology ever produced, Thomas Lake Harris, who ruled a community of dupes at Brocton, New York State. At the direction of this charlatan, Oliphant left all the refinements of civilization and performed the most menial duties in the prophet's community. Oliphant even took his young wife and his mother to America, and it nearly broke his home-life.

The story of his disillusionment is among the strangest chapters in the history of human mentality.

Another example of shrewdness and credulity is that of James Smith, the first editor of the *Family Herald*. "Shepherd" Smith, as he was called, was one of the smartest journalists in Fleet Street, and he made his paper a huge success. Brimful of brainy ideas, he originated the *Answers to Correspondents*, and for many years gave sage advice to his tens of thousands of readers. He was the first to commence the collection of anecdotes and jests from American papers, and his weekly leading article was as eagerly scanned as the clever stories which appeared in the pages of his paper.

In private life Smith was, seemingly, another man, and was as different as Dr. Jekyll was from Mr. Hyde. Originally a follower of Joanna Southcott, a crazy servant who persuaded people that she was to be the mother of a Messiah, Smith lived for a time with the community headed by Joanna's successor, John Wroe, an illiterate fanatic. Smith was a man of education and culture, yet he was all his life influenced by his Southcottian association, and the ill-balanced mentality of his private life was poles asunder from the shrewdness of his business career.

A still more extraordinary contrast is that afforded by the case of Mrs. Annie Besant. She had been a woman of brilliant ability, and held the degree of Bachelor of Science, with honours, at London University. For fifteen years she worked and suffered for Freethought, a modern Hypatia. There comes into her world a Russian woman with big mesmeric eyes, a stock of occult "patter," and an assurance worthy of the Tichborne claimant. Helena Blavatsky was obviously a charlatan. Yet we know that Mrs. Besant became her staunch disciple. It is a moving story, for few such brilliant and attractive figures as that of Mrs. Besant pass the stage in the history of modern Rationalism.

To quote still another instance. Michael Faraday was a highly distinguished chemist and natural philosopher, whose achievements in science were of the first importance. Away from his beloved laboratory he was as credulous as any tradesman who cuts cheese with a wire for a living, and he not only attended a small chapel, but was an elder and sidesman.

I hope I shall not be thought unsympathetic, but all this has for me a great fascination. Before the integrity of the analytic methods of the psychologists, these personalities should be examined in detail and explained. To me they pass like a carnival procession, grotesque, grandiose, pitiful. A modern writer reminds us that "life does not cease to be amusing when it is serious, nor serious when it is amusing," and the stories told above illustrate that view.

MIMNERMUS.

"What Shall We Put in its Stead?"

DURING my recent visit to South Wales, I was frequently asked the above trite old query, not by hostile hecklers, but by those who more or less sympathized with our cause.

When, however, I gave "Secular Education" as my reply, the questioner, almost invariably, failed to conceal a more or less real disappointment with the answer. And the disappointment thus honestly betrayed did not in the least surprise me, for the correspondence between the role played by Christianity and by Secular Education respectively is by no means quite obvious. It occurred to me, therefore, that this special number of the *Freethinker* offered me a suitable opportunity of showing how,

from the *Christian* standpoint, it is the correct and only answer.

From the Rationalistic point of view it has been answered once and for all by the Editor in his lucid pamphlet of the above title.

The Rationalist considers Christianity, in common with all religions, to be a social evil—a upas tree poisoning society with its baneful emanations. An institution or custom which is a positive social evil does not require replacement. The maximum good is attained when it is entirely abolished. It would be a palpable absurdity to ask what should we put instead of thieves if we resolved upon a crusade to exterminate them. In the case of a pernicious influence, to abolish it is all that is necessary or desirable.

Beneficial agencies or institutions, on the other hand, should be replaced; for if you do not put something instead of them, you inflict an injury upon the community.

Now, the above question is almost invariably put on the assumption that Christianity is of some useful service to the State which alone saves it from being an obvious absurdity. That is, the question is usually asked from the standpoint of the *modern* Christian, who regards his religion not only as a useful adjunct to the State but as a moral force necessary to the existence of a healthy society.

I use the word "modern" advisedly; for those who first espoused and founded the new cult did not consider their religion as an institution, or a movement for the good or amelioration of society in any sense whatsoever. To assume or assert such a view is to betray the grossest ignorance of Christian origins, or a lack of mental honesty. Christianity at its birth was solely an instrument to secure the salvation of the "Soul"—that hypothetical entity born of the frenzied imagination of omniscient Gnosticism. Its sole concern was to devise or find out means to enable the "soul" to escape hell and find its way safely through the hostile elements of the lower realms of the air to the uppermost heaven—the eternal abode of light, purity, and bliss.

It was only when the hallucinatory expectation of the immediate end of the world began to fade in the thoughts and beliefs of the early Christians that they began to look upon their communities—in the aggregate, the Church—as integral parts of society, and as determinants of its character and aims. The disillusionment was not sudden, but from the moment the falsity of that fundamental expectation became more or less obvious, the Church began in right earnest to *secularize* its religion into an ally of the Throne and its temporal power. Henceforth it appears in a dual capacity—the guardian of "worldly" as well as "other-worldly" well-being. It now arrogantly claimed to be God's appointed instrument for both "saving the soul" and for safeguarding the morals of society. It is in respect to this latter claim that the question is usually put; for the majority of people unreflectingly assume it to be true. They believe, more or less sincerely, that "fear of hell" is useful or even necessary to social well-being. They look upon it as the dam that keeps back the pent-up waters of our animal instincts from rushing forth with destructive violence, leaving in its wake only desolation and death.

So the question resolves itself into: "What shall we put instead of the 'fear of hell'?"

It may be seriously questioned whether "fear of hell" is an efficient social deterrent at all. The effectiveness of a punishment as a preventive of crime is directly proportional to its vivid nearness, and to the degree of certainty of its ever being inflicted. Invisibility, remoteness, and great chances of evading it, reduces its inhibitive power to a vanishing point.

Now, the remoteness and the shadowy character of the "other-world," and the easy possibility of avoiding all its punishments through atoning "Belief," went far to neutralize any deterring power which "fear" normally possesses.

Besides, "fear of hell" is not a natural impulse, in-born in us and inherited from the primitive past, like the instinctive fears which rule and determine animal life. No; the "fear of hell" is wholly *artificial*, acquired through priestly indoctrination in youth. Its source is in *society*, and not in our nature. It therefore soon dies away if not perpetually stirred up and kept alive—which is, by-the-by, the main function of the pulpit.

But let it be granted that the "fear of hell" does possess some small amount of restraining power in our social life as it now exists; and the question, "What would you put in its place?" then becomes relevant.

And the equally relevant answer is, "Secular Education, or Training in Citizenship." That is to say, plant in the child habits and habitudes of well-doing. The answer was given ages ago in the old Hebrew maxim: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

A habit or disposition of mind, when ingrained in the nature of the child, approximates the character of a natural or internal impulse. When well laid, they acquire more or less the potency and permanency of instincts. They alone are the safe and reliable guarantees of conduct. Where they are absent, character is neither trustworthy nor stable—a mere straw at the mercy of "every gust that bloweth."

Wishes, counsels, persuasive appeals, and implorations—that is, all *external* goads—have at best only an ephemeral and transient effect. They evanesce so soon as the external stimulus is withdrawn, and the counselled and the exhorted soon revert to their former ways.

This is daily exemplified in the attempts made to reform those brought up in Slumland and in similar abodes. The moment the external stimuli are withdrawn, and *often* before that event, they return to wallow in the mire.

I know a person who has again and again tried to redeem young persons of promise and ability, and to transform them into useful and respectable members of society. He clothed them, befriended them, treated them with great consideration and kindness, and placed them in situations which were "luxurious homes" compared with the hovels they were used to call their "homes," and yet not in one case did he succeed in effecting a permanent "redemption." They would freely admit the folly and madness of their former career; yet, as the impulses of self-respect, of cleanliness, of thrift, of ambition, and of pride were not implanted in their nature, they all, sooner or later, reverted to their old haunt and its life.

Moral impotency, however, is not confined to the nether world of Slumdom; it is rife among all classes of Society in its legions of wastrels and prodigals of all complexions and grades. For what makes a person a wastrel, is to arrive at the age of maturity without having acquired the "instincts of self-control." And as that negative fact is invariably accompanied by the more tragic positive one, of *having* acquired the opposite habit of "giving the reins" to one's proclivities and passions, self-redemption is hopeless. Indeed, the acquired "moral abandon" usually possesses such fixity and strength that even the implorations of blending love and the importunities of wounded pride are equally impotent to effect a reformation of conduct.

External goadings are, at best, efficient only so long as they are constantly applied.

Heavy dust particles can be stirred up and made to float about for a little while in the air of a room, but

they all finally come to the ground again. It is only those which are self-buoyant that go up to descend no more. "Fear of hell" may occasionally stir up the morally grovelling and set him on his feet for a time, but seldom for long. But boasting habits of self-control ingrained in our nature in youth give us moral buoyance, which make us quite independent of the hortatory goads of society.

How can these self-acting impulses be acquired by the community?—by the race? Only by having them implanted in the child-mind so as to form integral parts of its mental structure.

If our schools were ethical seminaries for training the new generation in the duties of citizenship—in habits of forbearance, of kindness, of self-sacrifice, of truthfulness, of honesty, and of devotion to duty—why, the "fear of hell" would be as obsolete and as ludicrous as a moral force as the slaying of an animal or the blessings of a priest to secure abundant crops.

J. C. THOMAS, B.Sc. ("Keridon").

Acid Drops.

As the Germans are beaten, it appears no longer necessary to describe them as a nation of "Atheists." Writing of the Yuletide festivities at Cologne, a leading London newspaper says: "All the Churches have been crammed with worshippers, and in the cathedral the services began long before dawn." Even the "Atheists" in religious fiction behave better than that.

By this time most people are aware of the religious value of the Army Church Parade. Here is an example which we take from a letter sent us by a friend:—

..... reminds me of my first Church Parade. When coming out of the Church, at the close of the service, I put my hat on. Immediately a sergeant who was behind me said: "Take that b— hat off. Don't you know where you are?"

Still, the Church parade must be maintained in order to encourage a proper feeling of reverence among soldiers.

Yet this idiotic institution is approaching its end. The question of compulsory Church attendance is, we learn, under consideration by the Government, and there is some prospect of its early abolition. "Church Parades to Go" is the heading of an article in the *Empire News* of Sunday last. A lieutenant-colonel is reported as saying:—

That absurd law is a relic of barbarism for intellectual serfs in the time of the Stuarts; it is harsh, unjust, intolerable. We are all against it, and this year we mean to get it wiped out.

Another officer says:—

Officers hate it as much as the men. I have served in the ranks, and know the amount of blasphemy church parade always provoked.

A corporal remarks:—

When the Boches sent over some shells that smashed up our church, the boys cheered because it stopped the church parades.

We are delighted at seeing this development of opinion. Ever since the War began we have carried on a vigorous postal propaganda, in addition to writing about it in the *Freethinker*, and are glad to see it has not been without effect. Our advice has been to soldiers everywhere: "Keep on asking to be excused Church Parade. This will make officers acquainted with how much the function is resented." And in some instances the requests have been so sustained, and so numerous, that Church Parade was practically abolished. Soldiers should insist on being treated as men, and should at least retain the freedom of choice in religious matters that belongs to every civilian.

The Church of England's advertising campaign for five millions has excited criticism in the Church itself. Arch-deacon Peile, writing in the *Daily News*, says: "A great deal

has been made of the alleged fact that the Church of England, as a Church, has no money of its own—which is not strictly true—since the large resources of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are at the disposal of the Archbishops and Bishops." A palpable hit!

Insurance Companies will have to consider the advisability of insuring people against attending places of worship. During the past week a man fell dead during a service at Rayleigh Wesleyan Church; and the verger of St. John's Church, Crawshawbooth, Rossendale, was found lying dead behind the church door.

The *Methodist Times* is under new management, and the *Daily News* says that there is room for a paper "that can interpret by sound exposition and without special pleading the teaching of the New Testament in the light of the social needs of to-day." Journalists are clever folk, but we do not envy them the task of reconciling a thirty per cent. dividend with the divine command: "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor."

The tangles of theology are tiresome, but Dr. Clifford's peroration in his New Year's address at Westbourne Park Chapel would scare a bench of bishops. In the final burst of rhetoric the venerable doctor (of divinity) said: "God himself, the Father of us all, is with us, and leads us and His family to the dawn of an everlasting day." Has there been an interesting event in the celestial regions?

The Young Men's Christian Association has a "Jewish Soldiers' Branch" situated in the Strand, London. After being treated like dogs for nearly twenty centuries by Christians, the Jewish people should value the compliment.

A special service is to be held at St. Paul's Cathedral to commemorate the journalists who fell in the War. Will the authorities hold another service to commemorate the journalists who stayed at home and wrote the warlike appeals to the God of Battles?

Whilst Providence was busy counting the hairs of people's heads, and watching the fall of the sparrows, the Fishguard Roman Catholic Church was destroyed by fire.

The Vicar of Longthorpe is getting into hot water for having exchanged pulpits with a Baptist. We agree that the practice is a dangerous one. The only sure way of keeping the Christian faith secure is to shut people off into separate compartments, mentally, and, if possible, physically. If exchange of pulpits is encouraged, no one knows where it may end. It might result in Freethought lecturers being invited to attend a church and lay their views before the congregation. Clergymen ought to bear in mind that churches are not places of enlightenment. They are intended to keep people in the path marked out for them by mediæval barbarians and half-crazy fanatics. No one ever goes to church for information. That is why we have the distinction between a lecture and a sermon.

Lord Hugh Cecil writes to the *Church Times* that he never hoped much from the moralizing effects of the War, but it is depressing to find a revival of quarrelling among Churchmen over the celebration of the Sacrament. This, it must be remembered, is a symbol of unity and love. Still, we don't think Lord Hugh Cecil should be surprised. It is always in the name of unity and love that Christians have been most quarrelsome, most brutal, and most bloodthirsty.

Discussing the alluring question, "Is there any man worth £30,000 a year?" an evening paper spoke of the Archbishop of Canterbury's "large official salary" of £15,000 a year. Our contemporary might have added that another Archbishop draws £10,000, and the bachelor Bishop of London a similar sum.

The clergy were too proud to fight themselves, but they know how to exploit the War in their own interest. An

Essex rector has issued a circular announcing his intention of erecting a large crucifix in the churchyard as a War memorial, and asking soldiers' relatives to supply him with the names and addresses of their lost ones.

There is always a risk of stepping from the sublime to the ridiculous in introducing religion upon the stage, particularly when the players suggest that the Union Jack is an object of adoration. In a new naval medley at a London theatre the captain of a battleship offers up a lengthy prayer: "Let me not fail for England's sake." Doubtless many of the audience wish the prayer deleted "for Christ's sake."

Bishops may be right-reverend Fathers in God, but a playful Providence sees that they run the same risks as ordinary sinners. The Bishop of Chelmsford whilst motor-ing from a confirmation service at Woodford collided with a stray horse, which kicked and destroyed the wind-screen. One newspaper report states that the bishop fainted, but nothing is said as to the fate of the horse.

Here is an interesting passage from a letter which appears in the *Church Times* of January, and is signed "A Vicar":—

Over 100 enlisted from my country parish. A good proportion of them were confirmed and had made their communion; the majority had attended church regularly, and many had been in the choir. When they joined up, most of them came to see me, and I gave them each a little pocket-money and a book or picture to remind them of their Church and duties. When first they came home on leave they called to see me; but subsequently none have come, and, worse still, very few have attended church. It has been very grievous. They went out spiritually equipped; now when they return they seem to have lost all their grip on religion. What can be the reason?

We suggest to the Vicar that when men who think see the Christian theory falsified by facts, and Christian professions belied in practice, there can only be one consequence.

President Wilson is reported as saying to a deputation of Free Churchmen that in these times "a man would go crazy if he did not rely upon the assistance of Divine Providence." As the statement was made to a deputation of Christians it may be no more than a polite expression intended to please the visitors. If intended seriously we quite fail to see what kind of a help "Divine Providence" is anywhere or to anyone. And the belief that during the four years we have passed through the world has been under the guidance of Providence is really enough to drive one insane. To be the sport of non-conscious forces may make one feel helpless, but to feel that all the slaughter and misery of the last four years is part of some divine plan is simply horrible.

Keep At It.

OUR Special New Year's Number was a complete success. As we anticipated, a very large number of our readers ordered extra copies, and it will be passing strange if these copies, finding their way into new hands, do not result in a number of people becoming regular readers.

Unfortunately, the cost of production prohibits any profit coming from an increase in circulation. Still, we want the increase, for it is as easy to write for a million as for a hundred—and far more satisfactory. And when prices do go down, the recovery will be all the more rapid. It is now simply a question of hanging on and waiting for the certain better times ahead.

So we must just keep at it, all of us—editor, contributors, and readers. There are thousands of new readers to be got; there are many thousands who do not even know that such a paper as the *Freethinker* exists—and this after thirty-nine years! It is deplorable, and we must all do what we can to remove such ignorance. We cannot ask our readers to keep on buying extra copies, but if they will send us names and addresses, we will see to the rest.

We are longing to get back to our sixteen-page *Freethinker*. And when we do—well, we shall begin to see things.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.
January 19, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

- "FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—G. W. Bate, 3s.; A. E. Maddock, £1; F. Hall, 10s.
- E. A. MACDONALD.—We quite share your appreciation of President Wilson, and also in the detestation of the orgy of hatred indulged in by Christians. We quite believe that 1919 will be a record year for Freethought. It will certainly be so if all of us take advantage of the present circumstances. Thanks for good wishes, which we reciprocate.
- E. R.—Will be published shortly. Very pleased you found the *Christianity and Slavery* so useful for your purpose. If the reverend gentleman replies let us know.
- N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—"H. V. T.", £1; Thos. Saunders, 2s.
- S. R.—Loeb's *The Organism as a Whole* is published by Messrs. Putnam's Sons. Price 12s. 6d.
- T. BRABBINS.—Ideas good, but form not quite up to standard.
- J. C. FYSH.—Very glad to hear from you, and shall be pleased to have the whole story when you have leisure to tell it. We are writing you. Other letter not yet to hand.
- A. STEPHENS.—The *Freethinker* may be ordered of any newsagent or from W. H. Smith's bookstalls. Paper sent.
- J. FOTHERGILL.—Received, and shall appear as soon as possible.
- C. R.—Yes, the New Year's Number of the *Freethinker* was a complete success. Your efforts were, we are glad to say, duplicated by many of our readers, and with complete success.
- R. V.—Thanks for cutting. Very useful.
- C. T. SHAW.—Your suggestion is a good one, and might be put into practice when conditions become normal. But, as you are aware, there is not at present any decrease in the cost of production, and we must be careful in our ventures.
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- 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.*
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."*
- 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.

Manchester suffered from the severest snowstorm for thirty years last week-end. Telegraph wires were down in all directions, roads were blocked in the district, and means of transit uncertain. Naturally, Mr. Cohen's meetings suffered in the circumstances. Still, all things considered, the meetings were encouraging, and the Manchester friends start on their New Year's work full of resolution and hope.

Next Sunday (January 19) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham. His subject is "Freethought, Religion, and Death." We hope Birmingham friends will make the meeting as widely known as is possible.

Of all forms of literature, perhaps the pleasantest is that which calls for no long stretches of attention, but gives the image, the impression from Nature or the world of man, and

then lets the meaning soak into the reader's mind. This subtle form of art is seen at its best in the work of writers who are Orientals or have an Oriental strain in them. We need mention only the prose poems of Yone Noguchi, the Japanese writer, and the wonderful Tourgeniev. We English have not cultivated imaginative subtlety to any great extent; but a little book written by Mr. Eden Phillpotts may do something to correct our matter-of-factness. *A Shadow Passes* (Palmer & Hayward; 3s. 6d. net) is a slender book of sixty odd pages, containing a number of impressions of the natural world around Dartmoor, with the lesson or moral implied or insinuated, or sometimes underlined in our obvious English way. Let us give an example of Mr. Phillpotts' art at its best:—

Over dew-drenched herbage, glittering grey with the dawn-mother's tears, some little creature had run home and left the mark of its paws green on the silver. To leave a footprint in the dew, for some son of the morning to see ere day has dried it—a modest ambition, and within the reach of the least of us who try to make good things.

There are a dozen impressions equally as subtle as this, and a few that are subtler, because the lesson is left wholly to the imagination. Of the less artistic method we quote one which will be of interest to Freethinkers:—

How reasonable is all that one can appreciate in these high places (the tors of Dartmoor). Everything proceeds steadfastly from cause to effect; everything is governed and controlled; and in the measure of our reason, so we perceive the inexorable procedure and consent to enforced conditions. The conditions themselves spring reasonably from remoter causes and the balance hangs true. Only we reasoning creatures are irrational and deride our supreme gift. The talk is of perishing faith, and reason answers that sooner will the principles of gravitation and evolution perish than faith. Faith is a permanent and vital endowment of the human mind—a part of reason itself. The insane alone are without it. We all back something, if only ourselves, and a man can no more disbelieve in everything than he can believe in opposites. Agnosticism is faith in the suspended judgment; Atheism is faith that existence depends upon the properties of matter and not the purposes of conscious Will. The faith of most Freethinkers rests in a conviction that the possibilities latent in human reason suffice for right human progress. They do not pretend to know where reason will bring us; but they affirm, since the evolution of morals is upward and towards righteousness, that reason may be trusted above any other guide. They believe that, had the world been governed by reason, the present disaster had not fallen upon it.

Here the impression is nothing—the moral everything. In other places the ethical lesson is out of all proportion to the æsthetic impression. The prose-poem is rendered top-heavy, or rather bottom-heavy, if we compare it to a dose of castor-oil with a spoonful of brandy on the top. For ourselves, we prefer to take ethical cathartics in a capsular form. But, as in all Mr. Phillpotts' work, the fine qualities far outweigh the defects. At his best, he is a great creative artist.

The South London Branch opens its Spring Session to-night (Jan. 12) at the Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., with a debate between Mr. T. F. Palmer and Mr. Noah Bailey, of the Christian Evidence Society. The subject of the debate is "Does Man Survive Death?" and should prove attractive in view of the recent interest aroused in the subject.

We are asked to call attention of North Londoners to the fact that Mr. A. H. Mitchell will open the debate to-night on "Art and Morality" at the St. Pancras Reform Club. It is hoped that there will be a good attendance and brisk discussion.

The *Glasgow Evening Times* gives a very appreciative notice of Mr. Andrew Millar's *Robes of Pan*. "Altogether a fine bit of work" is the reviewer's description of the book, a judgment with which we cordially agree, as will, we think, all who travelled with Mr. Millar in his trips abroad. Those who are aware that Mr. Millar's nature-studies and philosophizings are penned in the not too numerous leisure hours of a signalman's life will read the booklet with a more human appreciation for the knowledge. The *Ardrossan and Saltcoats*

Herald, while raising a mild dissent to Mr. Millar's comments on religion, publishes a eulogistic notice of the little work, extending over two-thirds of a column. Finally, the *Edinburgh Evening News* writes admiringly of the author's "fine descriptive passages."

Freethought versus Evil.

THE position of the Freethinker in modern civilization is not one to be envied. That rare faculty—Freethought, paradoxically enough, hangs like a weight about his neck, dragging him down upon his knees in despair. He feels so much, knows so much, and realizes the truth of things with such intensity and certitude that the scrambling over him of the multitude who regard his presence as an obstacle in the path of Progress, fills him with a righteous bitterness; but, at the same time, he does not utterly despair.

The Freethinker is aware of existence; he is filled with a consciousness of life. His spiritual past is fully awake. Not the supernatural, spiritual past with which Deism chains the minds of the people in the name of religion; but that spiritual past which is the outcome of Nature herself, and which cannot exist consciously in the mind of man apart from dynamic personality and complete freedom of mentality. It is obvious to the Freethinker that without the condition of complete freedom of mental activity, progress is not only impossible, but inconceivable. If the Freethinker ever comes mentally into harmony with the concept world of ordinary commonplace human beings, it is because he is mesmerized by the nature mystery of human existence. He watches every manifestation of life with intense interest, he is fully alive, he is near the source of things. The fact that humanity can exist at all in its present apathetic state tires his sense of proportion—his sense of life—his sense of possibility. The Freethinker knows that the diversity of human life is infinite. He realizes that no two individuals are constituted the same, either mentally or physically. He acknowledges the fact of human inequality, and, at the same time, is quite sure that certain fundamental qualities are shared by all types. Common sense, for instance, a quality universal in man, is merely a third-rate form of intelligence. It is the basis of intelligence and of all rational thought. He also is quite sure that the apparent animosity extended to him by the people in the form of apathy is, indeed, merely a stupid indifference to their own interests. There is no real or concrete hatred of truth, or greatness in the people; they are merely indifferent; they do not hate the Freethinker, neither do they love the Church. They are most deeply concerned with other issues of life of a purely material nature. Their apathy is the result of an unawakened sense of life; they are obsessed by the conventions that have grown up around the elementary facts of material existence. They are kind, sympathetic, and good natured when their feelings are acted upon *via* material things; but their sympathies are very seldom extended to those who make no material demands, in other words, those who demand from them a higher sense of the possibilities of life, a more intense interest in thought, mentality, and reason. Countless ages have passed since man drew above the beasts and worshipped stone; yet, practically, no real mental development of benefit to the race—that is, no general mental development—has taken place. Every age has produced its mental giants, its poets, dreamers, idealists, reformers, philosophers, and life-lovers—every age has neglected them. The waves of life rise and fall, each wave leaving some beautiful shell or deep-sea treasure upon the shore, to be discovered and loved by an occasional seeker after

beauty; but the people—the majority, the multitude—are unconscious of the wave of life, or of the shore, or the treasure, or even of the interest of the thinker. Great and glorious ideas have been conceived and expressed by men whose thought was free, but very few disciples have heard the call.

The multitude are mentally chained by the material facts of existence; they can exercise no abstract enthusiasm, they are driven along by a commonplace, deathly, and third-rate conception of life. Their chief instinct is the will to subsist. In a material sense this is expressed very luridly by struggle for money; for power over food, clothing, and shelter—the three primitive necessities which still dominate the energies and enthusiasms of the people. How many thinkers have been mentally shocked when realizing the utter stupidity of the people in this respect alone! If, says the thinker, you must acknowledge the three primitive necessities—food, clothing, and shelter—why not organize these things so that they cease to be ends in themselves? Why not bring *thought* to bear upon the problem? Why not recognize the fact that nothing less than *thought* can deal adequately with these things and liberate the higher activities of the mind for cosmic development in an upward direction. The spectacle of millions of highly "civilized" human beings all struggling for the three primitive necessities, and about two-thirds of them getting these necessities in inadequate quantities, is nothing less than insane. The preoccupation necessary in such a gigantic and absurd struggle, the feverish concentration and the enormous energy dissipated in this struggle, very effectively and very naturally checks any intellectual or mental development in the race.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

(To be continued.)

The Beast in Man.

I HAVE sorely, and I fear irretrievably, offended my old friend George Flint. It came about in this way. For more than a year past we have been in the habit of meeting regularly two or three times a week in the saloon lounge of a quiet, old-fashioned inn in Camberwell—tell it not in Gath, whisper it not in Beersheba—to discuss the situation respecting the progress of the War as it occurred from day to day or from week to week, or to await quietly for the maroons to go off, giving us warning of an approaching air raid, which we might expect over our heads in about half an hour after the first report was heard.

Well, after having discussed the various phases of the conflict, or as much as a strictly censored press was allowed to tell us, we sometimes found it necessary, to avoid monotony, to change the subject, and discuss other topics of general interest. There were four of us in our party: Mr. Flint, who was a commercial traveller of the old-fashioned type, with a wide experience of men and things; Mr. Joe Stoutley, a gentleman who had been a pharmaceutical chemist; Mr. Jolliman, a practical engineer—and myself.

One evening, when the news was rather "flat, stale, and unprofitable," I started a discussion on the savage origin of man, with a view of explaining in a sort of scientific fashion some of the unspeakable crimes perpetrated by the German soldiers upon defenceless men and women at the early stages of the War in Belgium and Northern France. That led me to the statement that man had come up from the lower animals, and that, when his worst passions were aroused the savage beast showed itself in the wanton and cruel crimes he was prepared to commit against his fellow-creatures.

"Yes," I said one evening, when the discussion was beginning to flag, "I am not only satisfied that man has come up from the savage races, but also that man was closely related to the anthropoid apes, and possessed in his nature some of the worst characteristics of the gorilla."

My old friend George Flint denied this statement most emphatically. Man was a fallen being, he would allow, but he repudiated with scorn the suggestion that man had at any time, however far back we cared to trace his ancestry, come up from the ape-like form. He appealed to his friend the chemist to support him in his contention. Mr. Stoutley, however, would not go so far as his friend the traveller; on the contrary, he knew that there was a good deal of evidence in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington in support of the theory of Darwin. But, as a Wesleyan, he was bound to say that he believed in the Bible story of the origin of man—"that God made man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

At first I was inclined to ignore the Biblical story, but as I knew my friend Mr. Jolliman shared my views, I proceeded to ridicule the story of man being made out of dust and woman out of the rib of a man, for all it was worth; and as all my friends had a good sense of the ridiculous, I succeeded in laughing the old Biblical story out of court.

And so in the process of the discussion I brought my hearers back to the Story of Evolution. First of all I dealt with the rudimentary organs in man that afforded evidence of man's origin. I also pointed out that man has on his scalp muscles in a rudimentary condition, by which our early ancestors were capable of moving the skin of their scalps, and some equilibrists could move them to such a degree as to throw a ball off their heads by the use of these muscles. Man also had rudimentary muscles down his back, by which our early ancestors could twitch the skin of their backs like horses or cows when flies alight upon them, being unable to reach them with their tails. Then I made a bold plunge, and affirmed that man possessed a rudimentary tail, and not only that, but that he possessed the muscles wherewith to waggle it.

At this point Mr. Flint got quite red in the face, and shouted across the table: "That be hanged for a tale!"—only he used a big, big D to emphasize his statement. Calmly I proceeded with my argument. I told my hearers that, some years ago, when I was ill and my doctor came to see me, he looked on my bookshelves, and saw several works dealing with the subject of Evolution; and when I asked him if he was a believer in Evolution, he said: "Of course I am; every doctor who thinks upon the subject must be." And then he proceeded to tell me that he never made a post-mortem examination upon a man without looking for the atrophied reptilian eye in his head, and he invariably found it; he also found the gill-slits behind man's ears, which clearly showed that man had passed through the amphibious stage.

Mr. Stoutley was ready to confirm these stories, and added a few more from his own experience. And so the time passed on merrily; but when the time came for us to part company, I suddenly remembered that I had a copy of Mr. T. F. Palmer's pamphlet, *The Story of the Evolution of Life*, in my pocket, and I handed that over to Mr. Flint for his perusal.

We met again on the following evening. I could see in a moment that my friend, Mr. Flint, was not in the best of moods, but I very soon discovered the reason. I asked him if he had read Mr. Palmer's able pamphlet, and what he thought of it.

"What do I think of it?" he exclaimed, "I think that the idea that we have descended from the monkey a most degrading idea, and I am ashamed of you for preaching such a doctrine."

"But," said I, in reply, "surely it does not matter how lowly the animal we have descended from so long as we have come up far enough?"

"What appears to me to be troubling you, my dear Mr. Flint, is that you seem to be doubtful whether you have come up far enough."

At this retort my friends, Messrs. Stoutley and Jolliman, laughed with great gusto, as though quite enjoying the joke. This only served to increase the anger of Mr. Flint.

"What good could it do?" he exclaimed, "to teach such a degrading doctrine. It was dead against all the best teachings of Christianity and against common sense?"

"You may be proud of having descended from an ape, but I am not; and I say, again, that I am ashamed of such teachings."

Now came my turn, and I made the best of my opportunity.

I denied that there was anything degrading in teaching that man had come up from the lower animals. Moreover, I said, nearly all scientific men were agreed on the subject. And not only did scientific men believe in the doctrine, but some of the most learned divines were prepared to accept the doctrine, although they did not say much about it, for fear of offending the tender susceptibilities of their followers, who were ignorant of the teaching of modern science, and apparently unable to understand the subject. And why did the Christians bury the remains of the illustrious Charles Darwin in Westminster Abbey? Obviously, because they wanted to say in years to come that they were believers in the doctrine of evolution from the very first.

"Nothing of the kind shouted Mr. Flint," who seemed to be quite conscious that the ground was being cut from under his feet. "Rubbish!"

"If you said that the teachings of Christianity on the subject were rubbish, I could agree with you," I replied, quite calmly. "But Christianity had always tried to silence the voice of Science whenever it conflicted with its teachings. Shakespeare, over three hundred years ago, seemed to have had an inkling of a knowledge of the doctrine of evolution, for in the sublime play of the *Tempest* he made one of his characters a sort of man-ape—Caliban—one of the missing links in the evolution of man."

"But, I repeat," said Mr. Flint, "that the doctrine is most degrading, and I think that every sensible man would agree with me."

"Some Christians would agree with you, I admit, but when you talk about 'sensible men' I think that most of them would agree with me that Christianity is the most degrading teaching ever offered for the acceptance of intelligent men. Fancy God making man and woman and then damning the whole human race because their first parents ate an apple? Fancy a good God making the belief in incredible creeds the standard by which man is to be judged of his merits in his dealings with his fellows. That is degrading enough in all conscience. And when we look at this terrible War that has been raging all over Europe for four years, in which Christians of various sects have been rending one another to pieces, and innocent men and women and children have suffered from no fault of their own, how can any intelligent being believe that a God of goodness and power could allow such atrocities to happen without attempting to stop them? Surely such a belief

is degrading to the last degree. I will say no more."

"You have said quite enough," said my old friend Mr. Flint. "Good night." Taking up his hat and umbrella, he walked out of the room in disgust, and left me and my two friends to go home together.

Yes, I have sorely offended my old friend, Mr. Flint.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Man's Feline Friend.

IV.

(Concluded from p. 13.)

IN days when the wild cat was a common British mammal, it was hunted for sport. Some of these cats were employed as hounds with a master over them. This functionary was termed the "Catatore," and his standing was "equal to that of the Master of the King's Hounds." In one of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays these animals are mentioned as "cat hounds."

In addition to cockfighting, bull-baiting, and other degrading sports, which were so sullenly surrendered by our rude forefathers, there were popular pastimes known as "Cat in Barrel," "Cat in Bottle," and "Catte in Basket." In this last-named sport dummy cats were occasionally mercifully substituted for the sentient creature, although the coarser-grained, whether high or low-born in the social scale, delighted in the torture of the living animal.

In the game of cat and bottle, a leather bottle or bag was suspended from a branch thus serving as a target. Inside the bag a cat was placed, and when the bottom of the bag fell out the successful player avoided a collision with the falling animal. Cat in barrel was a pastime more elaborate and cruel in character. This brutal sport is described as follows:—

To the sound of music and beating of drums a cat was placed in a barrel containing a quantity of soot; this was suspended from a cross-beam resting on two high poles. Those taking part in the sport rode in succession underneath the barrel, striking it with clubs and wooden hammers. When the barrel at last broke, and the cat was forced to appear, it was cruelly killed.

Members of the cat family appear to have been domesticated in America prior to the European discovery of that continent. Both in South America and in the southern area of North America domesticated felines were derived by the native races from wild species indigenous to the New World. The late Dr. Lydeker, F.R.S., a leading authority on the Mammalia, states that—

One of these breeds is the Paraguay cat, which when adult, weighs only about three pounds, and is not more than a quarter of the size of an ordinary cat.....Another South American breed is said to be free from the hideous caterwauling of the ordinary cat. In old days New Mexico was the home of a breed of hairless cats, said to have been kept by the ancient Aztecs, but now well-nigh if not completely extinct.

The domestic cat is liable to many debilitating and mortal diseases. Among these numerous maladies canker, influenza, dysentery, mange, jaundice, bronchitis, and paralysis may be named. The animal is also afflicted with tapeworms and other internal parasites, while insect pests infest its fur and gorge themselves upon its blood. Kittens are highly susceptible to the ravages of fleas and lice, and Miss Frances Simpson, who speaks with authority, tells us in her work on Cats that she has noted the victims of these vermin—

with deadly white lips, nose and mouth, the coat all rough and wiry, the kitten itself a bag of bones with no real disease but what the parasites have caused, for they

suck the blood, thus causing an anæmia, and irritate the sufferer almost to madness.

The illustrious Buffon entertained a poor opinion of cats, and regarded these creatures as faithless, cunning, callous, and perverse. Like the grave, they take but do not give, and their constitutional ingratitude, he said, rendered them markedly inferior to that noble animal—the dog. Sentiments such as these have been shared by other famous men, and, it must be admitted, that the cat has usually been a far greater favourite with the female than the male sex. Like our mighty selves, our feline friends possess their failings, but it is absurd to deny them a high capacity for affection towards those that treat them well. Excellent is the judgment of the writer who contends that—

cats may teach us patience, and perseverance, and earnest concentration of mind on a desired object, as they watch for hours together by a mouse hole.....The curiosity with which they spy into all places, and the thorough smelling which any new object invariably receives from them, commends to us the pursuit of knowledge, even under difficulties."

Many other feline virtues might be mentioned, but sufficient has been said to show that the cat is certainly a most interesting product of the giant evolutionary forces of Nature.

T. F. PALMER.

Correspondence.

SECULAR ORGANIZATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The question of the *seeming* lack of progress of the Secular Movement is worth considering, because of the practical issues involved. It is difficult to imagine how more tangible results can be obtained by propaganda efforts than at present by any embellishments, as Freethought will always be the gateway to larger issues, which bear fruit in other directions.

Much can be done within the confines of adjacent Movements to place the Atheist conception in its proper setting. For instance, there does not appear to be any good reason why Socialists should pander to any class of religionists, or why their programme should not boldly declare independence of help in any way from a supernatural source. This would be merely stating the truth in logical relationship to the main item of their programme, preventing parasitic outgrowths, and definitely placing Socialism on the side of Freethought against all forms of supernaturalism.

The gain of Freethought could then be ascertained, weighed up, and rendered valuable for the effective undermining of religion, without disturbing the sense of proportion of Socialist central ideas. This would also add enormously to the fighting force of Freethought, and render the attack on Christianity more complete.

By the aid of Freethought propaganda and the march of events, Socialists are being forced, individually and collectively, to make the only choice which fits in, clearly and logically, with the principles they support.

ALFRED RUSSELL.

Society News.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Our first mixed Social for adults and children, held at Downing Street Hall on Dec. 28, was a great success. The games—tug-of-war, musical chairs, etc.—were thoroughly enjoyed by old and young. The proceedings closed at 10.30, too late for an expression of well-deserved thanks to the numerous members and friends who worked so hard to make the gathering a success. The Branch is much indebted to Mr. Eckersley for his songs, and Miss Williams and Miss Brooks for their services at the piano, not forgetting the committee of ladies, Mr. and Miss Bailey, and Miss Greenall, for their efforts in amusing the children. Altogether, an enjoyable and memorable evening.—H. BLACK, Secretary.

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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.

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INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, W., near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. Hyatt, "The S U-N."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, A. H. Mitchell, "Art and Morality." Open Debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7.30, Debate—"Does Man Survive Death." Affirmative, Noah Bailey (Christian Evidence Society); Negative, T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Edwin Fagg, "Victory and Revolution in Art."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BELFAST (I.L.P. Hall, 77A Victoria Street): 3.30, Mr. Solomon Leventen, "The Trial of Jesus, A Jewish Point of View."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dr. Henri M. Leon, M.A., LL.D., Phil. D., etc. (Secretary of the Societe Internationale de Philologie, Sciences et Beaux-arts). "Palestine," with Lantern Illustrations.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, Mr. F. E. Monks will give his postponed paper on "The Lesson of the Bowman Case."

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Morley's Restaurant, Porth): 2.30. Freethinkers in the surrounding district cordially invited.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, First Floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, "A Chapter of Psychology"; 7.15, Business Arrangements for Mr. Cohen's Visit on February 23.

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1.

Christianity a Stupendous Failure, J. T. Lloyd; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *The Massacre of the Innocents (God and the Air-Raid)*, Chapman Cohen. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 1s. per hundred, post free 1s. 2d. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

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