

THE
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN · · EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XXXIX.—No. 17

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 1919

PRICE TWOPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Hymns for Infants.

As a child I did not indulge in hymn-singing; and when I reached adolescence, that peculiar form of literature left me quite unresponsive. As a youth, hymns struck me chiefly as consisting of bad rhyme married to damnable sentiment; and so when, still in my teens, I fell a victim to the incurable disease of book-collecting, I left hymns almost alone. Later, I began to realize that, as a famous but misunderstood line of Terence has it, nothing that is human should be boycotted by the collector. So I added some volumes of hymns to my store, as I came across them. And then I discovered that, looked at from the right point of view, for downright amusement, some collections of hymns were hard to beat. Of course, they were not written for amusement; but that is quite beside the point. The purpose with which an author writes and the purpose he achieves are often widely different. One is often saddened by the professional humourist, and amused by the ponderous profundities of the platitudinarian philosopher. So even the despised hymn-book may carry lessons quite undreamed of by those who wrote them.

* * *

Child Culture.

Among the few volumes of hymns I possess is one by the once famous Dr. Watts. It contains about seventy hymns, is dated 1817, and bears the title *Hymns for Infants*. I thought at first that the title might be a jest of the author's at the expense of the adult believer. But I reflected that hymn writers are not usually humorous, else would they choose some other occupation. And the Preface says very distinctly that the volume "adapts evangelical truths to the wants and feelings of childhood." From that I gather that the children of 1817 must have been vastly different from all the children I have ever known. One of their characteristics was a strange mingling of old-fashioned insular patriotism with a very crude evangelical theology. Thus, the volume opens with a burst of thankfulness from one of the youngsters for having "made me, in these Christian days, a happy English child," and the singer, in a thank-God-there-are-many-worse kinds of a spirit, thanks God for—

care of me,

While thousands languish in distress
And pine in poverty.

But lest there should be too much conceit developed Hymn No. 30 reminds the child that "God made the world," and all are protected by his hand as well as British children. That is not much consolation to the thousands who are languishing in distress and poverty, nor to the children of six or seven years of age who were, in 1817, working underground in mines or in factories for twelve and fourteen hours a day. Still, that was God's business, and if he took "care of me," the "happy English child" was all right.

* * *

Infant Criminals.

This "happy English child"—of Christian parentage—had an intense conviction of its own worthlessness. It cried to the Lord "to change this heart of stone," and then proceeds to catalogue its infantile villainies. It does not attend to prayer—

And when I pray or sing,
I'm often thinking all the while
About some other thing.

On many Sabbaths, though I've heard
Of Jesus and of Heav'n,
I've scarcely listened to thy word
Or prayed to be forgiven.

The hardened little wretch! But when the "happy English child" grew up it probably discovered that others beside children were often "thinking about some other thing" when they ought to have been meditating on the comforts of eternal damnation! Other people's dresses, business deals, election prospects, etc., are not unknown subjects of meditation during service. And there is quite a human touch about the following:—

Oh Lord, I'm ashamed to confess
How often I've broken thy day!
Perhaps I have thought of my dress,
Or wasted the moments in play;
And when the good minister tried
To make little children attend,
I was thinking of something beside,
Or wishing the sermon would end!

Poor little Tommy or Mary! And how many fellow-sinners they must have had among the adults! They, too, would be wishing the sermon would end. But the worst of it was that the "happy English child" would grow up, and in most cases make other children as miserable as they had been themselves.

* * *

Heaven and Hell.

The sinfulness of thinking of dress and toys and the like was made apparent by the conviction that this is a "sinful world," and—

Our brightest joys are fading fast,
The longest life will soon be past;
And if we go to heav'n at last,
We need not wish to stay.

It is not quite clear here whether the wish not to stay refers to heaven or earth. Probably the latter, as in another hymn, a yearning is expressed to learn by Sabbaths here below, to spend eternity in heaven. But one thinks of the other little girl, daughter of rigid

Presbyterians, who, on being told that in heaven there was an everlasting Sabbath, enquired whether, if she was good, would she be allowed to go to hell for a holiday. Anyway, a child's destiny is a little uncertain, for—

His pious parents speake of Thee,
The wicked child who often heard
And fled from every serious word
Shall not be able then to flee,
No he shall see them burst the tomb
And rise and leave him trembling there
To hear his everlasting doom
With shame and terror and despair.

The "everlasting doom" has previously been described by the mother:—

But always recollect my dear
That wicked people go to hell.

And this enables the "happy English child" to joyfully sing:—

But where my living soul would go,
I do not and I cannot know;
For none were e're sent back to tell
The joys of heav'n or pains of hell.

Some truth there, although there is certainty here:—

But Hell's a state of endless woe,
Where unrepentant sinners go.

There is a sense of wonder expressed, and a feeling of superiority generated by other children living as though they—

did not know
There was a heaven and hell.

The moralizing influence of such sentiments is undeniable. And there is a further promise in the child dwelling upon the sufferings of Jesus as in the following:—

Nailed upon the cross, behold
How his tender limbs are torn
For a royal crown of gold,
They have made him one of thorn.

See the blood is falling fast
From his forehead and his side.
Hark! He now has breathed his last!
With a mighty groan he died.

And so on through six verses, each one ending with the cheerful elevating refrain: "Jesus condescends to die."

Pious Fagans.

There is plenty more of the same sort in this collection of *Hymns for the Infant Mind*, prepared by the good Dr. Watts, and adapted to the feelings and wants of children. Dr. Watts probably told other lies during his life, but he certainly never told a more outrageous one than when he wrote that description of his collection of doggerel. Nothing is more objectionable than foul language from the lips of children, unless it is foul sentiments such as are voiced in this collection. Dickens has made immortal the character of Fagan who debauched the character of children by teaching them to steal. But was he really worse than these evangelists who debauched the minds of children with verses such as those cited? If such teachers could have had their way what would the world have been like? Fortunately, the logical consequence of such teachings and their actual consequences are not identical. Mere human nature prevents that. All parents could not have believed their children would go to hell for thinking of their toys on Sunday, and the brutality of some of the hymns would often be unrecognized by the children themselves. But some effect such teachings must have had, and we shall not be wide of the truth in attributing much of the prevailing coarseness, and brutality, and hardness of character to their influence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Wisdom of Meredith."

In the *Christian Commonwealth* for April 2 there is a brief report of a lecture on the above subject recently delivered by Dr. Fort Newton in the City Temple. This report describes Meredith as "one of many men who sought a way out of scepticism, despair, and cynicism, and he found it." As this designation is at once untrue and misleading, I ventured to ask Dr. Newton whether or not the report was accurate, and he was good enough to send the following answer:—

I did not see the report of my lecture on Meredith, of which you speak, and so do not know if it was accurate. But I did not describe Meredith as a Christian believer. Far from it. No more than Lincoln did he accept the theology of his day. Indeed, he had no patience with it. He called himself a "practical Christian," I believe, and that is about the only kind of Christian in which I have much interest. I thank you for your kindness and goodwill, which I return with all my heart, wishing you all good things. Fraternaly, J. FORT NEWTON.

In kindly permitting me to publish his letter, the reverend gentleman says: "Unfortunately, I have seen but a few copies of the *Freethinker*, but I have many friends among men of that way of thinking in my own country. I used often to hear Robert Ingersoll in days ago, and admired him alike for his character and his genius—his rich humanity, his rippling humour, and his golden gift of speech. He was a prose-poet, and his voice was like an orchestra,—I have never heard a voice like it." That is a fine tribute to a remarkably fine and great man.

So far was George Meredith from seeking a way out of scepticism that it would be nearer the truth to say that he diligently sought a way into it, and found it. As a lad of sixteen, on his return from a Moravian school in Germany, he was a zealous evangelical Christian, and the first of his published letters is full of a canting pietism. But by the time he was twenty-one he had travelled far in the direction of Freethought, and his tributes to Christianity were few and far between. His intellectual emancipation was gradual, but it never stopped until it reached completion. For a time he regarded Christianity as "a great chapter in the History of Humanity," and he was not sure that "men's minds are strong enough, or their sense of virtue secure, to escape from the tutelage of superstition in one form or another, just yet." He was already convinced that "the nearer we get to a general belief in the abstract Deity—*i.e.*, the more and more abstract—the nearer are men to a comprehension of the principles (morality, virtue, etc.), than which we require nothing further to govern us." That was the road along which he arrived at complete scepticism, and scepticism led him to neither despair nor cynicism, but to the most joyous peace with and confidence in Nature. He renounced supernaturalism altogether, and found in Nature his all in all. It is easy enough to quote passages from letters and works written during this process of transition which favour Christian belief, but to do so would be the quintessence of dishonesty.

Dr. Fort Newton is fully justified in saying that Meredith "found his way in the comic spirit"; but it was not a way out of scepticism, but a way which scepticism opened up and rendered glorious. "Comedy," as the reverend gentleman well puts it, "is not false, it is not sarcasm, it is not irony, it is the sunlight of laughter in the heart." This was the frame of mind which pure Naturalism produced in Meredith's case. It made him an incorrigible optimist. The Fables of the Above he discredited and despised. Earth, or Nature, is to him the sum-total of existence. She is our Mother, who

feeds us at her breast. We are her "chief expression," "her great word of life," "her great venture." Hence—

On her great venture, Man,
Earth gazes while her fingers dint the breast
Which is his well of strength, his home of rest,
And fair to scan.

This is Atheism; not a formal *denial* of God, but the practical ignoring of him. We have the assurance of Mr. Edward Clodd, for twenty-five years an intimate friend of Meredith, that he did not believe in a personal God; but in his philosophy of the Universe he simply leaves the Deity entirely out. He has neither need nor room for him.

In the report of his lecture, Dr. Fort Newton declares that "it is not accident which made Meredith lay so much emphasis on prayer." There was a stage in his emancipation when the great man believed in and recommended prayer in the popular, Christian sense of the word; but it was a stage which he outgrew and left wholly behind. Even as accomplished and generally so fair a critic as Professor James Moffat, of Glasgow, forgot this in his otherwise illuminating article in the *Hibbert Journal* many years ago. If I remember rightly, the Professor referred to or quoted certain passages from the novels, such as *Lord Ormont* and *Beauchamp's Career*, as expressive of Meredith's own views on prayer; but such quotations are irrelevant in the extreme. And yet even Captain Baskellett, speaking in a Tory drawing-room, repudiates the Christian conception of prayer thus:—

Prayer is the recognition of laws; the soul's exercise and source of strength! its thread of conjunction with them. Prayer for an object is the cajolery of an idol! the resource of superstition.

But Colonel Halkett could not sit and hear any more even of that, and Lord Palmet said to Miss Halkett, "Isn't it like what we used to remember of a sermon?" Meredith himself, in his mature years, however, does not *advocate* prayer in any sense. In the *Empty Purse*, written in 1892, he says:—

If courage should falter, 'tis wholesome to kneel.
Remember that well, for the secret with some,
Who pray for no gift, but have cleansing in prayer,
And free from impurities tower-like stand.

To find Meredith's real estimate of Christian prayer we need only consult a poem of 1883, entitled *Earth and Man*. As G. M. Trevelyan aptly observes: "'The Invisible' is used throughout this poem to mean the supernatural God as conceived by superstition, by Man desiring to escape from and deny his Mother Earth (Nature)." Man, the offspring of Earth, is here represented as trying unsuccessfully to understand his Mother:—

And ever that old task
Of reading what he is and whence he came,
Whither to go, finds wilder letters flame
Across her mask.

She watches him as he, imagining her to be hostile to him, makes desperate efforts to release himself from her dominion:—

She hears his wailful prayer,
When now to the Invisible he raves
To rend him from her.

To ignorant, unthinking man, Nature seems heartless and deliberately cruel:—

He may entreat, aspire,
He may despair, and she has never heed.

The survival of the fittest, or, as the poet calls it, Earth's "cherishing of her best endowed," stupid man characterizes as "a wanton choice," and so he turns to the supernatural and prays—

Save me from the hollowness of Earth
Me, take, dear Lord.

It is recorded that in December, 1870, one half of France rushed to the churches to pray for deliverance from the cruel Teutonic invasion, and meditating upon the mournful fact the poet said:—

Could France accept the fables of her priests,
Who blest her banners in this game of beasts,
And now bid hope that heaven will intercede
To violate its laws in her sore need
She would find comfort in their opiates.

Yes, she *would*, but at the mere thought of such folly the poet exclaims:—

Mother of Reason! can she cheat the Fates?

Demanding intercession, direct aid,
When the whole tragic tale hangs on a broken blade.

It was not comfort that France needed then, or needs now, but Strength—for Strength she yearned then and yearns now:—

For Strength, her idol once, too long her toy.
Lo, Strength is of the plain root-Virtues born:
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
Train by endurance, by devotion shape.
Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
It is the offspring of the modest years,
The gift of sire to son, through those firm laws
Which we call Gods; which are the righteous cause,
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.

Many more quotations to the same effect might be made, but the following from a poem of 1901, entitled *The Test of Manhood*, must suffice:—

He drank of fictions, till celestial aid
Might seem accorded when he fawned and prayed
Sagely the generous Giver circumspect,
To choose for grants the egregious, his elect;
And ever that imagined succour slew
The soul of brotherhood whence Reverence drew.

It may be true, but I am not aware of the fact that the fully emancipated Meredith called himself "a practical Christian." What is beyond all doubt is that to him the term God ultimately signified, not a personal Being, filling and transcending the Universe, but simply the firm laws of Nature. In 1869 he and his son Fred went to hear Bradlaugh one evening, and writing to his friend, John Morley, he expressed his ardent admiration for the iconoclastic Atheist. In a letter to Captain Maxse in 1870 he said:—

The parsonry are irritating me fearfully, but a non-celibate clergy are a terrific power. They are interwound with the whole of the Middle Class like the poisonous ivy. Oh! for independence, that I might write my mind of these sappers of our strength.

It is well known how to the very last he wrote words of sympathy and encouragement to another great Atheist, the late George William Foote, Bradlaugh's successor as President of the National Secular Society, and for many years editor of the *Freethinker*. Indeed, the last letter he ever wrote, dated April 23, 1909, was addressed to Mr. Foote, and contained these words, relating to a cheque he had sent earlier in the month, "as a contribution to the *Freethinker*":—

As a question of supporting your paper, my name is at your service.

I am in full accord with the concluding clause in the report of Dr. Newton's lecture, which informs us that Meredith "believed that the highest ideal of life was disinterested thought for those who come after us." In an interview with Sir William Robertson Nicoll he declared that "he had never felt the unity of personality running through his life and that therefore he could not conceive personal immortality." To him the Christian story of Easter was one of the Fables of the

Above. In a letter on Death contributed to the *Westminster Gazette* for February 9, 1905, he said :—

As to death, any one who understands Nature at all thinks nothing of it. Her whole concern is perpetually to produce nourishment for all her offspring. We go that others may come—and better, if we rear them in the right way. In talking of these deep things, men too often make the error of imagining that the world was made for themselves.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Psychological Problem.

No doubt the Zoological Gardens is a place for serious people. I suppose there is more theology and philosophy in those Gardens than you would discover in Westminster Abbey, the British Museum, or the University of London.

—Harold Begbie.

Learning is good ; but common-sense is better.

—G. W. Foote.

M. ANATOLE FRANCE, an author whose books are not always recommended by the chaste custodians of Free Libraries, has, in his *Isle of the Penguins*, a delicious joke at the expense of Orthodoxy. The distinguished French writer describes the old and half-blind Saint Mael as mistaking birds for human beings, blessing and baptizing them. This causes trouble in heaven, and the Holy Trinity is embarrassed. A celestial congress is called, and the outcome is that the baptism, having been carried out, entitles the birds to the privileges of the Christian religion. Accordingly, the birds are endowed with souls—"very little ones"—and become human beings.

This jest suggests a very ancient psychological difficulty. A famous countryman of M. France's, the late Gustave Planché, attacked the compilers of the Dictionary of the French Academy because they defined man as "a reasonable being, composed of a soul and a body." Planché said that this definition implied that brutes have no souls. Descartes thought he solved this puzzle by regarding animals as machines. This was a sober guess ; but Father Bougeant, a famous Jesuit, was more imaginative. He believed animals to serve as prison-cells for "fallen spirits." That ingenious priest contended that each animal was inhabited by a devil, being evidently impressed by the Gospel legend of the bedevilled pigs, and other similar psychological absurdities. According to this Catholic priest, a demon swam with every herring, grazed with every bullock, soared with every bird, and romped with every mosquito. He was well answered by Hartley Coleridge, who alludes caustically to this line of reasoning as "blaspheming God for Christ's sake, and lying for the love of truth."

Paradoxical or not, preposterous or otherwise, the hypothesis of an after-life for animals, has ever been a source of trouble to Christian apologists. In the ages of faith speculation ran riot. So late as the seventeenth century many philosophical works contained a chapter devoted to the souls of animals. Leyland, in his strictures on Lord Bolingbroke, admits the supposition of brutes having souls. Bishop Butler, the famous Defender of the Faith, says, placidly, that the immortality of animals presents "no difficulty." John Foster, the sentimental evangelical, writing of birds, says, "I cannot believe that all these little spirits of melody are but the snuff of the grand taper of life." Theists like Theodore Parker, who believed in a future life on the ground that it is necessary in order to make intelligible the purposes of the Deity, consistently extended the belief to the immortality of animals. The ultimate welfare must come to the ill-used beasts, else, say they, the universe is not perfect. Theistic, like Christian, logic,

seldom resists inquiry or stands cross-examination. Dr. Johnson, a very robust believer, had a canny way of evading the difficulty, which has been much imitated by Christian Evidence lecturers. Discussing the future life of animals, someone said to Johnson : "But, really, sir, when we see a very sensible dog we don't know what to think of him." Johnson replied quickly : "True, sir ; and when we hear a foolish fellow we don't know what to think of him."

In spite of overbearing men like Johnson, there will be always men of kindly speculation. Charles Bonnet, the famous Swiss naturalist, was as benevolently busy about the future state of his humble clients as Emanuel Swedenborg was concerning "the paragon of animals." Leigh Hunt, from quite a humanitarian point of view, satirizes the pride that smiles at the notion of "other animals going to heaven." He conceives a much less pleasant addition to the society than such a dog as Pope's "poor Indian" hoped to see admitted to that "equal sky." Matthew Arnold, who was nothing if not secularistic, is ironical in his lines on a favourite dog, and deftly pricks the bubble of pious pretensions :—

Stern law of every mortal lot,
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where.
But thou, when struck thine hour to go,
On us, who stood despondent by,
A meek, last glance of love did throw,
And humbly lay thee down to die.
Thy memory lasts both here and there,
And thou shalt love as long as we,
And after that thou dost not care !
In us was all the world to thee.

Sydney Smith, who disliked bugs less than he did Methodists, is impatient of the affirmative hypothesis. The comfortable canon, "with good capon lined," consigns the animals to dust. Thomas Carlyle is characteristically obscure in his remarks on a "little Blenheim cocker." He asks quaintly : "Have animals not a kind of soul?" The saints have no clearer vision than the Sage of Chelsea. Saint Paul asks scoffingly : "Does God care for oxen?" and the more kindly Saint Francis regarded the swallows as his brethren. Theophile Gautier contends that Francis was right, and that animals are "our brethren, who placidly pursue the line marked out for them." Swift's admirers said he could have written beautifully of a broomstick. Gautier was quite equal to penning panegyrics of the placidity of the tapeworm, or the devotion to duty of the shark. Laughter is the best antidote to such beautiful nonsense. Voltaire is more incisive when he expressed the hope that if fleas had a subsequent existence they would be self-supporting.

Although Christians halt between two opinions with regard to the immortality of animals, the votaries of older and more humane superstitions did not treat them so contemptuously. As old Montaigne reminds us, ancient nations regarded them as "familiar and favourites of the gods." In one place the crocodile was revered, in another the ibis, and even cats were worshipped. The monkey and the calf were honoured with statues of gold. The common cow was also a divine beast. Here a serpent, there a fish, and even a beetle, were objects of veneration. In the Christian scheme, by some strange chance, a dove receives a portion of the adoration wasted on the Holy Trinity.

The prevalence of all this superstition is bewildering, but it is not to be wondered at. Comparative physiology is no older than Goethe, and comparative psychology is only dawning in the minds of men. But these are weighty matters for scientists and serious folk. Like Artemus Ward's statement concerning the glass-eye of the aunt of the rival editor, it is somewhat

irrelevant to the issue. It is, however, a serious matter for believers if animals possess souls. Christ died to save all men, but if animals are to be included in the scheme of salvation how will it fare with the believer in the next world?

How will he face the ox he wronged on earth,
The murdered sheep upon whose chops he fed,
The little lamb whose leg increased his girth,
The pig without a head?

The tabby that as sausage he consumed
Will rise against him with his tail erect;
The turkeys for his Christmas dinner doomed,
His face will recollect.

The partridge, grouse, the quail he had on toast,
The creatures he has eaten, great and small,
Tough, tender, lean and fat; the boiled and roast—
He'll have to face them all.

MIMNERMUS.

Non Nobis, Domine.

WE only paid the price in blood,
Limbs, eyes, and souls;
We only stayed
The flood
An hour,
And through the years
We prayed,
"Not unto us but unto Thee
The victory."
Only the notes
Of cannon-thunder
Answered to our cries.

"Not unto us but unto Thee
The victory, O Lord!"
They prayed.
Only the tears
Of widows and the sighs
Of orphans have reply.

And now the end is here;
"We give Thee thanks for victory,
O God; the end was Thine."

What thanks have they to give
Who merely live
With memories
Of prayers vain, unheard;
Who merely wonder'd
Why the sword
Of the Divine
Struck with the strong?

"The end is Thine, O Lord!"
We praise Thy name with singing
And with fear.
"The end is Thine, O Lord!
Thou canst no wrong."
But in the beginning
Of all this slaying of our fellow-kind
O wert Thou careless, Lord,
Or merely blind?

H. C. F.

It is a most terrible, continual, and revolting blasphemy that men (using all possible means of deception and hypnotization) assure children and simple-minded folk that if bits of bread are cut up in a particular manner while certain words are pronounced over them, and if they are put into wine (the Greek Church sacrament), God will enter into those bits of bread, and any living person named by the priest when he takes out one of those sops will be healthy, and any dead person named by the priest when he takes out one of these sops will be better off in the other world on that account; and that into the man who eats such a sop—God himself will enter.—Tolstoy.

Acid Drops.

There has again been trouble at Inverness over the Sunday question. The National Union of Railwaymen applied for the use of the Town Hall, and the application was opposed by Dean of Guild Fraser, Baillie Petrie, and others. These gentlemen were quite certain they ought to discourage the secularization of the Lord's Day, and the first-named said the Germans began their "down grade" policy by ignoring their Sabbath, and the Clerk solemnly said that the Germans were a "warning." One can imagine the pious expression of these two Inverness bigots while they were going through this performance—the one citing the "horrible example," and the other running in with his solemn comment. In the end the application was refused, and the Railwaymen left without a hall on the only day on which they could conveniently meet.

The railwaymen and others have the matter in their own hands. If they return to power men of the stamp that opposed their application they must abide the consequence. Christians will never realize without force that others in the community beside themselves deserve consideration. Christian egotism and impudence lead them to conduct affairs as though none but themselves matter or deserve consideration. We suggest that a good way to correct the bigotry of the Inverness authorities would be a vigorous distribution of Freethought literature. We should be quite pleased to lend a hand if this were attempted.

In a recent law case, dealing with the question as to whether a Spiritualist leader was a minister, counsel quoted a dictionary definition of a denomination as "a class or society of individuals who call themselves by some name." Judge Darling drily remarked: "According to that the Clan McPherson would be a denomination." Excellent! And even the Highland clan could not have a closer grip on the silver.

The old, familiar "May Meetings" are to be resumed again this year by the orthodox, and we shall look forward with pleasurable anticipation to these rhetorical festivals, which always add to the gaiety of the nation. Times have altered little in this respect since Macaulay said scornfully, "Exeter Hall sends forth its annual bray."

For stealing two apples at Bristol, a dock labourer was sent to prison for a month. According to the dear clergy, for stealing apples, Adam and Eve were sentenced to death, together with their progeny for ever.

The Arbroath Established Presbytery reports that the average contribution of its members amounted to less than one penny per head per week. Before we express any opinion on the matter, we should like to have some knowledge of the quality of the sermons. It may be that having due regard to the latter factor 4s. 9d. per year represents a generous contribution.

St. James's Church, Bermondsey, has been asking for suggestions that will make the Sunday evening service more popular. A general opinion seems to us in favour of smoking being allowed during the service, some suggest turning the church into a cinema show, with the comment that "a hearty laugh at Charlie Chaplin does more good than any pie-jam." There are certainly possibilities here. A boxing match between the vicar and the curate would not be without its attractions, and Mr. Maskelyne might be induced to perform the trick of turning water into wine. Dressed to suit, this part would be impressive. Really, it is not impossible to fill a church if one goes the right way to work.

At a confirmation by the Bishop of Chelmsford at St. Mary's Church, Prittlewell, Essex, the candidates numbered seventy, and included a very large proportion of blushing damsels from sixteen to thirty years of age, with a make-

weight of males. Quite a good catch for the "fishers of men" in the see of Chelmsford.

"A snail is an express train compared with the progress towards Christian unity," says the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare. "Aye, there's the rub," as another and a greater Shakespeare puts it. And long before unity is needed there will no longer be any Christianity.

In his presidential address to the Society for Psychical Research, Lord Rayleigh said some scathing things about spirit phenomena. Forty-five years ago, he added, he arranged pencils and paper inside a glass retort with the neck hermetically sealed. There had never been any writing inside the retort. The spirits had neglected it altogether. Clearly a case of the "retort" discourteous.

The Bishop of London has been very quiet of late concerning the blessings of war, and equally silent about Russia. As, with Mr. Stephen Graham, he was foremost in shouting that Czarist Russia was chock-full of piety, and burning to carry "true religion" all over the world, he probably finds it wiser to say nothing for awhile. But he is busy in other directions. Miss Maude Royden, the very capable City Temple preacher, was invited to conduct a three hours' service at St. Botolph's on Good Friday. The Bishop promptly prohibited the service. Women may have a vote, but the Bishop says they shall not occupy the pulpit. From a Christian point of view, his action is strictly correct; from a human point of view, it is simply idiotic. Mentally, Miss Royden could give the Bishop about eighty-five points out of a hundred, and then romp in an easy first.

A correspondent of the *Daily News* referred to priests, missionaries, etc., pouring into China and carrying on a political campaign. Whereupon a member of the Church Missionary Society writes that the statement should be qualified by the word "Buddhist." That may be true in this special case, but as a matter of fact the complaint of the Chinese concerning the political action of Christian missionaries, and of their interference in the administration of the law of the country, is of long standing. All nations appear to use their missionaries when they can; and in the case of Chinese and Hindoos, these have often been the cause of serious trouble.

At the funeral of Lord Hillingdon at Seal, Sevenoaks, a hymn, written by the deceased, was sung. So runs a press paragraph. It is not so curious as the case of Moses, who wrote an account of his own funeral.

The *Protestant Alliance Magazine* says that Romanists would not be allowed to "defile" this country with their presence if British people were greater readers of the Bible. Well, there is something in that. If the British people really read, and believed, and tried to live up to, the Bible, a great many people would not be allowed to live. But which would live and which would die would be decided by which got the upper hand for the time being. That has always been the practice during history, and its breakdown was clearly due to want of belief. Christianity is a lovely kind of a creed when one looks at it properly.

Roscommon, Ireland, has a "spook" of its own. This takes the form of an "invisible preacher," whose voice is heard in the woods, foretelling the approach of another great war. All efforts to catch a person attached to the voice have failed, which is clear proof that it must be a ghost. Anyway, the proof is about as good as that advanced by many Spiritualists in support of their belief. And why not an invisible preacher? If he were only inaudible as well, no one would complain. In fact, that is the kind of preacher we ourselves prefer.

The clergy are still "starving." One of them, the Rev. G. P. Lane, of London, left estate to the value of £19,380.

The Bishop of London calls Spiritualism a "superstition," and warns people against visiting mediums. The Spiritualists might return the compliment. Like the Bishop, they are not in the profession for the sake of their health.

Pious folk are upsetting themselves? concerning the "morals" of the British soldiers on the Continent. The chief trouble seems they are afraid that the "boys" will get accustomed to theatres, music-halls, and other amusements, being available on Sundays.

Dr. A. C. Dixon is returning to the United States after eight years' ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington Butts, London, which was formerly the scene of Spurgeon's triumphs. Evidently Brother Dixon did not set the Thames afire.

Some people have been wondering why the Peace Conference has not got on with its work more rapidly. Cardinal Bourne suggests that the delay is prolonged because God is treated as of no account. Now, we have read complaints as to the curiosity of a conference at which only one side was represented, but no one—save Cardinal Bourne—has noted that no invitation was sent to God Almighty. And naturally he is annoyed. So a large part of Europe is delivered over to starvation and bloodshed because the Peace Conference has treated God as of no account.

The Rev. G. A. S. Kennedy, better known as "Woodbine Willie," has been preaching at St. Peter's, Eaton Square, and in Westminster Abbey. If the press reports are accurate, he must have shocked his auditors in both these haunts of ancient peace. According to the *Christian Commonwealth*, "W. W." is "unconventional," and he uses such phrases as "It had to be did," and "A Beecham's pill of truth, worth a guinea a box." It is all very sad; but, as the Christian religion started in a stable, it might as well finish in stable-talk.

Some Church people take it very ill that Mr. Lloyd George is a Nonconformist. Writing in a daily paper, a parson says that in the future "the anomaly of a Baptist Prime Minister appointing the Church's chief officers and many of her incumbents will come to an end. For, of course, a Baptist is a heretic, and a heretic is almost as dreadful a person as a Freethinker.

The New York State Assembly has passed a Bill permitting local authorities to decide whether they want baseball played on Sundays. It is almost enough to make the Pilgrim Fathers jump from their tombs.

"His tender mercy is over all his works," may be a fine piece of piety, but it does not always fit the facts. Eighty-two persons were killed, and hundreds injured, in a tornado that swept over Texas recently.

A daily paper prints a fine piece of unconscious humour imparted in a prayer by a Nonconformist parson in a certain hospital: "O Lord, Thou hast just heard Thy servants trying to sing 'Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag.' We all want to get rid of our troubles, but teach us, O Lord, to pack them up in Thy heavenly kit-bag."

"It is said that peeresses have a right to a seat in the House of Lords. If so, do bishops' wives have the same privilege? The Black Army needs no reinforcing in the political world.

At St. John the Baptist Church, Leytonstone, the "Easter Day Offertories" were announced as to be handed to the vicar for an Easter offering, and it was hoped there would be "a very good collection." Those out of town were reminded that they could send on their contribution. A case of "you can't come in without paying, but you can pay without coming in."

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

April 27, South Place, London.

To Correspondents.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Best Wishes, £1.

G. WELLS.—We are always pleased to send specimen copies, and will attend to the matter. Thanks for what you are doing.

S. P.—We do not care for a lengthy correspondence on the Polish question, but we note your protest against B. F. B. sweeping on one side the account of Jewish progroms in Poland as "Hun lies." Some murders of Jews there certainly were, how many it is not easy to say. And the untrustworthiness of the press makes it difficult to decide.

ENQUIRERS into the money problem mentioned in Mr. G. O. Warren's article should apply to the British Banking Reform League, Chamber of Commerce Buildings, Birmingham.

W. C. ROBERTS.—Pleased to know the Falkirk meetings gave so much satisfaction, and that "excellent reports" appeared. Posters are being sent. Much obliged.

J. WARRINGTON.—Most magistrates appear to adopt the plan of a more sympathetic attitude towards Christians than towards Freethinkers. It is an example of the kindly influence of their creed.

R. KLEIN.—Sorry that want of space prevents the publication of your letter, but we note your protest against the statements contained in the letter of "B. F. B."

G. FUSSEL.—Received, and shall appear. Thanks.

BEST WISHES.—Have acted as you request. Thanks.

MR. A. FORBES desires to inform the Middlesboro' correspondent who complained at not receiving his *Freethinker* regularly that Mr. Elliot, newsagent, of Parliament Road, always has the paper on hand in due time. The remedy appears, therefore, obvious.

CAPT. M. STANTON.—Received, and hope to publish in a week or so.

H. E. S.—There is no certainty that the story of the Monk Tele-machus is historical. In any case, it is certain that gladiatorial games were not brought to an end by his alleged action.

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 of 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.

To-day (April 27) Mr. Cohen opens the course of lectures at South Place with an address on "The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact." The lecture commences at 7.30, and there is every promise of a good meeting. This will be a good opportunity for Freethinkers to bring a Christian friend along with them, and we hope they will do so. South Place Institute can be reached by bus or tram from any part of London. Liverpool Street Stations—Metropolitan and G.E.R. Railways—are within three or four minutes walk of the hall.

We are asked to state that the West Ham Branch commences its out-door work on Sunday, May 4, outside Mary-

land Point Station. The first lecture will be delivered by Mr. Burke at 7 p.m. The local Secretary is Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, 17 Garbutt Road, Upminster, and she will be pleased to hear from anyone who wishes for particulars of membership, or who desires to help the work of the Branch in any way.

The North London Branch brought its debating season to a close with an interesting and well thought out address on "The Psychology of Spiritualism," by Mr. T. H. Elstob, of Newcastle-on-Tyne. An animated discussion followed in which some spiritualists took part, but the defence was not adequate to the attack. It was evident, too, that spiritualism does not in all cases make for calmness of disposition.

An old friend of the *Freethinker*, living in Paris, writes objecting to our comments on the case of Villain (not Vaillant, as printed). He points out that Villain, the murderer of Jaures, was acquitted as an hereditary idiot, not as a patriot, and that Cottin, the attempted murderer of Clemenceau, has been relieved at the request of Clemenceau. Further, Villain expressed regret for his crime, while Cottin declared he would do the same thing again. We are glad to have the correction made, but we followed English newspapers, which stated that Villain was acquitted on the ground that his crime proceeded from patriotic feeling. We are writing this away from home, but we feel certain that none of the British papers seen by us mentioned hereditary idiocy. The two offences seemed to us to be on the same level, and the action of the jury strikingly dissimilar. Hence our comment. And none would be more pleased than we should be to see French justice vindicated.

The Origin of Life.

II.

(Continued from p. 189.)

In fact, there is a sequence in everything, everything is connected up, *everything precedes and succeeds in nature*—in nature there are only series. The isolated fact without antecedent or consequence is a myth. Each phenomenal manifestation is in solidarity with another. It is a metamorphosis of one state of things into another. It is transformation.—Professor A. Dastre, "Life and Death"; 1911; p. 68.

In discussing what life is, we may therefore lay down in the first place that *all vital manifestations are manifestations of chemical change in proteidogenous matter, are in short the outcome of arrangements of that matter with the necessary liberation or storing up of energy.* To this extent all vital phenomena resemble phenomena of surrounding inanimate nature; they differ from these only in degree, not in kind. There is not one vital activity which can be mentioned that demands for its explanation something over and above chemical change; and to this extent, inanimate and animate nature are one.—Dr. J. G. Adami, "Medical Contributions to the Study of Evolution"; 1918; pp. 225-6.

DR. LIONEL BEALE was one of the last defenders of "Vital Force," and wrote several works in its defence, even going to the length of issuing a sixpenny pamphlet on the subject to popularize his ideas and combat Materialism.¹ He belonged to the older school of physiologists, before the coming of Evolution—he was born in 1828, more than ninety years ago—and the clue to his opposition may be gleaned from his pathetic protest in his pamphlet: "Some of us rebel at being called mechanisms built by the sun, or laboratories of a kind, or machines for the conversion of energy."² His opposition arose from his emotions and religious views, and it will be found that nearly all the opposition to the natural evolution of life has had a similar origin. Dr. Beale knew that the tide was against him, for he laments: "During the last forty years or more there has been a persistent and most determined effort on the part of

¹ Dr. Lionel Beale, *Vitality: An Appeal, an Apology, and a Challenge* (1898).

² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

some highly distinguished philosophers, as well as physiologists, physicists, and chemists, and even physicians, to persuade mankind that *all vital actions* are in their nature but physical and chemical."¹

But "Vital Force" has followed "Creative Force" into the limbo of exploded hypotheses. Physical and chemical forces are the only ones recognized by modern scientists, as the following extracts will show:—

The doctrine of a special vital force has received its deathblow at the hands of modern science (Professor Meldola, *The Chemical Synthesis of Vital Products*, vol. i., p. vi.; 1904.

The hypothesis of a "vital principle" is now as completely discarded as the hypothesis of phlogiston in chemistry. No biologist with a reputation to lose would for a moment think of defending it (Professor Fiske *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i., p. 422).

I know of no authority in recent years which recognizes a distinct vital force; all students of nature, so far as I am aware, explain all the phenomena of life by means of physical and chemical forces (Professor J. S. Kingsley).²

The processes of crystal formation may in fact be claimed as one of the simpler phases of vital phenomena. "Life!" "Vitality!" exclaims Professor Judd. These terms are but convenient cloaks of our ignorance of the somewhat complicated series of purely physical processes going on within plants and animals. "Organization!" Why should the term be applied to the molecular structure of an amœba or a yeast cell, and refused to that of a crystal? (Professor J. W. Gregory, *The Making of the Earth*, p. 220).

The older physiologists believed in a special vital force or power—the power of living. When a wound healed, it was supposed to heal because the organism possessed enough of this vital force to resist injury. We should say to-day that life is the general name for a number of complicated physical and chemical processes, not an added principle, a mysterious something over and above them (E. B. Titchener, *An Outline of Psychology*, p. 294; 1896).

Living organisms contain no special vital elements differing from those of non-living matter, and are actuated by no special vital force.....As the untutored savage explains the movements of a watch by attributing them to a spirit which has entered into it, so many writers hold that the activities of living matter are due to some special and mysterious vital force. They attempt to bridge the gaps in our knowledge by giving them a name. This is no scientific method; science advances by explaining, that is describing, the unknown in terms of the known.....vital force.....has no intelligible meaning if used to denote some force added, so to speak, from without over and above the ordinary properties, acting on the physico-chemical mechanism but not of it (E. S. Goodrick, *The Evolution of Living Organisms*, p. 15; 1912).

When hydrogen and oxygen combine under the influence of the electric spark to form water, no one pretends that this is accomplished by any mysterious aqueous (from aqua—water) force. "What justification is there, then," asks Professor Huxley, "for the assumption of the existence in the living matter of a something which has no representative, or correlative, in the not living matter which gave rise to it? What better philosophical status has 'vitality' than 'aquosity'? And why should 'vitality' hope for a better fate than the other 'itys' which have disappeared since Martinus Scriblerus accounted for the operation of the meat-jack by its inherent 'meat-roasting quality, and

¹ Dr. Lionel Beale, *Vitality: An Appeal, an Apology, and a Challenge* (1898), p. 10.

² The quotations from Kingsley, Fiske, and Meldola are taken from the Appendix to Professor Dolbear's *Matter, Ether, and Motion* (1899).

scorned the 'materialism' of those who explained the turning of the spit by a certain mechanism worked by the draught of the chimney."¹

The prime work of science has been the elimination of these "itys," spirits, and explanations which explain nothing, and has replaced them by the idea of one eternal, self-existent energy.

For instance, the early chemists explained the phenomena of combustion, or burning, by stating that it was due to a substance to which Stahl gave the name of phlogiston. If an article, they argued, was very inflammable it contained a great deal of phlogiston. In fact, charcoal and similar substances were regarded as nearly pure phlogiston, while, on the other hand, incombustible bodies were supposed to have parted with their phlogiston. These ideas lasted until Lavoisier, the great French chemist, in 1772, overthrew them by his experiments in the calcination of metals, which discovery, says Picton, brought him so much unpopularity that "he was burnt in effigy at Berlin on account of his antiphlogistic ideas."² A few years later Berlin adopted his views.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

Man's Discovery of the World.

V.

(Concluded from p. 192.)

For promulgating what are to-day the commonplaces of science, Roger Bacon and Gerbert were branded with the accusation of sorcery, and the former pined for many weary years in a dungeon. Every enlightened endeavour was strangled by the current Bibliolatry. But, curiously enough, the quite inaccurate statements contained in the second book of Esdras helped to establish an important verity. Although this book is regarded by Protestants as apocryphal, it was very generally accepted by the Catholic Church as a divinely inspired production. Now, in the sixth chapter of Esdras, there are certain verses summarizing the creative acts of the Jewish deity. These read as follows:—

Upon the third day thou didst command that the waters should be gathered in the seventh part of the earth; six parts hast thou dried up and kept them to the intent that of these some, being planted of God and tilled, might serve thee.

Upon the fifth day thou saidst unto the seventh part where the waters were gathered, that it should bring forth living creatures, fowls and fishes, and so it came to pass.

The cultured and progressive Cardinal d'Ailly was profoundly impressed by these passages, and as he meditated over them he was constrained to conclude, as a believer in the earth's sphericity, that as only "one-seventh of the earth's surface was covered by water, the ocean between the west coast of Europe and the east coast of Asia could not be very wide." D'Ailly was of opinion that the extent of the land-surface of the globe was accurately known, and reasoning from this quite erroneous assumption, he concluded from the inspired statement of Esdras that our planet must be considerably smaller, and the land of "Zipango" visited by Marco in his travels not nearly so distant as was commonly alleged.

An edition of d'Ailly's *Ymago Mundi*, in which these arguments were clearly expounded, was published at the period when Columbus was striving to convince his contemporaries of the practical nature of a sea voyage

¹ T. H. Huxley, *Lay Sermons* (1880), p. 137.

² Picton, *The Story of Chemistry*, p. 233.

to the eastern coast of Asia. "Among the treasures in the library at Seville," remarks Dr. A. D. White, "there is nothing more interesting than a copy of this work annotated by Columbus himself; from this very copy it was that Columbus obtained confirmation of his belief that a passage across the ocean to Marco Polo's country was short." This misconception, derived as it was from a document regarded as divine, weighed heavily with the Spanish sovereigns when they consented to support the enterprise of the Genoese navigator. Thus was Columbus enabled to prosecute his memorable voyage, which was destined in its turn to promote those later enterprises which brought the great Western Continent within the ken of the Eastern Hemisphere. In this instance, the unsound science of the Scriptures prepared the path for those maritime adventures which, in company with the new astronomy of Copernicus, the rebirth of ancient culture, and the invention of the printing press, provided the firm foundations of those revolutionary scientific and humanistic triumphs which succeeding centuries were destined to reveal.

Without question, the spirit of adventure, combined with the desire to secure riches and renown, was a dominating passion with many of the explorers of the romantic age of maritime discovery, although loftier ambitions were not unknown even then. But despite certain blemishes, the main results of the ocean expeditions of Spain, Portugal, and other seafaring nations have increased the resources and amplified the happiness of civilized humanity. No lover of his kind can condone the conduct of Cortes, Pizarro, and other heartless adventurers, or whisper one word of excuse for the barbarities inflicted on defenceless races by resourceful and powerfully armed invaders in so many parts of the world. It is deeply regrettable that most, and perhaps all, of the colonizing peoples have at some time been guilty of unpardonable excesses. And it cannot be disputed that some of the vilest of these crimes have been committed with the sanction and in the name of religion.

To quite a different category, however, belonged the illustrious Captain Cook. Not only did this great navigator make many important additions to our geographical knowledge; he also ministered to the health of his men. His preventive measures against the ravages of scurvy—that terror to the toilers of the sea—gained him election as a Fellow of the Royal Society.

That uncompromising Freethinker, Dr. Nansen, is another explorer whose labours are beyond all praise. His projected expedition to the Arctic regions met with little encouragement from geographers, but the undaunted Nansen persevered in his plan, with the result that the celebrated *Fram* made her voyage of discovery with triumphant success. For, while the heroic Franklin and many other fearless explorers perished in their search for knowledge, Nansen and his comrades returned in safety to their native shores.

These were northern exploits, but they are matched by the Antarctic expedition made immortal by the inspiring deeds of Scott and his companions, who, unfortunately, lost their lives while attempting to return from the South Pole in 1912. They battled with fate like brothers in distress. They are well worthy of our most affectionate remembrance and regard as heroes and martyrs in the cause of science. As Professor Gregory eloquently says:—

But though they have entered into their long sleep from the solitude of the polar waste of snow and ice where they lie, their spirits have risen triumphant to testify to the world the greatness of human endeavour and the glory of self-sacrifice for the purpose of increasing knowledge.

T. F. PALMER.

The Humbugarios.

THE Humbugarios are a queer people. They worship a certain man as a God, and yet persistently do the very opposite of what he tells them to do.

He says, "Give to every man that asketh of thee," and yet they never even lend money without exacting usury.

He says, "Woe unto you rich," and yet they all strive to get as rich as possible, and respect only those who are rich, by whatever methods.

He says, "Swear not at all," and yet they insist on swearing in all their Courts of Justice.

He says, "Resist not evil," "Love your enemies," and "If a man takes away your coat, give him your cloak also," yet they maintain at enormous cost a huge army of soldiers, sailors, policemen, bailiffs, judges, lawyers, hangmen, and gaolers to do the exact opposite.

When their friends and relations die they say that they have gone to a place of everlasting bliss, yet they weep and mourn as if they had gone to a place of eternal misery.

They maintain in comfort and luxury many thousands of clergymen and their wives and families, besides spending many millions on the building and maintenance of cathedrals, churches, and chapels, for the object of worship and placation of an incomprehensible Deity, and yet not one of their highly paid and well educated clergy can furnish any reasonable description of this Deity or adduce one solitary fact in proof of either its existence or its power.

They know that the only possible way to produce wealth of any kind is by human labour, and that, therefore, everybody who lives without working must of necessity be living on the labour of others; yet the only people they respect are those who receive a large unearned income, and the only people they thoroughly despise are those who work the hardest.

They say that honesty is the best policy, and yet they have to watch each other like hawks to avoid being swindled.

They know that nobody can produce wealth without access to the raw material found only in the land, and yet they allow a few idlers to monopolize all the land and tax every worker for the mere privilege of being allowed to work.

They know that money is a necessity for the rapid exchange of goods and services, and therefore of civilization, and yet they allow a few men to monopolize the manufacture and sale of this necessary contrivance and thus enable them to extort a monopoly price ten times in excess of its actual value.

These privileged bankers and their hired sophists, the orthodox professors of economic science, inform and assure the Humbugarios that no efficient exchange of goods and services is possible without the use of a very scarce substance called gold; so they extract it, with great labour, from the bowels of the earth in distant lands, convey it to London with infinite care, and there again consign it to the bowels of the earth in the sacred vaults of their banks.

Through these absurd and contradictory beliefs and actions, the unfortunate Humbugarios have got themselves into such a tangle that the vast majority of them are condemned to hopeless but quite unnecessary and undeserved poverty, while crime, disease, and prostitution stalk through their beautiful country almost unchecked and unregarded.

Where do you think these strange people live?

G. O. WARREN.

An Awful Affair.

THANKS to the untiring efforts of Sir Sherlock Doyles, the world was at last made safe for Spiritualism. It was universal. Every nook, every corner, every recess of living thought, knew that it was possible to speak to the dead. Telephone companies began to tremble; directors said, if people can speak to the dead, communication with the living will be superfluous. Undertakers, with long sight, as long as a piece of string or a Christian apology, looked on this new era with disfavour. People who owed money to the departed began to get uneasy. Children played with fire, and old women, at one time satisfied with one drop of gin, took two drops, and blowed the consequences. The "social fabric," as the pompous and the windbags called it, began to wear a trifle threadbare, for here, indeed, was a "Crisis." The dead were alive. The dead were not dead. The dumb could speak. It was a crisis never before known in the history of mankind—and it had solved the food question.

There was no such thing as death, and this encouraged many in foolish experiments. There was an increase in incivility, and any careless member of society who happened to remark, "I wish you were dead," was looked upon as being extremely stupid. The monotony of seeing the same faces every day, and hearing the same inane remarks, was rendered more terrible by the knowledge that "Finis" could not be written upon those elegant tombstones which spoke so eloquently of those who could not at one time speak for themselves. The most marked effect of this discovery, however, was the total neglect of this life. It is true that Christianity had encouraged this attitude, *andante*, as it were; but Spiritualism increased the *tempo* to *allegretto*. Busybodies who walked the earth chalking the walls and pavements with texts such as "Prepare to meet thy God," looked very silly, and, in a fit of rage, ate all their chalk. This may explain obscurely the remark about eating one's words. Among a certain class, the discovery was very disturbing. The "Ostentatious Rich," who by every device had tried hard to disown their common ancestor Adam, were as wild as an Australian rabbit. This class, of whom Rabelais has said "many are at this day Dukes on the earth whose extraction is from some porters and pardon-pedlars"—this class, I repeat, was wild because in the great beyond they could not wear spats, use lorgnettes, nor take milk baths, to prove their superiority over those who had been taught that honesty was the best policy. There were no spiritual spats, no real or assumed short-sight, with spirits, as nobody could see them; and, of course, washing was impossible. Equality was there, and it was present "thick and heavy," even in the ghostly world.

The ideas of Spiritualism gradually had an effect on war. The last skirmish with the Chikkapooos was a rather tame affair. If a man volunteered for a dangerous job, he was accused of trying to evade his responsibilities. "Towney," who had been blown out of his dugout four times, and into the cookhouse twice, had a brilliant idea. He said, "What's the good of killing anybody if they ain't dead?" "Nor never will be," chimed in Taffy. This logical view, along with no incentive to live, finally disposed of war, and the subject was completely forgotten.

Versifiers who had been assisting in the education of the public ceased to write anything about hating the Chikkapooos. Instead, they became lyrical and hysterical over the lost illusions of the good old-fashioned style, when people departed, destination unknown. It was a thunderbolt in the religious world. Archbishop Phizz-

juice was president of a conference called to discuss the matter. He said that it was a grave and pressing problem. The discovery had rather queered their pitch, so to speak; but, personally, he did not mind, as he had never really believed anything he taught. This latter remark was greeted with loud cheers of approval. Striking the personal note again, he said, that he did not face the future with any fear whatsoever as all his investments from the Chikkapoo affair had been withdrawn and re-invested in an aerial-post system between Iceland and the Honolulu Islands. He had also great hopes of getting figs from thistles, as his life-work had resolved itself into nothing more than the diet of a barber's cat. The very rev. Foun Downt did not beat about the bush. He said that all the fraternity would have to take up work for a living instead of taking a living to dodge it. This assertion caused tremendous disorder. Every man, or to be correct, every divine present passed a resolution and argued with anybody and nobody. Their business, bankrupt of ideas for centuries, was now utterly smashed. Sir Sherlock Doyles had put the tin hat on it.

As there was no end to life, all the people argued that it would save a lot of trouble if there was no beginning. Consequently, there was never a stork to be seen in the land. Crowns and coronets found their way to rag and bone shops, and diamonds were worn on boot soles. The social fabric was torn to shreds, and the food problem was solved, for, in the finish, there were tons of food, but no living person left to eat it. Spiritualism had done its lively work. With the promise of being a free spirit, no food or no clothes to buy, no rent to pay, and no work to do, was it to be wondered at that people decided on the free spirit choice? A gossiping kind of spirit was heard to say that Sir Sherlock Doyles had expressed his regret at not sticking to his last, as his vigorous propaganda on a befuddled world had been the cause of upsetting the "design" argument. He had also strong objections to any spirit in ghost land singing "Let's all go down the Strand."

The physical world we know of had a long and refreshing rest. If you should cross the Channel, not as a vulgar sightseer, but rather in search of the beautiful and the sublime, as I understand your object in life to be, you would find a lovely enchanted country. In late spring there would be fields of crimson and heliotrope poppies. The south wind would carry to you the fragrance of a million violet blooms, and a little yellow bird, no bigger than our lark, would flutter in the sky with his breast turned sunwards, singing to you of nothing but happiness. This I know is true, but if you believe the other tale you will believe anything. To a cobbler there is nothing like leather, and woe unto him who drops the substance of fiction for the shadow of an awful affair.

WILLIAM REFTON.

Sanity and simplicity are the distinguishing marks of the loftiest genius, which may be described as inspired common sense. The great artist never loses touch of facts; he may let his imagination soar as high as the stars, but he keeps his feet firm-planted on the ground. All the world recognizes the sublimity of Greek sculpture and Shakespeare's plays, because they are both true to nature and fact and coincident with everlasting laws. The true sublime is not fantastic; it is solid and satisfying, like a mighty Alp, deep-rooted first of all in the steadfast earth, and then towering up with its vineyards, its pastures, its pine-forests, its glaciers, its precipices, and last of all the silence of infinitude brooding over its eternal snows.—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON APRIL 15.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Eager, Kelf, Leat, Moss, Neate, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Wood, Miss Kough, Miss Pankhurst, Miss Pitcher, Mrs. Rolf, and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting read and confirmed.

New members were received for Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, South London, and the Parent Society, seven-teen in all.

The result of the vote of the Branches being strongly in favour of Manchester, it was formally moved that the Conference be held on Whit Sunday, June 8, in that city.

The various nominations for officers and notices of motion for the Agenda having been dealt with by the Agenda Committee, were submitted to the Executive, and, being carried, the proof agenda was ordered to be sent out. Amendments, if any, to be returned not later than May 10.

The meeting then adjourned until May 29.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

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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The Humanitarian works by Joachim Kaspary, out of print, can be studied in the Reading Room of the British Museum, London. They will, however, be Revised and Published as soon as possible.

THE FOLLOWING WORKS ARE IN PRINT.

1. International Peace. Price 2d., post free ... 1898
2. The Guide of Life and the Ethics of Humanitarian Deism compared with those of Christianity and Buddhism ... 1899
Price for Poor People, 2s., post free.
Price for Rich People, 21s., post free.
3. The Humanitarian View of the British-Boer War, of the Chinese Question, and of the Restoration and Maintenance of Peace. Price 6d., post free ... 1901
4. An Addition to the Humanitarian View of the British-Boer War, etc. Price 2d., post free ... 1902
5. The Humanitarian View of the Fiscal Question ... 1904
Price 2d., post free.
6. Humanitarian Deism. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1904
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10. The Humanitarian View of the Public School Question Price 3d., post free. 1904
11. The Life and Character of Paul ... 1905
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12. The Primitive Christians. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1905
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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.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7, Mr. Quazi Abdulla, B.A., "Ahmad, the Promised Messenger of the Age."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, S. K. Ratcliffe, "The One Thing That Matters."

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 7.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact."

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Shaller; 3.30, Messrs. Ratcliffe, Saphin, Kells, and Dales.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY.—Meeting at 5.45 in Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds. New and intending Members please note. 7.15, Freethought Lecture in Victoria Square.

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

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Mrs. G. Wilkinson, "Shop Stewards."

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30. The League of Nations. War Price 6d., post free 6½d. 1918

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Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN

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MAY 4.

Mr. J. T. LLOYD

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