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Views and Opinions.

Russia and Religion.

I read Dr. Lyttelton's article in last week's Freethinker with considerable interest, and a full appreciation of the clever word-play in some of its passages. But I fail to find therein enlightenment on those points on which I besought information. Some of the statements, too, convey a quite misleading impression. Thus I am told that I "palliate the enormities of the Bolsheviks by pointing to the French Revolution." What I did was to utter a word of warning against accepting uncorroborated newspaper stories as containing the whole truth, to ask that events should be looked at in their proper perspective, and by analysing and tracing the course of events in Russia, arrive at a rational judgment. How far the stories related of Lenin and Trotsky are true, I do not know. I feel certain many of them are false. Even so "respectable" a journal as the Observer had recently occasion to warn its readers against the picture of these men as murderous ruffians or self-seeking thieves. Criminals are never really dangerous people. Lenin and Trotsky may be idealists (and idealists are often dangerous), ready to sacrifice the world for their ideals, but common sense repudiates the picture drawn by Dr. Lyttelton. And I cited the illustrative value of the French Revolution, because the course of events, with the influence of England and its Allies-then and now - are so analogous. I am sure that much of the outcry in this country against the Bolsheviks is due to their treatment of the Church. They have not suppressed religion, they have not closed the Churches, they have not made the teaching of Atheism compulsory. But they have nationalized Church property and secularized the State. And when Karl Marx said of the Church of England that it would sooner sacrifice the whole of its Thirty-nine Articles than one thirty-ninth of its income, he expressed a truth concerning all the Churches at home and abroad.

Atheism and Morals.

But still I do not know why Dr. Lyttelton associates the alleged crimes of Trotsky with Atheism. (Apparently the rule here is that in dealing with Christianity we must shut our eyes to the conduct of Christians and consider only certain of its assumed principles; but in dealing with Atheism we must put principles on one side, and consider only the conduct of anyone who calls

himself an Atheist). It is to me grotesque to assume that Trotsky, or anyone else, professes Atheism as being more accommodating. Yet, I am bound to infer that this is Dr. Lyttelton's conclusion, although no newspaper has, to my knowledge, said this, and it appears to me as reasonable as it would be to conclude that the Kaiser professed Christianity in order to make easier the sinking of the Lusitania. Atheism is simply the negation of Theism. It has no other "doctrines" of which I am aware. Having got rid of Theism, we are left to frame rules of life in accordance with experience, and by the light of whatever wisdom we possess. These rules may be good or bad, harmful or injurious, but in what way is Atheism responsible. We may, if we please, credit Atheism with the responsibility for all that is done without reference to Theism, and to this I should raise no serious objection. Only in that case we must place to its credit the whole of modern science, and, indeed, all that is best in our civilization. If we are not to do this, on what other ground can Dr. Lyttelton properly charge Atheism with the responsibility for Bolshevik atrocities? The only other position I can see is that unless one has a supernatural basis for morality, then healthy conduct is impossible. has been implied by Dr. Lyttelton more than once in the course of this discussion, and I have asked more than once, for a definite statement on this head, but without result. Perhaps that answer may be given in Dr. Lyttelton's final statement of Christian belief. At any rate, it would be informing to hear what are the "doctrines" of Atheism that sanction crime, and in what way Atheism can fairly be charged with responsibility for offences that may be committed by an Atheist.

The Crimes of Christians.

Dr. Lyttelton complains of my dwelling on the "wellworn theme of the crimes of Christians." But it is not my fault that the history of Christianity provides such an infinitude of illustrative cases, and it does really need explaining why a religion that is said to be so powerful for good, should have so easily accommodated itself to every form of rascality. The plea of poor, weak, human nature will not do, since Christianity is commended on the score of its unrivalled power over human nature. And if it fails on so colossal a scale, the recommendation is clearly worthless. But my critic misses the point. The contention was that Trotsky professed Atheism because he connected "the creed of an Atheist with the conduct of a ruffian." To this I made the perfectly relevant reply that as for nearly two thousand years Christianity had been used as a pretext and a justification for every form of villainy known to man, the hypothesis that a man must renounce Christianity in order to be a ruffian, will not hold water. I gave a number of instances in support of my statement. To this Dr. Lyttelton replies that the Carpocrations, etc., were not representative Christians. But they were as representative as any others-that is, they represented all who agreed with them, and no Christian does more than this.

any rate, my point was that these people drew their sanction from Christianity. To say they misunderstood Christianity is beside the point. When it came to burning, flaying alive, breaking limbs, torturing on the rack, starving to death, etc., the Inquisition needed no resource to Atheism to justify its conduct. Why then should Trotsky? That was my point, and it is clear that Dr. Lyttelton nowhere meets it.

A Real Red Herring.

So it was not as a red-herring, but as a pertinent illustration of the point at issue, that I instanced the conduct of Christians. But it is palpably a red-herring -even though used unconsciously-to say that the essential question is whether "the principles enforced by Jesus were anti-social." The essential question is nothing of the kind. I should have no objection to discussing that question in its proper place, and I think it could be shown that the encouragement given by the Gospel Jesus to the belief in celibacy, demonism, dependence on the supernatural, with certain other teachings, had very disastrous social consequences. But all this is, to use my critic's phrase, a red-herring; and I have observed too often Freethinkers being drawn aside from the main issue to follow that trail. And, therefore, I beg to submit that Christianity does not rest upon the moral or social teachings of Jesus Christ, but upon Jesus Christ. As I have before said, the question of whether the reported teachings of Jesus are good or bad, whether the influence of these teachings have been good or bad (on this I should be prepared to back the influence and teaching of Confucius and Buddha against that of Jesus) is not really essential. The most that could be shown would be that Jesus was a good man, or that he agreed with other teachers of morals in laying down some admirable precepts. It is Christ, the Virgin born, incarnated, and resurrected Deity, that is essential to Christianity. Without that nothing matters. The presentment of the Gospel Jesus merely as a moral teacher is camouflage to the real thing. I think I can safely challenge Dr. Lyttelton to show that Christianity ever made headway in virtue of its moral teachings. Of course, moral teachings accompanied Christianity, as they must accompany every system that is to secure a hold on people; but the plea for Christianity on the ground of its moral teaching was, and is, only resorted to when its supernaturalism fails to carry conviction. And it is with its supernaturalism that Christianity must either stand or fall. That issue may be evaded for a time, but sooner or later it must be faced

CHAPMAN COHEN.

FALSE EDUCATION.

Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human flower, Even in its tender bud; their influence darts Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins Of desolate society. The child, Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name, Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts His baby-sword even in a hero's mood. This infant arm becomes the bloodiest scourge Of devastated earth; whilst specious names Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour, Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood. Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man Inherits vice and misery, when force And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

-Shelley, " Queen Mab."

The Shady Side of Spiritualism.

" My aunt seen a ghost wanst," said Mr. Hennessy.

"Everybody's aunt has seen a ghost," replied Mr. Dooley.

—Finlay Dunne, "Mr. Dooley Says."

SINCE Sir A. Conan Doyle forsook the flat of "Sherlock Holmes" in Baker Street, and began to frequent the haunts of "Sludge the medium," it has been hard to be just to him. As a novelist, Sir Arthur's gifts are plain as a pikestaff, and no one can be blind to them. Nor have we any wish to underrate his literary gifts, his artistry in words, and his talent in story-telling; but as the St. Paul of Spiritualism he is unconvincing.

A short time since, Sir A. Conan Doyle published an article in the London Daily Chronicle, in which he sought to show that life after death was a fact, and that the doings of Spiritualists, from the Davenport Brothers to Stainton Moses, deserved real consideration. Conan Doyle is an imaginative man, as well as an exponent of Spiritualism, and he could not help decorating his ideas, as when he spoke of Spiritualism as "psychic religion," and as the most tremendous subject which had ever engaged the mind of man. In another passage he said that the "silent revolution" of the last seventy years had now reached a climax which "puts religion in the fore front of reconstruction," and completes "the magnificent spiritual conception of the Christ." The messages of Spiritualism, according to Conan Doyle, "teach that what St. Paul calls our spiritual body is the exact counterpart of our present one." The next world is 'enhanced by the consciousness of God's tender care," although "for the wicked there are chastening spheres." Replying to the saucy suggestion that the messages are "diabolical," he added: "if the Devil is engaged in proving that materialism is a fallacy," then Satan is, indeed, "a reformed character."

Materialists may well be pardoned if they require something more illuminative. As our Transatlantic cousins put it: "It does not cut any cake." It all seems the rhetorical echo of theological platitudes, and, for the rest, the suggestions are sufficiently fanciful for the pulpit. As a fact, the article is of little evidential value, for Sir Arthur is largely content to refer inquirers to books. And few hard-shell Materialists, we assume, will be converted from the error of their ways by reading the masterly and inspiring Life of D.D. Home, by his second wife." Conan Doyle can hardly help himself, for he suffers from the defect of his qualities. The novelist is always elbowing aside the student, and jumping from the springboard of actuality into the waters of fancy. The chief value of his article, however, was the tacit admission that the ordinary Christian conception of a hereafter, comprising a pawnbroker's paradise for the minority, and a red hot poker department for the majority, no longer appeals to religious folk.

As explained in the clever camouflage of Conan Doyle, the newest and most up-to-date Spiritualism is very like the old. The hand may seem the hand of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob. Behind all the verbiage of telepathy, clairvoyance, automatic writing, precognition, there is always "D. D. Home" as presented by his second wife, and "Sludge the Medium." Sir Arthur sees this himself, for he admits the "excesses" perpetrated by "unscrupulous camp-followers of the movement." The position, too, has its humorous side. Reduced to a plain statement, the Spiritualist position, as explained by Conan Doyle, is that this life is the "temporary ante-room to something grander beyond"; but, just as the timorous and time-serving Christians, Spiritualists prefer the irksome ills they know to the boundless bliss beyond. It is a conclusion sufficiently

humorous to wrinkle with smiles the faces of the lions in Trafalgar Square.

The present recrudescence of Spiritualism is largely caused by the heavy death-toll of the great War. There is a quite natural desire among the bereaved to seek for consolation through almost any channel. credulous folk are told that this or that medium has given most astonishing revelations. So what has been vouchsafed to others can quite as well be revealed to them. Hence the demand for "mediums," who so readily trade upon their credulity. It never seems to enter their heads that if a dead man could return at all, it would be to them direct that his return would be manifested, and not to an individual to whom he had never been introduced, and who was receiving money for his services. For the money the "medium" rakes in is the flow of tears from the sorrowful and distressed, and is one of the shadiest of shady businesses.

For Spiritualism is a money-making game. That is one of the reasons we hear so much of it. With some it is an honest belief; but with so many it is obviously a means of making a living. It is the credulity of the believer which gives the necessary seriousness to the movement, and, at the same time, makes possible much of the chicanery attached to it. As for the Spiritualistic theory that discarnate intelligences haunt chairs and tables, play with accordions, mandolines, and tambourines, scratch nonsense into locked slates, dictate doggerel from "the other side"-ordinary hard-headed folk will have none of it. It will be time enough to worry about it when they find themselves dallying with banjos and concertinas and ringing bells in the fourth dimension. The materialistic view of death is at least free from such foolish imaginings. To the Secularist, death is represented as rest, as the close of a banquet, as the universal law of Nature, which befalls all living beings, though the immense majority encounter it at an earlier period than man. Like the ancients, we think of it simply as sleep, dreamless, undisturbed, the final release from the anxieties and labours of life. As wise old Epicurus says: "Why should we fear death? Where death is, there are we not; and where we are, there death is not."

Man's Discovery of the World.

In an execrated chapter in his celebrated Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Gibbon, writing in the eighteenth century, compared Palestine's size and fertility with that of a small principality. This quite fair comparison proved the occasion of considerable clerical wrath. For the Holy Land had long been pictured as a veritable Eden of extensive territory and boundless opulence. No harm befell Gibbon; but two centuries earlier, in the Protestant stronghold of Geneva, that luckless reformer, Michael Servetus, published an edition of Ptolemy's Geography, in which Judæa was described as a comparatively insignificant and sterile land. When on his trial for heresy, this plain statement of fact was urged with relentless fury against Servetus by his vindictive enemy, John Calvin. It proved unavailing to plead that the description was demonstrably accurate, and poor Servetus was sternly informed that this assertion "necessarily inculpated Moses, and grievously outraged the Holy Ghost." Servetus was sent to the stake, and the publishers deemed it prudent to delete this obnoxious passage from a reprint of the book.

During the past few generations, the means of transit have undergone a revolution so stupendous, and knowledge of other lands than our own has been so greatly ideas. According to this strange theory, the Universe

increased, that we find it hard to realize the insular ignorance of earlier times. We have grown so familiar with the unchallenged teaching of geographical science, that few possess the faintest conception of the bitter struggle, extending over several centuries, which culminated in the triumph of truth over the forces of reaction and religion. Yet, when we remember that the conceptions of the Church concerning the Universe were scarcely more advanced than those of primitive savages, we cease to marvel at the strenuous antagonism with which every geographical discovery was confronted.

Save among a few solitary thinkers in Pagan antiquity, our earth, which has since been shown to be merely a fifth-rate planet of a tenth-rate sun, was regarded as the centre of the Universe. Our globe was supposed to be flat, and the heavens above were declared to rest upon the mountains. This theory prevailed in early Egypt and Assyria, and the Biblical account of the creation was borrowed from Babylon. As the Assyrian inscriptions show, the mighty god Marduk created the heavens and the earth, which reposed upon the ocean, while the solid firmament descended on all sides at the horizon, and was supported upon foundations laid down in the great bed of the sea.

Through an opening in the eastern firmament, the sun comes forth in the morning, travels across the firmament or sky, and returns to its rest at night through an aperture in the west. This solid vault also supports the upper waters which give us our rain, and rising above these are the mansions of the gods. Old Persian and Egyptian views were strikingly similar. But in later Greece the doctrine of the earth's sphericity was espoused by Plato and Aristotle, as well as by other Pagan philosophers and scientists. Their speculations, along with those of the disciples of Pythagoras, served to exercise a slightly enlightening influence upon a few of the early Christian Fathers. But the vast majority of the Church authorities regarded these teachings with the gravest alarm. Eusebius soon settled this problem to general satisfaction. The New Testament, he proclaimed, plainly pointed to the rapidly approaching end of the world, and therefore to discuss the shape of the earth meant a ridiculous waste of time far better devoted to more solemn subjects. Other famous Fathers were equally contemptuous towards this impious heathen fancy, and as the years rolled away the theologians steadily developed their sacred theory of the earth and its surroundings.

To them the first chapter of Genesis was literally inspired, and they argued quite justly that the Scriptures plainly declared that at the creation the earth was overarched by a solid vault. Other passages in the Bible were instanced to show that the heavens were spread out like a curtain. Therefore the Universe was like a human dwelling-the earth constituting the ground floor. The vault or firmament was the ceiling, "under which the Almighty hangs out the sun to rule the day and the moon and stars to rule the night." This celestial ceiling forms the floor of the chamber above, and this apartment contains a cistern which holds the waters of the sky. This grotesque cosmology also assumes, in the words of Professor White, that the rain is-

let down upon the earth by the Almighty and his angels through the windows of heaven. As to the movement of the sun, there was a citation of various chapters in Genesis, mixed with metaphysics in various proportions, and this was thought to give ample proofs from the Bible that the earth could not be a sphere.

In the sixth century of the Christian era, that theological luminary, Cosmas Indicopleustes, elaborated a scheme of Nature avowedly derived from the Hebrew Bible, although unconsciously coloured by Egyptian

is fashioned in the form of an immense Jewish tabernacle. This huge box-like structure is separated into two divisions, one erected over the other. In the lower compartment dwells the human race. This extends to the solid vault, above which the angels reside in paradise. These angels occupy a large amount of their time in directing the sun and planets in their courses, and in opening and closing the windows of heaven when sprinkling the earth from the celestial cistern, or in shutting off the supply. Night's darkness is occasioned by the existence of a great mountain, behind which the sun vanishes at the close of day. On this special point, however, a few bold commentators ventured to hint a doubt, and contended that the sun is plunged into a pit in the evening and hauled out again in the morning. Cosmas, as we can easily understand, had no misgiving whatsoever concerning the strictly scientific and orthodox accuracy of his conclusions down to the minutest detail. His treatise ends with the grim assertion that "not only Moses and the prophets, but also angels and the apostles, agree to the truth of his doctrine, and that at the last day God will condemn all who do not accept it." And this puerile cosmology was received for centuries as practically inspired throughout Western Christendom.

With such limited views of the extent of the universe, multitudinous myths and legends of spiritual beings ascending from the earth to heaven, or descending from heaven to earth were in eager demand. The story of St. Mark who flew down from the realms of bliss into the market place of Venice to set free a slave is one only of an immense number of similar legends.

And not only did the Trinity and the holy angels dwell just above the firmament, but beneath the earth's surface were the residences of the damned where they roasted for ever and ever in the furnaces of hell. Dante's sombre pictures of the subterranean dungeons of the lost souls of men served to deepen the belief in the fiery realms beneath our feet. As an able historian has noted, this disconcerting view of the near neighbourhood of hell sadly obstructed geographical discovery:—

Many a bold navigator, who was quite ready to brave pirates and tempests trembled at the thought of tumbling with his ship into one of the openings into hell which a widespread belief placed in the Atlantic at some unknown distance from Europe. This terror among sailors was one of the main obstacles in the great voyage of Columbus. In a mediæval text-book, giving "science" in the form of a dialogue, occur the following question and answer: "Why is the sun so red in the evening?" "Because he looketh down upon hell."

Yet some there were even among the ecclesiastics who cherished the true view as expounded by Aristotle and other ancient thinkers. In the seventh century, Isidore, of Seville, and a little later, the Venerable Bede, championed the theory of our planet's sphericity, and the doctrine secured various influential converts, although the dead weight of orthodox authority was hurled in the scales against it. On the eve of the Reformation most educated men acknowledged its truth. But the leading Reformers were so shackled by the Scriptures, and the deductions drawn from them by the early cosmologists, that they proved entirely reactionary in their attitude. For many years the disciples of Calvin and Luther attached as much importance to these men's opinions as to the Bible itself. But with the advent of modern astronomy and the progress of geographical discovery more rational conceptions of the earth's form and structure gained ever-increasing acceptance, and the belated believers sullenly deplored the departure of the good old times of sound Scriptural science.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

Does Religion Pay?

It is a common dodge of Christian writers and reviewers to suggest wrong opposites or antitheses when it is going to suit their book. For example, the writer recently noticed a reviewer using the term "idealism" as the antithesis of "materialism." This, of course, is a trick, and a mean one at that; but it is not likely to be detected by the groundlings, the superficial readers, and the ignorantly superstitious. The antithesis of "materialism" is, of course, "spiritualism"—not "idealism." The materialist is usually an idealist. But the object of Christian speakers, writers, and reviewers, is to show that "materialism" is mercenary and gross, that the "materialist" is devoid of all fine feelings, that all his aims are sordid, and all his instincts commercial.

Well, what about the motives that impel people to associate themselves with church and chapel? We do not hesitate to say that the inducements held out to the public to identify themselves with religion are of a kind that appeal to self-interest, and there is plenty of Scriptural warrant for them. "Cast your bread upon the waters, "says one text, "and it shall return to you after many days." You are asked to go to church because religion is a "paying thing"—"a good investment." The Y.M.C.A. offers the boys "a good time," and, in common with other religious organizations, does everything it can to make the best of both worlds for its members. Religion makes it all right for you in the world "that now is," and guarantees you a life of neverending bliss after death.

If it were not for its "materialistic" endowments the existence of ecclesiasticism would soon draw to an end. Wealth always means social power—power to legislate, power to regulate and govern. Wealth is strength; poverty is weakness. The wealthy do the preaching; the poor do the listening. It was ever thus.

the poor do the listening. It was ever thus.

The "materialism" of religion is apparent in the orthodox maxims in everyday use. "Honesty is the best policy." It is apparent in the comforting words of the Godly man who wrote: "I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." The natural inference is that all rich people are virtuous and all poor people vicious. And the richer people are, the more virtuous do they become; while the poorer people are, the more vicious do they become. It is really a marvellous religion is Christianity!

"The Powers that Be" are ordained of God. They, therefore, whose toes itch to kick the spiritual lords out of Parliament must be servants of the Devil. But the jus divinum of magistrates and sub-kings of all sorts, as well as that of kings themselves, is in the melting-pot. No doubt the Devil put it there. If he did, good luck to him, and may it come out something better than it went in.

We confidently assert that, with very few exceptions, people go to church because it pays them to do so. The loaves and fishes-or buns and oranges-bring the pauperized and fawning wretches from the slums to your beastly mission-halls-any one of which is enough to give a battalion of cheerful people the blues for a month of Sundays. The young professional man goes to church to secure or maintain connections. The bagman looking for a job goes to church so as to get into touch with potential employers. The clergyman goes to church because it is his trade to preach, and to be paid for doing so. Expectations may not, of course, always be realized; but we are assured that godliness with contentment is great gain. It is nowhere said that the Church has, or ever had, the responsibility of seeing that Justice is done in the earth. Its strong suit is Charity. If in

the war of competition you go to the wall, there is always a mess of meal and water to be had in the annexe to some Church Mission, where they sing "Oh, let us be joyful."

The Salvation Army Drum bids you save your cash and save your skin. These are the two injunctions upon which depends your future glory. Thrift and Faith are the keys to Paradise. The trouble is, you can always have a God to have faith in, though you may not always have money to be thrifty with. So far as the Churches are concerned, they will exist just so long as they have money to keep them going. When that goes, God goes.

IGNOTUS.

Acid Drops.

The Mitchell Library, Glasgow, was founded by a Freethinker. Recently it was suggested that the Freethinker be placed in the Mitchell Library and the Anderston District Library. The Libraries Sub-Committee, which had the matter before them, recommended that the suggestion be not accepted. From a report in Forward, we see that one member of the Council, Mr. Izett, said

he had read the *Freethinker* for the first time only a fortnight ago, and he had been agreeably surprised by its contents. It advocated good sound ethics, and, although unorthodox from a religious point of view, contained good, fresh matter for the enlightenment of many who were in darkness. He moved that the minute be sent back for re-consideration.

The mot on was recorded by Mr. Buchanan, who appealed to the Council to take a broad and generous outlook. The Council was, however, not equal to the task, and the minute of the Committee was opposed. We thank both Mr. Izett and Mr. Buchanan, and hope they will continue their efforts for fair play. So should those outside the Council. The circulation of the *Freethinker* has greatly increased of late in Glasgow, and we do not fear the bigotry of the Council will stand in the way of its receiving still more readers. It may even help to secure them.

The credulity of Christians is limitless. Judging by the fragments of the "crown of thorns" to be seen in the churches of Europe, that crown must have been the size of Kennington Oval. Similarly, the pieces of the "true cross" show that the cross must have been about as tall as the Nelson monument. This credulity exists to-day. A tenth-century church bell, associated with the legendary Saint Senan, a Galway saint, was sold at Christie's Sale Rooms for £1,312 105.

To attract men to places of worship is getting a difficult problem. At Northampton the clergy, both Anglican and Nonconformist, hold meetings on Sundays at which smoking is permitted and discussion invited. Formerly the clergy used to tell outsiders that they would smoke in the next world.

The weather has affected adversely attendance at churches and chapels, and the clergy have been grumbling. The Rev. C. Brown, a Crouch End minister, says: "In my 29 years of London life I do not remember so long a series of bad weather Sundays." These Christian clergy are over hasty. Are there not petitions for fine weather in the Prayer Book of the Government Religion?

At Chertsey Petty Sessions, on March 12, Rev. C. M. Bayliss was fined £10 for cruelty to two bullocks. The animals were found in a state of semi-starvation, but the defending solicitor said that Mr. Bayliss "loved the bullocks better than bullocks had ever been loved before." It is gratifying to know that the bullocks are now getting less Christian love and more food. It is the New Testament which asks contemptuously, "Doth God care for oxen?"

The Central Board of Finance of the Church of England passed a resolution on March 12 in favour of the Arch-

bishops appointing a committee to inquire into the revenues of the Church of England and their distribution. The resolution is solely concerned with a better division of the income of the Church among the clergy. What is required is a return of a great deal of the revenue of the Church to the nation as a whole. If the public were only aware to what an extent Church revenue is derived from land taxes, mining royalties, ground rents, and the ownership of slum areas, we fancy there would soon be an agitation on the matter. But the public are ignorant, and many Labour leaders are too much afraid of religious hostility to enlighten them.

Huge circulations of newspapers are only obtained by "tickling the ears of the groundlings," as Shakespeare phrases it. Here are some items from a Sunday paper: "Bogies, Bare Arms, and the Devil's Bait"; "Is the Theatre of To-day Immoral?"

A newspaper placard bore the inscription: "£500 for a Ghost!" It is a low price. The clergy have made thousands of millions out of their Jerusalem ghost.

Father Bernard Vaughan, in a sermon at Maiden Lane, declared that "until Christ is given the right place among nations I cannot believe much in the League of Nations." The dear man does not mean that Christ is a geographical expression, but that the Roman Catholic Church has been left out in the cold.

A lecturer on languages says that there are "five sorts of English," which he described in detail. He overlooked the peculiar idiom which is used by Christian Evidence lecturers.

The Bishop of Chelmsford desires that in England there should be "no idle rich, no loafing poor." We wonder in which category the Bishop would place the Archbishop of Canterbury with his income of £15,000 a year.

Judging by press paragraphs and advertisements, the clergy are on the brink of starvation. A few of them, however, have succeeded in putting money in their purses. One of them was the late Rev. Charles L. Wimberley, of Newbury, who died worth £14,498.

Last week we pointed out that the clergy in Ireland were between the devil and the deep sea in supporting Home Rule. The Roman Catholic Church does not want it, but it dare not oppose it. Confirmation of this view appears in a special article in the Morning Post for March 17. The writer says therein of the clergy:—

Not that they want Home Rule. In their souls they hate the very idea, because they are sensible enough to see that once the populace were given its head priestly control would cease. If the people were permitted to manage their own affairs they would manage the priests also.

That was precisely our own conclusion.

From figures supplied to the Coal Commission, it appears that during the past fifty years the average number of men killed in following their occupation is 1,100. In twenty years the average number of people injured was 160,000. Considering there are only just over a million employed in the coal industry, this makes the casualty list greater than that of the War. Yet those who can go into paroxysms of ecstasy over the heroism of the battlefield are silent over that of the industrial world. The Bishop of London said all our soldiers were saints—at which soldiers themselves smile. He has been very silent over the heroism of the miner. Perhaps that is because the miner's demands threaten mining royalties, from which the Bishop's own Church largely benefits.

The revelations made before the Commission on housing conditions were of a frightful nature. Thus, in Hamilton, out of 38,000 people, 27,000 lived in one or two-roomed houses. In Wishaw, 28 per cent. of the population lived in houses of one room. Five, seven, and even eight persons

were living in one room. Baths were non-existent. No wonder the infantile mortality is very high, and that the tone of life leaves much to be desired. Yet all these places are liberally supplied with churches and chapels. Even though baths be scarce, parsons are plentiful. The Scottish Churches have been deeply indignant over the desecration of the Sabbath; they have been wonderfully silent on the desecration of the home. When the full report is issued it should make a pretty comment on the value of Christian civilization.

"The point about a pianola is that it does not get tired," said Mr. Justice Avory. Some Salvation Army bands can keep going until the officer's hat is full of coppers.

A flag of the Young Men's Christian Association floats over the biggest music hall in Constantinople. Does this imply that red-nosed comedians are now added to the many attractions of the Christian religion?

At a Congregational Conference at Nottingham a minister said that the War bonus in his case was not sufficient to cover his milk bill. Clearly Christian charity does not begin at home.

Following the example of the Young Men's Christian Association, the Church Missionary Society is advertising boldly in the newspapers. Both these pious organizations find that the methods of the patent medicine vendors pay better than prayer.

Hats off to the soldier! The facts about the Allies starvation blockade of Germany, since the Armistice, are now public, and it is worth remembering that a definite complaint has been made to the Paris Conference by a British General—General Plumer, it is said—as to the effect of the sight of starving women and children on the feelings of our soldiers in the Army of occupation. That is really something of which we at home should feel proud. But it is to be noted that no complaint has been made by any of the Churches. Yet the facts have been known for some time. It is the soldier who protests. He is there to fight men, not to watch starving women and children. Again, we say, hats off to the soldier!

Dr. Henry Coffin, an American preacher, is coming to London to put the fear of the Lord into the Cockneys. His name ought to scare the sinners.

The Archbishop of Canterbury had an audience with the King recently. Perhaps his Grace wants a War-bonus. It must be hard to make the two ends meet on a paltry £15,000 a year.

The various church gatherings are now full of talk about union and closer co-operation, but we do not see how any sort of union is going to improve their position as a whole. If the Christian religion is to "make good" it is no use merging two, or half a dozen, sects into one; what it must do is to convert the non-Christian and stop the Christian joining their ranks. And how is union going to do either of these things? Sensible people are not going to believe in the resurrection or the Virgin birth, or the other fantastic Christian stories, because all the Churches are united on some question of ritual. Let the Churches prove that their teachings are true, and they will have done something worth talking about. As it is, "Union" is only another way of writing "Failure." When a man who has kept two shops open closes one, is it usually taken as an indication of success?

It is announced that the Bishop of London is to spend three days among the boys at Harrow School. That, in its way, is good news; although we are afraid the Bishop is rather too old to benefit much from the course. And what can one expect to learn in three days? Besides, the acquisition of mere knowledge is not everything; it is not even the main thing. Innate capacity is of far greater importance. So we do not anticipate much from the Bishop's three days at school.

A paragraph in a newspaper was headed, "The Apple of Health." It is evident that it did not refer to the "fruit" in the Garden of Eden.

Dean Inge, the gloomy dean, is getting more sombre than ever. In a cheering sermon recently, he contemplated the ruin of "the richest country in the world." We are not downhearted. So many of his colleagues contemplate the damnation of the bulk of the human race.

A daily paper quotes a letter from a Highland soldier pointing out that British troops have experienced the full pleasure of the Continental Sunday, and are likely to be very dissatisfied with the dull Sabbaths at home. This remark applies to other places than the land of Bobbie Burns.

"I will preach ten-minute sermons for no one," said a minister at the Free Church Council. Does the reverend gentleman hope to be paid by the hour?

"Return of the Flood" was a headline in a newspaper. We hope not. Noah's ark would hardly be large enough to-day, and the sanitary inspectors would make complaints.

It is quite evident that among the troubles that face the Allies in the near East is the Christianity of the rival Churches. Thus, Dr. E. J. Dillon writes that American missionaries favour the retention of 1,200,000 Helenes under Turkish rule, because, as these belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, the Turk would be more favourable to missionary work than they would under any of the South-Eastern Governments. The Turk has always had trouble with the rival Christian bodies, and they will continue troublesome until their religion has less hold on them than at present.

There was one omission in the South African Act of 1909 that has saddened some folk. It left out all mention of God. The Churches have ever since been trying to get God in, and we see from the Cape Times that a question was asked the Prime Minister whether this can be done. As they say over here, the reply was in the negative. So "God" remains outside the South African Act.

Correspondence.

A BIBLE BARBARITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Your excellent article, "A Bible Barbarity," reminds me of the Mohammedan parallel of Christian ordeal. It is known as "Mubihala," or, as translated into English language, execration. It is interesting to record that within the last ten years or so this "mubihala" was held between the late Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, "Promised Messiah" and founder of Ahmadya sect in India, and the deceased Mr. Paget, of America. For the benefit of your readers, I quote a verse from the Koran:—

Veritable (existence) of Christ unto Allah is like that of Adam, (I) created him from dust, then said unto him, Be! And he became. It is all truth from thy Lord, hence don't become one of the sceptics. And unto him, who, after all this has come to thy knowledge yet argues with thee, Tell thou, Let us call our sons and your sons our women and your women our ownselves, and your ownselves and then do "Mubihala" (execration), so as the Lord may inflict His curse on the liars (Alimran 57-59).

Another illustration on very much the same lines is found in "Para" (chapter) 7th, verses 24 and 25.

Note:—The translation is my own from the original in my possession which is in Arabic.

Hindus.

O Nature, wonderful Nature, you glow with eternal light; beautiful and indifferent, you whom we call our mother, uniting in yourself both life and death, you animate and you destroy.—Tchekov, "The Cherry Orchard."

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 23, Manchester; March 26 and 27, Belfast; March 30, Leeds; April 6, Edinburgh; April 13, Glasgow; April 27, South Place, London.

To Correspondents.

- "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.—S. W. Soper, ios.; E. Langridge, 5s.
- W. M. FERRIER.-A satire, and a clever one.
- F. C. Holden.—Have acted on your suggestion. Please let us know if anything appears. We do not see the paper regularly.
- S. C.—We are always ready to send six weeks free copies to addresses of likely subscribers if the addresses are supplied to us. We want a lot more new readers, and want them soon. And we can get them if all who are interested help.
- Popgun.—We don't see anything in the report on which we could base a paragraph. Thanks all the same for sending. Pleased to hear that the *Freethinker* has been of such use to you.
- T. FISHER.—We will do anything we can to help, but our time is so fully engaged that we have little leisure on our hands. But, if necessary, we will make time somehow.
- J. M.—When we get back to sixteen pages we hope to introduce several new features into the *Freethinker*. But we cannot do this with our present restricted space.
- N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—West Ham, 10s.; Glasgow, 4s. 6d.; H. J. Kain, 5s.; Mrs. J. Fox, 2s.
- N.S.S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss E.&M. Vance acknowledges:—Glasgow, 4s.
- W. Powell.—There were reasons why no comment was made.

 And it is not always policy to make such reasons public.
- F. C. WYKES.—There are always people in the world who regard a solemn face as indicative of wisdom, whereas it may mean no more than a lack of wit and a-feeble imagination. And Christianity has always regarded happiness on earth with a certain amount of suspicion.
- A Symonds.—We hope you will succeed in getting Freethinkers to organize in Bristol. The city has need of a vigorous propaganda. We will do anything to help that lies within our power.
- Col. Stuart Graham.—We quite agree with your comments. But we had a purpose in view, as you assume, and that purpose has been served. Thanks for your appreciation of our efforts.
- J. WILLIAMS.—We are sending you Freethinker poster. Hope you will be able to get it displayed:
- We are asked to announce that the *Frecthinker* is now on sale at Mr. Young's, Newsagent, outside Ladbroke Grove Station, N.W.
- G. B. McNaught.-We are much obliged for cuttings.
- H. H. F.—We do not know when we shall again visit Sheffield. We do not think it is likely before the autumn. We had noted the article you are good enough to send us. The psychology of the situation is simple. War can only be carried on over a lengthened period by a systematic cultivation of hatred. This in turn leads to a boundless credulity concerning everything that refers to the "enemy." With the return to normal conditions, criticism and common sense will stand a chance.
- 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.
- 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.

To day (March 23) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick, Manchester, afternoon and evening. We hope that all local friends will do their best to see that the meetings are made as widely known as possible. Mr. Cohen's afternoon subject is "The Meaning and Morals of Materialism"; evening, "The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact." As a number of friends are expected from a distance, tea will be provided for those who desire to stay between the afternoon and evening meetings. There will be a pleasing introduction to the evening meeting in the shape of music and singing. The lecture commences at 6.30.

We are asked to draw the special attention of Manchester friends to the sale of work on behalf of the funds of the local Branch, which commences at 3.30, to be followed at 6 30, by the last social of the season. Tea is to be obtained at the hall. The Secretary also asks us to remind members who have not yet paid this year's subscriptions that they are due now, and additions to the Branch's financial resources are welcome.

Mr. Lloyd's pen is absent from our columns this week, and for that we are sure all our readers will be sorry. But he was unfortunate enough to contract a very bad cold while lecturing in Wales, and did not feel up to the point of writing this week. We are glad to learn, however, that he was able to keep his engagements at Pontycymmer, and that the audiences were in every way satisfactory.

On Wednesday and Thursday (March 26 and 27) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Ulster Hall, Belfast. The meetings there will commence at 8 o'clock. He will leave Belfast on Friday night, and proceed to Leeds, where he lectures in the Town Hall, twice, on Sunday, March 30. The Town Hall is a very large building, and involves a very large expenditure. We hope, therefore, to see it well filled. That is encouraging to both the speaker and the audience.

Among the flood of War books published, there are very few of sufficient merit to survive the War period. They were mainly written to supply a passing demand, and the close of the War has removed the condition that called for their production. An exception to this rule, however, must be made in favour of The Biology of War, by Dr. G. F. Nicolai (Dent & Sons; 21s. net). The work is a bulky volume of over 500 pages, and gives a lucid survey of the whole question of war and its influence on civilization. The book is the production of one who has read widely and thought deeply, and is a thorough piece of work by one well qualified for his task. The whole question is treated with a completeness and a calm reasoning that reflects credit upon the author. We intend dealing with this important volume at length in an early issue of the Freethinker. Meanwhile, we can endorse the opinion of the publishers that it is one of the best peace books; for the way to intelligently love peace is to understand war.

A public discussion on Spiritualism is to take place in the Conservative Hall, near Treherbert, on Friday, March 28, between Mr. T. Bennett and Mr. J. Connelly. The subject to be discussed is: "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" Mr. Connelly takes the negative and Mr. Bennett the affirmative. Admission is by silver collection, and the discussion commences at 7 o'clock.

There appears to be some need for the authorities keeping an eye on the conduct of the police, and also that of the magistrate at Marlborough Street Police Court, in connection with non-Christian meetings in Hyde Park. Every now and again someone is charged by the police with "annoyance," or conduct likely to lead to a breach of the peace. On examination, this is always annoyance to Christians, and it is always Christians who are on the point of being exasperated into committing a breach of the peace. No one else is upset, apparently; and one should be left with the impression that Christians never interrupt at meetings, never create disorder, and never use language offensive to non-Christians. We haven't got that impression, however, as our experience of Christians quite contradicts it. Our impression is that certain members of the police are deliberately harrying non-Christian speakers, and they are being encouraged by the attitude of the Marlborough Street magistrate.

For instance, on Monday last, a Mr. Leonard Josephs was summoned at Marlborough Street with creating a disturbance, etc. According to the evidence of the police, he said, in a Christian meeting, that he was a dealer in antiques, and knew that the value of Christianity was decreasing greatly. He is said to have put other questions, and in the end he was arrested by the police. The magistrate, after saying that

no one-Christian or non-Christian-had the right to say anything that would hurt the feelings of anyone else, said the language cited was deliberately chosen to create a breach of the peace, and, in his opinion, no meetings should be allowed in Hyde Park, and Mr. Josephs was bound over in his own recognisances of £10. Now, if no one is to be permitted to say anything that hurts the feelings of anyone every public speaker in the kingdom must be for ever dumb. Secondly, to say that a man asking a question, or making a comment at an open-air meeting, is deliberately creating a breach of the peace, is downright nonsense. There is not an openair meeting in the country at which such interruptions do not occur. And, finally, for a magistrate to say that meetlngs should not be allowed, is, in the circumstances, unjustifiable and an encouragement to bigots whether in or out of the police force. The whole thing savours of petty persecution, and the sooner it is stopped the better. Otherwise the police may find they have tackled a larger problem than they think.

Meanwhile, we would advise Freethinkers to leave Christian meetings severely alone. There is little good done by interjections at any meeting. It is flattering to the vanity of some people to stand in a meeting and create a laugh by calling out something; but it is far better to remain silent, or stay away. Those who really wish to frustrate the action of Christian bigots will do it most effectively by not playing into their hands. A little self-control and judgment is all that is needed.

The Maesteg Branch of the N.S.S. is holding its first Annual Meeting to-day (March 23) at the Co-operative Lecture Hall, at one o'clock. A full attendance of members is requested.

What is an "Entity"?

(Continued from p. 134.)

IT was with reference to these antagonistic contentions that the words "ens" and "entity" came into prominent and general use. This "great historic dispute" as to whether cat, mouse, lizard, toad, wasp, or tapeworm had an existence apart and above cats, mice, etc., dragged on for centuries until a modus vivendi was found in the famous ante rem, in re, post rem compromise. By this "inspired revelation" it was at long last disclosed that both schools of saints were right. For, lo and behold, did they not before creation (ante rem) exist in the mind of God; and in creation (in re), inhere in the created individual things; while ever afterwards (post vem) do they not exist as concepts embodied in the names of things? Q. E. D.

After that great scholastic triumph, may we not apply to God's vicegerents the words which the apostle applies to the Deity and exclaim: "Oh the depth of wisdom and of knowledge" of the elect of God?

When, however, the human mind was studied under the name "God," it became in their magic hands a vast nest of entities. Not only were the elements of thought treated as such, but all its faculties, attributes, and powers.

Moreover, these were not merely endowed with discrete existence, but were honoured with the status of personal being; they were not mere entities; they were persons. Thus, the god-mind became a vast brood or family of personified beings. It is positively marvellous how prolific were some of the great gnostic personalities in their production of these divine entities, notably, Philo, Marcion, Montanus, Manichæus, and Basilides.

In Pagan gnosticism, as distinguished from the Christian variety, sophia, or wisdom, and pistes-sophia, or faithwisdom, loomed largely in all their speculations. of all this divine brood of persona! entities, the most fateful of all was the "O Logos" or the divine reason. This divine personage existed in two forms—as immanent reason in the mind of God and operative reason in

In this latter form of word, this logos deity "in the beginning" created the world; or, according to another version of his doings, he simply changed chaos into cosmos. He was finally received, but not without misgivings, into the Christian pantheon as the result of the clever "introduction" given him by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, who ingeniously identified him with both the Jewish Messiah and with the alleged historic Jesus. This identification has been more prolific, both directly and indirectly, of internecine feuds and wars than perhaps any other dogma of the Christian creed.

Is it not, therefore, more than marvellous that a religion claiming to be founded solely on revelations should not have received a special warning against adopting and incorporating in its creed one of the most extravagant and frenzied of gnostic conceits? In so doing the Christian God would have prevented his own elect from massacring, torturing, and burning each other for many a century. In very truth, one may again exclaim with the apostle: "How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out."

ITS SCIENTIFIC MEANING.

The word entity when made to denote a physical or natural object is usually qualified by the epithet "real" or "actual" to distinguish it from the metaphysical or imaginary order, and, thereby, to emphasize its reality. Thus, the ether is described as a "real entity." A "real" attribute thus always denotes one belonging to a physical entity.

Before we proceed to state the answer which science returns to the above query, I must first point out how a true, as distinguished from a bogus, knowledge of Nature has not merely revolutionized man's primitive conception of "matter," but how it has abolished it. Matter as conceived by the human mind in the immaturity of its childhood days was a "log"—heavy, solid, and dead. It was the causal agent of his senses of touch and resistance. That has vanished before science like darkness before the daylight. And well it might, for, like darkness, it had no real existence.

Instead of being an inert mass of inactivity and obstruction, the trammel of life, the prison of the spirit, the eternal cause of divine and human evil, it is the very source of all physical energy, the focus and vehicle of life, and the indissoluble companion of consciousness. It is almost a calamity that the same word should represent two ideas so diametrically opposed in meaning. The ridiculous anomaly could hardly have endured so long were it not that it is to the interest of religion to retain and perpetuate its barbaric meaning. It is not altogether for the sake of the ideas implied, though those are essential to the priestly vocation, but also, and more particularly, for the sake of antimundane emotions associated with them.

In order to enable the reader to see the nature and extent of the change now referred to, I must briefly summerize the facts. Our ultimate sensations are not due to entities, either material or immaterial, physical or metaphysical, prodding our sense-organs, but are due to either the absorption or the expenditure of energy, or possibly in one case to its release only. This truth will at once become evident by a brief reference to our ultimate senses.

Our sensations of heat and light are not due to entities bearing those names, but are the accompaniments of the absorption of radiant energy.

So is that of sound due to wave energy, which differs from that of light and heat only in being embodied in material oscillations instead of in those of

Those of taste and smell result from a similar absorption of chemical energy.

That of touch is possibly due to simply a release of energy-trigger-like-in the tactual sense-organ.

The muscular sense of resistance, on the other hand, is the accompaniment of expended energy.

Now, each of these different types of energy implies of necessity a fountain or origin from which it proceeds. The sun, the stars, a fire, or some incandescent matter as the source of light and heat; some oscillating object as the source of sound; some chemically unstable substance as the origin of taste and smell. And nerve and muscle serve as a reservoir of the energy liberated or expended in the senses of touch and muscular effort.

Hence, in each case, "matter" is not the "Hule"the dead-log-the fantastic offspring of the night-mare dreams which prevailed in the mental world in which Christianity had its birth. On the contrary, it is the fous et origo, the reservoir, the womb of all phenomena, animate and inanimate.

Gustave le Bon, in his fascinating book, The Evolution of Matter, voicing the current view of modern physicists, states that the atom is a vortex or whirlpool of energy. It is, no doubt, the only view consonant with radio-activity and allied phenomena. But the vortex is so static a system as to be practically indestructible. I say "practically" in deference to Le Bon's contention that there is now sufficient evidence of the disintegration of matter to justify the conclusion that the dogma of its indestructibility is not absolutely true.

(To be concluded.)

KERIDON.

Dilution of Worship in Belfast.

THERE are few subtleties or fine distinctions in Belfast. The lines or rather line of demarcation is firmly drawn, and every boy and every girl born into Belfast is either a Catholic or a Protestant. True, in the counting of heads, the Protestants have an unfair advantage, for the classes are really Catholic and non-Catholic, the latter being all lumped together and claimed as Protestants.

The natives have a sort of blood-hound scent for the religious taint. Ordinarily a man's name gives him away, and is a fairly good guide to his religious and political views, for here, with few exceptions, the broad rule works out wonderfully. A man with a Catholic name is a Sinn Feiner, a pro-German, a hater of everything English, and the only way to argue with him is to chase him up the Falls Road, and hit him with a good Protestant brick, unless the cowardly rebel has armed himself with a revolver, when it becomes necessary to ask "the poliss" to assist in the discussion. On the other hand the" Prod" is a fanatic, obsessed by memories of one King Willy, a white quadruped, an ancient battle, a hatred of the Pope, and a "loyalty" determined by big wages on the island. I have no wish to libel Belfast people; these distinctions are not mine, and I merely instance them to show the peculiar working of the Belfast mind.

Both sets of extremists profess a belief in the same God, which, to a non-Christian, is puzzling, considering how bitterly they hate the faith of each other, and how little there is of that "common Christianity," which broad doctrine the Bishop of Down and Connor fears might weaken his hold on the children. I am told that "Mickies" and "Prods" worship the same God, and that it is merely their method of approaching him that varies. After all there isn't much difference. The Catholic wears a scapular under his clothes, the Orangemen sports a sash over his coat, Catholics think of their

big drums to his glory thinking him to be hard of hearing, the statue is paralleled by the banner, and Mariolatry is matched by Williolatry.

Before I had become acquainted with religious life in Belfast, I had the view that there were as many Gods as there were believers; or, in other words, that everyone had his own conception of God, that no two conceptions tallied, and that a satisfactory definition was never forthcoming as to what exactly was meant by the word "God." But in this city of straight issues a great spiritual truth has been vouchsafed unto me. There are really three great divisions of religious opinion in Belfast. There are "Mickies" and there are "Prods"—these are the two main bodies; but there is also a superior section, nominally Protestant, but Catholic enough to embrace all higher critics, theosophists, deep yearners, second comers, and other intellectual Christians. This latter body holds itself aloof from the squabbles of the vulgar, and, indeed, deplores the arguments of the boot, the bludgeon, and the brick, whether employed by Papish or Orangeman.

Well, it was difficult to reconcile these three religious attitudes with a belief in one and the same God, but the mystic number three put me at last on the right track. I now make known my great discovery. Any apparent differences between the three sets of Christians may now be explained in the light of my scientific investigations into the worshipping methods of this well-ordered community.

My researches show, that specialization and concentration having achieved such wonderful results in the ship-yards during the War, the mind of Belfast is, sub-consciously so saturated with labour-saving ideas, that in the sphere of religion, while there is but one God for all Belfast, to avoid over-lapping, a waste of spiritual effort, and a lack of proper co-ordination in powerful efficiency, the three persons in the Trinity are worshipped separately by the three great divisions of Christians in Belfast.

Sandy Row, Shankill Road, the Custom House Steps concentrate on God the Father-the good old-fashioned Bible God—a jealous God, a God of war, a wrathful. irascible old tyrant, who rules with a rod of iron in a manner eminently suited to rivetters; the God of the Orange lodges, and the soap-boxes, of hell fire, and blood and thunder, God the Father Almighty to be approached direct through prayer without any circumlocution or priestly go-between. Undoubtedly "Thileand" (Queen's Island) is solid for God the Father.

The Falls Road, in supplication, traffics almost exclusively with the second person. The Son is a prime favourite with the "Mickies," to the almost complete neglect of the Father. The portrait of the Son is everywhere, in many different styles, invariably highly coloured, and frequently grouped with his Mother, who is a kind of fourth person in the Trinity. Jesus is everything to Catholics; they sing love songs to him, they burn perpetual paraffin to his personality, and regularly eat his corpse-even on meatless days-a proceeding that would be distasteful to the heathen cannibal who has a taste for fresh meat. Yes, God the Son, dressed in Sinn Fein colours, carries the confidence of Divis

When one strolls up the Malone Road, one is a different atmosphere altogether. Here, God is a gentleman, as far as gentlemanliness can be tolerated in the "industrious North." In this circle of culture, it is the Ghost that is worshipped-not a turnip and a white sheet, not a materialistic ghost, but a Holy Ghost, a Spirit, an Essence; an attenuated, elastic, something or other, intangible and elusive; the Incomprehensible, the Unknowable, and, if I may be rude, the utterly ridi-God as having an ear for music, while Carsonites welt culous. A reverend gentleman rejoicing in the name of

Seaver appears to be Sir Oracle with the Malone Ghost-worshippers. Flaunting the magic letters M.A., M.D., after his name (a very wise proceeding, as it proves to readers that at schoolboy lessons he was quite normal), this Admirable Crichton publishes his weekly sermon in the Sunday Evening Telegraph, which, with transparent hypocrisy, the honest Ulster Protestant proprietors date as if published on Monday!

In literary style, Mr. Seaver attempts the epigrammatic, with the same dexterity that a camel might have at billiards. To be quite charitable, I must conclude the the strain of passing examinations in his youth has been too much for him.

This stodgy supernormalist (or is he really a sly joker?) told us recently that "Jesus was the Prince of Freethinkers." I now present him with the new thought that "God is the King of Atheists," and I hope some Sunday evening to read in the Monday's paper the address delivered to the Malone Ghosters on the Sabbath, and which must have been in the printer's hands by Saturday!

So far as I know, I have been a lonely Darwin in evolving my theory of the dilution of worship in Belfast; but my brother scientists are welcome to the fruits of my studies, and I cheerfully give them my first principles, upon which they may build as they accumulate further facts.

The prayers of the Faithful in Belfast are wafted on high as from out the angles of an equilateral triangle, coalescing as they ascend, and converging at an ethereal apex suspended in space, where sits the great Geometrician, the three persons in the coalition, the one true God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and Harland and Wolffs'; but the clouds obscure His Face, on which we poor mortals may not gaze—lest we should catch him laughing.

J. Effel..

Aristotle's Children.

Sociology is a somewhat cumbersome name for a science. If we could divide society into two classes, the Platonists and the Aristotelians, the latter class would be sociologists. Critical, analytical, with a nose for fallacies, with an eye for a pig in a poke, they represent the iron of facts as distinct from the gold of the idealists, the Platonists, the poets, the—liars; those good, blythe creatures whose pretty lines cheer us when we are sad—and give us pleasure when we are happy. As it should be, say the weavers of pretty words—as it is, say the Aristotelians, the sociologists; and as citizens of the world we cannot spare either.

An interesting book, entitled An Introduction to Sociology, by Arthur M. Lewis, has been placed in our hands, and the reading of it has been a pleasure mingled with instruction. It is a "downright" book, written with enthusiasm and sincerity. The author has presented the opinions of men like Comte, Spencer, Huxley, and Darwin in a convincing manner for the solution of social problems. In effect, he says, we have the results of their labour; how can we make that knowledge universally known?

There is every ground for believing that if the scientific knowledge already achieved could be made the common property of the mass of men, it would amply suffice for the solution of the great majority of our social problems and launch the human race in a society which would in some measure correspond to the millenial dreams of poets and prophets, who have had visions of the golden age and the brotherhood of man.

In other words, what our author would like is devolution instead of research, and, in an age of senseless hurry,

we find ourselves in agreement with him. He is writing in America. Let us take a look from our own doorstep. One of our distinguished scientists has been at some pains to prove that communication with the dead is possible. Is it, then, that this world is a place overflowing with milk and honey, a place where poverty does not exist, a place where happiness is for all? Our scientists -our dilettantes—our bog-lights, use their influence to add but another problem to our problem. Another, a novelist, to put a roof over the Strand Magazine or the detective tales in it, we care not which, in four years' agony, has been at some trouble to lecture upon Spiritualism. Our angle of sight on this cause and effectwhat is it? Something of repugnance, but not surprise; the old apple tree of Christianity is worthy of such fungus. It would take such a growth from the air. Research in the clouds, or devolution on earth? Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, they asked for bread and you both gave them air.

We have an illuminating passage from Lafargue in connection with man and the machine:—

The labour of the mechanical factory puts the wageworker in touch with terrible natural forces unknown to the peasant, but instead of being mastered by them, he controls them. The gigantic mechanism of iron and steel which fills the factory, which makes him more like an automaton, which sometimes clutches him mutilates him, bruises him, does not engender in him a superstitious terror as the thunder does in the peasant, but leaves him unmoved, for he knows that the limbs of the mechanical wonder were fashioned and moulded by his comrades, and that he has but to push a lever to set it in motion or stop it. The machine, in spite of its miraculous power and productiveness, has no mystery for him. The labourer in the electric works, who has but to turn a crank on a dial to send miles of motive power to tramways or light to a city, has but to say, like the God of Genesis, "Let there be light," and there is light. Never sorcery more fantastic was imagined, yet for him this sorcery is a simple and natural thing. He would be greatly surprised if one were to come and tell him that a certain God might, if he chose, stop the machine and extinguish the lights when the electricity had been turned on, he would reply that this anarchistic God would be simply a misplaced gearing or a broken wire, and that it would be easy for him to seek and to find this disturbing God. The practice of the modern workshop teaches the wage-worker scientific determinism, without his needing to pass through the theoretical study

After burying the free-will theory at the end of chapter ii., our intrepid author proceeds to slay "the great man difficulty" with the aid of Spencer. It is inevitable that Carlyle should be in the conflict, although Mr. Lewis is careful to distinguish between the great man and the great man theory. The former is a fact the latter a myth, when considered in relation to divine causes, and, especially, when used in connection with the science of sociology. Luther, according to the author, was a victim of circumstances for his place in history, and we prefer this explanation to that of divine fire, or special appointment by a deity. In this book we are confronted with evidence that epoch-making discoveries were, in many cases, in a state of becoming in various countries at the same time. The discovery of the telescope, of oxygen, of the nebula hypothesis, and the perturbations of the planet Uranus, were all phenomena in which divine appointment played no part, and, to clinch his argument, we have a quotation from

If you should wish to understand these phenomena of social evolution, you will not do so though you should read yourself blind over the biographies of all the great rulers on record, down to Frederick the Greedy and Napoleon the Treacherous.

constructive—Heaven bless him. Comte is praised for two things: the law of human development and the classification of the sciences. The founder of Positivism and the pioneer of Sociology, had, apparently, no illusions about religion when he used the words "theological or fictitious." One smiles at the sublime way in which the mountainous labour of divinity is dismissed; but is not man an atom in comparison with the solar system? Astronomy is a science, and there is no place here for Apollo with his golden lyre—as it is, not as it should be. And if Apollo shall have no place, how shall the divine with his eyes fixed on the other side of dissolution find room? Theological or fictitious-science knows nothing which cannot be demonstrated, and Comte proclaims in three words the result of an impartial examination of our own Christianity. As a creed founded on an impregnable rock we know the assumption istheological or fictitious. As the late Mr. G. W. Foote wrote: "No one troubles to defend an impregnable position." With the concrete results of the effect of Christian values before our eyes in the present day, our judgment is the same-theological or fictitious; and our duty is to disseminate this knowledge as widely as possible. Man will at least be able to breathe when Christianity has tottered to its grave.

We should like to further quote and comment on Mr. Lewis's book, but we must conclude with a final comment on the author's conclusion which is found both at the end and the beginning of his book. It is summed up in one word, and that is education. Children who are spared the pain and misery and futility of Christian teaching at a later time will have no difficulty in saying: "theological or fictitious." Education, by the exclusion of such useless brain furniture, will produce a better type of citizen, leaving him or her free to make a religious or

In chapter iv. there are no casualties; our author is moral choice at an age of discretion. Freethought demands evidence and facts; Sociology is satisfied with nothing less, and our work consists of removing this mirage before the sight of man which is theological or fictitious. Freethinkers will tender their sincere thanks to Mr. Arthur M. Lewis for his very valuable book on sociology, a science which we may venture to define as " History for the Intelligent" as being distinct from that written by class-biased historians for children.

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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. Ernest Dales, "Reason v. Superstition"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, H. V. Storey, "Imperialism." Open Debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7, Mr. Percy S. Wilde, "Folk Lore of the Old Testament."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Tolstoi and Christianity."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

Belfast (Ulster Hall, Belfast). Mr. Chapman Cohen, March 26, at 8, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?" March 27, at 8, "Why Men Believe in God."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (The Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Old and New Members cordially invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, A Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3.15, "The Meaning and Morals of Materialism"; 6.30, "The Logic of Fact and the Logic of Faith."

NewCastle-on-Tyne Branch N. S. S. (12a Clayton Street East): 6.30, Members' Meeting, Important.

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Morley's Restaurant, Porth): 2.30. Important Business, followed by Lecture; Owen Hughes, "Development of Freethought."

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