

The FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

Evolution.

Evolution began as a formula and, with many, ends as a fiat. On the one hand, it is invoked with all the solemnity of a mediæval magician commanding the presence of his attendant spirits. On the other hand, it is approached with a hushed reverence that is reminiscent of a Catholic devotee before his favourite shrine. It has acquired the characteristics of the "Kismet" of the Mohammedan, the Beelzebub of the pious Christian, and the inspiration of glory to the born soldier. It is used to dispel doubts and to awaken curiosity. It becomes a formula that may express comprehension or merely indicate vacuity. Decisions are pronounced in its name with all the impressiveness of a "Thus saith the Lord!" We are not even sure that some will not object that to talk about evolution in this light way is "irreverent," and should be avoided. For there are crowds of folk who cannot separate profundity from solemnity, and who continually mistake a long face for the sure indication of a well-stored brain. The truth is, of course, that what a man understands thoroughly he can deal with easily; that he laughs at a difficulty is not necessarily a sign that he fails to appreciate it—it may be a consequence of his having taken its measure. The chief reason why people will not laugh at religion is due to a perception of the fact that it will not stand it. The priest everywhere maintains his hold largely because of the narcotizing influence of ill-understood phrases, and in this he is matched by the pseudo-philosopher, whose pompous use of imperfectly appreciated formulæ disguises from the crowd the mistiness of his own understanding.

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The Ghost of God.

A glance over the uses made of the word "evolution" will well illustrate what has been said. These sometimes make one wonder what on earth the writer thinks "evolution" stands for, and at other times one feels sure that its prime function is to cover up mere want of comprehension. For example: in a recent issue of the *Daily Express*, Mr. Shaw Desmond, writing on the subject of the demand for equality, asks, What do people mean by it? and, after discussing the probable meanings, remarks: "If it is a demand for a levelling of mankind down to the average, every good citizen will fight that, and he will have evolution with him, for all evolution is a levelling up." Now, it would be quite unfair to pillory

Mr. Desmond as being peculiar in this conception of evolution; he is one of a very large group, and this specimen is selected only because it is representative of a group, and because it has some very important bearings on social and religious as well as on scientific questions. And here we must, paradoxical as it may sound, be discursive in order to keep to the point. Primarily, this ascription of what one may call a moral element to evolution is no more than a carrying over into science of the Theistic spirit and temper. Quite naturally, the Theist was driven to find some ethical justification for what he said was the divine government of the universe. And he proceeded to argue that it was morally and intellectually admirable. From the Godite's point of view that was a sound position. The world was God's world; he made it; and we were ultimately compelled to judge the character of the workman by the quality of his work. But now comes the non-Theist, and he, although rejecting "God," and substituting the formula "evolution," frequently proceeds to claim for his formula all that the Theist had claimed for his. That also had to be shown to be moral, and noble, and just, etc. We don't marvel that the Christian often says to the Freethinker that he has a God. Substantially, some of them have. That is, they carry on with the same pseudo-scientific reasoning that is characteristic of apologetic Theism. They have given up God, but they cumber themselves with his ghost.

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Adaptation.

Now evolution, we repeat, is not a fiat; it is a formula. It does not decree; it describes. It has nothing to do with morality as such, nor with progress as such, nor with a levelling up, nor with a levelling down. It is no more than a special application of the principle of causation; and whether the working out of that principle has a moralizing, or an ennobling, or a progressive effect, is not "given" in the principle itself. Cosmic phenomena presents us with two things, difference and change. And the law of evolution is an attempt to express those differences and those changes in a more or less precise formula. It does for phenomena in general precisely what a particular scientific law does for its own special group of phenomena. But it no more has a moral implication, or a progressive implication, or a levelling up implication than has the law of gravitation or the law of chemical affinity. It may result in one or the other, it has resulted in one or the other; its operations make here for progress, and there for stagnation or retrogression, but it is only called the one or the other *by us*. Evolution knows only adaptation and equilibrium. Whether that adaptation spells a levelling up or a levelling down is quite another matter.

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The Direction of Evolution.

Confining our attention to animal society, how is evolution expressed? Primarily, what we have is adaptation. If an animal is to live it must be adapted to its surroundings to the extent of being able to

overcome those forces that threaten its existence. That is a commonplace; all it says is, that if an animal lives it must be able to live; but all truths are commonplaces—when one sees them. Still, if we only had adaptation to consider, and if the environment in relation to which adaptation was to be secured remained constant, all we should have would be the deaths of all not able to live, the survival of better endowed specimens; but there would be no movement that could be called progression or retrogression. This arises because the environment itself changes. Either the material conditions undergo a change, or the pressure of numbers on the means of subsistence initiate a struggle as to their possession. The consequence is the introduction of a new quality into the process of adaptation. It becomes a question of a greater endowment of the particular qualities that spell survival. And that paves the way to what we call progress—or the reverse. For one must observe that evolution is as evident whether the movement is in the direction of, or away from, what we call progress. It levels neither "up" nor "down"; what it does is to secure a certain measure of accommodation between an organism and its surroundings. Up and down is as relative in biology as it is in astronomy. In nature there is neither better nor worse, neither high nor low, there are only differences, and if that had been borne in mind a great many theistic apologies would never have seen the light, nor would non-theists have so often weakened their case by using a watered-down form of the theistic argument.

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Evolution and Progress.

What ground is there, then, for speaking of evolution as "levelling up," or of its being a progressive force? None whatever. Retrogression (if one must use these terms) is as common in nature as progression. On the one hand we have aquatic life giving rise to mammalian life. On the other hand, we have mammalian life taking again to an aquatic existence. Here, we have a "lower" form of life giving way to a "higher" form; and, there, we have the higher being supplanted by a lower. And, on the whole, lower forms are more persistent than are the higher ones. There are certain lowly forms that were in existence long before the appearance of man, and which will most probably be the last form of life to disappear from a worn-out globe. The argument with which the Theist seeks to meet a mechanistic conception of nature, namely, that evolution is a law of progress, that it implies a goal, and is the realization of a plan, is wholly fallacious. From a scientific point of view it is meaningless chatter. Science knows nothing of a plan, or an end, or even of progress in nature. All these are conceptions that we humans create for our own convenience. They are so many standards of measurement, of the same nature as our agreement that a certain measure of space shall be called a yard, or that a certain quantity of liquid shall be called a pint. It is sheer anthropomorphism. It is the ghost of God imported into science.

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In my next article I will deal with the more concrete applications of the principles on which I have been dwelling.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Great Drift.

FOR upwards of twenty years it has been the heart-breaking wail of the Churches that they are steadily losing the power which they wielded with such terrible effect in days long gone by, and ever since the Reformation, Protestant Christianity has been passing through a slow process of disintegration. Indirectly, it was the revival of learning that rendered the Reformation possible, whilst the Reformation itself has been indirectly making for the emasculation of the Christian religion. Even within the Catholic Church there has been at times a distinct trend toward intellectual emancipation, only in that communion it has been resisted and checked with a considerable degree of success. From a Christian point of view, the Reformation was a false and disastrous movement. Its substitution of the Bible for the Church as the supreme, final authority was in itself a mistake; but when the right of private judgment in its interpretation was admitted, Christianity received a blow which, in the end, was bound to prove fatal. Consequently, the Catholic Church and the Catholic party in the Anglican Communion are perfectly justified in pronouncing the Protestant Reformation the biggest religious blunder ever committed. From a Freethought point of view, however, it was the first effective onslaught upon the chief stronghold of the Christian superstition, being the first successful assertion in Christendom of the rights of the human Reason. It was an extremely crude and more or less unconscious assertion, no doubt, and certainly not one of the Reformers contemplated even the possibility of its eventually resulting in the dissolution of the Faith.

The *Church Times*, as is well known, is the able organ of the Catholic Party in the Church of England, and the foregoing remarks were suggested by several recent articles and letters in its columns, and particularly by a leading article, entitled "The Passing of the Evangelicals," in its issue of October 10. It may be interesting to recall the origin of the Evangelical Party in the Anglican Church. During most of the eighteenth century "the general remissness and negligence" of the Church must be regarded as a notorious fact. Arian views prevailed, and the clergy had no sense of the sacredness and importance of their profession. Many of them found their chief pleasure in hunting and carousing, knowing little and caring less about spiritual religion, and naturally neglecting their duties as ambassadors of Christ. When at last a reaction set in from Oxford, it was vigorously resisted. The two Wesleys and Whitfield were persecuted; and out of that bitter persecution arose the Wesleyan Church and the Calvinistic Methodism of Wales. This was what is known as the Evangelical Revival, which, towards the end of the century, had a reacting effect upon many of the Anglican clergy, who became distinguished for their piety and zeal, making preaching their forte and attending with diligence to their pastoral duties. Under their influence the Church Missionary Society, Bible and tract societies, and Sunday-schools were founded. During the nineteenth century the Evangelicals were noted for their orthodoxy and earnestness, and great was their influence everywhere. But before the close of last century it was evident that their power was on the wane; with the result that now, the *Church Times* says: "As the older men pass away their places are not filled, except nominally, for the new Evangelicalism is very different from the old." It was almost exclusively an emotional movement, dwelling mainly on the love of Christ for lost souls and his atoning work to make their salvation legally possible. There were mission preachers whose

Every country must be instructed either by *writers* or *preachers*; but, as the number of readers increases, the number of bearers is proportionately diminished, the writer becomes more useful, and the preaching Bonze less necessary.—*Goldsmith*.

fery eloquence stirred the masses mightily, and numerous conversions were their reward. As the *Church Times* rightly observes, the new Evangelicalism—

claims to have a more liberal, a more scholarly, outlook on the world; but does it start really from the same principles? That there should be a cooling of fervour, indeed, proves little. Fervour is not what it was among High Churchmen either. More than half a century ago a saintly Evangelical lamented, "Our school is dying of exinanition"; nevertheless it is not yet dead. But the Bishop of Durham deplores the decay of old ideals of the unworldly life, separated from what is earthly and secular, the disappearance of the note of solemn warning and the hope of glory from evangelical pulpits, the far feebler impact of spiritual religion upon the life of the nation, the withdrawal into the background of the necessity of the new birth.....This is true, no doubt, of the modern, "socialized" pulpit generally, from which words like "salvation" have almost disappeared, and in which heaven is almost as unpopular a topic as hell.

That is an accurate diagnosis of the state of supernatural religion at present generally, not excepting the High Church Party. A great drift towards Secularism is in progress in all the sects. This is sorrowfully admitted by all religious leaders, even by those of Wesleyan Methodism, for many years the most fervently evangelical of all the denominations. Almost imperceptibly Reason's claims to be heard and to dominate all life are being well-nigh universally recognized, with the inevitable result that supernatural belief is being gradually undermined. Reason and credulity cannot long co-exist. It is generally known that Dr. Hensley Henson, the present Bishop of Hereford, has strong leanings towards Rationalism, and our contemporary calls attention to the significant fact that, "except the venerable Dean of Canterbury, scarcely any Low Churchmen dissociated themselves from the Hereford scandal, and the new Bishop has been warmly supported by the Low Church Press." The *Church Times* goes further still, and declares that "in Convocation the defence of Holy Scripture and the Creeds has been left to a small band of High Churchmen."

At one time Evangelicals and Low Churchmen represented two distinct schools, and the latter persecuted the former with great fierceness; but, eventually, the two parties practically amalgamated, so that now "Evangelical" and "Low Church" are synonymous terms. Referring to the great Tractarian agitation our contemporary says:—

It was not Evangelicalism, but the anti-supernatural temper of the Reform era, which was assailed by the Oxford Movement; indeed, a passionately evangelical spirit breathes through the writings and teachings of the Tractarians. It is a word which no Catholic would willingly surrender to a party, for if ours is not Gospel Christianity it is not Christianity at all.....There is very little of the Calvinistic spirit in neo-Evangelicalism, or of the higher Puritanism either. It has accommodated itself to the temper of the age, getting rid of hampering *impedimenta*. It still retains more of the devotional *ethos* than Liberalism does, but its future seems to lie in an eventual coalition with the latter, on the basis of resistance to any Christianity which is ecclesiastical and sacerdotal, authoritative and doctrinal.

So far so good. The present tendency in all the Churches is to magnify secular interests to the detriment of supernatural belief. The religious cry of the day is for a new Christianity; a Christianity for this world instead of for the next, a Christianity concentrating on social problems, and on righting economic wrongs; a Christianity that will "level down Churchmanship to the least common denominator of civil citizenship; in short, a Christianity that will only be another, more polite word for Secularism. Just now there is little, if any, of this

kind of drift in the Catholic Church. In its case it is not the Church that drifts, but the people who drift out of the Church towards pure Naturalism. In Italy, in Spain and Portugal, even in France and Germany, the minds of the people are getting impregnated with the seed of Secularism, which is simply Rationalism in practice, and, in consequence, they tire of the Church and leave it severely alone. Even the *Church Times* candidly admits that the future of Christianity is extremely dark and doubtful. It also declares: "That Low Churchmen will be able much longer to keep out of the vortex of Rationalism we fear is unlikely." Time will soon show whether it will or not.

Meantime, while the great drift is going on, one naturally asks, is Christianity worth preserving? Would its disappearance be a loss? There are things in it of priceless value, but these were in the world centuries before it was ever heard of, and will undoubtedly survive it. As to the value of Christianity itself, some wonderfully outspoken utterances were delivered at the recent Church Congress held at Leicester. According to a report in the *Daily Herald* for October 15, a paper by Lord Eustace Percy was read, in which it was boldly declared that "war, as we have known it in the past, and as it threatens in the future, is the product of Christendom," and that "it was by no accident that the history of Christendom had been a history of wars." The President of the Congress, the Bishop of Peterborough, delivered a remarkable address from the chair, in which he lamented the fact that at present God does not count in the lives of the people, and asserted that it can never be well with us either individually or nationally, either industrially or economically, until there is a revival of the sense that he does. At the moment there is no sign of such a revival. Everywhere the great drift is seen to be taking place. On the one hand the Churches are on the move, and, on the other, the people are leaving the Churches; and there are but two goals—Catholicism and Secularism—the latter appears to be by far the more attractive for the bulk of the drifters.

J. T. LLOYD.

Shelley the Sempiternal.

O cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
O might it die or rest at last!

—Shelley.

It is related of the youthful Robert Browning that, browsing among the bookstalls, he saw a volume labelled as "Mr. Shelley's Atheistical Poems, Scarce." Badly printed, shamefully bound, this despised book of verse touched young Browning to new emotions. This contact with the dead poet proved the dawn of a new life to the clever lad. From that time Browning's prolific poetic production began. The result is not surprising, for Shelley was one of the supreme singers of his century. To him song was natural speech. With labour, special education, and careful selection of circumstances, many have purchased their poetic rights, as the chief captain bought the name of Roman, but Shelley was a born poet. He was the revelation of a new world; and it only wanted the remove of a century to show him in his colossal proportions.

So surely as Shakespeare is the first of our dramatic and Milton of our epic poets, so certainly is Shelley one of the greatest of our lyric poets. He had the voice of a siren, and his music is irresistible. Like Shakespeare, Shelley saw sylphs and fairies, and heard the ding dong bell of the water-nymphs, and he could turn from the witcheries of elf-land to the stern realism of *The Cenci*.

As generation succeeds generation, Shelley emerges more and more as one of the great figures destined to immortality of fame. Many of his contemporaries who overshadowed him whilst he was living have almost faded into nothingness, but this Freethought poet has a message for unborn generations.

"Shelley's fame has probably grown more in the last generation than that of any of our poets," declares a critic in the *Times*, discussing "Foreign Critics and Shelley." "Translations of his poems, as well as books, pamphlets, and articles about him have greatly increased in most of the European countries during the past twenty or thirty years. It seems likely that he will soon definitely rank in foreign opinion as the third of the English poets. No one will dispute the pre-eminence of Shakespeare and Milton." And the critic goes on to say that "there are ten or twenty times as many recent foreign books about Shelley in the British Museum catalogue as there are about Keats."

How strange it all seems! Shelley's transformation has passed through three stages. First, he was regarded as a fiend; second, as a "beautiful but ineffectual angel"; and, third, as the prophet of a new and nobler humanity. But the *Times* scribe is nothing if not critical. In such a case as that of Shelley, there is bound to be a fly in the ointment. Shelley's most terrible crime seems to have been that he had no humour, which the reviewer contends is necessary "for the mixing of the cup of universal and enduring fame." How often this nonsense has figured in Shelley criticism. Byron was a great humorist, and even he could hardly have bettered Shelley's satirical lines on Wordsworth in *Peter Bell the Third*. And the translation of the *Hymn to Mercury* is an exquisite piece of humour; whilst in Shelley's letters there are very many touches of delicate humour, which are sufficient to disprove the critic's silliness.

With regard to Shelley's religious views, a Spanish Catholic critic is quoted in the *Times* as saying that Shelley's lyrics are a constant lament over his own misery and the world's wrong. But this is as absurd as the statement that the great English poet had no humour. Lamentation is not the only note. Witness the noble lines beginning:—

The world's great age begins anew.

Or, perhaps, the lines in *Prometheus Unbound*:—

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.

How often must it be repeated that literature was not a pastime with Shelley. There was a close connection between his writings and his life. Ever a pioneer, from the days of *Queen Mab* to his last poem, his pen was a weapon which he wielded for Liberty. Except that the later verse shows greater mastery, and strike deeper chords than he had used in his youth, there is no change. His Freethought was never disputed during his unpopular days, when men and women were imprisoned for selling his works. Florence to the living Dante was not more cruelly unjust than England to the living Shelley. Only some thirty years after his untimely death was his poetic glory acknowledged by his own countrymen. Now, a hundred years after his death, Shelley arouses more interest abroad than any other English poet, except Shakespeare. The reason is not far to seek. It is because Shelley is the poet of Humanity who looked beyond the tumult of revolt to the peace of a new society, and who voiced the hopes and fears of the Young Generation against the cruelties and stupidities of the Old.

MIMNERMUS.

Prostituted Brains.

It has been well said more than once that there are cases of legalized prostitution which are worse than some cases of prostitution upon which the Law frowns. Can there be anything more shocking to the moral sense than to contemplate the innocent young daughter of an ignorant, coarse-minded, but ambitious couple being given in a *marriage de convenance* to an elderly, wealthy *roue*? Surely not.

Now, we have to recognize that it is quite as possible to prostitute the mind and the faculties and qualities of the mind, as it is to prostitute the body and the faculties and qualities of the body. And you may find people who prostitute both, as well as people who prostitute the one or the other. The only brain, for example, that is acceptable to the Churches is the dependent and subservient brain. The brain that presumes to be independent and to think for itself is banned and denounced by the Churches. The very word "theology" is a contradiction. But it was a very astute clerical move to call divinity an "ology," to attempt to dignify it as a science—nay, as the Queen of Sciences! The clerical mind always aims high in the matter of nomenclature and appellation. We are the people, and wisdom and goodness shall die with us!

The satisfactory feature of the second decade of the twentieth century is that the best brains are *not* entering the Church. This general statement must be made, of course, comparatively, and with the qualification that you do still find men of considerable—even great—intellectual power in the Churches. Still, the bulk of the best brains of our land is going past the Churches. But even if all the best brains did not enter the Church, we must not for that reason imagine that the Church would cease to exist. In the minds of some simple believers, this would be an advantage to pure religion and to the power of the Church Universal, because they firmly hold that much learning has driven many professed Christians spiritually mad, and given scope to the jesuitical policy of the Higher Criticism, with all its appalling implications.

There is nothing new under the sun; and certainly the uneducated believer has no faith in new facts or new ideas. They are disturbing; and mentally he abhors disturbance. It is amazing with what a grip the vacant mind holds on to two or three cardinal propositions; with what fervour and eloquence it can proclaim them as truth; with what self-denying diligence and sedulous care it seeks to induce others to embrace the same beliefs. The methods of the highly educated clergyman who presides over a wealthy and fashionable congregation are entirely different from those of the uneducated advocate of the simple truth as it is in Jesus. But the big man does not condemn the methods of the little man. Not at all. On the contrary, he approves benignly and blandly—from a distance; because, after all, the little man is a fisher of men, and what comes to his net adds to the numerical strength of the believing community. Besides, some of the individuals netted by the little man may grow in knowledge, wealth, and influence, to be as big as the fish that accommodated, without inconvenience, the prophet Jonah; and having so grown, he will naturally want more congenial surroundings than those afforded by the Little Bethel, the tin mission hall, or the street-corner meeting. By insensible gradations he will reach the soothing and scented atmosphere of the great dim building where his pacific soul will be unmoved or irritated by bellowed "Amen!" or "Glory!" the tramp of hob-nailed boots on bare boards, or the beastly rattle of a vulgar collect-

ing-box. Nay, his soul will be hushed to soft slumbering acquiescence by the low and placid intonation of well-trained voices and the purr of the huge hidden pipe organ. The accessories will have improved and the believer will pay accordingly.

Though all the brains of the country refused to enter the Churches, bless your heart, the Churches would not cease to exist! Don't think it! There are myriads of "kind hearts" and professors of "simple faith" who would sit still under the expansive wings of Mother Church. Why? Because the pious rich continue to endow the Church with immense fire premiums, and every rich man and woman has a crowd of parasites in his or her train. The Feudal System is only extinct in name.

It is the effect of prostituting the brain, of belittling the brain, of concurrence in the false cry and damnable lie that the heart is better than the brain. As an old gentleman once observed to the present writer: "You might as well speak of loving with your liver as loving with your heart." No one merely thinks with the brain. He or she does *everything* with the brain. The brain is your mainspring of speech and action. "The greatest thing in the world is man, and the greatest thing in man is mind." It is to be supposed that when Hamilton said he knew as well as anybody else about the doctrine of the immanence of God, but it did not prevent him from doing justice to man.

He who belittles, or slanders, or injures, or impairs the brain is the arch-enemy of humanity. All this clerically engineered, emotional rubbish about the heart—the heart—the heart! must be consigned to the dust-bin. It has been a source of misery for human beings, and it has carried with it as an inevitable and indispensable corollary the prostitution of the greatest thing in the world—the brain of man. The brain feels as well as thinks. It loves and hates as well as schemes and plans. It quivers with emotion in the presence of great beauty. It recoils from pain, and is responsive to what is pleasant and joyous. It rejoices with those who rejoice, and weeps with those who weep. It admires the sunrise and sunset. It fills the being with a flood of glory when it receives first knowledge of some great master in art. "Heart" is only a figure of a part of the brain. It means the feelings as distinguished from pure reason. But they cannot be ever fully separated. The brain is a composite of feeling and intelligence.

Brains that will not be subservient are at a discount. But the brain that is employed in advancing something or advocating something that it either does not believe or positively disbelieves is a prostituted brain, and the being in whom it is found has allowed himself to be degraded to the lowest possible level. He who respects the independence of the brain—the brain of others as well as his own—is capable of the highest order of moral courage when the test is applied to him. But if you can compel people to use their brains as *you* choose to direct, you rob them of their personality, their manhood and womanhood, their honour.

IGNOTUS.

I have always distrusted chimeras. Nothing is less wholesome for men and nations than illusion; it stifles effort, it blinds, it is the vanity of the weak. To repose on legends, to be mistaken about all realities, to believe that it is enough to dream of force in order to be strong—we have seen well enough to what terrible disasters such things lead. The people are told to look on high, to believe in a Higher Power, and to exalt themselves to the ideal. No, no! That is language which at times seems to me to be impious. The only strong people are those who work, and it is only work that gives courage and faith.—*Emile Zola.*

Acid Drops.

The *Christian World* thinks the London magistrate gave a dangerous decision in ruling that a Spiritualist medium was not guilty of fortune-telling if she believed in it herself. To our mind, we consider he acted sensibly enough as matters stand. Will someone please tell us on what ground a fortune-teller should be fined or imprisoned while others are allowed to do a roaring trade in the sale of charms and mascots, etc.? And will someone also tell us what substantial difference there is between a Spiritualistic medium taking money for telling about the future and a Roman Catholic priest taking money for getting souls out of Purgatory, or saving other souls from getting in? or the ordinary clergyman getting money for telling us about the next world? If fortune telling and reading the future, and trading on people's love of the mystic and the marvellous, is a crime, then let it be a crime all round. But for a parson crying out against these things, and meantime following his own craft, strikes us as professional jealousy more than aught else.

As we said last week, the real cure for this kind of thing is education. And we don't mean by that the kind of thing that anyone can get at any school. We mean education in the sense of a real broadening and enlarging of the mind. And the moral we draw from this craving for consulting mediums is that we are still very little removed from savages. One reads of members of the Royal family wandering round with mascots, of regiments taking away their mascot, of banners being blessed, and of guns being consecrated. What is all this but savagery pure and simple? How much better is the prince or princess who wears a charm than the savage chieftain or chieftainess with a string of magical ornaments prepared by the local specialist? And how is this general form of savagery to be killed while we have churches and chapels all over the country which are doing their best to keep superstition alive? The savage is with us all the time, we spend a deal of our national energy in seeing that he is ready for use when wanted, and then we prosecute some poor devil of a fortune-teller who is only taking advantage of the harvest that society has sown for him. Well, if the law does suppress him, there is always the Church or the revival platform on which he may exercise his talents.

The "vicar of a large and poor parish," writing in a daily paper, suggests £500 as a "minimum wage" for parsons. This is very modest for men who work one day weekly.

Pity the sorrows of a poor old Deity! In view of the industrial crisis, a four days' series of prayer-meetings took place at the Mansion House, London. Under divine guidance, perhaps City magnates may find out that Trade Unionists are human beings.

The beautiful nonsense printed in the papers is taken for granted, but a choice sample deserves to be rescued from oblivion. In a literary contemporary, a writer discourses on "Bolshevik Taste in Literature," and says "Milton's *Paradise Lost* is still a great favourite with the Russian peasants." Prodigious! And the vast majority of these peasants are illiterate. Even the educated peasants in "God's own England" have not yet reached the giddy literary heights of Charles Garvice and Ethel Dell.

Few people know what "Bolshevism" is; but it has a fine sound. Writing in *Lloyd's Sunday News* on the growth of divorce cases, Lady Beecham entitles her remarks "Matrimonial Bolshevism." The article is full of pretty platitudes and some downright nonsense. The following is a good example: "It is exactly 1919 years ago since motherhood was raised from the dust, when the infant Child in the mother's arms inspired Western civilization." And Lady Beecham is "honorary secretary of the Marriage Defence League," too. Such pills as this will never cure the nation's matrimonial troubles.

A writer in the *Star*, referring to Voltaire's ending of *Candide*, "We must cultivate our garden," says: "It sums up the theme in a phrase, and offers us a modest philosophy that solves most of the riddles of life." Such pretty compliments are not usually paid to Freethinkers until they have been dead a hundred years.

"A clerical nonentity," writing in a daily paper on the subject of "The Church and Social Unrest," declares that the clergy do little but talk to bring about harmony between labour and capital. Even "a clerical nonentity" should be aware of the attitude of the bishops on such questions. How can we expect the subordinate clergy to flout their superiors—and keep their jobs?

A definite start has been made in the formation of a trade union for the clergy. A Dorsetshire vicar is the moving spirit, and he is already asking for subscriptions. It is strange that if the dear clergy want more money that they should overlook the value of petitioning the Throne of Grace. And, particularly, in view of the suggestion that the Second Person of the Undivided Trinity was a working-carpenter.

Lawyers are very busy untying the knots tied by Holy Mother Church. There are nearly three thousand divorce cases in the list. A striking proof that the clergy are losing their hold on the nation.

"Power of speech in these days is almost terrible in its range," declares the Bishop of Peterborough. Yet present-day speech is very modest in comparison with the "cursing Psalms."

Dean Inge told the Church Congress some home truths about the state of religious belief. He told the Congress that people had lost all interest in a future life. He said:—

I am not speaking of the irreligious, but of the religious. The belief in another world was fading out of our teaching and out of our life. We had first a revolt against the doctrine of reprobation, and a shallow, good-natured assumption that even the wicked and impenitent will not fail of ultimate happiness. Then all future reference to a future life gradually disappeared from popular preaching, except as a rather perfunctory consolation to mourners. I have noticed again and again how a congregation loses its interest in a sermon if one begins to talk about heaven and hell.

It sounds like, "We are among friends; let us tell the truth."

The Vicar of St. Mark's, Marylebone, in dealing with Spiritualism, said there was a "wave of psychic feeling passing through England." This seems to us a very grandiloquent name for a very common thing. The interest of, we should say, 99 per cent. of the people who go in for Spiritualism is not much higher or more "psychic" than the feeling that takes one to see a clever conjuring entertainment. That they may think it is real instead of being a trick makes no difference to the quality of the animating motive. Consider the number of people that one could collect to stare for hours at a house that is said to be "haunted"! Or the crowds that will gather to gape at a house in which a murder has been committed! One might as well call this a wave of "psychic feeling." If we except the few whose minds are overwrought by grief, all we have left with Spiritualism is idle or morbid curiosity. But with everything into which religion enters, the first step is to use a crowd of humbugging terms. The rest is easy with a population the larger part of which knows no more stimulating mental food than a scrappy morning or evening newspaper.

The Bishop of Peterborough said that the people at large did not know what God was like or what God can do. That is certainly true, and one wonders whether the Bishop is any better informed. There is nothing easier than to talk about God; any fool can do it, and most fools take advantage of the opportunity. Not only fools though—others with a more sinister purpose to serve find the name of God their most valuable asset. In all ages: "Thus saith the Lord" has been a prelude to knavery or folly.

As the people do not know what God is like, the Archbishop of Dublin proceeded to explain. He said that the laws of nature are "a revelation of God's trustworthiness." We are not quite sure what that means, it sounds much like the curate who praised God for decreeing that death should come at the end of life instead of in the middle of it. God, we presume, is trustworthy, because he does not interfere with nature acting uniformly. He might have made death come in the middle of life instead of it always coming at the end, or he might have made 2 and 2 equal 5 instead of them always equalling four. Oxygen and hydrogen might have produced water to-day and whisky to-morrow instead of producing the same thing all the time. Therefore the Archbishop writes God a testimonial of trustworthiness. We feel inclined to add yet another proof. If God had made theologians sometimes talk like men of sense and sometimes like fools, we should never have been able to tell a theologian from an ordinary human being. But he always makes them talk in much the same way, therefore, we are not deceived. Nature is uniform, the theologian always talks—like a theologian. Therefore, thank God for being trustworthy, for the mark of the maker is on all his works!

Canon Peter Green says that "bishops' palaces, motor-cars, and incomes, are a real stumbling-block to the working man in accepting Christianity." The Canon must be green, indeed, if he really thinks that this exhausts the objections of the working-classes to the Christian Superstition.

The Rev. B. J. Bouchier, of Hendon, is not satisfied with green apples, hard plums, anæmic tomatoes, and faded cabbage as gifts for the harvest festival at his church. He wants useful articles, such as tobacco, cigarettes, scrubbing-brushes, blacking, firewood, and other homely articles. A year's subscription to a paper is suggested also. Just imagine the clergyman's feelings if some enthusiastic and youthful Churchman handed in a packet of Woodbines and a year's subscription to the *Boys' Boomerang*!

A son of a rector was sentenced at Dorset Sessions to twelve months' imprisonment for passing worthless cheques. It was stated that he recently escaped from Canterbury Gaol. This is not a valuable testimonial to the value of a religious training.

The Bishop of London has a plan for the union of the Government Religion with the Wesleyan Body, which includes the creation of twelve Wesleyan bishops. A pleasant prospect for the new bishops, but an unpleasant one for Democracy.

Prebendary Rudolf, founder of the Waifs and Strays Society, has been presented with a cheque for £1,000 by his admirers. The Church of Christ has always seen that there are a large number of waifs and strays for such societies to look after.

According to a legend, Saint Simeon Stylites passed many years of his life on a pillar. We hope that the Vicar of Hampton Wick does not meditate anything so drastic. Writing in the parish magazine, he says he will be compelled to vacate the vicarage, but "I shall be located somewhere at hand, and my address will be affixed to the church-board."

The Rev. J. H. Ellison, who will be chaplain to the new Lord Mayor of London, is rector of St. Michael's Church, the income of which is £1,350. He is brother-in-law to the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose income is £15,000.

The British and Foreign Bible Society has issued the Scriptures in the Adamawa language. Better late than never! People are beginning to leave off reading the Bible in English.

The Rev. S. S. Shergold says that the town of Brighton is "ungodly." Last time we visited the place we noticed a very large number of places of worship. Mr. Shergold had better try again.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 26, Manchester; November 2, Glasgow; November 3, Paisley; November 6, Milngavie; November 7, Falkirk; November 9, Edinburgh; November 16, South Shields; November 23, Leicester; November 30, Birmingham; December 7, Sheffield; December 21, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 26, Birmingham; November 16, Leicester; November 23, Manchester; December 7, Swansea.

J. H. O. (South Africa).—The only reason why we did not print your letter is that our space is very limited, and the topic was one that we did not care to have discussed at the time. From a mass of material, every editor is compelled to select what he considers of the more immediate importance. He may be unwise in his selection and rejection, but it must be done.

H. SPENCE.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible.

TARA.—We are neither elated nor downhearted. We have been pegging away at the work of weakening superstition for nearly thirty years, we knew it was no easy job when we started, and really don't expect to finish our work within the next month or two.

J. TRAVERS.—Quite candidly, now; would it really be an unmixed blessing to know that *everyone* would live for ever? Think of some people we all know wandering around for ever and ever. The prospect is too awful for contemplation.

E. ALLURED.—Thanks for cuttings. Discussions in the press are certain to do good. They form an introduction to Freethought to many people.

W. R. EDWARDS.—Pleased to hear from so old a friend. You are not very far from London, and there seems no great difficulty to our seeing you in the flesh one day.

J. F. WILLIAMS.—With the help of our friends we have no doubt of getting over all our difficulties—one day.

N. LAWSON writes:—"Please find herewith a small subscription to your Sustentation Fund. I have been a reader of your paper for only two-and-a-half years, having first had a copy given me while in France. Some pamphlets, which, I believe, came from your office, gave me further enlightenment, and now there is no paper I would more reluctantly give up than the *Freethinker*. I feel it would be a disaster for anything to happen to it, and I hope that the response to your appeal will be such as to relieve you from financial worries for some time. My own regret is that I am unable to do more." We are pleased to hear from one of our War-time converts.

"A FRIEND" writes to say that Mr. J. Cain can get the *Freethinker* outside the Ranelagh Street Railway Station. It is sold by a newsboy who was induced by the writer to commence selling, and he now has a number of regular customers.

F. BEGLEY.—We cannot say offhand what was the value of General Booth's property at his death, but believe it was small. But the whole of the Army's assets was practically in his name.

W. SCOTT.—Sorry we have not the space to open our columns to a discussion on the subject of inter-racial marriages.

W. G. SMITH.—If the preacher at Rinstead Parish Church on October 12 said that all Atheists, including Charles Bradlaugh, were converted before they died, we are not surprised that your son felt inclined to call him a liar. He deserved it. But lying in the pulpit is quite a respectable occupation. We do not know anything of the conduct during the strike of the person you name. We should say that his Freethought could not be of a very robust kind.

E. HOPPER.—If "people" in the paragraph, to which you refer, meant *all* people, your reasoning would be conclusive. Unfortunately, it refers only to those who know, and they are in the minority. To the majority, "God" is still a term with a certain hypnotic power. And there is the spell and power of organized religion that must also be broken.

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

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

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

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Owing to the editor's absence from London over the week-end, we must hold over until next week the list of acknowledgments to the Sustentation Fund. It is unsatisfactory to give an incomplete list, and the matter will not hurt by the delay. We continue to receive many kindly letters along with the subscriptions, which we greatly appreciate. It is well to know that the readers of the paper are so keenly interested in its welfare, and so ready on all occasions with their help. Nothing but the feeling that we could depend upon them would have enabled us to struggle through the War-period. We hope to soon announce a closing date for the fund.

To day (Oct. 26) Mr. Cohen lectures, afternoon and evening, in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick, Manchester. We believe the meetings are being well advertised, but there is always room for our friends to do a little personal advertising among their more orthodox friends. Next Sunday Mr. Cohen opens a week's campaign in Scotland. He will lecture at Glasgow on Nov. 2, Edinburgh on Nov. 9, and spend the week in lecturing in the district.

On Saturday, October 25, the Manchester Branch commences its "Social" season with a gathering in the Co-operative (Small) Hall, Downing Street. There will be music, dancing, whist drive, and a dramatic performance. The function commences at 6 o'clock, and tickets will be 2s. each, including refreshments. Secretary's address: H. Black, 446 Great Cheetham Street, Higher Broughton.

Last Sunday London lay in the embrace of a thick fog, so thick that traffic, for a time, had to be suspended. In the circumstances, the audience at South Place was not so large as it would otherwise have been; but those present greatly enjoyed Mr. Lloyd's lecture. To-day (Oct. 26) Mr. W. H. Thresh will lecture. The title of his address, "From Savage to Shakespeare," ought to be enough to secure a crowded hall.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (October 26) at the Repertory Theatre at 7 o'clock. We hope that all Birmingham friends will do their best to see that the hall is crowded, and with as many Christians as is possible.

We cannot say that we are fond of funerals, particularly Secular ones. Indeed, if a funeral must be, we think we would rather see a Christian than a Secular one. But as Secularists will die, it is well that their funerals should be carried out in accordance with their desires. To secure this, we have been asked by the Propaganda Committee, appointed by the Executive, to help in compiling a list of all those people, in various parts of Britain, who would undertake the reading of the Secular Burial Service if called upon. There should be at least one person in every district, and we hope there will be. Branch Secretaries can help in the matter by seeing that some names are forthcoming, and we hope that no mistaken feeling of modesty will prevent volunteers from sending in their names. These should be sent to Miss E. M. Vance at the National Secular Society's office. Any help that can come from headquarters will be given.

Mr. Cohen's meetings at Weston-super-Mare on Sunday last were not large, but the interest of the audience was marked and their manner appreciative. These were the first Freethought meetings ever held in the town, and they may result in more systematic propaganda in the future. Mr. Collette Jones was present from London, and officiated as chairman on both occasions. We are indebted to him for putting himself to the trouble of travelling so far for that purpose.

It was always difficult to get the case for Mohammedanism as against Christianity fairly presented in the English Press, and since the War commenced it has been more difficult than ever. The British Press has become more venal than it was ever before, and sheer lying has become a quite respectable quality. So we asked Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall, a gentleman who is as well informed on matters connected with Mohammedanism as any other man in London, to write us an article on the subject. The result appears on another page. We hope to publish more from Mr. Pickthall on the same topic.

The Wisdom of the Serpent.

THE pernicious influence of clericalism takes effect in various directions, and manifests itself in many ways. Not long ago in one of the Scottish counties opportunity arose for making an advance towards the secularization of education in the public schools of the district. At a meeting of the Education Board a motion was put forward calling for the withdrawal of the Shorter Catechism from the schools under the jurisdiction of the Board. The motion was so favourably received that it would have been carried had it not been for the votes of four Roman Catholic clergymen on the Board who supported the continuance of the Catechism. Their votes being given against the motion the result was a tie, and the chairman exercised his casting-vote by recording it against the motion, which was therefore lost.

There is no fault to be found here with the action of the chairman, which was in accordance with well-established usage. Where the votes of an elected body are equally divided for and against a proposed change of procedure, it seems only right that the chairman's casting-vote should be given in favour of the *status quo*. What we are concerned about is the position of the four priests.

It should be borne in mind that the reverend gentlemen who assisted in rivetting the Shorter Catechism round the necks of the children in the public schools of the county of Renfrew do not represent the parents of the children affected. The Roman Catholics have their own schools, where, of course, the Shorter Catechism dare not enter. As a matter of fact, to the Roman Catholic clergymen, the Shorter Catechism must be an utter heretical work, yet they were quite willing to vote in favour of its continued imposition on the children attending the Board Schools. Had the priests any sense of fairness they would have abstained from voting on that particular motion, and have left the matter to be decided by the representatives of the parents and guardians of the children concerned. It was (or should have been) no affair of the priests; the motion did not affect *their* schools.

When the conduct of the priests in this connection was adversely criticized in the press, it was urged in justification that the priests in voting for the maintenance of the Shorter Catechism (in somebody else's school) were confident they were correctly interpreting the wishes of the community. This is a quite gratuitous assumption, and it is effectively disposed of in

this instance by the fact that, eliminating the official Roman Catholic representation, a majority of the Board favoured the dropping of the Catechism. The other members of the Board represent that section of the community for which the Board Schools were provided, the Roman Catholic members do not.

It has been remarked above that the question of excluding or not excluding the Presbyterian Shorter Catechism from the public schools should have been no affair of the priests; but, of course, Secularists need not be surprised at the action of the priests in thus taking advantage of their position on the Board to bolster up Protestant religious teaching in the nation's schools. In spite of the acrimony which frequently enters into the relationship between Catholic and Protestant clerics, when it is a question of opposing Secularism the interests of priest and presbyter are one. The above-chronicled episode merely furnished additional proof—if additional proof were needed—that the priests are quite agreeable that what they consider a false religion should be taught in the public schools rather than no religion at all.

Another form of what looks very like sharp practice on the part of the Roman Church has given rise to a considerable amount of caustic comment. Under the Education Act of 1918 provision has been made for taking over financial responsibility for the upkeep of the voluntary schools by the local educational authorities. This arrangement is the natural and necessary price payable by the community to the voluntary schools in return for the latter consenting to come under public control so far as the secular side of their training is concerned. One Section of the said Act provides that the teaching staff in the transferred voluntary schools shall from the date of transfer be placed upon the same scale of salaries as teachers of corresponding qualifications appointed to corresponding positions in other schools under the same authorities.

This is an obviously just regulation. The managers of the Roman Catholic schools were, however, not content to allow the Education Boards to make any requisite and reasonable adjustment of salaries *after* the transfer had been effected. They forestalled this by doubling, and in some cases trebling, the salaries of their teachers before the date of the transfer, with the evident expectation that the Education Boards would take over their teachers unquestioningly at the revised valuation which had been so suddenly made. It might be urged that no great harm can result from this procedure if the various Boards correctly and impartially interpret the plain sense of the Act of Parliament as cited above, and decline to sanction any excessive salaries that the astute managers of the voluntary schools may have passed on to be paid by the ratepayers. This contention, of course, is true so far as it goes; but the consideration must be carried a little further.

We are far from saying that the voluntary school teachers, even with the belated advances so generously awarded by the clerical managers, are being overpaid. But the whole controversy resolves itself into this: If the hugely increased salaries which the managers of the voluntary schools granted to their school staffs on the eve of their conveyance to public control represent nothing more than the remuneration to which they are justly entitled, then the inevitable deduction must be that the Roman Catholic teachers have previously been grossly underpaid. This, of course, is the fact; and we do not grudge them their advancement, which is long overdue. The charge of sweating, however, still lies at the door of the Roman Catholic authorities. This is met by the plea that the managers of the voluntary schools, not having the rates at their back, could not

afford to pay their teachers adequately. It is singular that lack of funds has not prevented the country being covered with R. C. churches, schools, and clerical domiciles. It is only when their employees ask for a decent living wage that the ecclesiastical authorities discover they cannot afford it.

This is quite in keeping with the traditions of Roman Catholicism in these countries. Those who work for the Church in a subordinate capacity are expected to reckon as part of their reward the reflection that they are labouring for the glory of God and of Holy Mother Church. But the glory of God does not pay for food or raiment, even at Government controlled prices; and there are no showers of heavenly manna to nourish hungry sojourners in the modern industrial desert. Luckily, the Roman Catholic teachers will in future, with the State as paymaster, be able to secure a larger share of the meat which perisheth, and this, after all, is a more tangible asset than the blessing of God, of which the Church can be so lavish.

The wisdom of the serpent is further exemplified by the quietly persistent efforts that are being made in this country to "noble" the labour vote. The advanced Labour Party (with capital letters this time) fancies it is capturing the Irish vote; but the tail never wags the dog. On this point a warning note has been sounded in these columns more than once. The leaders in the Labour world are indeed blind to all the lessons of history if they think they can accelerate the emancipation of the worker by an alliance with clericalism. When we see a well-known protagonist of clerical obscurantism standing as official Labour candidate at a Parliamentary election, it may well be asked if the Labour leaders realize whither they are drifting. They may win a few seats in Parliament with the aid of a clerically influenced vote, but the price ultimately exacted for such measure of success will be a bitter one. The Roman Catholic Church is branded in history as the enemy of freedom and progress. There is no convincing indication to-day that the leopard has changed its spots, or has any desire to do so. No one who has studied the methods of Roman Catholicism can doubt that when the Church acquiesces in any approach to co operation with political democracy, she does so for her own ends. Now, as ever, clericalism is the enemy, and leaders of advanced movements who intrigue with it do so at their peril, and are playing a game in which they are certain to be worsted.

GEO. SCOTT.

The fantastic notions which the Christian Church disseminates as to the eternal life of the immortal soul after the dissolution of the body are just as materialistic as the dogma of "the resurrection of the body." In his interesting work on *Religion in the Light of the Darwin Theory*, Savage justly remarks: "It is one of the standing charges of the Church against science that it is materialistic. I must say, in passing, that the whole ecclesiastical doctrine of a future life has always been, and still is, materialism of the purest type. It teaches that the material body shall rise and dwell in a material heaven." To prove this one has only to read impartially some of the sermons and ornate discourses in which the glory of the future life is extolled as the highest good of the Christian, and belief in it is laid down to be the foundation of morality. According to them, all the joys of the most advanced modern civilization await the pious believer in Paradise, while the "All-loving Father" reserves his eternal fires for the godless materialist.—*Haackel*.

Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.—*Confucius* (to Emperor Ke Kang).

Islam and Christendom.

It is the fashion for our politicians nowadays to scoff at the Oriental policy of Disraeli, and to speak of the period which was dominated by his personality as one of aberration in our country's history. Comparatively few people seem to realize that Disraeli's Eastern policy was merely the historic Eastern policy of England systematized and directed to a creditable end. That end was the contentment, education, and eventual emancipation of the subject races in the British Empire in such manner that England could command their loyalty for centuries to come. It was a scheme which would have been approved by all our earlier statesmen who perceived that England's greatness depended not on these islands on the edge of Europe, nor on the annexation of new regions on the outskirts of the inhabited world, but on the possession of rich countries in the East which many nations coveted. It was Britain against Europe in those days, and Europe, from the point of view of Muslims, is still Christendom.

But when Disraeli, at a moment of great personal triumph, made the old unreasoned policy complete and gave it an ideal, there had already grown up unofficially a school of thought in opposition to such purely British tendencies—people who thought that the chief aim of England ought to be a better understanding with those European countries which still preserved an ecclesiastical structure, people who esteemed the fate of subjects of the British Empire of trivial account compared with the apocalyptic vision of a reunited Christendom. Mr. Gladstone epitomized the views of this new anti-British party neatly upon one occasion, in a public gesture. When on a mission to the Ionian Islands, at an official reception he, to some extent the representative of England, stooped to kiss the hand of an obscure Greek bishop. Terrific was the outcry in official circles, delirious the triumph and amusement of the Greeks, over an act which everyone regarded as un-English. The ecclesiastical party was not popular in England then. It is not popular in England now under its true colours. Yet furtively, and unsuspected of the people, it has won the day: witness the inclination of our rulers to back the claims of Greece and Italy against the wishes of some eighty million British Muslims and against our own pledged word.

According to Disraeli, England should have held aloof from European squabbles, relying on the peoples of her Empire—rendered loyal and contented by progressive measures, and considered on a par with England in our foreign policy—to defend her against all assailants. She should have had upon her side popular opinion in every country because of the good fortune of the peoples subject to her sway, and because her empire was the home of liberty.

According to Gladstone, Europe, *i.e.*, Christendom, should have united to impose the will, and eventually, of course, the creed of Christians on the world.

For Disraeli, the Sultan of Turkey was a better ally than the Czar of Russia, because his alliance gave great satisfaction to the British Muslims, and because his aims were not opposed to those of England. For Gladstone the Czar was preferable to the Sultan, even though his aims were dead opposed to ours—why? Because the Czar had been baptized. He was a "Christian." But that is anti-British, being dead against the spirit of the British Empire. This, from the moment it became an Empire, has had more in common with the Muslim Empire—based on tolerance—than with Byzantium, or Spain, or Portugal, or any technically "Christian" Empire of the past. It is true that we do not forbid by

law, under the death penalty, attempts by any member of the dominant religion to turn the subject-peoples from their faith, as was done in the Muslim Empire. It is true that the British Government does, even to this day, permit, and, apparently, in some cases, encourage the activities of Christian missionaries to the annoyance of non-Christian British subjects. Yet, speaking in a general way, it may be said that every subject has full liberty of conscience, and that religious communities other than Christian are tolerated in the British realm. But the British Empire is still far behind the Turkish Empire in the measure of *political* liberty which it allows to subject peoples of another faith. And this defect Disraeli's policy was meant to remedy. We had to improve the condition of "our own people," to make the British Empire a league of nations exempt from barriers of creed and even colour, an example to the world, before we bothered about foreign nations. Was not Disraeli's vision of a league of independent nations united by enthusiasm for the British flag a better goal of policy for British statesmen than the reunion of Christendom, which has brought our Empire to this pass: that the most important of the subject-peoples, both in numbers and intelligence, are furiously discontented with the Empire as it is, while loyal to the old tradition of that Empire as embodied in Disraeli's Eastern policy?

Gladstone once said in a public speech that so long as there were followers of "that accursed book" (the Coran) Europe would know no peace—a curious perversion of the truth when Europe had been relentlessly attacking El Islam for centuries. In the Coran I find this text, among a host of others to the same effect:—

Verily those who believe [*i.e.*, the Muslims] and those who follow the Jew's religious rule and the Christians and the Sabæans—whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, and does good works—their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.

From the Islamic point of view, a Christian or a Jew or a heathen *who does good works*—or, in other words, obeys the law of God as set forth in the Coran, although unconsciously—is better than a Muslim who does evil. Muslims enjoy no privilege; the mere recitation of their creed or fulfilment of its rites is not the way of salvation. There is no special test for any creed or race. The same test will be applied to all mankind—the test of works.

One can imagine the horror which such tolerance arouses in the breasts of men who think salvation is for Christians only, the magic consequence of certain rites and formulæ. Such men must dread Islam, because it makes a wide appeal. To quote again from the Coran:—

And they say: None enters Paradise unless he be a Jew, or a Christian. These are their own desires. Say: Bring your proof (of that which you assert) if you are truthful.

Nay, but whosoever turns his face entirely towards God while doing good to men, his reward is with his Lord; and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.

The challenge to ecclesiastical Christianity is frank, and quite unanswerable; and the hatred of Islam by the Church is thus explained. But Europe of to-day, enlightened by Freethought—which has more in common with Islam than with Christianity—does not judge by the test of faith, but that of works. It is no use to tell a modern Englishman that the Turk deserves to be wiped out because he has never undergone the rite of baptism. You must demonstrate that he is worse in conduct than his Christian neighbours, which is not the truth; but that does not matter to the ecclesiastical mind convinced that a non-Christian is intrinsically

worse than a Christian. It is an affair of faith, not works. Well, we have all been witness of the demonstration. We have heard the praises of the Russian Czardom, and the violent abuse of Turkish government, by which the present situation has been brought about. Most of us now realize that the praises were quite undeserved; but do we realize that the abuse, coming from the same political workshop, was equally undeserved? It was.

One half the truth concerning Turkey has been religiously withheld from us for years. The trick of advertising massacres of Christians by Mohammedans, and hushing up the previous massacres of Mohammedans by Christians, has given to the Christians of the East a false aureole of martyrdom, has given a false air of justice to our anti-Turkish policy. So the triumph of the ecclesiastical party is complete. It may appear complete, but it is not enduring. A most important factor in the situation has been quite ignored. Europe is satisfied, but what of Asia? Disraeli thought of Asia as the ultimately decisive factor, but no British statesman since his day has given serious thought to it. From the Bosphorus to the Great Wall of China and beyond all Asia is revolting at this moment against the foul injustice, as they think it, of our treatment of the Turks, against our exaltation of the jackal Christian races whom every Asiatic loathes and despises. The Muslim judgment of men by their works extends to governments. A government of Christians which did justice is more worthy of a Muslim's loyalty than a government of Muslims which did wrong. It is our justice which has made the Muslims loyal to us in the past. The British Government, in its tolerance and fair dealing, appeared to them essentially a Muslim government—a government apart from Christendom at any rate, above sectarian zeal, and on the higher level ordered by Islam. Now that it is seen that we are one with Europe, that we give sly preference to Christian races, that we put forth with a solemn air assertions which every Asiatic knows to be false, the sentiment throughout the East has turned against us. We have hammered Asia nearly solid in dislike of us. If we pursue our anti-Turkish, "Czarist" policy—why on earth should we pursue it now the Czardom is defunct?—sooner or later there will be a great explosion of the hate against us, which can hardly fail to end the British Empire in the East.

I was asked to write an article upon the present relations of Islam and Christianity. All that I have done, I find, is to show in a roundabout way the present state of feeling of the Muslim nations of the world against the Christian nations. The relations of Islam with true Christianity are unchangeable. They are essentially the same religion. A difference of opinion between the Prophet Mohammed and Jesus Christ appears to me unthinkable. But Islam, which enjoins free thought and free examinations of all doctrines as a condition of faith, is necessarily opposed to dogmatic Christianity, regarding sacerdotalism as the opposite of true religion.

MARMADUKE PICKTHALL.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—The loyal supporters of North London, who braved the fog on Sunday, heard a very interesting lecture by Miss Rosomond Smith on "Illegitimacy." Miss Smith speaks from an inner knowledge of the workings of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, and gave a very hopeful account of the efforts of this body to create a more tolerant and humane attitude towards the woman who has to bear her own punishment. On Sunday next, October 26, Dr. Charles Porter will speak on "The Prevention of Venereal Diseases."

—F. AKROYD, Hon. Sec.

Correspondence.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am writing this to express my appreciation of your front page article in the issue for October 12. Like you, I feel it is high time a strong protest was made against the constant association of Socialism with religious terminology by many of our platform speakers, who, very often, do not in the least believe in any form of supernaturalism. The Socialist movement is cursed with far too many people, who, although having themselves discarded any Theistic belief, nevertheless use its terms and idioms in the foolish idea that by so doing they placate the feelings of the orthodox. Much of this business is done deliberately for vote-catching and electioneering purposes, and anyone who denies this evidently does not know so much about labour politics and politicians as I do. Another cause of this attitude is the fear of that odium and association of Atheism with wrong or vicious conduct that the "unco guid" are clever enough to work for all it is worth. Although writing quite unofficially, I am glad to say we have had little of this spirit at our Institute. The *Freethinker* is regularly taken and appreciated by our more literary members, and although we have had to fight local prejudice, because we allow all forms of recreation and social enjoyment on Sunday, we have steadily ignored the Prudes and Puritans until now—all this is regarded as a matter of course. We have all types of characters in our membership, including Roman Catholics (one of our best workers was a Salvationist); but we have always held that Socialism means *this world-ism*; and whilst respecting every person's private convictions, we will not accept the idea that any pious humbug is in any sense essential.

How can we expect to kill intolerance and mental slavery so long as even those who are personally free from religious bias, pander to it through fear of losing support, influence, or respectability?

This is the first time I have ever written you, although I have read your journal for many years, but I feel that I must add my little mite of support to your appeal for candour and intellectual honesty.

J. THORNTON (Leeds).

Obituary.

Frequenters of our Outdoor Stations, especially in North London, will learn with deep regret of the sad death of Harold Storey, the fourteen-year-old son of Mr. Headley V. Storey, as the result of an accident in the football field. Full of life and spirits, and a lad of great promise, his untimely death awakens in us all heartfelt sympathy with the bereaved parents. A Secular Service was read at the graveside on Wednesday, October 15, by special request, by Mr. J. T. Lloyd.—E. M. V.

RATIONALISTIC EDUCATION.

MR. W. H. THRESH has re-opened School in temporary premises, and will be pleased to receive a few Day Scholars and Boarders. Next Term he will have accommodation, in a commodious house (not now available), for Forty Pupils. Freethinkers who wish to place their children in this school are asked to make their arrangements at once, as the success of the enterprise will depend upon the support of sympathisers. It will be remembered that Mr. Thresh conducted a similar school (closed by the War) for thirteen years in Southend-on-Sea.—Address W. H. THRESH, c/o 23 Weston Road, Southend-on-Sea.

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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.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Dr. Charles Porter, "The Prevention of Venereal Diseases."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Miss Kough, "Does God Count?" (Bishop of Peterborough at Church Congress).

SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL (Finsbury Pavement, E.C.): 3.30, Mr. W. H. Thresh, "From Savage to Shakespeare."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Why London is not England."

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Samuels; 3.15, Messrs. Dales, Saphin, Baker, and Ratcliffe.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S. (near Band Stand): 3, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "Socialism and Secularism in Germany"; Mr. R. Norman, "Count Your Blessings."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Dream Life and Real Life."

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's Rooms): Members meet every Sunday at 5.45 (afternoon). Lectures in Victoria Square at 7.15.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street): Mr. C. Cohen, 3, "Evolution and God"; 6.30, "Christianity, the Army, and the Nation."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (60 Alexandra Road, Swansea): 6.30, Branch Meeting. Thursday, October 30 (The Docker's Hall), 6.30, Whist Drive, Social, and Dance.

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